

# Between Emergence and Submergence:

## On Beyng-Historical Tragedy<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT:** This essay investigates the tragic kernel of Heidegger's history of beyng. Arguing that his 1930s view of tragedy is centered around the confrontation between *Aufgang* and *Untergang*, or emergence and submergence, which characterizes the difference between the first and other beginnings, I demonstrate that Heidegger radically affirms submergence for the sake of another beginning. Rendering submergence synonymous with the truth of beyng, its self-concealment, Heidegger claims that the emergence of beings in the first beginning required submergence, which is appropriated in the other beginning. Hence, this tragic play of emergence and submergence unfolds the history of beyng. I further argue that Heidegger develops this idea through a critical confrontation with Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West*. Heidegger explicitly subverts Spengler's position by arguing that while the West is fundamentally tethered to *Untergang*, this does not mean decline or decay, but rather the submergence that intimates another beginning.

**KEYWORDS:** Spengler; submergence; emergence; tragedy; the West

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Heidegger's thought in the 1930s and early 1940s marked a change in his historical project. In the 1920s, he was concerned with pursuing a "destruction of the history of ontology," attempting to re-raise the question of being by dismantling ontological assumptions (SZ: 23/22). In the mid-1930s, Heidegger expanded this historical project, adding the task of inaugurating a new philosophical history as such: another beginning. In what Daniela Vallega-Neu calls Heidegger's "poietic writings,"<sup>2</sup> he stages a "confrontation [*Auseinandersetzung*]," or "interplay [*Zuspiel*]," between two philosophical beginnings: the first beginning (*des ersten Anfang*) and the other beginning (*des anderen Anfang*) (GA 65: 169/133). The first beginning refers to the inceptual emergence of the truth of being for the Pre-Socratics and the historical transformation of this originary experience into metaphysics. The other is the coming history that takes shape through recollecting and appropriating the first beginning. Hence, he writes in *The Event*: "The first beginning and the inceptuality [*die Anfängnis*] itself are experienced for the first time in the other beginning" (GA 71: 27/20). In brief, the inception of the other beginning consists in unconcealing what was concealed and forgotten in the first beginning.

Heidegger's account of the confrontation between the first and other beginning of philosophy provides a specific world-historical narrative, which he calls "the history of being [*die Geschichte des Seyns*]: i.e., the history of the various occurrences of being (e.g., nature, substance, God, will to power, etc.).<sup>3</sup> But what kind of narrative is this history of being? What genre? According to Peter Trawny, it is a tragedy: "The truth of being is onto-tragic. This is connected with the first of all inceptions, the inception of the history of being [...] A narrative element thereby flows into the history of being."<sup>4</sup> This narrative tells the tragic concealment and forgetting of being by the different manifestations of beings as a whole, which ultimately results in the present state of technological nihilism.

While much has been written on the influence of Greek tragedy in Heidegger's history of being, little has been written on the particular influence of Oswald Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*. In this

essay, I demonstrate that Heidegger constructs the tragic confrontation between the first and other beginnings in terms of *Untergang*: the “decline” or, as I will translate, the “submergence” of beyng, which is contrasted with the *Aufgang*, or “emergence,” of beings as a whole. In this way, Heidegger critically takes up elements of Spengler’s declinist historical narrative. However, unlike Spengler’s account of the West, Heidegger’s sense of submergence is rendered into a positive event that allows for another beginning to occur. The principal argument of this essay is that Heidegger affirms the tragic submergence of beyng, and the West, as the condition for another beginning of history: “The West [*Abendland*] is the land of the other beginning, a land that takes its first delimitation out of such an advent [...] The West is the future of history, provided the essence of history is grounded in the event of the truth of beyng” (GA 71: 96/81). As such, the tragic history of beyng reaffirms the narrative centrality of the West but in a way that subverts Spengler’s account of historical decline.

Before proceeding to the argument, it is necessary to justify my translation of *Untergang* and *Aufgang* into “submergence” and “emergence,” respectively. Conventionally translated, *Aufgang* means “rise,” “rising,” “arising,” “ascent,” or “dawn.” As an antonym for *Aufgang*, *Untergang* can be translated as “sinking” or “setting,” e.g., *Sonnenaufgang* (sunrise) and *Sonnenuntergang* (sunset). However, *Untergang* has more affectively negative connotations, like “doom,” “demise,” “decay,” “downfall,” or, as in the instance of Spengler’s use, “decline.” My aim is to maintain both the connotations of spatial movement, like “rising” and “sinking,” and positive/negative affective resonance, “dawn” and “decay.” I believe that “emergence” and “submergence” capture both of these connotations, while also faithfully conveying Heidegger’s use of the terms. As developed in this essay, Heidegger uses *Aufgang* to mean the phenomenological sense of something coming into appearance. Unlike “rising” or “arising,” which have a specific object in view, “emergence” connotes coming to appear out of something, like a flower from out of the ground. This translation has precedent as well. For example, Richard Rojcewicz uses

“emergence” for *Aufgang* (GA 71) while Julia Goesser Assaiante and S. Montgomery Ewegen make use of “emerging” for *Aufgehen* (GA 55). Rojcewicz translates *Untergang* into “downgoing,” which maintains the motion of the term, but loses some of its affective resonance and conceals that it is an antonym to *Aufgang* qua emergence. For this reason, similar to Goesser Assaiante and Ewegen, I chose “submergence” for *Untergang*.<sup>5</sup> It expresses the oppositional interplay between *Aufgang* and *Untergang*, a sense of motion, and negative affectivity, e.g., “the building was submerged by the rising tide.” More importantly, this translation resonates with the phenomenological counter to appearance: disappearance or concealment. Hence, “the city of Atlantis disappeared, submerged by the raging sea.”

#### GRAECO-GERMANIC TRAGEDY

Although Heidegger’s poetic writings properly begin with *Contributions to Philosophy (Of The Event)* (GA 65), Heidegger notes that this project first took shape in spring of 1932 (GA 66: 424). In his lecture course, *The Beginning of Western Philosophy: Interpretation of Anaximander and Parmenides*, Heidegger articulates the basic character of beyng-historical thinking. In order to bring about the “end of metaphysics” by means of grasping the truth of beyng, one must also “seek out the beginning of Western philosophy” in ancient Greek thought, specifically in the writings of Anaximander, Parmenides, and Heraclitus (GA 35: 1/1). According to Peter Trawny, this text marks the first formulation of a “narrative” – the history of beyng – that “revolutionized his thinking” by creating a world-historical picture from which to criticize the present. In this narrative, philosophy qua metaphysics seemed to have exhausted itself, ending in nihilism. Properly responding to the end requires seeking out its beginning.<sup>6</sup>

As mentioned above, Trawny argues that this narrative is tragic, set in the West, and it contains two primary actors: Greeks and Germans.<sup>7</sup> This latter aspect is especially important to highlight. According to Charles Bambach, Heidegger perpetuates the myth of “Graeco-German affinity,” which posits that there is an essential linguistic and cultural

accord between the ancient Greeks and modern Germans.<sup>8</sup> In regard to the history of being, the first beginning occurs with the Greeks, the other with the Germans. Rhetorically asking when the first beginning occurred, Heidegger responds: “At the point when the *Greek people*, whose ethnicity [*deren Stammesart*] and language have the same provenance as ours, set about creating through its great poets and thinkers a unique way of Dasein for a human people” (GA 36/37: 6/5). This posited affinity would also correspond with Heidegger’s explicit commitment to Nazism in the early 1930s. For example, in 1933, Heidegger claimed that a return to the Greek beginning was necessary to “form” a world in which the “spirit” of the “National Socialist revolution” could be realized (GA 36/37: 6–7/6).

Heidegger’s appeal to tragic narrative is also consistent with this Graeco-Germanic affinity. Due to this proclaimed cultural affinity, Greek tragedy was enormously impactful in German philosophy and aesthetics, especially during the 19th century. In his celebrated work on tragedy, literary theorist Péter Szondi claims that “the philosophy of the tragic is proper to German philosophy.”<sup>9</sup> He distinguished the poetics of tragedy, i.e., its literary form, which was theorized by Aristotle, from the philosophy of tragedy, which is taken up by various German philosophers. Unlike the poetics of tragedy, which focused on the cathartic emotional effect on the audience, Szondi argues that the philosophy of tragedy attends to the idea of tragedy, or what tragedy conveys about human existence. Specifically, beginning with Schelling, German philosophers presented Greek tragedy as the attempt to reconcile the contradiction between freedom and necessity (or fate).<sup>10</sup>

For example, in Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, it is told to the King and Queen of Thebes that their son will murder his father and marry his mother. Attempting to escape fate, or necessity, each member of the family ends up unwittingly producing the very conditions that will result in its actualization. The tragic situation is such that the downfall has always already virtually occurred. Indeed, its virtual occurrence is precisely what results in its actualization. However, the genius of tragedy is that it attempts to reconcile free will with necessity through

suffering. Hence, Oedipus is free because he suffers for his crime. Although it was his fate and he did so in error, he nevertheless chose to murder his father and marry his mother. Thus, Oedipus suffering necessity is the very sign of his freedom.

The contradiction between freedom and necessity, evident in Greek tragedy, becomes a recurring theme in German philosophy, even if the terms of that contradiction might shift. Hence, for Hegel, it is the contradiction between natural/divine law and human customs; for Hölderlin, it is between human time and divine destiny; for Nietzsche, it is between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. According to Dennis Schmidt, the “common denominator” for each of these philosophers of tragedy is that they apply these contradictions and forces to history itself. Consequently, history becomes thought primarily in terms of tragic fate; freedom has to be thought from within historical necessity. To this lineage of philosophers, Schmidt adds a figure who is absent from Szondi’s work, namely, Heidegger, who is viewed as presenting an historical account of tragedy with the “greatest force.”<sup>11</sup>

However, Schmidt’s brilliant discussion of Greek tragedy in Heidegger’s thought is limited given that it does not discuss the poetic writings. These texts reveal that Heidegger viewed the history of being as explicitly tragic: “We see the essence of the ‘tragic [*des Tragischen*]’ in that the beginning [*der Anfang*] is the ground of submergence [*des Untergang*], which is not the ‘end [*Ende*],’ rather it is the rounding [*das Rund*] of the beginning. In that case the tragic belongs to the essence of being” (GA 66: 223).<sup>12</sup> As rounding or circular, the tragic beginning is already the end, and the end is the beginning. In terms of the history of being, then, the submergence of being is already contained in the first beginning. Heidegger reiterates this point in his 1942 lecture course on Hölderlin: “This is why in Greek tragedy virtually nothing happens. It commences [*fängt*] with the submergence [*dem Untergang*] (GA 53: 128/103, tm).”<sup>13</sup> Hence, Oedipus’ fate is such that he already virtually killed his father and married his mother before the act itself. Tautologically, his downfall is precisely *what* constitutes his downfall and, for this reason, it is inescapable. The tragedy of the history of

being is that this submergence is also inescapable, a fate that the history of the first beginning (i.e., metaphysics) is working out. Indeed, in *Contributions*, Heidegger implies that the decision regarding the transition to the other beginning has already been “decided [*entscheiden*],” the task is now to determine “whither [*wohin*],” “when [*wann*]” and “whence [*von wo*]” this being historical event will take place (GA 65: 177/139). Already decided, we are left with parsing out the shape of this transition, attending to the submergence of being that the event of appropriation will grasp. With this basic structure in mind, I turn to an in-depth examination of the meaning of emergence and its tragic interplay with submergence.

#### THE FIRST BEGINNING: THE EMERGENCE OF THE TRUTH OF BEING

How did being first appear to the Greeks? The answer is simple: it appeared as that which *is*. In this context, appearance refers to the emergence of beings themselves, i.e., how they appear: “Appearance [*Erscheinung*] is emergence [*das Auftauchen*]: not the becoming seen and apprehended of something, but a character of the happening of beings as such” (GA 35: 7/6). “Emergence,” in this case *Auftauchen*, therefore signifies the happening of beings. But to the extent that happening is still separable from specific beings, emergence indirectly refers to being as such. There is a distinction to be made between that which emerges and the act of emergence itself, or the distinction between *what* something is and the fact *that* it is. Thatness was felt by the Greeks with the disposition of “wonder” (*θαυμάζειν*), i.e., wondering why there are beings rather than nothing. In wonder, humans and beings are brought into relation: “Wonder displaces man into and before beings as such” (GA 45:170/147). As such, wonder marks the origin of philosophy.<sup>14</sup> In the Greek experience, this dynamic coming-to-appearance of beings will ultimately be designated by the word *φύσις*. In his 1935 lecture course *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Heidegger writes, “In the age of the first and definitive unfolding of Western philosophy among the Greeks, when questioning about beings as such and as a whole received its true inception, beings were called *φύσις*” (GA 40: 15/14). Thus, the first

beginning begins with the experience of wonder towards φύσις: the emergence of beings as a whole. In this text we also see the appearance of “emergence” as *Aufgang*, and its variations, e.g., *Aufgehen*, as a key conceptual term for Heidegger, one that will come to be synonymous with φύσις itself (GA 40: 16/15; GA 71: 302/262).

What is Heidegger’s justification for speaking of, and even translating, φύσις in terms of *Aufgang* (emergence), rather than the more conventional “*Natur*” (nature)? Φύσις is rooted in the word φύειν, which means “to bring forth,” “to produce,” or “to grow.” In its noun form, φύσις ambiguously names that which is brought forth and bringing forth as such, or what emerges and emergence: “It says what emerges [*Aufgehende*] from itself (for example, the emergence, the blossoming, of a rose), the unfolding that opens itself up, the coming-into-appearance in such unfolding, and holding itself and persisting in appearance – in short, the emerging-abiding sway [*das aufgehend-verweilende Walten*]” (GA 40: 16/15). For Heidegger, φύσις designates both beings as a whole and being as such for the Greeks: what *is*, emerges. This sense of the word is lost with its subsequent Latin transliteration into *natura*, which more narrowly means “to be born.” It loses its ontological sense (coming-into-being), gaining a biological sense (coming-into-life). In English, this connection of nature and life leads the former to be rendered distinct from those things produced by human activity, i.e., artificiality. In referring to a distinct group of beings, “nature” does not refer to being as such. Hence, the transformation of φύσις into nature is one of the marks of the forgetting of being that motivates Heidegger’s thought.<sup>15</sup>

Connecting emergence and appearance, Heidegger is further able to connect the fundamental relationship between emergence and unconcealment (truth), φύσις and ἀλήθεια, since that which emerges and appears is also unconcealed. He writes: “For the Greek essence of truth is possible only together with the Greek essence of Being as φύσις. On the grounds of the unique essential relation between φύσις and ἀλήθεια, the Greeks could say: beings as beings are true. The true as such is in being” (GA 40: 109/107). More specifically, as Heidegger

claims in his 1943 lecture course on Heraclitus, ἀλήθεια is the very essence of φύσις (GA 55: 173/130). In other words, emergence is the unconcealment of what is previously concealed. But it is important to note that concealment is also the “counter-essence” of unconcealment. The former preserves what is most proper to the latter. This follows from the fact that unconcealment as ἀλήθεια is a privation of concealment as λανθάνειν.<sup>16</sup> With this in mind, it follows that concealment is also the counter-essence of φύσις: emergence requires and presupposes concealment (GA 54: 176/118).

Heidegger demonstrates this relationship between concealment and unconcealment through a reading of Heraclitus’ fragment 123: φύσις κρύπτεσθαι φιλεῖ, which is usually translated into English as “nature loves to hide.” Heidegger translates the passage as such: “Das Aufgehen dem Sichverbergen schenkt’s die Gunst,” which Goesser Assaiante and Ewegen render into English as “Emerging to self-concealing gives favor” (GA 55: 110/84).<sup>17</sup> In this translation of Heraclitus, Heidegger suggests that self-concealment (*dem Sichverbergen*) belongs to emergence (*Das Aufgehen*) or to any instance of emergence there is accompanying concealment. This complements Heidegger’s account of the truth of beyng as the clearing for self-concealing. According to Heidegger, the “essence of truth” is the “clearing for self-concealing,” which is identified with the truth of beyng (GA 65: 348/275). This has important ramifications for understanding beyng. Because beyng is not an entity or a thing, it cannot be fully unconcealed as though it were an object of thought. As Heidegger asserts in his *Basic Questions of Philosophy*, “the attempt to grasp this Being as if it were a being yields emptiness” (GA 45: 210/178). At best, its truth can be indirectly cleared or intimated as self-concealing or even withdrawing.

Specifically, beyng can be indirectly cleared through grasping its role in constituting phenomenal experience. Beyng distinguishes beings from non-beings, i.e., they are rather than are not, yet beyng itself is not a being. Its clearing, yet not cleared, nature can be intimated by means of analogies and metaphors. As Katherine Withy usefully analogizes: “It (being) lacks ontic determinacy, in the same way that

the background lacks the crispness of the foreground, light lacks the visibility of visible objects, the pervasive lacks the distinctiveness of the clear or the unfamiliar.”<sup>18</sup> The appearance of beings qua foregrounded, visible, and distinctive presuppose beyng qua background, light and pervasive. Thus, the truth of beyng still says something about beyng, i.e., its self-concealment, and its relationship to ontic beings without thereby rendering it unconcealed, which would violate its very essence as self-concealing.

Returning to fragment 123, φύσις, as giving favor to self-concealing, refers to the concealment of beyng as such. Accordingly, Heidegger maintains that Heraclitus intimated the truth of beyng. But this truth was subsequently lost or forgotten over the course of history, i.e., the history of beyng. Specifically, metaphysical thinking obscured concealment by transforming φύσις into something present, or always already unconcealed. So how exactly does this transformation take place?

As discussed above, the first beginning occurs with the wonder *that* “Being *is* – (because its essence is unconcealment [*Entbergung*],” which then transforms into an account of *what* and *why* being is, which is the purview of metaphysics. This mode of questioning conceals the truth of beyng because it renders it into a kind of being, i.e., a *what*. For this reason, Heidegger claims that metaphysics primarily consists of the tautological proposition, “beings (*ens entium*) ‘are’ being” (GA 70: 53/40). In other words, being is something present or already emerged. This formulation obscures the dynamic sense of φύσις, the emergence of what *is* from out of concealment (beyng as such).

Heidegger presents a helpful description of this transformation in *The Event*: “The character of clearing is transformed into *presence* [*die Anwesenung*]. And presence steps back behind the things that are present; being becomes ιδέα [...] *Emergence*, on account of what is astonishing about it, immediately becomes *presence*, from which are distinguished coming to be and passing away” (GA 71: 25/18). Heidegger is referring here to the Platonic dialogues as the origin of metaphysics. For Plato, the being of something is its form or idea. For example, while a chair may change in time (e.g., its color fades), its idea remains the same.

This manner of conceiving being alters the referent for ἀλήθεια into ἰδέα: “Beingness as ἰδέα thereby is of itself what truly (ἀληθῶς) is, ὄν” (GA 65: 220/172). Hence, if we want to know the truth of something, we have to grasp its idea. Furthermore, this also accounts for the transformation of ἀλήθεια into correctness; truth is the correct correspondence of the perceptible thing with its idea, and later its correspondence with a proposition.

Ultimately, according to Heidegger, metaphysics achieves its proper formulation with Aristotle. While his text φυσικὴ ἀκρόασις (*Physics*) concerns the behavior of beings as a whole (φύσις), his τὰ μετὰ τὰ φυσικά (*Metaphysics*), or what comes after *Physics*, concerns the meaning and principles of being. As such, the emergence of beings becomes distinguished from their principles or reasons for being, or that which constitutes the beingness (οὐσία) of beings. Heidegger explains:

But when τί τὸ ὄν (what is being) is asked, the question is not aimed at the particular being, but rather beyond it (μετὰ), “over” it towards the being of beings. The question τί τὸ ὄν does not think τὰ φυσικά but rather μετὰ τὰ φυσικά. The thinking that thinks οὐσία – i.e., beingness – moves beyond the particular being and over toward being. It is a thinking μετὰ τὰ φυσικά – that is, “metaphysics.” From Plato and Aristotle up to the current day, western thinking is “metaphysics.” (GA 55: 57/46)

Aristotle defines metaphysics, establishing it as a tradition that exists to the present day. As such, Aristotle plays a more significant role in the forgetting of being. He delimits the study of φύσις to the apparent motion/change of beings, separating it from the study of being as such. Being as such no longer refers to emergence from out of concealment, but rather pure presence.

Paradoxically, over the course of history, this determination of being as presence results in nihilism: “Only beings are and being remains empty smoke, an error [*ein leerer Rauch und ein Irrtum*]” (GA 70: 53/40).

Beyng as such is nothing, since beyng cannot be understood except by making it into another present being. For example, defined as necessarily existing, God is both the metaphysical source of beings and is itself a being. Such thinking renders the truth of beyng, its self-concealment, incomprehensible. This apparent lack at the heart of metaphysics is indirectly experienced as an “abandonment by being [*Die Seinsverlassenheit*],” which Heidegger diagnoses as nihilism (GA 65: 119/95).

In terms of Heidegger’s narrative, the transition of φύσις into nihilism is the fate that belongs to the history of beyng. In accord with the tragic sense of fate, however, nihilism only *seems* to be the end of metaphysics. In reality, nihilism belongs to the very beginning of metaphysics. Heidegger writes, “Beyng is already abandoning beings when ἀλήθεια becomes the withdrawing basic character of beings and thereby prepares the determination of beingness as ἰδέα” (GA 65: 111/88). Yet, it is crucial to understand that nihilism is not a mere fault of metaphysics. Rather, it preserves the truth of beyng: “the abandonment of beings by being means that beyng *conceals itself* in the manifestness of beingness. And beyng itself is essentially determined as this self-withdrawing concealment” (GA 65: 111/88). Nihilism therefore tacitly names the truth of beyng as self-concealing. Accordingly, grasping the truth of beyng and thereby inaugurating the other beginning actually requires taking up and working through the nihilistic kernel of metaphysics. Subverting the emergence of beings in the first beginning, the other beginning takes shape through the “submergence,” which means the forgetting, yet preserving, of beyng that occurs as concealment (GA 70: 54/40, tm).<sup>19</sup>

#### THE OTHER BEGINNING: THE TRAGEDY OF SUBMERGENCE

In *The Event*, Heidegger summarizes the relationship between emergence and submergence as such: “The beginning is unique. The word of the inceptuality [*der Anfängis*] is multiple. Hence there are many ways to say the beginnings. We know the first beginning as the emergent [*den aufgehenden*] (φύσις); we know the other beginning as the submergent [*den untergehenden*] (event [*Ereignis*])” (GA 71: 302/262, tm).<sup>20</sup> While the first beginning took shape in wonder before the emergence

and unconcealment of beings as a whole, the coming other beginning occurs in the event whereby the submergence of beyng is recollected and appropriated. The emergence of beings as a whole was coextensive with the submergence of beyng, or, in other words, the unconcealment of beings required the concealment of beyng. Thus, the abandonment by beyng that marks the transformation of metaphysics into nihilism already occurred in the first beginning. The truth of beyng – its self-concealment – was submerged.

For Heidegger, the other beginning consists in recollecting this very submergence that determined the fate of the history of beyng, allowing the truth of beyng to be disclosed. This will account for the tragic construction of the history of beyng: the submergence of beyng that is revealed at the end of that history already occurred at the beginning. The identification of metaphysics with nihilism, and nihilism with beyng itself, is the tragic moment, i.e., the event. However, rather than lamenting this fate, Heidegger ultimately affirms the tragedy of beyng as the condition for another historical beginning, a beginning that affirms the West as the source of salvation from the various ills associated with modern nihilism.

In order to properly understand and frame Heidegger's tragic narrative, it is necessary to clarify the terms introduced so far and to address a few questions. What exactly is meant by submergence, or *Untergang*? Why is submergence identified with self-concealment on the part of beyng? Why does the other beginning take shape through the recollection of the truth of beyng? Does this act of recollection relate to the forgetting of beyng? Lastly, how does this relate to Spengler's account of *Untergang*, which is negatively interpreted as decline or downfall?

One of the difficulties in reading Heidegger consists in working through the sheer entanglement of his concepts. Hence, submergence and self-concealment are almost interchangeable. What is submerged is concealed, and the act of submergence is self-concealing. Granted that the other beginning consists in appropriating the truth of beyng, and that beyng is fundamentally self-concealing, then the other beginning is the event by which the submergence of beyng that underlies the

history of beyng is appropriated. Hence, Heidegger writes, “The other beginning is the appropriating event (unconcealing concealment). The event is submergence – recollection [*Erinnerung*]” (GA 71: 303/263, tm). The event of appropriation consists in the recollection of the submergence of beyng, its self-concealment.

With regard to the history of beyng, there are two specific senses of submergence. First, submergence names the truth of beyng that is intimated, yet concealed, in the first beginning. Second, it names the historical *Übergang*, “the transition” or “crossing,” between the first and other beginnings (GA 65: 66/53; GA 70: 103/81). The history of beyng, then, accounts for the submergence of beyng that is coextensive with the history of metaphysics. The other beginning occurs when metaphysics is exhausted, making possible the recollection of the truth of beyng. But what exactly does Heidegger mean by recollection? Why is the submergence/self-concealment of beyng grasped by means of recollection?

*Being and Time* opens with the claim that the question of being has been forgotten (GA 2: 3/sz 2). With the *Kehre*, Heidegger further argues that this forgetting of being is symptomatic of its truth. Not being an entity capable of unconcealment, the truth of beyng is that it is self-concealing, which Heidegger etymologically connects to forgetting. Indeed, the Greek word for concealment, *λανθάνειν*, can be translated as forgetting. Hence, what is concealed is also forgotten. For this reason, the unconcealment of beyng as self-concealing means also recollecting or remembering what was forgotten. The event that appropriates the history of beyng, i.e., the submergence of beyng as such, which brings forth the other beginning of history, is an act of recollection. As Heidegger claims in his Nietzsche lectures, “recollection in the history of being thinks history as the arrival, always remote, of the perdurance of truth’s essence” (GA 6.2: 439/EP 75). Thus, recollecting not only locates an origin, the self-concealment of beyng, but it also designates a future, a history to arrive. Not unlike his earlier account of historical repetition, recollection is a return to the past that bestows a future. Indeed, in his poetic writings, Heidegger links anticipation

and recollection: “Every thinking-ahead [*Jedes Vordenken*] is a giving to recollection” (GA 70: 98/77). The coming other beginning takes shape through a recollection of the first beginning, thereby unconcealing the submergence of beyng as such. In this way, recollection is not just simply remembering: it is a fundamentally creative act.

Although the history of beyng surveys the entire of history of metaphysics, Heidegger primarily recollects the truth of beyng through critical readings of the Pre-Socratics. In this case, I return to Heidegger’s reading of Heraclitus, whose fragment 123 reveals the co-belonging of emergence and self-concealment. Φύσις does not just emerge from concealment, but also submerges back into it, just as a flower emerges and dies. Moreover, any instance of emergence is always relative to beings – what *is* – which conceals beyng as such. Rendering concealing synonymous with submerging, Heidegger thereby points to the identity of emergence and submergence, *Aufgang* and *Untergang*: “Emerging and self-concealing (i.e., submerging) are the same” (GA 55: 153/116).

However, in other texts, Heidegger argues for a certain priority to submergence. While necessarily entangled, submergence is the condition for emergence:

The emergence [*Der Aufgang*] begins with the abyss [*dem Ab-grund*] and this means with the *submergence* [*dem Untergang*] [...]. The first being [*Das erstmalige Sein*] is emergence and thus already submergence because the clearing that comes down over it is ungrounded [*ungegründet*] and no longer promising. What emergence was and remains before the entire history of beyng, as its submergence, must become experienced as *the event of the appropriation of the abyss* [*Ereignis des Abgrundes*]. (GA 66: 96)

This passage requires much unpacking. I have already talked about the event of appropriating beyng, but what of abyss? Is there something abyssal regarding the truth of beyng? If abyss is more primordial than emergence, then why would this be the case for submergence as well?

In his poetic text *On Inception*, Heidegger claims that the first beginning is the abyss, or the “ungrounded [*das Ungegründete*],” of the truth of being (GA 70: 13/7). Emergence is ungrounding insofar as the wonder before beings as a whole conceals being as such, since understanding *what* beings are presupposes, but also obscures, an understanding *that* they are. Beings thereby emerge from self-concealment, which is then forgotten. Without being, then, beings appear to hover over an abyss. As such, the abyss is another descriptor of being: “Being occurs as abyss” (GA 66: 100). However, by placing a hyphen between “Ab-” and “grund,” Heidegger emphasizes that the abyss is still a ground, albeit one that is “self-concealing” *as* ground (GA 65: 379/300). The abyss is simultaneously “nothing [*Nichts*]” and a “ground” (GA 66: 99). How does Heidegger account for this apparent contradiction? Rather than being an abyss in the sense of an empty space, the abyss actually designates the “fullness [*die Fülle*] of what is still undecided [*des Nochunentschiedenen*] and is to be decided [*zu Entscheidenden*]” (GA 65: 382/302). The abyss is therefore not a lack, but a site of possibilities. And these possibilities include not only possible emergent beings but also the possible ground upon which the self-concealment of being can be indirectly cleared. This helps better explain the meaning of Da-sein in Heidegger’s middle period. Rather than a human being, Da-sein names the “there” that grounds the abyss (GA 65: 386/305). As such, the event of appropriation means that humans become Da-sein, grounding and experiencing the truth of being as abyss.

That being qua abyss precedes emergence accounts for the priority of submergence. Returning to the quote mentioned above: “The emergence begins with the abyss [*Ab-grund*] and this means with the submergence” (GA 66: 96). Beings emerge from the abyss, or that which is submerged. Connecting the abyss with submergence, Heidegger renders submergence into another name for the self-concealment of being. Self-concealment is submerged relative to the unconcealment of emergence. But emergence is also “submergence into the abyss [*Untergang in den Abgrund*]” (GA 71: 147/127, tm). This is empirically shown through the experience of beings as they decay and die, e.g., a flower that emerges and submerges into the ground.<sup>21</sup> Hence, submergence stands between

both ends of emergence: beings emerge from and return to the submergent abyss of beyng. This is to say also that the truth of beyng is not exhausted by emergence, the latter of which metaphysics attempts to eternalize into something present. The submergence of beyng from metaphysics means that the appropriation of the former is not foreclosed by the latter.

By articulating the cohesion between beyng, abyss, and submergence, we can better understand the historical character of submergence. The other beginnings occur when the abyss is appropriated from submergence (GA 70: 13/6). For Heidegger, submergence is identical with the *Übergang* between the first and other beginnings, or the history of beyng. This is further demonstrated by the fact that the end of metaphysics is coextensive with submergence (GA 70: 103/81). Thus, beyng-historical thinking is consonant with thinking the submergence of beyng that underlies the various formulations of metaphysics. Hence, Heidegger calls beyng-historical thinking “submergent thinking [*das untergängliche Denken*]” (GA 70: 94/74, tm).<sup>22</sup> By attending to submergence, beyng-historical thinking stages the confrontation between the first and other beginnings, i.e., demonstrating the submergence of beyng that the emergence of beings as a whole concealed. The first beginning (metaphysics) results in nihilism precisely because it showed that beyng was not an emergent entity; rather, it is submergence itself.<sup>23</sup> Submergent thinking recognizes this as the truth of beyng and proceeds to critically reflect upon the history of metaphysics.

While identifying beyng-historical thinking and submergent thinking, or thinking of the *Untergang*, Heidegger is insistent that submergence is not a negative term. Moreover, the history of beyng is not a negative account of history: “This [submergent thinking] cannot be compared to any historiographical ambiance of decline, which clings only to perishing and ceasing, to impotence and collapse, reckoning this up merely as ending” (GA 70: 94/74, tm). Submergence is neither the decay nor decline into a determinate end, since its recollection is a creative event that marks the occurrence of the other beginning. The end is simply another beginning. It is on this very point that the confrontation between Heidegger and Spengler stands. While critically appropriating

certain elements of Spengler's historical narrative of decline, Heidegger subverts it through an appeal to another beginning for the history of philosophy.

#### SPENGLER AND THE BEYNG-HISTORICAL WEST

Although not a primary figure in his thought, like Hölderlin or Heraclitus, Heidegger's oeuvre contains a few important references to Spengler, where the latter is rendered into a foil for the former's historical project.<sup>24</sup> It is certainly the case that Heidegger views Spengler's thought as fundamentally shallow, calling him a superficial reader of Nietzsche and even a "pen pusher [*den Schriftsteller*]" (GA 95: 140/108; GA 96: 274/217). Nevertheless, in his poietic texts, alongside Ernst Jünger, Spengler is rendered into one of the culminating figures in the history of metaphysics. In brief, Spengler's "historical metaphysics of Caesarism" consummates modernity and the end of western metaphysics, describing in ontic terms Nietzsche's account of the will to power (GA 66: 27). This point is reiterated in *The Event*, where Heidegger asserts that Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, along with Jünger's *Der Arbeiter* and *Über den Schmerz*, "indicated, mediately" how the "essence of beingness" occurs, "since it provokes and determines the consistent interpretation of Nietzsche's metaphysics in various respects" (GA 71: 116/99). In what follows, I argue that Spengler's declinist narrative intimates and helps explain, negatively and by way of contrast, Heidegger's unique reading of submergence, where the former thinks in terms of metaphysics and the latter in terms of the truth of beyng. Nevertheless, insofar as Spengler grasps, albeit unconsciously, the end of the first beginning, a confrontation with Spengler is necessary to appropriate the truth of beyng, ushering in another beginning. How, then, does Spengler understand the essence of beingness? How does this connect to the tragic character of the history of beyng?

Published in 1918, Spengler's *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* reflected the *Zeitgeist* of Europe immediately following World War One. The 19th century promise of technological innovation was betrayed by the total mobilization and experience of mass death in the early 20th

century. Linear progress was replaced with inevitable decline. Spengler presents a “morphological” (*morphologischen*) account of history, which claims that each historical culture is a unique organism that is born and dies. He writes, “I see in world history the picture [*Bild*] of an eternal formation and reorganization, a wonderful becoming and passing away [*Vergehens*] of organic forms [*organischer Formen*].”<sup>25</sup> The text documents the specific history of the West, disclosing its inevitable decline, decay, and death, i.e., its *Untergang*. However, what is unique to the West is its historical consciousness that allows it to see its fate and take part in it: “for the first time, a culture is able to foresee [*voraussehen*] which path fate has chosen for it.”<sup>26</sup>

Specifically, Spengler predicts the transformation of culture into civilization, which is accompanied by the decline of democracy into authoritarianism, or “Caesarism.” Presenting this as inevitable, Spengler does not criticize or approve this new Caesar; rather, he warns that we can either accept this fate and work through it or resist and be destroyed. Hence, he concludes the second volume of *Untergang*: “We do not have the freedom to achieve [*zu erreichen*] this or that, but to do what is necessary [*Notwendigkeit*] or nothing at all. And a task, which the necessity of history has set, will be resolved [*gelöst*], with or without him [i.e., the historical individual]. The fates lead the willing and drag the unwilling [*Ducunt fata volentem, nolentem trahunt*].”<sup>27</sup> Thus, Spengler’s history led him to a kind of Nietzschean *amor fati*. But, given his morphological model of decline (verified by the transition from Greek culture to Roman civilization), his account coincided with his radically conservative support for authoritarianism, i.e., “Prussian Socialism,” which would serve as an important influence on Nazism.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, both Spengler and Heidegger possess a tragic picture of history, one that is developed by and results in *Untergang*, “decline” for the former and “submergence” for the latter. Heidegger also takes up Spengler’s unique vision of what this *Untergang* looks like in practice. As is well known, in his poetic texts, Heidegger argues that the culmination of beingness is machination. Abandoned by being, beings are only conceivable as instrumentalized objects. According to Heidegger, this

nihilistic situation is anticipated by Spengler's work, whereby "beings in the whole' are thought machinationally [*machenschaftlich*] and the human being, as executor [*Vollstrecker*] of machination, is determined from out of this essential entanglement" (GA 66: 28). Accordingly, in his 1931 text, *Man and Technics*, Spengler writes that "civilization has itself become a machine that does, or tries to do, everything in mechanical fashion [...] Whether it has meaning or not, our technical thinking must have its actualization."<sup>29</sup> While Spengler bemoans this result, he nonetheless thinks it as inevitable. He concludes that "our duty is to hold on to the lost position, without hope, without rescue."<sup>30</sup> However, for Heidegger this conclusion is untenable. While admitting a degree of validity to Spengler's interpretation of history, and even accepting elements of its fatalism, Heidegger nonetheless believes that the end of the history of metaphysics is only the preparation for another beginning. His account of the history of beyng leads him to affirm the submergence of beyng not in principle, but as a condition for something other.

Heidegger's unique formulation of *Untergang* and its fundamental entanglement with Spengler is further reflected in his account of the West. Against the latter, the former's history of beyng centers around denying the decline of the West, arguing instead that it is the "future of history, provided the essence of history is grounded in the event of the truth of beyng" (GA 71: 96/81). The West is not in decline, since its proper history has not yet begun. Nevertheless, Heidegger also affirms *Untergang* qua submergence, which he identifies with the West itself, calling the West "the land of the submergence [*das Land des Untergangs*] i.e., inceptuality of the beginning [*der Anfängnis des Anfangs*]" (GA 71: 272/235, tm). The West therefore names both the submergence and also the transition into another historical beginning.

Heidegger accounts for the co-belonging of these two determinations by etymologically breaking down the term "The West," which in German is *das Abendland*. *Abend* translates into "evening." The West is the evening land, or the land where the sun sets. But given that the setting of the sun and the onset of night prepare the way for morning, then the West also intimates another historical beginning. This is the beyng-historical meaning of the West: "The 'West,' experienced

in terms of the history of beyng, is the land of the evening, and the evening prepares the night out of which the day of the more inceptual beginning [*des anfänglicheren Anfangs*] already eventuates [*sich ereignet*]” (GA 71: 95/80). For Heidegger, the West signifies the general transition from the first to the other beginning of history. This transition is also the submergence of beyng. As the sun sets, it submerges below the horizon, preparing the way for morning. Consequently, in terms of the history of beyng, the West is the name for the self-concealment of the truth of beyng, but also the possibility of its recollection and appropriation, i.e., the accompanying dawn of another beginning. Hence, Spengler is certainly right to speak of the *Untergang* of the West, but wrong to render it negatively into decline.

Thus, Heidegger’s beyng-historical thinking appropriates Spengler’s declinist reading of the West in order flesh out its concealed truth: the submergence of the West and the submergence of the truth of beyng are identical, both pointing to another beginning. As tragic, the history of beyng names the necessary and fatalistic submergence of the West. But rather than resulting in sheer death and decay, or even Oedipal blindness, Heidegger anticipates that this submergence will result in a new beginning for philosophy, the West, and even history as such. Hence, Heidegger argues that the history of beyng, its submergence, has to be radically affirmed. Regarding the West and the other beginning, Heidegger writes:

The ending in its demise [*in seiner Verendung*] should not be resisted. Yet we must also not abandon to it anything that is preparation for the beginning. We should not impede the demise. We must not claim that the withdrawal into ‘fatalism [*den Fatalismus*]’ is an ‘attitude [*eine Haltung*]’. We cannot hope for anything from progression [*einem Fortgang*] or regression [*einem Rückgang*]. The beginning is everything. (GA 71: 97/82)

Standing on the side of the other beginning, Heidegger argues against anything that might impede the exhaustion of the first beginning.

Viewing the West as the beginning and end of the history of metaphysics, Heidegger displaces its spatial sense, rendering it something intimately temporal. Specifically, with submergence, it designates what is to come, i.e., the future. Hence, the West is the “future of history” (GA 71: 96/81). It is not to be identified with a geographic space. In order to make this distinction, Heidegger poses a curious comparison between the idea of the West and that of Europe:

The West, as a concept of the history of being, has nothing to do with ‘Europe [*Europa*],’ as a concept of modernity [*dem neuzeitlichen*]. What is European is the preliminary form of the planetary [*des Planetarischen*]. The new order [*Die Neuordnung*] that is Europe constitutes an anticipation of planetary dominance [*der Planetarischen Herrschaft*], which of course can no longer be an imperialism [*Imperialismus*], since emperors are impossible in the essential domain of machination [*der Machenschaft*]. What is European and planetary is the ending and completion. The West is the beginning [*der Anfang*]. (GA 71: 95/80)

Within this complicated construction we can glean some insight into what Heidegger means by “Europe.” “Europe” obviously refers to the continent of Europe and its inhabitants. But insofar as the people of this continent (German, French, English, etc.) have sought to expand their power through colonialism and imperialism, the idea of “Europe,” its modern values and products, has become planetary in scale. Hence, Heidegger will add that “Europe” dominates “Asia,” “the Western hemisphere,” and even the “the East of Russian Bolshevism” (GA 71: 95/80). In other words, according to the Heideggerian construction of “Europe,” we could replace the notion of “westernization” with “Europeanization.” Thus, at the end of modern history, Europe is identified with the planet as a whole. Heidegger appears to want an alternative to what Emmanuel Wallerstein calls “European universalism,” or the universal spread of the particular values and preferences of Europe.<sup>51</sup> For Heidegger, that the

future belongs to the West is not to say that it reflects European goals or values, but rather that it relates to something new, i.e., another beginning. Therefore, it undermines any unified appeal to European superiority as a spatial and geographic region.

Because Spengler focuses on the spatial conception of the West, Heidegger identifies him as a European thinker: “‘Europe’ is the actualization of the *Decline of the West*” (GA 96: 274/217). Insofar as the *decline of the West* accounts for the total domination of machination over life, Spengler is unable to think beyond the confines of metaphysics, failing to see that the West represents an opening to an event that is constitutive of another beginning. Despite attempting to think provincially about Europe, i.e., about its specific decline, Spengler ends up being another force in the Europeanization of the entire planet.

Nevertheless, whatever counter Heidegger may present to European universalism, it is important to question whether or not this insight is limited by his commitment to another component of his being-historical narrative: the fundamental relationship between the Greeks and Germans. In other words, while it is true that Heidegger being-historically conceives the West futurally, displaced from the ontic and spatial characterization of Europe and its globalization, there are certain ways that his narrative re-stages conventional Western-centrism, especially due to his Graeco-Germanic affinity.

As Robert Bernasconi notes, although Heidegger is critical of standard narratives underlying the history of philosophy, “he not only vigorously upheld the thesis of the Greek origins of philosophy, he also presented the history of being against the backdrop of a narrative account of the history of philosophy that at least on the surface resembles the standard account.”<sup>32</sup> Indeed, Heidegger does more than re-center the West in the history of philosophy: he renders philosophy *identical* with the West. He writes in his 1943 lecture course on Heraclitus:

There is no philosophy other than western philosophy.  
‘Philosophy,’ in its essence, is so primordially western  
that it bears the ground of the history of the west.

From out of this ground alone, technology has arisen.  
 There is only a western technology. It is the consequence of 'philosophy' and nothing else. (GA 55: 3/3)

Taking it for granted that philosophy is a Greek concept, Heidegger draws the conclusion that philosophy is and can only be a western phenomenon. Heidegger then makes the stronger claim that philosophy is the "ground" of the history of the West. Consistent with the history of *beyng*, philosophy is the causal engine operating behind Western history. The most important appearance of philosophy is technology, or technological rationality. Consequently, the global spread of technology (globalization) is a form of Westernization. In this we can interpret a form of conventional Western-centrism present in Heidegger's thought. Indeed, in his previous lecture course, he not only affirms that there is a "destiny of the West [*des abendländischen Geschicks*]," but that this destiny "conceals a world-destiny [*ein Weltgeschick*]" (GA 54: 114/77). Of course, it can be objected that this is just another version of Heidegger's tragic, *beyng*-historical account of Europe and the West, i.e., beneath the spread of European technological thinking lies the concealed or submerged the truth of *beyng*. Thus, the destiny of the West qua Europe is the path towards the appropriation of the truth of *beyng* from out of submergence. This is certainly a consistent reading of Heidegger; yet, it is important to qualify this claim due to the unique *beyng*-historical role of the German people.

Although Heidegger was interested in other cultures and philosophical approaches, like Japanese Buddhism, he consistently centered the world-historical experiences of the German people, especially during the poetic phase of his work. For example, he concludes his 1943 lecture course on Heraclitus with an appeal to the historical task of the Germans:

In whatever way the fate of the Occident may be conjoined, the greatest and truest trial of the Germans is yet come; namely, that trial in which they are tested by the ignorant against their will regarding whether the Germans are in harmony with the truth of *beyng*, and

whether they are strong enough in their readiness for death to save the inceptual in its inconspicuous adornment from the spiritual poverty of the modern world.  
(GA 55: 180–181/135)

The Germans must save the West from the spiritual poverty that characterizes modernity. It is the Germans who must grasp the submergence of being in order to bring about another beginning. Thus, the tragic fate of the West is necessarily tied to the German people.

For Heidegger, this situation is primarily for two reasons. First, it is due to the Germans being an essentially indeterminate people, i.e., their essence is *to determine* their essence, or more specifically to “struggle [*den Kampf*]” over their essence (GA 95: 31/24). Hence, they are rendered fundamentally futural, given that this struggle is based on the anticipation of an arriving determination. They are also, for this reason, fundamentally historical, since the meaning of history is derived from the anticipation of the future. Second, they carried out the consummation of the first beginning, i.e., modernity. Narrowly defining modernity in terms of the reduction of the emergence of beings as a whole to consciousness, which is dialectically sublimated into absolute knowing, Heidegger identifies modernity with the results of German Idealism, and Hegel specifically (GA 95: 29/23). Because Germans brought about the culmination of the first beginning, then they are also tasked with realizing another beginning. For Heidegger, the event of the other beginning requires grappling with German philosophy. In particular, confrontations with Hegel and Nietzsche are needed, the consummate thinkers of modernity and the history of the first beginning. To this list, we can also add the ontic descriptions of modern nihilism characteristic of Spengler’s and Jünger’s work as well.

It can reasonably be countered that this is the being-historical account of the Greeks and Germans, which are separable from the ontic account of peoples who exist in a specific geographical region and time in history. After all, the ideas that Germans are indeterminate as a people and that German philosophy, having consummated modernity, is planetary in scope, seem to be far removed from the specific geography

of Germany and those who live there. Nevertheless, it should also not be dismissed that this reliance on the more conventional historical narrative of Graeco-Germanic affinity does indicate Heidegger's lingering commitments to the generic historical reading of the West. At the very least, I argue that the reliance on the terms "Germans" and "Greeks" potentially reaffirms a form of conventional Western-centrism that hinders the radicality of Heidegger's beyng-historical thinking, especially for readers of his work.

### CONCLUSION: THE TRAGEDY OF BEYNG?

As should be clear from the preceding, Heidegger's account of *Untergang*, or submergence, is one of the key aspects of his beyng-historical project. Indeed, beyng-historical thinking is thinking submergence (GA 70: 94/74). Insofar as Heidegger, in his poietic texts, defines tragedy in terms of submergence, i.e., that it precedes and conditions the emergence of beings in the first beginning, then it is clear that the narrative of the history of beyng is fundamentally tragic. The submergence, or self-concealment of beyng, is the condition for the first beginning, and the other beginning will take shape through its recollection and appropriation. Accordingly, we can pose that the event of appropriation is tragic.

This insight was then applied to Heidegger's confrontation with Spengler's *Decline of the West*. The West is the "land of the submergence," where the sun sets and makes possible another beginning (GA 71: 272/235, tm). However, in tragic circularity, this other beginning, while creative, is nonetheless a return to the first beginning as such. Hence, the first beginning itself is experienced and appropriated in the other beginning (GA 71: 27/20). It appropriates the self-concealment of beyng, which lay submerged in the first beginning, i.e., with the development of metaphysics. Heidegger recognized that Spengler had certain insights regarding the history of metaphysics, describing how the end of metaphysics results in nihilism, understood as the totalitarianism of machination. However, while admitting the accuracy of this tragic fate, Heidegger nonetheless argues that the submergence of the

West would not result in death, but in another beginning. For the sake of beginning, Heidegger claims that this fate cannot be resisted: “The beginning is everything” (GA 71: 97/82). With this tragic narrative in mind, Heidegger displaces the geographic idea of Europe in favor of the West as temporal event. Nevertheless, by doing so, Heidegger continued to think in terms of conventional history of philosophy, at least in terms of beginning with the Greeks and ending/re-beginning with the Germans. Consequently, from Heidegger’s perspective, while Spengler appears to see the world-historical task of the Germans, those who are able to see their own tragic fate and affirm it, he did not do justice to their creative task of saving the West. Thus, Spengler remains European, all-too European.

This examination opens up a horizon of inquiry that is beyond the purview of this essay. First, is there a way to displace Heidegger’s German-centrism? This is another way of asking whether or not Heidegger’s temporal account of the West can be used to genuinely counter the problem of European universalism. Despite himself, does Heidegger ultimately end up affirming the conventional narrative of the West? As Sean Meighoo criticizes: “In Heidegger’s argument on the end of philosophy, the history of the West thus continues to bear a special mission for all humanity, a mission that is made only more poignant by its negative charge. The universal import of the history of the West is affirmed for Heidegger by the global dominance of scientific technology.”<sup>55</sup> Is there a non-western or even decolonizing Heideggerian response? Second, given Heidegger’s claim that the tragic end of the first beginning should not be resisted, it should be asked how far this urgency goes. In his *Black Notebooks*, Heidegger writes that the “great doom [*Das große Verhängnis*]” for modern humans is that submergence will be “denied [*versagt*]” (GA 96: 251/199). Furthermore, he claims that the decision facing human beings is between carrying out the “destruction [*Zerstörung*]” that intimates the “concealed beginning” or being left with sheer “devastation [*Verwüstung*]” (GA 95: 366/287; GA 96: 3/3). Thinking tragically, Heidegger’s being-historical narrative presents an either/or which offers some form of suffering or pain. If

nihilism, and its manifestations in machinational thinking and even political violence, preserve the submergent truth of beyng, then how far do we affirm these tragic ontic consequences? Is destruction really necessary? What does this mean for the possibility of political critique in Heidegger's thought? These questions must be addressed in order to more fully explicate the task of beyng-historical thinking.

NOTES

- 1 This is a revised version of the second chapter from my dissertation, “Between Emergence and Submergence: On Heidegger’s History of Beyng,” entitled *The Tragedy of The Political: Heidegger and The German Conservative Revolution*. I want to thank the reviewers for their extensive criticisms, which greatly improved the quality of this article and my overall project. I would also like to thank my dissertation advisor, Andrew J. Mitchell, for his guidance on this project, it would not have been possible without his insight and support.
- 2 The “poietic” writings refer to Heidegger’s non-public writings from 1936–1944: *Beiträge zur Philosophie (Vom Ereignis)* (GA 65), *Besinnung* (GA 66), *Die Geschichte des Seins* (GA 69), *Über den Anfang* (GA 70), *Das Ereignis* (GA 71), *Die Stege des Anfangs* (GA 72). Although in Germany these texts are usually called the “*seynsgeschichtliche Abhandlungen*,” or treatises on the history of beyng, Daniela Vallega-Neu adopts the term “poietic”—Greek for “bringing forth”—to emphasize that these writings serve to bring about “the other beginning” of philosophy. See Daniela Vallega-Neu, *Heidegger’s Poietic Writings: From Contributions to Philosophy to The Event* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018), ix.
- 3 Heidegger appropriates the archaic spelling *Seyn* in order to distinguish it from his earlier ontological project of determining the meaning of being, *Sein*. Concerned that “being” could be rendered into a representational object (i.e., beingness), Heidegger uses “beyng” to designate a sense of the word that is tethered to the play of unconcealment and concealment and is also eventual. In other words, unlike being qua beingness, beyng is something that happens, i.e., the event of appropriation. For example, Heidegger writes: “But beyng ‘is’ not at all; instead, it essentially occurs” (GA 65: 255/201).

- 4 Peter Trawny, *Freedom to Fail: Heidegger's Anarchy*, Trans. Ian Alexander Moore and Christopher Turner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 39.
- 5 Specifically, Goesser Assaiante and Ewegen use “submerging” for *Untergehen*.
- 6 Peter Trawny, *Heidegger & The Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy*, Trans. Andrew J. Mitchell (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 9.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 8 Heidegger is not the first to posit a linguistic-cultural affinity between the Germans and the Greeks. Fichte, for example, had claimed that the German and Greek languages had comparable “inner values” and that that both peoples were “original.” Furthermore, this “myth of Greaco-Germanic affinity” was a consistent theme of 19th and early 20th century German thought, reaching its height in the Nazi identification of the Greeks as Aryans. See Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *Addresses to The German Nation*, Trans. Isaac Nakhimosky, Béla Kapossy, and Keith Tribe (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2013), 55, 106; Charles Bambach, *Heidegger's Roots: Nietzsche, National Socialism, and The Greeks* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), 116–117; Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, “The Nazi Myth,” *Critical Inquiry* 16, No. 2 (1990), 309.
- 9 Péter Szondi, *An Essay on the Tragic*, Trans. Paul Fleming (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 2.
- 10 *Ibid.*, 7.
- 11 Dennis J. Schmidt, *On Germans and Other Greeks: Tragedy and Ethical Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 282.
- 12 Quotes from *Besinnung* (GA 66) are my translations.
- 13 William McNeill and Julia Davis translate “Untergang” as “downgoing.” I substitute this translation with “submergence.”
- 14 This is famously stated by Aristotle in his *Metaphysics*: “It is through wonder that men now begin and originally began to philosophize.” See: Aristotle, *The Metaphysics*, Trans. Hugh Tredennick (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), 982b.

- 15 However, “nature” also has two other senses, which more closely relate to φύσις. First, nature means that which defines a specific being (e.g., “human nature,” “the nature of a chemical,” etc.). Second, the behavior of beings as a whole, the subject of physics (e.g., laws of nature). The first indirectly refers to the being of a specific being, that which makes something what it is. The second, indirectly refers to the Greek determination of φύσις as being as a whole, which would even include the behavior of artificial objects, e.g., both a hammer and a planet are subject to gravity.
- 16 Λανθάνειν can be translated as “forgetting.” Accordingly, ἀλήθεια is the unconcealment of that which is concealed or forgotten.
- 17 The word κρύπτεσθαι comes from the verb κρύπτειν, which can mean “to conceal, hide.” See *A Greek-English Lexicon*, ed. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, 8th edition (New York: American Book Company, 1901), s.v. κρύπτειν.
- 18 Katherine Withey, *Heidegger on Being Self-Concealing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 148.
- 19 Peter Hanley translates “Untergang” as “receding.” I substitute this translation with “submergence.”
- 20 I use the word “submergence” for “*Untergang*,” rather than Rojcewicz’s “downgoing.”
- 21 Heidegger specifically connects submergence to death: “Death [...] has the character of submergence” (GA 70: 138/114, tm).
- 22 Peter Hanly translates “das untergängliche Denken” into “receding thinking.”
- 23 Heidegger indicates the entanglement of submergence and nihilism in *The Event*. Here, “Abandonment by being [*Seinsverlassenheit*]” (another name for nihilism) is identical with submergence (GA 71: 78/65, tm).
- 24 For example, in a 1925 ad for a public lecture on Wilhelm Dilthey, Heidegger frames the need for an account of the essence of history as a response to the nihilistic and culturally relativistic approach of Spengler (GA 16: 50). Furthermore, in his 1929–1930 lecture

- course, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger diagnosed contemporary social malaise through an approving reference to Spengler: “Reduced to a formula, it [*Decline of the West*] is this: the decline of life in and through spirit. What spirit, in particular as reason, has formed and created for itself in technology, economy, in world trade, and in the entire reorganization of existence symbolized by the city, is now turning against the soul, against life, overwhelming it and forcing culture into decline and decay” (GA 29/30: 106 /70).
- 25 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte (Vol. 1): Gestalt und Wirklichkeit* (München: C. H. Beck, 1920), 29.
- 26 Ibid., 218.
- 27 Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte (Vol. 2): Welthistorische Perspektiven* (München: C. H. Beck, 1922), 635.
- 28 Spengler’s relationship with Nazism is complicated. His influence on the far-right in Germany was broad and expansive, influencing many of those involved in the Nazi party. In his 1933 text *The Hour of Decision*, Spengler explicitly mentions that he “welcomed” the “national revolution” and sought counsel with Hitler himself. However, the text also criticized National Socialism for its appeal to the mass politics and its investment in biological racism. For this reason, Alfred Rosenberg, the primary architect of Nazi ideology, came to officially reject Spengler’s work. See Roger Woods, *The Conservative Revolution in the Weimar Republic* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1996), 128–129.
- 29 Oswald Spengler, *Man and Technics: A Contribution to a Philosophy of Life*, trans. Charles Francis Atkinson and Michael Putman (London: Arktos, 2015), 72.
- 30 Ibid., 77.
- 31 Immanuel Wallerstein, *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power* (New York: New York Press, 2006).

- 32 Robert Bernasconi, "Heidegger and The Invention of The Western Philosophical Tradition," *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1995), 240.
- 33 Sean Meighoo, *The End of the West and Other Cautionary Tales* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 68.

