

Virgilius redivivus: DFG-Projekt zur lateinischen Grammatik

Im März 2016 ist ein Projekt zur lateinischen Grammatik gestartet, das von der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) genehmigt wurde. Es befasst sich mit einem vermutlich aus dem 7. Jahrhundert n.Chr. stammenden irischen Grammatiker, der sich „Virgilius Maro“ nannte und als Schüler des Aeneas ausgab. Das Werk des Virgilius scheint eine Mischung aus ernsthaftem grammatischen Lehrbuch und parodistischem Nonsens zu sein, was das Ganze sehr unterhaltsam, aber auch recht schwer verständlich macht. So liest man u.a. von 12 Arten von Latein, von 50 Verben ohne Singular, von einer 14tägigen Kontroverse über die Frage, ob das Pronomen *ego* einen Vokativ habe, oder von Buchstabenrätseln bei Cicero (Beispiel: RRRSSPPMMNTEEOOAVI). Im Laufe des Projekts sollen diese und andere Dinge mehr enträtselt werden. Näheres demnächst auf einer eigenen Projekthomepage.

Bewilligt wurde u.a. eine Doktorandenstelle für drei Jahre, die inzwischen durch Herrn Lorenzo di Maggio besetzt worden ist.

Summary

Virgilius Maro Grammaticus - Was he a Grammarian?

The objective of the project is to examine to what extent the extant works of the Hiberno-Latin grammarian Virgilius Maro, who wrote c. 650 CE, should be understood as serious publications in the context and tradition of late antique grammatical theory, as parodies of this discipline, as hidden allegories, or as mere nonsense. While subsequent grammarians, rooted in ancient tradition, (such as the so-called Donatus Ortigraphus) as a matter of course quote the grammarian Virgilius as an expert source, modern scholars have puzzled over the 'actual' and 'true' intentions of the author for c. 150 years. In this process Virgilius in turn appears as a silly jokester, an erudite parodist, or even as a (proto-Kabbalistic) teacher of wisdom.

The text itself seems to be sufficiently secure (there are two modern critical editions), but to this day a commentary is lacking. Neither is there a coherent monographic study which presents the central aspects of the work; so far, the only contributions are specific and, in part, tendentious.

In order to give well-grounded answers to the questions outlined above the two extant works, the so-called Epitomae and Epistolae, will be examined for references to ancient grammar regarding form and content: first, a thorough analysis of the eight Epistolae, which cover the traditional eight parts of speech (noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, participle, conjunction, preposition, and interjection), will answer the question how familiar Virgilius was with ancient grammar and its problems, and where he possibly included additions, criticism or even parody. Following this, the rather essayistic Epitomae, which are in part considerably more obscure, will be elucidated in a mainly content-related commentary so as to resolve the question whether there are serious grammatical (or other?) issues hidden behind the often - as it seems - fictitious and/or nonsensical details.

The results will be summarized in the first scientific overall presentation of Virgilius Maro, focusing on the history of grammar.