Abstract

This text seeks to reflect on the relationship between the Classical world and the concept of nobleman, as defined in the Luso-Castilian nobiliary treatises at the beginning of the Modern Age, by examining the role and influence of such authors as Aristotle and Cicero and its interpretation by modern theoreticians of nobility. It therefore provides an approach to the study of the idea of excellence and social prominence which are inherent in the concept of nobleman proper and to the social relevance of some key-concepts, such as virtue and honour. Nobility treatises should be interpreted not only as variably successful rhetorical games, but also as strategies to communicate social prestige. In this respect, both antiquity and the classics provide diverse forms of expression and the articulation of the concept of nobleman which was useful at a time when, as was the case of the Modern Age, nobility was prevalent.

Keywords

Nobility, concept of nobility, honour, virtue, nobiliary treatises.