STOICS, a school of philosophers founded at the close of the 4th century b.C. by Zeno of Citium, and so called from the Stoa or painted corridor (*στoὰ* *πoικίλη)* on the north side of the market-place at Athens, which, after its restoration by Cimon, the celebrated painter Polygnotus had adorned with frescoes representing scenes from the Trojan War. But, though it arose on Hellenic soil, from lectures delivered in a public place at Athens, the school is scarcely to be considered' a product of purely Greek intellect, but rather as the first fruits of that inter­action between West and East which followed the conquests of Alexander. Hardly a single Stoic of eminence was a citizen of any city in the heart of Greece, unless we make Aristo of Chios, Cleanthes of Assus and Panaetius of Rhodes exceptions. Such lands as Cyprus, Cilicia and Syria, such cities as Citium, Soli, Heraclea in Pontus, Sidon, Carthage, Seleucia on the Tigris, Apamea by the Orontes, furnished the school with its scholars and presidents; Tarsus, Rhodes and Alexandria became famous as its university towns. As the first founder was of Phoenician descent, so he drew most of his adherents from the countries which were the seat of Hellenistic (as distinct from Hellenic) civilization; nor did Stoicism achieve its crowning triumph until it was brought to Rome, where the grave earnestness of the national character could appreciate its doctrine, and where for two centuries or more it was the creed, if not the philosophy, of all the best of the Romans. Properly therefore it stands in marked antithesis to that fairest growth of old Hellas, the Academy, which saw the Stoa rise and fall—the one the typical school of Greece and Greek intellect, the other of the Hellenized East, and, under the early Roman Empire, of the whole civilized world. The transcendent genius of its author, the vitality and romantic fortunes of his doctrine, claim our warmest sym­pathies for Platonism. But it should not be forgotten that for more than four centuries the tide ran all the other way. It was Stoicism, not Platonism, that filled men’s imaginations and exerted the wider and more active influence upon the ancient world at some of the busiest and most important times in all history. And this was chiefly because before all things it was a practical philosophy, a rallying-point for strong and noble spirits contending against odds. Nevertheless, in some depart­ments of theory, too, and notably in ethics and jurisprudence, Stoicism has dominated the thought of after ages to a degree not easy to exaggerate.

The history of the Stoic school may conveniently be divided in the usual threefold manner: the old Stoa, the middle or transition period (Diogenes of Seleucia, Boethus of Sidon, Panaetius, Posidonius), and the later Stoicism of Roman times. By the old Stoa is meant the period *(c.* 304-205 b.c.) down to the death of Chrysippus, the second founder; then was laid the foundation of theory, to which hardly anything of importance was afterwards added. Confined almost to Athens, the school made its way slowly among many rivals. Aristo of Chios and Herillus of Carthage, Zeno’s heterodox pupils, Persaeus, his favourite disciple and housemate, the poet Aratus, and Sphaerus, the adviser of the Spartan king Cleomenes, are noteworthy minor names; but the chief interest centres about Zeno, Cleanthes, Chrysippus, who in succession built up the wondrous system. What originality it had—at first sight it would seem not much— belongs to these thinkers; but the loss of all their works except the hymn of Cleanthes, and the inconsistencies in such scraps of information as can be gleaned from unintelligent witnesses, for the most part of many centuries later, have rendered it a peculiarly difficult task to distinguish with certainty the work of each of the three. The common standpoint, the relation to contemporary or earlier systems, with all that goes to make up the character and spirit of Stoicism, can, fortunately, be more certainly established, and may with reason be attributed to the founder.

Zeno’s residence at Athens fell at a time when the great movement which Socrates originated had spent itself in the second generation of his spiritual descendants. Neither Theophrastus at the Lyceum, nor Xeno- crates and Polemo at the Academy, nor Stilpo, who was drawing crowds to hear him at Megara, could be said to have inherited much of the great reformer’s intellectual vigour, to say nothing of his moral earnestness. Zeno visited all the schools in turn, but seems to have attached himself definitely to the Cynics; as a Cynic he composed at least one of his more important works, "the much admired *Republic”* which we know to have been later on a stumbling-block to the school. In the Cynic school he found the practical spirit which he divined to be the great need of that stirring troublous age. For a while his motto must have been “ back to Socrates,” or at least “ back to Antisthenes.” The Stoics always counted themselves amongst the Socratic schools, and canonized Antisthenes and Diogenes; while reverence for Socrates was the tie which united to them such an accomplished writer upon lighter ethical topics as the versatile Persaeus, who, at the capital of Antigonus Gonatas, with hardly anything of the professional philosopher about him, reminds us of Xenophon, or even Prodicus. Zeno commenced, then, as a Cynic; and in the developed system we can point to a kernel of Cynic doctrine to which various philo- sophemes of other thinkers (more especially Heraclitus and Aristotle, but also Diogenes of Apollonia, the Pythagoreans, and the medical school of Hippocrates in a lesser degree) were added. Thus, quite apart from the general similarity of their ethical doctrine, the Cynics were materialists; they were also nominalists, and combated the Platonic ideas; in their theory of knowledge they made use of " reason ” (*λόγος*), which was also one of their leading ethical conceptions. In all these par­ticulars Zeno followed them, and the last is the more important, because, Chrysippus having adopted a new criterion of truth— a clear and distinct perception of sense—it is only from casual notices we learn that the elder Stoics had approximated to Cynicism in making right reason the standard. At the same time, it is certain that the main outlines of the characteristic physical doctrine, which is after all the foundation of their ethics and logic, were the work of Zeno. The Logos, which had been an ethical or psychological principle to the Cynics, received at his hands an extension throughout the natural world, in which Heraclitean influence is unmistakable. Reading the Ephesian doctrine with the eyes of a Cynic, and the Cynic ethics in the light of Heracliteanism, he came to formulate his dis­tinctive theory of the universe far in advance of either. In taking this immense stride and identifying the Cynic “reason,” which is a law for man, with the “ reason ” which is the law of the universe, Zeno has been compared with Plato, who similarly extended the Socratic “ general notion ” from the region of morals—of justice, temperance, virtue—to embrace all objects of all thought, the verity of all things that are.

If the recognition of physics and logic as two studies co­ordinate with ethics is sufficient to differentiate the mature Zeno from the Cynic author of the *Republic,* no less than from his own heterodox disciple Aristo, the elaboration on all sides of Stoic natural philosophy belongs to Cleanthes, who certainly was not the merely docile and receptive intelligence he is sometimes represented as being. He carried on and completed the assimilation of Heraclitean doctrine; but his own contributions were more distinctive and original than those of any other Stoic. Zeno’s seeming dualism of God (or force) and formless matter he was able to transform into the lofty pantheism which breathes in every line of the famous hymn to Zeus. Heraclitus had indeed declared all to be in flux, but we ask in vain what is the cause for the unceasing process of his ever-living fire. It was left for Cleanthes to discover this motive cause in a conception familiar to Zeno, as to the Cynics before him, but restricted to the region of ethics—the conception of tension or effort. The soul of the sage, thought the Cynics, should be strained and braced for judgment and action; his first need is firmness (*εὐτονια*) and Socratic strength. But the mind is a corporeal thing. Then followed the flash of genius: this varying tension of the one substance everywhere present, a purely physical fact, accounts for the diverse destinies of all innumerable particular things; it is the veritable cause of the flux and process of the universe.