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## *Generositas virtus, non sanguis?*

### The importance of noble birth in Castiglione's Perfect Courtier

Baldassare Castiglione's analysis of the qualities of the Perfect Courtier starts with the opinion that 'I wyll have this our Courtyer ... to be a Gentleman borne and of a good house.'<sup>1</sup>

The belief that nobility<sup>2</sup> is determined by heredity has its roots in the writings of some of the ancient philosophers.<sup>3</sup> One of the greatest believers in the virtues of noble blood was Theognis. He affirms that nobility's highest duty is to preserve their purity of descent, and bitterly attacks the nobles who agree to mixed marriages.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> All citations from *Il Cortegiano* in Thomas Hoby's translation, *The Courtyer of Count Baldessar Castilio Divided into Foure Bookes. Very necessary and profitable for Yonge Gentilmen and Gentilwomen Abiding in Court, Palaice, or Place. Done into Englyshe by Thomas Hoby. 1561*. Reprinted and ed. by Walter Raleigh. *The Tudor Translations* 23 (London, 1900), 44, 368. The original has: '...che questo Cortegiano sia nato nobile, e di generosa famiglia' (I, 14).

<sup>2</sup> The explanation of *gentilis* as equivalent to *nobilis* is ascertained by many other writers of the time. Eg Chaucer in his translation of Boethius translates *nobiles* as *gentilmen*, and *nobilitas* as either *gentillesse* or *noblesse*. Quoted in George McGill Vogt, "Gleanings for the History of a Sentiment: *Generositas virtus, non sanguis*" *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 24 (1925): 102–124, at 103, 114–5; George R. Sitwell, "The English Gentleman", *The Ancestor*, 1 (April 1902): 58–103, at 71. Selden (*Titles of Honor* (London, 1631), pt. II, chap. VIII: 866) translates *nobilitas* as *gentry*, and *nobilis* as *gentleman*. Cf. William Caxton, *Book of the Ordre of Chyvalry*. Ed. A. Byles (London, 1926), xxxix, 121.6. William Harrison (*The Description of England*, ed. Georges Edelen Icornell University Press, 1968), 113, writes: 'The Latins call them [ie gentlemen] *nobiles et generosos*, as the French do nobles and gentlemanmes'. For a discussion of various meanings of the word 'nobility' see Ruth Kelso, *The Doctrine of the English Gentleman in the Sixteenth Century* (Urbana, 1929), 19–22.

<sup>3</sup> Jaeger claims the idea that a race must be preserved by inbreeding was worked out in Sparta and spread by the educational theorists of the fourth century. See W. Jaeger, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture*, 3 vols. (Oxford, 1939–45), I: 203.

<sup>4</sup> 'We select rams and asses and horses which are noble, and try to breed them from good stock: but a nobleman does not hesitate to marry a baseborn woman; wealth confuses breed. 'Theognis, *Elegy and Iambus*, II, ll. 183ff, quoted in Jaeger, *Paideia*, I:203.

Aristotle himself accepts birth as a definite factor, indeed as the basis of nobility<sup>5</sup>; on the other hand, he defines noble birth as wealth plus virtue.<sup>6</sup>

There are differences of opinion amongst the authors of the Italian courtesy-books as to the necessity of high ancestry in the case of a courtier. Castiglione's *Cortegiano* is one of the rare cases in humanist writings<sup>7</sup> where birth seems to win.<sup>8</sup>

Castiglione was a practical man and he realised the attitude of his fellows to hereditary and honorary titles and pomp. He also realised that among the common people the name of an old house coupled with a lordly air and a velvet cloak constituted the chief claim to the title of gentleman.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, he indicated how important common prejudices in favour of nobility were:

‘forsomuch as our entent is to facion a Courtyer without ani maner default or lack in hym, and heaped with all praise, me thinke it a necessarye matter to make him a gentleman, as well for many other respects, as also for the common opinion, which by and by doth leane to noblenesse. For where there are two in a noble mans house which at the first have geven no prooffe of themselves with woorkes good or bad, assoone as it is knowen that the one is a gentleman borne, and the other not, the unnoble shall be muche lesse esteemed with everye manne, then the gentlemen, and he muste with much travaile and long time imprint in mennes heades a good opinion of himselfe, whiche the other shal geat in a moment, and onely for that he is a gentleman...’<sup>10</sup>

As social gaps widened after 1400, the mystique of being part of the noble caste increased,<sup>11</sup> and while Castiglione recognised the *omni bassi* (non-noble classes) may possess the same qualities as the noble,<sup>12</sup> it was inevitable that the popular mind saw the nobility in a favourable, and enviable light.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, *Politics*. Transl. Benjamin Jowett. World's Greatest Classic Books on CD. World Library (1991), III.13 at 133; see notes 9 and 29 below.

<sup>6</sup> ‘For noble birth is wealth plus virtue going back to one's forefathers’. *Ibid.*, III.13 at 133.

<sup>7</sup> Also Stephano Guazzo (*Civile Conversation* (London, 1581), especially Book II) regards it as all-important and complains against the indifference with which it was regarded in his days; Girolamo Muzio (*Il Gentilhuomo* (Venice, 1571)) is of the same opinion. On the development of the ideas of nobility ‘from valour to pedigree’ in France see Ellery Schalk, *From Valor To Pedigree. Ideas Of Nobility In France In The Sixteenth And Seventeenth Centuries* (Princeton University Press, 1986); on the idea of nobility in Spain see Leonard Mades, *The Armor And The Brocade. A Study Of Don Quixote And The Courtier* (New York, 1968), chap. II.

<sup>8</sup> Dr. Johnson says ‘Gentleman is a man of ancestry ... all other derivations seem to be whimsical. He is a man of birth, a man of extraction.’ Quoted by A.W. Reed in *Chivalry. A Series Of Studies To Illustrate Its Historical Significance And Civilizing Influence*, ed. Edgar Prestage (London, 1928), 207.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Aristotle's opinion that ‘good birth is always valued in a man's own home and country’ *Politics*, III.13 at 133. Cf. L. Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558–1641* Oxford, 1965), 27.

<sup>10</sup> Hoby, 47. Cf. the opinion of Essex that ‘all we by a natural inclination do favor nobility’. Quoted in W.H. Dunham, “William Camden's Commonplace Book”, *The Yale University Library Gazette*, vol. 43 (1969): 139–156, at 151.

<sup>11</sup> See, eg. M. Bloch, *Feudal Society* (Chicago, Univ. of Chicago Press, 1961), especially pp. 286–88.

<sup>12</sup> ‘I denie not, but in men of base degree may reigne the very same vertues that are in gentlemen.’ Hoby, 47.

<sup>13</sup> Simond D'Ewes ‘ever accounted it a great outward blessing to be well descended, it being in the gift only of God and nature to bestow it’. *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*. Ed. J.O. Halliwell (1845), I: 6.

During the discussion of the qualities of the Perfect Courtier, in answer to the requirement that a courtier should be a 'Gentleman<sup>14</sup> borne', an objection is brought forward to the effect that loftiness of birth is not necessary to the courtier, since many noblemen have been full of vices,<sup>15</sup> while talent, beauty and other natural gifts are often found in persons of humble ancestry.<sup>16</sup>

The argument for virtue over birth – *Generositas virtus, non sanguis*<sup>17</sup> – has always had many more supporters than critics. It appears in remarkably modern form in Sallust<sup>18</sup>, Seneca<sup>19</sup>, Juvenal<sup>20</sup> and, especially Boethius<sup>21</sup>. It was a medieval

<sup>14</sup> Hoby uses the name 'gentleman' in the meaning of 'a man of noble/gentle birth'. This is in line with the sixteenth century usage of the word.

Segar in his *Honor Military and Civill* (London 1602): lib. 2, cap. 1, p. 51. writes: 'We in England doe divide our men into five sorts: Gentlemen, Citizens, Yeomen, Artificers, and Labourers. Of Gentlemen, the first and principal is the King, prince, Dukes, Marquesses, Earls, Vicounts, and Barons. These are the Nobilitie, and be called Lords, or Noblemen. Next to these be Knights, Esquiers, and simple gentlemen, which last number may be called Nobilitas minor.'

Ferne in his *The Blazon of Gentry* (1586): 85, 86) writes: 'First you shall knowe how this word Gentill doth in true speech comprehend all estates and degrees of noblesse, by the opinion of Budaeus. And the greatest nobleman doth commonly use (saith he), nay rather desire, for the better and more solemne contestation of the matter, to protest in these words, that as he is a Gentleman it is thus or thus, then to stand upon the tearme of noble'. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 4. See also Sir Thomas Elyot, *The Boke Named The Governour*. Ed. Herbert Stephen Croft, 2 vols. (New York, 1967), 2: 26–38. Also *OED* defines 'gentleman' as 'a man of gentle birth, or having the same heraldic status as those of gentle birth'.

Castronovo says that 'Genteel was the adjective that later corresponded to the word gentleman: originally in the sixteenth century it denoted good birth; its connotation of respectability came much later... Nobility and gentility were synonymous terms right through the Renaissance; they both denoted men of ancestry.' David Castronovo, *The English Gentleman. Images And Ideals In Literature And Society* (New York, 1987), 5. For the most thorough discussion of the definition of the sixteenth century gentleman see Kelso, esp. chap. 2. For other definitions of the term over centuries see A. Smythe Palmer, ed. *The Ideal Of A Gentleman Or A Mirror For Gentlefolks. A Portrayal In Literature From The Earliest Times* (London, 1908), 3–66.

<sup>15</sup> '...this noblenesse of birthe is not so necessarie for the Courtyer. And if I [ie Gaspar Pallavicin] wiste that anye of you thought it a straunge or a newe matter, I woulde alledge unto you sondrye, who for all they were borne of moste noble bloude, yet have they bene heaped full of vyces...' Hoby, 46.

<sup>16</sup> Hoby, 46–7.

<sup>17</sup> After Vogt.

<sup>18</sup> See especially the speeches of Marius, the 'new' man, in Sallust, *Jugurthine War*, transl. S.A. Hardford (Baltimore, 1963), 117–21.

<sup>19</sup> Seneca, *De Beneficiis*, especially Lib. iii.28: 'All men descend from the same original stock; no one is better born than another, except insofar as his disposition is nobler and better suited for the performance of good actions.' In *Moral Essays*, transl. John W. Basore, Loeb Classical Library (Harvard University Press, 1928–35), III:177.

<sup>20</sup> Juvenal's (298–138) *Satire VIII.*, is probably the best known and most influential attack on nobility. See especially line 20: 'Nobilitas animi sola est atque unica virtus'. In *Juvenal and Persius*, transl. G.G. Ramsay, Loeb Classical Library (London, 1918): 159. Cf. Elyot, 2: 31–2 n. b.

<sup>21</sup> 'And therefor it is thus, that honour ne comth nat to vertu for cause of dignitee, but ayeinward honour comth to dignitee for cause of vertu'. Chaucer's translation of Boethius (d. 524, written after 510) *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, Lib.ii, Prosa vi, in Skeat, vol. II, p. 42, ll.17–19].

commonplace that the virtue of ‘gentillesse’, combining a courtesy<sup>22</sup> of manner with a courtesy of mind, is not the inevitable adjunct of aristocratic birth, though most appropriate to it. Chaucer’s ‘he is gentil that dooth gentil deedes’<sup>23</sup> could be said to be the most popular exposition of this theory of gentility in the late Medieval England.<sup>24</sup>

There is no difficulty in finding parallels to the views of the poets in the many books of the gentleman produced within the period of the Renaissance. The *Institucion of a Gentleman* (1555) says that

No other thing old knighthood had wont to bee then a degree geven unto a soldier for his worthines in the warres above others. Therefore no man ought to contempte or dispse that man whom virtue hath set up more higher than his parents were before him.... Not by lineage made noble but by his own knowledge, labour, and industry becometh gentle, where unto Tully consenteth and saith non domo dominus, sed domino domus honestas est.<sup>25</sup>

‘But now, of this name of gentillesse, what man is it that ne may wel seen how veyn and how flittinge a thing it is? For yif the name of gentillesse be referred to renoun and cleernesse of linage, thanne is gentil name but a foreine thing, that is to seyn, to hem of hir linage. For it semeth that gentillesse be a maner preysinge that comth of the deserte of ancestres. And yif preysinge maketh gentillesse, thanne moten they nedes be gentil that ben preysed. For which thing it folweth, that yif thou ne have no gentillesse of thyself, that is to seyn, preyse that comth of thy deserte, foreine gentillesse ne maketh thee nat gentil. But certes, yif ther be any good in gentillesse, I trowe it be al-only this, that it semeth as that a maner necessitee be imposed to gentil men, for that they ne sholden nat outrayen or forliven fro the virtues of hir noble kinrede.’ *Ibid.*, p. 64–5, ll. 24–38.

<sup>22</sup> On the origin and meaning of ‘courtesy’ see, e.g., Humphry Tonkin, *Spencer’s Courteous Pastoral. Book Six Of The ‘Faerie Queene’* (Oxford, 1972), chap. VI.

<sup>23</sup> *Wife of Bath’s Tale*, l. 1176; see also *ibid.*, 1113–1182. Chaucer wrote in the *Gentillesse* (ll. 1–7):

“The firste stocke and findere of gentillesse,  
What man desireth gentil for to be  
Must folwe his traas, and alle his wittes dresse  
Vertu to sue, and vyces for to flee;  
For unto vertu longeth dignitee,  
And nought the revers, saufly dar I deeme,  
Al were he mitre, crowne, or diademe.”

Printed in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, gen ed. M.H. Abrams, 5th edition, 2 vols. (London, 1986), 1:229. See the discussion of the gentleman in Chaucer in Philip Mason, *The English Gentleman. The Rise And Fall Of An Ideal* (London, 1993), chap. 3.

<sup>24</sup> See Vogt for other quotations from literature. Cf. Johan Huizinga, *The Waning Of The Middle Ages. A Study Of The Forms Of Life, Thought And Art In France And The Netherlands In The Dawn Of The Renaissance* (New York, 1954), chap. 3.

<sup>25</sup> *The Intitucion of a Gentleman* quoted in Palmer, 33.

Similarly, Elyot's<sup>26</sup> and Ascham's<sup>27</sup> ideas contradict Castiglione's views.<sup>28</sup>

Castiglione's stress on noble birth is not merely a simple theory of aristocratic superiority, but it seems to be found in the law of heredity, *viz.*, that good habits in parents produce in their children a facility for virtuous action. It is also asserted that in the very nature or blood of men nobly descended lies actually the seed of virtue, just as mettle is ingrained in an excellent breed of horses. This belief is based on Aristotle's teaching that those sprung of better stock are likely to be better men, inheriting an inclination to do well and to shun evil.<sup>29</sup> The seed of courtesy is implanted in men be benevolent nature. It is understood that 'gentle manners' naturally go along with 'gentle blood', and that 'noble carriage' is rarely found apart from good breeding.<sup>30</sup>

Experience shows that men, like animals, birds and trees, produce their kind; from one house proceed virtuous, brave, wise men, from another the opposite. Descending from an ancient<sup>31</sup> and noble family, you inherit an inclination to virtue<sup>32</sup>, the manners and high spirit of your ancestors.

<sup>26</sup> Elyot says that, as in the case of money, 'it appereth that the estimation is in the metall, and nat in the printe or figure', and that 'nobility is not after the vulgar opinion of men, but is only the praise and surname of virtue.' Elyot, 2:36–7, 37–8. See also notes for Elyot, 2: chap. IV.

<sup>27</sup> '[God] knoweth, that Nobilitie, without vertue and wisdom, is bloud in deede, but bloud trewlie, without bones and sinewes...' Ascham, *The Schoolmaster* (1570). Ed. Lawrence V. Ryan (Cornell UP), book I.

<sup>28</sup> The democratic idea of the equality of man is combined with a belief in the need for a governing class in the prayer included in the *Primmer* (1553) of Edward VI: 'Al be it, whatsoever is borne of fleashe is fleashe, and al that we receyve of our naturall parentes is earthe, duste, ashes and corruption, so that no chylde of Adam hath any cause to boste hymself of hys byrthe and bloude, seyng we have all one fleashe and one bloude ... yet for asmuch as some for wysedome, godlynesse, vertue, valiauntesse, strength, eloquence, learnyng and policie be advanced above the common sorte of people unto gidnities and temporall promocions, as menne worthy to have the superiorityte in a Christen common wealthe, and by thys meanes have obtained among the people a moore noble and worthy name...' Quoted in Palmer, 514.

<sup>29</sup> 'Those who are sprung from better ancestors are likely to be better men, for nobility is excellence of race' *Politics*, III. 13 at 133. Also '...as men and animals beget men and animals, so from good men a good man springs. But this is what nature, though she may intend it, cannot always accomplish' *Politics*, I,6 at 23.

<sup>30</sup> Guazzo says that 'the nobleman by virtue is more excellent than the nobleman by birth' and 'that which makes one of us differ from another is the virtue of the mind', yet he expresses an aristocratic bias saying: 'Nobility of blood, among other good qualities, constrains a man not to degenerate from the virtue and valor of his ancestors. And this nobility deserves to be honoured in this respect, for the more we are born of good lineage the more we are apt to be better.' Quoted in Mades, 37.

<sup>31</sup> For the difference between 'nobility dative' (derived by direct acquisition from the prince) and 'nobility native' (derived by descent from noble ancestors) see Thomas Milles, *The Catalogue Of Honor Or Treasury Of True Nobility* (London, 1610), 9–18; cf. James Cleland, *The Institution Of A Young Noble Man*, 1607. Introd. Max Molyneux. (New York, 1948), 6–8. Due to the quickly growing numbers of dative nobility, often granted for bribes, it was said that 'gentlemen are made good cheape in England'. Sir Thomas Smith, *De Republica Anglorum* (London, 1583), 39–40. See also William Harrison, *The Description Of England*. Ed. Georges Edelen (Cornell University Press, 1968), 113–14.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Horace's 'Fortes creantur fortibus et bonis' *Odes*, iv,4, quoted in James W. Holme, *Italian Courtesy-Books of the Sixteenth Century*, *The Modern Language Review*, vol. 5, No. 2 (April 1910): 145–66, at 149.

Because nature in every thing hath depely sowed that privie sede, which geveth a certain force and propertie of her beginning, unto whatsoever springeth of it, and maketh it lyke unto her selfe. As we see by exaample not onely in the race of horses<sup>33</sup> and other beastes, but also in trees, whose slippes and graftes alwayes for the moste parte are lyke unto the stocke of the tree they came from... And the lyke is in men, yf they bee trayned up in good nourtour, moste commonlye they resemble them from whom thei come and often times passe them...<sup>34</sup>.

While recognising the importance of virtue as the true foundation of nobility, also the courtesy books which support the idea of *Generositas virtus* are traditionally in favour of the view that gentle birth and nobility of character together create the most favourable conditions. The author of the *Institucion of a Gentleman*, writing of those whom he calls 'gentle gentle', declares that 'such noblemen deserve to be called not only Gentle Gentle, but also they shall be esteemed xv fold Gentle, as men in whom we may discern the perfect shape of nobility'<sup>35</sup>; Elyot says 'the lenger it continueth in a name or lignage, the more is nobilitie extolled and meruailed at'<sup>36</sup>. To the same purpose writes Ascham: 'nobility, governed by learning and wisdom, is indeed most like a fair ship, having tide and wind at will, under the rule of a skilful master.'<sup>37</sup>

While Chaucer states the democratic theory that a gentleman is one 'who does gentle deed', Castiglione states the aristocratic theory that the doing of gentle deeds indicates gentle blood. Courteous manners and courage, Castiglione tells us, are seldom seen in one of low birth, but are the natural product of gentle or noble blood.

Castiglione noticed that in any situation involving valour in arms or other manly operations, the most illustrious men are noble,<sup>38</sup> since men well-born have a natural grace of mind and body. Castiglione insists that, all other things being equal, a man born of noble blood will have advantages over his non-noble fellows in attaining to a perfection of courtly virtues,<sup>39</sup> for *noblesse oblige*<sup>40</sup>:

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Spencer's use of the parallel of horses to emphasize that normally good breeding produces good qualities. *Faerie Queene* vi.iii.1–2. Also the opinion of Essex that 'we most regard creatures as horses, hawks, and hounds, of a generous brood', quoted in Dunham, 151. See also *The Works Of Edmund Spenser. A Variorum Edition*. Ed. Edwin Greenlaw et al. 9 vols (Baltimore, 1938), 6:329–330.

<sup>34</sup> Hoby, 44–45.

<sup>35</sup> *Institucion* divides all men into 'gentle gentle' (men of noble birth and noble character); 'gentle ungentle' (men of noble birth and base character); 'ungentle gentle' (men of base birth and noble character); 'ungentle ungentle' (men churlish in birth and disposition). Quoted in Palmer, 32–4.

<sup>36</sup> Elyot, 2:38.

<sup>37</sup> Ascham, *The Schoolmaster*.

<sup>38</sup> Therefore it chaunceth alwaies (in a maner) bothe in armes and in all other vertuous actes, that the moste famous menne are gentlemen. Hoby, 44.

<sup>39</sup> Francis Bacon (*Of Nobility*, 14) wrote that 'new nobility is but the act of power, but ancient nobility is the act of time.' The oft-quoted story tells us that when James I's old nurse supposedly asked him to make her son a gentleman, the King replied that he could make him a baronet, but that God almighty couldn't make him a gentleman. In other words, the gentleman's status was not open to on-the-spot creation. Cf. Cleland, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Expression found among the maxims of Duc de Levis (1764–1830). Cf. P. Dudziński, *Alfabet heraldyczny*, Warszawa 1997, 241.

For it is a great deale lesse dyspraise for him that is not born a gentleman to faile in the actes of vertue then for a gentleman. If he swarve from the steppes of his auncestours, he stayneth the name of his familie, and doeth not onely not get, but loseth that is already gotten. For noblesse of birth is (as it were) a clere lampe that sheweth forth and bringeth into light, workes bothe good and badde, and enflamenth and provoketh unto vertue, as wel with the feare of slauneder, as also with the hope of praise. And wheras this brightnesse of noblesse dothe not discover the workes of the unnoble, they have a wante of provocation and of feare of slauneder, and they reckon not themselves bounde to wade anye further then their auncestours did before theym, whereas the noble of birthe counte it a shame not to arrive at the leaste at the boundes of their predecessours set foorth unto them.<sup>41</sup>

It is only inclination to virtue you inherit, however, and in order to bring it out, proper up-bringing and education is necessary. Birth – understood as defining collectively a social group – is accepted by Castiglione in a realistic way as the actual determiner of nobility.<sup>42</sup> Virtue is a quality that may or may not go with nobility. But what is important is that one can be ‘non-virtuous’ and still remain noble, since nobility is determined in the first instance by birth. As summed up by Stone, it was the paradox of the sixteenth century that ‘precisely at the time when political theorists were laying increasing emphasis upon virtue, education’ and usefulness for the state as the test of nobility, at large ‘birth and wealths till ranked higher than virtue, education, or ability as indicators of status’.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Even Castiglione accepted that the ancestors gained nobility by the good deeds. Insisting on ancient lineage as the only prerequisite for nobility would make every one noble, if pushed back to Adam. Hence the oft-quoted: *When Adam delved and Eve span/Who was then a gentleman*. It is usually accepted that the couplet comes from John Ball’s revolutionary sermon at Blackheath in 1381. On the many varieties and popularity of the couplet see Vogt; Mason, 303–4. For a discussion of the theories of the origin of nobility see Cleland, 1-10. A summary of the sixteenth-century theories is given in Kelso, chap. 3.

<sup>42</sup> Burckhardt justifies the necessity of noble birth because ‘the perfect man – the true courtier – should not be wanting in any conceivable advantage’ [J. B. *The Civilisation of the Renaissance in Italy* (London, 1960): 223. See also Sydney Anglo, *The Courtier, The Renaissance and Changing Ideals*, [in] A.G. Dickens, ed. *The Courts of Europe. Politics, Patronage and Royalty, 1400–1800* (London, 1977), 37–8; John R. Woodhouse, *Baldesar Castiglione. A Reassessment Of “The Courtier”* (Edinburgh University Press, 1978), 72–4.

<sup>43</sup> Stone, [645]: 27. For the discussion of the sixteenth century English upper classes see *Ibid.*; for conflicting views R.H. Tawney, *The Rise of the Gentry: A Postscript*, *The Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 7, no 1 (1954): 91–7; H.R. Trevor-Roper, *The Elizabethan Aristocracy. An Anatomy Anatomized*, *The Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 3 (1951), 279–98. The ‘storm over the gentry’ is summarised in J.H. Hexter, *Reappraisals In History* (Northwestern University Press, 1962), 117–63.

***Generositas virtus, non sanguis?***

**Rola dobrego urodzenia  
w charakterystyce idealnego dworzanina B. Castiglione**

**Streszczenie**

Artykuł próbuje odpowiedzieć na pytanie, jaką rolę w charakterystyce idealnego dworzanina B. Castiglione odgrywa dobre urodzenie. Na pytanie, czy *nobilitas* pochodzi z dziedziczenia, czy raczej – w myśl demokratycznej opinii Chaucera – dżentelmenem jest ten, kto postępuje godnie, Castiglione odpowiada, że “dżentelmenem jest się z urodzenia i z pochodzenia z dobrego domu”. Castiglione opiera swój pogląd na teorii dziedziczenia dobrych cech, ale zastrzega, że dziedziczyć możemy jedynie inklinacje do cnoty, rolę zaś wychowania i edukacji jest uczynić z dobrze urodzonego dziecka wartościowego człowieka. Nawet jednak jeżeli *bene natus* nie będzie zbyt cnotliwy, to i tak będzie wyróżniał się od pospólstwa dobrym urodzeniem.