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Sarah Broadie was recognized as one of the world's leading scholars on Aristotle and Plato. This article is about her contribution to our understanding of Greek philosophy and will say nothing about her career or honours.[1] Her work opened up new areas of inquiry in modality, ethics, psychology, theology and cosmology in ancient Greek philosophy, and even those who, after study of her arguments, disagreed with her conclusions readily acknowledge her inspiration and influence. She had an extraordinary ability to see alternatives – not only non-traditional interpretations, but also new criteria for testing interpretations – and it was characteristic of her to explore every layer of an alternative before sharing it in print. Through her example she showed others the rigour, serious striving for the truth, and depth of philosophical engagement that is possible in the study of philosophy's ancient past. Accordingly this article is structured in such a way as to bring out not the conclusions she reached so much as her exemplary qualities as a scholar in the history of philosophy, or, to use Aristotelian language, the intellectual virtues of her scholarship. I take my examples primarily from her books and discuss only a few of her articles. What follows gives no more than a taste of her work, and I hope it will encourage others to visit or revisit her writing and savour it directly.

By way of illustrating her influence on the field I start with not a book or article but a talk. Her presentation on the *Timaeus* at a Cambridge seminar in 1993 was cited for a period of over ten years by several other scholars, all leaders in the field, who comment on its powerful influence on their work.[2] One part of her talk's influence was to make scholars rethink the Platonic distinction between corporeality and incorporeality. In Plato corporeal things are distinguished from the incorporeal by being seen and touched, not by being spatial, for both corporeal and incorporeal entities can have size, shape, location and movement.[3] But she was

[1] Since her death in August 2021 obituaries and other tributes have described not only her career and the honours with which her achievements were recognized, but also the personal qualities with which she earned respect and devotion around the world. See especially the appreciation posted by her colleagues at St Andrews here: About Sarah – Remembering Sarah Broadie (st-andrews.ac.uk)

[2] In chronological order: D.N.Sedley '"Becoming like god" in the *Timaeus* and Aristotle', in T.Calvo and L.Brisson (eds.) *Interpreting the Timaeus-Critias*, Sankt Augustin 1997, 330 n.4; M.F.Burnyeat 'Plato on why mathematics is good for the soul', in T.Smiley (ed.) *Mathematics and Necessity: Essays in the History of* Philosophy, Oxford 2000, 59 n. 83; T.Johansen *Plato's Natural Philosophy: A Study of the Timaeus-Critias*, Cambridge 2004, 140 n.7. My thanks to Thomas Johansen for discussion of her talk (at which I was not present) and its influence.

[3] See also her "Soul and body in Plato and Descartes".

also in the vanguard of a more fundamental shift in approaches to the *Timaeus*. She championed a kind of literalism towards the parts of it that strike modern interpreters as outlandish, such as corporeal (or partly corporeal) gods, the creation of the universe in time, and the distinction between the divine creator and his intelligent products. But her own kind of literalism consistently involved asking, from a philosophical perspective, what could motivate such passages; and the effect was to show that the dialogue, by raising some of the most fundamental questions that any theory of the universe's beginning must tackle, remains a rewarding object of philosophical scrutiny today. Through her talk and then eventually her book of 2011, *Nature and Divinity*, she inspired an enormous range of research into the *Timaeus*, which used to be a comparatively neglected dialogue and is now among the most studied parts of Plato's writing.

She is best known for her work on Plato and Aristotle, particularly the latter, and chose as the title of her collected essays *Aristotle and Beyond*. But some of her work is indispensable reading for research across almost the whole of ancient Greek philosophy (and, indeed, beyond). To give just one example: virtuous action is a major preoccupation of many ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, such as the Stoics and later Platonists, as well as Plato and Aristotle themselves. Perhaps more than any other scholar of ancient Greek ethics, Broadie shows the importance of understanding what such action is like from the point of view of the agents themselves: virtuous people should be blind neither to the appropriateness of their actions nor to the value of so acting, but does it follow that such people act virtuously *for the sake of being virtuous*, and with thoughts of their own virtue (rather than, say, the suffering or needs of others) foremost in their minds? Aristotle might be taken to suggest that when he writes about acting "for the sake of the noble". But Broadie argues that, when we spell out in full what Aristotle means, we can make sense of virtuous people's self-awareness without attributing to them repellent self-absorption. She offers an alternative whereby agents, in their choices, engage with their circumstances directly, rather than via considerations of virtue itself. They take care to do the appropriate thing in the circumstances and understand the appropriateness of each particular act; and their disposition so to care and act is their virtue. None of that requires the agents to say to themselves 'courage requires me to…' or, worse still, 'I will safeguard my generosity by…' (*Ethics with Aristotle*, 94–5).

Creativity and textual fidelity

I will say most about Broadie's ways of engaging with ancient texts. In her account of the Good in Plato's *Republic*, she sets herself a constraint: any viable interpretation must make it intelligible why, in the text, Plato chose the *sun* to illustrate goodness. Here are two examples of how she applies that constraint to questions of interpretation (*Plato's Sun-Like Good*, 40–1, 137–8). Is the Good (a) an object of investigation or (b) a tool or resource used for understanding other items? Plato's choice of the sun, she argues, makes (b) more plausible. Of course Plato recognizes that we can gaze at the sun. But we do better to use it as a way of recognizing and identifying other things, by bringing them out of the shadows, lifting them up and turning them over in its light – and that, she adds, is what Plato's Socrates actually emphasizes about the sun in the text. Another question: when Socrates says that "being" or "reality" is added to Forms by goodness, does he mean that they become what it is – that is, that they become *good* – because of it? Apply the sun analogy again. The objects illuminated

by the sun are extremely diverse. Most are not at all sun-like, whether illuminated by the sun or not, and Plato's text contains no suggestion that they are. So whatever the sun analogy is intended to illustrate cannot be the Good's conferring its own property or properties on other Forms. I will return later to her use of the principle of charity, but it is already evident here: she accords Plato enough respect to assume that he chose his analogies well.

But the main point to note here is that, in her hands, the constraints imposed by disciplined study of a text prove astonishingly fertile. By systematically making the sun analogy her guide she develops a brilliantly original account of how goodness relates to reasoning about the virtues in politics. Future philosopher-rulers, in their training for political engagement, test accounts of a virtue, such as a definition of justice, by considering whether whatever conforms to the account is *good*. And when philosophers actually take on political responsibilities they continue to use goodness as a test: they ask themselves whether, in the current circumstances, probably unforeseen during their training, applying a particular account of a virtue in this or that way would be good (*Plato's Sun-Like Good*, 44–52, 84–90). Very few interpretations of the *Republic* have made the connection between political training and leadership on the one hand and study of goodness on the other seem so plausible; and it is born of treating the sun analogy with the utmost seriousness. Just as, on her account, goodness is used as a test in the philosopher-ruler's training and exercise of power, so in her own exposition of the *Republic* she continually returns to the sun analogy to make sure that interpretative questions are considered in its light.

Her writing about Aristotle's ethics is another area where fidelity to the text, and the interpretative constraints that implies, stimulate, not impede, philosophical reflection, to such an extent that it becomes impossible for her readers to discern a boundary between study of the text and productive use of the philosophical imagination. Throughout the book she keeps as a guiding principle the (textual) fact that Aristotle's writing about ethics has a practical orientation. In another author's hands, this might have become a way of excusing Aristotle from challenges: he cannot be expected to tackle *that* difficult question, as his aims are – it is tempting to add 'merely' – practical. But Broadie's treatment is utterly different. First, she scotches the merest hint of that 'merely'. On the contrary, she celebrates, with Aristotle, the dignity of practical reasoning in the face of Platonic veneration of an unchanging world. Reason does not face a twofold choice, between contemplating unchanging Forms and being dragged around at the mercy of changing, contingent items. Such contingency as we find in the sphere of action is not reason's enslavement but a reflection of its power and responsibility, for the contingency of human actions is the contingency of its being up to the rational deliberator herself or himself to decide what to do (*Ethics with Aristotle*, 214).

Secondly, the practical nature of Aristotle's writing is used not to evade challenges but to clarify exactly to what he is responding, and how, and how the debate must then play out. In Aristotle's writing on the voluntary, is he facing issues of determinism and necessity? Yes and no, Broadie answers: he is confronting questions about necessity and contingency *as a philosopher of ethics*, not taking a stand against determinism. From the practical point of view, when someone looks at options for action, what he or she calls 'necessities' are something specific: the fixed context of an agent's action, that can be reckoned with and taken account of by the agent in making a choice, but not changed. The only necessities that fall within the scope of practical reasoning are these decision-informing necessities. And so in saying 'not everything is necessary', the practical agent is saying merely that some of the

other items in the same practical scope are different, in that they *can* be changed by his or her actions. By contrast, determinists who say that *everything* is necessary adopt a less restricted perspective that is unavailable to this agent. If determinists are to resist Aristotle, and the practical perspective for which he speaks, they must decamp onto the same ethical terrain and show practical deliberation to be pointless and unable to make a difference (*Ethics with Aristotle*, 157–9).

Indeed, in her book the fact that Aristotle's writing is practical is used to motivate a challenge for her readers. At the very start she asks what it says about *us* if we study philosophical ethics with no expectation that it will make a practical difference: we must believe either that conclusions are not to be found or that the finding of conclusions will make no difference to behaviour. And if so, why bother reading such ethics at all? "There are better ways [than reading philosophical ethics] of being practical, and if we want to exercise our intellects there are more rigorous disciplines than ethics for that" (*Ethics with Aristotle*, 3–4).

Cleaving to the practical aims of Aristotle's writing also yields insights in completely unexpected areas. For example, why does Aristotle offer such lofty praise of *non*-practical contemplation? It cannot be an idle interest in composing paeans to the intellect: to think that would be to disrespect the practical orientation of the text. But what could be the practical purpose of celebrating the non-practical? Answer: his audience includes future political leaders, and they need to hear about the value of intellectual activity detached from practical action. This prompts her, first, to contrast Aristotle's Athens with the social and organizational situation in which we live, with the comparative security of funded institutions of research and higher learning, even in non-practical disciplines, such as the history of philosophy itself. Secondly, she explains that defending the value of contemplation to his audience has been made a more urgent need by Aristotle's own philosophy. Other philosophers can allow contemplation somehow to derive its value from the value, far more widely accepted in his or our society, of practical reason. But Aristotle's emphatic and thoroughgoing distinction between practical and theoretical reason makes that line of defence impossible (*Ethics with Aristotle*, 394–8).

Nearsighted and farsighted analysis

We have seen how Broadie's reconstructions make close reference to particular passages, such as the sun analogy of Plato's *Republic*. Sometimes the way she achieved originality was by bringing out the philosophical significance of apparently minor features of a text. For example, in Plato's *Theaetetus*, an exploration of knowledge, the final attempt to make sense of knowledge tests a definition of it as 'true judgement (*doxa*) with an account (*logos*)'. A lot has been written about the meaning of '*doxa*' (some of it by Broadie herself) and whether 'judgement', 'belief' or 'opinion' is the right translation; and in the text Plato himself makes Socrates explicitly consider various interpretations of *'logos*'. We might suppose these to be the only interpretative questions worth asking. But in one of her latest articles ("The knowledge unacknowledged in the *Theaetetus*") Broadie shows the significance of how we understand the 'with'. She argues that Socrates treats it in what she calls an 'additive' sense – that is, the true judgement that is an ingredient of knowledge can be had on its own, in the absence of knowledge – and shows that this understanding of 'with' is by no means philosophically innocent.

An Aristotelian example is found in her discussion of *prohairesis* (rational choice) and the cognate adjective *prohairetikos*, translated by others as (*inter alia*) 'concerned with choice' or 'involving choice'. We might think that the only task for the philosophical interpreter is to establish the meaning of the noun, *prohairesis*, and the meaning of the adjective will simply follow with no need for further reflection. Not so, Broadie argues. For the adjectival ending '-*ikos*' means not 'involving …', as previous translations suggest, but 'causing …' or 'tending to cause…'. And this is very important for understanding what Aristotle means when he speaks of virtue as *prohairetikos*: it *promotes* or *tends to result* in a choice (*Ethics with Aristotle*, 78).

But she combined this eye for underdiscussed but significant details with an unequalled ability to see far in both logical directions: both to what supports a theory and to its implications. Consider, for example, how she writes about Aristotle's assumption that change depends on an agent. A problem derives from it: if all change is transitive, either an *acting upon* or a *being acted upon*, how can the motion of a projectile be accounted for after it has left the thrower's hand (*Physics* 8.10, 266b27–267a22)? Well, we might say, so much the worse for Aristotle's assumption about the dependence of change on agents. But her approach is to turn through 180 degrees and ask what supports the assumption, and in tackling that question she makes her reader look, with her, far beyond this part of Aristotle's text. Her answer is (after some simplification) as follows. We intuitively suppose there to be a difference between merely relational change and real change: for example, when my son grows and becomes taller than me, he has grown, but have I changed? Aristotle's analysis of change in Book 3, which is in terms of potentiality to be in a different state, does not show my son's change to be any realer than my own change: my son was potentially taller than me, and I was potentially shorter than him. But now take the *cause* of the different relational properties. It is whatever caused my son to grow, as it is because of that both that I have become the shorter of us and he the taller. That cause stands in a particular spatial relationship with only one of us: it is a set of conditions in my son and his environment. By contrast, the same cause can perfectly well be removed from me, as well as from all the other people he outgrows; the only restriction is that they and it be in the same universe. It is this concept of a particular, localized cause that allows us to distinguish real change from relational change. So Aristotle's assumption cannot be discarded lightly, even when it runs into difficulties (*Nature, Change, and Agency*, 169–75). As she recognizes, there remains the challenge of showing whether Aristotle's notion of an agent is this notion of a cause standing in a special relation with the subject of change, and that prompts a new line of inquiry: what exactly is his notion of agency?

The same book provides an example of her ability to see far in the other direction – that is, to see implications where most others would not, and I hope it will give a sense of the apparently sudden, but in fact meticulously prepared, developments in her writing that made it so exciting. In her outline of Aristotle's theory of natures, she observes that natural substances have characteristic behaviour that is specific to their sort, and that we learn what substances are by observing such behaviour. No surprise here for those who know their Aristotle. Then she asks: but what do external circumstances contribute? The characteristic behaviour, such as earth's falling or fire's rising, derives from the substance, not its circumstances, which can promote such behaviour only insofar as they enable the substance to express itself. Circumstances play a more active role only when they prevent a substance

from expressing itself. Next question, and here is the unexpected twist: what then would Aristotle say about scientific practice and systematic experiments? Today we take it for granted that controlling the conditions must help understanding. But for Aristotle scientists' aim is to understand the natural substances, and he would ask what is gained by artificially controlling the conditions. If the substance expresses its nature, it does so just as it would in a natural environment, and controlling the conditions has given the scientists no benefit. If the substance does not express itself, the conditions must have impeded it – and so all the scientists have done is obstruct their own cognitive access to the substance's nature. Broadie allows that any explanation of why ancient Greeks showed little interest in systematic experiments must be complex and diverse, but she makes a strong case for adding to the list of reasons Aristotle's metaphysics and similar intuitions in his compatriots (*Nature, Change, and Agency*, 33–4).

Plato without Platonism, Aristotle without Aristotelianism

Another distinctive feature of her scholarship is the deeper level at which she strives to understand the decisions ancient philosophers made. She saw 'that is simply the sort of thing we'd expect Plato/Aristotle to say' as no answer at all. To that end she sometimes detaches Plato or Aristotle from the theories with which they are now associated and helps us see them as really facing *choices*, where the familiar '-isms' are only one option.[4] For example, one of the most familiar claims of Aristotle's *Physics* is that complex organisms have what he calls 'natures'. Rather than taking this for granted, or outlining an objection and then moving on, Broadie insists on getting from him an answer to the question *why* he should attribute natures to these complexes, when he would deny the attribution in the case of other complexes (*Nature, Change, and Agency*, 50).

There is a similarly tenacious interrogative attitude when she writes about the theory of Forms in the *Timaeus*. Why, in that dialogue, is such care taken to showing that there are Forms of fire and other elements? As she points out (and, as often, something that seems obvious after the telling needed her to draw attention to it), nothing else in the *Timaeus* receives such extended defence.

> Why is the position so important to Plato? We have, I think, left behind any temptation to be satisfied with ruminations such as 'Well, Plato was a Platonist, so of course he wanted to have a full range of Forms.' Even if such a generalisation is not completely useless as an explanation, it fails to account for the extraordinary importance of securing the Forms of the four elements. (*Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus*, 235)

Her own answer has to do with what is ruled out, in this particular context, by the insistence on these particular Forms: Plato is excluding the possibility that the four elements are self-

[4] When returning to her books it is remarkable to see how she writes without any labour-saving reliance on '-isms' and similar words. Her book on Aristotle's ethics is a model of how to philosophize about Aristotle and happiness without much talk at all of 'eudaimonism'. Compare her comment on how to discuss the separation of souls from each other and from the cosmic soul in the *Timaeus*: "the mythic presentation calls less for academic paraphrase by some term like "individuality" (planted down and left at that), than for a detailed or concrete unravelling of what is presented, putting together Plato's philosophical theory of the divine cosmos with what we know about human life from ordinary experience" (*Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus*, 96).

sufficient for their own existence and operate with complete autonomy as the materials of our world. That answer is of a piece with her rigorous and wide-ranging contextualization of the *Timaeus* in Presocratic philosophy.

Earlier in the same book she asks on what grounds Plato denies that (as some Presocratics had suggested) the intelligence responsible for the world is itself material. She shows that an argument for that rejection is available to Plato, once the perfection of the cosmos has been set down as a basic assumption. Suppose the world-building intelligence emerges from a particular order of the material elements. The ordering of the elements would itself be a work of intelligence, and that order-creating intelligence must be prior to, and so distinct from, the intelligence that emerges from the order of matter. So someone advocating a material intelligent cause for the cosmos has to shift his ground and take the intelligence to be grounded in the elements as they just happen to be distributed in space. But then there is nothing to ensure that a *single* intelligence arises that coordinates and takes charge of everything. And the perfection of the cosmos requires the world-building intelligence to apply itself to matter universally, as physical matter not integrated into the cosmos would make the latter vulnerable to disruption or even destruction. In offering this argument she stays neutral as to psychological facts about Plato himself. It is possible that he found a materialist view of world-making intelligence too distasteful or implausible to consider seriously. But we cannot be sure of that:

> It may instead be true that he was willing to give serious consideration to various earlier theories in which matter, or some force that operates in matter, is intelligent and works purposefully to form the cosmos and its parts. Since such willingness is at least a possibility, it is interesting to see that Plato possessed, whether or not he used it in his actual thinking, a cosmological *reason* for rejecting any simple form of teleological materialism: namely, that this sort of theory cannot bear the weight of the assumption that this cosmos is superlatively excellent. (*Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus*, 16–17, 25–6)

Generosity to both sides

It was characteristic of her to treat both sides of a debate with generosity, by showing the best that can be said of either party. This is shown on the largest scale in her writing books both about Plato's account of the Good and about Aristotle's ethics. In the first book of his *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle objects that the term 'good' is predicated in all the categories (good qualities, good quantities, good relations, and so on) and so there cannot be a single entity, such as a Platonic Form, behind the term (1096a23–9). Even though she was the author of one of the most important books of this or the last century on Aristotle's ethics, in her last book, on goodness in Plato's *Republic*, Broadie argues that her own interpretation of Plato defends him against Aristotle's criticism (*Plato's Sun-Like Good*, 51–2). On her account, goodness features in a particular kind of *question* ('is … good?'), not one of the declarative predications distinguished by the Aristotelian theory of categories. So formulated, the question does not fall into any one of the categories, but once the ellipsis is filled in with a categorially determinate item (e.g 'is this quality of the soul good?'), 'good' in the question enters the same category. But the ellipsis-containing formula is nonetheless a *single* one.

We see the same generosity to both sides in her writing on Plato and the sophists. Yes, Plato (and Socrates) rightly saw a need to save the power of argument from abuse just as it first

began to be theorized (*Ethics with Aristotle*, 395). But it is to the sophists' credit that they, through their experiments in teaching people to be virtuous and politically adept, opened the eyes of their philosophical successors to the enormous potential, for good or harm, of systematic education: "nothing could remove the sense once created of a gap at the centre of human life which unreflective values and practice, even at their best, would never fill from their own resources" (*Ethics with Aristotle*, 369–70).[5] A third example of even-handed generosity is provided by her account of Aristotle's objections to his predecessor Empedocles. Her main objective is to make sense of Aristotle's own theory and criticism, but this never causes a wavering in her commitment to seeing how Empedocles can defend himself (*Nature, Change, and Agency*, 78–9). You have to step outside her thought-world to appreciate fully this quality, for once you join her in her rigorous exposition of a debate, it becomes unthinkable to achieve a sympathetic account of one philosopher by means of a mean-spirited or simplistic account of another.

Tough charity

Despite her own lifelong dedication to ancient Greek philosophers, she did not fear asking, in an unsentimental spirit that sometimes startles, about the value of what was being put forward in an ancient text. For example, Plato's comparison between the Good and the sun suggests that goodness enables people to understand objects of intellection, just as the sun enables sighted animals to see objects of vision. Is there more to this than "hot air", and do we have "reason to accept the sun-analogy as saying something true as well as beautiful" (*Plato's Sun-Like Good*, 20, 22; cf. 138)?

She was of course no stranger of the principle of charity. But her characteristic way of applying it was in fact to demand more, not less, of a text. She credits ancient philosophers with enough sense not to expect blind credulity in their readers – "Plato does not expect unreasoned acceptance here any more than anywhere else" (*Plato's Sun-Like Good*, 19) – and then sees where they provide the argument or justification that is owed to their readers. In the case of the sun analogy and knowledge, she argues that the explanation of goodness and intellection is given in the Divided Line, where the account of dialectic outlines how goodness makes the virtues intelligible. Readers are given some reason to believe *that* goodness can be a source of knowledge by being shown *how* it is (20). Her approach is the exegetical equivalent of a parent's responsibly allowing her or his child autonomy and risk. Expose the texts to tough questions, and they will grow, not shrink, in stature.

Epilogue: the music of reasoned action

I close with a quotation of her final book. It illustrates the elegance of her writing and her ability to incorporate in her scholarly voice both ancient imagery and imagery of her own making. But the subject matter also speaks to her high esteem for thoroughly reasoned practical action, which (as her colleagues, friends and students would enthusiastically confirm) found expression in her own personal generosity and sensitivity to others as well as

[5] See also her brilliant chapter "The sophists and Socrates".

in her professional writing. The passage describes what happens to the Forms of the virtues when they are implemented in political reform and law-making. For example, what happens to the Form of justice when just laws are passed? The Forms do not depend on such implementation for their existence, but they nonetheless become further realized when they become a point of reference for human action.

> The forms themselves, those pure eternal intelligibles, will have come into action as objects of human thought with the potential to affect society and people's lives. They are still there in the 'plain of truth' standing on their sacred pedestal (*Phaedrus* 248b6; 254b6–7), but they are no longer doing only that. They are no longer like a musical score which is indeed correctly called 'music' and 'symphony' or 'concerto' but is never played or chosen to be played, perhaps because no one can understand it. They are now like a score which even before it is played has been established as part of some working musician's repertoire. (*Plato's Sun-Like Good*, 141)[6]

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