CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

SIGNIFICANT stages in the history of philosophy are seldom identifiable with the same precision as political events, but there are good reasons for bringing the new movements of thought which developed in the Greek world at the end of the fourth century B.C. under a single description. Hellenistic is a term which refers to Greek, and later, Graeco-Roman civilization in the period beginning with the death of Alexander the Great (323 B.C.) and ending, by convention, with the victory of Octavian over Mark Antony at the battle of Actium in 31 B.C. During these three centuries it is neither Platonism nor the Peripatetic tradition established by Aristotle which occupied the central place in ancient philosophy, but Stoicism, Scepticism and Epicureanism, all of which were post-Aristotelian developments. These are the movements of thought which define the main lines of philosophy in the Hellenistic world, and 'Hellenistic philosophy' is the expression I use in this book to refer to them collectively. Their influence continued into the Roman empire and later times, but in the first century B.C. Platonism began a long revival and an interest in Aristotle's technical writings was also re-awakened. The detailed treatment of Hellenistic philosophy in this book comes to an end with these developments. They are both a cause and a symptom of an eclectic stage in Greek and Roman thought, during which the Hellenistic systems become only of secondary importance to the historian of philosophy.

In this introductory chapter our interest is chiefly in the beginning of Hellenistic philosophy, and it is useful to glance initially at the social and political circumstances which provided the framework for intellectual life at this period. Alexander's eastern empire disintegrated in the wars and dynastic struggles which followed his early death. But it prepared the ground for an unparalleled extension of Greek culture. Alexandria in Egypt and Antioch in Syria were Greek foundations, capitals respectively of the Ptolemaic and Seleucid kingdoms secured by two of Alexander's generals. The soldiers, civil servants and businessmen who settled in Asia and Egypt transplanted the social institutions of the Greek mainland. A common culture, modified by different influences in different places, and above all, a common language (the *koinê*), gave them a sense of unity. Alexandria under the Ptolemys became a new centre of arts and sciences, which had such power to attract eminent men of letters and scholars that it outshone Athens in the diversity of its culture. Athens remained pre-eminent in philosophy. But Antioch, Pergamum and Smyrna were other flourishing cities whose rulers competed with one another as patrons of poets, philosophers, historians and scientists.

For about a hundred years it was an age of remarkable intellectual achievement. The extension of the social and political horizon of classical Greece was matched by a widening of interest in subjects such as history and geography. Great advances were made in philology, astronomy and physiology. Learning affected literature, and most of the notable literary figures were scholars. One of the consequences of this scholarly activity was a narrower definition of subject boundaries. Aristotle and his immediate followers took in a very wide range of subjects under 'philosophy', including studies that we would designate scientific or literary or historical. The scope of Hellenistic philosophy is much more limited on the whole. Strato of Lampsachus (died 270/68), one of Aristotle's successors, was a philosopher whose primary interests might be called scientific. Much later, the Stoic Posidonius (died 51/50) made staunch efforts to associate philosophy with history, geography, astronomy and mathematics. But these are exceptions. The special sciences were vigorously studied in our period, but not primarily by leading members of the Hellenistic philosophical schools. In their hands philosophy came to acquire something of its modern connotations, with a division drawn between logic, ethics and general investigation of 'nature'. This distinction between philosophy and science was underlined by place as well as time. The major figures of early Hellenistic philosophy—Epicurus, Zeno, Arcesilaus, and Chrysippus—all migrated to Athens from elsewhere. Those who are most noteworthy for their scientific achievements—Archimedes, Aristarchus, the astronomer, and the medical scientists, Herophilus and Erasistratus, had no strong association that we know of with Athens.

Without Alexander there would have been no Alexandria. Many of the characteristics of the Hellenistic world can undoubtedly be traced to his imperial ambitions and their subsequent effects. Philosophy, so many have said, responded to the unsettled age of the Hellenistic monarchs by turning away from disinterested speculation to the provision of security for the individual. Stoicism has been described as 'a system put together hastily, violently, to meet a bewildered world'.[1] It would certainly be wrong to isolate Stoicism and Epicureanism from their milieu. Epicurus' renunciation of civic life and the Stoics' conception of the world itself as a kind of city may be viewed as two quite different attempts to come to terms with changing social and political circumstances. But many of the characteristics of Hellenistic philosophy were inherited from thinkers who were active before the death of Alexander. The needs of people in the Hellenistic world for a sense of identity and moral guidance can help to explain why Stoicism and Epicureanism rapidly gained adherents at Athens and elsewhere. But the Peloponnesian War a hundred years previously probably caused greater suffering to Greece than Alexander and his successors. Economically, Athens was a prosperous city at the end of the fourth century and new public works absorbed capital and energy. It is difficult to find anything in early Hellenistic philosophy which answers clearly to a *new* sense of bewilderment.

Alexander, it is true, helped to undermine the values which the declining city-states had once so proudly asserted, and Aristotle's ethics assumes as its social context a city-state like Athens. But Diogenes the Cynic was already challenging the basic conventions of classical Greek civic life many years before the death of Alexander. These three men, Alexander, Diogenes and Aristotle, all died within a year or two of each other (325–322), and this is worth mentioning because it emphasizes the need to take account of continuity as well as change in the interpretation of Hellenistic philosophy. The young Alexander was taught in Macedonia by Aristotle, and in later years Alexander, who knew the free-speaking Diogenes, is reputed to have said, 'If I had not been Alexander, I should like to have been Diogenes' (D.L. vi 32). Alexander set out to conquer the external world; Diogenes aimed to show men how to conquer their own fears and desires. Aristotle and Diogenes were contemporaries but they had little else in common. Moralist, iconoclast, preacher, these are descriptions which catch something of Diogenes' posture. He shared none of

---

[1] E. Bevan, *Stoics and Sceptics* (Oxford 1913) p. 32. Contrast with this kind of explanation L. Edelstein's reference to a 'new consciousness of man's power that arose in the fourth century, the belief in the deification of the human being', which he finds influential on Stoicism and Epicureanism, *The Meaning of Stoicism* (Cambridge, Mass. 1966) p. 13.

Aristotle's interest in logic or metaphysics, and attacked the city-state as an institution by advocating an ascetic life based upon 'human nature', the rationality of which was at variance, he argued, with the practice of Greek society. This repudiation of accepted customs was backed up by reference to the supposed habits of primitive men and animals.

Behind Diogenes' exhibitionism and deliberate affront to convention lay a profound concern with moral values which looks back to Socrates. The Stoics refined Diogenes' ideas, and there were men in the Hellenistic world and the Roman empire who called themselves Cynics, modelling their preaching and life on the uncompromising style of Diogenes. Unlike Socrates however he acknowledged no allegiance to any city, whether it was Sinope on the Black Sea, his native town, or Athens where he spent much of his later life. His ethical values took no account of social status and nationality, and this emphasizes the radical character of Diogenes' criticism of traditional attitudes. A study of Aristotle's painful defence of slavery in *Politics* Book I should make the point beyond doubt. What mattered to Diogenes was the individual human being and the well-being he might achieve purely by his natural endowments. This strong emphasis upon the individual and a 'nature' which he shares with humanity at large is one of the characteristics of Hellenistic philosophy. It becomes most prominent among Stoics, at the time of Rome's expansion from the second century B.C. onwards; but the early Stoics, Sceptics and Epicureans were supremely confident that a man's inner resources, his rationality, can provide the only firm basis for a happy and tranquil life. The city recedes into the background, and this is a sign of the times. But Diogenes had pointed the way before the dawn of the Hellenistic age.

When Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, and Epicurus began teaching at Athens in the last years of the fourth century the city already had two illustrious philosophical schools. A few years before 369, Plato had established the Academy, a society which seems to have had much less in common with a general centre of learning than later uses of the name might suggest.[1] Its senior members pursued a wide range of interests, but formal teaching may have been limited to mathematics and certainly is not likely to have gone beyond the curriculum, which includes dialectic for those over thirty, described in Book vii of the

---

[1] cf. Harold Cherniss, *The Riddle of the Early Academy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1945) pp. 61–72.

Republic. What the numbers of the Academy were at any one time is not known. The juniors in its early days must have been a small group of upper-class young men, not exclusively Athenians, for Aristotle who spent the years 367–347 as student and teacher in the Academy came from Macedonia. In founding the Academy Plato may have hoped among other things to educate men who could be expected to become prominent in public life. The published dialogues were his principal method of reaching a wider audience.

After Plato's death (347) the headship of the Academy passed first to his nephew, Speusippus, then to Xenocrates and thirdly to Polemo, a contemporary of Epicurus and Zeno. Aristotle remained formally a member for the rest of his life, but he left Athens for reasons which are open to conjecture on the appointment of Speusippus. He spent the next twelve years in various cities of Asia Minor and Macedonia, returning to Athens in 335. During his absence from Athens, Aristotle probably devoted much of his time to biological research, the fruits of which bulk so large in his writings. Following Alexander's accession to the Macedonian throne, Aristotle began his second prolonged stay in Athens, now teaching not in the Academy but in the Lyceum, a grove just outside the civic boundaries. Theophrastus and other Academicians, who had accompanied Aristotle on his travels, joined him there; and after Aristotle's death in 322, Theophrastus established the Lyceum (often called the Peripatos) as a school in its own right. He continued to direct its work until his death in 288/4.

The activities of the later Academy are not well documented. Aristotle often associates Speusippus with 'the Pythagoreans' (e.g. *Met.* 1072b30; *E.N.* 1096b5). The transmission of so-called Pythagoreanism is a complex and controversial subject. What seems to have happened, very briefly, is that Speusippus and Xenocrates developed certain metaphysical and mathematical principles which were not called Pythagorean by Plato. In their hands Plato's theory of Forms underwent considerable transformation.[1] They also wrote copiously on ethical subjects. Here again the details largely escape us, but it is certain that they accepted such basic Platonic notions as the necessary connexion between virtue and human well-being. Speusippus took up the extreme position of denying that pleasure in any sense or form can be something good (Aristotle, *E.N.* vii 14), and he attacked the hedonist philosopher, Aristippus, in two books. Several doctrines attributed to Xenocrates recur in Stoicism. One text is of particular interest: 'The reason for discovering philosophy is to allay that which causes disturbance in life' (fr. 4, Heinze). Xenocrates' name in this passage, which comes from Galen, depends on an emendation of the name 'Isocrates'. But the statement harmonizes well with the general aims of Hellenistic philosophy, especially Epicureanism and Pyrrhonism.

---

[1] cf. Cherniss, op. cit. p. 33.

Xenocrates probably saw himself chiefly as a scholarly exponent of Plato's philosophy. Under his leadership the Academy professed Platonism, a systematic account of ideas which Plato himself, however positively he held them, may never have intended to be presented as a firm body of doctrine.

In the ancient biographical tradition Xenocrates is presented as a grave figure who had such an effect on Polemo, who eventually succeeded him, that the latter turned from a life of dissipation to philosophy. Polemo became head of the Academy in 314, three or four years before Zeno's arrival in Athens. With its fourth head the Academy seems to have moved away from mathematics, metaphysics and dialectic to concentrate upon ethics. Polemo is reported to have said that 'a man should train himself in practical matters and not in mere dialectical exercises' (D.L. iv 18). Plato regarded dialectic as the best moral training, on the grounds that it prepared its practitioners for an insight into the nature of goodness. But Hellenistic philosophy strove to make itself relevant to a wider social group than Plato or Aristotle had influenced. This is proved, to my mind convincingly, by the number of rival philosophers who were active at the end of the fourth century, all of them offering their own solution to the question already asked and answered by Plato and Aristotle: 'What is happiness or well-being and how does a man achieve it?' One answer, advanced by the first Sceptic, Pyrrho, was equanimity born of a refusal to make any definite judgments, but Epicureans and Stoics were the new philosophers who tackled the question most successfully. They succeeded not because they abandoned theory for practice, but because they offered a conception of the world and human nature which drew its support from empirical observations, reason and a recognition that all men have common needs. In saying this I do not mean to imply that they restricted the scope of philosophy to ethics. This is a frequent misconception about Hellenistic philosophy. Epicurus wrote thirty-seven books *On Nature*. The Stoics made contributions of great interest in logic, theory of language and natural philosophy. Both systems adopted the important assumption that happiness depends upon an understanding of the universe and what it is to be a man.

There were a number of minor philosophical movements in the early Hellenistic period all claiming descent from Socrates. We know or think we know Socrates so well from Plato that it is easy to forget the other Socratics who went their own way in the first part of the fourth century. They are shadowy figures whose views are preserved only in occasional references by contemporary writers and the bald summaries compiled in late antiquity. But they established traditions which anticipate certain aspects of Hellenistic philosophy and which influenced or even competed briefly with the new schools.[1]

I have said a little about Diogenes the Cynic, and will return to him in Chapter 4. Ancient historians of philosophy liked to concoct tidy master-pupil relationships, and they make Diogenes a pupil of Antisthenes. This man was an Athenian associate of Socrates. It is difficult to say how far Diogenes was positively influenced by Antisthenes. Perhaps twenty years older then Plato, Antisthenes himself is attacked by Aristotle for his naïveté (*Met.* 1024b33) and his followers ('Antistheneans') are criticized for their lack of culture (ibid. 1043b23). Sniping at traditional education was part of Diogenes' platform; and if Diogenes Laertius is to be trusted, Antisthenes himself claimed that virtue (*aretê*) is something practical, needing neither copious words nor learning (D.L. vi 11). In fact, Antisthenes was a voluminous writer whose style was highly regarded by a number of ancient critics. The titles of his books show that he was interested in literature, problems of knowledge and belief, and especially dialectic (D.L. vi 15ff.). The later Cynic tradition has coloured Diogenes Laertius' biography. It is reasonable, however, to suppose that Antisthenes advocated Socratic strength of mind as much by personal example as by teaching and writing. The little that we know of his logic and theories of language suggests that he was strongly at variance with Plato. But it was not for contributions to theoretical philosophy that Antisthenes became famous. His importance in this book rests on certain moral propositions in which he certainly foreshadowed and may have directly influenced the Stoics. Especially striking are the following fragments: virtue can be taught and once acquired cannot be lost (Caizzi fr. 69; 71); virtue is the goal of life (22); the sage is self-sufficient, since he has (by being wise) the wealth of all men (80). Probably Antisthenes, like Diogenes, dispensed with any detailed theory which might support such statements. It was left to the Stoics to build them into a systematic treatment of ethics.

---

[1] For a detailed account of the minor Socratics cf. W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy* vol. iii (Cambridge 1969).

A second Socratic, whose followers were active in the early Hellenistic age, is Aristippus of Cyrene (*c.* 435–355). Xenophon records conversations between Socrates and Aristippus (e.g. *Mem.* 3.8, 1–7; 2.1) and Aristotle also mentions him (*Met.* 996a29). Aristippus' importance rests on his claim that pleasure is the goal of life. He advanced this thesis long before it was adopted by Epicurus, and Epicurean hedonism, though possibly influenced by Cyrenaic views, differs from them in significant respects. By pleasure Aristippus meant bodily gratification, which he conceived as a 'smooth movement', 'rough movements' producing pain (D.L. ii 86). Unlike the Epicureans the Cyrenaics denied absence of pain to be pleasure—it was an intermediate condition—and they rated pleasing bodily sensations above mental pleasures (ibid. 89–90). Our sources do not distinguish clearly between the theories of Aristippus himself and those of his followers, two of whom, Theodorus and Hegesias, flourished at the end of the fourth century. From Aristotle (*Met.* 996a29) we learn that Aristippus scorned mathematics because it took no account of good or bad; and it may be inferred from this that the main concern of his teaching was ethical. Here it is possible to see the influence of Socrates, and Socratic influence may also be evident in Aristippus' dismissal of speculation about the physical world (D.L. 92), which he perhaps developed into a sceptical attitude towards knowledge of external reality.

Eucleides of Megara was a third follower of Socrates whose adherents were still prominent in the early Hellenistic period. It is unfortunate that our knowledge of Eucleides is so slight, for he seems to have been a philosopher of greater significance than Antisthenes or Aristippus. The Megarian school was particularly interested in the kind of arguments first developed by Parmenides and Zeno of Elea in the fifth century. Parmenidean monism was also taken over by Eucleides who held that 'the good is one thing, called under many names' (D.L. ii 106). In the same context, Diogenes Laertius observes that Eucleides denied the existence of that which is contradictory to the good. In seeking to reduce everything to one thing, which is good, Eucleides may have been as much influenced by Socrates as by Parmenides. (Socrates' interest in teleological explanations for phenomena is well attested in Plato's *Phaedo* 97c). But we cannot say how Eucleides worked out the implications of this proposition. Later Megarians were largely renowned for their skill at dialectic, and they had an important influence on Stoic logic. Zeno the Stoic studied with two eminent Megarian philosophers, Stilpo and Diodorus Cronus.

To later antiquity these minor Socratic schools were of only marginal interest. It would be a mistake to regard them as insignificant in their own day. We tend to think that Plato and Aristotle completely overshadowed rival contemporary philosophers because their work has not survived or proved influential. It is unlikely that an educated Greek at the end of the fourth century would have formed the same judgment. Stilpo is reputed to have won followers from Aristotle, Theophrastus and many others (D.L. ii 113f.). Platonists and Peripatetics never exercised a monopoly in Greek philosophy, and they were soon outdone in the extent of their influence by the new Stoic and Epicurean schools.

When these schools were founded, the Academy had ceased to be outstanding in mathematics and theoretical philosophy. Its intellectual vitality was restored about the year 265 in a very different form by Arcesilaus, who turned the Academy from dogmatism to scepticism. But the Lyceum remained a vigorous society down to the death of Strato in 270/68. Theophrastus was a scholar of great versatility who maintained the research tradition established by Aristotle. He refined and expounded Aristotelian doctrines, but was also quite prepared to challenge Aristotle, as may be seen in the work which has come down to us with the title, *Metaphysics*. There Theophrastus discusses a series of problems which arise out of Aristotle's metaphysics. He made important advances in logic, and was particularly interested in the collection and analysis of data in natural history and geology. The importance of empirical checking is frequently stressed in two of his surviving works, *Inquiry into plants* and *On the causes of plants*. His ethical theory seems to have been closely based on Aristotle. Theophrastus was no radical and can hardly have found Epicurean and Stoic views on man and society congenial. Epicurus wrote a book *Against Theophrastus*, the content of which is not known, and through the writings of Theophrastus and other Peripatetics the technical works of Aristotle, which he did not prepare for general circulation, must have become more widely known.

This last point is important. Some scholars have argued that Epicurus and Zeno could have read only Aristotle's 'published' literary works and not the technical treatises which form the bulk of the work which survives today. Strabo, writing in the early Roman empire, relates that after Theophrastus' death Aristotle's manuscripts were dispatched to a man called Neleus, who lived at Skepsis, a town near Pergamum in Asia Minor (xiii 1, 54). When Neleus himself died the books were hidden in a cellar, for reasons of security, only to be recovered and edited in the early first century B.C. Too much has been based on this curious story. It has been held to show that Aristotle's technical treatises were completely unknown for about two centuries. But the conclusion does not follow. It is difficult to believe that only one version of these works was available in Athens at the time of Theophrastus. That Epicurus and the early Stoics had some knowledge of Aristotle's principal doctrines is both a reasonable and, I think, a necessary assumption. Nor is it only an assumption. We have one piece of evidence which connects Epicurus by name with Aristotle's *Analytics* and a work on Nature (see p. 29). But the decline of the Lyceum from the middle of the third century B.C. makes it unlikely that much of Aristotle's technical philosophy was known during the next hundred and fifty years.[1]

Ever since Eduard Zeller wrote his monumental *Philosophie der Griechen* over a hundred years ago, many scholars have contrasted Hellenistic philosophy unfavourably with Plato and Aristotle. But by any standards the achievement of Plato and Aristotle is virtually without parallel in the history of western thought. In assessing Hellenistic philosophy we need to remember that little of Epicurus and no complete work by an early Greek Stoic have survived. Moreover our knowledge of Carneades' sceptical methodology is also derived from secondary sources. We know the broad outlines of early Stoicism and Epicureanism. The details and the arguments are often missing. Plato and Aristotle have a head-start over the Hellenistic philosophers in terms of work which we can evaluate today.

Much of our evidence comes from hand-books written centuries after the time of the early Stoics, Epicureans and Sceptics. The absence of so much first-hand evidence makes the study of these philosophers a very different enterprise from work on Plato and Aristotle. Considerable care must be taken over comparing and assessing different sources, and this preparatory work, if it is allowed too much room in the presentation and analysis of the subject-matter, can easily make Hellenistic philosophy seem tedious, inaccessible and lacking in conceptual interest. This is a false impression. We can now see that Epicurus and Zeno were philosophers whose ideas evolved gradually as a considered reaction against theories in vogue at the end of the fourth century and earlier. It is also true that they felt passionately about the truth of their own theories and the implications of them for human well-being. The same might be said of Plato. But philosophy advances by criticism, and Epicurus and Zeno were critical of current dogmas concerning the structure of the physical world, the sources of knowledge, the nature of man and the grounds of his happiness. The Sceptics challenged the basis of all objective statements, and Carneades' criticism of the Stoics provides ample evidence of his sharp mind. We can argue about the merits of the alternative Stoic and Epicurean theories, but there is no justification for regarding them as a sudden impoverishment of Greek philosophy.

---

[1] Little is known about the Peripatetic philosophers at this time. Their activities seem to have centred largely upon rhetoric, biography and works of popular moralizing. Theophrastus himself wrote on such subjects as marriage, piety and drunkenness. For the ancient evidence see F. Wehrli, *Die Schule des Aristoteles* (Basel 1944–), a series of volumes on individual philosophers.

The Stoics and Epicureans however interpreted the scope of philosophy more narrowly and dogmatically than Aristotle, and by the middle of the first century B.C. onwards, which is the period of our earliest secondary sources, both schools had taken up entrenched positions. But two hundred and fifty years is a long time, and our loss of philosophical writing from this period is almost total. Possibly, as is often said, Epicurus' followers were largely content from early days to accept the teachings of their founder. They certainly revered him as the saviour of mankind, but we know of developments in Epicurean logic, to take only one example, which probably occurred long after his death. The Stoics, who have far more in common with Plato and Aristotle, were more self-critical than the Epicureans, and such leading figures as Chrysippus and Diogenes of Babylon elaborated logic and other subjects in great detail, turning Stoicism into a highly technical philosophy. Stoics and Epicureans criticized each other and were criticized in turn by the Academic Sceptics. But until the time of Panaetius and Posidonius, few very significant amendments to fundamental Stoic doctrines seem to have been made, and the extent of their modifications was less substantial than has sometimes been supposed. Perhaps the new Hellenistic systems were too successful in gaining popular support to channel the development of philosophy into new directions. The Academic Sceptics, who had no 'system' to defend, were very able critical philosophers, but their influence was naturally restricted and often negative. Stoicism and Epicureanism could be understood in a rudimentary sense by almost anyone, and they could also provide intellectual satisfaction for those who wanted more than a message. The early Academy and Lyceum were less flexible in terms of general appeal. They did not make the world intelligible in a manner which could be found satisfying at many different levels.

Both the Epicureans and the Stoics were prepared to popularize their teaching. In his *Letter to Herodotus*—the name refers to a friend, not the fifth-century historian—Epicurus opens by remarking that he has prepared an epitome of his philosophy for those unable to study his technical writings (D.L. x 35). He also compiled a set of ethical maxims which set out the cardinal doctrines and were learnt by heart. But within the school itself there were those like Epicurus himself who devoted their main energies to philosophy. The Stoics assigned a special place to what they called 'suasions and dissuasions', the purpose of which was moral advice. The serious student will have been expected to advance far beyond such things, much as Lucilius, in Seneca's *Moral letters*, is conducted from the rudiments of ethics to problems about the meaning of 'good'. Under Chrysippus a course at the Stoa must have included a considerable assignment of logic and natural philosophy.

We should not think of professional Stoics and Epicureans as men in whom freedom of thought had ossified. But they became the transmitters of doctrines which provided many people throughout the Hellenistic world with a set of attitudes that religion and political ideologies might also have supported. The decline of the Greek cities accelerated the decline of the Olympian gods. Stoics attempted to accommodate the Olympians by interpreting them as allegorical references to natural phenomena. The Epicureans denied the gods any influence over the world. Eastern religious ideas infiltrated into the Mediterranean world. Some embraced them; others chose Stoicism or Epicureanism instead. Stoic and Epicurean philosophers, particularly the latter, made it their business to win supporters, but the market was open to be developed. The price which they paid for entering it with such success was dogmatism, at least outwardly, and the divorce of philosophy from scientific research. Epicurus' attitude to science was naïve and reactionary. The Stoics defended out-of-date theories in astronomy and physiology against the new discoveries of Aristarchus and Erasistratus. The Sceptics were unsympathetic to science, and only

Posidonius in the later Hellenistic period made a serious effort at re-uniting philosophy with mathematics and other scientific studies.

But Epicurus and especially the Stoics were clearly interested in many problems for their own sake. The humanist focus of their philosophy is one of its most interesting features, and it leads to very different results in the two systems. In neither case is it narrowly moralistic because the ethical values of both philosophies are related to two fully developed, if divergent, conceptions of the universe.

In the period covered by this book philosophy became thoroughly institutionalized and practically synonymous with higher education. Epicureanism was the exception. For a brief period at the time of Lucretius and Julius Caesar, it was fashionable and influential in Rome. But it never achieved the public respectability of Stoicism. Philosophers were among the most eminent members of the community and some of the men who feature in this book were chosen to represent their cities as ambassadors. From the middle of the second century B.C., philosophers are found in Rome, but no school was permanently set up there. Some Romans during this period took up Hellenistic philosophy, but they made few original contributions to it. Most of the impetus and the ideas came from Athens and the eastern Mediterranean cities in which many of the Hellenistic philosophers were born.