

Writers respond to "Art... or Arts?"

Art defines our culture

This is a response to Karl Katzke's commentary about buying "Shared Destinies."

I grew up in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Our most prominent public sculpture was three large missiles pointing upright in front of F.E. Warren Air Force Base, next to the Interstate freeway.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

They still stand there today as a memorial of the wonderful days of the Strategic Air Command, missile silos and the cold war.

Are these missiles, funded by public money, the monuments I wish to define my culture? Is buying "Shared Destinies" a waste? Did you know that the budget for military bands is three times the budget for the National Endowment for the Arts?

Art is not a peripheral, frivolous activity. It is the essence of human activity. When we study the histories of great cultures, we study their sculptures, paintings and architecture. These artifacts are often all that is left to define the accomplishments of a culture.

"Shared Destinies" is not student art work. It is the work of a highly accomplished artist with a master's degree, many commissions and years of experience. The artist, Devin Laurence Field, donated half the value of the sculpture to the college. This is the kind of art I want to have to define my culture.

A quotation from the movie, "Mister Holland's Opus," says it very clearly, "when you take away art and music, theater and dance, you won't have anything left to write about."

Rick True
Art Instructor, CCC.

We should not spend the money

I would like to sound my agreement with Karl Katzke's opinion article, "Art... or Arts?"

Artwork is great for personal investments, wall decorations, and museums, but CCC is an educational institution of many genres where educational advancement is, or should be, the primary focus. If the community is willing to contribute \$16,000+ to the purchase of a statue, should it not be even more willing to contribute the same to something more useful and profitable, something which would have a lasting effect on the advancement of our society's learning? That \$16,000 could be used for scholarships, improvements in CCC's computer network, or even the Art Department.

The pioneering spirit of the art piece, "Shared Destinies," is nice, but wouldn't contributing, encouraging, and aiding the reality be even better?

Shirley Starcher
Student

"Shared Destinies," Devin Laurence Field's steel sculpture stands near the Community Center, waiting for funding to make it a permanent display on our campus. Another \$16,000 is needed for the purchase.



TIMOTHY A. BELL/ Clackamas Print

What's left of culture is the art

"Shared Destinies." What does that mean to us? We are linked together, students, faculty and staff in a community, in a "shared destiny" here at CCC. I am sad that some feel that purchasing this sculpture is a misuse of funds. Sad because I know that in the not too distant future those who objected will remember it and realize what a magnificent piece it is. The scale and use of the medium of steel is remarkable. My personal bent is toward art, but not everyone's is. However, I can remember how painfully difficult it was to understand history, until I looked at it from the perspective of culture and society through art; that was when I began to grasp the integrity of the two because what was left of a culture was the art (i.e. music, dance, theater, architecture and literature).

I understand your funding concerns, but do you have the whole story? The college has an opportunity to represent itself to you and the community through this work. The funding to purchase the sculpture is only partially coming from the "college." The balance will be voluntarily provided by other benefactors through the work of the Foundation. The amount committed by the college is small by comparison to the whole.

The Foundation does fundraising for the entire college for scholarships, grants and revenue. They are a funding source for much that is not covered in our general budget. Before you becoming critical of an issue, I recommend that a little more research be done. If you did, you would know the complete story on funding of "Shared Destinies," as well as many of the other buildings, programs and student support funds here at Clackamas through the Foundation. You asked us to use our voice and so here is mine.

Mary Lou Rupp
Art Dept. Secretary, and artist

Bigger boundaries of truth

Editor's note: The following letter contained typographical errors when it was published on Nov 4. We have re-printed it in its correct form.

In response to Joel Shempert's opinion Piece, "Truth or Consequences: In Search of an Absolute", (Wednesday, October 28, 1998, Issue 4) I would suggest that even Paul of Tarsus was a moral relativist masquerading as a moral absolutist in his day.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Since I have discussed religion with Joel

in Comparative Religion class and in many other discussions, he knows of my aversion to simply quoting Bible passages to prove universal truth. But, since his writing opens this door, let me ask if he thinks the following ideas of Paul of Tarsus are absolute or relative:

- "May condemnation fall on those that unsettle you." (Gal. 5:10) (Boy, if I wished that on anyone that unsettled me...)
- "Those that trouble you about circumcision should go the whole way and castrate themselves." (Gal. 5:12) (A reference to whether circumcision was necessary)
- "It is shameful for a woman to speak in church." (1Cor. 14:34-35) Does Joel suggest that this is still true today... or was it ethically relevant at the time Paul stated it?
- "Slaveowners, deal justly and fairly with your slaves" (Col. 4:1) Today, since we are not relativists in this regard as were the Roman civilizations of Paul's time we might say, "Slaveowners, free your slaves."

There are many other instances that suggest Paul was speaking a truth that was relative to his time and circumstance. I am not suggesting that there is not a moral absolute from which humans might contemplate or judge actions, I am only suggesting that Joel take care in declaring Absolute Truth's Parameters. They might be much bigger and more flexible to the evolving human consciousness that a simple perusal of the boundaries of truth might indicate.

Bill Briare
Religion Instructor

Advice to the absolutist

An open letter to Joel Shempert:

I'm sure I speak on behalf of my colleagues, Bill Briare and James Bryant-Trierise when I say that you do CCC a good service when you write articles about important religious and philosophical topics, and that you should keep at it. Here's some advice on the *absolutism/relativism* issue that you may or may not find helpful in the future.

Determine what your objectors held dear. Suppose they hold dear the following: Women should not be discouraged from speaking their minds; slavery is wrong; cruelty and torture are wrong.

Once you determine what views your objectors' hold dear you then ask them whether they consider them to be 'absolute' or 'relative.' (These terms are not as clear as one would want, but you could at least begin with them). If they say 'absolute,' your work is done. If they say 'relative,' you ask questions like 'So I or my group may legitimately discourage women from speaking their minds?' 'I, or my group, may legitimately enslave people?' 'Southern slave-holders legitimately enslaved Africans because their morality allowed it?' etc. . .

On the point that absolutists eventually wind up imposing their views on others by force, you may ask the following sorts of questions 'If I find individuals in my society thinking it's perfectly all right to torture and kill homosexuals, may not I, acting with or through my state, work to stop them, by lethal force, if necessary?' 'If some white people take it in their heads to drag black people behind their pickup trucks, and take up arms to defend their right to do this, may not the state oppose them, by lethal force if necessary?' etc. . .

A final word: don't argue history unless you know a lot; stick to philosophy, where it's not what you know that counts.

Wendell Stephenson
Philosophy Instructor

The Clackamas Print welcomes letters from Students and Faculty that are 300 words or less. The Deadline for letters is the Friday before Publication.

A higher power within morals

I have recently read Joel Shempert's "Truth and Consequences: In search of an Absolute," and had mixed feelings on the subject. After hearing Shempert's thoughts I found myself asking, "Where do morals come from?" I thought of this regarding myself and my morals. My morals were created by me. But then I thought about what created me and everything about me. I would be lying if I said my parents and society did not influence me in any way. So my first conclusion was that my morals came from cultural values.

With some more thought, I decided that there was more to it than just cultural values. There is a higher power within morals. I do not know where this power comes from but it is not just the common thoughts of a society. Our soul, a god, or possibly the pure energy in the universe that makes everything coexist: these are all things that I thought might have a say in our morals.

It is not just a higher power, though. If this was true we would all have the same morals and we all know that differences in morals exist. I believe it is a combination of some higher power and an individual person. Everyone is different and that is why morals are different, but there is too much in common with the morals around the world to make it entirely a self decision.

Matt Fulop
Student

Live by the Golden Rule

In regards to the editorial "Truth and Consequences: In search of an Absolute," I just have a few comments. I do believe that there is a type of absolute standard for all cultures and people, but I also think it only pertains to the most important matters in life. For example, I would hope that everyone knows that it is wrong to murder someone. I believe that as long as someone is not hurting anyone else then they should be free to have their own belief system.

Our country was built as a melting pot of different ideas and cultures and that freedom should not be taken away. Besides, what is this absolute standard? Is the author referring to the Bible? What if a society is Muslim or Buddhist? Are these people suddenly condemned because they don't believe in the same god? Instead of an absolute standard, I believe we should live by the golden rule. Do unto others as you would have done unto you.

Jana Spain
Student