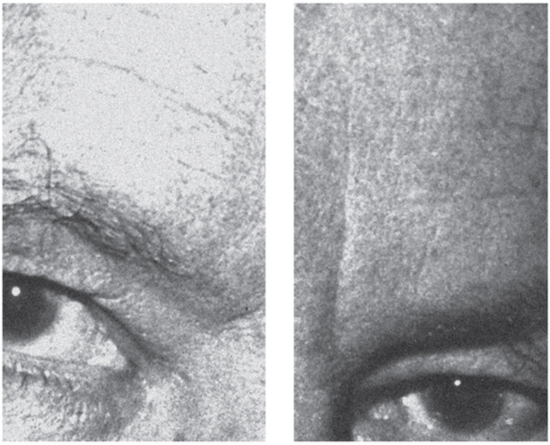
# Freedom to Fail



## *Heidegger's Anarchy*

Peter Trawny

# Freedom to Fail

# Freedom to Fail: Heidegger's Anarchy

## Peter Trawny

Translated by Ian Alexander Moore
and Christopher Turner

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# Translators' introduction

There are several noteworthy German terms and their cognates that present difficulties for the English translator, beginning with the original German title of Trawny's book, *Irrnisfuge* or "Errancy-fugue."[1] *Irrnis* is a rare German word that we have always translated as "errancy." As Heidegger employs it, it refers to an originary site of error, rather than to a particular error. When *Irre* is used in this way, as in Heidegger's "On the Essence of Truth," it too is rendered as "errancy." When it is used in a more particular sense, it is rendered as "error." *Irrtum*, for its part, is always rendered as "error." Other related words include *abirren*, *in die Irre gehen*, and *verirren* ("to go astray"), *Abirrung* and *Verirrung* ("aberration"), durchirren ("to wander through"), *irren* ("to err," "to be lead astray"), *Irrfahrt* ("odyssey"), *irrig* and *irrend* ("errant"), and *Irrweg* ("errant path").

The German term *Fuge* can for its part mean both "fugue" (in the musical sense) and "conjuncture." We have translated this term mostly as "conjuncture" or "joint," though occasionally as "fugue," when, for example, Trawny appears to be alluding to Paul Celan's poem "Todesfuge" ("Death Fugue").[2] Other related terms and phrases include *aus den Fugen* ("out of joint"), *Gefüge* ("conjoined structure"), *fügen* ("to join," "to structure"), and *sich fügen* ("to comply").

In several of Heidegger's texts cited by Trawny, Heidegger employs an archaic spelling of the German *Sein* ("to be"), writing it with a "y" rather than with an "i," thus as *Seyn*. Fortunately, an archaic variant of the English word "being" also used to be written with a "y," enabling us (without recourse to neologism) to translate *Seyn* as "beyng." The modern spelling *Sein* has been translated as "being" and its nominalized participle *das Seiende* as "beings."

*Ereignis*, another Heideggerian *term d'art*, has confounded translators for decades. While, in everyday German, it just means "event," Heidegger often employs it with other valences in mind, such as those of appropriation or bringing something into its own, into what is proper (*eigen*) to it. We have therefore decided to retain both senses by translating it as "appropriative event." Its verbal form (*sich ereignen*), however, has been rendered simply as "to eventuate," although the resonance of appropriation should also be borne in mind.

Finally, unless otherwise indicated, *Anfang* and *anfänglich* have been rendered as "inception" and "inceptual," respectively, since in this text they typically have a deeper sense than the start or beginning of anything whatsoever. *Beginn* has been rendered as "beginning."

When Trawny cites a German translation of a non-German text, we have, except in the case of Imre Kertész's *A gondolatnyi csend, amíg a kivégzőosztag újratölt* ("A Breath-long Silence, While the Fire Squad is Reloading Their Guns"), consulted the original and either provided an existing English translation, or translated the passage from the original ourselves, as with

Jean-Luc Nancy's *La pensée dérobée*. In such cases, reference to the German translation has been omitted. Where Trawny cites a text originally written in German, we have included Trawny's reference to the German edition and provided a reference to an English translation as well, when one exists. Unless otherwise indicated, we have also used the existing English translations in such cases. When no English edition is specified, it means the translation is our own.

Translators' notes and interpolations in the footnotes and the body of the text have been put in square brackets.

We would like to thank Sean Kirkland for encouraging us to take on the translation, as well as Will McNeill for his helpful suggestions concerning a few tricky terms, and especially for his dedication to teaching and translation. Without the countless hours he devoted to helping us improve our German and translation skills, we would not have been able to undertake seriously, let alone complete, this translation.

“Much is monstrous. But nothing / More monstrous than man.” Friedrich Hölderlin, translation of the first stasimon of the chorus of Theban elders from Sophocles’ *Antigone*.[3]

“*Beyng* itself is ‘tragic.’ ” Martin Heidegger, “Überlegungen XI.”

“In this poem, I have sought to bring the monstrousness of the gassings to language.” Paul Celan on “Death Fugue.”