

Villar, Juan, b. end of 16th century, Arjonilla, Jaén, Spain; d. 1660 (Alonso 1969: 73–74), exact location unknown. Author of a Spanish grammar.

It is not easy to determine the identity of this author, who appears to have been a Jesuit priest. Palau y Dulcet (1969–76:XXI–XXVII) connects Villar’s identity to that of Juan Serrano Álvarez, a pseudonym he occasionally used. Further testimony along the same lines can be found in the fact that F. E. Uriarte includes V.’s name and work, without going into details, in his *Catálogo* (1916:v, 416).

V.’s *Arte de la lengua española* contains four parts: etymology, syntax, prosody, and orthography, where he defends the phonetic principle that orthography must adapt itself to pronunciation (Esteve Serrano 1982: 54). In spite of its simplicity and its connection with Latin scholastic grammar (Esparza 2002: 94), V.’s *Arte* is interesting for several reasons. (1) It showed a concern for idiomatic correctness, predating in this respect the 18th-century *Gramática de la Real Academia Española*: ‘Villar tries to set the use and uses—as if he were a representative of the as yet inexistent Academia—, but he does it with a very particular criterion, conceiving norms to be inflexible, strict, monolithic. That is, with a personal concept of norm where there are no references at all to the geographic and social varieties of the language’ (Peñalver 1997). (2) Its modernity lies also in its separation of Spanish from its Latin origin (Llitteras 2002: 302), manifest in his rejection of the existence of grammatical case in Spanish (Lázaro Carreter 1949: 152 and 154). Likewise modern is its link to French rationalist grammar, notably in the introduction of the important concept of proposition (Esparza 2002: 103–05).

V. follows the same grammatical philosophy as A. de Nebrija, as witnessed by his claim that: “Con este Arte los estudiantes dejarán de tener dificultades en el aprendizaje del latín” (‘with this *Arte* students will no longer have difficulty in learning Latin’). The *Arte*’s interest lies in its concern with setting norms for the Spanish language. It may be concluded that V. tried to synthesize Nebrija’s theory and grammatical doctrine with the new postulates of his time.

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