

Can this comic story be nonetheless related to Epaminondas?

Charillus, who had come with me to Athens to stay with Cebes. As they were going down Statuaries Street, near the law-courts, they were confronted by a herd of pigs, very muddy, jostling one another in a dense mass. There was no escape, and our friends were either knocked over or smothered in mud. Charillus came home with his legs and his cloak all muddied, and we always laugh when we think of the *daimonion*, and marvel how divine care never abandoned or neglected Socrates.'

[11] 'Do you really believe, Theocritus,' said Galaxidorus, 'that Socrates' *daimonion* had some peculiar, special force, rather than that he had reliable experience in some department of common divination, and used this to determine his decision on obscure or inscrutable matters? An ounce weight will not tip the scale on its own, but if it is added to a weight already on the balance it may pull the whole thing down. Likewise, a sneeze, a casual word, or any such trivial sign, cannot on its own determine a weighty mind to action, but if it is added to one of two opposing calculations, it solves the problem by tipping the balance, and the impulses and movements follow.'

'As a matter of fact,' interjected my father, 'I heard from a Megarian, who had heard it from Terpsion, that Socrates' *daimonion* was a sneeze, either his own or someone else's. If someone else sneezed on the right, either in front or behind, it persuaded him to do whatever he was about; if on the left, it dissuaded him from doing it. As to his own sneezes, one that happened while he was hesitating made him go forward; one that happened in the course of the act gave him pause and stopped his impulse. What seems amazing to me is that, if it was a sneeze, he did not admit it to his companions, but always said that the *daimonion* was stopping him or leading him on. Surely to be panicked by a casual word or a sneeze into desisting from a course of action or abandoning an intention like this would be an indication of some sort of vain pretention or pride, not of the simplicity and sincerity which we believe made Socrates such an outstandingly great man. Indeed, Socrates' impulses seem generally to have possessed a consistency and vigour suggesting that their origin lay in a strong, correct judgement. To have persevered voluntarily in poverty all his life, when it would have pleased and gratified others to relieve him; to have been

loyal to philosophy in the face of so many obstacles; and ultimately, though his friends' zeal and means were at his disposal to ensure him safety in exile, never to have yielded to their entreaties or evaded the approach of death, but faced the terrible moment with unflinching reason—these are not the acts of a man whose resolution changes at the bidding of an accidental word or a sneeze, but of one guided towards the good by some superior authority and control.

[12] 'What then, Simmias?' said Phidolaus, 'are we to allow Galaxidorus his fun, reducing this great achievement of prophecy to sneezes and accidental words, things which ordinary folk only attend to in a humorous way, and in matters of no moment? When graver designs or greater actions pend, Euripides' words come true: "None plays the fool like that when swords are out."'

'Well, Phidolaus,' retorted Galaxidorus, 'I am ready to listen to Simmias, and be convinced by him as you are, if he heard anything from Socrates' own lips. But it's not difficult to demolish what you and Polymnis have said. In medicine, a throbbing or a blister is no great thing in itself, but it may be a symptom of something far from trivial. A pilot uses the cry of a seabird or a wisp of thin cloud as a sign of wind and rough sea. So it is with prophecy. A sneeze or a word is no great thing in itself, but it is a sign of great events. No art despises the possibility of indicating