

The summary of the dissertation

The aim of this dissertation is to introduce the virtue ethics of Macrobius Ambrosius Theodosius, the Roman author living at the turn of 4th and 5th centuries, and to analyse his perception of the four cardinal virtues (i.e. *prudentia*, *temperantia*, *fortitudo* and *iustitia*). The examination was based on Macrobius' two major works, *Saturnalia* and *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis*. Both writings have a didactic purpose; the direct aim of the author with the encyclopaedic knowledge accumulated in the texts is his son's education, the extension of his erudition, while his indirect intention is to represent the traditional values of Roman culture, as well as the essential ideas of the Neoplatonic philosophy for his readers of all times.

The starting point for the analysis of the doctrine of virtues is *Commentarii* I. 8, where Macrobius summarises the Neoplatonic system of the four virtues, which was elaborated by Plotinus and Porphyry. According to this doctrine the main purpose for humans is assimilation to God and this pursuit can be realized through the exercise of virtues. The four virtues are ranked on four consecutive levels, which signify the way of the soul's ascension, the higher and higher grades of self-perfection from the sphere of mortal existence to the ascent to the One. Macrobius takes over the Plotinian hierarchical system, but to a certain extent he also changes it. The two main differences between him and his predecessors are that to his mind civic or political virtues play a significant role in the process of divinization, which were less important in the original concept; furthermore, according to him anybody can possess these virtues, not only philosophers and the leaders of the state. This latter idea could be understood as a sign of the mutual effect of Neoplatonism and Christianity.

Some scholars doubt the existence of the above mentioned differences, arguing among other things that civic virtues only appear in *Commentarii*, not in *Saturnalia*. The dissertation points out that this view is not convincing as the presence of the cardinal virtues is demonstrable in the former work as well, but previously they were not searched for in an appropriate way. Inasmuch as we take into account that anyone can possess the virtues, it is not enough to examine the *virtutes* of philosophers and state leaders, but the research must be extended to everybody. Thus we find numerous *exempla* for the cardinal virtues, and the major part of the dissertation consists of collecting and evaluating these examples. From the results of the examinations we can draw the conclusion that on one hand the examples of *Saturnalia* prefigure the mature philosophical concept occurring in *Commentarii*; on the other

hand they undoubtedly support the above mentioned differences between the approach to virtues of Greek Neoplatonists and their Roman successor.