

Encounter Philosophy

Dear MSU Student,

Reflection upon self and world is fundamental to human experience. Regardless of one's field of study, our understanding of who we are in the world guides us in all that we do. Philosophy brings into question that which we take to be self-evident, and by doing so continuously transforms the way we think and live.

I have completed the minor in philosophy in addition to my degree in mechanical engineering. Engineering, as with any field, is shaped by the world in which it is practiced. In our age, we increasingly turn to the certainty of science for answers in the challenges we face. Science itself is rooted in particular tradition of philosophical thinking, and through the study of philosophy I have not only gained a better understanding of the foundations of this kind of knowledge, but have been able to reflect upon its limitations as well. I believe that is inadequate to understand engineering to be a scientific task alone; engineering will always be a creative act, and one that is guided by the culture we inhabit. That which we create has the power to transform our everyday experience, and will always require difficult decisions with ethical implications. Function can never really be separated from aesthetic experience. While engineers use knowledge for design and construction, it is easy to argue that knowledge of culture and history are just as fundamental as scientific principles. My own study of philosophy has transformed my understanding of what it means to be an engineer in such a way that I have decided to continue my studies in architecture. In past times, the title of architect was synonymous with that of the engineer. This is perhaps a reflection of the fundamental importance of culture and creative expression in the productive fields that has now been forgotten with our emphasis of technical mastery. There will always be a relationship of dialogue between creative activity and our self understanding as given to us by philosophy.

Regardless of your field of study, I hope you will consider the importance of philosophy to who we are in our world. Philosophy requires only an open mind and a relentless desire to seek better understanding. Philosophy will improve your ability to write, to speak, to reason clearly, and to listen carefully, but most significantly, philosophy may even lead you to question what it means to dwell in the world, perhaps one of the most greatest endeavors of life itself.

Sincerely,



Nick Schock
Mechanical Engineering Major, Philosophy Minor