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# Ways of Being Bound: Perspectives from post-Kantian Philosophy and Relational Sociology

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 Springer

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction



**Patricio A. Fernández, Alejandro N. García Martínez, and José M. Torralba**

There are many ways of being bound. We are bound to acknowledge the truth and to follow laws; we are bound to others and to the world. Who we are is partly defined by those bonds, regardless of whether we live up to them—or even of whether we acknowledge them.

This fact is puzzling. How are those bonds binding? Wherein lies their normative character? A venerable philosophical tradition, particularly since Kant, has provided an account of normativity that crucially appeals to notions like “self-consciousness,” “reflection,” and “self-legislation.” But can our normative bonds be properly understood in these essentially first-person terms? Many philosophers argue that they cannot; some claim, e.g., that our social condition resists any account that fails to acknowledge the second and third-person perspectives as coeval with, or perhaps even prior to, the first-person. Others think that any self-regarding notion is a derivative construct that relies on the existence of certain normative bonds, and thus cannot be used to explain them.

Given the nature of this topic, interest in it goes beyond philosophy. Sociologists also consider how relevant social bonds are for each individual’s identity and how personal identity and social relationships are linked. The configuration of personal identity depends on the bonds we establish with others. Our social condition demands an intersubjective approach to the notion of personal identity, but it also introduces the idea of an independent criterion of judgement regarding what bonds need to be taken into account in order to develop a consistent identity.

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The present book addresses these topics from both a philosophical and a sociological perspective. The chapters in the first part (“Normativity and Social Bonds from Kant to Heidegger”) aim to explore these themes in the philosophy of Kant, Fichte, Hegel, Husserl, and Heidegger. They examine the phenomenon of “being bound” or “bindingness” (*Verbindlichkeit*), i.e., why and how we are bound. By bond, we mean something broader than strict moral obligation since it also encompasses theoretical requirements and emotional bonds, which cannot be reduced to it.

The second part of this book (“Social Bonds in Relational and Realist Sociology”) aims to consider the way in which the phenomenon of “being bound” appears in relational and realist sociology through the concept of a “social relation.” In this context, the genesis of “relational goods” receives special attention, as do processes of collective identification, i.e., processes whereby a genuine sense of “us” can emerge. This part of the book further considers how bonds of social sympathy—e.g., humanitarian thoughts and feelings—are components of our moral constitution as individualized human beings. It also addresses the issue of how social bonds have become increasingly idealized.

## 1.1 Normativity and Social Bonds

Korsgaard is among the authors to most clearly draw attention to the question of the sources of normativity in recent decades (Korsgaard 1996, 2009). Her concept of practical identity offers a good starting point from which to consider the proposals contained in this book. According to her approach, we are bound by our own identity as rational beings. This idea refers to the Kantian notion of self-obligation, but with the nuance that one’s identity is defined by reference to certain roles and relationships, which include bonds. The concept of practical identity is relevant for understanding normativity when the agent reaches a reflexive level, that is, when he becomes aware of the possibility of acting in a way that reinforces or, on the contrary, questions one of his roles.

Korsgaard’s proposal has been criticized both for its excessive reliance on reflection and for its insufficiently radical consideration of the social dimension of the person. When Korsgaard locates the source of normativity in self-consciousness, it might seem that she is not far from the Heidegger who claims that without *Dasein* there would be no normativity. However, the difference between the two positions is considerable since the Heideggerian explanation avoids reference to self-consciousness and proposes an understanding of *Dasein* in terms of “care” (*Sorge*) (Crowell 2007), as will be explained below. Some also critique Korsgaard’s proposal for only providing an explanation of why we grant moral relevance to some aspects of our practical situation and not to others. Certainly, the subject must judge the coherence of her own practical identity. Missing here is an explanation of why we find ourselves bound to duty. In this sense, Korsgaard only explains the extent to which we acknowledge the law that already binds us (Pippin 2003, 2008). However, the fundamental problem is precisely that the moral law cannot be binding only on

those who have recognized it as such. The moral law must possess unconditional bindingness.

This last difficulty is one of the main issues that needs to be addressed in an investigation of normativity. In recent years, it has been discussed under the label “paradox of autonomy” (Menke and Khurana 2011), which refers to the type of relationship established between freedom and normativity starting with Kant. This paradox can be briefly formulated as follows: if normativity can only arise from self-obligation (or self-legislation), then either normativity ends up being arbitrary (since, ultimately, the subject decides to submit to it or not) or heteronomous (since normativity limits freedom itself). This paradox is problematic in that the very conditions of possibility of moral autonomy (freedom as self-legislation) are, at the same time, the conditions of the impossibility of said autonomy (since the moral law is no longer unconditionally valid) (Khurana 2011). It becomes necessary, therefore, to explore ways in which normativity becomes an expression of freedom, that is to say, models in which (moral) bindingness appears as structurally inserted in the exercise of freedom.

The starting point for answering this question is found in the phenomenological tradition, especially in Heidegger, which offers conceptual resources for understanding how normativity is present in the structure of human existence. As Vigo explains in his chapter, a rational being noting the truth of a proposition represents an experience of intellectual bindingness that, in a certain sense, founds and explains all kinds of binding, including moral binding itself. Both the truth of a proposition and its moral requirement must be recognized and, above all, accepted. Here appears theoretical binding’s connection with the phenomenon that Heidegger deals with when speaking of “letting oneself be bound” (*sich binden lassen*) (Heidegger 1962, § 73 c; Vigo 2008). This attitude is on a deeper plane than any immediately practical disposition. It is a matter of letting oneself be bound by what things are, by what manifests itself to us as true, and undoubtedly supposes a certain moral disposition of a peculiar nature since it is not immediately directed to the realization of ends or the production of objects. One of the most notable features of the Heideggerian approach on this point lies in the fact that it provides elements that allow us to think about the phenomena of entailment associated both with practical-operative access to the world and with theoretical-constative access.

Vigo’s text provides a framework to interpret the main thesis of Crowell’s chapter, who argues that nothing truly binds us in the absence of our ability to bind ourselves to ourselves. Certainly, the moral law or social conventions bind us. However, their bindingness is not grounded in the order of *beings*, but of *being*, specifically, in what it means to be a self. In his text, he reviews several positions. Regarding Kantian autonomy, he explains that acting for the sake of duty is a form of self-binding, but it leaves open the question of whether I am obligated to bring unity to myself. Against Korsgaard’s proposal, he argues that the transcendental argument that leads you to treat your humanity as a normative form of identity only has factive force. Finally, he considers that Darwall’s position reduces the first-person singular to a pre-social stage of development and, thus, avoids the problem of self-binding. According to Crowell, in Heidegger’s philosophy one finds an

explanation of how, within the social whole, the subject constitutes himself as a self, becoming responsible for being a self. Heidegger's self-bindingness yields a non-contingent, transcendental obligation to account for myself in the space of reasons. Freedom consists in that kind of responsibility or obligation.

Since the question of the source of normativity is usually presented in Kantian terms, one of the questions that needs to be addressed is that of the relation between the matter and the form of willing or, in other words, the object of the will. To this Khurana devotes his text. According to Kant, the morally good will must be determined only by the universal form and not by matter, i.e., by the content of concrete action. In this view, the source of normativity lies in the form and not in the content. However, what we concretely ought to do arises from the particular context in which we find ourselves and from the bonds we have with other people. There is no human desire without content. Khurana dismisses two possible interpretations of the relationship between form and matter: the impositionist and the incorporation model. The first because in it the opposition between form and matter seems to remain irresolvable, and the second because it may lead to a kind of pre-established harmony. A solution can be found in the Hegelian notion of "absolute form" that is present in the concrete forms of our everyday practice. The form from which normativity arises should not be understood as the mere form of law, but as the form of the system that includes its concrete and determinate parts.

De Haro's chapter contributes to the understanding of the foundation of normativity in Fichte. For Fichte, direct moral bonds are always social bonds, but in a peculiar sense that needs to be explained. De Haro does so by comparing Fichte's notion of duties to oneself with that of Kant. For Kant, the idea of duties to oneself is not only not contradictory, but also necessary, since if it is not your own reason that binds you, then you would not be bound to any moral duty at all. The peculiarity of Fichte is that he considers these duties as conditioned (since they are a means in the realization of the moral law) and indirect (not really *to* oneself but only *referred* to oneself). It is of interest for this volume's general theme that, from this perspective, one can understand the status of particular conditioned duties, such as those that bind me to develop my abilities to be a good parent, son or spouse or to develop my professional skills. De Haro distances himself from the collectivist drift in Fichte's approach and maintains a Kantian stance according to which you could say that reason itself is the only object of reason, and, at the same time, that each individual person is the proper object of practical reason, and not just as a means for the realization of the Realm of Ends.

Placencia offers an interpretation of Hegel's concept of individuality in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. He reminds us that practical identity cannot be determined in a void and argues that one can find in Hegel a conception of "practical identity" constitution that accounts for elements that authors such as Korsgaard tend to neglect. Despite her distinction between necessary and contingent practical identities, it seems to him that she does not do justice to the role of animal nature and its finitude. A more satisfactory explanation can be found in Hegel's approach since he accounts for the normative role of natural determinations, as seen in his analysis of

tragedy, as well as for human beings' finite character, as seen in the lack of control that we have before the objectification of our interiority in our actions.

Crespo's chapter offers an interpretation of the way in which community bonds are constituted in Husserl's philosophy. Taking as a starting point the intersubjective character of knowledge based on the existence of an intermonadic community, he tries to offer an answer to the question of how this community is constituted. This chapter focuses on one of its fundamental elements, namely ethical love.

Gonzalez's chapter bridges both sections of this volume as she questions the relationship between the natural solidarity that is at the basis of social bonds and the existence of a moral duty of solidarity. She inquires whether there is sufficient support in Kant's philosophy to develop the latter from the former. Since human beings are animals who are endowed with reason rather than determined by nature, we are able to set ends and endorse the ends of others, making them both the object and subject of love.

Claiming that moral reason is central to the constitution of personal identity is not enough to understand the special relationship that we postulate between bonds and identity. It can be argued, in fact, that the sense of one's own identity is rooted in factors prior to moral development itself. Hence, it is appropriate to complete the philosophical approach to the notion of bindingness with an approach that specifically addresses the elucidation of this relational structure. Such complex structure includes subjective meaning and intentionalities, social links and influences, a common culture or values, and an emergent result of all this process on inter-action (Donati 2013; Archer 1996).

## 1.2 Solidarity and Reflexivity

The question of what keeps us together as a society has been central to sociological thought since its inception (Boudon and Cherkaoui 2000). Reflection on social bonds therein relies on many of the concepts and analyses originated in philosophy, such as action, relation, culture, praxis or identity (Bauman 1999; Bourdieu 1979; Giddens 1979). But it ultimately seeks an understanding and explanation of the concrete forms that the dynamics of interdependence take in equally particular historical and social contexts, which we usually summarize in the concept of society (Donati 1991).

In fact, perhaps one of the key questions in all social theory consists in elucidating and clarifying our simultaneous status as beings conditioned by our social relationships and attachments, and our unavoidable aspiration to personal decisions and actions that are expressive of a will that can be intentionally directed according to subjective preferences. Thus, to use some examples from classical sociological thought, social conditioning corresponds to the social facts that Emile Durkheim identified as the social sciences' object of study, which actors experience as external and coercive, whether in their material or immaterial forms (Durkheim 1997). For its part, subjectivity, which is intentionally directed towards an end through effort of

the will, characterizes the social action in Weber's thought that sociology largely studies (Weber 1978).

Some authors have summarized this central question of sociological thought using the concepts of (socio-cultural) *structure* and (human) *agency*. As summarized by Margaret Archer, "The problem of structure and agency has rightly come to be seen as the basic issue in modern social theory. [...] The urgency of this problem of structure and agency is not one which imposes itself on academics alone, but on every human being. For it is part and parcel of daily experience to feel both free and enchained, capable of shaping our own future and yet confronted by towering, seemingly impersonal, constraints" (Archer 1996, xi–xii).

Seeing social conditioning and subjective intentionalities as having greater or lesser relevance results in more eminently structuralist and holistic sociological approaches, or in individualistic and voluntary ones. Thus, for the most radically structuralist positions, the individual is reduced to a puppet that moves and acts as determined by the culture or social structures from which he cannot emancipate himself. Instead, the most genuinely individualistic approaches reduce explaining the person and his actions to his subjective aspirations and intentionalities (O'Neill 1973; Zahle and Collin 2014).

In the second part of this volume, albeit in line with philosophical approaches to the question of social bonds, the sociological viewpoint is the protagonist. More specifically, the sociological perspective herein can be understood through two key concepts: solidarity and reflexivity.

In sociological terms, solidarity is understood here precisely as the form that social bonding takes in particular social contexts. It is what holds members of a community together. The first, more philosophical part of this volume explores this concept and some of its implications, for example in Ana Marta González's analysis of Kant's notion of solidarity.

More specifically, solidarity is a central concept in the field of sociology that has received much attention throughout the history of sociological thought. The most famous sociologists, authors like Durkheim, Weber, Tönnies, Elias, Mead or Parsons, have tried to answer the question of social bonds, of what keeps us together as a society, i.e., the mortar that makes a certain order possible in place of perpetual conflict between those who live together. The difference between *Community* and *Society* (*Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*) in Tönnies' thought (Tönnies 2001), Elias' figurational sociology (Elias 1978), George Herbert Mead's mechanism of communication and the emergence of the self (Mead 1982), or Parsons' early voluntarist theory of action (Parsons 1968) are all clear examples of attempts to resolve the question of how members of a society are held together, i.e., of the nature of social bonds.

This concept of solidarity lends itself more to a macro analysis of society and its members, to a perspective that privileges an understanding of how social ties structure and how modes of relationship shape the particular social fabric that represents a society. Durkheim is probably among the authors of classical sociology who most explicitly used this concept of solidarity and who devoted most effort to its analysis. His paradigmatic distinction between mechanical and organic solidarity (Durkheim

1922) also introduces a historical perspective of analysis, convergent with that of many other sociological approaches; it takes into account the changing nature of these forms of social bonding. In short, forms of solidarity, that is, the ways in which we remain together and linked to one another, are changing.

The chapters by García and Wilkinson deal with the issues most associated with the concept of solidarity when explaining social bonding. Thus, García proposes a historical scheme that reveals, with reference to different authors and positions in sociological thought (Durkheim, Elias, Weber, Simmel, Mead, Bourdieu, among others), a consistent line of change in social bonds towards progressive idealization or abstraction. Thus, transformations to both social structures and individual personality structures take a clearly identifiable direction regarding the sense in which members of one community understand themselves in relation to others. The historical processes of growing functional interdependence run parallel to progressive individualization and rationalization of social action, which ends up generating increasingly abstract or idealized forms of social bonding.

For his part, Wilkinson also deals specifically with the concept of solidarity, especially in the way Durkheim studies it to explain the moral bonds that underlie every human community. For him, the way in which we hold ourselves together with others, that is, the form that social bonding takes, directly depends on emotional dispositions, social convictions, and moral or political values that regulate our relationships with others and our social interactions. Consistent with García's historical analysis, Wilkinson explores how the processes of individualization and abstraction of social relations have become a form of social solidarity in which its members share a "cult of humanity." This is an idealized form of moral evaluation of the abstract subject itself that is at the heart of the historical process towards the proliferation of humanitarian actions and supranational consensus, which links, albeit abstractly and for shared moral purposes, an increasing number of countries and regions in the world.

In addition, from a processual perspective, Archer's contribution to this volume seeks to account for the historical transformations of social ties in contemporary societies. In order to study changes in forms of solidarity, she proposes a study of how social bonds have taken root based on differentiation between social integration and systemic integration. Precisely by differentiating the properties and respective causal capacities of both orders, it is possible to better understand the dynamics that have arisen during recent decades and have affected the social bonds of the complex societies in which we live. This conceptual framework of analysis reveals that the situational logics of competition and opportunity that have emerged in recent decades tend to be counterproductive in terms of solidarity or social bonding: initiatives that attempt to generate new modes of social integration easily end up being "colonized" by the logic of the market or the state, or become part of the institutionalized system, thus diminishing genuine social bonding or solidarity among members of a community. In short, Archer's chapter analyzes how the convergence observed in our era of low social integration, together with equally weakened system integration, helps us understand contemporary phenomena and social



challenges, such as the proliferation of populisms and nationalisms in various parts of the world.

Alongside the concept of solidarity, from a sociological perspective, reflexivity is the other foundational concept that ties together the analyses chosen for this volume. Through reflexivity processes, people are adopting a series of evaluations in a kind of inner conversation (see Archer 2014) with which to guide their action and make their way in the world. The relevant question here in terms of social bonds refers to how this reflexivity unfolds. This leads us to two additional questions: on the one hand, to what extent do reflexivity and its practical conclusion (how we orient ourselves in our shared social life) affect the modes of social relationship we maintain? That is, how does reflexivity contribute to the transformation or modulation of social bonds? Thus, the prevalence of one form or another of reflexivity, which must always be considered in a dynamic and changing context, is reflected in certain forms of organization and social bonding at the institutional level and the social structure in which we are immersed (Archer 2012). On the other hand, we should clarify the sense in which the very reflexivity that a person exercises is constituted starting from our significant social bonds with others. In this second sense, and in order to understand the reflexivity with which we clarify and assume our relationships with the world and especially with other members of our community, we must take into account that our condition of being-in-relation is constitutive of personal identity and therefore participates in the reflexivity we exercise. This implies, in short, taking seriously human beings' relational condition.

Donati's text points directly to these issues. He analyzes and proposes a relational paradigm that combines two planes of reflexivity and personal identity: one of personal reflexivity and the other of social reflexivity. Our simultaneous condition as individuals and beings linked to others needs a conceptual framework for understanding and analysis that does not fall into the fallacies associated with the most eminently individualistic positions or of the most radically constructed and holistic ones. This conceptual framework must take into account that social bonds cannot be understood solely as structural links, but are also appropriations or subjective references. Hence, Donati, in his relational sociology, distinguishes three semantics associated with social relation. First, referential semantics (*refero*), which refers one reality to another within a framework of meanings that is more or less shared by the actors involved, with various types and degrees of intentionality. Second, structural semantics (*religo*), understanding the social relation as a link, a kind of reciprocal conditioning, that is at the same time a bond and a resource. And, finally, there is a third type of semantics that we can call generative, which conceives of the social relation as an "emergent effect" of reciprocal actions (Donati 2013).

In the end, social bonds and the personal identity from which they are constituted include inner reflexivity, as well as relational reflexivity, pointing directly to our being-in-relation to the significant Other. Donati's Relational Subject (2016) makes it possible to understand how personal and collective identity are connected in a morphogenetic approach. In the interactions of social structure, the social relationship appears as a bond (*religo*), while in socio-cultural interactions, the subject's



intentional orientation (*refero*), made up of values, feelings, and expectations that respond to cultural conditioning, prevails. Within this framework, we sociologically understand how structural, agential, and cultural factors affect the formation of the subject's identity.

Finally, the chapter from García-Ruiz and Rodríguez-Lluesma applies several of the ideas discussed in previous chapters to an analysis of consumer practices. The inner conversation as a form of reflexivity through which the person builds and decides on the orientation of his or her action in the world is a form of consideration of oneself in relation to the given context and, thus, in relation to the significant Other. For this reason, this chapter proposes an understanding of consumer practices based on the relational way in which subjects make their decisions. The course of action that an agent develops in the field of consumption is understood, therefore, by framing it in a context of the significant relationships that participate in subjective reflection when identifying and giving reason for one's preferences and objectives.

In short, the sociological perspective included in this volume approaches the issue of social bonds both historically and systematically. On the one hand, it offers a diagnosis of the transformation of certain forms of solidarity or social integration towards growing idealization and abstraction of social bonds, which in recent years seems to have resulted in low levels of both social and systemic integration. On the other hand, it proposes a theoretical, realistic and relational framework for the very understanding of social bonds. This perspective entails bringing to the fore the relational condition of human identity, which unfolds in the world in a unitary way, combining processes of inner reflexivity with social reflexivity.

As a whole, this collective volume offers a panoramic view of social bonds. Combining different traditions of thought, such as the philosophical and the sociological, it is possible to reconstruct some central axes of the bounded dimension of the human being. From the philosophical tradition, the different contributions in this work reflect on the relevance of "bindingness" (*Verbindlichkeit*) in order to understand practical identity. The approach of part of the philosophical tradition to normativity is based on self-consciousness and moral obligation. This approach is complemented by the contributions that emphasize the reference to certain roles and relationships, which are the enabling context or the condition of possibility of the constitution of the self. This reference to the social as a whole for the understanding of practical identity and moral obligation naturally gives way in this volume to the more sociological perspective. The latter analyzes, in a convergent manner with those philosophical contributions (while making use of the concepts and methodologies proper to this discipline), the nature and implications of the social links in which the human being's life unfolds. Thus, the reader will be able to verify a continuity or affinity between the philosophical and sociological perspectives that proves fruitful. The philosophical analyses of the constitution of normativity from the prism of reflective self-consciousness, as well as of the relational and contextual conditions in which practical identity itself is constituted, are convergent with the proposed review of a sociological reflection condensed in the idea of reflexivity and

solidarity. We trust that this interdisciplinary study will serve to shed light on the way in which we are bound both to a moral normativity and to each other.

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**Part I**  
**Normativity and Social Bonds from**  
**Kant to Heidegger**

## Chapter 2

# Being Free and Letting Oneself Be Bound. A Central Motif in Heidegger's Aletheiological Approach to Freedom



Alejandro G. Vigo

**Abstract** This chapter analyses some significant aspects of Heidegger's elaboration of the idea of the "binding character" or the "bindingness" (*Verbindlichkeit*) of what has a claim to truth, in the context of his aletheiological reformulation of the notions of freedom and truth. The focus of the essay shall be on Heidegger's lecture course on *The Basic Concepts of Metaphysics* (1929/1930) and his essay on *The Essence of Ground* (1929). After explaining in general terms the systematic importance that Heidegger assigns to the problem of bindingness, the paper examines Heidegger's understanding of the connection between freedom and bindingness, as it is present in the theoretical-constative access to the world and to beings, both at the ontic and at the ontological level.

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This work presents a new, modified, and extended development of one part of a conference entitled "Transcendencia, verdad y fundamento. La reformulación heideggeriana del problema de la libertad," which I had the opportunity to give under the auspices of the "Primeras Jornadas Nacionales de la Sociedad Iberoamericana de Estudios Heideggerianos (SIEH)," which took place at the Universidad Nacional de San Martín in San Martín, Argentina, on November 24, 2016. I want to thank the other presenters and participants of the congress for their observations and questions. Moreover, and especially, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Adrián Bertorello and Dr. Leticia Basso Monteverde for their kind invitation to take part in the congress and the volume that includes the works presented. The final version of this work was written under the auspices of the research project entitled "Vínculos, emoción e identidad. La dimensión moral de los vínculos sociales" (Project FFI2015–67388-P, Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, Spain; researchers responsible: Prof. Dr. Ana Marta González and Prof. Dr. José María Torralba, Universidad de Navarra, Pamplona, Spain). Translated into English by Erick Jiménez. Revised by Patricio Fernández.

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## 2.1 Introduction

In a previous work (Vigo 2019) I attempted to identify the basic principles from Heidegger's *Being and Time* (*BT*) that serve as a springboard for his radicalization of the problem of freedom (*Freiheit*). Writings from the years immediately following the publication of *BT* to the beginning of the 1930s form a taut string of thought that testifies to a lively combination of philosophical creativity, speculative power, and commanding energy—a combination that likely finds no parallel in the extensive production following the famous “turn” (*Kehre*) of the mid-1930s. From *BT* to the early 1930s, the radicalization of the problem of freedom takes place in the context of a reformulation of the concepts of “being-in-the-world” (*In-der-Welt-sein*) and “openness” (*Erschlossenheit*) as fundamental structures of the being of *Dasein*, in terms of the classical notion of “transcendence” (*Transzendenz*). In accounting for the possibility of the openness to presence of beings themselves, that is, of their openness to understanding, “transcendence” in this context is used in a renewed sense that emphasizes the fundamental role played by the “surpassing” (*Überstieg, übersteigen*) of entities toward the world and toward Being.

Now, I believe that the structural connection between transcendence and freedom that Heidegger seeks to bring into view can only be understood in its true scope, if we do not lose sight of the strictly aletheiological framework operative from the outset in his treatment of freedom. The persistence of Heidegger's strictly aletheiological focus provides a basic element of continuity with the project of *BT*. That focus remains unquestioned in later writings and provides a key point of reference for determining the orientation of the developments contained in these writings, and for judging their scope and relevance. This goes not only for the way that Heidegger seeks to appropriate the theme of freedom, in connection with the elucidation of the structure of transcendence. It also goes for his attempt to recuperate, in an aletheiological key, the problem of the ground (*Grund*) and of founding (*gründen, begründen*), that impregnable bastion of the archeological conceptions of traditional metaphysical thought. Inscribed in this methodological and thematic context, moreover, is the peculiar way in which Heidegger elaborates a central motif at the very core of the possible articulation of freedom and truth, namely the “binding character,” or rather the “bindingness” (*Verbindlichkeit*) of what is said to be true in a given case.<sup>1</sup>

In what follows, I will discuss certain of the more important aspects of the elaboration of this motif that Heidegger carries out in two immensely fruitful writings: the lecture course on the basic concepts of metaphysics during the winter semester of 1929/1930 (*GBM*), and his essay on the essence of ground from 1929 (*WG*). For

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<sup>1</sup>I have discussed, in a broader way, the principal motifs elaborated in the sequence of writings from *BT* to *WW*, through *GBM* and *WG*, in Vigo 2014. Although what I say here is, to a large extent, based on the results attained there, the present essays shifts the main focus to the connection between freedom and bindingness, which was not central to that earlier work.

reasons that will become clear, I will deal with these writings in that order. First, however, I will explain in a more general way some of the reasons why, as part of his attempt at an aletheiological reformulation of the question of freedom, Heidegger assigns such systematic importance to the problem of bindingness.

## 2.2 Truth, Measure, Bindingness

At least since Kant, the notion of binding, or of being bound, has played a central role in philosophy. Given that it refers to something which possesses a certain normative valence, one of the most important applications of the notion of binding arises in attempting to thematize the basic structures of our practical access to the world, and especially the conditions that give this access its specifically moral character, in the broad sense that includes the legal sphere as well. In this sort of application, the notion of bindingness points, in diverse ways, to the domain of what terms such as “obligation” and “obligatory” designate. In everyday German, however, the expression has a much broader field of use, which is not restricted to mandates, norms or rules—be they moral, legal, or even merely practical-operative. It alludes also to forms of normativity, or to phenomena endowed with normative valence, in the domain that discloses modes of comportment proper to the theoretical-constative access to the world, such as, for example, claiming or affirming something. Thus, for example, one might say in German that an “assertion” or “declaration” (*Aussage*) is “binding” (*verbindlich*), inasmuch as it brings with it a certain claim to be true—that is, inasmuch it (claims to) affirm what is the case. Naturally, there is a whole range of other possible contexts of consideration in which theoretical and practical interests are interwoven in different ways, and which should be taken into account when attempting to reconstruct the totality of possible forms and phenomena of normativity included in the domain of application of the notion of bindingness. Here, however, it is enough to capture the general connection between bindingness and the (claim to) truth, as it appears in connection with assertions and, more precisely, with purely declarative assertions, as this will be the central object of interest in what follows.

As just described, an assertion, then, is endowed with a binding character, insofar as it brings with it a certain claim to truth. But this is only possible inasmuch as asserting itself is a mode of comportment that conforms, in a certain way, to something that the assertion in each case is about—that is, to a being to which the assertion refers. For this reason, this being must, in turn, appear in a way that makes this specific sort of conformity to it possible. In the treatment of assertion (*Aussage*) and truth (*Wahrheit*) in §§ 33 and 44 of *BT*, respectively, Heidegger presents asserting as a way of being in relation to a being, which itself has a grounded character as it emerges from the (mere) “directing of one’s gaze” (*Hinsehen*) proper to “knowing” (*Erkennen*). By the same token, the “being-true” of the assertion, understood as its “being-uncovering” (*entdeckend-sein*), is only possible on the basis of the “state of

uncoveredness” (*Entdecktheit*) of the being, as the structural correlate of a (mere) “directing of one’s gaze.” In terms of offering a theory of knowledge or truth, the sequence of grounding delineated in this way is reflected in traditional “concordance” or “correspondence theories of truth”. In effect, since both the assertion and the knowledge from which assertion emerges conform to what they refer to, these traditional conceptions claim that truth depends on this “object,” as it appears in and from itself.

Since knowledge and assertion must conform to the being to which they refer, in order to be true, this “object” appears to be invested with a particular “binding character,” inasmuch as it acts as a “measure” of knowledge and assertion. Thus, an assertion can only “claim” to be “true,” and thus be “binding,” if previously—that is, through the “directing of one’s gaze” (“knowing”) from which the assertion itself emerges—“lets itself be bound” to the being in a determinate manner so as to take that being as the “measure” to which it ought to conform. In Heidegger’s view, taking this characterization of the relation in which knowledge and assertion stand to the “object” to which they refer as constitutive of truth is one of the central intuitions of traditional “concordance” or “correspondence” theories of truth. This peculiar sort of bindingness relates, then, to a specific mode of “measuring (up to),” and “acting as a measure” or “providing a measure.” A passage from the Zollikon seminars, from the July 6, 1965 session, outlines the point with admirable clarity. I quote:

All measuring (*Messen*) is not necessarily quantitative (*ein quantitatives Messen*). Whenever I take notice of something as something (*etwas als etwas zur Kenntnis nehme*), then I myself have ‘measured up to’ what a thing is (*messe ich mich dem an, was das Ding ist*). This ‘measuring up’ to what is (*dieses Sich-anmessen an das Gegebene*), is the fundamental structure (*Grundstruktur*) of human comportment toward things (*das menschliche Verhalten zu den Dingen*).

In all comprehending (*Auffassen*) of something as something (*etwas als etwas*), for instance, of the table as a table, I myself measure up to what I have comprehended (*messe ich mich dem Aufgefaßten an*). Therefore, one can also say: What we say about the table (*das, was wir über den Tisch sagen*) is a ‘saying’ which is ‘commensurate’ to the table (*ein diesem angemessenes Sagen*).

Customarily, the truth about a thing is also defined as *adaequatio intellectus ad rem*. This is an assimilation (*Angleichung*) as well, a continuous measuring up of the human being (*ein ständiges sich Messen des Menschen*) to a thing (*mit dem Ding*). But here we are dealing with measuring in a completely fundamental sense, [the sense] on which scientific-quantitative measuring (*alles wissenschaftlich-quantitative Messen*) is based in the first place (*erst*).

The relationship of the human being to measure (*das Verhältnis des Menschen zum Maß*) is not entirely comprehended by quantitative measurability (*durch die quantitative Meßbarkeit*). Indeed, it is not even raised as a question. The relationship of the human being to what gives a measure (*das Verhältnis des Menschen zu einem Maßgebenden*) is a fundamental relationship to what is (*eine fundamentale Beziehung zu dem, was ist*). It belongs to the understanding of being itself (*zum Seinsverständnis selbst*)” (*Zollikon 130*; English translation: Heidegger 2001, 100).