Education and Ecology:  
Earth Literacy and the Technological Trance  

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"To understand the world  
knowledge is not enough,  
you must see it, touch it,  
live in its presence  
and drink the vital heat of existence  
in the very heart of reality."

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Heart of Matter*  

The reality of a global environmental crisis, recently the focus of the  
Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June of 1992, together with the demise  
of communism, has suddenly created an urgent agenda in this transitional  
decade that must be met with novel educational, social, and political  
programs.

Those of us interested in education and in the work of Pierre Teilhard  
de Chardin and Thomas Berry are especially challenged to create the  
conditions for healing the biosphere in the 21st century. Teilhard's call to  
"build the future" and to inspire the energies for that future are essential  
parts of the educational vision needed in our time. As Thomas Berry has  
noted, without a clear analysis of the challenges faced by the human  
community and without a sufficiently comprehensive historical and geo-

litical context—a planetary perspective—we will be unable to make the  
necessary changes.1 As educators our responsibility is to motivate the next  
generation of students to go beyond the technological trance of a  
consumer society to an understanding of earth literacy.

Accordingly, this study begins with a survey of the problems as we move  
from a military based cold war economic system toward an economy  
founded on sustainable development and proper use of natural resources.  
Next a reassessment is made of the myth of progress and the lure of quick  
technological fixes. After a review of the present inadequacies of