



Why Ecology Needs to Be at the Center of Media Education: Communication and how Life Works

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Abstract

The contemporary understanding of media education poses a significant obstacle to citizens, scholars and students in addressing the current environmental crisis. This current view, informed by a mechanistic version of modernism, sees media as a collection of specific mechanical technologies carrying information from one point to another---whether it be one to one, one to many, or many to one. It blinds us to what we might call an ecological or systems view of communication as the biological evolutionary growth of consciousness and culture which places humans and their mediating communication tools in direct relationship to the living world. The mechanistic view of media education creates a false problem of separation between media and nature. In our presentation, we will argue that an ecological view of media education can help us better understand the media/environment interconnection and ask more ecologically and culturally fruitful questions about the design and uses of technologies for nurturing communication which builds communities and societies in harmony with an interdependent human/environment relationship. After laying out these two models, we turn our attention to the recent WHO-UNICEF-Lancet Commission report "A future for the world's children?" The report states "Climate change, ecological degradation, migrating populations, conflict, pervasive inequalities, and predatory commercial practices threaten the health and future of children in every country." An analytic comparison of the report from the mechanistic vs the ecological approach to media education is presented assessing the implications for a more fruitful understanding of the media/environment connection and for effective media policy directed toward a thriving biosphere blending strong cultural and ecological sustainability.

Keywords: media education, media studies, environment, ecology, modernism, technology, ecomedia, communication.

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