

[21] 'Such are the ideas we have had about the *daimonion*, Phidolaus, both during Socrates' life and after his death. We have nothing but contempt for people who speak of sneezes and accidental words and the like. But I had perhaps better leave unsaid what I heard from Timarchus of Chaeronea about these things, for it is myth or fiction rather than argument.'

'No, don't leave it unsaid,' said Theocritus, 'tell us about it. Myth does in some sense touch on truth, even if not very exactly.'

590 But tell us first who this Timarchus was. I don't know him.'

'Of course you don't, Theocritus,' said Simmias, 'he died young, and asked Socrates to allow him to be buried beside Socrates' own son, Lamprocles, his friend and contemporary, who died a few days before him. Timarchus was a spirited young man, who had just got his teeth into philosophy; so he was naturally anxious to understand the power of Socrates' *daimonion*. He took Cebes and me, but nobody else, into his confidence, and made the descent into the Cave of Trophonius, after performing the usual rites at the oracle. He stayed in the cave two nights and a day; most people despaired of him, and his relatives mourned him as dead. But on the second morning, he reappeared, very cheerful. Having performed his act of reverence to the god, and escaped the waiting crowd, he proceeded to tell us of all the wonderful things he had seen and heard.'

[22] 'He said that when he descended into the place of the oracle, he first found total darkness. He prayed, and lay there for a long time, not very clear in his mind whether he was

awake or dreaming. It seemed to him, however, that there was a noise, and his head was struck, and the sutures of his skull parted to release his soul.