

SARAH BROADIE

Sarah Jean Broadie

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elected Fellow of the British Academy 2003

by

URSULA COOPE

Fellow of the Academy

Summary. Sarah (Waterlow) Broadie was a scholar of Ancient Greek Philosophy. She wrote three monographs on Aristotle, the first two discussing his philosophy of nature and his account of modality, and the third focusing on his *Nicomachean Ethics*. In later years, she turned to Plato, writing two further monographs, one on the *Timaeus*, and the other on the role of the form of the Good in the *Republic*. Her aim was not only to cast light on the thought of these philosophers, but also to help us to think for ourselves about some of the questions they discussed. Throughout her life, there are certain central philosophical themes to which she kept returning: puzzles about agency, time, modality and freewill; questions about divinity, the ultimate origins of the universe, ethical virtue, and the nature of practical reasoning. Her interest in these topics is reflected in her style of doing ancient philosophy. Her work shows how it is possible to acknowledge our distance from Plato and Aristotle, while at the same time engaging with them as interlocutors in a common philosophical project.



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I

Sarah Jean Waterlow was born on 3 November 1941 in her mother's family home in Galhampton, Somerset. Her mother, Angela (Gray) Waterlow, read history at Cambridge and was a talented painter. Her father, John Waterlow, was a distinguished clinical scientist, who worked on childhood malnutrition. John Waterlow's father, Sir Sydney Waterlow, was a classicist and diplomat, who had served as British Ambassador to Greece in the 1930s. An ancestor (another Sir Sydney) donated what is now Waterlow Park to Londoners in 1889 as a 'garden for the gardenless'.

John Waterlow's work took the family first to Gambia and then to Jamaica. In Gambia, where they moved when Sarah was seven and stayed for 18 months, Sarah and her two younger brothers (Oliver and Dick) were educated at home by their mother. In 1951, when Sarah was 9, the family moved to Kingston, Jamaica, where John set up and directed a Tropical Metabolism Research Unit. Several of the university buildings feature cubist-inspired murals painted by her mother, Angela. Sarah was proud of her mother's painting, and had fond memories of the colours and sounds of Jamaica. She lived there for three years, attending St Andrew High School for Girls.

The children and their mother returned to the UK in 1953, and Sarah went to Sherborne School for Girls in Dorset. Her school friends remember her as brilliant at art and classics, but rubbish at games (a games teacher commented that she 'lacked attack'). She had a sense of mischief: very good at caricatures and at making up doggerel poetry about various teachers, her fingers always covered in black ink. She managed to persuade the school to allow her to skip games lessons to use the art room. In 1960, she went up to Somerville College, where she read *Literae Humaniores* (classics and philosophy), followed by a BPhil in Philosophy, and where she was taught by Elizabeth Anscombe (FBA) and Philippa Foot (FBA).

II

In 1967, Sarah Waterlow moved to Edinburgh University to take up a job as a Lecturer in the Philosophy Department. There she met her future husband, Frederick Broadie (1913–2009), a charismatic senior colleague. They were to marry in 1984, when Sarah also converted to Judaism and changed her name to 'Broadie'. Frederick had an unusual past for an academic. He had left school at 14, earning his living by teaching and playing the violin. During the war, while employed as a wireless operator for RAF Bomber Command, he had sent off a handwritten essay on Spinoza to the University of Oxford (addressed 'to whom it may concern'), and on the strength of this was awarded a studentship to read PPE at Balliol. Frederick had broad philosophical interests. He taught

himself Latin in order to write a book on Descartes' *Meditations*; in later years, he was preoccupied by questions about divine creation, a subject also central to some of Sarah's later work. As well as being a philosopher, Frederick was a published poet and novelist, his novels being based partly on his early experiences growing up in Manchester. Music continued to be important to him throughout his life. In later years, he taught himself to play the cello and the flute. At his funeral, Sarah was to describe him as 'profound, passionate, generous and courageous'.

Together with Frederick, Sarah threw herself into the Edinburgh literary, artistic and musical scene. Frederick appreciated Sarah's talent, and encouraged her to believe in her own potential as a philosopher. At his suggestion, during her early years as a lecturer, she studied towards a PhD (awarded 1978), under the supervision of A.H. Coxon in the Classics Department.

Her early work included several papers on Plato¹ and two non-historical papers discussing questions about agency and causal direction.² In her collected papers (published in 2007), she points out that these two early non-historical papers were written under the influence of the linguistic philosophy, then prevalent in Oxford, which she later came to regard as unfruitful.³ But she remained, throughout her life, preoccupied with the topics of agency and causal directedness. It was Frederick who encouraged her to approach such topics through a study of Aristotle's *Physics*, focusing on questions about possibility, change, agency, time and nature.

Sarah's PhD dissertation, *Nature, Change and Agency in Aristotle's Physics*, was the basis for her 1982 published book of the same name. Remarkably 1982 also saw the publication of her study of Aristotle's views on the relation between time and modality, *Passage and Possibility. A Study of Aristotle's Modal Concepts*.⁴ Both books are striking in the way in which they attempt to engage with Aristotle as a live philosophical interlocutor, while drawing attention to, and explaining, the ways in which his presuppositions differ from those that come naturally to us.⁵

Passage and Possibility discusses Aristotle's views about the relation between modality and time, focusing especially on *De Caelo* I, 10–12 and on the famous sea battle argument in *De Interpretatione* 9. Much of the book is a reply to, and correction of, Hintikka's account of Aristotelian modality (in his *Time and Necessity*).⁶ *Passage and Possibility* starts out by acknowledging that Aristotle connects time and modality in

¹ Waterlow (1972–3; 1977; 1982a).

² Waterlow (1970; 1974).

³ Broadie (2007: introduction).

⁴ Waterlow (1982b).

⁵ This was a characteristic feature of Sarah's work. For a discussion of some further ways in which Sarah's approach to ancient philosophy was distinctive, see Long (2022).

⁶ Hintikka (1973).

ways that seem alien to modern philosophers. The goal of the book is to explain Aristotle's understanding of this connection, and to do so while rejecting Hintikka's interpretation. Hintikka had argued that, for Aristotle, the following equivalences express analytic truths: it is necessary that *p* if and only if it is always the case that *p*, and it is possible that *p* if and only if at some time it is the case that *p*. By contrast, Sarah argues that, for Aristotle, these connections between modality and time, rather than being analytic, follow from certain metaphysical commitments. The key to making sense of this is to recognise that Aristotle is operating with a notion of modality that is quite different from the modern notion of logical possibility/necessity.

Sarah explains how, on Aristotle's view, possibilities are grounded in the natures of things in the actual world, and in the changes such things undergo. There are two important ways in which modality is related to time. First, Aristotle claims that an object's *capacity to be F* should be understood as the *capacity to be F for a certain maximal period of time* (which could be an infinite period of time) – see *De Caelo*, 283a7–10. For example, if the longest time I can hold my breath is 90 seconds, then my capacity to hold my breath is a capacity to *hold my breath for 90 seconds*. I exercise this same capacity even when I hold my breath for a shorter time, say for 30 seconds. In such a case, I should be thought of as exercising the capacity to hold my breath for 90 seconds, but not exercising it to the full, rather than as exercising some distinct capacity to hold my breath for 30 seconds. If something is always *F*, then the maximal period of time associated with its capacity for being *F* is an infinite period of time: its capacity to be *F* is a capacity to be *F* always. A consequence of this view is that something that is always *F* 'is not simply always exercising the capacity for being *F*: it is exercising the capacity for being-*F*-always' (*Passage and Possibility*, p. 72).⁷ The second way in which Aristotle relates modality to time is in his rule that something is possible just in case nothing impossible follows from its being true *at some other (later) time*. Starting out from these claims, Aristotle sets out a temporalised notion of modality, according to which what is necessary/possible at one time need not be necessary/possible at all times. This is a view on which a thing is possible at *t* if and only if the supposition that it actually occurs at some later time is not incompatible with how things are at *t*.

The main interest of the book lies in the philosophical development and interrogation of this temporalised notion of modality, and of related views on the notion of a capacity and on the directedness of time, change, and causation. As we shall see, this temporalised

⁷ Sarah describes this as a special case of a more general Aristotelian view that a capacity should be defined in relation to (what she calls) its 'maximal exercise'. For example, suppose that the furthest you can jump is five and a half feet; on Aristotle's view, you have a single capacity to jump, that is defined in terms of this maximal distance: a capacity *to jump five and a half feet*. When you jump some shorter distance, say three feet, you should be thought of as exercising this same capacity (the capacity to jump five and a half feet), though not exercising it to the full, rather than as exercising some distinct capacity to jump three feet.

notion of modality, together with certain questions raised by Aristotle's discussion of fatalism in the sea battle argument, were matters Sarah was to revisit in several later papers (see section IV below).

Nature, Change and Agency in Aristotle's Physics is a study of central themes in Aristotle's *Physics*.⁸ It is a book that is unusual in the depth of its philosophical engagement with this work. Sarah does not shy away from challenging Aristotle philosophically, asking why he made the choices he did, and exploring the other options he might have taken instead. She argues that the *Physics* is more unified than has often been realised: at its core is the claim that nature is an inner principle of change and rest. This view of nature underlies many of the central features of Aristotle's *Physics*: his teleology and rejection of materialism, his views about natural places and motions, his definition of motion/change, his claim that an agent of change need not itself undergo change, and his view that there is a first unmoved mover.

Sarah argues that Aristotle's solution to earlier paradoxes of change depends upon the idea that there is a persisting underlying subject that is *such as* to undergo a certain change. If it is to play this role, the underlying subject must make some contribution to its own change. She then shows how we can build upon this minimal idea in order to explain two central aspects of Aristotle's account of nature: his view that the source of a natural change is necessarily the same as the subject that undergoes this change, and his view that those things that have a nature are self-sufficient to determine the pattern of their natural changes (so that, for these changes, external circumstances are mere enablers). Organisms, on this account, are unities of a special kind. They are structured wholes, whose structure and behaviour must be understood teleologically; they are not mere accidental compounds whose behaviour can be fully explained as resulting from the changes and interactions of their component parts. This view underpins Aristotle's rejection of reductionism and mechanism in natural science, and sheds light on his reasons for according such importance to teleological explanation.

Sarah draws out several interesting philosophical consequences of this overall picture. First, Aristotle's account depends upon a fundamental distinction between substances (the kind of things that can be subjects of change) and properties (qualities, quantities etc.). This distinction is crucial because it enables Aristotle to deny that a substance's coming to be F amounts to the coming to be of a new self-standing entity: the F thing. For example, Socrates's becoming pale does not amount to the generation of a new entity: pale-Socrates. Second, Aristotle's account depends upon the distinction between external circumstances and an internal source, and hence depends upon a robust distinction between permitting/enabling a change and being the source of that change. Third, this account supports a certain skepticism about the usefulness of experiment in

⁸Waterlow (1982c).

natural science: if a living thing's nature is revealed only by how it behaves in its natural habitat, then we cannot come to understand that thing's nature by conducting experiments on it outside that habitat. Fourth, the view implies a certain kind of anti-reductionism in natural science: 'there is no single sub-class of laws from which all other laws and generalizations could theoretically be deduced. The four elements are all-pervasive, but their natures cannot account for those of living structures, and in each type of case the explanatory gap is filled by a different form or telos, of which there are as many as there are species of organism' (p. 92, *Nature Change and Agency*).

In the second half of the book, Sarah turns to Aristotle's analysis of change in terms of potentiality and actuality, his account of agency and patiency, and his argument in *Physics* VIII for the existence of an ultimate primary unmoved mover. In her chapter on agency and patiency, she discusses Aristotle's view that when an agent acts on a patient, there is a single change in the patient that can be described in two ways: as the action of the agent or as the change in the patient. She asks whether Aristotle would have any reply to a Humean, who doubted that there was such a thing as real transitive agency. For Aristotle, she argues, Hume's mistake lies in the 'assumption that if transitive agency were anything real and objective, it would consist in something extra, a *tertium quid* between objects' (p. 193). Aristotle shares Hume's view that there can be no such *tertium quid*, but unlike Hume, he has an account of transitive agency that doesn't depend on the existence of any such thing. That is because Aristotle, unlike Hume, holds that objects are in themselves dynamic, and this is a view that is rooted in his account of natural substances, as intrinsically such as to undergo certain kinds of changes.

Sarah argues that Aristotle's *Physics* contains two distinct, and incompatible, accounts of change. In *Physics* III, Aristotle gives an account designed to make sense of natural processes and of purposive actions: the kind of changes that are unified progressions towards an end. On this account, a change is a kind of 'incomplete actuality', by comparison with the end that constitutes its completion. For example, the process of *growing into an oak tree* is an incomplete actuality of the acorn's potential to *be a fully grown oak tree*. In *Physics* VI, by contrast, Aristotle gives an account of change in terms of infinite variety. On this account, any subject that undergoes a change must, during the course of its change, complete infinitely many sub-changes. Sarah argues that this *Physics* VI account fails to make sense of the unity of a change. Both accounts of change come under pressure in *Physics* VIII, when Aristotle discusses the eternal heavenly motion. Aristotle is forced to recognise that his *Physics* VI account cannot make sense of the unity of this motion. But he also has to contend with a challenge to his *Physics* III account. Given that heavenly movement necessarily lacks a terminus, how can it be understood as a progression towards a certain specific end point? Sarah argues that Aristotle's reaction to this challenge is to modify, without entirely abandoning, his *Physics* III view of change as incomplete actuality. He retains the view that change is

essentially incomplete, but in the case of eternal motion, he is forced to adopt a new understanding of the sense in which it is incomplete: it is incomplete by comparison with its agent (an agent that is itself changeless and necessarily always in a state of complete fulfillment), instead of by comparison with a terminus towards which it is heading. Thus, although the eternal motion lacks a terminus that would constitute its completion, it counts as ‘incomplete actuality’, and hence as a change, because of its dependence on its agent.

These two books established Sarah’s international reputation. When the University of Texas at Austin turned to Gregory Vlastos for advice about a visiting appointment in ancient philosophy, Sarah Waterlow, still relatively unknown, was at the top of his list of recommendations. Her forthcoming two books on Aristotle would, he predicted, make her famous.⁹ Myles Burnyeat, when approached for advice, concurred. Of *Nature Change and Agency*, he commented, ‘I have learned more about Aristotle from it than from any other book I have read on Aristotle’s philosophy’; of *Passage and Possibility*, ‘This is an amazingly original, subtle, and painstaking work, which will be a landmark in the study of necessity and possibility in Aristotle.’¹⁰ In 1982, Sarah spent a semester as a visiting Professor at the University of Texas at Austin. Colleagues at Austin quickly appreciated her brilliance and philosophical depth, and she was offered a professorship there.

III

Sarah and Frederick moved to the US in 1984, in what she described to her stepson, Jonathan, as their ‘big adventure’. She ended up holding a succession of Professorships in the US, first at the University of Texas at Austin (1984–6), then at Yale (1986–91), at Rutgers (1991–3) and finally at Princeton (1993–2001), where she was only the second woman to be appointed to a senior position in Philosophy. Princeton was very much a centre for the study of ancient philosophy in the 1990s, and during these years, Sarah had an influential role in supervising and mentoring many graduate students. She was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1990.

Some of her work in this period further developed her earlier thoughts on Aristotle’s discussions of movement, time, teleology and modality. In 1983–4, she wrote two important papers on Aristotle’s views on time and motion, ‘Instances of Motion in *Physics*

⁹ In this paragraph I am indebted to a talk given by Alexander Mourelatos for an online celebration of Sarah Broadie’s life which took place on what would have been her 80th birthday.

¹⁰ Both quotations are from a talk given by Alexander Mourelatos (see previous footnote). They are drawn from Burnyeat’s original referee’s report for OUP on the two books.

VI' and 'Aristotle's now'.¹¹ These took up questions about the role of the now in Aristotle's account of time, his account of temporal order, and his response to Zeno's paradoxes. They were a response, in part, to G.E.L. Owen's 'Aristotle on time',¹² and together with Owen's paper, they have set the stage for work on these topics in the years since. Sarah herself was to revisit Aristotle's account of time in her later paper, 'A contemporary look at Aristotle's Changing Now', and in her translation of Philoponus's commentary on the relevant chapters of Aristotle (*Philoponus: On Aristotle Physics* 4:10–14).¹³

In 1987, Sarah published 'Nature and Craft and Phronesis in Aristotle',¹⁴ which discusses the analogy between nature and craft that Aristotle draws in his *Physics* and his claim that craft, like nature, 'does not deliberate'. This claim has often been thought puzzling, since actual craftsmen clearly do often need to deliberate about what to do. Sarah shows how we can make sense of Aristotle's analogy if we understand him as modelling nature on an idealised craftsman, a craftsman 'already effectively in action' who does not need to think about how to proceed.¹⁵

In a paper published in 1993, Sarah returned to the topic of Aristotle's prime mover, this time focusing on *Metaphysics* Lambda ('Que fait le premier moteur d'Aristote?: sur la théologie du livre lambda de la *Métaphysique*').¹⁶ This paper has been influential mainly for the challenge it poses to the standard interpretation of the causality of the prime mover. On this standard interpretation, the prime mover engages in purely intellectual contemplation, and the *primum mobile* moves because it wants to imitate the prime mover's activity. Sarah questioned whether prime mover, on this standard interpretation, would really count as a final cause: how could *imitating* something count as acting for the sake of that thing? Her arguments have prompted important work on the scope and significance of the notion of final cause in Aristotle, a topic crucial for our understanding not only of the *Metaphysics*, but also of Aristotle's work in natural philosophy and ethics.¹⁷

During her years in the US, Sarah also turned to a major new project, a study of Aristotle's ethical works. In the introduction to a collection of her papers, she reports that when she first encountered the *Nicomachean Ethics* as an undergraduate she found it unexciting ('pedantic and prosaic'), compared to the philosophical works that had then

¹¹ Waterlow (1983; 1984).

¹² Owen (1976).

¹³ Broadie (2005a; 2011).

¹⁴ Broadie (1987a).

¹⁵ For critical discussion of this suggestion, see Sedley (2010) and Coope (2021).

¹⁶ Broadie (1993).

¹⁷ See, for instance, Richardson Lear (2004: chapter 4).

captured her imagination: Plato's dialogues and Hume's *Treatise*.¹⁸ Her turn to Aristotle's ethics was, she says, originally prompted by an outside invitation. She then came to appreciate the greatness of Aristotle's ethical writings, and went on to publish a monograph, *Ethics with Aristotle*, a commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (with a translation by Christopher Rowe),¹⁹ and several important papers on Aristotelian ethics, especially on the notion of the 'highest good'.

*Ethics with Aristotle*²⁰ is a deep reflection on some of the central themes of Aristotle's ethics, focusing on happiness, virtue, the voluntary, practical reason, akrasia, pleasure, and the place of contemplation in the best life. The book aims to discuss the coherence of Aristotle's overall project in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and to uncover the assumptions that lead him to ask the questions he does and to defend certain positions rather than others. It is a rich and densely argued book. One of its central themes is that Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* is intended to be *practical*: it is intended to be relevant to readers, in their thinking about how best to live their lives. It is thus intended for a readership that wants to do ethics 'with' Aristotle; not for future scholars, whose primary interest is in what this particular historical figure thought.

How, though, does Aristotle think that a work of this kind can be practically relevant? He insists that, in order to benefit from his lectures, his audience must already have been well brought up, so he cannot think that reading the *Nicomachean Ethics* will by itself be enough to make one virtuous. Sarah argues that Aristotle is not aiming to 'provide us with a motive for valuing those things that well-brought-up people value'. In particular, when he argues that the highest good consists in virtuous action, he is not intending to make his readers more disposed than they already were to engage in such action. The audience is already committed to, and 'virtually in possession of' the highest good. What philosophical reflection enables us to do is 'to make the best of the best which we already have' and 'to be able to pass it on uncorrupted' (p. 23, *Ethics with Aristotle*).

A way in which reflection on ethics enables us to make the 'best of the best' is brought out by the discussion of contemplation at the end of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle's view, Sarah argues, is that when we reflect on the value of life of ethical virtue, we see this value lies in the perfection of reason in noble activities, and we also come to understand that the kind of life that best realises this value will be a life that is 'crowned by' theoretical activity. This life will be a life of ethically virtuous activity, but it will also include within it leisure time in which there is room to engage in a higher kind of activity, namely theoretical contemplation. Thus, by reflecting on what we are already committed to (ethically virtuous activity), and coming to understand just what it is about

¹⁸ Broadie (2007: introduction).

¹⁹ Broadie (1991; 2002a).

²⁰ Broadie (1991).

ethically virtuous activity that is valuable, we can come to understand something that we might not already have realised about the best kind of life: the central role of theoretical contemplation in such a life.

The *Nicomachean Ethics* starts out with a discussion of what happiness is. Aristotle describes this in terms of a 'target' we need to hit: like archers, we will be more successful at achieving our aim if we know what it is we are aiming to hit (*Nicomachean Ethics* I.2, 1094a22–5). This might suggest that we need to identify what happiness is in order to successfully achieve it. Sarah argues that it is the politician, not the ordinary person of practical wisdom, who aims at happiness in this way. The science of politics is the science of bringing about happiness, and to bring about happiness one needs articulated knowledge of what happiness is, and what conditions will foster it, the sort of articulated conception that it is the job of philosophical reflection to supply. By contrast, Aristotle does not think of the ordinary virtuous person as starting out from some end that specifies her conception of what happiness is, and as aiming, in her reasoning, to work out how best to achieve that end (and hence how best to achieve happiness, so understood). Sarah argues at length against attributing such a conception of practical reasoning to Aristotle (a conception she dubs the 'Grand End' view). She claims that to think of practical reasoning in this way would be to underestimate the difference between practical wisdom and craft. Political science is a productive craft which aims to produce happiness on the basis of an articulated conception of what happiness is. Practical wisdom, by contrast, is a rational ability, acquired through habituation and experience, to see how to act well in particular circumstances in pursuit of some virtuous objective appropriate to the occasion.

Sarah points out that if Aristotle's account of the highest good were meant to provide some grand end, specifying what we should aim to achieve in our practical reasoning, then what Aristotle says about happiness would be rather disappointing: it would not provide us with much guidance about how to act. By contrast, if the account of happiness is intended to provide guidance for the politician, this helps to explain certain features of Aristotle's discussion. For instance, Aristotle argues that happiness is virtuous activity. Why, then, does he concentrate on giving an account of the virtues, rather than on virtuous activity? The answer, Sarah argues, is that the politician cannot aim directly at bringing about virtuous *activity*. There are two reasons for this: (a) if it is to be fully valuable, such activity must be an expression of the agent's own virtue (virtuous activity done virtuously), and (b) the correct way to act is not fully specifiable in advance, independently of the particular circumstances that arise. For these reasons, the politician has to aim at *creating the conditions for* virtuous activity: making the agent such as to act virtuously. To do this, the politician needs an understanding of what virtue is.

In later papers, Sarah spells out in more detail the ways in which Aristotle's presuppositions, in his ethical works, differ importantly from our own. In particular, she argues, Aristotle has different presuppositions about what questions need answering. For

instance, in 'Aristotle and contemporary ethics',²¹ she argues that Aristotle is not a consequentialist, 'and in particular not a eudaemonistic one'; nor is he a modern-style virtue ethicist 'if this means a philosopher who defines right or appropriate action as the action of the virtuous person'; and, though he has 'commonsense deontological leanings', he shows no interest in 'working them up into a system' and defending that system against alternative theories (p. 126). She points out that Aristotle differs from modern philosophers in his 'lack of epistemological anxiety'. He does not feel the need to justify, against a sceptical opponent, the claim that flourishing consists in virtuous activity, and he relies instead on the assumption that readers who are well brought up will recognise that this is true. Moreover, he does not think that there is something especially puzzling about the good person's ability to discern ethical truth. Sarah suggests that modern philosophical puzzlement about this may arise from an 'inordinate respect for natural science'. By contrast, in Aristotle's day it would have seemed bizarre to suppose that the revelations of the natural sciences were more secure, from an epistemological point of view, than ordinary common sense views about how we should behave.

In other articles, Sarah argues that the role ancient Greek philosophers assign to the highest good is different from that assigned to it in modern philosophy. In 'The idea of the *summum bonum*' and in 'What should we mean by the highest good?',²² Sarah argues that, for Aristotle, the 'highest good' is not to be thought of as the standard of right or wrong. For example, to identify some X as the highest good, is not to commit oneself to the view that an action (or kind of action) counts as right to the extent that it promotes X, nor is it to claim that one must always act in such a way as to maximise X. Instead, she suggests, Aristotle thinks of the highest good as the source of value for all other goods. On this view, other goods are worthless when they conflict with the highest good, and are good (or 'worth taking trouble over') only when they are compatible with the highest good. If this is right, then to claim that the highest good is virtuous activity is not to claim that one should try to maximise the amount of such activity (or even that one should maximise one's own engagement in such activity); it is, rather, to claim that leading a life of virtuous activity is a pre-condition for getting anything of value from other goods (goods such as wealth, power and honours). The claim is that these other goods are only genuinely valuable when enjoyed as part of a virtuous life. On such a view, there is no reason to suppose that whatever is identified as the highest good is something we should try to maximise. These interpretative claims help to clear away possible misunderstandings of Aristotle and of other ancient Greek philosophers, and they also open up the question of whether there is an important insight we will be missing if we fail to appreciate this ancient conception of the highest good.

²¹ Broadie (2006a).

²² Broadie (2005b; 2007).

IV

In 2001, Sarah returned to Scotland, so that Frederick could be close to his family in his final years. As she said to her stepson, Jonathan, ‘our big adventure is over’. She looked after Frederick devotedly until his death in 2009.

From 2001 to 2021, Sarah was Professor of Moral Philosophy and Wardlaw Professor at the University of St Andrews. She was also, of course, much in demand as a visitor to other Universities. She gave the Nellie Wallace Lectures at Oxford in 2003, and from 2018 to 2021 she was Keeling Scholar in Residence and Honorary Professor at UCL. During her years at St Andrews, she played an increasingly prominent leadership role in Philosophy in the UK and Europe. She was Executive Editor of *Philosophical Quarterly* from 2001 until her death. In 2002, she was elected to the Royal Society of Edinburgh, followed by election to the British Academy in 2003, and to the Academia Europaea in 2006. She served as Vice-President of the British Academy (2006–08) and as President of the Aristotelian Society (2012–13). She was also a longstanding member of the organising committee of the Symposium Aristotelicum. Sarah’s work and achievements were recognised by an Honorary Fellowship of Somerville College (2005), and an honorary DLitt from Edinburgh in 2020 (received on her behalf by her stepson, Jonathan, after her death). In 2019, she was awarded an OBE for services to scholarship. On receiving the call about this from Buckingham Palace, her initial response was to ask ‘Is this a prank?’

At St Andrews, she participated enthusiastically in the life of the department, attending the student research seminar, meetings of the Minorities and Philosophy chapter, and department social events. She supervised a string of graduate students, who went on to careers in ancient philosophy, and she was a valuable mentor for junior colleagues. She was delighted that the move back to the UK meant she could socialise with younger colleagues in her department without the awkwardness of knowing she would be involved in evaluating their case for tenure. Her colleagues and students remember her for her wit and brilliance, and also for her kindness and good judgement.

Sarah’s Inaugural lecture given in 2003 at St Andrews was on the topic of leisure.²³ Aristotle discusses the proper use of leisure and asks about the role leisure time should play in a happy life. Sarah thought leisure raised interesting philosophical questions that had been neglected by modern philosophers. She argues that leisure is the freedom to do things because one feels like it, not because one must, and she explores the difference between what it is to do something because one must, and what it is to do something because one feels like it. In the former case, one focuses on getting something done, whereas in the latter case, one is focused on the *doing* itself and may not even have a clear plan of action in advance of acting. She argues that it is important, for human

²³ Printed in Broadie (2007).

beings, that there is some time protected for the latter kind of activity, activity that allows for a kind of creativity that is unlikely to be compatible with actions that are undertaken in the service of some practical necessity.

In her years at St Andrews, Sarah revisited some of her earlier preoccupations, writing a series of papers on fate and determinism, but she also turned to two major new projects on Plato, resulting in a book on Plato's *Timaeus* in 2012, and in 2021 a book on the form of the Good in the *Republic*.²⁴

Sarah had a longstanding interest in puzzles about fate and determinism. Her early book, *Passage and Possibility*,²⁵ was partly concerned with these topics, and she had returned to them in two papers from the 1980s: 'On what would have happened otherwise; A problem for determinism' and 'Necessity and Deliberation: An Argument from *De Interpretatione* 9'.²⁶ She built upon and further developed some of these earlier ideas in three further papers, published during her time at St Andrews: 'From Necessity to Fate: a Fallacy?', 'Alternative world histories', and 'Actual Instead'.²⁷

Sarah maintains that there is something right about Aristotle's claim that if everything had always been necessitated in advance (and hence, if determinism were true), there would be no point in deliberating. The reason for this is not (as certain ancient philosophers alleged) that if determinism holds, then the outcome you are deliberating about will come to pass whatever you do. Rather, Sarah argues, the reason is that, if determinism is true, you have no rational grounds for supposing that a proposed course of action will be beneficial or harmful.

Deliberation about a proposed course of action involves making a judgement about whether, if one engages in that course of action, things will turn out better (or worse) than they would otherwise have turned out. Sarah argues that, if determinism is true, you can never have any basis for making counterfactual judgements of this kind. This is because of the problem of 'backtracking': universal determinism implies that if something other than what in fact occurs were to occur, then the prior circumstances would have to have been different, and their causes would have to have been different, and their causes ... and so on. In other words, the universal determinist is committed to the view that a difference in what will occur implies a difference in the whole history of the world. On this view, we can have no ground for any assumption about how the world would have been in the counterfactual situation in which the proposed action is not performed, and hence no grounds for supposing that things would have been better (or worse) in that counterfactual situation. Sarah argues that, in fact, this problem arises not merely for

²⁴ Broadie (2012; 2021).

²⁵ Waterlow (1982a).

²⁶ Broadie (1986; 1987b).

²⁷ Broadie (2001, reprinted with a slightly different title as a Keeling Memorial Lecture; 2002b; 2013, the Aristotelian Society presidential address).

determinism, but for any view on which the entire history of the world is thought of as being already determinate at any moment (as opposed to a view on which certain aspects of the future become determinate as time passes) – or at least, for any such view, if it is combined with ‘absolute actualism’, ie with the view that there is a fact of the matter about which possible world is actual (see her ‘Actual Instead’²⁸).

Sarah also suggests that universal determinism would undermine the very possibility of difference-making efficacy. ‘Making a difference’ involves intervening in the world in such a way that some outcome that previously was only a possibility is now guaranteed to come about. Universal determinism makes this kind of efficacy impossible, since if universal determinism is true then whatever happens was always necessarily going to happen.²⁹ Sarah claims that the fundamental problem here is about the compatibility of determinism with difference-making agency, not about its compatibility with moral responsibility.³⁰ This is interestingly similar to a view that was later to be defended much more fully by Helen Steward (for instance, in her *A Metaphysics for Freedom*,³¹ a book Sarah much admired).

Sarah’s Nellie Wallace Lectures at Oxford in 2003 were on the topic ‘Nature and Divinity in the Philosophies of Plato and Aristotle’. These marked a transition to a period in which the study of Plato became increasingly central to her research. In 2016, she published a paper arguing that Plato, in his *Theaetetus* and *Sophist*, rejects an ‘additive’ picture on which knowledge is true judgement *plus* something (‘The knowledge unacknowledged in the *Theaetetus*’³²). Part of her argument was that ‘true judgement (*doxa*)’ in Plato is not the same as the modern notion of true belief: *doxa* is rather a kind of *reasoned* belief; there are cases in which such belief is only available to someone who already has knowledge.

In 2012, Sarah published *Nature and Divinity in Plato’s Timaeus*.³³ Interpreters have often held one or other of the central doctrines of the *Timaeus* to be a ‘philosophically offensive anomaly’. This view has been taken, for instance, of the claim that there was a literal historical creation of the cosmos, or that the divine world-making principle is incorporeal and wholly separate from the cosmos. One traditional approach has been to suggest that such claims are not meant literally. By contrast, Sarah makes the case that these claims, understood literally, are essential parts of the view: abandoning them would sacrifice points of crucial importance to Plato.

²⁸ Broadie (2013).

²⁹ See Broadie (1987b).

³⁰ See Broadie (2002b).

³¹ Steward (2012).

³² Broadie (2006b).

³³ Broadie (2012).

Sarah had, in fact, already been contributing to discussions of the *Timaeus* long before the publication of this book. Her presentation on the *Timaeus* at a reading group in Cambridge in 1993 continued to be cited by scholars for over 10 years afterwards, as having had an important influence on their work.³⁴ One question she posed in that presentation was about the Platonic distinction between corporeality and incorporeality: what does it mean, for Plato, to claim that something is incorporeal? She was later to publish a paper discussing the ancient view that there could be corporeal gods ('Corporeal gods, with reference to Plato and Aristotle').³⁵

Her work on the *Timaeus*, and especially her book, did a great deal to renew interest in this dialogue among ancient philosophers, and to establish it as a philosophically fruitful subject of study. On Sarah's account, a general theme that runs through the *Timaeus* is a contrast between the fact that the universe has a trans-natural explanation and the fact that we human beings are embedded within the universe, vulnerable to influences from our environment but also able to rise above its limitations. Moreover, our perspective from within the universe (from a particular cultural moment, and place and time) is contrasted with the kind of abstract perspective it is possible for us to take on the universe as a whole and on its history. It is essential to the kind of beings we are that, though occupying a certain place within history, we are also able to take this abstract perspective on the universe as a whole and on ourselves within it. And it is essential to the completeness of the cosmos that it should include mortal beings like us who are able to take both of these perspectives. Ethical and cultural achievement requires this distinctively human ability. Sarah argues that this is why the universe must contain beings like us. 'There are two quite different fronts on which reason can overcome disorder': one is the operation of divine causation, and the other is 'the achievement attained from within the physical *milieu* by rational souls made for mortal incarnation'. If the cosmos is to be 'the completest triumph of rationality', then both of these rational victories must be won, and this is only possible if the cosmos contains beings like us who are both situated within the cosmos and also able to reason in an abstract way about the cosmos as a whole (pp. 106–7, *Nature and Divinity in Plato's Timaeus*).

This picture depends upon the idea that we human beings are governed by the cosmos, but are nevertheless in some sense autonomous. Sarah argues that two features of the *Timaeus's* creation story are crucial for making sense of this: the fact that the demiurge (the divine creator) is separate from the cosmos (rather than being identified with the cosmic soul, as a long tradition of interpreting the *Timaeus* claims) and the fact that the creation of the cosmos happened in time, and hence is in the past relative to us now. These features of the account introduce a certain distance between

³⁴ See Long (2022), who collects examples.

³⁵ Broadie (2016).

the demiurge's creative activity and the activity of rational beings within the cosmos. This makes possible a kind of human autonomy. Sarah also argues that the fact that the demiurge's creative activity happened in the past allows Plato to attribute a kind of self-sufficiency to the cosmos and the living things within it: the cosmos and the things within it can keep going and reproduce on their own. In adopting an account of this kind, Plato paves the way for the Aristotelian view that natural things are self-maintaining.

A further aspect of the *Timaeus* that interpreters have found puzzling is the account of the four elements, and their relation to the underlying receptacle. Sarah argues that this account is designed to answer a philosophical puzzle: how can the four elements function as (in a certain sense) the fundamental building blocks of the universe, without this implying a reductive account on which cosmic order is to be explained by the elements and their relations? Sarah argues that the account of the role of the elements (and of their relations, on the one hand, to the receptacle and, on the other, to the Forms) is meant to explain how it is that the elements themselves are subservient to the overall cosmic order. This is something Plato especially needs to emphasise, given the role that was assigned to such elements by Presocratic philosophers.

Plato's Sun-like Good (CUP)³⁶ was published in July 2021, a few weeks before Sarah's death. It offers a revolutionary new interpretation of the central books of Plato's *Republic*, in particular, of the nature of the philosophers' education, the role of mathematics, and the role of the form of the Good as a non-hypothetical first principle. As the book's title suggests, Sarah starts out from the idea that we should take seriously Plato's decision to explain the nature of the Good by comparing it to the sun. Plato compares the Good's relation to the intelligible world to the sun's relation to the visible world. The sun is what illuminates the visible world, allowing us to see things; it is not itself an object to be gazed at. If we are to take the sun-Good analogy seriously, this suggests that the Good is not itself an object to be understood, but is rather a tool by means of which we understand other things. Moreover, the sun does not make the objects it illuminates sun-like, so we should not expect that the Good confers on other things a property that it itself possesses.

Taking these as our guiding insights provides a new way of interpreting the central books of the *Republic*, and this new interpretation allows us to understand how the Good can have an important role in training potential philosophers to be future political leaders. On this interpretation, the Good should be understood interrogatively: to grasp the form of the Good is to bring the form to bear on proposed accounts of virtues or ethical norms, and the way to bring the Good to bear on such accounts is to ask the question, 'would it be *good* if actions were taken, arrangements made, according to this account?'

³⁶ Broadie (2021).

(what Sarah calls ‘the G-question’). The guardians’ training prompts them to ask this question, and it also endows them with the wisdom to answer it in a sensible way.

The Good is thus ‘the ontological counterpart of an interrogative propositional function or open sentence: “is – Good?”’ It is non-hypothetical, not because it is some self-evident first premise, but because ‘whatever we do, we cannot not care about the good’. On this account, dialectic (the reasoning employed by the guardians) is an essentially *practical* kind of reasoning, quite unlike the theoretical reasoning employed by mathematicians, who reason from a hypothesised first premise. Part of the point of the training the rulers receive is to encourage them to move beyond mathematical (and other similar) reasoning, to engage in reasoning of a very different kind. This raises the question of why it is so important for them to spend ten years being educated in mathematics. Sarah’s answer is that this training in high level mathematics introduces the rulers-to-be to the practice of thinking for themselves; it confronts them with the idea that there are areas where truths need to be uncovered by argument and where one will go wrong if one simply accepts what seems to be the case. Because of the strict upbringing they have undergone (the censorship, communal parenting and banning of debate), the rulers-to-be have not had the opportunity to develop the kinds of critical faculties that they will need if they are to achieve intellectual maturity. The training in mathematics enables them to develop such faculties, and to do so by engaging with a subject matter that, unlike the subjects they will need to make decisions about when they become rulers, has no propensity to arouse distorting emotional responses.

One of the great advantages of this interpretation is that it makes sense, in a way few others have done, of how the *Republic* can maintain that there is an essential relationship between the form of the Good and training in politics. Sarah poses the question: what would philosophy need to be like in order to contribute to the running of a state? And she answers ‘its contribution consists in analytical and critical intelligence and unwavering commitment to rationality in reaching ethical judgments’, not in the mastery of self-consciously technical philosophy. When rulers are philosophical, they will not accept as dogma even their previous accounts of the virtues, but will be diligent in questioning and, if necessary, extending them to meet the current circumstances. This has something in common with her earlier rejection of ‘Grand End’ interpretations of Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*. In both cases, she emphasises the importance of a kind of down-to-earth wise decision making that is sensitive to the circumstances in which one finds oneself. And in both cases, she rejects the viability of a conception of wisdom according to which deliberation is guided by a complete and previously-established conception of the good to be achieved. For the wise person, the question of what it is good (or just or courageous) to do must be answered anew with each new decision. As an interpretation of Plato, this account is radically new; it will set a challenge to Plato scholars for years to come.³⁷

³⁷ For some early critical responses, see Aufderheide (2023), Leigh (2023), and Long (2023).

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Sarah's 70th birthday was marked by a celebratory conference at St Andrews, which she much enjoyed, in spite of early misgivings that it would be 'like attending one's own funeral'. Just before the pandemic, in early 2020, she gave the Aquinas lecture at Marquette University, on mathematics in Plato's *Republic*, and Marquette held a conference in her honour. Preparations for her 80th birthday included a *festschrift*³⁸ and a planned birthday conference at St Andrews. Sadly, though she knew that it was underway, she never got to see the *festschrift*, which appeared just a few weeks after her death. The planned birthday conference became a memorial event.

Her philosophical curiosity, imagination and good judgment made her a much-valued mentor. Her former students and colleagues point out how much fun it was to talk philosophy with Sarah, and how open she was to exploring all kinds of positions, not only those she herself would endorse. She had high standards, which could be intimidating, but also showed great kindness. She took an active interest in the lives of her graduate students and younger colleagues, giving wise advice and also sometimes practical help. (When I was a car-less visiting graduate student at Princeton, she would drive me to the local supermarket each week.)³⁹ She was not at all the kind of mentor to encourage imitators or followers. As she would say, she was not an 'empire builder'. This was partly because of a certain reticence and self-effacement, but also because of the high value she set on originality and on thinking for oneself. She was nevertheless quietly influential on a large number of younger scholars. Especially in later years, she had a deep commitment to the flourishing of ancient Greek philosophy in the UK. In an interview for the British Academy, she explained that, in her view, the challenge for philosophy these days is to avoid over specialisation in increasingly technical narrow subfields. We should train new philosophers 'to be animated by an open-ended love of adventures in ideas while fully maintaining their obsessional practice of critical clarification. The latter is essential for the subject to move forward, but without the former that subject risks ceasing to be philosophy.'⁴⁰ It is just such a combination of rigorous clarity with delight in philosophical adventure that characterises Sarah Broadie's own work.

Sarah read widely, with a love for poetry, novels, music and art. She combined a kind of deep seriousness with a mischievous sense of fun and a very dry sense of humour. She had a gift for friendship, and a relish for good food, wine and whisky. In later years,

³⁸ Sattler & Coope (2021).

³⁹ For a delightful memoir of Sarah as mentor and friend, see Aimar (2022).

⁴⁰ 'Nine Fellows of the British Academy on how their subjects could shape the 2020s', British Academy blog (24 January 2020). <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/nine-fellows-british-academy-humanities-social-sciences-shape-2020s/>

she much enjoyed travelling, especially visits to Israel, and regular holidays with her cousin Philippa.

Though suffering from respiratory difficulties in the last two years of her life, she remained philosophically active right up until the end, serving as Executive Editor of *Philosophical Quarterly*, and participating in many online discussion groups during the covid pandemic. At the time of her death, she was actively engaged in collaborative projects with younger colleagues (for instance, a project on leisure with Joachim Aufderheide and a project on Socrates in the *Protagoras* with Barbara Sattler). As it became increasingly difficult for her to move about, she told friends ‘Luckily almost all the things I most want to do can be done within these somewhat limited circumstances, so I am quite flourishing and happy.’ At the time of her death, Sarah was a member of the liberal Jewish community of Edinburgh, Sukkat Shalom. She regularly attended services on zoom during the pandemic, the last, just two days before she died. Sarah is buried beside Frederick in Edinburgh Jewish Cemetery. She is survived by her brothers Richard and Oliver Waterlow and their children, and her step-sons Alexander and Jonathan Broadie and his children.

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Note on the author: Ursula Coope is Professor of Ancient Philosophy at Oxford University and a Professorial Fellow of Keble College. She was elected a Fellow of the British Academy in 2020.

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