Bertrand Russell, one of the most important philosophers of the 21st century, in the essay *'The Problems of Philosophy'* states that philosophy is not as much about the answers as about the questions. His feeling is the true study of philosophy is to free oneself from the confined, small private world of narrow beliefs. He feels that a peaceful meaningful life is lived through deeper contemplative study of our "great and powerful world." He maintains that often when philosophers come up with the answers they fall into other areas of science. He mentions that Newton's first work was titled 'the mathematical principles of natural philosophy' and that Astronomy used to be defined as philosophy. Russell identifies the conflict between the ego of self and the greater universe causes internal strife that can only be resolved by truly open questioning. Through this, we are enriching our lives and our minds, while becoming closer to our universal truths.

To answer the question whether studying philosophy is practical, I would like to point to the news. The BBC News headline today is: '**Gaza-Israel** conflict: What can Israel and Hamas gain?' This centuries old conflict has no end in sight. It is a complicated, volatile situation which has affected millions of people personally, as well as a greater political influence on the middle east. The air raids, bombing, and retaliatory violence are destructive to the Israelis and the people of Gaza. I am reminded of the quote from the essay of Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy.* "Thus contemplation enlarges not only the objects of our thoughts, but also the objects of our actions and our affections: it makes us citizens of the universe, not only of one walled city at war with all the rest".

This conflict needs very deep contemplative study. There needs to be a depth of respect for each side while looking at the problem without dogma, prejudice or 'taking sides'. This conflict is a perfect example of the purpose of the study of philosophy. How is it that we are living in the 21st century and 101 people of Gaza have been killed in this recent conflict? How can we as educated, reasonable people not resolve our conflicts in a civil way? We as a society at large need more contemplative study. We need to be able to see another persons view, we need to let go of our prejudiced dogmatic views for more open dialog.

'The mind which has become accustomed to the freedom and impartiality of philosophic contemplation will preserve something of the same freedom and impartiality in the world of action and emotion'. This quote of Russell is my favorite because it voices my personal aim. I hope to gain freedom from the prejudices of my personal experience, or lack there of. I hope to be able to see many sides to a situation, conflict or problem and be able to rationally and creatively create understanding.

"through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe, which constitutes its highest good". As the final paragraph of Russell's essay *'The Problems of Philosophy'*, I come to understand my wish to study philosophy.