

A Word About Words

Post by "Don" of December 9, 2022 at 9:23 PM

LOL! Be careful what you ask for 😊

Let's start with some definitions from LSJ:

δόγμα (dogma)

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, δόγμα](#)

From the LSJ definition's references, we can see it translated as opinions, public decree, convictions, beliefs, etc.

δογματίζω (dogmatizo) "to dogmatize" The "controversial" word used in the characteristics of an Epicurean sage "δογματιεῖν τε καὶ οὐκ ἀπορήσειν"

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, δ , δμω-ή , δογμα^τ-ίζω \(tufts.edu\)](#)

- ἀπορήσειν "to be in doubt, to be puzzled,"

[Henry George Liddell, Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon, ἀπορ-έω \(tufts.edu\)](#)

This is the same word as used in talking about when the sage will make money and is translated in some texts as "to be in poverty/need" so each instance could be translated as "to be in want."

This means the Epicurean puts trust in the picture of reality painted by Epicurus, *declares* those beliefs to be trustworthy, and doesn't remain in doubt - doesn't go through life in want or need - of an explanation of reality.

At its most basic, dogma just means a settled opinion or something firmly established. It doesn't *need* to be something taken on blind faith. Epicurus has reasoned out his "dogma" and built it on a firm foundation, that's why we can trust it or, if you will, have "faith" in it.

I'm becoming more convinced of the significance of the juxtaposition of δογματιεῖν (dogmatiein) and ἀπορήσειν (aporēsein) after looking at various references, especially the Diogenes Laertius excerpt below from the life of Pyrrho. If Diogenes Laertius was copying from some Epicurean text for those characteristics, it seems there was a definite contrast being made between those who δογματιεῖν and those who ἀπορήσειν.

Check this out:

[Diogenes Laertius, Lives of Eminent Philosophers, BOOK IX, Chapter 11. PYRRHO \(c. 360-270 b.c.\)](#)

Besides these, Pyrrho's pupils included Hecataeus of Abdera, Timon of Phlius, author of the Silli, of whom more anon, and also Nausiphanes of Teos, said by some to have been a teacher of Epicurus. All these were called Pyrrhoneans after the name of their master, but Aporetics, Sceptics, Ephectics, and even Zetetics, from their principles, if we may call them such-- [70] Zetetics or seekers because they were ever seeking truth, Sceptics or inquirers because they were always looking for a solution and never finding one, Ephectics or doubters because of the state of mind which followed their inquiry, I mean, suspense of judgement, and finally Aporetics or those in perplexity, for not only they but even the dogmatic philosophers themselves in their turn were often perplexed (ἀπορητικοὶ δ' ἀπὸ τοῦ τοὺς δογματικοὺς ἀπορεῖν καὶ αὐτούς). Pyrrhoneans, of course, they were called from Pyrrho. Theodosius in his Sceptic Chapters denies that Scepticism should be called Pyrrhonism ; for if the movement of the mind in either direction is unattainable by us, we shall never know for certain what Pyrrho really intended, and without knowing that, we cannot be called Pyrrhoneans. Besides this (he says), there is the fact that Pyrrho was not the founder of Scepticism ; nor had he any positive tenet ; but a Pyrrhonean is one who in manners and life resembles Pyrrho.