

CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF CAMEROON (CATUC), BAMENDA
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BEING-TOWARD-THE-PLANET: ONTOLOGICAL DILEMMAS OF TECHNOSCIENTIFIC
ENVIRONMENTALISM

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This paper examines how technoscientific environmentalism produces dilemmas in which proposed solutions often reproduce the very problems they seek to address. It asks: How does technoscientific environmentalism transform our ontological relation to the Earth, and what alternative mode of being does this transformation require? Drawing on Martin Heidegger, Hans Jonas, and African relational environmental thought, the paper argues that dominant technoscientific approaches, even when framed in terms of sustainability, remain grounded in an instrumental ontology that reduces the Earth to a standing-reserve to be optimized and controlled. Against this background, the paper proposes a reconceptualization of the human being as “being-toward-the-planet,” understood as a form of stewardship that combines ontological humility, ethical responsibility, and relational coexistence within a broader community of life. This alternative orientation resists both technocratic “salvationism” and passive resignation by emphasizing vulnerability, interdependence, and shared exposure to ecological risk. The central claim is that the ecological crisis is fundamentally ontological: it arises from a distorted understanding of what it means to be human on Earth, and therefore cannot be resolved by technoscientific means alone. A genuine response requires a transformation in how humans inhabit the Earth, one that reconfigures our self-understanding from masters of nature to co-dwellers within a fragile planetary habitat.

Keywords: Technoscientific environmentalism, Ontology, Being-toward-the-planet’
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