

# NOTES AND DISCUSSIONS

## ARISTOTLE ON THE PRESERVATION OF TYRANNY

### I

Aristotle considers tyranny, just like kingship, as a monarchy or regime with one-man rule. But both as such and in reference to kingship there is an enormous contrast in Aristotle's dealing with tyranny in the fourth and the fifth book of the *Politics*. In the fourth book Aristotle categorizes tyranny as the worst of all regimes (1289b2–3) and he indicates that he will discuss it last, because it equally is the least of all a regime (1293b27–30). That is why he acknowledges at the beginning of 4.10 (1295a1–4), the chapter on tyranny and its various categories, that he does not have much to say about it; he will only deal with it for the sake of completeness. At this point, this seems a sincere statement, for chapter 4.10 is one of the shortest in the whole *Politics* and even consists, for the greater part, of repetition. It is in any case far denser than the elaborate chapters on kingship (3.14–17).

In the fifth book, however, Aristotle thoroughly deals with tyranny. In this book he discusses the causes of the destruction of regimes and the means to preserve them. In chapters 5.10–11 respectively he handles the destruction and preservation of monarchies, but now Aristotle has far less to say on kingship, since the majority of the content is devoted to tyranny. Striking is that these chapters are, in contrast to 4.10, the longest in the whole *Politics*. Aristotle not only has more to say on tyranny than in the fourth book, but little by little he also seems to display another attitude toward it. The myriad of historical examples in 5.10 of tyrants who lost their power (and their lives) still seems to confirm that tyranny is the worst regime, since many scandalous causes are listed as to explain why they lost control. In 5.11, however, Aristotle devotes just as much attention to the preservation of tyranny, where he makes a distinction between the traditional way and a new way. The traditional way to preserve a tyranny is almost entirely described in amoral terms, although Aristotle once still indicates that he considers these measures not to be free from depravity (1314a12–14). But the new way, on the other hand, is described in such a fashion that it is hard not to read it as a mode that receives Aristotle's (relative) appreciation.

Various scholars have dealt with Aristotle's analysis of tyranny before and some have indeed come to the conclusion that it is paradoxical.<sup>1</sup> For if he truly considers tyranny the worst of regimes, why would he then describe the means to preserve them in rather neutral or even positive terms? The standard solution that most scholars seem to endorse is that Aristotle elaborates so extensively on the maintenance of tyranny in *Politics* 5.11

1. Among the many studies on Aristotle's analysis of tyranny, see esp. Kamp 1985; Petit 1993; Boesche 1993; Gastaldi 2009. That this analysis is paradoxical is argued the most plainly in Bodéüs 1999, 121–26.

because he also wants to look into the measures that improve existing regimes, even the worst of all.<sup>2</sup> That would be the very reason why Aristotle distinguishes between a traditional way, where the tyrant truly acts tyrannical, and a new way, where he imitates kingly behavior, for the latter will in every respect be an improvement on the former. Recently, an alternative solution has been put forward by Panos Christodoulou, who argues that Aristotle, following Plato, primarily wanted to indicate that a tyrant in the end still does not become a king, no matter how hard he tries to imitate his behavior.<sup>3</sup> Although both solutions are not wrong, I deem that they do not really grasp the philosophical point of Aristotle's chapter on the preservation of tyranny. I will argue that the point of *Politics* 5.11 is that tyranny may occur both with and without the consent of the subjects, which is why I believe Aristotle describes two ways to preserve a tyranny.

I will start my argumentation in section II with a distinction between kingship and tyranny in order to look for Aristotle's demarcation criterion between both regimes. This will be found in the consent of the subjects: it always seems necessary for kingship, thus the lack of it must be sufficient for tyranny. But this leaves open the possibility that there are also tyrannies with the consent of the subjects. Subsequently, I will investigate in section III when tyrannies arise and subsist. According to Aristotle, this is due to force or deceit. In Plato's thought, the subjects of a tyrant always endure the regime involuntarily, but Aristotle appears to acknowledge that deceit as persuasion can make one's rule voluntary. That is why I proceed in section IV with my general claim that the twofold analysis to preserve a tyranny in *Politics* 5.11 is used to make a distinction between a tyranny exercised with force but without the consent of the subjects, on the one hand, and one where the subjects are deceitfully persuaded but willingly accept the tyrant's rule, on the other. Finally, I will try to elucidate in section V two philosophical consequences: first, it explains why tyranny can be made better, though not good, with respect to the subjects, for they will still suffer injustice, but without also being treated unjustly. Second, it also shows how kingship and tyranny are much closer to each other than in Plato's political thought, where the vast contrast between these two regimes is emphasized.

## II

In order to understand Aristotle's analysis of tyranny, one has to know in what respect tyranny differs from the other regimes. In *Politics* 3.7 Aristotle generally distinguishes regimes with one, few, or many rulers. The regimes with one ruler are kingship and tyranny; the former is considered correct because it is directed at the common advantage of king and subjects (1279a32–34), the latter is deviant because it is only directed at the private advantage of the tyrant (1279b6–7). One can therefore consider a regime to be a tyranny when it is a monarchy with a view to the mere interest of the ruler. Although this seems a good demarcation criterion at first sight, it does not bring us very far in distinguishing tyranny sufficiently from kingship, for in the chapters on the various categories of kingship (3.14) and tyranny (4.10) Aristotle also takes into account two categories that have something of both. He considers a barbarian monarchy and a Greek dictatorship to be kingly because they are "in accordance with law" (*κατὰ νόμον*) and exercise power

2. For a recent example, see Destrée 2015, 218–23. Destrée correctly criticizes the view that Aristotle argues that tyranny should be overthrown rather than preserved, as is defended in Kraut 2002, 373–74.

3. See Christodoulou 2009, 160.

“over willing subjects” (ἐκόντων), but likewise tyrannical because they govern with the “rule of a master” (δεσποτική) (1285a16–b3, 1295a7–17). Hence, in looking for a criterion that is sufficient for tyranny, one has to examine these three possibilities.

Ruling in the way of a master seems to be the most obvious candidate to function as the demarcation criterion. Not only is it understood as a tyrannical characteristic of the barbarian monarchy or Greek dictatorship, but even of tyranny in general, as Aristotle indicates in 3.8 (1279b16–17). Nonetheless, it cannot be sufficient for tyranny, only necessary. After all, the two mixed categories of a monarchy are also δεσποτική while simultaneously being kingly. Furthermore, there is no explicit reference to despotism when Aristotle gives his definition of a true tyranny in 4.10 (1295a17–23):

τρίτον δὲ εἶδος τυραννίδος, ἥπερ μάλιστα εἶναι δοκεῖ τυραννίς, ἀντίστροφος οὕσα τῆ παμβασιλείᾳ. τοιαύτην δ' ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι τυραννίδα τὴν μοναρχίαν ἥτις ἀνυπεύθυνος ἄρχει τῶν ὁμοίων καὶ βελτιόνων πάντων πρὸς τὸ σφέτερον αὐτῆς συμφέρον, ἀλλὰ μὴ πρὸς τὸ τῶν ἀρχομένων. διόπερ ἀκούσιος: οὐθεὶς γὰρ ἐκὼν ὑπομένει τῶν ἐλευθέρων τὴν τοιαύτην ἀρχήν.

There is also a third kind of tyranny, which seems the most typical form, being the counterpart of the absolute kingship. This tyranny is necessarily the rule of one man who is accountable to no one, and governs all alike, whether equals or better, with a view to his own advantage and not to that of the subjects, and therefore against their will; for no free man willingly endures such a government.<sup>4</sup>

Although the despotic character is omitted, the other two possibilities, the submission of power to the laws and the willingness of the subjects, are mentioned here: first, a true tyrant is “unaccountable” (ἀνυπεύθυνος), which seems to indicate that his power is not subjected to any laws.<sup>5</sup> Second, his rule is “involuntary” (ἀκούσιος), which means that he does not have the consent of his subjects. This is not remarkable, because these two criteria are also taken into account in the works of previous Greek thinkers to distinguish kingship from tyranny.<sup>6</sup> Yet the first of these, not ruling in accordance with the laws, cannot be a good demarcation criterion either, since, once again, it does not seem to be sufficient for tyranny: in the definition of the true tyranny Aristotle indicates that it is only “necessary” (ἀναγκαῖον), which makes sense, for already in 3.13 (1284a3–14) he deems the absolute kingship, the counterpart of true tyranny, just as much to be a monarchy above the law.<sup>7</sup> In general, though, not being subjected to the laws cannot even be necessary for tyranny, because the two mixed categories of a monarchy are also κατὰ νόμον although they are tyrannical as well. The only remaining criterion to distinguish tyranny sufficiently from kingship therefore seems to be the consent of the subjects.

Aristotle uses the words ἐκὼν or ἐκούσιος in the *Politics* in the majority of cases with regard to monarchy and in 3.14 (1285b5, b21) he considers it to be a characteristic of non-tyrannical categories of kingship, too. In 5.10 he even indicates that kingship in

4. Translations of Aristotle's texts are, with some modifications, taken from Barnes 1984.

5. The word ἀνυπεύθυνος seems to point to a lawless rule, because Aristotle also uses it to criticize certain rulers in the second book of the *Politics*: in 2.10 (1272a36–39) he blames the Cretan κόσμοι in that respect for not ruling “in accordance with written rules” (κατὰ γράμματα). The same reproach is held against the Spartan ἔφοροι, who do not rule “in accordance with written rules and the laws” (κατὰ γράμματα καὶ τοὺς νόμους, 1270b30–31). That tyranny is a regime without laws is also indicated in *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.6 (1134a32–b8).

6. See Pl. *Plt.* 291d–e; Xen. *Mem.* 4.6.12.

7. To be fair, within the passage from 3.13 Aristotle does not explicitly indicate that such a regime is an absolute kingship, but only calls it a παμβασιλεία from 3.15 (1285b36) onwards. Nonetheless, there is no doubt that Aristotle considers the absolute kingship to be different from a kingship in accordance with the laws, which he specifies at the beginning of 3.16 (1287a1–10).

general is “a voluntary kind of rule” (ἐκούσιος ἀρχή, 1313a5). There seems to be, in other words, no kingship without the consent of the subjects. This makes consent a necessary condition for kingship, which allows us to attribute the following thought to Aristotle:

Every king is a monarch who rules with the consent of his subjects.

With regard to tyranny, Aristotle adds further on in 5.10: “[T]here is an end to the king when his subjects are not willing to have him, but a tyrant lasts even when they are not willing to have him” (μη βουλομένων εὐθὺς οὐκ ἔσται βασιλεύς, ἀλλὰ τύραννος καὶ μὴ βουλομένων, 1313a14–16). Although syntactically different, βουλομένων and ἐκόντων may be regarded as synonyms here.<sup>8</sup> Hence, if the subjects no longer assent to the rule of a monarch, it immediately stops being a kingship and becomes a tyranny. We can therefore rewrite Aristotle’s thought as:

Every monarch who does *not* rule with the consent of his subjects is *not* a king.

Or, since kingship and tyranny are the exhaustive forms of monarchy:

Every monarch who does *not* rule with the consent of his subjects is a tyrant.

If the consent of the subjects is a necessary condition for kingship, then the lack of consent must be sufficient for tyranny. This is thus the demarcation criterion that we sought to distinguish tyranny from kingship. Important to note is that the lack of consent does not seem to be a necessary condition for tyranny, too, because the two mixed categories of a monarchy also exercise power over willing subjects while at the same time being tyrannical. Consequently, a tyrant might exercise his power with the consent of the subjects as well. Although Aristotle indicates in his definition of true tyranny in the fourth book that “no free man” (οὐθεις τῶν ἐλευθέρων, 1295a22–3) would endure tyranny willingly, he seems to have broadened his scope in the fifth book in saying that a tyrant lasts “even” (καί, 1313a15) when the subjects do not want this, which suggests that tyrants may likewise rule willing subjects.<sup>9</sup> It therefore seems worthwhile to investigate this suggestion further.

### III

If we want to find out in what respect a tyrant could rule with the consent of his subjects, it is important to look for the cases where tyranny occurs. In *Politics* 5.10 Aristotle gives us two instances: “If someone obtains power by deceit or force, it is at once thought to be a tyranny” (ἄν δὲ δι’ ἀπάτης ἄρξῃ τις ἢ βίας, ἤδη δοκεῖ τοῦτο εἶναι τυραννίς, 1313a9–10). The fact that Aristotle links tyranny to force or deceit is not remarkable, for, once more, it may be found in the works of his predecessors as well.<sup>10</sup> But at this point we have to be careful, as it is tempting to misinterpret Aristotle’s thought. If Aristotle

8. See Schütrumpf and Gehrke 1996, 574.

9. A similar but less evident suggestion may be found outside the *Politics* in *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.1 (1110a4–8), where Aristotle mentions a tyrant who orders someone, with his parents and children taken hostage, to do something base. Aristotle indicates that “it may be debated whether such actions are involuntary or voluntary” (ἀμφισβήτησιν ἔχει πότερον ἀκούσια ἔστιν ἢ ἐκούσια). Although the chapter from the *Nicomachean Ethics* does not dwell upon tyranny any further, it is yet remarkable that Aristotle considers the subject of a tyrant as someone who could (possibly) assent to the tyrant’s assignment.

10. See *Pl. Resp.* 9, 573e–74a; *Xen. Mem.* 3.9.10.

understands monarchic rule that is ἀκούσιος as tyranny, it might seem that βία and ἀπάτη are two instances to which the subjects of the tyrant would not assent.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the only thing that Aristotle literally writes is that force and deceit are sufficient for tyranny, not necessary. One might therefore attribute the following thought to Aristotle:

Every monarch who rules by force or deceit is a tyrant.

It is important to note that at this point there seems to be no further connection between force or deceit on the one hand and involuntary rule on the other, because both are considered to be sufficient conditions for tyranny, without any further implications toward one another. And yet, in *Rhetoric* 1.15 Aristotle clearly connects them in general: “[A]ctions due to the force or deceit of others are involuntary” (τὰ βία καὶ ἀπάτη ἀκούσια, 1377b5). How could it be possible then that tyranny occurs in cases as force or deceit but still with the consent of the subjects?

If we want to answer this question, we need to look at the cases of force and deceit separately. It is beyond any doubt that when a tyrant “uses force” (βιάζεται, 1281a23), as Aristotle indicates in *Politics* 3.10, he cannot rule willing subjects, for both in *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.1 (1109b35–10a4) and *Eudemian Ethics* 2.8 (1224a10–11) Aristotle makes clear that βία is one of the two cases where something is done involuntarily. That force belongs to tyranny and excludes voluntariness is a thought that Aristotle must have adopted from his former master, because Plato distinguishes what is βίαιος and what is ἐκούσιος in his *Statesman* (276d–e) and connects the former with tyranny, the latter with kingship. Similarly, in the *Laws* (832c) Plato writes that tyranny as rule over unwilling subjects is always accompanied by some force. In that respect, Aristotle thus seems to be in complete agreement with Plato.

When we look at a tyrant ruling by deceit, however, the result is less straightforward. According to *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.1 (1110b18–24) and *Eudemian Ethics* 2.9 (1225b6–8) there is, in addition to force, a second situation where something is done involuntarily, namely in the case of “ignorance” (ἄγνοια).<sup>12</sup> Although this is not the same as ἀπάτη, it would be not that hard to connect both concepts: people who are deceived seem to be ignorant in a certain respect and are therefore acting involuntary. There is, nonetheless, another way to understand deceit: not as being ignorant, but as being persuaded. In *Eudemian Ethics* 2.8 Aristotle says the following: “Now the enforced and the necessary, force and necessity, seem opposed to the voluntary and to persuasion in the case of acts done” (δοκεῖ δὴ τὸ βίαιον καὶ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον ἀντικεῖσθαι, καὶ ἡ βία καὶ ἡ ἀνάγκη, τῷ ἐκούσιῳ καὶ τῇ πειθοῖ ἐπὶ τῶν πραττομένων, 1224a13–15; cf. 1224a38–b1). But persuasion is, in contrast to ignorance, voluntary instead of involuntary. Being persuaded seems to be a more suitable candidate than being ignorant to understand the deceit of a tyrant, because the former is used for people acted upon, the latter for people acting.<sup>13</sup> In the case of a tyrant ruling certain subjects, these subjects are obviously acted upon. It is true that

11. This is the interpretation of Newman 1902, 445.

12. In this passage from the *Nicomachean Ethics* everything done through ignorance is always considered to be “non-voluntary” (οὐχ ἐκούσιον), but it is only thought to be “involuntary” (ἀκούσιον) when it also produces pain and regret. The fact that Aristotle does not consider non-voluntariness and involuntariness as synonyms here is not problematic to our interpretation, since he does not seem to apply the distinction in the *Politics*, where ἐκών/ἐκούσιος and ἄκων/ἀκούσιος are mutually exclusive.

13. In both *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.1 and *Eudemian Ethics* 2.9, Aristotle argues that one is not acting voluntarily when one is ignorant about certain elements relating to the deed; he does not say anything about ignorance of people acted upon.

Aristotle does not explicitly indicate in his ethical treatises that persuasion may be a form of deceit, but this is clearly how he understands it in a key passage at the end of *Politics* 5.4 (1304b7–17):

κινουσι δὲ τὰς πολιτείας ὅτε μὲν διὰ βίας ὅτε δὲ δι' ἀπάτης, διὰ βίας μὲν ἢ εὐθὺς ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἢ ὕστερον ἀναγκάζοντες. καὶ γὰρ ἡ ἀπάτη διττή. ὅτε μὲν γὰρ ἐξαπατήσαντες τὸ πρῶτον ἐκόντων μεταβάλλουσι τὴν πολιτείαν, εἴθ' ὕστερον βίᾳ κατέχουσιν ἀκόντων, οἷον ἐπὶ τῶν Τετρακοσίων τὸν δῆμον ἐξηπάτησαν φάσκοντες τὸν βασιλέα χρήματα παρέξειν πρὸς τὸν πόλεμον τὸν πρὸς Λακεδαιμονίους, ψευδάμενοι δὲ κατέχειν ἐπειρῶντο τὴν πολιτείαν· ὅτε δὲ ἐξ ἀρχῆς τε πείσαντες καὶ ὕστερον πάλιν πεισθέντων ἐκόντων ἄρχουσιν αὐτῶν.

Revolutions are effected in two ways, by force and by deceit. Force may be applied either at the time of making the revolution or afterwards. Deceit, again, is of two kinds; for sometimes they first deceive others willingly in a change of regime, and afterwards hold power through force without their will. This was what happened in the case of the Four Hundred, who deceived the people by telling them that the [Persian] king would provide money for the war against the Lacedaemonians, and, having cheated the people, still endeavored to retain the regime. In other cases they persuade at first, and afterwards, by a repetition of the persuasion, they rule them willingly.

In this passage Aristotle connects βία with involuntariness and ἀπάτη with voluntariness, for he understands persuasion here as a form of deceit. Since this passage from the fifth book of the *Politics* describes the two instances in which tyrannies arise, it implies that a tyrant may indeed rule both unwilling and willing subjects: when a tyrant uses force, his subjects do not assent to his rule, but when he uses deceitful persuasion, he will have their consent. Although commentators of the *Politics* have often linked this passage to Aristotle's conception of tyranny in 5.10 as regime of force or deceit, they seem to fail to connect it as well with Aristotle's twofold analysis in 5.11 on the preservation of tyranny.<sup>14</sup> Yet, as I will try to make clear, this difference between a tyranny over unwilling subjects and one over willing subjects, seems to be the issue at stake in this chapter.

#### IV

The structure of *Politics* 5.11 is the following: Aristotle begins with a short passage on the preservation of kingship (1313a18–33) and then continues by describing more elaborately two ways to preserve a tyranny, first the traditional way (1313a34–14a29) and then a new one (1314a29–15b10). This is not the place to discuss the entire chapter in detail, so I will only dwell upon some important points with regard to the preservation of tyranny.<sup>15</sup> The traditional way is characterized by measures that are considered to be typically tyrannical and illustrated with many examples from Greek or foreign history. Aristotle himself summarizes them under three headings: a tyrant should humiliate his subjects, create mistrust among them, and be aware that they are incapable of actions against him (1314a14–25). The other way to preserve a tyranny proceeds in almost the

14. The connection with tyranny is made in Newman 1902, 332–33; Schütrumpf and Gehrke 1996, 457–58; Curmis, De Luna, and Zizza 2016, 339. However, none of these commentators seem to accept that tyrants can rule willing subjects, because they fail to see how their ἀπάτη can be persuasion, as in *Eudemian Ethics* 2.8, and only understand it in its general sense, as in *Rhetoric* 1.15.

15. For a full discussion, see Simpson 1998, 410–15; Keyt 1999, 168–81.

opposite direction insofar as the monarch should not act as a harsh and cruel tyrant, but as if he was a good and benevolent king. Many of the measures to preserve such a tyranny are therefore presented as the reverse of the traditional way. In the end, Aristotle clearly favors this other way, for the rule of such a tyrant will be more noble, exercised over better subjects, and longer lasting, and the tyrant will have a virtuous disposition, or at least be half-good, for he will be not truly wicked, but only half-wicked (1315b4–10). What are our reasons now to believe that Aristotle is pointing in this chapter to the difference between a tyrannical rule with and one without the consent of the subjects?

Let us begin with two arguments related to the structure of this chapter and then continue with two arguments related to the content. A first argument with regard to structure is that the division of the chapter into three parts neatly corresponds to the conclusion of section II that kingship always implies the consent of the subjects, whereas tyranny might be with or without such consent. This could explain why Aristotle only deals with one way to preserve a kingship and two ways to preserve a tyranny. A second argument with regard to structure is that the two ways to preserve a tyranny are presented as each other's opposites, which agrees with the opposition between force and persuasion indicated in section III. It is in that respect also remarkable that the quoted passage from *Politics* 5.4 describes regimes governed at some point with force or always with persuasion, but only illustrates the former with an example from history.<sup>16</sup> This corresponds to the analysis of the two ways to preserve a tyranny, where only the measures of the traditional way are illustrated with (many) historical examples. On the basis of the structure of 5.11, we therefore have some reason to believe that the difference between voluntariness and involuntariness does indeed play a role here.

The two arguments related to the content of this chapter may give us further reason to think so. A first argument is that the whole analysis of the two ways to preserve a tyranny seems to agree very well with the concepts of force and deception.<sup>17</sup> The traditional way, on the one hand, corresponds quite strongly with the idea of using force: by using verbs as “to lop off” (κολούειν, 1313a40) or “to destroy” (ἀναιρεῖν, 1313a41) from the start, Aristotle illustrates how such a tyrant acts violently to remain in power. Naturally, the subjects of such a ruler would never assent to his rule. The new way, on the other hand, shows a strong similarity with the concept of deception: by constantly using the verbs “to seem” (δοκεῖν, 1314a39–40, b7) and especially “to appear” (φαίνεσθαι, 1314b15, b18, b23–24, b31, b33, b39; 1315a3, a21, b1), Aristotle makes clear, as scholars have recognized before, that a tyrant should not become a king, but only imitate one.<sup>18</sup> Such a tyrant should therefore deceitfully persuade his subjects of his being a king without really being so.<sup>19</sup> Does Aristotle consequently also believe that the subjects would assent to his rule?

16. The example in this passage from *Politics* 5.4 is not a tyranny, but the short-lived oligarchy of the so-called Four Hundred in Athens during the year 411 BCE, dealt with in the *Constitution of the Athenians* (29–33). Nonetheless, Aristotle could easily have given an example of a tyrant as well, for in his *Constitution of the Athenians* he both describes in 14.1 how Pisistratus first “won the people by persuasion” (συνέπεισε τὸν δῆμον) as in 15.2 how he tried to “recover the government by force” (ἀνασώσασθαι βίᾳ τὴν ἀρχήν).

17. Cf. the analysis in Boesche 1993, 17–22, at 20: “Aristotle regarded violence as inevitably necessary for a tyrant, but also as a sign of instability, and he certainly regarded deception as a more effective mean to make a tyranny lasting.”

18. See Petit 1993, 91; Christodoulou 2009, 168–69.

19. Although Aristotle does not literally mention the word ἄπαιτη within his analysis of the tyrant with the appearance of a king, he does connect it in *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.4 with the pretense of pleasure, “for it appears a good when it is not” (οὐ γὰρ οὐσα ἀγαθὸν φαίνεται, 1113a34–b1).

A second argument is that Aristotle indeed gives us at least two clues that the new way to preserve a tyranny is one with the consent of the subjects. A first clue is that Aristotle writes that such a tyrant “must keep only one thing, his [military] power, so that he may rule not only willing subjects but even non-willing subjects” (ἐν φυλάττοντα μόνον, τὴν δύναμιν, ὅπως ἄρχῃ μὴ μόνον βουλομένων ἀλλὰ καὶ μὴ βουλομένων, 1314a35–37).<sup>20</sup> This is a plain reference to the thought from *Politics* 5.10 (1313a14–16), discussed in section II, where Aristotle had suggested that tyrants may rule willing subjects as well.<sup>21</sup> I believe that we must understand its meaning in line with the passage from 5.4, discussed in section III: if a tyrant uses deceit at first and (military) force later on, he will eventually rule unwilling subjects, but if he uses and keeps using deceitful persuasion, he will rule willing subjects. Everything thus depends on how good he is at playing the role of the king. A second clue is that, if the tyrant is in fact good in keeping up appearances, he can indeed receive the consent of his subjects. It may seem odd at first sight that the subjects would voluntarily accept a regime that is not truly good, but only apparent. On the basis of a passage in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* 1.10, however, one may conclude that this is enough for receiving someone’s consent (1369b21–8):

πάντ’ ἂν εἴη ὅσα ἐκόντες πράττουσιν ἢ ἀγαθὰ ἢ φαινόμενα ἀγαθὰ, ἢ ἡδέα ἢ φαινόμενα ἡδέα· τίθημι γάρ καὶ τὴν τῶν κακῶν ἢ φαινομένων κακῶν ἢ ἀπαλλαγὴν ἢ ἀντι μείζονος ἐλάττονος μετάληψιν ἐν τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς (αἰρετὰ γάρ πως), καὶ τὴν τῶν λυπηρῶν ἢ φαινομένων λυπηρῶν ἢ ἀπαλλαγὴν ἢ μετάληψιν ἀντι μείζονος ἐλαττόνων ἐν τοῖς ἡδέσι ὡσαύτως.

[A]ll voluntary actions must either be or seem to be either good or pleasant; for I reckon among goods escape from evils or apparent evils and the exchange of a greater evil for a less (since these things are in a sense desirable), and likewise I count among pleasures escape from painful or apparently painful things and the exchange of a greater pain for a less.

The subjects are significantly better off in a regime where a single ruler appears as a good king rather than acts as a violent tyrant, for it will be “nobler and more enviable” (καλλίω καὶ ζηλωτοτέρων, 1315b5–6). Aristotle, therefore, certainly must maintain that they can assent to the rule of a tyrant who acts in the new way. At this point, I hope to have proven that Aristotle’s analysis of the preservation of tyranny serves as an indication how a tyrant can rule both with and without the consent of his subjects. The only remaining points to make then are to show why this is important within Aristotle’s political philosophy and how Aristotle relates in this respect to Plato.

## V

If it is true that Aristotle points out in *Politics* 5.11 that a tyrant can also rule willing subjects, what would be the philosophical consequences of such a thought? The answer

20. That δύναμις here means “military power” is plain from *Politics* 3.15 (1286b27–40), where Aristotle uses the same concept in his discussion of the size of a monarch’s guard. Interesting to note, although quite obvious, is that Aristotle indicates that using such a power is a measure of force, for a monarch then “will be capable to force those who are not willing to obey” (δυνήσεται βιάζεσθαι τοὺς μὴ βουλομένους πειθαρχεῖν, 1286b29–30). This is thus a measure for a traditional tyrant.

21. On the basis of these two sentences from *Politics* 5.10–11, Keyt (1999, 174–75) seems to reach a similar conclusion: “The tyrant who takes this path tries to win his subjects’ acquiescence in, if not their active consent to, his rule.”

seems plain and simple: everyone will be better off in comparison with a traditional tyranny, both the tyrant himself and his subjects. It is thus an improvement of this deviant regime, without transforming it into a correct one as kingship, for in the end the ruler still remains a tyrant. An explicit defense of this interpretation is given by Richard Bodéüs, who compares this situation with a social contract between the tyrant and his subjects: the subjects accept that they do not have a share in the power of the tyrant, while the tyrant tries to take measures that are at least not in the disadvantage of his subjects.<sup>22</sup> The concept “social contract,” used by modern philosophers such as Hobbes or Rousseau, may be misleading to describe this situation, for Aristotle seems to believe that the subjects of this tyrant are deceived rather than knowingly assent to his rule. Nevertheless, I do not want to quarrel with Bodéüs’ interpretation as such, because other than that it seems to concur with my argumentation. One important aspect, however, still seems left out in the existing literature, namely that the analysis may also indicate a subtle difference with regard to the injustice of both ways to preserve a tyranny.

The fifth book of the *Nicomachean Ethics* is entirely devoted to the virtue of justice and in the last chapters Aristotle investigates its relation to voluntariness and involuntariness. In chapter 5.9 he handles the question whether someone can be voluntarily harmed and distinguishes in this regard “suffering injustice” (τὸ ἄδικοι πάσχειν) from “being treated unjustly” (ἀδικεῖσθαι): they are not equivalent, because someone can suffer injustice incidentally without being treated unjustly, just as someone can do something unjust incidentally without acting unjustly (1136a23–8, cf. 1135a15–20). This is owing to the wish of the person acted upon, for only if this person does not want something to happen, is he or she also treated unjustly.<sup>23</sup> This is why Aristotle connects suffering injustice and being treated unjustly with different statuses of willingness: “Then a man may be voluntarily harmed and voluntarily suffer what is unjust, but no one is voluntarily treated unjustly; for no one wishes to be unjustly treated” (βλάπτεται μὲν οὖν τις ἐκὼν καὶ τᾶδικοι πάσχει, ἀδικεῖται δ’ οὐδεὶς ἐκὼν· οὐδεὶς γὰρ βούλεται, 1136b5–6). In other words, when you voluntarily accept the actions of one another, you cannot be truly treated unjustly.

It seems, therefore, that the subjects of a tyrant who are voluntarily accepting his rule still suffer injustice, for after all it remains a deviant regime, though they are not being treated unjustly as well. In playing the role of the king, the tyrant deceives his subjects, but his actions will be carried out so that he may gain their consent. In the new way to preserve a tyranny in *Politics* 5.11, Aristotle indeed says that this tyrant should make sure that his subjects do not fall victim to “being treated unjustly” (ἀδικεῖσθαι, 1315a35). But such a tyrant does not *become* a king, who truly acts as a guard in order that they “suffer no injustice” (μηθὲν ἄδικον πάσχωσιν, 1311a1). In that sense, a tyrant who is ruling willing subjects is acting unjustly without also treating his subjects that way. This is in contrast to the subjects of a traditional tyrant, who receive an unjust treatment in every respect. When comparing the new and traditional way to preserve a tyranny, one can see thus that the former is an improvement on the latter with regard to justice as well. The

22. See Bodéüs 1999, 132–33.

23. According to Broadie and Rowe (2002, 353) the idea refers back to *Nicomachean Ethics* 5.8 (1135b19–24), where Aristotle indicates that a man who acts with knowledge but not after deliberation is only acting unjustly, without being unjust himself. The latter is only the case when he acts from choice, which will make him an unjust and vicious man as well.

consent of the subjects does not make a monarchy just, but may nonetheless indicate that it is less unjust than one without consent.<sup>24</sup>

If a tyrant ruling willing subjects is an original idea in the *Politics*, the final question will be how it relates to the work of his predecessors, especially Plato.<sup>25</sup> Although there are many correspondences between both thinkers, I want to argue that Aristotle really distinguishes himself from his former master with his new way to preserve a tyranny. Plato describes in the eighth and ninth book of the *Republic* how a tyranny emerges and what characterizes a tyrant. Christodoulou has pointed out that Plato also used the idea of a tyrant playing a theatrical role in the ninth book (577a–b), just as Aristotle’s deceitful tyrant from the *Politics*, who “acts in the character of the king” (ὕποκρινόμενον τὸν βασιλικόν, 1314a40); he nevertheless admits that there is a difference between Plato’s and Aristotle’s tyrant, insofar as the former will stop playing his role when he is in power, whereas the latter may also continue his deceit.<sup>26</sup> I believe that this is exactly the reason why Plato’s description of a tyrant is only in agreement with Aristotle’s traditional way of preserving a tyranny. In the passage from *Politics* 5.4 it is indeed pointed out that someone who deceives first but afterwards rules through force—the *modus operandi* of Plato’s tyrant in *Republic* 9 (573e–74b)—does not rule willing subjects in the end. On the contrary, many of Aristotle’s listed measures to maintain a tyranny in the traditional way, such as killing citizens (1313a40–41), impoverishing the people (1313b18–21), or constantly going to war (1313b28–29), also occur in Plato’s *Republic* 8 (566e–67a). Although Aristotle’s analysis of the traditional way contains many historical examples, he actually seems to have adopted the main ideas from his former master.<sup>27</sup> But additionally, Aristotle also pays attention to a tyrant who successfully continues his deception, through which he maintains to hold the consent of his subjects.

The reason that Aristotle has enlarged Plato’s analysis of tyranny may be that he does not agree in the end with the vast contrast that Plato sketches between a king and a tyrant. In *Republic* 9 (576d–e) Plato states that the opposition between kingship and tyranny is the largest among any of the regimes, and Aristotle certainly adopts this thought in *Politics* 4.2 (1289a39–b3). But in *Politics* 5.11, he adds a new variant of tyranny in order to show that a tyrant can be very similar to a king, insofar as both rule willing subjects. Since the consent of the subjects must be understood as a good demarcation criterion between kingship and tyranny, as we have indicated in section II, Aristotle then shows how tyranny in the end may approximate kingship. In this respect, he did not change his mind on tyranny in the fifth book of the *Politics* in reference to the fourth, but merely extended his thought.<sup>28</sup>

BRECHT BUEKENHOUT  
KU Leuven

24. This may then serve as a more balanced perspective on this new way to preserve a tyranny than the one from Simpson (1998, 415), who argues that such a tyrant’s rule “being over unwilling and equal or superior subjects, is still fundamentally unjust.” For the relation between the consent of the ruled in a monarchy and the justice of a regime, see also Riesbeck 2016, 239–48.

25. A comparison with other thinkers such as Xenophon or Isocrates is of less philosophical importance, but may be found in Gastaldi 2009, 151–52.

26. See Christodoulou 2009, 160–61 and at 166: “Pourtant, l’analyse d’Aristote se différencie de celle de Platon sur un point essentiel: le Stagirite ne distingue pas deux temps du processus tyrannique, deux moments dans le comportement du tyran. L’idée essentielle d’Aristote est que, même après avoir obtenu le pouvoir dans la cité, le tyran peut continuer de jouer le rôle du bon roi, du bon chef.”

27. See Schüttrumpf and Gehrke 1996, 575–78.

28. I would like to thank *CP*’s anonymous reviewer and Tim Christiaens for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this note.

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THE ELEMENTS OF SLAUGHTER: ON A PROPHETIC ACROSTIC  
IN LUCAN *BELLUM CIVILE* 7.153–58

As the battle of Pharsalia looms in the seventh book of Lucan's *Bellum civile* (hereafter *BC*), portents both meteorological and animal appear (7.151–86)—signs that, despite their horror, are actually welcomed by the soldiers, who take terrible signs as good omens for a terrible deed (180–84). These omens are attributed to *Fortuna* (152), but it is never safe to take Lucan's Fortune at face value when the author himself is so deeply involved. The portents occur as the soldiers prepare their weapons for battle (*BC* 7.151–60):

non tamen abstinuit **venturos** prodere **casus**  
per varias Fortuna **notas**. nam, Thessala rura  
Cum peterent, totus venientibus obstitit **aether**  
[inque oculis hominum fregerunt fulmina nubes]  
**Adversasque** faces immensoque igne **columnas**  
Et trabibus mixtis avidos typhonas aquarum

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