



Community over Chaos: An Ecological Perspective on Communication Ethics (Studies Rhetoric & Communicati)

James A. Mackin

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This ecology of ethics seeks to balance the needs of the individual and those of the various levels of community.

As James A. Mackin, Jr., shows, both modernism and postmodernism have undermined the traditional foundations for ethics. Using an ecological model, however, *Community over Chaos* develops a common ground for ethical judgments about communication, thus countering the current theoretical climate of pessimistic cynicism toward the very possibility of ethics.

This theoretical pessimism is not merely an academic problem. The general public is becoming more and more disillusioned about the possibility of ethical communication. We are unable to teach principles of communicative ethics in our primary and secondary schools because we cannot agree on a common ground for those principles. Instead, we teach a narrow form of competence that is concerned primarily with short-term, individual success. Because our communities are built on our communicative practices, our inability to justify communicative ethics must ultimately lead to the disintegration of our communities.

Mackin's ecological model assumes that each of us is a communicative system operating within larger communicative systems that together form our communicative ecosystem. Virtues of the ecological approach are practical wisdom, based in fuzzy logic, and communicative openness and honesty.

Mackin recognizes the importance of both chaos and community in our communicative ecosystems. Chaos, as the source of originality and creativity, can contribute to growth and development; community provides the source of regularity and nurture that makes chaos endurable.

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