

Sophists

A Sophist is someone who teaches Sophia, or wisdom made from knowledge, to his disciples. Originally, sophism was a complimentary term, but in the second half of the 5th century BCE, the meaning greatly changed to label a disorganized group of people who taught rhetoric and subjectivism.

Sophists offered to teach this persuasive speech and became quite wealthy from their teachings. They believed not in discovering the truth, but in winning the argument no matter what the cost (similar to lawyers and advertisers today). The practice of taking fees combined with the use of rhetoric skills to pursue unjust lawsuits eventually led to the decline of respect for the Sophists.

Protagoras is believed to have been the first Sophist, he believed that truth is a measure of preference. This subjective belief is common among the Sophists, and is probably what helped them to argue and win many of their cases...and the fact that they believed it themselves (though it was not true) I believe helped them win as well.

Socrates criticized the Sophists but did so subtly. He believed in absolute truth, and did not charge for his teachings. Socrates would spend most of his time in the Athens marketplace, with no shoes and a dirty toga, and try to engage in philosophical conversations with the Greeks.