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Chapter 10

Stanley Rosen: The Nemesis of Nihilism Nalin Ranasinghe, Assumption College

Although his writing style has changed more than once, Rosen has always sought to defend the lifeline between cosmos and logos; he has always insisted that the bond between philosophy and ordinary language is sacred and indissoluble. From this vantage his amazing ability to yoke together and drive the unruly black horse of ordinary language and the ideal steed of metaphysics seems godlike. Accordingly, bearing in mind his teacher's famous assertion that the depth of things resides precisely in their surfaces, it is appropriate that my tribute by should begin by describing Stanley Rosen in the place where his unsurpassed mastery of both philosophy and ordinary language are most evident: the classroom.

I first took a class with Stanley Rosen almost twenty years ago, at Penn State, in the fall of 1985. What transpired in Rosen's seminar that afternoon was something that I have never experienced, either before or since, with any other teacher. My other instructors that semester were Joseph Kocklemans and the late David Lachterman, professors of rare erudition perfectly capable of making difficult texts clear and accessible. However, only Rosen, could seamlessly integrate philosophy into ordinary experience while enormously enriching his students' awareness of both. He was an amazing combination of Platonist, stand-up comedian, Dutch uncle and social commentator. Like Socrates, he could bring philosophy down from the heavens and do the most difficult topics justice in the language of the agora—or gridiron. His students saw that Rosen came before them neither to praise ordinary language—at the expense of philosophy, nor to

bury it—in abstract jargon. Rosen made me aware of how flat and stale it was to make a living by opposing philosophy to everyday life; Platonism, as he embodied it, was distinguished by a robust sense of reality. A philosopher who cannot use the direct evidence of the everyday exercise of reason to justify the good life is worse than useless; he is dangerous.

This is why Rosen, America's most distinguished Platonist, has made it his mission to ceaselessly warn against the nihilistic foundations of what his teacher memorably called "the joyless quest for joy." By thoughtlessly denouncing the so-called elitist experience of excellence, our egalitarian ethos is powerless to defend the very virtues that must sustain a democracy. For one thing, any talk of high and low, noble and base or good and evil is expressed purely in terms of selfishness, sentimentality or superstition. Alternately, and even more dangerously, any "value language" that cannot be quantified is deemed either meaningless or, horror of horrors, judgmental. Consequently we find ourselves "thrown" in a world in which ordinary speech is hopelessly incompatible with the technical jargon and quantitative measurements that rule and constitute the increasingly artificial and illusory everyday reality we dwell in. Yet Rosen does not zestfully denounce Modernity in the stern constipated tones of Cato the Elder; self-consciously anachronistic speech only serves to widen the gap between eternal verities and present-day exigencies. He is of the view that human beings can only maintain the essential connection between reason and the good by living the good life in the present. Ancient self-knowledge and Modern liberality cannot be understood as virtues that mutually exclude each other.

Rosen's metaphysics of the ordinary becomes startlingly relevant when we realize that the hundreds of billions spent on weapons that could blow our planet up many times over are as inconceivable in terms of human experience as the immeasurably tiny particles of matter and energy used by computer technology to hold our world together. Reality today is such that even the President of the United States cannot hope to master all the data at his disposal and gain an accurate world-view without a large number of advisors and advisors of advisors, all operating from their own limited and limiting perspectives. Furthermore, by a perverse reversal of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle at the macro level, it seems inevitable that the very efforts made to measure and report this chaotic mass of raw matter itself result in distorted pictures of the whole that only further disorient the various entities constituting it. Consequently order, no matter how arbitrary or violent, is affirmed for its own sake. Renouncing higher notions of justice and personal integrity, both the technocratic West and the fundamentalist East shamelessly kneel before the altar of necessity. Human society becomes generic and machine-friendly, and the loudly proclaimed advances in cloning only promise to superficially embody what educational institutions have been doing to the minds of impressionable students for many decades. Under these conditions, when nobility and even uncorrupted speech seem to be all but impossible, a man who can practice ordinary language to remind us of virtue and excellence can only be compared to Tiresias in the Underworld: "alone retaining his wits while the others flitted around like shadows." Yet such is the dis-ease of

this state that even many students fear those rare teachers who can deliver them from Hades.

For fifty years, Stanley Rosen has unceremoniously dragged thousands of students out of the ghetto of jargon and compelled them to speak and think in ordinary language. This is why many righteously tolerant academics have been appalled by his use of “judgmental” language and unprofessional examples to gratuitously indicate the nihilistic foundations of their schizophrenic existence. Now, as then, many highly intelligent students of philosophy prove to be utterly incapable of living their lives in accordance with the principles they pay lip service to in academes. Nihilism, an unbalanced disposition towards reality, which often results from a death-obsessed “care” or ego-maniacal authenticity, is preferred over the “logocentric” procedures of judgment and rank ordering that provide meaning and virtue in a world conspicuously deficient in both qualities. Unfortunately, the question of whether “being judgmental” is worse than being a hypocrite is one that few care to address in our simultaneously over-tolerant and over-righteous times.

Many students (and professors) still view philosophy as a disease (or way of being articulately neurotic) that they just happen to be good at. Of course, this sophisticated *diagnosis* finds no way of distinguishing between Wittgenstein and Woody Allen—and perhaps it shouldn't. In other words, philosophy becomes just a means of paying one's bills; the unquestioned end is normalcy—understood in the most banal and mimetic terms. Any setback will cause philosophers of this variety to not unhappily pursue some other, often more lucrative, career path that would better advance either “family values” or Epicurean lifestyles. Furthermore, following the example of Wittgenstein and the Logical Positivists it has become acceptable, and indeed downright philanthropic, for philosophers to set about the liquidation of philosophy itself—with a view to delivering normal people from its annoying questions and perplexities. Unfortunately, this Socratic “speed-bump” is the last obstacle to the flattening out of everyday reality and its rapid bifurcation into the mutually inclusive extremes of McWorld and Jihad.

By inconsiderately philosophizing in everyday language Rosen makes it far harder for his audience to maintain a “double-truth” relationship between philosophy and everyday existence. He has never treated philosophy as a language game that is played strictly within the pages of scholarly journals and becomes irrelevant or dangerous the moment we re-enter the real world of Xanthippe and Crito. The Good must have precedence over Being, even in our thoroughly historicized surroundings. Indeed, one could argue that Rosen has always followed Zarathustra's imperative to “be faithful to the earth” and never been seduced by ontic or even ontological exigency. Whilst those least worthy of philosophy only pursue it instrumentally, better but more timorous scholars have sought to make the world safe for philosophy and only succeeded in debasing both philosophy and the world. Vigorously eschewing both of these false oppositions, Rosen believes that true philosophers can and must justify existence through their “robust sense of reality.” It follows that “rank-ordering” is an essential aspect of the

distinctive manner in which a philosopher views the world and judges that it is still possible to practice virtue. Even though seeing things as they are is certainly not easy, and the task frequently seems to be as impossible as it was for Socrates or Rousseau to penetrate the encrusted outer shell of Glaucus, Rosen points us towards an abiding structure that, in his own words "isn't the eternal order but yet is the natural foundation for willing the eternal order to be."¹ It is noteworthy that despite the cryptic language, this formulation is far more positive than its equivalent in Strauss's thought: eternally recurrent problems that let philosophers stand beyond good and evil to rescue us from the chaotic mire of historicism. By his emphasis on this structure that allows noble deeds and thoughtful words to remain timelessly meaningful, Rosen defends the reality of both ordinary language and human virtue.

Furthermore, despite his passionate interest in moral and political questions, Rosen has consistently been critical of irrationalism and skepticism; both poses conveniently conclude that "everything but judgmental language is permitted" once we are either desperate or "cool" enough to assume the absurdity of existence or the final inaccessibility of ultimate reality. As a result, the world is delivered up to extremists on both ends of the political spectrum. Contrariwise, throughout his extraordinarily successful and productive career Rosen has demonstrated that ordinary language *is* sufficient to guide human life when it is governed by rational judgment—rather than mindless imitation. Conversely, ideas and facts cannot be separated from each other without consequences even more dangerous than those following the splitting of the atom. Neither does Rosen's model of human existence place man somewhere between an illusory physical world and a wholly transcendent heaven; he prefers to derive the ideas used to measure qualitative excellence from human cognitive activity itself—thus deriving depth from surface. In this important regard he once again separates himself from those who pride themselves on their ability to create values *ex-nihilo* by imposing order on the chaotic *hyle* of reality. Rosen's scathing criticisms of historicism and pseudo-aristocratic nihilism are founded in his recognition that it is possible for human beings to take their stand in the real world and resist both fundamentalism and sophistry.

Stanley Rosen, a self-described New Deal Democrat, has remained constant in his political views while instructing three generations of students. Temperamentally unsuited to occupy the Vicarage of Bray, he has never failed to warn against the worst tendencies of the ideology most in vogue among his students—even at the risk of being associated with political views that he is least sympathetic towards. His characteristic defense of prudence in eloquent but seemingly immoderate language has very little resemblance to our contemporary tendency to use insidious methods to promote extremism. Far from being the kind of man who would prescribe Nazism to ward against the corruption of Weimar, his criticisms of nihilism and Post-Modernism have always been undertaken in the name of moderate enlightenment. It is far nobler to be a Platonist accused of sounding like a Nietzschean than to be a Nietzschean impersonating a Platonist.

Rosen's well-known unwillingness to suffer fools gladly derives precisely from his awareness that many fools are yet capable of excellence; he does not allow a false sense of charity to alienate him (or them) from the experience of quality in the world. His high expectations of others have always been accompanied by genuine authenticity in personal relations with individuals. Having been educated in the company of many truly brilliant eccentrics at the University of Chicago in its glory days, and being himself the possessor of an artistic temperament, Rosen has always understood the thin line that separates genius from madness. He has never mistaken an artful plodder with a high IQ for a genuine philosopher. In a situation where students typically expect professors to be either their equal or an unapproachable superior, Rosen has refused to play either role for the sake of gaining drinking-buddies or disciples. Differently put, he has never been known to be afraid of being himself or of speaking his mind. Consequent to this refusal to conform to stereotype, humorless students (and colleagues) at both extremes have decided that he is either unprofessional or an elitist. Their pathetic inability to appreciate Rosen's unsurpassed sense of humor has always served as a kind of *pons asinorum* separating the children who approach him from the goats, sheep, camels and lions making up the intellectual order of rank. By refusing to take himself too seriously, and by never seeking to make disciples, Stanley Rosen always pointed beyond himself. The exaggerations and self-caricatures that made members of the afore-mentioned menagerie regard him as an egomaniac were in fact the productions of an artist always keenly aware of the enigmatic relationship between image and original. It followed sadly but necessarily that those incapable of understanding this basic Platonic distinction proved that they were unworthy of studying with our greatest living Platonist. Some of the most egregious misinterpretations of Plato have been committed by persons firmly convinced that a philosopher will never write or speak humorously.

Of course, any talk concerning Stanley Rosen and student teacher relationships is necessary incomplete without a discussion of his attitude towards his own teacher, Leo Strauss. Since much of Rosen's own work could be regarded as an ongoing response to certain fundamental themes in Strauss's work, and because Rosen himself has had much to say about his former teacher, we could gain valuable insights into the thought of both thinkers by directly addressing this topic. Accordingly, this will be the theme of the second half of this introduction. Just as Strauss's amazing success as a teacher is attested to by the large number of disciples garnered by this unprepossessing man, the strange fact that the charismatic and ebullient Stanley Rosen has actively refused to make disciples says a great deal about his deepest philosophical beliefs.

Rosen first met Strauss in 1949 shortly after the latter had moved to the University of Chicago after over a decade at the New School for Social Research in New York City. Rosen at the time regarded himself as a poet. He was also busily engaged in completing the requirements for a Bachelor's degree from Chicago in one year a feat that was also performed by his distinguished contemporary Seth Benardete. Rosen's hilarious account of his encounter with

Strauss awaits publication, but it suffices to state that on the occasion of their first meeting, after having introduced himself as a poet, he responded to Strauss's inquiry whether he knew what Plato said about poets by saying that he didn't care because as a poet he knew more about his art than Plato possibly could. This was the unpromising beginning of a very long and animated conversation that ended with an invitation to study with Strauss.

It is highly significant that Rosen was one of a very small number from the Philosophy Department at Chicago to attend Strauss's lectures; Richard Rorty was another. Most of the participants were either from Strauss's own department of political science or the Committee on Social Thought. Among these were intellectual luminaries such as Seth Benardete, Victor Gourevitch, Muhsin Mahdi, and Allan Bloom. Rosen was also the only one of Strauss's students to come to him from poetry. This fact is of course not unrelated to Rosen's interest in language and its, often tenuous, relationship to everyday reality. By his own account, he was also initially virtually uninterested in politics,² an attribute that, needless to say, also separated him from the vast majority of those who attached themselves to Strauss. Put differently, one could say that he preferred to study causes rather than effects; it has been noted on many occasions that Rosen's interests in metaphysics and epistemology also make him almost unique among Strauss's students. Because of his departmental affiliation, every official course offered by Strauss had to do with political science; however there were several private groups reading philosophical and theological works that he presided over as well.

By his own admission, Rosen attended virtually every meeting of Strauss's seminars over the five years he spent as a graduate student at the University of Chicago. It was soon readily apparent to him that Strauss "transcended the faculty members of the philosophy department in virtually every significant way." Accordingly, after taking his master's degree, Rosen transferred to the Committee on Social Thought where he was able to write a dissertation on Spinoza under the supervision of Leo Strauss. Shortly after completing his degree, marrying, and spending a year in Greece, Rosen secured employment at the Pennsylvania State University and left Chicago. This did not however end his association with Strauss. They corresponded often by letter and in 1958 Strauss visited Rosen and his wife at State College, Pennsylvania. Strauss, who had often defended Rosen against criticisms concerning his student's colorful temperament by giving assurances that he was "getting better," was very pleased at his student's success. He is said to have boasted to colleagues in Chicago that Rosen had "made it" and was now the proud owner of a house and automobile. Rosen continued to visit Strauss on many occasions, the last such visit taking place shortly before the latter's death in 1973. On that occasion, upon hearing that Rosen was preparing a book on Hegel, the ailing teacher pointed him towards what turned out to be a vitally important passage in the *Greater Logic*. This incident confirmed Rosen's adamantly held conviction that Strauss's true genius was to be found neither in his pronouncements as a statesman or prophet, nor in his metaphysical or poetic powers, but in his remarkable ability to read a text.

Rosen has stated elsewhere that Strauss rescued him as a teenager from a “transcendentally grounded nihilism.” While he came to share a number of his teacher’s central views and retained many of them throughout his life, Rosen says was never at any time a “Straussian.”³ Strauss never required him to become a Straussian “as a price for the extraordinary benefits he bestowed on his students.”⁴ Despite fully acknowledging how much he benefited from Strauss’s immense learning and “sober madness” Rosen believed that there were certain important differences, largely concerning the issue of esotericism, which caused him to separate himself from the Straussian mainstream. As readers of his numerous books and articles are well aware, Rosen is in considerable sympathy with the courage and generosity animating the “Moderns” in their revolution against tradition and nature. Yet Strauss, who according to Rosen regarded courage as the lowest of virtues,⁵ was often critical of what he perceived as Rosen’s excessive boldness. It is worth repeating the expression ‘*epater le bourgeois*’ (shocking the bourgeoisie) that summed up Strauss’s disapproving opinion of his student’s more exoteric writing style.⁶ As Rosen’s student, I am temperamentally incapable of not drawing attention to the obvious inference that this criticism had more to do with style than substance.

Even though Rosen’s celebrated book *Nihilism* was written to work out the general features of Strauss’s analysis of the nihilistic roots of modern philosophy, its “spiritual father,” while commending the work highly, also commented that he himself lacked the courage to write such a book.⁷ This goes to the heart of the fundamental difference between Strauss, a refugee from Nazi Germany, and Rosen, a native of Cleveland Ohio. Strauss had served in the German Army in occupied Belgium during the unprecedented carnage of the Great War; he had also lost all of the members of his family who remained in Germany to the Holocaust. It is easy to see why the author of such works as *Persecution and the Art of Writing*, a man who rediscovered the long forgotten art of esotericism by reading heretical political theologians, preferred not to express his truest opinions freely on most matters of importance. The question as to whether this had to do more with temperament, personal safety (lack of courage) or fear of corrupting his readers (*epater le bourgeois*) cannot be answered conclusively or in mutually exclusive terms. It is also not unrelated to their different views on whether it is more desirable and or practical to gain fame or disciples. There are reasons for and against the belief that Strauss, the prudent Ancient, obeyed the Greek warning against seeking fame in one’s own lifespan. It is likewise unclear whether Rosen, the courageous and generous Modern, embraced Machiavelli’s advice to trust in his own arms—even if they held *Fortuna* within them.

While Rosen has always defended the phenomenon of esoteric writing, it is his contention that our plight today is such that ‘shocking the bourgeoisie’ is far less dangerous than allowing them to persist in complacently nihilistic modes and orders already producing a cultural and economic meltdown. Put bluntly, esoteric writing is useless in a decadent time where success is measured by power, rather than wisdom, and even the best students are barely literate, certainly not pious, and often incapable of ever being more than good students.

Consequently, the true meaning of Strauss's teachings failed to reach the best minds and most able politicians of the present day. Importing esotericism to America is ultimately almost as quixotic as transplanting democracy in Iraq; in both cases one can best deflect the accusation of esoteric knavery by drawing attention to exoteric folly.

An emphasis on rigorous interpretive procedures aiming at the utmost clarity, ultimately expressed in ordinary language, rather than reliance upon oracular pronouncements and/or dogmatic assumptions concerning perfectly constructed texts that could only be decoded by infallible interpreters, starkly distinguishes Rosen's approach from methods common to both Heideggereans and Strausians. These procedures only separate student from interpreter while promoting the latter to an intellectual pantheon that confirms their qualitative kinship with the Ancients: "Where I go, you cannot follow." Additionally, dogmatic doctrines concerning perfect texts tend to create subterranean virtual realities presided over by sophisticated shadow-shapers. The idea that there is only one perfect unchanging esoteric doctrine beyond good and evil denies the reality of the productive disagreements between equally great thinkers that have contributed so much to Western Civilization. It also deprives writers from past times of what while they would most desire in ours: intelligent readers capable of ascending from the signifier and sign-painter to the signified. The idea that Shakespeare could only have learned about the soul by reading Xenophon and Thucydides by candlelight denies the possibility that an intelligent man could gain much wisdom by observing human affairs. It is far more plausible that Shakespeare and other great minds gained access to that "natural foundation for willing the eternal order to be" that Rosen alludes to.

It is quite obvious that many great writers write in such a way that the deeper implications of their works would only be apparent to more astute readers. However, the view that great works are flawless masterpieces of logographic necessity takes away the only quality that makes interpersonal communication of goodness truth and beauty between very different times and places possible: shared finite humanity. Consequently, a certain kind of historicism, based upon dark oracles concerning the withdrawal of Being or caves below caves, necessitates revelatory exegesis by a superhuman mediator when unnecessarily befuddled students cry out "Only a god can enlighten us!" Conversely, by refusing to resort to obscurantism, and providing constant verbal and non-verbal reminders of his robust humanity, Stanley Rosen has never 'hermenutered' his students and left them incapable of reading for themselves. He recalls Strauss smiling broadly and quoting Nietzsche's assertion that the best thing a student can do for his teacher is to kill him. Teacher-student relationships modeled after the doctrine of original sin, which opens up an infinite moral and qualitative abyss between creator and creation, are not appropriate in rational—as opposed to revelatory—contexts. In other words, teachers who produce disciplined disciples often cast a long shadow that makes emulation of the master's virtue by the disciples, or even recognition of it by later generations, all but im-

possible. Shakespeare put it best in *Julius Caesar*: "The evil that men do lives after them; the good is oft interred with their bones."

Rosen has stated that Leo Strauss "regarded Heidegger as the enemy of the heritage of Platonism in the late Modern world." Accordingly, he sought to "inoculate his students against Heidegger by training them in the Platonic tradition."⁸ It was in the service of this cause that Rosen published two works that took direct aim at Heidegger: *Nihilism* and *A Question of Being*. Yet Rosen's singular experience was that Strauss very rarely mentioned Heidegger by name, even in private conversations and reading groups, and never referred to Heideggerean texts.⁹ It was only shortly after leaving Chicago that Rosen became aware of Strauss's lecture *An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism* a revised version of which was published by Thomas Pangle in 1989. This document concludes with a description of Heideggerean Being or *Esse* as a synthesis of the Platonic Ideas and the Biblical God. *Esse* is said to be as impersonal as the former and as elusive as the latter.¹⁰ It is exceedingly curious that Strauss himself, in his famous 1953 lecture *Progress or Return?* claimed that the secret of the vitality of the West depended on the continuance of the unresolved conflict between Reason and Revelation, Jerusalem and Athens.¹¹ Bearing in mind Heidegger's famous pronouncement in his *Introduction to Metaphysics* (also published in 1953) that the idea of a Christian Philosophy was about as meaningful as a round square,¹² we must entertain seriously Rosen's thought that, despite their respective foci on ontology and politics, the man his teacher called "the only great thinker in our time,"¹³ exerted a great deal of influence on Leo Strauss.¹⁴ Did Strauss believe in either the round or the square? Does he subscribe to the Nietzschean view that a culture is created *ex nihilo* out of the dialectical interaction between two fictions? Or did he follow Heidegger's example and effectively function as a revelatory interpreter?

Perhaps we could say that Strauss, who claimed to be only a scholar,¹⁵ rejected the poisoned chalice of Reason and preferred to find upright shelter in the enduring stormy tension between the impersonal and the elusive. In less poetic words, he preferred political philosophy to metaphysics. Viewed in this light, it is likely that his setting up of the famous quarrel between the Ancients and Moderns was undertaken with the intention of reconfiguring the debris remaining from Heidegger's *destruktion* of the Western Tradition in a way that protected the West from the consequences of nihilistic enlightenment. This solution amounted to forcing both Faith and Reason to co-operatively assume defensive postures against their common enemy, the juggernaut of technology, instead of exposing each other's offensive deficiencies. Unfortunately, the exigencies of the Cold War forced the West to embrace this very enemy in self-defense. Heidegger warned against this danger, but of course his own doctrines had contributed greatly towards the Western Tradition's weakened condition. Rosen himself believes that Strauss was imprudently prudent "too pessimistic concerning human creativity, too enamored of nature and so too forgetful of the fact that nature is both good and bad"¹⁶ to employ a more positive attitude towards Caliban-like modernity. While we deplore the liberal tendency to celebrate raw po-

tentiality as actuality, this is no reason to embrace the conservative fallacy of justifying, anointing and acclaiming what *is* as what *ought* to be. This is but another form of historicist fatalism. While they might flatter the rich and pander to the powerful, language games of this kind can only breed hubris and stupidity in the real world.

Strauss's preoccupation with such theorists of strife as Thucydides, Hobbes and Machiavelli, as well as his preference for those two noted anti-Socratics Aristophanes and Nietzsche, justify the inference that he esteemed the Ancients for their noble pessimism than out of any belief in the classical good life. This view is also supported by the fact that his celebrated re-discovery of Platonic political philosophy occurred through the esoteric, atheistic, and decidedly pessimistic medium of Islamic political thought. While Strauss's call for the revival of spiritedness was altogether justified in dark days of the Cold War, Cassandra-like, he drowned out his own warnings that the less immediate but gravest threats were posed by intellectual and religious decadence. In our present hegemonic predicament the unformed ambition of Alcibiades is more dangerous than the prudent timidity of Nicias. When our foes are unified by their hatred of us, we can no longer depend on our enemies to remind us of our virtues.

Leo Strauss's prudent interpretations of old, esoteric, texts have little to say to our unlettered, thoughtless and thoroughly exoteric times. His praise of martial virtue seems redundant besides our sanguine bellicosity, and his guarded revelations of well-concealed wickedness fail to shock our shameless and insatiable appetites. The sad truth is that all attempts to reproduce the singular *virtues* of this great exegete have been markedly unsuccessful. Mindless imitation of ideal hierarchical relationships between infinitely wise oracular teachers, noble young aristocrats, and invincibly ignorant *Hoi Polloi* do little good and generate a great deal of mischief in our cynical, illiterate, and thoroughly materialistic society. Today, the grand alliance promoted by Strauss between Reason and Revelation yields a distressingly large harvest of knowledgeable knaves, lustful libertarians and fanatical fools. By contrast Rosen's accounts of the essential connection between Reason and the Good provides a richly comprehensive erotic Platonism that is agreeable to the generous heart and fevered temperament of modernity. He believes that poetry can mediate successfully between sad reason and crass politics¹⁷ and he has shown that a new robust metaphysic can be derived from the enduring phenomena of ordinary experience. While fully aware that nihilism is a permanent human possibility, Rosen's speech and deeds are animated by his confidence that humans are not inherently incapable of the self-knowledge needed to educate their desires and lead a good life. In one of the most beautiful passages of *Nihilism* he stirringly reminds us of the contagious example of a virtuous human being:

The good man...is not "useful for..." in the same sense that tools, food, acts even just and beautiful things exhibit utility...there is a certain fulfillment, completeness, or perfection which shines forth from such a man, and which we too admire, even perhaps without envy or desire because of its splendor. This is

what we mean by “genuine goodness” or “purity of character.” The shining of a good man’s splendor may illuminate and help us to complete our own lives, whether by virtue of its nobility, or because we are able to see better what to do ourselves when that noble light permeates the otherwise dark contours of our lives.¹⁸

These winged words best express what Stanley Rosen has meant to many of his students.

Notes

1. Stanley Rosen, *Hermeneutics as Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 127.
2. See Stanley Rosen, Preface to the Portuguese Translation of *Nihilism*, (South Bend: St. Augustine’s Press, 2000), xxii.
3. Rosen, Preface to the Portuguese Translation of *Nihilism*, xxiii.
4. Rosen, Preface to the Portuguese Translation of *Nihilism*.
5. Rosen, Preface to the Portuguese Translation of *Nihilism*.
6. Rosen, Preface to the Portuguese Translation of *Nihilism*.
7. Rosen, Preface to the Portuguese Translation of *Nihilism*, xxii–xxiii.
8. Rosen, Preface to the Portuguese Translation of *Nihilism*, xxiv.
9. Rosen, Preface to the Portuguese Translation of *Nihilism*.
10. Leo Strauss, “An Introduction to Heideggerean Existentialism” *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*, ed. Thomas Pangle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 45.
11. Leo Strauss, “Progress or Return?” in *Jewish Philosophy and the Crisis of Modernity*, ed. Kenneth Hart Green (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997) 116.
12. Martin Heidegger, *Introduction to Metaphysics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 7.
13. Strauss, “An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism,” 29.
14. Stanley Rosen, Preface to Chinese Translation of *The Quarrel Between Philosophy and Politics*, 1.
15. Strauss, “An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism,” 29.
16. Rosen, Preface to Chinese Translation, 2.
17. Rosen, Preface to Chinese Translation.
18. Stanley Rosen, *Nihilism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).