

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*
(New York: Harcourt Brace, 1978), p.71

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 geological 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