

# What Was It Like to Be Caesar Crossing Rubicon 49 B.C.?

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The mind-body problem receives new attention, partly under the inspiration from the success of quantum mechanics. Here I will discuss reductionism. The mind-body problem remains central to modern philosophy, no doubt stimulated by the progress in brain research. Following Thomas Nagel's article on bats, one may similarly examine one of history's champions. I will also deny reduction or physicalism, though my argument is very much simpler than Chalmers (1996).

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## Introduction

Otto Neurath spread the theory of the *unity* of science during the hey days of logical positivism. It entailed a drastic reduction of mental acts to brain or outer behaviour. Philosopher Dennett (1991) ridiculed the "Cartesian theatre", suggesting some like form of reduction. On the other hand, Chalmers devoted much effort to clarifying what reduction of mental states amounts to. He finds that "phenomenological consciousness" can NOT be completely reduced to "psychological consciousness", i.e. the brain. Although his wording is confusing, he definitely rejects Bennett and his biological conclusions.

Yet, Chalmers seems contradictory: on the one hand, he rejects physicalism and materialism in favour of some weak dualism; On the other hand, he finds that any form of experience has consciousness, even a laptop or a simple heater.

This is not the place to debate the research program of finding the brain correlates to consciousness or awareness whether simple or complex. Instead I follow Nagel, but restricting me to humans. For example, in history a key question is which mindset did CAESAR have, and not the possible reduction of human plans to neurons.

## The Rubicon Story

What did Julius Caesar think, feel or when crossing this river? We know his outer behaviour from his own writing but how we account for his motives.

In the humanities and social sciences, Caesar during January 49 B.C. would be understood as driven by means and ends. We can only speculate about them, viz suggest which goal function is most probable given what else we know. What matters crucially is his consciousness or intentions. But we can only make hypotheses about his inner behaviour or subjective state.

According to historians Suetonius and Plutarcus, Caesar hesitated and felt anxious when crossing RUBICON around 11 January. Yet he was determined not to give into the Senate demands, thus releasing the

civil war—“the dice has been cast”. In Caesar’s writing, there is nothing that supports this hypothesis.

In his book *The Civil War*, Caesar speaks about two things:

- (1) Discussion with Roman senate and allies in Rome;
- (2) Preparations for the coming standoff with Pompejus.

It is rather clear that (1) is only a play of words in a zero sum conflict as well as that (2) is where the real action unfolds. How do we understand or explain the crossing of Rubicon? His inner behaviour or the meaning or intention—Weber (2012) called it “*SINN*”.

### **Sinn: Means and Ends 49 B.C.**

The key to unlocking the RUBICON event lies in Caesar’s mind-set that Weber would analyse as means-end intention. Here we follow his idea of IDEAL-TYPES. Caesar is the closest one that can get to the *homo politicus modeling* of a rationality:

#### **Homo Politicus Model**

1. End: power, authority;
2. Means: military, wealth, friends;
3. Correct experience of the situation.

Caesar wanted the dictatorship that Sulla had had. He had an army from the annexation of Gaul, which also provided immense wealth, selling peoples or tribes into slavery. Moreover, he could afford to bribe senators, if needed. He made one mistake, namely trusting his “friends”—“*et tu Brutus*”.

The point here is the reference to Caesar’s mind. We are talking about his goals, his experiences, his expectations. Though we may one day have located goals, experiences, and expectations in the brain, it is just not what understanding the RUBICON crossing is about. No need for a Cartesian theatre, no need for reduction of intention to neurons—Chalmers said that it is a question of *logical* reduction from phenomenal consciousness to brain—never logical. Intention is subjective or personal, impossible to *deduce* from neurons.

### **Rational Means-End Intention**

Weber’s theory of the subjective side of human conduct implies that intention be analysed as means-end phenomena. As an ideal-type real phenomena are closer or distant from the rational means-end model: clear goals, correct estimation of the probabilities that means further the realization of end.

This model may also be used when human behaviour falls short of rationality, especially *mistakes* in ends or means. The German catastrophe in the World War II was due to too many goals pursued and insufficient means. Thus, when preparing the invasion of Soviet Union, Hitler allowed *Wehrmacht* to be drawn into the Balkans and Northern Africa. The mistakes in human action are often due to goals confusion or wrong idea about the conditions for failure or bad outcomes. The means-end framework suits human action well in Parsons’ evaluation from 1937. A reduction of Chalmer’s type is not relevant even if possible.

### **Mind-Sets Are Contingent Facts**

A rational means-end intention is ontologically speaking subjective, but one cannot rely upon “*Verstehen*” or “*einfielung*”. Weber emphasized that statements about inner behaviour must be corroborated by evidence from outer behaviour, like letters, sequences of outer behaviour, or own sayings. Statements about inner behaviour are

in principle falsifiable, though not always in practice.

The historian or social scientist often has to construct the intention with diverse evidence. He or she must avoid the circle: why cross RUBICON? Because Caesar wanted that. How do you know? He did so.

The rational means-end model captures a mindset that is not culture bound. The stunning three victories of Alexander the Great, like the war behaviour of Churchill or Bismarck's success can be mentioned. When one is confronted by abnormal behaviour, one may refer to mental instability like Stalin and Putin.

One finds countless examples in human history of dismal outcomes being due to an impractical goal or hubris as well as wrong means. Examples: Louis xiv, Charles xii, Napoleon, Mussolini, etc. Ambition and information explain much of behaviour. They are complex functions in the brain, dependent upon neurons but not reducible to them empirically or logically.

### Conclusion

The social sciences and history seek an answer to the question "What is it like to be a person" of "What Was it like to be persons". This analysis will not stop at outer behaviour or outcomes, but will include so-called mind phenomena.

Weber emphasized that the social sciences and history focused on the meaning of behaviour, analyzed as means-end reason. It can not be reduced to physical or biological properties. I wish to state the following proposition:

I believe that Caesar in January 49 B.C. was driven by a rational means-end intention.

This proposition is true about my mind even in case of a false belief about Caesar. I was led to it by my brain *inter alia*. It is subjective but can be verified or made probable.

Plans of means-end type play a major role in human conduct. They are mental constructs, but often comprising mistakes. Even if there is one—to one correspondence between mental act and the brain, it is irrelevant and transaction costs too heavy to enquire.

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