

Appearance as the Arrival of the Future

WOLFHART PANNENBERG

AMBIGUITIES of language often indicate a problematic subject matter. That is the case with the word "appear" (*erscheinen*). When I say that an acquaintance (or someone with whom I was previously unacquainted) "appeared" to me, in order to speak with me, the meaning is: he came to me, he showed up in my habitat, perhaps at my home. He did not only seem (*scheinen*) to be there; he really was there. When something appears to us, it does not only seem to be with us, it actually is present. Appearance and existence are here very closely connected. But on the other hand, my acquaintance still exists even when he does not appear to me. Whether that would still be true if he appeared nowhere — whether my acquaintance would then still exist — that is, of course, questionable. But that question I will set aside. In any case, the existence of my acquaintance is not the same as his appearing to *me*. Thus, we differentiate between what something is in and for itself (or also for others) and the way it appears to and for us. This distinction is already present in the word "appear." What appears to me is precisely that which is, in and for itself, something more than it is as it presently appears to me. In this sense, according to Kant, the idea of appearance points back to a being-in-itself which is different from the appearance, since it would be nonsense to say that there is appearance without there being something to appear.¹ What is meant is not only that appearance has a concrete form. Rather, the concept of appearance implies that in it something manifests itself which is something more than that part of it which appears. The ambiguity of the word appearance is thus based on the relation of appearance to being. On the one hand, appearing and existence mean the same thing. But on the other hand, appearance, taken literally,

WOLFHART PANNENBERG is Professor of Systematic Theology at the University of Mainz. His publications number over thirty, the most recent book being *Grundzüge der Christologie*. The present article was translated from the German by David Griffin. It is based on a presentation before the Philosophical Society in Basel on November 2, 1965.

¹ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Preface to Second Edition.

points to a being transcending it. How are these two sides of the word's meaning to be united? Or do they fall totally asunder, so that the unity of the word connecting the two is only an insignificant coincidence?

I

With this question we turn to the history of thought about appearance. Since Parmenides at the latest, and especially under the powerful influence of Plato, the tendency to separate appearance and being has been dominant. The world of appearance, of *doxa*, is considered a mixture of being and non-being, of a lesser order than the being which exists in itself. In Platonism this latter being is depicted as the being of the ideas, which is reflected only imperfectly in the appearances and which remains inaccessible to sense perception, although the understanding grasps it. This being is held to exist in itself, eternally and unchangeably; the appearances in which it is reflected add nothing to it. Of course, it must be mentioned that this interpretation, which was expressed most decisively by Plato himself in the *Phaedo* and the *Republic*, does not exhaust the full profundity of his thought about the idea. Originally, the appearance was included in the idea as the perceived form, as especially Julius Stenzel has shown; the idea is precisely the form shining through *in* the appearance, so that, for example, the idea of beauty is experienced in what is beautifully shaped. From such a point of departure the complete separation of the idea from its appearance could only be a fringe possibility for Plato. And he himself showed it to be untenable in his *Parmenides*: If idea and appearance are separated from each other, then another idea is needed to account for the relatedness of the first two. But if this new idea as such is again separated from those things (idea and appearance) for whose similarity it is supposed to account, then a further idea is required, etc.² The separation between idea and appearance, the divorce so strongly attacked by Aristotle, was recognized by Plato himself to be untenable. Of course, that Plato overcame it can hardly be asserted. The influence upon him of the Eleatic understanding of being seems to have been too strong for that, especially the notion that true being, in its immutability, *needs* nothing beyond itself for its being.³ Thus, for the idea, understood as true being, the relation to the appearance must be a matter of indifference, and in this self-sufficiency of the idea the separation from its appearances continues to exist. Even Aristotle, as his notion of substance shows, was not able completely to escape the suggestion of the Eleatic understanding of being. So it becomes understandable that the separation of true being from its appearance, the precedence of self-sufficient ideas or substances reposing in themselves over the phenomenal reality of sense experience, remained a dominant motif in the history of thought whenever the notion of appearance became thematic.

² *Parmenides*, 132 (the idea of greatness and of great things), 133.

³ Diels, *Fragment*, 8, 33.

Against this background it was of great significance when the relation between essence and appearance came to be recognized as reciprocal. In order to find the reciprocity of this relationship explicitly formulated, we must take a broad leap over the whole history of the relation of essence and appearance. We find it so formulated by Hegel. According to him, the relation is such that the appearance not only points back to the essence appearing in it as to its truth. The reverse is also true: "Essence *must* appear. Seeming (*Das Scheinen*) is the definiteness, through which essence is not mere being, but essence, and fully developed seeming is appearance. Essence is thus not behind or beyond appearance, but existence is appearance by virtue of the fact that it is essence which exists."⁴ To understand fully Hegel's statement here we would have to go into the changes that the concept of essence had undergone from Plato's notion of true being and Aristotle's category of *ousia* down to Hegel. Only out of the dissolution of the Aristotelian concept of substance could the strange situation become more understandable, that in Hegel's statement essence is set over against being, rather than itself being directly depicted as true being. Be that as it may, the statement that essence must appear is still intended by Hegel in the sense of an ontological precedence of essence over its appearance, even if the essence first comes into view by going behind the world of being into its ground, since being is now characterized as appearance of a ground that differs from it, i. e., the essence. Appearance thereby presents itself as mere reflection, as self-alienation of the essence, which, in the process of Hegel's logic, is to be more precisely defined as concept and idea. Since the Hegelian idea is thought of as timeless, logical structure — being therein similar to the timeless being of Parmenides — appearance in Hegel's philosophy (contrary to his insight into the reciprocity of the relation of essence and appearance) is again reduced to the status of the nonessential. Instead of — as Hegel asserted — the idea existing only in the appearances, it in fact finds in the appearances of religion or history merely subsequent illustrations of its fixed, logical structure.

The separation of being (or essence) and appearance can then evidently be avoided only if one approaches being and essence by beginning with appearance even more decisively than Hegel himself did. Kant offers a beginning in this direction with his thesis that all functioning of the understanding is related to appearance. However, since he presupposed the traditional opposition of the thing in itself and the appearance, Kant meant to express with this thesis the fundamental limitation of all human knowing. Nevertheless, his thesis could lead to thinking of appearanceness as the fundamental characteristic of being itself. To my knowledge, Heinrich Barth has taken this course more consistently than anyone else. Barth allows being in the sense of subsistence only to appearance⁵ and rejects every "reduction of the

⁴ Hegel, *Enzyklopädie*, 131.

⁵ Heinrich Barth, *Philosophie der Erscheinung*, II, p. 617.

appearance to non-appearing being-in-itself."⁶ Finally, he understands the "something" that appears, and apart from which (according to Kant) appearance cannot be thought, as the eidetic content in the act of appearing itself, which forms the theme of the *interpretation* of the appearance. The statement that the meaning of the appearance (which is, in its actuality and contingency, already presupposed) is expressed in the *eidōs*,⁷ reverses the traditional interpretation of the relation of *eidōs* and appearance. The appearing as existence takes priority over all notions of essence. Barth's understanding of appearance accordingly reveals itself as bound up with the post-Hegelian situation, in which the priority of "being-there," of existence, over against all "whatness," all eidetic structures, has been repeatedly affirmed. When it is not limited to anthropology, this priority agrees, albeit remotely, with the Anglo-Saxon tradition of empiricism. Over against modes of thought that take what exists in its pure facticity as the point of departure, Barth's orientation in terms of phenomena, his view of existence as what appears,⁸ proves itself superior by the fact that the notion of appearing simultaneously comprehends both the act of coming-into-appearance and the "something" that appears, thus the eidetic or essential element.

Heinrich Barth's new interpretation of the notion of appearance opens the way for the contingency of events, for the historicity of all experience, in so far as its occurrence is always presupposed in the interpretation of its content. Nevertheless, the interpretation of the contingent appearances is not limited to the sphere of events, but goes beyond it. Interpretation can take place only by going beyond the event that gives rise to the interpretation. In so far as this is true, the "something" that appears cannot be thought of as totally exhausted in the act of appearing. It is precisely and only for this reason that the characterization of the existing as *appearance* can be justified. In going beyond the event in the process of its interpretation, a difference arises anew (and in a new sense) between appearance and being, between appearance and essence.

This going beyond the appearance in its interpretation can be clarified by reference to very old themes, which are, not accidentally of course, also Socratic themes: In saying *what* appears in the individual appearance, a something is always named that appears not only here, but elsewhere as well. By virtue of this generality (however it is to be interpreted), the *eidōs* transcends the individual appearance in which it is encountered.

Connected with the possibility of manifold appearances of one and the same *eidōs* is the fact that it exhausts itself in none of its appearances. There always remain other ways in which "the same" *eidōs* could appear. One could draw from this the completely unplatonic consequence that the *eidōs* contains in itself an element of indeterminacy beyond what can be known

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 437 (against Kant).

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 617.

⁸ Or "emerges" (*ibid.*, p. 633 f.).

of it from its appearance or from a plurality of such appearances. Yet, in any case (and this is only the other side of the same thing), the individual appearance always presents itself as only a partial realization of the possibilities of the *eidōs* appearing in it. The work of art seems to be an exception to this rule. In the harmony of part and whole that exists in the work of art, the difference between essence and appearance is, in a certain sense, overcome. This is the basis of the perfection of the work of art. But in everyday reality such harmony is not found. Here the multiplicity of appearances is the sign of the imperfection of each individual one.

So far we have seen that neither the separation of true being and appearance nor the thesis of their identity can be maintained without turning into the respective opposite. From the *separation* of idea and appearance, or essence and appearance, we are directed to the fact that they belong together. But with the assertion of the identity of the appearance and the existence of the appearing something, the difference between appearance and essence breaks out anew, because the interpretation of that something which appears unavoidably goes beyond the event of its isolated appearance. Now that the theses of the separation and of the identity of appearance and true being have both been shown to be one-sided, the question is raised of whether the unity of the identity and non-identity of appearance and being is accessible to a more penetrating description.

II

The theologian may be excused for introducing a theological example at this place in the train of thought. This is not done to silence the intellectual question with an authoritative answer. Rather, the example may directly contribute to a better understanding of the difference and the unity of appearance and that which appears.

The well-known and controversial problem of the relation of the futurity and presence of the Reign of God in the ministry of Jesus seems to me to be relevant for illuminating the unity and difference of appearance and that which appears. In the oldest layers of the New Testament traditions of Jesus are sayings that speak of the presence of the Reign of God in the ministry of Jesus. These stand alongside sayings that differentiate the Reign of God as something future from the present ministry of Jesus. Whether and how both groups of sayings are to be reconciled is today a major exegetical question. I myself find most convincing the arguments of those exegetes who do not opt in favor of one of the two sides, and do not unravel the difficulties by eliminating one group of opposing sayings as unauthentic, but rather seek the uniqueness of the message of Jesus precisely in this juxtaposition of seemingly opposing sayings. But how is such juxtaposition to be understood? In the sense of a future extension and completion of that which has broken in in the present? I prefer the opposite view: that in the ministry of Jesus

the futurity of the Reign of God became a power determining the present. For Jesus, the traditional Jewish expectation of the coming Reign of God on earth became the decisive and all-encompassing content of one's relation to God, since the coming Reign of God had to do with the coming of God himself. Thus, obedience to God, with the complete exclusiveness of the Jewish understanding of God, became turning to the future of the Reign of God. But wherever that occurs, there God already reigns unconditionally in the present, and such presence of the Reign of God does not conflict with its futurity but is derived from it and is itself only the anticipatory glimmer of its coming. Accordingly, in Jesus' ministry, in his call to seek the Kingdom of God, the coming Reign of God has already appeared, without ceasing to be differentiated from the presentness of such an appearance. The divine confirmation of this matter, which came to Jesus' disciples through the Easter appearances, was the basis for the later Christian mode of expression, that God himself had uniquely and definitively appeared in Jesus without the difference between Jesus and God himself being thereby dissolved. The later christological doctrine speaks appropriately of the deity of Jesus, which nevertheless, as that of the "Son," remains different from that of the Father. This, in the final analysis, is still a matter of the interpretation of the "appearance" of God, of the presence of his Reign, in the ministry of Jesus. The difference of the Son from the Father, to which the christological doctrine holds fast, corresponds to the continuing difference in the message of Jesus between the futurity of the Reign of God and its presence in Jesus' ministry. And just as the future, precisely in its abiding difference from the present, is the basis for the present efficacy of God's Reign (and thus for its entrance into the present), so is the deity of Jesus himself, as that of the "Son," based precisely on Jesus' holding fast to the difference between God the Father and himself. Jesus did not raise the claim of divine authority for his own person — as his opponents evidently misunderstood him. Rather, he subjected himself totally to something different from himself, which he called "the Father," to God's coming Reign; only so was the coming Reign of God — God himself — already present in him. The difference between Jesus' present and the Father's future was ever again actualized in the surrender of the man Jesus to the coming Reign of God that he proclaimed, in so far as it was the future of another. Jesus pointed away from himself; therefore, the interpretation of that which appeared in him must go beyond the appearance of Jesus, to God, whom his message concerned. For this reason any mixing of the divine and human in the event of the appearance of God in this man is in error. And yet, precisely in Jesus' *pointing away from himself to God's future did this future as such become present in and through him*. The appearance of God in this man, which transcends his finite existence, means, just because of this, an existence of God in him, a oneness of God with him. The coming-to-appearance of God in Jesus has thereby a different meaning from the epiphanies of gods in human or animal form, of which we hear, e. g., in the history of Greek religion. There, any

particular form of the appearance, being replaceable, remains external to the essence of the deity, just as in Plato or Parmenides, its appearance remains non-essential to true being.⁹ In the ministry of Jesus, on the contrary, the God of Israel, the future of his Reign, comes definitively to appearance once. He manifested himself in this single event conclusively and for all time, and just for this reason only once. This is how the later ecclesiastical doctrine of the Incarnation expressed the matter, over against all Hellenistic notions of an epiphany. The finality of Jesus' ministry is based on its eschatological character, on the fact that through it the ultimate future of God's Reign becomes determinative of the present and therefore becomes present. Appearance and essential presence are here one. Is not this character of the appearance of God in Jesus — as opposed to the different religio-historical background of the Platonic-Parmenidean relation between appearance and true being — also relevant for considering the problem of appearance in general?

Of course, little would be gained if without further ado we tried to abstract a general concept of appearance from the way in which God came to appearance in Jesus of Nazareth. In so proceeding one would merely arrive at theological postulates for which he could, at most, try to claim general validity. We would rather ask whether our theological example throws light on certain, perhaps otherwise hidden, sides of the general philosophical problem of appearance. The pursuit of this question can be sufficiently motivated by the fact that in Christian reflection on the appearance of God in Jesus of Nazareth the two elements are united which have again and again broken apart in philosophical reflection, although they are both suggested when appearance is discussed, i. e., the effective presence of what appears in the appearance, and its transcendence of the individual appearance. In the idea of the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth both are combined: God is completely and conclusively present in this individual man, and yet he remains different from him; in fact, it is just as the One who is different from Jesus that God is in him. We have seen that this unity of the seemingly mutually exclusive elements is understandable (and grounded) in the way that God's Reign is still future in relation to the ministry and message of Jesus and yet, as future, is present in it. Does the connection of identity and difference in the relation of being (or essence) and appearance have something to do with the temporality of this relation? And does that which appears in the appearance thereby present itself in the mode of futurity?

⁹ Is there perhaps expressed in this a devaluation, which is quite widespread in mythical thinking, of the profane, everyday reality, as opposed to that primordial reality, which is spoken of in myth and carried out in the cult in order to draw profane existence, which is unholy in itself, into it?

III

If we look at the beginnings of Greek philosophizing, it can well be said that Heinrich Barth has rightly described the theme of appearance as already the theme of the Ionian philosophers of nature. This judgment seems to me to be confirmed precisely through the structure of the quest for the *archē*, in which Heinrich Barth found the point of departure for the ontological "reduction" of appearance to semblance (*Schein*).¹⁰ In going beyond the immediately experienced multiplicity in the quest for its common ground, all that is achieved at first is that the element of difference between appearance and appearing essence, which is constitutive for the appearance as such, receives its due. That things "are" different "fundamentally" (i. e., in their ground) in contrast to what they "seem" to be — is this not the basic conviction of every view that experiences reality as appearance, as opposed to a superficial empiricism content with what is immediately observable? But this conviction of fundamental difference is not enough to distinguish the Ionian thinkers from the experience of existence that found its expression in myth. For the mythical intuition also saw something deeper in that which is immediately visible. The intuitive certainty of this vision, which grasps precisely in the phenomenon what the things "fundamentally" are, did not, of course, seem to the Ionian philosophers of nature to be a possibility. What the true nature of the "ground" is had become questionable. Different answers were given. By becoming questionable the phenomena had already lost their transparency to their deeper ground. In so far as the philosophical answers now named the one ground, to which, however, the phenomena are not transparent, the "possibility of a devaluation of the appearance" arose.¹¹ It is thus implicitly presupposed that the ground has always been there, so that the phenomena really — if they were not deceptive semblance — would have to set the viewer free to see through them to the ground present in them. Parmenides is the first to affirm the present givenness of the ground in a reflective way, in that the "is," being absolutely self-identical and unconditionally present, is accorded the function of the *archē*, as the common and unifying element of everything that is.¹² Since the "is" is absolutely self-identical and one, and as such is present, everything manifold and changeable becomes deceptive semblance. This devaluation of the phenomena into mere semblance does not yet follow from the difference of the ground from the phenomena in which it appears, but only from the situation where the phenomena no longer show what they already are "fundamentally." When "in ground" the only true being is already present, then the phenomena, in their difference from the ground, can only be considered deceptive concealment.

¹⁰ Heinrich Barth, *Philosophie der Erscheinung*, I, p. 10.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹² Whatever else the *archē* may be, it must in any case be *being*, in order to be the origin and the unity of all things (*ὄντα*).

In Parmenides, therefore, the future has no place in the understanding of appearance. It is different with the second root of the classical philosophy of appearance, which confronts us in Plato. The Platonic idea points, on the one hand, back to the Parmenidean understanding of being, but its other and original root lies in the Socratic quest for the good in the life of the *polis*, and thus for *ἀρετή*, the true virtue, which knows the good and the useful, and acts accordingly. An element of futurity is contained in the notion of the good. In so far as everyone strives for the good and the useful, as is said in the *Gorgias*, it is clear that no one already finds himself in its possession; rather, he hopes to attain unto it. Thus, in the essence of the good, as that which is striven for, there is something future. This is confirmed by the famous Platonic expression in the *Republic* that the good is to be thought of as transcending what exists (*ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας*). Of course, the transcendence of the good is not there based on the fact that striving is a going beyond that which is presently given, but on the transcendence of the cause (the ideas as true being) over that which is caused by it. But causality itself (*αἰτία*) is, for Plato, connected with striving.

Now if we, with Julius Stenzel, understand the Platonic idea as the full form of the goodness and virtue of the things in question, which it "imitatively" strives to attain, then it is clear that the Platonic understanding of the relation of idea and appearance includes, from its Socratic background, a relation to the future. And this is not a relation of visible things to just any sort of future, but to their essential future, to their "good." The idea of the good might then perhaps be understood in a precise sense as the "idea of the ideas," that is, it in sum has as its content that which constitutes every idea as idea. Already the Socrates of the Platonic *Phaedo* could say, not only of the society, but also of the whole cosmos, that "the good and useful is that which connects and holds together" and thus fulfills the *archē's* function of unifying the many.

In Plato's conception of the idea, of course, the Socratic motif of the good clashes with the Parmenidean conception of true being. Since the ideas are understood in the Eleatic sense as true being, the motif of futurity, which is present in the Socratic striving for the good, cannot lead to a new understanding of being. It is only as presently at hand that the Platonic ideas form that world of true being behind the real world which has so often been a source of reproach against Platonism. And it is with this world behind the real world that the notorious difficulties are introduced into the question of how the appearances can then participate in the ideas. For the original "ethical" question concerning the good there were no such difficulties: the good as the sought after, essential future was just as much connected to present things as it was different from them. In so far as the good as idea could be viewed in what was present, the arrival of its essential future was therein experienced.

To a certain extent the thought of Aristotle seems in our questions, as in so many others, to be a renaissance of the Socratic mode of thought. In

the Aristotelian connection of *eidos* and *telos*, the Socratic striving for the good (and the futuristic element implied therein) finds a new ontological formulation. The essence of a thing, its *eidos*, is the goal of its movement — at least of its natural, unforced movement. Thus, the yet unattained goal is present in an anticipatory way in the moved as entelechy, and this indwelling of the goal effects the movement toward the goal. For Aristotle, this was explicitly connected with the Socratic question about the good: “According to our doctrine, then,” he says in the first book of the *Physics*, “there is, on the one side, something divine, good, desirable; on the other side, the opposite (privation, formlessness); and in between, something which by nature strives for the good.”

The futurism of this Aristotelian analysis of movement is neutralized, however, by two notions. The first is the notion of self-movement, already conceived of by the later Plato. According to this doctrine the entelechy is not the anticipation of the *not yet* attained goal, but is the already present (*vorhanden*) germ, out of which the goal unfolds itself. This inner teleology, which reverses the relation of present and future, has robbed evolutionary thought until our day of the possibility of seeing what is new in each event as something really new. Even more decisive for Aristotle himself is the notion expressed in his *Metaphysics* that the goal of the movement, in order to be able to cause the movement, must already be somewhere. But if the movement brings forth nothing except what is already actual somewhere else, then nothing new can arise. Also, for Aristotle the realm of forms is timeless, i. e., unlimited presence. Thus, in Aristotle the Eleatic understanding of being prevailed once again. From this followed the Aristotelian downgrading of individual and contingent entities, which were not seen as coming from the future, but only negatively as non-essential. The Christian Aristotelianism of the Middle Ages saw itself driven to a re-evaluation here, since the Christian doctrine of creation ascribes to God the bringing forth of something new. Here the contingency of the occurrence was positively understood as expressive of the freedom of the Creator. But the coherence of contingency with an ontological priority of the future was not reflected upon even here, so that in the Christian scholastics the Aristotelian metaphysics of form remained as an unrecognized and unconquered alien element.

Modern philosophy has dissolved the Aristotelian metaphysics of substantial forms, and dissolved it, indeed, into appearance. However, since the primary qualities (the spatial body) as well as the secondary qualities of sense perception, and finally (in Kant) the substance itself, disappeared into a general relativity, that which appears “receded” from the horizon of modern philosophy. Philosophy no longer succeeded in thinking of what appears independently of the way in which it appears. So only human experience, as the place of the appearing itself, remained to determine the content of what appears. When this is rightly reflected upon, the origin of appearance can no longer be specified as a presently existing being. But this did not lead to thinking of appearance in its contingency as the happening of that which is

future (*des Zukünftigen*). Instead, Kant construed the appearing content to be conditioned through the forms of our faculty of knowledge. In their synthetic nature, these forms portray constructions of the productive power of imagination, which finds in experience what is not really present to be perceived in the sensibly given, yet characterizes what appears in the sensibly given. Thus, the productive imagination goes beyond what is primarily given in experience. But in thus going beyond, where does it go? If we raise this question in view of the way that modern subjectivity is related to its world in general, which is, among other things, represented by Kant's productive imagination, is it not then to be said, that the subjectivity goes beyond the given and alters it, in that it makes *itself* into the future of its world, be it through technology or by the constructions of the imagination? Do we not then have to understand the synthetic constructions of the productive imagination (if we set aside Kant's hypothesis of an unchanging structure of human experience) as *anticipations* of the essential future of what is given in appearance? Is it not only with this presupposition that we can possibly understand the miracle of the correspondence to objective reality and of the realizability of spontaneous human constructions? Inversely, if appearance were to be understood as something that happens out of the essential future of that which appears, then its interpretation with reference to *that which appears* would only be possible by an anticipation of the future, as this anticipation characterizes the creative subjectivity of the imagination. (It may be mentioned in passing that such anticipation remains in itself ambiguous, because it can misrepresent the essential future of the appearing reality as well as grasp it.

IV

I must now interrupt this line of thought in the midst of such open questions and summarize. In the section above we have dealt with the question of whether the appearing reality is to be understood more as the appearance of something that always is or as the arrival of what is future. Both ways have their religio-historical backgrounds: the one coming from myth's orientation to primal time and the archetypical, the other from being grasped by an eschatological future. The first way is a well-beaten path and has been impressed on all our familiar habits of thought. The second way has until now been hardly considered. And yet, the beginnings of it are shown even in classical statements of the traditional understanding of being. There is much to be said in favor of orienting philosophical thinking to that which always is. Above all, one may point to the possibility of forming general concepts and of making general structural statements that can be applied to the most diverse individuals and to changing situations. And yet, against this view is the truth that such a position, which sees what appears in the appearance only as a timeless universal, will inevitably underestimate or totally fail to recognize the importance for our experience of reality of the con-

tingently new, of the individual, and of time. Accordingly, it seems more appropriate to consider the universal as a human construction, which indeed proves itself useful by its ability to grasp a reality that is probably of quite another character, since it is conditioned by contingency and time.

The real basis of the universality of the abstractions we construct is perhaps to be sought in *repetition*, which plays such a large role in all events. Innumerable new events "repeat" earlier ones, although they always bring forth something new. The element of change remains unobservable in the overwhelming majority of events; thus, from a sufficiently broad perspective, one can speak of a repetition of *the same* structures in an indefinite multiplicity of events. And from this can arise the conception of that which is ever the same, of the eternal presence of the *eidōs*. This interpretation is particularly suggestive because man, by means of such constructions, asserts himself over against the unfathomable number of contingent events. Is not man seeking an absolute confirmation of himself in the apotheosis of what always is? But, in reality, do not men succeed in producing such constructions, which must be made ever anew, only by exposing themselves to the uncertainty that lies in the contingent experience of reality and in the contingency even of one's own constructing? Must not man endure this lack of security, since he himself does not yet live in the final future, but rather is ever again surprised by what comes upon him from the future? Eternal presence could be the experience only of what is itself the final future.

Perhaps even the phenomenon of repetition can be approached in terms of the arrival of what is future: The contingently new becomes present event by taking up into itself, or by repeating, the existing situation, in so far as it is not able to transform it into a new synthesis. This is the basic idea of Alfred North Whitehead's philosophy of nature. The contingency of the event apparently includes an element of faithfulness. As is well known, the first discussion of repetition in connection with the idea of faithfulness was Kierkegaard's treatment of it in the human realm. But perhaps this notion has a wider significance. The arrival of what is future may be thought through to its conclusion only with the idea of repetition (which does not exclude the new), in the sense that in it the future *has* arrived in a *permanent* present.

If we reflect once more upon our theological example, upon the *definitive meaning* of the *appearance* of God's future in Jesus of Nazareth, in which God's *love* is revealed, then perhaps this can be said: The future *wills* to become present; it tends toward its arrival in a permanent present.

This post contains major plot spoilers about Arrival. In one of the final scenes of Arrival, the new first-contact science fiction film with a focus on linguistics, Dr. Louise Banks (Amy Adams)... It's an easy line to overlook, especially as the gravity of the film's second-half surprise sinks in. Throughout the film, Louise is experiencing not her memories of the past, but living out precognitive moments of her own future. She is experiencing time out of order, because her efforts to understand an alien language have irreversibly rewired her brain. The credit for this narrative trick goes to author Ted Chiang, who plotted Arrival back in 2002 as a first-person short story called Story of Your Life. "The Arrival" is the fourth episode of the first season of the American science fiction drama television series Fringe. The episode was written by the series co-creator and executive producer J. J. Abrams and executive producer and show runner Jeff Pinkner. Paul A. Edwards directed it. The episode concerns a mysterious cylindrical object called "The Beacon" which appears at a construction site in New York City. The story also involves the relationship between Walter Bishop (John Noble) and the