

# Renaissance Virtue in Verse and Prose: Rakovský's *Thalia* and Machiavelli's *Il Principe*<sup>1</sup>

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The aim of this paper is to compare Martin Rakovský's conception of Renaissance virtues of rulers, presented in his book *De magistratu politico: Thalia*, with Machiavelli's interpretation of these virtues in *The Prince*. Apart from understanding the virtues according to both authors, the main objective of this study is to determine the possible influences of *The Prince* on Rakovský's *Thalia*. As the article shows, the comprehension of virtues in these two works was sometimes more similar (prudence, audacity), sometimes less similar (piety, justice, temperance, munificence, clemency). With regard to the influence of *The Prince* on Rakovský's *Thalia*, this is apparent mainly in (1) the first half of the section on Rakovský's second virtue, prudence, which is semantically (and illogically) contradicted by other parts of his work, (2) the second half of the section on prudence, which is identical in terms of semantics and composition to Chapter XXIII of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and finally (3) Rakovský's distich 653 – 654 from the section on audacity, especially the wording of verse 654.

Keywords: morality, philosophy, politics, Renaissance, semantics, sociology, Slovak literature

## 1. Introduction

The Renaissance was a significant shift in the mind-set of Western civilisation, and one of the ways this shift was expressed was through the so-called Renaissance virtues. In their ideal form, these virtues no longer have a purely religious focus, but emphasize human potential, active involvement in worldly affairs, and classical ideals, including political duties, which are best articulated by the ruler of a political entity. The aim of this paper is to compare two ethical and socio-political concepts of the virtues of rulers, namely the concept of Martin Rakovský of Rakov, presented in his work *De magistratu politico (On Political Authority)*, more precisely in

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its third part, or Third Book *Thalia*, subtitled *Quae sint virtutes potissimum principi necessariae* (*What virtues are most necessary for a prince*), with the concept of Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli in his work *Il Principe* (*The Prince*).

The need to compare the ethical and socio-political views of Martin Rakovský of Rakov and Niccolò Machiavelli arose already some time ago. An attempt to do so can be found as early as in the *Dejiny staršej slovenskej literatúry* (*History of Older Slovak Literature*) by Ján Mišianik et al., although it is very laconic (cf. Mišianik et al., 1958, p. 93). Ján Bodnár's *Dejiny filozofického myslenia na Slovensku I* (*History of Philosophical Thought in Slovakia I*) deals with this comparison in slightly greater detail, but even so, the comparison does not extend beyond a single sentence (cf. Bodnár et al., 1987, p. 70). The most extensive comparison to date can be found in Stanislav Šmatlák's *Dejiny slovenskej literatúry od stredoveku po súčasnosť* (*History of Slovak Literature from the Middle Ages to the Present*) (cf. Šmatlák, 1988, 137 – 138). Although his view is also superficial, he directly expresses the need for a thorough confrontation of Martin Rakovský's ideas with “much better-known examples of Renaissance political philosophy, such as Niccolò Machiavelli's famous work *Il Principe*” (Šmatlák, 1988, p. 137).

However, the aim of this study is not to thoroughly confront the ideas of both authors, as its scope does not allow for this. It focuses only on the Renaissance virtues described in a small part of Rakovský's relatively extensive work, namely in the book *Thalia*, which is suitable for comparison with Niccolò Machiavelli's illustrious work *Il Principe* also for that reason that the comparison highlights a certain possible influence of Niccolò Machiavelli on an important Renaissance thinker from beyond the Alps, a nobleman from the Habsburg Monarchy who came from a Slavic, more specifically Slovak, linguistic environment. At the beginning of this paper, the most important facts concerning Rakovský's work *De magistratu politico* will be briefly presented, and this will then be compared in general terms with Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*. The basic postulates of the influence of other authors, including Machiavelli, on Rakovský will also be mentioned here. Finally, which is, in fact, the main purpose of this work, individual examples will be used to point out the similarities and differences in the understanding of Renaissance virtues by both authors, as well as the possible influences of *The Prince* on Rakovský's *Thalia*.

## 2. *De magistratu politico* and *Il Principe*

*De magistratu politico, libri tres*, is Martin Rakovský's most extensive work. In its final form, it was written in the Slovak land of the Habsburg Monarchy, but was published in Leipzig in 1574. This philosophical-political treatise (Kákošová, 1998, p. 40) is a verse composition dedicated to Emperor Maximilian II, who was one of the prominent Habsburg political figures of the early modern period (Baďurík, 1998, p. 13). There is a certain similarity here with Niccolò Machiavelli's dedication to Lorenzo Medici in the introduction to *The Prince*, but this similarity is not exceptional, as dedications were a common feature of Renaissance literary works.

*De magistratu politico* itself consists of three books, *Euterpe*, *Clio*, and *Thalia*, with a total of 2,632 verses (1,316 elegiac couplets). As the text suggests, Martin Rakovský of Rakov originally intended to write nine books, named after the nine muses. The motto of Rakovský's composition is a distich by the contemporary poet David Rheinischius (Okál, 1979, p. 251). He says that “authority either cannot exist at all, or cannot remain long in a community where God is not present” (Rakovský, 1974, p. 247). This indicates in advance that the work will

be considerably more religious and idealistic in spirit than Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, which is, however, a work that was exceptional in its secularity (perhaps even cynicism) for its time, so this is to be expected.

As Stanislav Šmatlák correctly points out, when examining both works, one immediately notices a clear difference in their conception. "While Machiavelli drew primarily on his thorough and often personal knowledge of the real mechanisms of power and the specific power struggles that took place within and between the Italian city-states of the 15th century, accepting their not very subtle and certainly not moral forms as something "natural", Rakovský paints a kind of abstract ideal not only of the organization of the state, but also of its management by an equally ideally understood ruler, drawing not only on knowledge of the cultural legacy of antiquity, but also on the principles of Renaissance humanism, ideologically guided by "reformed" Christianity" (Šmatlák, 1988, pp. 137-138).

This then led to the assertion that Rakovský's socio-philosophical theory is closer to the political and social democratism of the transalpine humanists and reformist thinkers, in contrast to Machiavelli's strong self-legislator, who pursues the political interests of the state regardless of the means used and the consent of the government and laws (cf. Bodnár et al., 1987, p. 70), with which one can fully agree. Nevertheless, the difference in the concept and understanding of morality is not the only difference between the works *De magistratu politico* and *The Prince*. Although from the point of view of content and also from the point of view of the needs of our comparison, this is the main difference, there are certain formal differences between the works as well.

First and foremost, it should be noted in this respect that Machiavelli's work *Il Principe*, despite having been written half a century earlier than Rakovský's *De magistratu politico*, is a typical Renaissance work, written in the author's native language. Rakovský, on the other hand, still stands on the position of a humanist literature written in Latin. This is because Italy, the cradle of the Renaissance, was culturally much more advanced than the parts of the Habsburg Monarchy known as Royal Hungary (roughly corresponding to present-day Slovakia and surrounding areas). However, it should also be noted that at the time when Rakovský lived and worked, literature written in national languages already existed in the Royal Hungary (in the Slovak land in Czech or Slovakized Czech, in western Croatia in Croatian, etc.), but the cultural level of these languages did not reach that of Latin or Italian, and moreover, national consciousness in the ethnic sense of the word was largely absent in the Royal Hungary or the Habsburg Monarchy as such. Another significant formal difference is that *The Prince* is written in prose (except for Petrarch's closing verses) and *De magistratu politico* (except for the dedication) is composed in bound verse form. This implies that Machiavelli's work, which is very prosaic in its moral framework, is richer in content, more saturated, and semantically clearer, unlike Martin Rakovský's work, which is in a sense more poetic in its moral framework, i.e., more idealistic, but also formally overloaded with various poetic devices that distract attention from the semantics of the work.

### 3. Influences

The first book of Rakovský's work *De magistratu politico* (*On Political Authority*), entitled *Euterpe sive liber primus* (546 verses), provides, according to the author, a definition of authority, its types, efficient and final causes, as well as opposite states, essential matters, etc.

(Rakovský, 1974, p. 256). The second book of the work, entitled *Clio, liber secundus* (746 verses), is a treatise on the continuous preservation of authority under four monarchies (Rakovský, 1974, p. 275). For this paper, though, the most important part is the third book of the work, which is also the longest, called *Thalia, liber tertius* (1340 verses) and subtitled *Quae sint virtutes potissimum principi necessariae* (*What virtues are most necessary for a prince*) (Rakovský, 1974, p. 301).

As for the influence of other authors on the third book of *De magistratu politico*, Rakovský himself clearly acknowledges only the influence of Aristotle and Cicero in the introduction to *Thalia* (Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 305; Rakovský, 1974, p. 301), and makes no mention of Niccolò di Bernardo dei Machiavelli. Of course, it can be said with absolute certainty that he also drew on other sources. Jozef Minárik mentions in addition the Bible and some ancient writers: Plato, Homer, Hesiod, Plutarch, Livy, Ovid, Virgil, Seneca, Flavius Josephus, as well as Reformation authors such as Johann Carion, Sleidanus, Lauterbeck, and especially Philip Melanchthon (Minárik, 1985, p. 122).

Miloslav Okál, who thoroughly analysed the book of *Thalia*, includes even more figures in his enumeration. With varying degrees of certainty, he also mentions Horace, Servius, Claudian, Cruciger, Ennius, Johannes Honter, Polybius, Antisthenes, Isocrates, Terence, Paul the Deacon, Xenophanes, Camerarius, Aeschylus, Lucan, Ecclesiastes, Plautus, Galeotti, Propertius, Pliny, Dracontius, Apuleius, Juvenal (Okál, 1979, pp. 287-320, 368-377). However, Niccolò Machiavelli's name is not found here either, so even Miloslav Okál, a great expert and translator of Rakovský's work, did not see or find such an influence.

All these lists show that the search for the influence of Machiavelli's *The Prince* on Rakovský's *De magistratu politico: Thalia, liber tertius* is not entirely obvious or straightforward. Nevertheless, in comparing these two works, which at first glance seem conceptually distant and without any apparent connection, we will attempt to prove that Martin Rakovský was familiar with Machiavelli's writing and that he was influenced by him. The former, i.e., knowledge of Machiavelli's work, can be assumed *a priori*, because in the 16th century, as Daniel Škoviera correctly points out, the most authoritative "mirrors for princes" (*specula principum*) were probably Machiavelli's *Il Principe* and Erasmus' *Institutio principis Christiani* (*Education of a Christian Prince*) (Škoviera, 1998, p. 25), which a scholar such as Martin Rakovský could hardly have overlooked. The latter, i.e., the influence of Machiavelli's work, will be demonstrated in our comparison using illustrative examples.

#### 4. Comparison

In the third book of *De magistratu politico, Thalia*, Martin Rakovský provides a brief overview of the virtues of rulers in the prologue (verses 37-54) (cf. Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 306). He later discusses these virtues individually. There are seven virtues of rulers: piety, prudence, justice, audacity, temperance, munificence, and clemency, although he does not explicitly name them as such in the prologue. In the prologue, Rakovský refers, among other things, to human free will, which has an impact on the overall understanding of Renaissance virtues. Niccolò Machiavelli also discusses this issue in the penultimate chapter of his work *The Prince*. It should be noted that there is no fundamental difference in the understanding of free will between the two authors. Both acknowledge its existence, at least in part. Rakovský cites several verses in which one reads that man is completely free (e.g., verse 108). On the other

hand, in several places he acknowledges God's omnipotence (e.g., verse 151). Machiavelli similarly states: "Nevertheless, that our freewill may not be altogether extinguished, I think it may be true that fortune is the ruler of half our actions, but that she allows the other half or a little less to be governed by us" (Machiavelli, 1891, p. 358; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 99). In addition, it is interesting to mention democratic features that can be found in Rakovský's prologue and also in many places in Machiavelli's work. In Rakovský's text, for example, it is the elegiac distich 53-54, which places the people on a high pedestal: *Ille beatus erit, populo spectabilis omni et bonus et summo dignus honore coli* (Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 306), i.e. "He [prince] will be blessed, and all people will follow him; he will be good and worthy of the highest honour". With these verses, Rakovský concluded his brief account of the virtues of rulers. A very similar sentence can be found in Machiavelli, for example in Chapter II of his *Il Principe*: "if no extraordinary vices make him [prince] hated, it is only reasonable for his subjects to be naturally attached to him" (Machiavelli, 1891, p. 183; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 4).

Unlike the prologue, Rakovský's extensive section (verses 135-386) devoted to the first of the seven virtues, piety, bears little resemblance to Machiavelli's *The Prince*. That is because Machiavelli himself does not deal with piety. He writes only: "It is not, therefore, necessary for a prince to have all the above-named qualities, but it is very necessary to seem to have them. I would even be bold to say that to possess them and to always observe them is dangerous, but to appear to possess them is useful. Thus it is well to seem pious, faithful, humane, religious, sincere, and also to be so; but you must have the mind so watchful that when it is needful to be otherwise you may be able to change to the opposite qualities. And it must be understood that a prince, and especially a new prince, cannot observe all those things which are considered good in men, being often obliged, in order to maintain the state, to act against faith, against charity, against humanity, and against religion" (Machiavelli, 1891, pp. 304-305; Machiavelli, 1921, pp. 70-71). He therefore proclaims a very superficial piety. Rakovský, on the other hand, prioritizes the first of the virtues:

Est igitur P i e t a s primum decus atque Regentum  
gloria, quae Attalicas unica vincit opes  
(Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 310).

[Therefore, piety is the kings' foremost honour and  
glory, which alone surpasses the wealth of Attalus.]

In his description of prudence, which Rakovský lists as the second virtue, the author drew mainly on Cicero (Okál, 1979, p. 292). However, its essence is very similar to that in Machiavelli's *The Prince*. In fact, in this part of *Thalia*, one can see Machiavelli's possible direct influence on Rakovský in several places. Right at the beginning (verses 387-392), Rakovský writes:

Dixi te, Pietas, nunc te, P r u d e n t i a, dicam,  
virtutum reiquum quae regis una chorum.  
Qua quicumque carent, ab ea quicumque recedunt,  
stultitiae in casses, praeda futura, cadunt

et sibi damna parant manifesta, ubi comoda debent  
 felicis vitae conciliare sibi  
 (Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 320).

[I have spoken of you, Piety, now I will speak of you, Prudence,  
 the virtue that alone leads the king.  
 Whoever lacks it, whoever departs from it,  
 falls into the snares of folly, destined to become prey,  
 and brings upon oneself manifest harm where benefits should be,  
 to ensure for oneself a happy life.]

This explicitly implies that prudence is most important among all virtues for Rakovský. In Machiavelli's work, the ruler's prudence is also implicitly presented throughout as the highest virtue. Machiavelli's *The Prince* is not a systematic work on virtues and vices, but, according to many references in the text, it is a work on what precisely a prudent ruler should do. At least this bon mot can be quoted: "Therefore it must be concluded that wise counsels, from whoever they come, must necessarily be due to the prudence of the prince, and not the prudence of the prince to the good counsels received" (Machiavelli, 1891, p. 352; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 96), etc.

In addition, Rakovský's first verses in this section reveal a certain utilitarianism. By the way, this is also expressed in other places of *Thalia*, and much more clearly. For example, in verses 405-406:

Pulchrius ex pulchris legit illa minusque malorum,  
 utilium semper suscipit utilius  
 (Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 293).

[One chooses the most beautiful of the beautiful and the least of the bad,  
 always accepting the most useful of the useful.]

In his analysis, Miloslav Okál considers these verses to be an echo of Cicero's statement *de duobus malis minus est eligendum* (Okál, 1979, p. 293). Nevertheless, strictly speaking, only the second part of line 405 echoes this statement. It is difficult to overlook the strong utilitarianism of pentameter 406, which is nowhere to be found in Cicero's statement. Here, then, it is reasonable to assume that Martin Rakovský may have been inspired by Niccolò Machiavelli's utilitarianism, and not only in verse 406. To illustrate this, a sentence from the latter author can be quoted: "Whoever, therefore, deems it necessary in his new principality to secure himself against enemies, to gain friends, to conquer by force or fraud, to make himself beloved and feared by the people, followed and revered by the soldiers, to destroy those who can and may injure him, introduce innovations into old customs, to be severe and kind, magnanimous and liberal, suppress the old militia, create a new one, maintain the friendship of kings and princes in such a way that they are glad to benefit him and fear to injure him, such a one can find no better example than the actions of this man" (Machiavelli, 1891, p. 227; Machiavelli, 1921, pp. 30-31).

To a certain extent, Martin Rakovský's elegiac distich 413-414 could also refer to Machiavelli's *The Prince*:

Auxilia et vires praesaga forisque domique  
conquirat socios conciliatque sibi  
(Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 321).

[One gathers help and strength, both abroad and at home,  
seeks out allies and wins them over to one's side.]

Miloslav Okál cannot find any parallels for this elegiac couplet in Cicero or Aristotle, but he seeks possible inspiration in Reformation authors (cf. Okál, 1979, pp. 293-294). Nevertheless, lines 419-420 are much more significant for this paper. Miloslav Okál provides no information about these verses, but they could also be an echo of the somewhat immoral utilitarianism of Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Following on from the prince's prudence, Rakovský praises deception:

Hinc variae technae rerum et stratagemata in hostem  
successum nunquam non habuere suum  
(Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 321).

[Hence, various clever tricks and stratagems against the enemy  
never failed to bring their success.]

Rakovský then cites an example of the symbol of deceit, the Trojan horse, which Miloslav Okál does not attribute to any particular thinker either. These verses are particularly interesting in light of the fact that Martin Rakovský strongly advocates for truth in several places. In this context, the aforementioned verses have almost the same effect as Machiavelli's famous quote: "Therefore, a prudent ruler ought not to keep faith when by so doing it would be against his interest, and when the reasons which made him bind himself no longer exist" (Machiavelli, 1891, p. 303; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 70), illustrated by the example of Pope Alexander VI, who "did nothing else but deceive men, he thought of nothing else, and found the way to do it; no man was ever more able to give assurances, or affirmed things with stronger oaths, and no man observed them less; however, he always succeeded in his deceptions, as he knew well this side of the world" (Machiavelli, 1891, p. 304; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 70).

The first half of the section on the second of Rakovský's virtues, prudence, is full of speculation about the potential influence of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, but these hypotheses lack any formal confirmation or arguments. It may therefore be only a possible coincidence of ideas, even if they are contradicted in meaning by other parts of the work, as is the case with deception and truth, and thus somewhat illogical, which increases the likelihood of direct influence. Yet in the second half of the section on prudence (verses 435-460), one finds the following formal confirmation, which is extremely important. Compositionally, this second half is essentially Chapter XXIII of Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, subtitled *Come si debbano fuggire gli adulatori* (*How Flatterers Must Be Shunned*), which can hardly be attributed to coincidence. Miloslav Okál mentions various possibilities regarding the origin of the ideas in the verses, but he is

certain only about the last, insignificant couplet, which he cites as an example of the wisdom of Lycurgus and Solon (cf. Okál, 1979, p. 294).

Like Machiavelli in Chapter XXIII, Rakovský begins the second half of the section by discussing the dangers of flattery, then goes on to talk about the qualities of a king's advisors, and concludes by saying that a ruler must be prudent himself (cf. Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 322; Rakovský, 1974, pp. 313-314). Machiavelli writes similarly: "I must not omit an important subject, and a mistake which princes can with difficulty avoid, if they are not very prudent, or if they do not make a good choice. And this is with regard to flatterers, of which courts are full, because men take such pleasure in their own things and deceive themselves about them that they can with difficulty guard against this plague; and by wishing to guard against it they run the risk of becoming contemptible. Because there is no other way of guarding one's self against flattery than by letting men understand that they will not offend you by speaking the truth; but when every one can tell you the truth, you lose their respect. A prudent prince must therefore take a third course, by choosing in his state wise men... And since some think that a prince who gains the reputation of being prudent is so considered, not by his nature but by the good counsellors he has about him, they are undoubtedly deceived. It is an infallible rule that a prince who is not wise himself cannot be well advised, unless by chance he left himself entirely in the hands of one man who ruled him in everything, and happened to be a very prudent man... Therefore it must be concluded that wise counsels, from whoever they come, must necessarily be due to the prudence of the prince, and not the prudence of the prince to the good counsels received" (Machiavelli, 1891, pp. 349-352; Machiavelli, 1921, pp. 94-96). It can be concluded that there is both a semantic and compositional correspondence here, which largely confirms the hypothesis that Rakovský was familiar with Machiavelli's *The Prince*, even though he did not fully agree with it.

The third of the virtues of rulers, listed by Rakovský, is justice or legality. Machiavelli considers this virtue to be a virtue as well: "The chief foundations of all states, whether new, old, or mixed, are good laws and good arms. And as there cannot be good laws where there are not good arms, and where there are good arms there should be good laws" (Machiavelli, 1891, pp. 253-255; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 47). Nevertheless, it could be argued that Machiavelli's ruler, who does not consider the means but rather the purpose, is not always guided by laws, as much as by circumstances. In this context, it is worth mentioning Rakovsky's elegiac distich 519-520:

Non semper servet strictum lex scripta rigorem,  
quin ratio fiat temporis atque modi  
(Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 325).

[Let the strict law not always maintain its rigor,  
but let it adapt to time and manners.]

Nevertheless, it is impossible to speak of Machiavelli's direct influence on Rakovský in this case. Within the framework of this comparison, one can conclude that the perception of justice (*iustitia*) is the same at a superficial level for both authors. In a deeper analysis, however, Rakovský's adaptation of the laws would take the path of leniency (cf. Aristotle's *ἐπιείκεια*), while Machiavelli's would take the path of success to a much greater extent.

As in his description of justice, Martin Rakovský used the works of Cicero and Aristotle (cf. Okál, 1979, p. 303) as his primary sources in his description of the fourth virtue, audacity (verses 557-728). Here, too, one finds certain similarities with Machiavelli's concept. A striking similarity can be noticed when comparing the relationship between justice and audacity in the texts of both authors. Martin Rakovský writes that audacity is questionable if it is not connected with justice, and in verses 557-560 he makes both virtues dependent on each other (Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 327; Rakovský, 1974, pp. 316-317). In *Il Principe*, one also finds a combination of these virtues in Chapter XXI, *Come si debba governare un Principe per acquistarsi riputazione* (*How a Prince must act in order to gain reputation*).

Although Machiavelli does not make the coexistence of virtues conditional, i.e., that one cannot exist without the other, he broadly states that one cannot exist without the other if a ruler wants to gain reputation: "Nothing causes a prince to be so much esteemed as great enterprises and setting a rare example. We have in our own day Ferdinand, King of Aragon, at present King of Spain... At the beginning of his reign he assailed Granada, and that enterprise was the foundation of his state. At first he did it leisurely and without fear of being interfered with... It is also very profitable for a prince to give some rare examples of himself in the internal administration, like those related of Messer Bernabo of Milan, when it happens that someone does something extraordinary, either good or evil, in civil life, and to take a means of rewarding or punishing him which will be much talked about" (Machiavelli, 1891, pp. 337-340; Machiavelli, 1921, pp. 88-89). Overall, it should be concluded that both authors consider audacity to be an important virtue in relation to the people. Martin Rakovský considers it in couplet 607-608 to be the highest virtue for achieving the welfare of the people (Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 329; Rakovský, 1974, p. 318), while Niccolò Machiavelli considers it the highest priority for gaining the respect of the people.

In connection with the fourth virtue, not only a similarity in thought, but perhaps also a certain direct influence of Machiavelli can be seen in Rakovský's verses 653-654:

Audentem fortuna iuvat plerumque Deusque;  
obstant ignavis numina sancta viris  
(Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 331).

[Fortune favours the bold, and God as well;  
the holy powers stand against the idle/cowardly (= *ignavus*) men.]

The opening part of the first verse, *Audentem Fortuna iuvat*, is taken from the *Aeneid* (Okál, 1979, p. 305). However, the wording of verse 654, which Miloslav Okál does not mention, can be considered a direct reference to Machiavelli's statement: "I certainly think that it is better to be impetuous than cautious, for fortune is a woman, and it is necessary, if you wish to master her, to conquer her by force; and it can be seen that she lets herself be overcome by these rather than by those who proceed coldly. And therefore, like a woman, she is a friend to the young, because they are less cautious, fiercer, and master her with greater audacity" (Machiavelli, 1891, p. 365; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 102).

A further section of Martin Rakovský's *Thalia* is devoted to temperance (in pleasures), which is supposed to be the fifth Renaissance virtue of a ruler. Of all seven parts devoted to the description

of the virtues of rulers, this is the most extensive (verses 729-1026). At the same time, however, it must be said that from the perspective of this comparison, it is also the least interesting, because this virtue is not mentioned at all in Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

Although comparison is impossible here, it is worth mentioning at least marginally one possible intellectual influence of Machiavelli on Rakovský. According to Machiavelli, a prince has only one duty, and that is war. "He ought, therefore, never to let his thoughts stray from the exercise of war; and in peace he ought to practise it more than in war, which he can do in two ways: both by action and by study. As to action, he must, besides keeping his men well disciplined and exercised, engage continually in hunting, and thus accustom his body to hardships; and on the other hand learn the nature of the land" (Machiavelli, 1891, pp. 278-279; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 58). In Rakovský's text on temperance, one reads that a prince should find suitable refreshment, and in addition to playing dice and gardening, hunting prey and watching fictional battles, which "harden the hearts of young men", are mentioned (Rakovský, 1974, p. 329). So, at least in some motifs, there could hypothetically be a similarity or even an influence, but as in the previous case (verse 654), this is only at the level of a strong semantic hypothesis without further supporting arguments.

According to Rakovský, the sixth virtue of rulers is to be munificence (verses 1027-1150). Rakovský takes from Aristotle the teaching that munificence is the middle ground between extravagance and stinginess (cf. Okál, 1979, p. 314). In Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, there is Chapter XVI entitled *Della liberalità e miseria (Of Liberality and Niggardliness)*. He teaches about munificence in the right circumstances, about "liberality" or generosity, as a middle ground between (economic) extravagance and niggardliness. At first glance, it would seem that the premises are the same. Nevertheless, this is only at first glance, because Rakovský idealistically suggests that the ruler does not need to have any treasures and considers stinginess to be odious (Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 349; Rakovský, 1974, pp. 332-333). Machiavelli's "middle ground" is much closer to thriftiness and he gives examples of contemporaries who achieved success despite being considered misers and, moreover, prosaically, that "of all things that a prince must guard against, the most important are being despicable or hated, and liberality will lead you to one or other of these conditions. It is, therefore, wiser to have the name of a miser, which produces disgrace without hatred, than to incur of necessity the name of being rapacious, which produces both disgrace and hatred" (Machiavelli, 1891, pp. 289-290; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 64). As in the case of the third virtue, the similarity in this case can only be discussed on a superficial level, but in reality Rakovský refers to Aristotle's teachings and not Machiavelli's ideas.

The section on Rakovský's last, seventh virtue, clemency (verses 1151-1304), can be compared to Machiavelli's Chapter XVII, *Della crudeltà e clemenza, e se egli è meglio essere amato, che temuto (Of Cruelty and Clemency, and Whether It Is Better to Be Loved or Feared)*, but also to other passages of *Il Principe*. In the mentioned chapter, Machiavelli writes: "From this arises the question whether it is better to be loved more than feared, or feared more than loved. The reply is, that one ought to be both feared and loved, but as it is difficult for the two to go together, it is much safer to be feared than loved, if one of the two has to be wanting. For it may be said of men in general that they are ungrateful, voluble, dissemblers, anxious to avoid danger, and covetous of gain; as long as you benefit them, they are entirely yours; they offer you their blood, their goods, their life, and their children, as I have before said, when the necessity

is remote; but when it approaches, they revolt" (Machiavelli, 1891, p. 292; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 66). And elsewhere in Chapter XVII, he utilitarianly adds that "every prince must desire to be considered merciful and not cruel. He must, however, take care not to misuse this mercifulness" (Machiavelli, 1891, p. 290; Machiavelli, 1921, p. 65).

Rakovský, on the other hand, addresses the same question of popularity and respect idealistically through clemency. He clearly leans toward popularity, responding to the question "whether it is better to be loved more than feared, or feared more than loved" by saying that it is better to be loved. This shows that his view of clemency is diametrically opposed to that of Machiavelli:

Nam genti faciet nimia indulgentia spretum,  
exosum populis omnibus ira dabit.  
At pia vicinis charum Clementia reddet  
et miti alliciet colla domanda iugo  
(Rakovský a Rakov, 1974, p. 351).

[Excessive indulgence will rob you of the respect of the nation,  
just as your anger will bring hatred upon the people.  
But pious Clemency will repay dear neighbours,  
and will gently entice their necks to submit to the yoke.]

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion to the comparison of Rakovský's work *De magistratu politico: Thalia, liber tertius* with Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, it is possible to say in a nutshell that the understanding of virtues in these two works was sometimes more similar (prudence, audacity), while at other times less so, or not at all, or the comparison was not possible (piety, justice, temperance, munificence, clemency). As for the influence of *The Prince* on Rakovský's *Thalia*, it should be reiterated that it can be assumed *a priori* that Martin Rakovský was familiar with Machiavelli's book, as it was one of the most famous works of the 16th century and Rakovský was a scholar of a European rank. In this paper, however, we have also shown *a posteriori*, in the form of more or less strong hypotheses, that despite Miloslav Okál's detailed analysis, there are several possibilities for the influence of *The Prince* on Martin Rakovský. These are mainly (1) the first half of the section on Rakovský's second virtue, prudence, which is semantically (and illogically) contradicted by other parts of the literary work, (2) the second half of the section on prudence (verses 435-460), which is essentially identical in terms of semantics and composition to Chapter XXIII of Machiavelli's *The Prince*, and finally (3) Rakovský's distich 653-654 from the section on audacity, especially the wording of verse 654, to which one can semantically assign the text about hunting prey and watching fictional battles, which "harden the hearts of young men" from the section on temperance, which largely reveals Machiavelli's ideological world and text in small details that are probably not a mere coincidence. The aim of this paper was to draw attention to such details and, with this modest contribution, to fill at least partially a small gap in the history of scholarly research on Slovak Renaissance literature.

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