

# Realism without Speculation: Heidegger, Meillassoux and the Question of Philosophical Method

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**Abstract:** In this article, we evaluate Meillassoux’s criticism of correlationism in general and of Heidegger’s correlationism in particular. Contrary to earlier contributions, we argue that Meillassoux’s reflections on uncorrelated being not only serve an epistemological but also an ontological interest; both Meillassoux and Heidegger are interested in the way we have access to uncorrelated being as well as in the nature of uncorrelated being itself. After introducing Meillassoux’s criticism of the correlationism of Heidegger, we reflect on three arguments of his account of planet earth as un-correlated being; the emergence of planet earth, the presupposed accessibility of un-correlated being and his criticism of Heidegger’s fideism. Although it becomes clear that Meillassoux’s criticism of correlationism is not applicable in the case of Heidegger, it also helps us to articulate the relevance of Heidegger’s “realist” approach of uncorrelated being in contemporary philosophy.

**Keywords:** correlationism, Heidegger, Meillassoux, philosophical method, planet earth.

## *Introduction*

An emerging movement in contemporary philosophy criticizes philosophers since Kant for being correlationists and instead argues for speculative realism. According to Quentin Meillassoux, correlationism means that “we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other” (Meillassoux 2013: 5). The idea that the world only appears within the framework of human thought is criticized because it cannot acknowledge the empirical fact of the emergence

and evolution of the world around 4.3 billion years *before* the appearance of humans on earth, i.e. the emergence of the world as *un*-correlated to human thought (cf. Meillassoux 2013: 9). Also, twentieth-century phenomenologists like Husserl and Heidegger are blamed for being correlationists according to Meillassoux.

The correlationism of Heidegger's philosophy seems obvious. In his *Introduction to Metaphysics* for instance, he explicitly discusses the time before the appearance of human beings on earth and rejects the possibility of the existence of the earth "before" the appearance of human being:

After all, there was a time when there were no human beings. But strictly speaking, we cannot say there was a time when there were no human beings. At every *time*, there were and are and will be human beings, because time temporalizes itself only as long as there are human beings. (GA 40: 40 [88])<sup>1</sup>

In *Being and Time*, this correlation of being and thinking is understood in terms of an understanding of being (*Seinsverständnis*).<sup>2</sup>

We should acknowledge, however, that Heidegger's correlationism is at least ambiguous. Although in *Being and Time* he states that there cannot be the being of beings *without* the human being (understanding of being), he at the same time argues that the meaning (*Sinn*) of being remains hidden to thinking (GA 2: 1 [19]). Heidegger's basic experience is an incommensurability between our understanding of being (which may be considered a form of correlationism) and the sense of being (which may be considered a form of non-correlationism), something *beyond understanding* which is unreachable for thought. Also in his later work, when Heidegger articulates the essence of truth as unconcealing-concealing, we recognize a limitation to the correlationism of our understanding of being; in a formal way, we can argue that the concealment and withdrawal of being is only possible in case being and thinking are *not* correlated.

In this article, we raise the question whether phenomenology can be seen as the object of Meillassoux's criticism, and whether his criticism is legitimate in the case of Heidegger. Although it will turn out that Meillassoux's criticism of correlationism is not applicable in the case of Heidegger, it will also help us to articulate the relevance of Heidegger's non-speculative but "realist" approach of un-correlated being in contemporary philosophy.

In section 1, we introduce Meillassoux's criticism of correlationism and evaluate its applicability in the case of Heidegger. In section 2, we reflect on

<sup>1</sup> Quotations and references to Heidegger's work refer to the original publication in the *Gesamtausgabe*, followed by the reference to the English translation of Heidegger's work.

<sup>2</sup> "Of course only as long as Dasein *is* (that is, only as long as an understanding of Being is ontically possible), 'is there' Being. When Dasein does not exist, [...] it cannot be said that entities are, nor can it be said that they are not" (GA 2: 211–212 [255]).

three arguments of Meillassoux to reject the correlationist's account of planet earth as un-correlated being; the emergence of planet earth, the presupposed accessibility of un-correlated being and Meillassoux's criticism of Heidegger's fideism. Based on our critical reflections on Meillassoux's and Heidegger's concept of un-correlated being, we draw our conclusions in section 3.

## 1. *The correlationism of contemporary philosophy: the case of Heidegger*

### 1.1. The correlationism of contemporary philosophy

According to Meillassoux, correlationism involves the decision "that there are no objects, no events, no laws, no beings which are not always-already correlated with a point of view, with a subjective access" (Meillassoux 2008: 1). According to Meillassoux, phenomenology is a clear example of such correlationism, in which being is mediated by thinking (consciousness) (Meillassoux 2013: 6); consciousness is always already intentionally involved in our experience of the world.<sup>3</sup> Correlationism doesn't imply that the meaning of being is constituted by an act of a subject, but that being and thinking are interconnected and interdependent; we "only ever have access to the correlation between being and thinking, and never to either term considered apart from the other. We will henceforth call *correlationism* any current of thought which maintains the unsurpassable character of the correlation so defined" (Meillassoux 2013: 5).<sup>4</sup> Being is always already given to thought and thought is always already responsive to being.

A first characteristic of correlationism is thus its relationism, i.e. an object cannot be understood in itself and beyond the relation it has to the subject, just as the subject can only be understood in its intentional relatedness to the object. A second characteristic of correlationism is that this relation is constitutive of the related terms and not the other way around; according to correlationists, planet earth for instance does not first exist in itself and is then

<sup>3</sup> See Wiltsche (2016) for a full elaboration of the question why phenomenology can be considered a form of correlationism.

<sup>4</sup> Meillassoux was not the first one who criticized the correlationism of contemporary philosophy. According to Levinas for instance, the ontological imperialism of the philosophical tradition consists in the reduction of the Other—un-correlated being—to the same—correlated being. Cf. "For Levinas, this 'correlationism,' to use Meillassoux's term, is essentially an 'idealism,' since the self never gets beyond Berkeley's reduction of what is represented to concepts in the mind" (Gratton 2014: 86). It is clear that Levinas also criticized the idea of *noesis-noema* of his predecessors and that his own phenomenological effort consisted in the rehabilitation of the outside of such correlations, i.e. the Other as un-correlated being (cf. Morgan 2011: 45). The question whether the experience of the Other can still be considered as phenomenology is beyond the scope of this article, just as the further exploration of the influence of phenomenologists like Levinas on Meillassoux.

perceived by human consciousness. On the contrary, in their mutual relation, the earth *as* a 4.3 billion years old being and human consciousness *as* that which is able to calculate its exact date are performatively constituted. This example shows the reciprocity of subject and object as a third characteristic of correlationism. It is not the case that one of the related terms has primacy over the other, but they are interconnected and interdependent. A fourth characteristic of correlationism is that the subject is included in the correlation. The object is only given *in* me—my consciousness, my language—and at the same time, I am outside with these objects themselves, insofar as consciousness is consciousness of something outside myself, in which I am at the same time intentionally involved. As a consequence, that which is outside is limited to that which I am aware of and can have access to. For this reason, correlationism is sometimes called a “philosophy of access” (Harman 2005: 4). The fifth characteristic of correlationism is that it is a philosophy of access; nothing is accepted as being outside this correlation. In this respect, Meillassoux conceives correlationism as an extreme form of idealism (Meillassoux 2013: 18).<sup>5</sup>

According to Meillassoux, there are two forms of correlationism. Weak correlationism rejects the idea that we can understand uncorrelated being, but acknowledges that we are able to *think* it. An example is Kant, who rejects our ability to understand the *thing in itself*, but argues that it is non-contradictory and that it exists. Why? Because otherwise we have to assume appearances without anything that appears, which is contradictory according to Kant. So, for the weak correlationist, we don’t have cognitive access to the thing in itself, but we can *think* it and say at least something about it; being is absolute, without reference to our understanding of this being, and non-contradictory, because we cannot think against the principle of non-contradiction according to Kant. Weak correlationism is called weak because it doesn’t reject all positive relations between thinking and uncorrelated being (Meillassoux 2013: 35).

Strong correlationists on the contrary reject the possibility of saying anything positive about the relation between thinking and uncorrelated being; because we are *included* in the correlation between being and thinking, we don’t have a position outside the correlation which enables us to say something verifiable about the thing in itself. This means that for the strong

<sup>5</sup> Meillassoux’s conceptualization of correlationism as extreme idealism is ambiguous, because on the one hand, he argues that correlationists like Heidegger “never address the idealist conclusions that must be drawn from correlationism about ancestral statements” (Gall 2014: 344–345; *cf.* Meillassoux 2013: 122). But on the other hand, Meillassoux also distinguishes between correlationism and idealism. While idealism reduces characteristics of reality to the structure of subjectivity, human consciousness or thinking (ontological level), correlationism claims that we don’t have access to reality apart from its correlation with thinking (epistemological level). In this respect, correlationism can be seen as a much broader concept. But given the explicit statements in which Meillassoux assesses correlationism as extreme idealism, as we will see, we are inclined to interpret Meillassoux’s criticism of Heidegger’s correlationism as one that includes a criticism of his extreme idealism (*cf.* Gall 2014: 344–345).

correlationist, contrary to the weak correlationist, we cannot even “think” the thing in itself. Consequently, not the thing in itself but the correlation itself receives primacy (Meillassoux 2013: 37).

An example of strong correlationism is Husserl. His phenomenology indeed calls for a return to the things themselves, but in this, his phenomenological attitude places precisely the *reality* of these things between brackets; he limits himself to the phenomena *as they appear to us* (cf. Husserl 2002: 56–58). According to Meillassoux, strong correlationism assumes the inseparability of being and thinking (cf. Meillassoux 2013: 36). This doesn’t mean that for the strong correlationist, the correlation between being and thinking itself becomes the thing in itself, i.e. the absolute. This is the position of German idealism (cf. Backman 2014: 278). Strong correlationism rejects metaphysics as the assumption of a necessary being—the absolute - and stresses our human finitude, i.e., the *fact* of an unescapable correlation between being and thinking (cf. Gratton 2014: 16). This *facticity* of the correlation has to be seen as the condition for the possibility of experience as such. The facticity of the correlation between being and thinking structures and guides our experience of the world, but we are not able to ground the factual correlation in an absolutely necessary principle (cf. Meillassoux 2013: 39). Examples of facticity are oppositions like subject-object, nature-culture, fact-fiction, that structure and guide our experience of the world. They are indeed fixed in the sense that we cannot change them—in this sense, they are factual—but this doesn’t mean that they are absolutely valid. The factual correlation between being and thinking is *groundless*. With this, it remains *possible*, and as a consequence, it is characterized by *finitude* (cf. Meillassoux 2013: 40).

### 1.2 Correlationism and non-correlationism in Heidegger’s work

According to Meillassoux, Martin Heidegger is a clear example of strong correlationism. Referring to Heidegger’s postscript to *What is Metaphysics*, he argues that according to Heidegger, only human *Dasein* is able to experience and understand being (GA 9: 307 [234]; Meillassoux 2013: 42). This understanding of being by human *Dasein* is conceptualized as a co-appropriation (*Zusammengehörigkeit*) of being and thinking. On the one hand, human *Dasein* only *is* as appropriated (*übereignet*) to being, and on the other hand, being only *is* as appropriated to human *Dasein*.<sup>6</sup> Because Heidegger seems to reject any reality of being outside the correlation with human *Dasein*, Meillassoux has a strong case in his diagnosis of Heidegger’s philosophy as

<sup>6</sup> Backman convincingly showed that because of this primacy of the relation (*Ereignis*) over the relata (being and thinking), the correlationist resists absolutation, at least in the case of Heidegger: “the absolute’ literally signifies a purely self-sufficient *self-identity* that is completely ‘absolved’ from all constitutive relations and references to anything other than itself” (Backman 2014: 283).

correlationism.<sup>7</sup> And because Heidegger rejects any reality of being outside the correlation with human *Dasein*, Meillassoux calls his correlationism an extreme form of idealism.<sup>8</sup>

But Heidegger continues: “This does not at all mean that being is posited first and only by man. On the contrary, the following becomes clear: man and being are appropriated to each other” (GA 11: 39 [31]). The idea that there is no being without its being correlated to thought doesn’t automatically imply that thought constitutes being (cf. GA 2: 212 [255]).<sup>9</sup> In *After Finitude*, however, Meillassoux doesn’t refer to Heidegger’s remark here that the enowning (*Ereignis*) between being and thinking doesn’t imply the position that being is posited by thought; and this remark is already sufficient to question whether Heidegger’s correlationism can be taken as extreme idealism.<sup>10</sup> On the contrary, Meillassoux focusses on the interconnectedness of being and thinking in Heidegger’s concept of enowning. Enowning

remains faithful to the correlationist exigency inherited from Kant and continued in Husserlian phenomenology, for the “co-proprietation” which constitutes *Ereignis* means that neither being nor man can be posited as subsisting “in-themselves,” and subsequently entering into relation—on the contrary, both terms of the appropriation are originally constituted through their reciprocal relation. (Meillassoux 2013: 8)

In order to evaluate Meillassoux’s criticism, let us first turn to a passage in which Heidegger himself refers to the ancestral.

In his *Zollikon Seminars*, Heidegger argues for human *Dasein*’s relationship to being as the all-sustaining relationship (*alles-tragenden Bezug*). It is in this

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Morin 2014. It is noteworthy that Meillassoux is not criticizing Heidegger here for being anthropocentric, as is the traditional criticism of his work. A possible explanation is that also Meillassoux, in the end, is an anthropocentric thinker: “For speculative materialism [...] humans remain at the centre of philosophy, though their knowledge is no longer finite. Humans are capable of the absolute; any qualities that can be mathematized are primary qualities that can be known absolutely, with no dark residue lying behind them” (Harman 2011; cited in Gratton 2014: 92).

<sup>8</sup> “Confronted with the arche-fossil, every variety of idealism converges and becomes equally extraordinary—every variety of correlationism is exposed as an extreme idealism, one that is incapable of admitting that what science tells us about these occurrences of matter independent of humanity effectively occurred as described by science” (Meillassoux 2013: 18). See also the earlier footnote about the ambiguity of Meillassoux’s assessment of strong correlationism as extreme idealism.

<sup>9</sup> In *Being and Time*, Heidegger already argued that “Entities are, quite independently of the experience by which they are disclosed, the acquaintance in which they are discovered, and the grasping in which their nature is ascertained” (GA 2: 244 [228]).

<sup>10</sup> In his *Contributions to Philosophy* for instance, it is clear that Heidegger rejects the conceptualisation of the understanding of being, which indeed can be understood as correlationism, as a form of idealism (cf. GA 65: 259 [193]).

context that he discusses the contradiction between his fundamental idea in *Being and Time* that there cannot be the being of beings *without* the human being, and the natural scientific assertion that the earth existed long before human beings appeared on earth.

This assertion stands in gross contradiction to the [following] statement of natural science: Due to the absolutely uniform rate of atomic decay in radioactive substances present in the earth's crust, it can be calculated and therefore proved that the earth has already existed for about four billion years, whereas the first man appeared only about two million years ago. At the very least, the being we call earth was already here long *before* human beings appeared. Therefore, beings and the manifestness of being, and therefore being can also exist entirely *independently* of human beings. (ZoS: 222–223 [176–177])

Heidegger here considers explicitly the idea that the time before the appearance of humans on earth indicates possible shortcomings of his fundamental intuitions in *Being and Time*. But in the end, he rejects this possibility. Only according to the atomic clock is the earth present at hand before humans emerged on earth. Our calculation of the age of planet earth is only possible, according to Heidegger, “insofar as *we* stand in the clearing of being” (ZoS: 222 [177]).

Heidegger's argument is comparable with the one we already encountered in the introduction, that time only temporalizes itself as long as there are human beings. In *Zollikon Seminars*, Heidegger argues that the meaning of the word “is,” which is presupposed in any statement about the existence of the earth before human *Dasein* emerged, remains undetermined. Even when we say that the earth exists independently of human *Dasein*, the *presence* of the earth, which indeed does not need human *Dasein*, is presupposed according to Heidegger. But what does presence mean?

*Presencing* is [how] the being of beings has been determined since ancient times. Not only in ancient times, but also in modern times, objectivity [*Objektivität*], standing against [*Gegenständlichkeit*], present-at-handness [*Vorhandenheit*], and presentness [*Präsenz*] are simply modifications of presencing. (ZoS: 223 [177])

But presence and presencing is not only a characteristic of being. It shows already a specific relation to human *Dasein* to which being is present:

There is no *presencing* without a “where-to” [*Wohin*] of such presencing and tarrying [*Verweilen*]—of tarrying on [*An-weilen*]; that is, it is a tarrying [*Weilen*] which approaches what lets itself be approached [i.e. *Da-sein*]. If there were not such a being [i.e., *Da-sein*] letting itself be approached, nothing could come to presence. The human being is the guardian of the clearing, of the *disclosive appropriating Event* [of being]. (ZoS: 223 [177])

So Heidegger does not necessarily argue that being and thinking are correlated here at an *ontic* level—he in fact acknowledges the independent existence of beings at an ontic level as we have seen—but that the presupposed concept of the *being* of the ancestral—the earth *is* before human existence emerged—already implies a tarrying of *Dasein* at an *ontological* level. This doesn't necessarily imply, as we will see, that being as such is in correlation with thinking according to Heidegger (see §2).

If we compare Meillassoux's and Heidegger's positions regarding time, it becomes clear that both move in a different direction. While Meillassoux argues that the chronological appearance of planet earth is *prior* to the transcendental conditions in which being and thinking are correlated, Heidegger argues that temporality itself is prior to the transcendental conditions in which the emergence of planet earth appears as chronologically earlier. "*Time is earlier than any possible earlier* of whatever sort, because it is the basic condition for an earlier as such." (GA 24: 363 [325])

As a second step, we briefly look at the five characteristics of correlationism we listed in section 1.1 in order to see to what extent Heidegger can be considered a strong correlationalist. 1) The relationalism of Heidegger's question of being occurs if we remember that Heidegger calls human *Dasein*'s relationship to being the *all-sustaining relationship*, which is confirmed by the co-proprietation of being and thinking in his later work. So the first characteristic of correlationism, its relationism, is confirmed in Heidegger's work. 2) The primacy of the relation between being and thinking over the *relata* is the second characteristic of correlationism. The applicability of this characteristic on Heidegger's work is confirmed if we remember that according to Heidegger, human *Dasein* only *is* as appropriated to being and being only *is* as appropriated to human *Dasein*. 3) This mutual appropriation of being and thinking can be considered reciprocal—the third characteristic of correlationism—if we consider Heidegger's example of time in *Introduction to Metaphysics* (*cf.* introduction). On the one hand, time always temporalizes itself only at one time, as human historical *Dasein*. On the other, human *Dasein* must understand time (being) in order to be there (*Da*) (GA 40: 90 [89]).

In the end, however, the correlation between being and thinking is not reciprocal for Heidegger. In the thirties, Heidegger thematises the self-concealing of being itself. Being has abandoned us to beings that are presented and represented by human thought. For Heidegger, this is not a personal failure but being-historical by nature. Negatively speaking, the *self*-concealing of being shows that a call of being itself is primary, rather than our human responsiveness to this call. Precisely here lies the finitude of thinking according to Heidegger. In this respect, the third characteristic of correlationism, i.e. the reciprocity between being and thinking, is not confirmed in Heidegger's work (we will come back to this issue in the next section).



4) The fourth characteristic of correlationism was that human *Dasein* is included in the correlation. This characteristic of correlationism is confirmed in Heidegger's work. The inclusion of human *Dasein* in the question of being becomes for instance clear in the opening passage of *What is Metaphysics*. Here Heidegger states that the question of being concerns the whole of being and can only be asked in such a way that the questioner (thinking) "is also there within the question, i.e. is placed in question" (GA 9: 103 [82]). Although being and thinking are not reciprocal according to Heidegger, the correlation between being and thinking is constituted by the fact that thinking is *included* in the question of being. 5) The fifth characteristic of correlationism, the idea that it is a philosophy of access, is only partly supported by Heidegger's thought. On the one hand, Heidegger states that there cannot be the being of beings without human *Dasein* (understanding of being). On the other hand, he argues that the sense of being remains hidden to thinking, i.e. that we do *not* have access to the sense of being and therefore, that the sense of being and thinking are *not* correlated.

It is surprising that Meillassoux argues that strong correlationists like Heidegger presuppose access to being, for Heidegger never stopped arguing that "the actualization of the access and of the appropriation constitutes the main component of philosophy" (*cf.* GA 61: 113 [84]); Oudemans 1998: 89–91). The understanding of being as all-sustaining relationship doesn't mean that 'being' is somehow available in the world and can then be understood; it is about the being of our understanding of the world, in which being and thinking are always and already correlated with each other. In this respect, Heidegger's question of being asks for the correlation between being and thinking itself, the fact that we live in a meaningful world in which we understand beings and know how to deal with them. But in his question regarding the correlation between being and thinking, he doesn't presuppose to have access to the sense of being, i.e. the meaning of this correlation.<sup>11</sup> In the self-evident correlation between being and thinking (understanding of being), which is conceptualized by Heidegger as a "passage way" for thinking (GA 65: 333 [234]; *cf.* 447 [315]), the sense of being (*Sinn von Sein*) remains hidden to thought (GA 2: 1 [19]); see Blok (2011a) for the full elaboration of the incommensurability of the understanding of being and the sense of being).

This concealment of the sense of being cannot be projected in a projection of thinking, nor can it be understood. Why? Heidegger calls the sense of being the projecting-opening-domain (*Entwurfsbereich*) (GA 9: 201 [154]; GA 65: 451 [317]), i.e. "that wherein the intelligibility of something maintains itself"

<sup>11</sup> "We find ourselves without support or assistance when it becomes necessary to reflect on the essence of the open pervading *aletheia*. This reflection will seem strange to the ordinary view, especially because it shows that the open is by no means first and only a result or consequence of disclosure but is itself the ground and the essential beginning of unconcealedness" (GA 54: 213 [143]).

(GA 2: 201 [192]). In this respect, Heidegger introduces a notion of sense as *Entwurfsbereich*, which is not a sense *for* thinking. On the contrary, the understanding of being presupposes this project-domain—the transcendental horizon or openness to all projections of thinking, that itself cannot be projected in a projection of thinking—which is not correlated and withholds itself in every thinking projection. Heidegger’s basic experience is, in other words, an incommensurability or twofold between our understanding of being (correlationism) and the sense of being (non-correlationism), something *beyond understanding* which is unreachable for thought (*cf.* Blok 2011a: 103–104). In this experience, Heidegger’s ‘realism’ consists.<sup>12</sup> This means that correlationism is indeed the point of departure for Heidegger, but that his way of thinking doesn’t presuppose access but raises the question of the sense of being of this self-evident correlation. In this respect, Heidegger’s question of being asks for the facticity of the dominant correlation between being and thinking—in modernity, being appears as represented for representing thought—in relation to the sense of being as the uncorrelated. For this reason, we can argue that Heidegger, although the correlation between being and thinking is his point of departure, doesn’t fulfil the fifth requirement of strong correlationism.

To conclude, we have to reject Meillassoux’s claim that Heidegger’s thought is a clear example of strong correlationism.<sup>13</sup> The correlation between being and thinking (understanding of being) is indeed the point of departure of his philosophical thought, but he raises in fact the question of the sense of being of this self-evident correlation, which itself is beyond understanding, i.e. uncorrelated being. This explains why two characteristics of correlationism, the reciprocity of being and thinking and the presupposed access to being, are not applicable in the case of Heidegger. On the one hand, we can argue that Meillassoux’s criticism of Heidegger’s correlationism does not take into account that his main interest consists in the exploration of the twofold of the understanding of being (correlationism) and the sense of being (non-correlationism). Because correlationism is also the point of departure of Meillassoux’s exploration of the ancestral as the uncorrelated, which is found in the *contingency* of the *facticity* of the correlation between being and thinking (see §1.1), we can on the other hand even argue that both Meillassoux and Heidegger have a comparable question; both ask for something—the contingency of the facticity of the correlation between being and thinking in the case of Meillassoux, and the sense of the facticity of the correlation between being and thinking in the case of Heidegger—which itself

<sup>12</sup> It is clear that this “realism” cannot be compared to any traditional form of realism in philosophy and science.

<sup>13</sup> In this respect, our evaluation of Meillassoux’s criticism of Heidegger supports Zahavi’s general conclusion that speculative realism lacks “scholarly engagement with the tradition” (Zahavi 2016: 13).

is not correlated with thinking. The main difference between Meillassoux and Heidegger is that for Meillassoux, un-correlated being has to be found in the ancestry of planet earth as ontic-ontological condition for the emergence of any correlation between being and thinking, while for Heidegger, uncorrelated being has to be found in the sense of being.

*2. Heideggerian reflections on Meillassoux's arguments against the correlationist account of ancestry: accessibility, fideism and the emergence of the earth.*

In the previous section, we have seen that Meillassoux's criticism of correlationism is not applicable in the case of Heidegger, and that in fact both Meillassoux and Heidegger ask for un-correlated being. In this section, we ask how Meillassoux and Heidegger have access to this uncorrelated being in order to highlight the relevance of Heidegger's philosophical method for contemporary efforts to think uncorrelated being. To this end, we start with three arguments against the correlationist account of the ancestry of the earth, i.e., uncorrelated being. Subsequently, we ask what happens with these three arguments if we look at them from the perspective of Heidegger's methodological thoughts concerning the accessibility of uncorrelated being.

### 2.1 Meillassoux's criticism of correlationism

The claim of correlationism is questionable according to Meillassoux, because consciousness only appeared 4.3 billion years after the emergence of planet earth, i.e., the emergence of the correlation between being and thinking is a historical event which is preceded by a long period of being *without* thinking; this period of being of the earth without thinking is called the *ancestral*. "Arche-fossils" or "fossil-matter" indicate the reality of the ancestral anterior to terrestrial life (*cf.* Meillassoux 2013: 10). How would the correlationist deal with the earth as the ancestral? He could argue that correlationism is the condition of the possibility of *experiencing* this ancestral according to Meillassoux—the earth only *is* as far as it is understood by us and as far as we are intentionally involved in it.

Meillassoux in fact provides three arguments to reject the correlationist's account of the ancestry of the earth. His first argument is that correlationism is at odds with scientific claims about the historical emergence of the earth. If our propositions about the earth are limited to the earth as it appears to us, then we cannot make any realist claim anymore about the earth as it emerged 4.5 billion years ago. As a consequence, it doesn't make sense anymore to verify scientific claims about the emergence of the earth. In fact, the correlationist should drop any realist claim about reality and reject realism as such according to Meillassoux; it is nonsense to claim that the earth emerged 4.5 billion years ago on the one hand, and that what this claim describes is unreal on the other

(*cf.* Meillassoux 2013: 17). For Meillassoux, the correlationist position is “one that is incapable of admitting that what science tells us about these occurrences of matter independent of humanity effectively occurred as described by science” (*cf.* Meillassoux 2013: 18). Contrary to strong correlationism, Meillassoux’s speculative realism wants to rehabilitate the ‘real’ or what he calls, “the great outdoors, the eternal in-itself, whose being is indifferent to whether or not it is thought” (Meillassoux 2013: 63).<sup>14</sup> The ultimate reality is found in hyper-chaos (Meillassoux 2013: 64; Meillassoux 2011a: 162), i.e. in the idea that everything is always possible (Gratton 2014: 59). Meillassoux argues that (scientific) knowledge of this chaos is possible.<sup>15</sup> It is clear that Meillassoux himself is a scientific realist (Meillassoux 2013: 12) and that his rejection of correlationism is based on a certain type of scientism, i.e. on the idea that scientific insights ultimately provide all truths (Meillassoux 2013: 17; *cf.* Gratton 2014: 45).

By rejecting correlationism, Meillassoux takes up the question how we can have access to the ancestral as uncorrelated being, or more precisely, the question how science can make legitimate statements about the ancestral (*cf.* Meillassoux 2013: 27).<sup>16</sup> Meillassoux’s reference to “science” here is deliberate and brings us to the second argument to reject the correlationalist’s access of ancestry. Correlationists do reject the possibility of *thinking* the uncorrelated and absolute thing in itself, but not necessarily this absolute itself. Although correlationism limits the *thinking* of uncorrelated being, it allows other possible ways to have access to it, like poetry and religion (*cf.* Meillassoux 2013: 45; Meillassoux 2011b: 226–227; *cf.* Gratton 2014: 45).<sup>17</sup> But if thinking does not have access to this absolutely uncorrelated being, there is not only no rational ground anymore to prefer one statement about this absolute to the other; correlationism “legitimizes *all* those discourses that claim to access an absolute, *the only proviso being that nothing in these discourses resembles a rational justification of their validity*” (Meillassoux 2013: 44–45).

<sup>14</sup> Wiltsche (2016) has criticized Meillassoux’s claim because scientific instruments like telescopes provide exactly the media to experience uncorrelated phenomena like the objects we actually “see” through the Hubble telescope, but already ceased to exist a long time ago.

<sup>15</sup> In the end, he finds this knowledge of the real in mathematics (*cf.* Meillassoux 2013: 80–81). He rehabilitates the Cartesian distinction between primary (mathematical) and secondary (non-mathematical) qualities and argues that mathematics is able to describe these mathematical qualities of uncorrelated being (Meillassoux 2013: 26). Further elaboration of Meillassoux’s absolutisation of mathematical discourse is beyond the scope of this article.

<sup>16</sup> It is clear that this ambition is contrary to Kant’s, who argued “never to venture with speculative reason beyond the boundaries of experience” (Kant 1990:24).

<sup>17</sup> In the secondary literature, there is a discussion whether correlationism is anti-absolutist or not. Although Meillassoux himself argues for the possibility of absolutism in correlationism, Robert Gall on the contrary argues that correlationism is anti-absolutist (Gall 2014: 338). In fact, it is clear that for instance Heidegger’s correlationism can not be conceived as an “absolutist thinking,” as Jussi Backman has convincingly shown (Backman 2014: 283–284; *cf.* GA 65: 228–230 [162–163]).

Moreover, it leaves open the *religious* “belief in the absolute.”<sup>18</sup> According to Meillassoux, the strong correlationist’s rejection of the possibility of having access to and of thinking (uncorrelated) being results in a becoming religious of thought, i.e. a religionizing of reason: “In leaving the realm of metaphysics, the absolute seems to have been fragmented into a multiplicity of beliefs that have become indifferent, all of them equally legitimate from the viewpoint of knowledge, and this simply by virtue of the fact that they themselves claim to be nothing *but* beliefs” (Meillassoux 2013: 47). If Meillassoux asks the question how *science* can make legitimate statements about the ancestral, this is to distinguish his own *rational* approach from fideist approaches of this question.

The third argument to reject the correlationist’s account of the ancestral is that it cannot account for the *emergence* of the earth. The emergence of the earth long ago cannot be re-constructed based on the givenness of being for thinking—as if it is comparable with the hidden backside of a tower that can be reconstructed based on the front we directly perceive—because the emergence of the earth is not based on something given. On the contrary, it is the origin of givenness, an absence of givenness “prior to givenness in its entirety” (Meillassoux 2013: 21). According to Meillassoux, the correlationist is not able to perceive the temporal emergence of planet earth, i.e. “to conceive [...] a time in which the given as such passes from non-being into being” (Meillassoux 2013: 21). The correlationist would argue that he asks for the transcendental conditions of the *experience* of the temporal emergence of the earth, but Meillassoux argues that he asks for the temporal emergence of such transcendental conditions of the possibility: “when we raise the question of the emergence of thinking bodies in time we are also raising the question of *the temporality of the conditions of instantiation, and hence of the taking place of the transcendental as such*” (Meillassoux 2013: 25). The emergence of planet earth is not the emergence of the correlation of being and thinking, but the emergence of the earth as capacity to articulate factual correlations between being and thinking, i.e. the era of humanity and terrestrial life which in the end will disappear again (*cf.* Meillassoux 2008: 3; Meillassoux 2013: 21–22). This earth is not correlational, but the factual correlation emerges, unfolds and expands out of this earth and goes back into the earth again, and not the other way around. This means that the singularity of the emergence of planet earth is temporally prior to the emergence of these transcendental conditions of the experience of the temporality, in which being and thinking are correlated. The singularity of this emergence not only concerns the ontic origin of planet earth, but also its coming into being at an ontological level according to Meillassoux:

<sup>18</sup> Robert Gall has shown that religion for Meillassoux means both that a necessary existence is possible and that “every position that consists in limiting the exercise of reason is religious” (Meillassoux 2011c: 230–231; Gall 2013: 360).

the time at issue here is the time wherein *consciousness* as well as *conscious time* have *themselves emerged in time*. For the problem of the arche-fossil is not the empirical problem of the birth of living organisms, but the ontological problem of the coming into being of givenness as such. More acutely, the problem consists in understanding how science is able to think—without any particular difficulty—the coming into being of consciousness and its spatio-temporal forms of givenness in the midst of a space and time which are supposed to pre-exist the latter. (Meillassoux 2013: 21)

Here it becomes clear that Meillassoux raises an epistemological thesis regarding un-correlated being, but an ontological one at the same time.<sup>19</sup>

For Meillassoux, this pre-existing time cannot be reduced to its givenness to thinking as the strong correlationalist would suggest, and according to Meillassoux it is science that has primarily access to this pre-existing time in which planet earth emerged and will disappear again.

Science reveals a time that not only does not need conscious time but that allows the latter to arise at a determinate point in its own flux. To think science is to think the status of a becoming which cannot be correlational because the correlate is in it, rather than it being in the correlate. So the challenge is therefore the following: to understand how *science can think a world wherein spatio-temporal givenness itself came into being within a time and a space which preceded every variety of givenness*. (Meillassoux 2013: 22)

This is the speculative realist question Meillassoux raises in *After Finitude*.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> In the secondary literature, it is discussed whether Meillassoux has a merely epistemological interest or not. Rober Gall for instance argues that Meillassoux raises primarily an epistemological thesis: “Meillassoux’s point is not simply about the mind-independent existence of things; like most presentations of (scientific) realism, his realism is also committed to arguing that scientific claims are literally true (or false) and that they give us true or approximately true descriptions of a mind-independent world” (Gall 2014: 338). In his article, he opposes Meillassoux’s epistemic thesis to Heidegger’s ontological thesis about being, and argues that Heidegger’s emphasis on ontology is superior because it is a better explanation of our thinking about things in themselves. In this article, however, we follow a different strategy. Meillassoux himself is not *only* interested in *knowing* ancestry—i.e., how mathematics describes “the great outdoors” in the natural world—but also in the ontological status of un-correlated being itself (Meillassoux 2013: 53). This point is generally missed in Wiltches (2016) criticism of Meillassoux. One can argue that Meillassoux follows his mentor Alain Badiou, who equated mathematics and ontology (Badiou 2005). Although the methodological question how we can have access to the ancestral in general and the epistemological question how sciences can make legitimate statements about the ancestral in particular is relevant for Meillassoux, we argue that these epistemological questions only make sense if they are embedded in an ontological interest in ancestry itself, i.e., in an interest in un-correlated being itself.

<sup>20</sup> Because the main question of this article is whether Meillassoux’s criticism of correlationism is correct in the case of Heidegger, a further elaboration of Meillassoux’s solution

## 2.2. Methodological questions: Meillassoux's work as a philosophy of access.

Based on our analysis of Heidegger's correlationism in section 1.2, we had to reject Meillassoux's criticism of Heidegger's account of the ancestrality of the earth in the previous section. Heidegger does not necessarily argue that being and thinking are correlated at an ontic level—which would indeed be at odds with scientific claims - but that the presupposed concept of the being of the ancestral already implies a tarrying of *Dasein* at an ontological level (understanding of being) (*cf.* §1.2). But this correlationism of the understanding of being doesn't imply, as we have seen, that being as such is correlated with and accessible to thinking. On the contrary, Heidegger's renewal of the phenomenological method concerns precisely our access to the twofold of the understanding of being (correlationism) and the sense of being (non-correlationism). In this section, we reflect on Heidegger's philosophical method to reflect on the sense of uncorrelated being. It will turn out that Meillassoux's question regarding the ancestral itself presupposes a philosophy of access. This will become clear if we consider Heidegger's methodological question of how we can have access to the facticity of the correlation between being and thinking.

According to Heidegger, access to facticity cannot be found in science nor in the metaphysical question of being. Both science and metaphysics take beings as point of departure and ask for the beingness of these beings, while the correlation of being and thinking is not a being but concerns the being of our understanding. Being is relational, as we have seen (first characteristic of correlationism), and the primacy of the relation over the relata (second characteristic of correlationism) makes clear why the correlation between being and thinking (understanding of being) cannot be discussed with reference to or as a being (*cf.* GA 40: 21 [20]). Because the facticity of the correlation between being and thinking is not a being, while the method of science and the method of metaphysics precisely take beings as point of departure, Heidegger calls for the transformation of the method of philosophy from object-oriented (beingness of the correlation) to relational oriented (being of the correlation), in order to enable philosophical thought to reflect on this facticity of the correlation of being and thinking.

This method is not found in the *question* of being in *Being and Time*, but in the *exploration* of questioning as a particular correlation between being and thinking, in order to reflect on the twofold of the understanding of being it presupposes and the sense of being. What is the nature of this exploration of questioning? "To explore the question as it is formulated, is to pose the question more essentially: in asking the question one enters

of the problem of correlationism, which is found in the absolutation of the facticity of the correlation—i.e., in contingency—is beyond the scope of this article.

explicitly into those relationships [*Bezüge*] that become visible when one assimilates virtually everything that comes to pass in the enactment of asking [*Vollzug*] the question” (GA 44: 214 [192]). In the enactment (*Vollzug*) of the exploration of the question of being, we experience the *relation* between being and thinking. Thinking is included in this relation (fourth characteristic of correlationism) and precisely this includedness enables thought to explore questioning<sup>21</sup>, which provides access to the facticity of the correlation between being as represented for representing thinking.<sup>22</sup>

Although this method of philosophy provides access to the correlation between being and thinking (understanding of being), it doesn't provide direct access to the twofold between the understanding of being (correlationism) and the sense of being (non-correlationism). Why? While on the one hand our inclusion in the understanding of being provides access to the correlation between being and thinking, on the other hand it is precisely this inclusion in the correlation that prevents access to the sense of being. How, given the facticity of the correlation between being and thinking, can we have access to uncorrelated being? This is the methodological question raised by Heidegger.

According to Heidegger, access to uncorrelated being presupposes a *Rückstoss* of that which is asked for in the question of being. Because philosophical questioning concerns the whole of being in which we are included (*cf.* §1.2), this whole recoils back on the specific way we question this whole. In other words, that which is asked for affects our questioning of the question of being. This means that the sense of (uncorrelated) being *itself* emerges and that we are touched by it (*cf.* GA 40: 15 [13]). This doesn't imply that thought is passive in the question of being; our exploration of questioning is only confronted with the sense of being when it actually asks and states this question (*cf.* GA 40: 3 [1]). In the end, however, the exploration of the question of being always remains *finite* compared with uncorrelated being. With this, it is said that thinking may compel itself into the state of questioning the question of being, but that this questioning is in the end not achieved by *thinking* (GA 65: 84–87 [58–60]). A philosophical thinking that really wants to be open to uncorrelated being must be able to wait for its emergence in the era of the abandonment of being according to Heidegger. In this respect, the question of uncorrelated being is our being opened *to* the question *by* a call of being, if it takes place (*cf.* GA 40: 151 [151]). It is precisely this question of access which provokes Heidegger's renewal of his method of phenomenology and which is missed by Meillassoux.

This becomes clear if we concentrate for a moment on Heidegger's and Meillassoux's conception of death as an example of uncorrelated being.

<sup>21</sup> See Blok (2015: 307–322) for a full discussion of Heidegger's method of the exploration of questioning.

<sup>22</sup> Although representationalism is definitely an example of correlationism, not all forms of correlationism have to be understood as such representationalism.



According to Meillassoux, the fact of death is an indication that the correlation between being and thinking is limited; death indicates uncorrelated being; mortality implies that my being will turn into non-being in the future, and this possibility of my non-being is only a real possibility if it is not a correlate of thinking; as a correlate of thinking, my death would only appear as long and as far as I am. But while precisely Meillassoux presupposes access to the fact of death—“human thought’s most remarkable power [is] its capacity to *access* the possibility of its own non-being, and thus *to know* itself to be mortal” (Meillassoux, 2013: 59 [emphasis added])—Heidegger on the contrary doesn’t presuppose such access: “the past [death, VB] as the authentic future can never become present” (GA 64: 120 [16]). The facticity of death occurs only in an *indirect* way according to Heidegger.

Heidegger argues that he doesn’t want to evade the inaccessibility of the fact of death, because only the utmost confrontation with this inaccessibility enables us to be touched by the authenticity of its being. In what does this authenticity consist? “Running ahead to the past [death, VB] is Dasein’s running up against its most extreme possibility; [...] in this running [Dasein] is thrown back upon itself as still Dasein” (GA 64: 117 [12–13]). According to Heidegger, the twofold between the understanding of being as presence of being for thinking (correlationism) and the sense of being shows itself in my running ahead to my death; in my confrontation with this irretrievability of time (uncorrelated being), I am thrown back on the facticity of my existence in the world (correlationism), which stays surrounded by the irretrievability of time as the sense of being (non-correlationism). What role does time as uncorrelated being play in my existence in the world, i.e. in my understanding of being (correlationism)?

“Dasein itself has the possibility of evading its death” (GA 64: 116 [12]). It is not “me,” but *Da-sein* which evades death. In this act of evading death, “I” am constituted in the first place according to Heidegger. Dasein evades death by asking “how much” time is left for me and “when” I will die. With this, Dasein doesn’t acknowledge the irretrievability of time, but “wishes to determine indeterminate time” (GA 64: 118 [14]); it *expels* time in the representation of the amount of time which is left for me. For Heidegger, this shows that the representation of being for thinking (correlationism) is constituted in Dasein’s “tendency to expel all time from itself into a present” (GA 64: 121–122 [18]). This tendency to expel shows that the correlation between being as represented and representing thought is *moved* by time as uncorrelated being. The indeterminate future of my death or irretrievability of time (uncorrelated being) moves thought to represent being as the represented, and this movement is the origin of the correlation between being and thinking. On the one hand, it is this irretrievability of time which is called the sense of uncorrelated being, which cannot be projected in a projection of thinking but *moves* all representation of being by representing thought (correlationism);

Dasein is *affected* by the indeterminate future of death in such a way that it evades death by the representation of being for representing thinking, which constitutes the correlation between being and thinking. On the other hand, this uncorrelated being is not directly accessible according to Heidegger, but only indirectly via Dasein's tendency to *expel* time in its representation of being by representational thinking, which constitutes, maintains and secures the correlation between being and thinking.

So while for Meillassoux thinking has direct access to finitude “and makes of this ‘power’ an ability to ‘make our way towards the absolute’”, i.e. *after* Finitude (Meillassoux 2013: 64 cited in Gratton 2014: 54), for Heidegger thinking has no direct access to finitude. For this reason, he reflects on finitude itself in order to have an indirect experience of uncorrelated being. It is in this respect, that not Heidegger but Meillassoux presupposes a philosophy of access (fifth characteristic of correlationism). Based on Heidegger's methodological reflections regarding time as uncorrelated sense of being, we can even reject Meillassoux's account of the ancestral; Meillassoux's scientism already presupposes access to uncorrelated being, i.e. reduces uncorrelated being to correlated being.

### 2.3. Meillassoux's criticism of Heidegger's fideism

In section 2.1, we have seen that Meillassoux criticizes correlationism because it suggests a fideist approach to uncorrelated being. Meillassoux argues that strong correlationists do not necessarily reject the absolute, but that they reject the *metaphysical* pretention to have access to the absolute by philosophical thought in favour of other possible ways of access to the absolute or uncorrelated being: “Scepticism with regard to the metaphysical absolute thereby legitimates *de jure* every variety whatsoever of belief in an absolute, the best as well as the worst. The destruction of the metaphysical rationalization of Christian theology has resulted in a generalized become-religious of thought, viz., in a *fideism of any belief whatsoever*. We will call this becoming-religious of thought, which finds its paradoxical support in a radically sceptical argumentation, the *religionizing* of reason” (Meillassoux 2013: 46–47). For Meillassoux, Heidegger is an “emblematic representative” of this kind of fideism (Meillassoux 2013: 48).<sup>23</sup>

Although it is definitely clear that Heidegger in his early work tried to defend the eternal truth of the church, and although he may have had the ambition to write a theology, as Meillassoux suggests (Meillassoux 2013: 48; Blok 2011b), it is also clear that Heidegger always had an ambiguous relationship

<sup>23</sup> In fact, Meillassoux criticizes religious elements in *philosophical* thought, not philosophical thoughts about God. A discussion of Meillassoux's own philosophical reflections on God is beyond the scope of this article.

to the domain of faith and religion.<sup>24</sup> In his early Freiburg lectures, for instance, the point of departure of Heidegger's analysis of factual life is found in the early Christian life experience. Is it indeed the case that the traditional dichotomy between philosophy and religion is eliminated here and that philosophy is reduced to religion? At the same time, Heidegger argues that his philosophical thought is "principally atheist" (GA 61: 197 [148]) and that a Christian philosophy "is a round square and a misunderstanding" (GA 40: 9 [8]).

As I have explained elsewhere, Heidegger deconstructs the concept of religion in his early work and only uses this destructed concept of religion to characterize his radically different method of *philosophical* thinking (Blok 2011b: 285–307).<sup>25</sup> Religion for instance comes from *relegere*—go through again, repetition, carefully thinking—according to Cicero (Cicero 2003: II.72). The word *relegere* shows that religion doesn't necessarily have to be understood as object-oriented (God) but can also be understood as relational-oriented, and can characterize Heidegger's *philosophical* method of the enactment of the exploration of the question of being in order to explore the correlation between being and thinking (See Blok 2011b: 285–307 for a full discussion). The same holds true for the concept of faith in Heidegger's later work. In his *Contributions to Philosophy* for instance, Heidegger calls the ones who question the truth of being—i.e. the twofold of understanding of being (unconcealment of correlated being for thinking) and the sense of being (concealment of uncorrelated being for thinking)—*the true believers* (GA 65: 12–13 [10]). He deconstructs the concept of faith as holding-oneself-in-truth and applies it as characteristic of his *philosophical* questioning of the truth of being (GA 65: 368–369 [258]).

Our previous discussion of the non-reciprocity of Heidegger's correlationism can help us to understand the necessity of faith or belief for philosophy. In order to enact the exploration of the question of being (*cf.* §1.2), what is asked (the truth of being as twofold between the understanding of being and the sense of being) should in turn affect the one who is involved in this questioning (§2.1). On the one hand, this method of questioning *holds* onto this truth of being; the exploration of questioning presupposes our disclosedness *to* the call of being *by* the call of being, if it takes place. This last condition is important, as we have seen, because the truth of being doesn't automatically have a hold on us in the age of the abandonment of being (*Seinsverlassenheit*). There is no call of being, nothing to hold oneself in. For this reason, Heidegger argues: "This originary believing, of course, has nothing in common with accepting

<sup>24</sup> This point is missed by Robert Gall, who argued that 'the return to religion' cannot be ascribed to Heidegger (Gall 2013: 362). Contrary to Gall, we argue that Heidegger developed a destructed concept of religion in order to characterize his own way of philosophical questioning (*cf.* Blok 2016a).

<sup>25</sup> See Figal (2009) for Heidegger's notion of destruction in Heidegger's work.

that which offers immediate support and renders courage superfluous. Rather, this believing is persevering in the utmost deciding. This alone can once again bring our history to a grounded ground” (GA 65: 369–370 [258–259]). In this respect, it is clear that Heidegger’s destructed concept of faith or belief cannot be understood, as Derrida suggests, as trust in, conviction of (*fides, pistis*) (Derrida 2002: 95) or as piety and fideism in the truth of being, as Meillassoux suggests (Meillassoux 2013: 46–48). This “persevering in the utmost deciding” consists in a holding-oneself-in-the-truth-of-being *without any hold* (see Blok 2016a for a full discussion).

The use of concepts like religion and faith in Heidegger’s thought does not necessarily indicate that he thinks that faith, contrary to thought, has access to uncorrelated being, as Meillassoux seems to suggest. It only shows that the limits of thought as representation of represented being to have access to uncorrelated being are acknowledged and that destructed concepts like religion and faith are used in order to articulate a *philosophical* method that enables us to reflect on the twofold of the understanding of being (correlationism) and the sense of being (non-correlationism), i.e. the truth of being. Meillassoux misses the methodological importance of Heidegger’s question of uncorrelated being, because his scientism already presupposes having access to being.

#### 2.4. Meillassoux and the emergence of the earth

This brings us to Meillassoux’s third and last argument to reject Heidegger’s account of the ancestral, namely that he cannot account for the emergence of the earth. As we have seen in §2.1, Heidegger acknowledges the independent existence of beings without any correlation with human thought. Regarding planet earth and the cosmos, he explicitly argues: “The cosmos can be without humans inhabiting the earth, and the cosmos was long before humans ever existed” (GA 26: 216 [169]). For Heidegger, the issue at stake is not the acknowledgment of the existence of planet earth before human consciousness: “1) Beings are in themselves the kinds of beings they are, and in the way they are, even if, for example, Dasein does not exist. 2) Being ‘is’ not, but being is there [*es gibt*], insofar as Dasein exists” (GA 26: 194 [153]). This quote clearly shows that Heidegger is an onto-centrist; he is not interested in the emergence of planet earth at an ontic level, but only in the emergence of being at an ontological level:

According to the usual interpretation, the “question of being” means asking about beings as such (metaphysics). But if we think along the lines of *Being and Time*, the “question of being” means asking about Being as such. This meaning of the expression is also appropriate both in terms of the matter at stake and in terms of language; for the “question of being” in the sense of the metaphysical question about beings as such precisely does *not ask* thematically about Being. Being remains forgotten. (GA 40: 21 [20])

Heidegger's onto-centrism is so radical, that being cannot even be confirmed by beings: "Those in the crossing must in the end know what is mistaken by all urging for intelligibility: that every thinking of being, all philosophy, can *never* be confirmed by 'facts', i.e. by beings" (GA 65: 435 [307]).

Although one can raise the critical question whether Heidegger's onto-centrism is still legitimate in the current age of global warming, which calls for our care for *beings*, not only being<sup>26</sup>, we can argue that Meillassoux cannot blame Heidegger for not being able to account for the emergence of planet earth 4.5 billion years ago. According to Heidegger, philosophy should concentrate on being, not beings.

### 3. Conclusions

In this article, we raised the question whether Meillassoux's criticism of correlationism is legitimate in the case of Heidegger. Contrary to earlier reflections on this question, we didn't take the controversy between Heidegger and Meillassoux as a question of the priority of epistemology or ontology in philosophy (*cf.* Gall 2014: 342). On the contrary, we argued that Meillassoux's argument about the ancestral is not only epistemological but also ontological; both Meillassoux and Heidegger are interested in the way we have access to uncorrelated being (epistemological level) as well as in the nature of uncorrelated being itself (ontological level).<sup>27</sup>

In section one, we have seen that Meillassoux's criticism of Heidegger's correlationism has to be rejected. The correlation between being and thinking (understanding of being) is indeed the point of departure of his philosophical thought, but he raises in fact the question regarding the sense of this self-evident correlation, which itself is beyond understanding, i.e., uncorrelated being. This explains why two characteristics of correlationism, the reciprocity of being and thinking and the presupposed access to being, are not applicable in the case of Heidegger. On the one hand, we can argue that Meillassoux's criticism of Heidegger's correlationism does not take into account that his main interest lies in the exploration of the twofold of the understanding of being (correlationism) and the sense of being (non-correlationism), i.e. the truth of being. Because correlationism is also the point of departure of Meillassoux's exploration of the ancestral as uncorrelated being, we can on the other hand even argue that both Meillassoux and Heidegger have a comparable question; both ask for something—the contingency of the facticity of the correlation between being and thinking in the case of Meillassoux, and the

<sup>26</sup> The further reflection on the earth in the age of global warming is beyond the scope of this article (see Blok 2016b).

<sup>27</sup> In fact, this distinction is artificial. Because human thought is *included* in the question of being, the two levels cannot be distinguished.

sense of the facticity of the correlation between being and thinking in the case of Heidegger - which itself is not correlated with thinking.

In section two, we have seen that not Heidegger's but Meillassoux's speculative realism presupposes a philosophy of access. Contrary to Meillassoux's speculations *after* finitude, Heidegger's 'realism' tries to deal with finitude itself in order to have an indirect experience of uncorrelated being.<sup>28</sup> Heidegger indeed uses religious concepts to achieve this goal, but these concepts are only used in a destructed way in order to articulate a *philosophical* method that enables him to reflect on the twofold of the understanding of being (correlationism) and the sense of being (non-correlationism). Finally we have seen that it is not so much the case that Heidegger cannot account for the emergence of planet earth, but that he is not interested in ontic phenomena. Philosophy should focus on being, not beings, and in this respect Meillassoux's criticism of correlationism can help us to articulate the relevance of Heidegger's non-speculative but 'realist' approach to uncorrelated being in contemporary philosophy. Whether Heidegger's onto-centric approach to uncorrelated being is sufficient in our time, where ontic phenomena like global warming threaten the survival of humanity on planet earth, is a question which will have to remain open to future discussion (*cf.* Blok 2016b).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> In this article we reject Meillassoux's speculative realism, although we don't want to reject speculation as such in favour of realism. According to Kant, speculation is the effort to think the *Ding an sich* outside the human (uncorrelated being), and speculation in this sense can be seen as the task of philosophical thinking as well.

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