

from danger, but he said it made no difference to him. On one occasion, however, he was frightened by a dog and climbed a tree. When accused of inconsistency, he said it was difficult to lay aside humanity altogether!

Pyrrho's views, somewhat modified, were taken up by **Arcesilaus** (315-240 BC), who became head of the Academy, founded by Plato. Arcesilaus taught that the wisest course was to suspend judgment and not commit oneself to any belief as final. As a teacher, he propounded no thesis of his own, but would refute any thesis proposed by a student. Sometimes he advanced two contradictory propositions and showed how to argue convincingly for either. His pupils apparently learned cleverness, dexterity in argument, and complete indifference to the truth.

In the following century, **Carneades** (214-129 BC) followed Arcesilaus as head of the Academy. In 156 BC he offered a course of lectures at Rome which were well-attended by young men eager to ape Greek culture. In his first lecture, Carneades expounded Plato and Aristotle. In his second lecture, he refuted everything he taught in the first, showing that every conclusion was unwarranted.

Sextus Empiricus (no empiricist!) flourished in the late 2nd cen BC and is our main source of knowledge about the Skeptical movement. In his work "Arguments Against Belief in a God," he wrote, "We skeptics follow in practice the way of the world, but without holding any opinion about it. We speak of the gods as existing, and offer worship to the gods, and say that they exercise providence, but in saying this we express no belief, and avoid the rashness of the dogmatizers."

From this brief sketch we can see that Skepticism includes opinions stretching from "Nothing can be known!" to "We believe in nothing."

(2) Agnosticism

This view embodies the belief that the final answer to basic questions is always, "I do not know." This answer seems more modest than that given by the skeptic. "I do not know" appears rather different from "No one can know anything."

Protagoras (481-411 BC) the Sophist is reported to have said, "I know not whether the gods exist or not. The question is difficult and life is short." One tradition says he was accused of impiety for this opinion and banished from Athens.

Nicholaus of Cusa (AD 1401-1464) held that man's wisdom lies in admitting his ignorance. His best-known work is entitled On Learned Ignorance.

(3) Subjectivism

This view embodies the belief that only subjective experience can properly be called knowledge, and that objective reality (though its existence must be assumed) can never be known, but only inferred.

Gorgias (late 5th cen BC) went so far in his Sophism as to