

**Short description of Enrico Piergiacomi's Project:
*Theology and the Dissolution of Cities. Religious Anti-
Urbanism in Early Stoicism***

In his essay *On the Republic*, Zeno of Citium – the founder of the Stoic school – presents a very peculiar view of the perfect city, or the cosmopolis where wise men and gods live together. Indeed, he argues that this place is born the very moment in which human cities are dissolved. He believes, after all, that the cosmopolis will not host (*e.g.*) temples, law-courts, and gymnasia. Such structures are built by craftsmen and architects, but these are not people full of religious sanctity and faith. Therefore, the cosmopolis will abandon such buildings and wise human beings will venerate the gods inwardly. The exercise of virtue is the real religious offering in praise of the providential and moral gods.

According to this premise, I will argue that the Stoic cosmic city may have been envisaged more as a metaphor, than as a real community to be created in the long term. Through natural law God only commands us to pursue virtue and to give assent to all the events that providentially occur in the cosmos by virtue of his wise mind. The latter include the existence of the cities of fools, which must continue to exist, since they are one of the divine creations. Wise men (whom some sources describe as being as rare as the Arabic Phoenix) will consequently need to build the cosmopolis within the corrupted space of the city. Goodness cannot exist without opposition to evil, for this is a general principle that was established by the natural law implanted by God.

Such a conception implies that Stoics had an anti-urban conception of the ordinary city. At the same time, however, they appear as the most lawful and urban thinkers, if we look at the cosmopolis, as proven by the fact that Stoic literature defined the citizens of the Hellenistic communities as fools, exiles, criminals, and anarchic revelers.