
Second Series of Paradoxes of Surface Effects

The Stoics also distinguish between two kinds of things. First, there are bodies with their tensions, physical qualities, actions and passions, and the corresponding “states of affairs.” These states of affairs, actions and passions, are determined by the mixtures of bodies. At the limit, there is a unity of all bodies in virtue of a primordial Fire into which they become absorbed and from which they develop according to their respective tensions. The only time of bodies and states of affairs is the present. For the living present is the temporal extension which accompanies the act, expresses and measures the action of the agent and the passion of the patient. But to the degree that there is a unity of bodies among themselves, to the degree that there is a unity of active and passive principles, a cosmic present embraces the entire universe: only bodies exist in space, and only the present exists in time. There are no causes *and* effects among bodies. Rather, all bodies are causes—causes in relation to each other and for each other. In the scope of the cosmic present, the unity is called Destiny.

Second, all bodies are causes in relation to each other, and causes for each other—but causes of what? They are causes of certain things of an entirely different nature. These *effects* are not bodies, but, properly speaking, “incorporeal” entities. They are not physical qualities and

properties, but rather logical or dialectical attributes. They are not things or facts, but events. We can not say that they exist, but rather that they subsist or inhere (having this minimum of being which is appropriate to that which is not a thing, a nonexisting entity). They are not substantives or adjectives but verbs. They are neither agents nor patients, but results of actions and passions. They are “impassive” entities—impassive results. They are not living presents, but infinitives: the unlimited Aion, the becoming which divides itself infinitely in past and future and always eludes the present. Thus time must be grasped twice, in two complementary though mutually exclusive fashions. First, it must be grasped entirely as the living present in bodies which act and are acted upon. Second, it must be grasped entirely as an entity infinitely divisible into past and future, and into the incorporeal effects which result from bodies, their actions and their passions. Only the present exists in time and gathers together or absorbs the past and future. But only the past and future inhere in time and divide each present infinitely. These are not three successive dimensions, but two simultaneous readings of time.

In his fine reconstruction of Stoic thought, Émile Bréhier says:

when the scalpel cuts through the flesh, the first body produces upon the second not a new property but a new attribute, that of being cut. The *attribute* does not designate any real *quality* . . . , it is, to the contrary, always expressed by the verb, which means that it is not a being, but a way of being. . . . This way of being finds itself somehow at the limit, at the surface of being, the nature of which it is not able to change: it is, in fact, neither active nor passive, for passivity would presuppose a corporeal nature which undergoes an action. It is purely and simply a result, or an effect which is not to be classified among beings. . . . [The Stoics distinguished] radically two planes of being, something that no one had done before them: on the one hand, real and profound being, force; on the other, the plane of facts, which frolic on the surface of being, and constitute an endless multiplicity of incorporeal beings.¹

Yet, what is more intimate or essential to bodies than events such as growing, becoming smaller, or being cut? What do the Stoics mean when they contrast the thickness of bodies with these incorporeal events which would play only on the surface, like a mist over the prairie (even less than a mist, since a mist is after all a body)? Mixtures are in bodies, and in the depth of bodies: a body penetrates another and

coexists with it in all of its parts, like a drop of wine in the ocean, or fire in iron. One body withdraws from another, like liquid from a vase. Mixtures in general determine the quantitative and qualitative states of affairs: the dimensions of an ensemble—the red of iron, the green of a tree. But what we mean by “to grow,” “to diminish,” “to become red,” “to become green,” “to cut,” and “to be cut,” etc., is something entirely different. These are no longer states of affairs—mixtures deep inside bodies—but incorporeal events at the surface which are the results of these mixtures. The tree “greens.” . . .² The genius of a philosophy must first be measured by the new distribution which it imposes on beings and concepts. The Stoics are in the process of tracing out and of forming a frontier where there had not been one before. In this sense they displace all reflection.

They are in the process of bringing about, first, an entirely new cleavage of the causal relation. They dismember this relation, even at the risk of recreating a unity on each side. They refer causes to causes and place a bond of causes between them (destiny). They refer effects to effects and pose certain bonds of effects between them. But these two operations are not accomplished in the same manner. Incorporeal effects are never themselves causes in relation to each other; rather, they are only “quasi-causes” following laws which perhaps express in each case the relative unity or mixture of bodies on which they depend for their real causes. Thus freedom is preserved in two complementary manners: once in the interiority of destiny as a connection between causes, and once more in the exteriority of events as a bond of effects. For this reason the Stoics can oppose destiny and necessity.³ The Epicureans formulated another cleavage of causality, which also grounds freedom. They conserve the homogeneity of cause and effect, but cut up causality according to atomic series whose respective independence is guaranteed by the *clinamen*—no longer destiny without necessity, but causality without destiny.⁴ In either case, one begins by splitting the causal relation, instead of distinguishing types of causality as Aristotle had done and Kant would do. And this split always refers us back to language, either to the existence of a *declension* of causes or, as we shall see, to the existence of a *conjugation* of effects.

This new dualism of bodies or states of affairs and effects or incorporeal events entails an upheaval in philosophy. In Aristotle, for ex-

ample, all categories are said of Being; and difference is present in Being, between substance as the primary sense and the other categories which are related to it as accidents. For the Stoics, on the other hand, states of affairs, quantities, and qualities are no less beings (or bodies) than substance is; they are a part of substance, and in this sense they are contrasted with an *extra-Being* which constitutes the incorporeal as a nonexisting entity. The highest term therefore is not Being, but *Something (aliquid)*, insofar as it subsumes being and non-being, existence and inherence.⁵ Moreover, the Stoics are the first to reverse Platonism and to bring about a radical inversion. For if bodies with their states, qualities, and quantities, assume all the characteristics of substance and cause, conversely, the characteristics of the Idea are relegated to the other side, that is to this impassive extra-Being which is sterile, inefficacious, and on the surface of things: *the ideational or the incorporeal can no longer be anything other than an “effect.”*

These consequences are extremely important. In Plato, an obscure debate was raging in the depth of things, in the depth of the earth, between that which undergoes the action of the Idea and that which eludes this action (copies and simulacra). An echo of this debate resonates when Socrates asks: is there an Idea of everything, even of hair, dirt, and mud—or rather is there something which always and obstinately escapes the Idea? In Plato, however, this something is never sufficiently hidden, driven back, pushed deeply into the depth of the body, or drowned in the ocean. *Everything now returns to the surface.* This is the result of the Stoic operation: the unlimited returns. Becoming-mad, becoming unlimited is no longer a ground which rumbles. It climbs to the surface of things and becomes impassive. It is no longer a question of simulacra which elude the ground and insinuate themselves everywhere, but rather a question of effects which manifest themselves and act in their place. These are effects in the causal sense, but also sonorous, optical, or linguistic “effects”—and even less, or much more, since they are no longer corporeal entities, but rather form the entire Idea. What was eluding the Idea climbed up to the surface, that is, the incorporeal limit, and represents now all possible *ideality*; the latter being stripped of its causal and spiritual efficacy. The Stoics discovered surface effects. Simulacra cease to be subterranean rebels and make the most of their effects (that is, what might be called “phantasms,”

independently of the Stoic terminology). The most concealed becomes the most manifest. All the old paradoxes of becoming must again take shape in a new youthfulness—transmutation.

Becoming unlimited comes to be the ideational and incorporeal event, with all of its characteristic reversals between future and past, active and passive, cause and effect, more and less, too much and not enough, already and not yet. The infinitely divisible event is always *both at once*. It is eternally that which has just happened and that which is about to happen, but never that which is happening (to cut too deeply and not enough). The event, being itself impassive, allows the active and the passive to be interchanged more easily, since it is *neither the one nor the other*, but rather their common result (to cut—to be cut). Concerning the cause and the effect, events, *being always only effects*, are better able to form among themselves functions of quasi-causes or relations of quasi-causality which are always reversible (the wound and the scar).

The Stoics are amateurs and inventors of paradoxes. It is necessary to reread the astonishing portrait of Chrysippus given in several pages written by Diogenes Laertius. Perhaps the Stoics used the paradox in a completely new manner—both as an instrument for the analysis of language and as a means of synthesizing events. *Dialectics* is precisely this science of incorporeal events as they are expressed in propositions, and of the connections between events as they are expressed in relations between propositions. Dialectics is, indeed, the art of *conjugation* (see the *confatalia* or series of events which depend on one another). But it is the task of language both to establish limits and to go beyond them. Therefore language includes terms which do not cease to displace their extension and which make possible a reversal of the connection in a given series (thus too much and not enough, few and many). The event is coextensive with becoming, and becoming is itself coextensive with language; the paradox is thus essentially a “sorites,” that is a series of interrogative propositions which, following becoming, proceed through successive additions and retrenchments. Everything happens at the boundary between things and propositions. Chrysippus taught: “If you say something, it passes through your lips; so, if you say “chariot,” a chariot passes through your lips.” Here is a use of paradox the only equivalents of which are to be found in Zen Buddhism on one hand and in English or American *nonsense* on the other. In one case, that which is

most profound is the immediate, in the other, the immediate is found in language. Paradox appears as a dismissal of depth, a display of events at the surface, and a deployment of language along this limit. Humor is the art of the surface, which is opposed to the old irony, the art of depths and heights. The Sophists and Cynics had already made humor a philosophical weapon against Socratic irony; but with the Stoics, humor found its dialectics, its dialectical principle or its natural place and its pure philosophical concept.

Lewis Carroll carries out this operation, inaugurated by the Stoics, or rather, he takes it up again. In all his works, Carroll examines the difference between events, things, and states of affairs. But the entire first half of *Alice* still seeks the secret of events and of the becoming unlimited which they imply, in the depths of the earth, in dug out shafts and holes which plunge beneath, and in the mixture of bodies which interpenetrate and coexist. As one advances in the story, however, the digging and hiding gives way to a lateral sliding from right to left and left to right. The animals below ground become secondary, giving way to *card figures* which have no thickness. One could say that the old depth having been spread out became width. The becoming unlimited is maintained entirely within this inverted width. “Depth” is no longer a complement. Only animals are deep, and they are not the noblest for that; the noblest are the flat animals. Events are like crystals, they become and grow only out of the edges, or on the edge. This is, indeed, the first secret of the stammerer or of the left-handed person: no longer to sink, but to slide the whole length in such a way that the old depth no longer exists at all, having been reduced to the opposite side of the surface. By sliding, one passes to the other side, since the other side is nothing but the opposite direction. If there is nothing to see behind the curtain, it is because everything is visible, or rather all possible science is along the length of the curtain. It suffices to follow it far enough, precisely enough, and superficially enough, in order to reverse sides and to make the right side become the left or vice versa. It is not therefore a question of *the adventures* of Alice, but of Alice’s *adventure*: her climb to the surface, her disavowal of false depth and her discovery that everything happens at the border. This is why Carroll abandons the original title of the book: *Alice’s Adventures Underground*.

This is the case—even more so—in *Through the Looking-Glass*. Here events, differing radically from things, are no longer sought in the

depths, but at the surface, in the faint incorporeal mist which escapes from bodies, a film without volume which envelops them, a mirror which reflects them, a chessboard on which they are organized according to plan. Alice is no longer able to make her way through to the depths. Instead, she releases her incorporeal double. *It is by following the border, by skirting the surface, that one passes from bodies to the incorporeal.* Paul Valéry had a profound idea: what is most deep is the skin. This is a Stoic discovery, which presupposes a great deal of wisdom and entails an entire ethic. It is the discovery of the little girl, who grows and diminishes only from the edges—a surface which reddens and becomes green. She knows that the more the events traverse the entire, depthless extension, the more they affect bodies which they cut and bruise. Later, the adults are snapped up by the ground, fall again, and, being too deep, they no longer understand. Why do the same Stoic examples continue to inspire Lewis Carroll?—the tree greens, the scalpel cuts, the battle will or will not take place. . . . It is in front of the trees that Alice loses her name. It is a tree which Humpty Dumpty addresses without looking at Alice. Recitations announce battles, and everywhere there are injuries and cuts. But are these examples? Or rather, is it the case that every event is of this type—forest, battle and wound—all the more profound since *it* occurs at the surface? The more it skirts bodies, the more incorporeal it is. History teaches us that sound roads have no foundation, and geography that only a thin layer of the earth is fertile.

This rediscovery of the Stoic sage is not reserved to the little girl. Indeed, it is true that Lewis Carroll detests boys in general. They have too much depth, and false depth at that, false wisdom, and animality. The male baby in *Alice* is transformed into a pig. As a general rule, only little girls understand Stoicism; they have the sense of the event and release an incorporeal double. But it happens sometimes that a little boy is a stutterer and left-handed, and thus conquers sense as the double sense or direction of the surface. Carroll's hatred of boys is not attributable to a deep ambivalence, but rather to a superficial inversion, a properly Carrollian concept. In *Sylvie and Bruno*, it is the little boy who has the inventive role, learning his lessons in all manners, inside-out, outside-in, above and below, but never "in depth." This important novel pushes to the extreme the evolution which had begun in *Alice*, and which continued in *Through the Looking-Glass*. The admirable conclu-

sion of the first part is to the glory of the East, from which comes all that is good, "the substance of things hoped for, and the existence of things not seen." Here even the barometer neither rises nor falls, but goes lengthwise, sideways, and gives a horizontal weather. A stretching machine even lengthens songs. And Fortunatus' purse, presented as a Möbius strip, is made of handkerchiefs sewn *in the wrong way*, in such a manner that its outer surface is continuous with its inner surface: it envelops the entire world, and makes that which is inside be on the outside and vice versa.⁶ In *Sylvie and Bruno*, the technique of passing from reality to dream, and from bodies to the incorporeal, is multiplied, completely renewed, and carried out to perfection. It is, however, still by skirting the surface, or the border, that one passes to the other side, by virtue of the strip. The continuity between reverse and right side replaces all the levels of depth; and the surface effects in one and the same Event, which would hold for all events, bring to language becoming and its paradoxes.⁷ As Carroll says in an article entitled *The Dynamics of a Parti-cle*: "Plain Superficiality is the character of a speech. . . ."