

The Annual Class of 1970 Lecture

MANAGING MORAL OUTRAGE:

How Philosophy Can Change Your (Emotional) Life



Gideon Rosen

Gideon Rosen is a professor of metaphysics, ethics, metaethics, and philosophy of mathematics at Princeton University. He currently serves as Chair of Princeton's Philosophy Department in addition to holding the position of Stuart Professor of Philosophy. Since joining the department at Princeton in 1993, Rosen has proved to be a prolific scholar in his various specializations. He is most noted for proposing the idea of modal fictionalism in metaphysics. Perhaps his most recognized work is ***A Subject with No Object: Strategies for Nominalist Reconstrual in Mathematics*** (1997), coauthored with John Burgess. Rosen is no stranger to Rutgers and has collaborated with various Rutgers professors on papers and books. He completed his B.A. at Columbia University, where he graduated summa cum laude, and completed his Ph.D. at Princeton University. Rosen has held a Hauser Fellowship in Global Law at NYU Law School and a Whiting Fellowship at Princeton. He is also a John Jay Scholar via Columbia University and served as Chair of the Council of the Humanities at Princeton from 2006 to 2014.

Abstract:

You can change your emotional state by taking a pill, but you can also change it by giving yourself reasons. This lecture explores the basis for this deep connection between reason and emotion and then argues that philosophy, with its distinctive battery of reasons and arguments, can motivate pervasive and potentially valuable changes in how we respond emotionally to events in our own lives and the wider world. The discussion focuses on the emotions that constitute moral blame: guilt, resentment and indignation, but also on a distinct emotion I call "moral outrage". The talk will present a skeptical argument designed to neutralize the blame emotions. If successful, this argument provides a rational antidote to guilt and resentment across the board. The availability of this antidote raises the worrying possibility that rational people will be left with nothing left to feel in response to social and political injustice. ("The best lack all conviction, while the worst/ Are full of passionate intensity") The talk will argue that moral outrage, unlike moral blame, is not vulnerable to skeptical attack and is therefore available as a stable emotional response to rank injustice.

THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2019 | 4:30-6:30PM *(Reception to follow)*
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