

GIOVANNI ZAGO, *Sapienza filosofica e cultura materiale: Posidonio e le altre fonti dell' Epistola 90 di Seneca*, Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane: Studi, Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 2012, pp. 359, ISBN 978-88-15-15042-4.

Another analysis of Seneca's *epist.* 90, perhaps the most studied of his *Epistulae Morales*, would have nothing new or nothing more to add to what has already been written on it. Yet Giovanni Zago has produced a book that will definitely ignite some arguments and will give food for thought, especially on the re-evaluation of the material extracted from Seneca's epistle and ascribed to the Greek Stoic philosopher Posidonius of Apamea. Zago is aware of the daring innovations he proposes and in a sincere, but certainly not apologetic attitude, in his introduction (9) he clearly states that he does not expect everyone to accept his argumentation and his interpretative suggestions, which he himself characterizes as "often highly conjectural" ("spesso fortemente congetturali"). And it is exactly here where lies the weakness of Zago's book: it is based on the author's preconception that certain theories and doctrines should or should not be attributed to Posidonius, and all the analysis is structured around and aims at proving this preconception right, even if this means that some of his interpretations and approaches are almost entirely founded on conjecture.

On the other hand, one cannot overlook that Zago has put an awful lot amount of work on structuring his arguments and has made excellent use of his material; every single argument, even the least significant one, is fully and copiously supported by material extracted from ancient texts and authors and from all the relevant modern bibliography, which Zago approaches critically and refutes where necessary. This is precisely the point that makes his book worth reading and certainly not ignorable: it shows that its author has confidence in his interpretations and can support them passionately and accurately, leaving little or no space for doubt and question.

Another merit one should credit to the author are his textual emendations of Greek and Latin texts, among others of Seneca, Cicero, Philodemus, Strabo, Galenus, Alexander of Aphrodisias, Diogenes Laertius, *et al.*, some of which will be discussed further down. Although the author states that "la critica del testo non è, infatti, lo scopo precipuo di questo volume" (10) and that he will deal with them more analytically elsewhere, it should be noted that they are commendable and worth taking into consideration by future editors of these texts and authors.

Chapter I, “*Laudes philosophiae*. Intorno all’incipit e all’epilogo dell’*Epistola* 90” (13–48), deals with the introductory part of Seneca’s epistle (90.1–3a *Quis dubitare, mi Lucili ... inter se cohaerentium*), as well as its conclusion (90.44–6). After criticizing the superficial and doubtful results which previous studies concluded on these parts of Seneca’s epistle, Zago moves to the literary and philosophical analysis of them, stating from the very beginning that there are no signs of Posidonius’s philosophical thought in them. His analysis starts with the expounding of the term *di immortales* (Sen. *epist.* 90.1 *deorum immortalium munus sit quod vivimus*) and the conventional Stoic and Senecan usage of the term *deus*. This is followed by his exposition of the phrase *bene vivere* (*ibid.* 90.1 *philosophiae* [sc. *munus sit*] *quod bene vivimus*) and its relation with *philosophia*; given that the book is obviously addressed to an audience familiar with Seneca and his Stoicism, the detailed discussion of the Stoic background of terms like εὐδαιμονία, *bonum*, *honestum*, etc. (16–28), is a long and rather unneeded digression from the author’s argument¹. Zago continues his interpretation of 90.1, especially the phrase *nisi ipsam philosophiam di tribuissent; cuius scientiam nulli dederunt, facultatem omnibus*, which the author connects with the idea that virtue is accessible to everyone (31: “Il presupposto dottrinale del passo è che la virtù è accessibile a tutti ...”). This provides for another extensive description of the doctrine on the acquiring of *virtus* by men, based on the testimonies of Seneca, Cicero, Aristotle, Alexander of Aphrodisias et al., which, in turn, leads to another digression, on *fatum* and the human limitations in escaping from it. The author connects his conclusion (that, for Seneca, man attains wisdom-*sapientia* and happiness-*bene vivere*, and these are not offered to them) with the incipit and the epilogue of Seneca’s epistle. In this latter part (90.46) Zago finds the Senecan terms that may connect the Stoic idea-principle on the harmonious combination of theory and practice in achieving *virtus* and *sapientia* with the Roman philosopher’s above-mentioned theory: *institutio* and *exercitatio* (*virtus non contingit animo nisi instituto et edocto et ad summum adsidua exercitatione perducto*), which Zago, though, relates to the Greek terms διδασκαλία and ἄσκησις as used by Alexander of Aphrodisias. Thus his conclusion on the introduction and epilogue of Seneca’s epistle (41) is that, although they appear of Stoic origin and content, they are however common *topoi* of Stoics and other philosophical schools as well.

In his attempt at identifying the source of Seneca’s theory in these parts of his epistle, and based on a hypothesis made by G. Mazzoli² that Seneca’s *Epistulae Morales* relate to his lost work *Exhortationes* (see Zago, p. 28), and believing that the content of *Ep.* 90.1–3 and 44–6 resembles that

¹ Cf. p. 28: “Dopo questa digressione, torniamo alle parole iniziali dell’epistola 90 ...”

² G. Mazzoli, *Sul Prorettico perduto di Seneca: le Exhortationes*, Milano 1977.

of the protreptic discourses that have reached us today, Zago compares these sections of Seneca's letter to two fragments of Cicero's philosophical protreptic dialogue *Hortensius* (frg. 88-9 and 111 Grilli). After a detailed and thorough analysis and comparison of the two texts, Zago conjectures on their affinity (not observed in previous studies) that perhaps both Roman authors had made use of Posidonius's work under the title *Προτρεπτικοί*, which, as Zago argues in Chapter V, was probably the source of Seneca's excerpts in *epist.* 90. The author concludes that both the incipit and the epilogue of Seneca's epistle are clearly of Stoic inspiration, but not specifically of Posidonian origin, and that the only traceable of Seneca's sources for these sections is Cicero's *Hortensius*³. Based on Zago's argumentation I believe that he correctly refutes the attribution of Sen. *epist.* 90.1-3a and 44-6 to Posidonius by Theiler⁴ and Blankert,⁵ and that his analysis proves right the assumptions of Reinhardt⁶ and Edelstein and Kidd⁷ that these sections did not derive from Posidonius.

Sen. *epist.* 90.4-7 and Posidonius's doctrine on the *saeculum aureum* and the *regnum sapientium* are the points of Zago's discussion in Chapter II of his book, "Il regno dei sapienti. L'età dell'oro secondo Posidonio" (49-108). Zago observes that these sections of Seneca's epistle are based on Posidonian material, given both in *oratio obliqua* (90.4-6) and in *oratio recta* (90.7), while he states that 90.3b is also of Posidonian influence. He begins his analysis with the terms *naturam sequi* and *incorrupti* from *epist.* 90.4 (*primi mortalium quique ex his geniti naturam incorrupti sequebantur*). Taking into consideration Seneca's arguments in 90.35b-46 the author claims that the idea of corruption should be deemed as a Senecan innovation-addition to Posidonius's theory and interpreted as the Roman philosopher's criticism of the morals and their decadence of his time. He dilates on the different views of Seneca and Posidonius in the perception of ethical corruption and the golden era of the reign of sages. Zago continues with the exposition of the *saeculum aureum*, which for Posidonius must have been a real historical period distinguished from the period of the *primi mortalium*; from his study it is concluded that the latter, who lived *sparsi* (90.7 *Illa [...] sparsos et cavis [scripsit Zago] tectos, aut aliqua rupe suffossa aut exesae arboris trunco, docuit tecta moliri*)⁸, preceded the era

³ Zago's comparison of Sen. *epist.* 46 "*virtus non contingit animo nisi [...] ad summum adsidua exercitatione perducto*" with Cic. *leg.* 1.25 "*est [...] virtus nihil aliud nisi perfecta et ad summum perducta natura*" in p. 47 to support his argument on the affinity between Seneca and Cicero in these sections of the epistle is rather unfortunate.

⁴ W. Theiler (ed.), *Poseidonios. Die Fragmente*, 2 vol., Berlin-New York 1982.

⁵ S. Blankert, *Seneca (Epist. 90) over natuur en cultuur en Posidonius als zijn bron*, Amsterdam 1940 (Diss.).

⁶ K. Reinhardt, *Poseidonios*, München 1921.

⁷ L. Edelstein – I. G. Kidd (eds.), *Posidonius. 1: The Fragments*, Cambridge 1989.

⁸ See pp. 64-9 for an extensive and detailed discussion of the various interpretations of the

of *sapientes reges*, and Zago reconstructs and analyses Posidonius's doctrine of the historical development of human species from its beginning up to the *saeculum aureum* (anthropogony, corruption-*διαστροφή*, *ἄτακτος καὶ θηριώδης βίος*, house-building and human communities, *reges sapientes*, *saeculum aureum*). To validate this reconstruction the author compares the Senecan passages with a number of passages from other authors, namely Cicero (*off.* 2.41-2, perhaps ascribed to Panaetius), Aristotle, Euhemerus, Polybius (6.5.7-9), and Plato (*Politicus*, *Laws* and *Republic*), to conclude, persuasively, that it was the latter that influenced Posidonius's doctrine of the golden era.

The rest of Chapter II is dedicated to the analysis and placement of Posidonius's idea of *sapientes reges* in the Stoic doctrine and tradition. After refuting the antecedent studies on the matter as unconvincing, Zago examines whether ideas similar to those of Posidonius can be spotted in pre- and post-Posidonian Stoic thought. After another digression on the political thought of the Stoics before Posidonius (with examples from Cicero and excerpts of Stoic origin in reference to *sapientes*)⁹, Zago concludes that Posidonius's ideas can be placed within the broad Stoic doctrine on σοφός-*sapiens*, while a comparison between Posidonius's theory as attested by Seneca in this epistle and an excerpt from Virgil's *Aeneid* (8.313-27), which appear to have some similarities, makes Zago wonder whether the latter was familiar with Posidonius's ideas or was influenced by Hesiod.

Chapter III should be considered as an extension of the precedent chapter, with special focus on Sen. *epist.* 90.6-7: "I sapienti posidoniani e l'origine delle leggi" (109-38). The opening period of *epist.* 90.6 (*Sed postquam subreptibus vitiis in tyrannidem regna conversa sunt, opus esse legibus coepit, quas et ipsas inter initia tulere sapientes*) provides Zago the opportunity to discuss the political transition from the reign of sages (= *saeculum aureum*) to tyranny, which appears as the result of *vitia*. In a highly conjectural discussion and argumentation the author tries to explain if Posidonius's theory refers to the *sapientes* themselves or their successors, given that for the Stoics sage is immune to *vitia*, and whether under this theory could be traced Posidonius's deliberate political thought on the chronological continuity of the states. Zago's conclusion that Posidonius does not think in chronological terms, but on merit, so for the Greek philosopher the best state is that of the *sapientes reges* and the second best is that of

term *sparsi*.

⁹ For the idea of *ἔμφυχος νόμος* in p. 104 (and 91, n. 94), cf. also Cic. *leg.* 3.2 *vereque dici potest [...] legem autem mutum magistratum*, for which see A. R. Dyck, *A Commentary on Cicero, De Legibus*, Ann Arbor 2004, 432-3; Marco Tullio Cicerone. *Le Leggi*. Introduzione Testo Traduzione e Note a cura di F. Cancelli, Roma 2008, 231; Cicero: *The Republic and the Laws*, translated by Niall Rudd. With an Introduction and Notes by Jonathan Powell and Niall Rudd, New York 1998, 216.

the rule of laws, leads to a discussion of the relationship between *sapientia philosophica* and the laws and practical arts in the Stoic thought as well as in other philosophical schools. For Posidonius the term *sapientes* (in the Stoic sense) could as well apply to kings (*sapientes reges*), to lawgivers (like the ones mentioned in 90.6, i.e., Solon, Lycurgus, Zaleucus and Charondas), and to inventors (of all the practical, banausic arts that are discussed in the following sections of Seneca's epistle).

The second part of the chapter is dedicated to the above-mentioned specific lawgivers and the reasons why reference is made to these very men. Solon, the first lawgiver mentioned in 90.6 and one of the so-called Seven Sages of Greece, gives Zago the chance for another digression, on the Seven Sages in the Stoic thought (120-7), which finishes with the observation that for Posidonius all the lawgivers of this section were deemed as *sapientes*. Just before the end of the chapter, Zago returns to a point from 90.3 (*Quod aliquamdiu inviolatum mansit [...] propria*), which he relates to the idea of intercommunity of property or absence of propriety, as a topic common both in Posidonius and Zeno's *Πολιτεία*, only to conclude that it cannot be definite that Posidonius's idea on this topic was based on Zeno.

Chapter IV, "Sapienza filosofica e cultura materiale. Posidonio e la nascita delle tecniche" (139-91), starts with Zago's reference to Sen. *epist.* 88.21-3, where the Roman philosopher describes the Posidonian classification of arts in four categories, with the *artes vulgares* being the first in order and the only ones which become Seneca's target of attack in *epist.* 90 (Zago argues against the studies which maintain that Seneca dealt with the *artes ludicrae* or the *artes liberales* in his epistle). In this chapter Zago examines those sections of *epist.* 90 in which Seneca refutes Posidonius's theory on the invention and birth of what the author calls "tecniche banausiche", i.e., practical, technical, banausic arts, like house-building (90.7), metallurgy and metallic tools (90.11-3), weaving and clothe-making (90.20), agriculture (90.21), bread-making (90.22-3), pottery (90.31), etc. The author dilates on Posidonius's innovative doctrine that these practical arts were purely and totally the results of the creativity of the *perfecta ratio* of *sapientes*, and were not invented because of men's needs. According to Posidonius, the *sapiens-philosophus* puts his wisdom and philosophy in the service of men and for the benefit of men as his ultimate end, and once he invents these arts he entrusts them to *sordidiores ministri* to practice them (*epist.* 90.25 'Omnia' inquit haec sapiens quidem invenit, sed minora quam ut ipse tractaret sordidioribus ministris dedit'). Furthermore a comparison between Posidonius's *artes vulgares* and those arts mentioned by Plato in his *Republic* (2.369b ff.) reveals, according to Zago, the absence of any reference to martial and military arts and activities (which, as will be shown in Chapter VI, result from men's avarice and luxurious mode of life), which may imply that Posidonius has in mind an ideal community.

Zago investigates also the order in which the *artes vulgares* are placed in Seneca's text, which discloses Posidonius's theory on the development of these arts. A passage of Lucretius (5.1241-57) which describes a similar progress in human arts leads Zago to an attempt at explaining this affinity between an Epicurean and a Stoic, which the author attributes to independent familiarity of both authors with their common Hellenistic culture¹⁰. While this explanation is based on T. Cole¹¹, Zago suggests another explanation of Posidonius's theory of the human artistic progress; the latter is based on the medical tradition, and the author compares Sen. *epist.* 90.22-3 with passages from the *Corpus Hippocraticum*, in particular with a passage from a treatise on the structure of the human body (Περὶ τῆς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου κατασκευῆς) written by Meletius, a Byzantine monk. The chapter ends with the examination of the reasons why Posidonius refer to Anacharsis and Democritus in *epist.* 90.31-2, with the necessary assessment of previous studies and theories and their refutation.

Although from the title of Chapter V, "Il *Protrettico* di Posidonio fonte dell'*Epistola* 90 (con appunti sulla fortuna dello scritto posidoniano)" (193-248), one would assume that it would deal with Posidonius's *Προτρεπτικοί*, for the first twenty pages of it (193-213) Zago returns to the examination of the term *sapiens/-ntes*, as used by Posidonius according to Seneca's testimony in *epist.* 90. He attacks R. Hirzel's¹² hypothesis that Posidonius's *sapientes* in Sen. *epist.* 90 cannot identify with historical sages who had the qualities ascribed to them by Posidonius, thus the men mentioned in *epist.* 90 were not considered genuine *sapientes*, while the latter had in mind an ideal *sapiens*; Zago characterizes Hirzel's theory "inaccettabile e pregiudiziale" (196) and concludes that for Posidonius there were actually real, historical and authentic sages, like the lawgivers of *epist.* 90 and the Seven Sages of Greece. He continues with the refutation of Theiler's¹³ theory that Posidonius's *sapientes reges* were exclusively practical philosophers, to conclude that *sapientia philosophica* applied its teachings to theoretical as well as practical level and covered every aspect of human life, and Posidonius's *sapientes* in Sen. *epist.* 90 were men who combined harmoniously theory and action. In support of this argument Zago uses an excerpt from Strabo (16.2.35-9), which some believe that traces back to Posidonius and in which there are references to Moses, Minos, Lycurgus *et al.* as leaders of the Hebrews, the Cretans, the Spartans, etc. respectively; this passage shows, according to

¹⁰ See p. 162: "... potremmo allora ipotizzare che l'analogia tra Sen. *epist.* 90, 12 e Lucr. 5, 1241 ss. dipenda dal fatto che Posidonio e Lucrezio ... abbiano rifiuto indipendentemente materiale tipico, patrimonio comune della cultura ellenistica".

¹¹ T. Cole, *Democritus and the Sources of Greek Anthropology*, Atlanta 1990².

¹² R. Hirzel, *Untersuchungen zu Cicero's philosophischen Schriften. 2: De finibus. De officiis*, Leipzig 1882.

¹³ See n. 4.

Zago, that these historical personalities were considered by their people as intermediaries between humanity and divinity and served as leaders for the intellectual, political and practical-technical progress of their people.

After establishing that Seneca had full and direct access to the work of Posidonius from which he excerpted the passages he cited in his epistle, Zago contests the theories and hypotheses of previous scholars on the identification of this work. He reaffirms Mazzoli's¹⁴ theory that it was Posidonius's *Προτρεπτικοί* the work used by Seneca and repeats, with more details, the argumentation used in Chapter I about Seneca's lost work *Exhortationes* and Cicero's *Hortensius*. He also makes an attempt at spotting any possible influence that Posidonius's work might have had in the post-Posidonian Stoa, to conclude that there are no safe indications for an influence of this kind. The chapter closes with a comparison between parts of Sen. *epist.* 90 and Cic. *Tusc.* 1 and 5, which leads to "un' ipotesi (audace, certo)" (247) about the privileged recipients, as Zago calls them ("i destinatari privilegiati"), of Posidonius's *Προτρεπτικοί*; he believes that these were the upper economical, social and political class cultivated Romans, whom Posidonius associated, befriended and taught, and his very work aimed at raising Posidonius's own status and authority in Rome.

The last chapter, "Seneca" (249-91), begins with a recapitulation of the parts of Seneca's epistle that derive from Posidonius's philosophical doctrines, and with a brief exposition of the structure of the epistle, which reveals Seneca's plan to refute the Greek philosopher's theories point by point, in order to show that responsible for the practical arts are not philosophy and the *sapientes*, but men themselves. Zago then turns to a point hinted at in Chapter IV: Seneca's references to contemporary conditions and inventions which lead to the increase of luxury and avarice (which *sapientes* cannot be responsible for). The analysis of Seneca's theory that men could live only with what nature provided them with, without resorting to unnecessary arts and practices, contains, according to Zago, elements and conceptions of Cynic and Epicurean origin, something the author dilates on with the examination of relevant passages. The connection of *artes* with *luxuria* and *avaritia* is part of Seneca's attack against the *luxuria* of his own times. He condemns it in favor of nature and its gifts to human species, while he turns against Roman imperialism which destroys the world in order to satisfy Rome's greediness. For Seneca human history can be divided in two eras: the *saeculum virtutis* (of the people of the past) and the *saeculum vitii* (his contemporary people), which however can achieve virtue via philosophy. Zago concludes his study of *epist.* 90 by pointing out that this was based on a fusion of philosophical doctrines and elements originating from the Stoic, Epicurean and Cynic philosophies, enriched with common *topoi* found

¹⁴ See n. 2.

in moralistic and poetical texts as well as with Seneca's current social and economical elements.

The book is completed with three appendices. For the first, "Alessandro di Afrodisia, *De fato*, 28" (295-7), Zago suggests a textual emendation of a passage from Alexander of Aphrodisias's *De Fato* (28, p. 55, 3-9 Thillet = p. 199, 16-20 Bruns): instead of the reading τῶν δὲ ἀνθρώπων οἱ πλεῖστοι κακοί [...] οἱ δὲ πάντες κακοὶ καὶ ἐπίσης ἀλλήλοις τοιοῦτοι ..., handed down by the manuscript tradition, Zago suggests the inversion of the terms πλεῖστοι and πάντες so that the text should read τῶν δὲ ἀνθρώπων οἱ πάντες κακοί [...] οἱ δὲ πλεῖστοι κακοὶ καὶ ἐπίσης ἀλλήλοις τοιοῦτοι... The author provides a parallel from Galen which seems to justify his corrective proposal.

The second appendix, "Galeno, *Quod animi mores*, 11, p. 76, 1-6 M." (299-300), contains another two conjectural corrective suggestions for Galen's text referred to in its title. Based on its Latin translation by N. da Reggio (...incipientes theoriam virtutum moralium), Zago rightly proposes the addition of the adjective ἠθικῶν with reference to ἀρετῶν in the emendation, also based on the Latin translation of the text, suggested by Müller (... ἀλλ' ἐξ αὐτῶν μὲν τῶν <ἐναργῶς φαινομένων τῆς θεωρίας ἀρξάμενοι τῶν> ἀρετῶν ...)¹⁵. The second emendation proposed by Zago (παρὰ τοῖς <τότε> ἀνθρώποις in the sentence ... εἰκάσι μάλιστα πάντων οἱ παλαιότατοι πρᾶξαι τε καὶ κληθῆναι σοφοὶ παρὰ τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ...) derives from the Arabic translation of Galen's text; for his proposal Zago counted on Biesterfeldt's German translation of the Arabic version¹⁶, something that really complicates matters, and thus it should be taken into consideration with caution.

The third appendix contains the text of Seneca's *epist.* 90, "Il testo dell'*Epistola* 90" (301-10), in its 1965 edition by L. D. Reynolds. Besides many changes made by Zago in the punctuation of the text, he has also made a few more alterations. In 90.7 instead of *'Illa' inquit 'sparsos et aut casis tectos aut aliqua rupe suffossa aut exesae arboris trunco docuit tecta moliri'*, Zago suggests *'Illa' inquit 'sparsos et cavis tectos, aut aliqua rupe suffossa aut exesae arboris trunco, docuit...*, an emendation supported by the author in a 2009 article¹⁷; given his brief analysis of the issue in Chapter II, pp. 64 ff., his suggestion could seem plausible. Among the other corrective suggestions made by Zago for Sen. *epist.* 90, are the insertion of *valde* (*Ecce Posidonius [...] dum vult describere primum quemadmodum alia <valde> torqueantur fila, alia ex molli solutoque ducantur ...*), the defense of *iuncta* instead of *vincta* (*tela iugo vincta est*)

¹⁵ I. Müller, *Claudii Galeni Pergameni Scripta Minora*, vol. 2, Lipsiae 1891.

¹⁶ H. H. Biesterfeldt (ed.), *Galens Traktat "Daß die Kräfte der Seele den Mischungen des Körpers folgen" in arabischer Übersetzung*, Wiesbaden 1973.

¹⁷ G. Zago, "Posidonio e le origini dell'architettura: contributi al testo e all' esegesi di Sen. ep. 90, 7 e di Isid. orig. 15, 2, 6", *Hermes* 137, 2009, 45-59.

and the deletion of *in* (*Quid si contigisset illi videre has nostri temporis telas, [in] quibus vestis...*), all in § 20 and defended by Zago in another article of his¹⁸. The addition of *manu* in § 23 (*deinde utriusque adritu grana franguntur et saepius <manu> regeruntur*) is first mentioned by Zago in Chapter IV (167, n. 49); apparently it is discussed by the author in a forthcoming publication, but it seems like an unnecessary addition. On the contrary, worth-mentioning is the emendation suggested by Zago for the phrase of § 36: instead of *antequam avaritia atque luxuria dissociavere mortales et ad rapinam ex consortio <docuere> discurrere*, he proposes *antequam avaritia atque luxuria dissociavere mortales qui ad rapinam ex consortio discurrere*, which would fit in the context. The correction of *mutis animalibus* of § 45 (*parcebantque adhuc etiam mutis animalibus*) into *mitibus animalibus*, as defended by Zago in a 2009 article¹⁹ as well as in pp. 250-51, n. 5, of this book, is not very convincing and I believe it would stumble on some palaeographical and textual criticism issues.

One more emendation worth-looking at is that of Cic. *leg.* 1.23 suggested in pp. 99-100 and n. 122. Instead of *Quibus autem haec sunt [inter eos communi](B: inter eos communia AHL) <*> et civitatis eiusdem habendi sunt*²⁰, Zago suggests *Quibus autem haec [sunt inter eos communia] e<s>t civitatis eiusdem habendi sunt*, with *haec* apparently referring to the preceding *communio iuris* (*inter quos porro est communio legis, inter eos communio iuris est*). Given Cicero's definition of *res publica* in his *rep.* 1.39 (*Est igitur [...] res publica res populi; populus autem non omnis hominum coetus quoquo modo congregatus, sed coetus multitudinis iuris consensu et utilitatis communione sociatus*)²¹ and the identification of the terms *res publica* and *civitas* in numerous passages of Cicero, one could argue that the *iuris consensus* which is one of the two fundamental factors for the organization of *populus* could well identify with *communio iuris* as the connecting element for the *communis civitas* of gods and men in *leg.* 1.23, as proposed by Zago, although I believe that *haec* refers to all the common elements between gods and men, i.e. *ratio*, *recta ratio*, *lex* and *ius*, mentioned in *leg.* 1.23, therefore *sunt* should somehow be preserved in the text²².

¹⁸ G. Zago, "Filatura e tessitura secondo Posidonio e Seneca. Per il testo e l'esegesi di Sen. ep. 90, 20", *Prometheus* 35, 2009, 53-68.

¹⁹ G. Zago, "Seneca, Leopardi e la lotta tra gli uomini primitivi e le fiere (Per l'interpretazione di Sen. ep. 90, 41)", *MD* 62, 2009, 129-43.

²⁰ M. Tulli Ciceronis *De re publica, De legibus, Cato Maior de senectute, Laelius de amicitia* recognovit brevique adnotatione critica instruxit J. G. F. Powell, Oxonii 2006.

²¹ Cf. *ibid.* 1.49 *Quare cum lex sit civilis societatis vinculum, ius autem legis aequale, quo iure societas civium teneri potest, cum par non sit condicio civium?*, and 6.13 *Nihil est enim illi principi deo, qui omnem mundum regit, quod quidem in terris fiat, acceptius, quam concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati, quae civitates appellantur.*

²² For the idea, cf. Cic. *nat. deor.* 2.154 *Principio ipse mundus deorum hominumque*

The book is completed with a bibliography list (313-34), which, though it is well-structured and up to date, has a fault – perhaps of minor importance for some – which has to do with the page numbers of articles; it would certainly be more helpful to have the complete page references instead of the number of the starting page followed by the Italian abbreviation ss. (= *seguenti*) to indicate no-one knows how many pages! Personally I would have found the exact citation of page numbers awfully useful.

The two indices which close the book, “Indice dei passi citati” (337-50) (of authors and texts cited in the book) and “Indice analitico” (351-9) (of names as well as philosophical terms), are very helpful and undeniably well-structured. A selective reading and checking of entries of the indices was sufficient for me to confirm their comprehensiveness and accuracy.

Before closing, just one more observation, of a broader nature, about the content of the book and its organization. One cannot question the richness of the material collected and discussed in Zago’s work, but the diversity, the range and complexity of this material requires a careful arrangement, which sometimes slips the author’s attention. There is an abundance of exceptionally significant bits and pieces of information and material in it, which unfortunately dissolve and become downgraded in their multiplicity and their occasional problematic assemblage.

Despite my reservations and objections about some of Zago’s specific arguments, textual corrective suggestions and composition of his work, in an overall evaluation of the book, unquestionably it offers an inventive, original and comprehensive study of one of Seneca’s most important epistles as well as of Posidonius’s philosophical doctrine. It is a work of estimable scholarship and as such will be appraised by all those who study, work on or are simply interested in the Senecan and Stoic philosophy.

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causa factus est, quaeque in eo sunt ea parata ad fructum hominum et inventa sunt. Est enim mundus quasi communis deorum atque hominum domus aut urbs utrorumque; soli enim ratione utentes iure ac lege vivunt; SVF 2.169.25-30 ὃν γὰρ τρόπον πόλις λέγεται διχῶς τό τε οἰκητήριον καί τὸ ἐκ τῶν ἐνοικούντων σὺν τοῖς πολιταῖς σύστημα, οὔτω καὶ ὁ κόσμος οἰοεὶ πόλις ἐστὶν ἐκ θεῶν καὶ ἀνθρώπων συνεστῶσα, τῶν μὲν θεῶν τὴν ἡγεμονίαν ἐχόντων, τῶν δ’ ἀνθρώπων ὑποτεταγμένων. κοινωνίαν δ’ ὑπάρχειν πρὸς ἀλλήλους διὰ τὸ λόγου μετέχειν, ὅς ἐστι φύσει νόμος· τὰ δ’ ἄλλα πάντα γεγονέναι τούτων ἕνεκα.