



GAMBURD LAW GROUP LLC
INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND LICENSING

NANCY R. GAMBURD
ATTORNEY AT LAW

600 WEST JACKSON BOULEVARD
SUITE 625
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60661

DIRECT 312.876.0460
MOBILE 312.399.9332
MOBILE 408.429.3310
FAX 312.276.4176
ngamburd@gamburdlaw.com
www.gamburdlaw.com

August 24, 2006

Holly M. Smith, Ph.D
Professor of Philosophy
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
Department of Philosophy
26 Nichol Avenue
New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901

Dear Holly,

From the perspective gained over the 25 years since I graduated, I thought I would let you know that my education in philosophy has been invaluable, both professionally and personally – as a superb foundation for graduate studies in law and engineering, for my patent law career, and for daily life as well. I know that prospective majors (and their parents!) often fear that a philosophy major may be a completely impractical indulgence, but I'm here to attest that the exact opposite is the case.

A philosophy education creates exceptional analytical skills. Courses in philosophy emphasize a logical and systematic approach to analyzing the subject matter, assessing precisely what is being presented, and – potentially more importantly – determining what may be missing from the argument. I've studied and obtained degrees in both biomedical science and electrical engineering. I found that their primary focus was on absorbing factual information, deriving and applying theoretical constructs, and manipulating the corresponding equations. While these fields required me to develop important skills, they simply did not demand the same rigorous level of analytical reasoning required by philosophy.

I have concluded that philosophy, rather than political science or history, is the best background one could possibly have for law school – no other area of undergraduate education so fully develops a student's expertise in logical argument, reasoning, and advocacy. From the first day of law school, I realized that I was considerably ahead of my classmates in recognizing, understanding, and analyzing legal issues, both because of these analytical and advocacy skills and because law is a very natural extension of so many areas of philosophy, including moral and political philosophy, theories of justice, causation, and so on. Indeed, my interest in law developed as a direct result of a course in contemporary moral philosophy.

These crucial analytical and advocacy abilities are not developed to the same degree in other disciplines. As a former partner in a national law firm, I often reviewed the legal work of

associate attorneys and other partners. Those attorneys, with diverse educational backgrounds, were not as skilled in recognizing key legal and technical issues, creating a logical flow of ideas, and crafting a winning argument.

There are also more subtle aspects of a philosophy education that are equally valuable and, in my case, have created a competitive advantage in my patent practice. Philosophy teaches a student to look at things from multiple points of view, to determine strengths and weaknesses, and to perceive shades of grey, not merely black and white. When I have received compliments on my development of patent portfolios, it has been this underlying skill set that has been recognized and appreciated. What clients have valued most has been the ability not only to understand an invention, but also to broaden it, to conceptualize the invention from many perspectives, and to project those conceptions along divergent paths into **the future to create** a uniquely broad and lasting patent unavailable from other patent counsel with similar engineering and legal training. Simply, this is a philosophy skill, not an engineering or legal skill.

Another subtle but significant talent developed through a philosophy education is the ability to write well – to locate and structure arguments so that they will be most effective, and to use language precisely and intentionally. I well remember reviewing a Ph.D. patent agent’s legal analysis in which the best argument was buried in the middle of something else, a mistake no philosophy major would ever have made. Being able to wield – or not to wield – precise language is a powerful tool. In some instances, precise language is essential to conveying a specific and deliberate meaning. Conversely, in other instances, having mastered the difference between precise and vague language makes possible conscious obfuscation (which, fortunately or unfortunately, is also quite helpful in a legal career!). By way of analogy, philosophy teaches how to use language like a laser, and also like a very broad brush!

My unusually complex career has made me appreciate how my philosophy education underpins a multidisciplinary approach that seamlessly integrates my training in science, engineering, and law. And of course, it has provided an equally helpful foundation for private life – for reading a New York Times editorial, analyzing an investment, interviewing a client, and generally for approaching life in a thoughtful and reasoned manner. It has simply been invaluable. Prospective philosophy majors may not pursue philosophy as a profession, but judging from my experience, they could hardly find another field that would prepare them as well for the careers and lives that lie ahead of them.

Given this experience, I would like to express my profound gratitude for your guidance, all those many years ago, to double-major in philosophy. Clearly, some of the best advice I have ever received, and words alone can’t thank you enough.

With my best wishes,



Nancy R. Gamburd

University of Michigan, Integrated Premedical-Medical Program, B.A. 1980 (Philosophy and Biomedical Science);
Northwestern University, J.D., 1984;
Illinois Institute of Technology, M.S. in Electrical Engineering, 1993.