

## Plato's Sun-Like Good

*Plato's Sun-Like Good* is a revolutionary discussion of the *Republic's* philosopher-rulers, their dialectic, and their relation to the form of the good. With detailed arguments Sarah Broadie explains how, if we think of the form of the good as 'interrogative', we can re-conceive those central reference-points of Platonism in down-to-earth terms without loss to our sense of Plato's philosophical greatness. The book's main aims are, first, to show how for Plato the form of the good is of practical value in a way that we can understand; secondly, to make sense of the connection he draws between dialectic and the form of the good; and thirdly, to make sense of the relationship between the form of the good and other forms while respecting the contours of the sun-good analogy and remaining faithful to the text of the *Republic* itself.

SARAH BROADIE is Bishop Wardlaw Professor of Philosophy at the University of St Andrews. She is author of *Aristotle and Beyond: Essays on Metaphysics and Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) and *Nature and Divinity in Plato's 'Timaeus'* (Cambridge University Press, 2011), and editor of *Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: A Philosophical Introduction and Commentary* (2002). She has published dozens of book chapters and articles on Plato and Aristotle, and was awarded an OBE in 2019 for services to classical philosophy.

# Plato's Sun-Like Good

*Dialectic in the Republic*

---

Sarah Broadie

*University of St Andrews*



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-009-01640-7 — Plato's Sun-Like Good  
Sarah Broadie  
Frontmatter  
[More Information](#)



CAMBRIDGE  
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom  
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia  
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre, New Delhi – 110025, India  
103 Penang Road, #05–06/07, Visioncrest Commercial, Singapore 238467

Cambridge University Press is part of Cambridge University Press & Assessment, a department of the University of Cambridge.

We share the University's mission to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)  
Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781009016407](http://www.cambridge.org/9781009016407)

DOI: 10.1017/9781009025379

© Sarah Broadie 2021

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press & Assessment.

First published 2021  
First paperback edition 2023

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data*

Names: Broadie, Sarah, author.

Title: Plato's sun-like good : dialectic in the Republic / Sarah Broadie.

Description: First edition. | Cambridge, United Kingdom ; New York, NY, USA:

Cambridge University Press, 2021. | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2021019444 (print) | LCCN 2021019445 (ebook) | ISBN

9781316516874 (hardback) | ISBN 9781009016407 (paperback) | ISBN

9781009025379 (epub)

Subjects: LCSH: Plato. Republic. | Good and evil.

Classification: LCC B398.G65 B76 2021 (print) | LCC B398.G65 (ebook) | DDC 321/.07–dc23

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021019444>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2021019444>

ISBN 978-1-316-51687-4 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-01640-7 Paperback

Cambridge University Press & Assessment has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

The philosophers' motto: *illuminatio dominus meus*

## Contents

---

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>page ix</i>
<b>Part 1 Approaching the Sun-Good Analogy</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introductory	1
1.2 The Philosopher-Rulers' Intellectual Task	3
1.3 'The Most Important Thing to Learn': Between Plural and Singular	9
1.4 What Further Knowledge Does the Longer Way Achieve?	10
<b>Part 2 The Form of the Good and Knowledge</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Sun, Cave, and Sun Again	13
2.2 Connecting Sun and Line	16
2.3 Higher and Lower Intellectual Levels	22
2.4 Mathematical versus Dialectical Hypotheses	26
2.5 <i>Saphēneia</i>	32
2.6 The Form of the Good as Non-Hypothetical Principle	34
2.7 Dialectic and the Good: Some Questions	39
2.8 The Role of the Form of the Good in Dialectic	44
2.9 Some Objections and Replies	52
2.10 Textual Counter-evidence	55
2.11 The Non-Hypothetical Principle as First Premiss?	65
2.12 The Form of the Good as Object of Definition?	72
2.13 Dialectic and Experience	75
2.14 Diagrams, Dialectic, and Context	80
2.15 Dialectic in Government	84
2.16 Not Rigorous Enough?	90
2.17 Why Is Dialectic Cognitively Superior to Mathematics?	95
2.18 Why Are We Shown So Little about Dialectic in the <i>Republic</i> ?	101
2.19 True Philosophers versus Sight-Lovers	111
2.20 The Criteria and Scope of 'Good'	123
2.21 Main Positions of Parts 1 and 2	132
<b>Part 3 The Form of the Good and Being</b>	<b>136</b>
3.1 Preliminaries	136
3.2 First Proposal	140
	vii

viii	Contents	
3.3	Interim Discussion of 505a2–4	147
3.4	Second Proposal	149
3.5	Perfectionist Accounts	155
3.6	System Accounts	159
	<b>Part 4 Various Further Questions</b>	<b>163</b>
4.1	Ambiguity of 'the Good' (I)	163
4.2	Ambiguity of 'the Good' (II)	168
4.3	Why the Mathematical Education?	176
4.4	Cosmology, Theology	195
	<b>Part 5 Winding Up</b>	<b>206</b>
	<i>References</i>	226
	<i>Index of Passages</i>	235
	<i>General Index</i>	239

## Acknowledgements

---

I have had the opportunity to present a few parts of this book to many audiences, provoking much helpful discussion. The work has also benefited from probing comments on earlier drafts by Rachel Barney, Sean Kelsey, Tony Long, Mitchell Miller, Richard Patterson, and Christopher Rowe. The most recent version owes significant improvements to Alex Long and Barbara Sattler, and to an anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press. I warmly thank all these scholars for their generosity.

Parts of Sections 2.3 and 4.3 were delivered as the 2020 Aquinas Lecture at Marquette University. I am grateful to Dr James South, Director of Marquette University Press, for the Press's permission to reproduce that material here.