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ON OCCURRENCES OF 'CAESAR' IN SOME OF WHITEHEAD' S TEXTS

ANTON ADĂMUŢ

'Alexandru Ioan Cuza' University of Iaşi

Abstract: It is something absolutely natural that in Whitehead's philosophical and essayistic works one meets names like: Plato, Locke, Descartes, Hume or Kant. It is equally natural that in *Principia Mathematica* the onomastics are of a completely different nature. This is how it happens that here we will meet names like Nicod, Zermelo, Peano, Cantor, Dedekind or Frege. Names as appropriate as possible with the content of the works. On the other hand, one cannot help but wonder why in the philosophical and essay-like works you find the occurrence of 'Caesar' no less than 37 times. We intend to discuss the presence of this occurrence in some of Whitehead's works in the following text.

Keywords: Whitehead, Caesar, Rubicon, sentence, ambiguity, truth.

1. VERY SHORT INTRODUCTION

A surprise in Whitehead is the relatively frequent occurrence of 'Caesar.' Its occurrence cannot be found in the properly scientific texts (*A Treatise on Universal Algebra*, *Principia Mathematica*, *Introduction to Mathematics*, *The Principle of Relativity*), nor does it appear in *Religion in the Making*. But it can be found in the rest of Whitehead's philosophical and essayistic texts (*The Concept of Nature*, *Science and the Modern World*, *Symbolism*, *Modes of Thought*, *Process and Reality*, *Adventures of Ideas*, *Essays in Science and Philosophy*). I want to dwell in the present text on this occurrence, in its various variants, and trace how it is used in the places where it occurs, and I state that, if I have counted correctly, it occurs at least 37 times. I may also mention that I will keep to the chronological order in which the expression 'Caesar' appeared over time in Whitehead's texts.

2. ABOUT SPACE AND EVENT: POMPEY VS. CAESAR

In *The Concept of Nature* (Chapter II: 'Theories of the Bifurcation of Nature'), Whitehead speaks of points, relationships and how they make it possible to understand space. Says the philosopher, using an example: 'What happens in space, occupies space. This relation of occupation is not usually stated for events but for objects. For example, Pompey's statue would be said to occupy space, but not the event which was the assassination of Julius Caesar. In this I think that ordinary usage is unfortunate, and I hold that the relations of

events to space and to time are in all respects analogous […]. Thus the theory of absolute space requires that we are aware of two fundamental relations, the space-ordering relation, which holds between points, and the space-occupation relation between points of space and material objects'[1]. Perhaps the example is not entirely random; the irony is that Caesar collapsed at the feet of the statue of Pompey, former friend and rival; the information appears only in Plutarch: 'Therefore Brutus himself gave him a stroke in the groin. Some say he opposed the rest, and continued struggling and crying out till he perceived the sword of Brutus; then he drew his robe over his face and yielded to his fate. Either by accident, or pushed thither by the conspirators, he expired on the pedestal of Pompey's statue, and dyed it with his blood: so that Pompey seemed to preside over the work of vengeance, to tread his enemy under his feet, and to enjoy his agonies. Those agonies were great, for he received no less than twenty-three wounds'[2]. On the other hand we have the testimony of Suetonius: 'As he took his seat, the conspirators gathered around him as if to pay their respects, and straightway Tullius Cimber, who had assumed the lead, came nearer as though to ask something. When Caesar with a gesture put him off to another time, Cimber caught his toga by both shoulders. As Caesar cried, "Why, this is violence!" one of the Casca stabbed him from one side just below the throat. Caesar caught Casca's arm and ran it through with his stylus, but as he tried to leap to his feet, he was stopped by another wound. When he saw that he was beset on every side by drawn daggers, he muffled his head in his robe, and at the same time drew down its lap to his feet with his left hand, in order to fall more decently, with the lower part of his body also covered. And in this wise he was stabbed with twenty-three wounds, uttering not a word, but merely a groan at the first stroke, though some have written that when Marcus Brutus rushed at him, he said in Greek, "You too, my child ?" (καισυτεκνον – *Kai su, teknon* ?/*Et tu, Brute* – A. A.). All the conspirators made off, and he lay there lifeless for some time, until finally three common slaves put him on a litter and carried him home, with one arm hanging down. And of so many wounds none, in the opinion of the physician Antistius, would have proved mortal except the second one in the breast'.[3] This would be, in chronological order, the first reference that Whitehead makes regarding the occurrence of 'Caesar'.

3. 'A STRANGE BOOK'

Caesar is mentioned twice by Whitehead in *Science and the Modern World* towards the end of the book, in Chapter XIII ('Requisites for Social Progress'). Here is the place: 'The moral of the tale is the power of reason, its

[1] Alfred North Whitehead, *The Concept of Nature*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1920, p. 36.

[2] Plutarch's *Lives*. Edited, with Introduction and Notes by Edward S. Ellis, Philadelphia, The Penn Publishing Company, 1900, p. 181.

[3] Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. An unexpurgated English version. Edited with Notes and an Introduction by Joseph Cavorse, New York, Random House, 1931, pp. 46-47.

decisive influence on the life of humanity. The great conquerors, from Alexander to Caesar, and from Caesar to Napoleon, influenced profoundly the lives of subsequent generations. But the total effect of this influence shrinks to insignificance, if compared to the entire transformation of human habits and human mentality produced by the long line of men of thought from Thales to the present day, men individually powerless, but ultimately the rulers of the world'.[4] Isabelle Stengers says of *Science and the Modern World* that it is 'a strange book'[5], and quotes in full the paragraph with Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon from page 292 of Whitehead, and concludes: 'The meaning of that "rule" that the long line of thinkers, from Thales to Whitehead, has impressed upon the world, also depends on this process. In the present case, if Alexander, Caesar, and Napoleon were victors over identifiable enemies, strength against strength, it was the highly unheroic victory of persuasion over strength that the adventure of Whiteheadian ideas was to describe in 1933. Here, the power of ideas must be said to be suggestion rather than truth, for, like what we call suggestion, it travels along roads that do not have much to do with deduction, reasoning, logical necessity, or the principle of reality. What was originally an extravagant ideal, transported by a visionary thought, by an individual bereft of social or political power, became a "habit" or "routine", stabilized by institutions, laws, and professional regulations. If ideals are victorious, then, it is without glory or glamour, by all the practices that are indeed invented by men but that also fashion them in return, creating the social environment from which new risks, new experimentations with ideas become possible'.[6] All in all, 'With *Science and the Modern World*, the reader will be exposed to difficulties that are not presented by *The Concept of Nature*. First of all, there is the difficulty of grasping the very subject of this book'.[7]

4. "THE EDUCATION OF AN ENGLISHMAN"

The occurrence of 'Caesar' is mentioned three more times in "The Education of an Englishman," a text that first appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly*[8]. The text "The Education of an Englishman" is summarized by Whitehead in *Essays in Science and Philosophy* and tells us the following: 'We were taught a

[4] Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World. Lowell Lectures, 1925*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1925, p. 292.

[5] Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead. A Free and Wild Creation of Concepts*. Translated by Michael Chase. Foreword by Bruno Latour, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, Harvard University Press, 2011, p. 114.

[6] *Ibidem*, p. 115.

[7] *Ibidem*, p. 114.

[8] *Atlantic Monthly. A Magazine of Literature, Art and Politics*, Volume 138 (July-December, 1926), pp. 192-198. The quote above can be found at p. 195.

good deal of history, very thoroughly so far as it went. But it was characteristically limited according to the prejudices shared equally by the Liberal schoolmasters, the Tory parents, and their children who were the scholars. Our reading was closely limited to those periods of history which, if we might trust our national pride, were closely analogous to our own. We did not want to explain the origin of anything. We wanted to read about people like ourselves, and to imbibe their ideals. When the Bible said, "All these things happened unto them for ensamples"[9], we did not need a higher critic to tell us what was meant or how it came to be written. It was just how we felt. For example, in Roman history we stopped short at the death of Julius Caesar. Freedom was over then. A gentleman could no longer say what he liked in the House of Lords or in the House of Commons – that is to say, in the Roman Senate or to the citizens in the Forum. Strictly speaking, we ought to have stopped when Caesar crossed the Rubicon; but human nature is always illogical, and we – that is to say, masters and scholars – were urged on by curiosity to see how it ended, and also by secret sympathy with Caesar, who was very like a great English landed magnate of cultivated mind and of sporting tastes, contesting his county parliamentary constituency, with a good chance of being unseated for bribery and corruption. Pompey was unpopular; he lacked the West Country touch. Cicero needed no explanation – he was the Roman substitute for a Lord Chancellor'.[10] The episode is also mentioned by Victor Lowe in *Alfred North Whitehead. The Man and His Work* (Chapter IV: "Sherborne," Section 3: "Whitehead's studies at Sherborne"). The classic text, or textbook, which governed the studies of young people in Whitehead's time was *A Practical Handbook to the Principal Schools of England* edited by C. E. Pascoe and published in 1877. It emphasized the English language, Greek and Latin language and literature, mathematics and physics with all their branches, modern geography and modern history, the French and German languages, music and physical education. And Lowe refers to Whitehead's text, "The Education of an Englishman" where Whitehead writes that he did not want to explain the origin of something in particular, but only to read about the people themselves and to 'imbibe' with their ideals. And Whitehead exemplifies from Roman history the death of Julius Caesar[11].

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[9] The verse is from *1 Corinthians* 10, 11: 'Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come'/*Haec autem omnia in figura contingebant illis: scripta sunt autem ad correptionem nostram, in quos fines saeculorum devenerunt.*

[10] Alfred North Whitehead, *Essays in Science and Philosophy*, London, Rider and Company, 1948, p. 29.

[11] Victor Lowe, *Alfred North Whitehead. The Man and His Work*. Volume I (1861–1910), Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985, pp. 51-53. See also "The Education of an Englishman" in *Essays in Science and Philosophy*, p. 20: 'We did not want to explain the origin of anything. We wanted to read about people like ourselves, and to imbibe their ideals.'

5. THREE DIFFERENT MEANINGS FOR THE NOTION OF MAN: 'CAESAR' GIVEN AS AN EXAMPLE

Chapter 1 of *Symbolism. Its Meaning and Effect* is entitled "Kinds of Symbolism." The occurrence of 'Caesar' is present seven times and the interpretation begins to resemble an early kind of philosophy of language as we will encounter it in *Process and Reality*. And I say this because in the first chapter he speaks of symbolism and perception, of fallibility of symbolism, of language and objectification, and in this section the text with the repeatedly invoked occurrences is included. I present the text in detail: 'With this conception of the world, in speaking of any actual individual, such as a human being, we must mean that man in one occasion of his experience. Such an occasion, or act, is complex and therefore capable of analysis into phases and other components. It is the most concrete actual entity, and the life of man from birth to death is a historic route of such occasions. These concrete moments are bound together into one society by a partial identity of form, and by the peculiarly full summation of its predecessors which each moment of the life-history gathers into itself. The man-at-one-moment concentrates in himself the colour of his own past, and he is the issue of it. The "man in his whole life history" is an abstraction compared to the "man in one such moment". There are therefore three different meanings for the notion of a particular man, – Julius Caesar, for example. The word "Caesar" may mean "Caesar in some one occasion of his existence": this is the most concrete of all the meanings. The word "Caesar" may mean "the historic route of Caesar's life from his Caesarian birth to his Caesarian assassination". The word "Ceasar" may mean "the common form, or pattern, repeated in each occasion of Ceasar's life". You may legitimately choose any one of these meanings; but when you have made your choice, you must in that context stick to it'.[12] We now know what the three meanings of the notion of man are exemplified by the case of Caesar. Let us therefore enter into the process and particularize it by a reality. The reality is: 'Caesar has crossed the Rubicon'!

6. ALEA IACTA EST: CAESAR AND THE CROSSING OF THE RUBICON

On January 10, 49 BC Julius Caesar utters the famous *alea iacta est* before crossing the small river that separated Cisalpine Gaul from Italy, and thus begins the civil war between the *Populares* (Caesar's supporters) and the *Optimates* (the Senate and the aristocrats who were on Pompey's side). There was, as a matter of fact, a law of the Senate by virtue of which no general returning from war, from Gaul or Spain for example, was, under any reason,

[12] Alfred North Whitehead, *Symbolism. Its Meaning and Effect*. *Barbour-Page Lectures.University of Virginia 1927***,** New York, The Macmillan Company, 1927, pp. 27-28.

allowed to cross the Rubicon at the head of troops under arms[13]; Caesar violated this law. By law, crossing the Rubicon with the army implicitly meant the start of civil war. A few etymological clarifications are necessary to better understand the context. The feminine noun *alea, aleae* denotes 'a game of hazard or chance with dice. This game was anciently forbidden at Roma (at least when played for money), except on the Saturnalia: hence, *lex de alea*. *Jacere aleam*, to cast the die, i.e., to begin this game. *Jacta alea esto*', so that it is suggested that the imperative would be *esto* not *est*[14], and it would read: 'let the dice be rolled'. Suetonius and Plutarch give us the information. Here is the place from Plutarch: 'When he arrived at the banks of the Rubicon, the river which divides Cisalpine Gaul from the rest of Italy, his reflections became more interesting in proportion as the danger drew near. Staggered by the greatness of his attempt, he stopped to weigh with himself its inconveniences, and, as he stood considering the arguments on both sides, he many times changed his opinion. After which he deliberated upon it with such of his friends as were by, enumerating the calamities which the passage of that river would bring upon the world, and the reflections that might be made by posterity upon it. At last, upon some sudden impulse, bidding adieu to his reasonings, and plunging into the abyss of futurity, in the words of those who embark in doubtful and arduous enterprises, he cried out, "The die is cast!" (*Alea iacta est*! – A. A.), and immediately passed the Rubicon'.[15] Suetonius completes it: 'As he stood in doubt, this sign was given him. On a sudden there appeared hard by a being of wondrous stature and beauty, who sat and played upon a reed. And when not only the shepherds flocked to hear him, but many of the soldiers left their posts, and among them some of the trumpeters, the apparition snatched a trumpet from one of them, rushed to the river, and sounding the war note with mighty blast, strode to the opposite bank. Then Caesar cried: "Take we the course which the signs of the Gods and the false dealing of our foes point out. The die is cast", said he'.[16]

[13] See Joseph Cavorse, note 2, p. 20, in Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*. Isabelle Stengers comments: 'During his multiple expeditions to many lands, Caesar had the opportunity to cross many rivers, but we remember that "Caesar crossed the Rubicon" and if we remember this, it is because when he and his soldiers, fully armed, crossed this river (which no Roman army could cross on pain of being declared outlaws), they knew they were crossing "the Rubicon": not a mere river, but a frontier/image that made them topple into an unforeseeable future. This is why the Rubicon was "what had been crossed" for all the soldiers, right from the first step taken by Caesar's horse.' And more: 'Julius Caesar knew that crossing the Rubicon had nothing to do with "crossing a river." The Rubicon had its own importance at the time of the Roman Republic, and was the object of explicit utterances. The decision to cross it was thus inseparable from an utterance. Julius brought an exclamation into existence – "Caesar crossed the Rubicon!" – in order for it to fashion Caesar's destiny, for better or worse.' See Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, pp. 416, 441.

[14] *A Complete Latin-English Dictionary*. For the use of Colleges and Schools. Translation from German by J. E. Riddle. Fourth Edition. London, Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1844, p. 31.

[15] Plutarch's *Lives*, p. 177.

[16] Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, p. 20.

7. WHITEHEAD: 'THE LIMITATIONS OF COMMON SPEECH'

The American philosopher and theologian Donald Crosby was influenced by Whitehead, among others. In one of his texts[17] he starts from what can be called Whitehead's view on 'the limitations of common speech'. Crosby finds four such limitations in Whitehead. Thus:

– the symbols we use are as concrete as possible, while the symbolized meanings are vague (and this is exemplified by Caesar and the Rubicon)[18];

– language has developed as a pragmatic tool for adapting to the environment, eluding elements of experience that define human existence. That is, we are no longer in the present what we were in the past, yet without losing our identity[19];

– the forms of language – words and sentences – taken separately seem unable to explain the interconnection between things, therefore we have reality but not the process, we have facts not interpretations[20];

– finally, the worst limitation of language is that we experience more and think less, which is the same as saying that we think more than we can express clearly[21].

I am particularly interested in the following excerpt: 'Whitehead connects this point with his theory of propositions by insisting upon the particularity of propositions as compared with the generality of verbal statements. Propositions do not have the particularity of feelings; a given proposition can be "felt" in a variety of ways. Then too, there are degrees of generality among propositions. Still, because a proposition refers to indicated logical subjects, it is much more particular in its character than verbal statements be (PR 282-283, 395). A verbal statement such as "Caesar has crossed the Rubicon" can apply equally well to a surprising number of particular propositions. Just which proposition or propositions the general verbal statement shall elicit for its user depends on the kind of direct perceptive knowledge he happens to have. (PR 297-299). Thus it is entirely futile to argue about *the* meaning of any given verbal statement, as though it could be assumed to admit of only a single meaning, and "merely credulous to accept verbal phrases as adequate statements of propositions. The distinction between verbal phrases and complete propositions one of the reasons why the logicians' rigid alternative, 'true or false', is so largely irrelevant for the pursuit of knowledge" (PR 17)'[22].

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[17] Donald A. Crosby, "Language and Religious Language in Whitehead's Philosophy", in *The Christian Scholar*, FALL, 1967, Vol. 50, No. 3, A Review of Some Current Issues in Process Theology (FALL, 1967), Published by: Penn State University Press, pp. 210-221.

[18] *Ibidem*, pp. 210-211.

[19] *Ibidem*, pp. 211-212.

[20] *Ibidem*, p. 212.

[21] *Ibidem*, p. 213.

[22] *Ibidem*, p. 211. In Crosby's parentheses, the PR refers to *Process and Reality* and the numbers refer to the appropriate paragraph in the PR and not the page. Personally, when I refer to PR, I refer to the page number and not the paragraph number.

Another author follows a similar interpretation, namely, Marck Halewood[23]. He rightly argues that Whitehead does not actually construct a theory of language in *Process and Reality*, but there are four points to make about the place and status of language and linguistics in general within Whitehead's writings. These would be the following:

– the two sentences analyzed in *Process and Reality* ('The *man* Socrates is mortal', or 'The *philosopher* Socrates is mortal', these being taken together and, on the other hand, the sentence 'Caesar has crossed the Rubicon') only demonstrate that language is ambiguous and equivocal. Whitehead concludes: 'Nothing could better illustrate the hopeless ambiguity of language since both propositions could fit the same verbal phraseology'[24];

– Whitehead distinguishes between actual language and philosophical sentences like 'Socrates is mortal'. Language is indeterminate, being dependent on the environment, and philosophical propositions do not account for the contingent nature of existence;

– words are different from each other in the way that real events are different, and an event is the manifestation of another event just as words are made of words;

– if, as Whitehead says, 'A word is a symbol,'[25] it remains to be explained what is the role of symbolism, i.e.,: 'why do we say that the word "tree" – spoken or written – is a symbol to us for trees ?'[26] and, from this perspective, 'it would be sensible [...] for trees to symbolize the word "tree" as for the word to symbolize the trees.'[27]

8. 'CAESAR' AND 'CAESAR HAS CROSSED THE RUBICON' IN *PROCESS AND REALITY*

In *Process and Reality* the occurrence of 'Caesar' appears for the first time in Part II: "Discussions and Applications," Chapter: VIII: "Symbolic Reference," Section III. The discussion concerns the connection between causality and perception as it appears in various schools of thought derived from Hume and Kant. The idea does not come only from these two; we already find it, says Whitehead, in Locke and Descartes, who find its roots in medieval philosophy. The philosophy of organism does not agree with the idea of Hume and Kant, according to which 'presentational immediacy was the primary fact of perception, and any

[23] Mick Halewood, "Language, Subjectivity and Individuality", in *Deleuze, Whitehead, Bergson*: *Rhizomatic Connections*. Edited by Keith Robinson, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009, pp. 46-47.

[24] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and Reality. An Essay in Cosmology*. Corrected Edition. Edited by David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne, New York, The Free Press, London, Collier Macmillan Publisher, 1978, p. 196.

[25] Idem, *Symbolism*, p. 10.

[26] *Ibidem*, p. 11.

[27] *Ibidem*, p. 12.

apprehension of causation was, somehow or other, to be, elicited from this primary fact'.[28] What does Hume do, in particular as headmaster? He misunderstands the process of constituting experience, in fact of causality. Whitehead says: when the electric light is turned on in a dark room, a temporary blindness of the eyes is produced. According to Hume, the response to such a stimulus would be only the 'response to representational immediacy', i.e., habit. Whitehead shows that it is actually a matter of physiology, and that biologically temporary blindness is nothing more than an effect caused by the action of light on the nerves of the eye. Man recognizes the relation of causality and names, following the unfolding of experience, light as the cause and blindness as the effect. And he says that it is a result of experience that the light blinded our man (Whitehead's in fact): 'I know it, because I felt it,'[29] and the philosophy of organism continues this vision of the causal relationship. Hume thinks otherwise, comes up with another explanation: what man really feels is the habit of blindness after turning on the light. By habit, man associates blindness with turning on the light and the author insists on the word 'association': 'the word "association" explains it all, according to Hume.'[30] Whitehead asks himself, downright ironic: how can the habit be felt when the cause cannot be felt? Hume confuses a '"habit of feeling blinks after flash" with a "feeling of the habit of feeling after flash".'[31] And Whitehead concludes: 'If this "Humian" doctrine be true, certain conclusions as to "behaviour" ought to follow – conclusions which, in the most striking way, are not verified. It is almost indecent to draw the attention of philosophers to the minor transactions of daily life, away from the classic sources of philosophic knowledge; but, after all, it is the empiricists who began this appeal to Caesar'[32]; the empiricists are wrong when they think that justice is on their side, and the 'Caesar' invoked here is rather a tribunal of experience to which the empiricists, led by Hume, promise more than they can offer based on the principle, which they do not respect: 'Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's'/*Reddite igitur quae sunt Caesaris, Caesari: et quae sunt Dei, Deo – Mark* 12, 17.

Also Part II, Chapter IX: "The Propositions," Section III: "Systematic Background Presupposed by Each Proposition; Relations, Indicative Systems of Relations; Propositions and Indicative Systems; Illustration, Inadequacy of Words" abounds in references to 'Caesar'; I counted no less than 13. The problem under discussion is a threefold one and is announced in the contents of Section III: "Propositions and Indicative Systems, Illustration and Inadequacy of Words," and the starting assumption is the following: 'Every proposition presupposes some

[28] Idem, *Process and Reality*, p. 173.

[29] *Ibidem*, p. 175.

[30] *Ibidem.*

[31] *Ibidem.* See also Leo A. Foley, *A Critique of the Philosophy of Being of Alfred North Whitehead in the Light of Thomistic Philosophy*. *A Dissertation*, Chapter IV: "Whitehead's Explanations of Causality", Eugene, Oregon, Wipfand Stock Publishers, 2016, pp. 41-58. In fact this book is a doctoral thesis published for the first time by The Chatolic University Press, 1946.

[32] *Ibidem*, p. 174.

general nexus with an indicative relational system. This nexus includes its locus of judging subjects and also its logical subjects. This presupposition is part of the proposition, and the proposition cannot be entertained by any subject for which the presupposition is not valid. Thus in a proposition certain characteristics are presupposed for the judging subject and for the logical subjects.'[33] It is about the indicative relational system: in short, no sentence can be understood outside of this system that relates to the real world. And Whitehead exemplifies by using three sentences in which the subject is Socrates. While uttering the sentence 'Socrates is mortal,' I indicate the subject 'Socrates' only if I activate the spatial-temporal indicative system, that is, I indicate, for example, 'Athens' and '5th century' BC. Without activating this system, the sentence can also mean 'The *man* Socrates is mortal' or 'The *philosopher* Socrates is mortal.' The principle is: 'a proposition presupposes the actual world as exhibiting some systematic aspect that has now been explained.'[34] In the absence of the principle, 'the superfluous indication may be part of the proposition.'[35] The exemplification with 'Socrates' is therefore reinforced with 'Caesar'. Here is Whitehead's text at length: 'This discussion can be illustrated by the proposition, "Caesar has crossed the Rubicon." This form of words symbolizes an indefinite number of diverse propositions. In its least abstract form "Caesar" stands for a society of settled actual entities in the actual world from the standpoint of the judging subject, with their objectifications consciously perceived by the subject […]. The word "Rubicon" is to be explained in the same way as the word "Caesar".

The only points left ambiguous respecting "Caesar" and "Rubicon" are that these societies – either or both, and each with its defining characteristic – may be conjecturally supposed to be prolonged up to the world contemporary with the judging subject, or, even more conjecturally, into the future world beyond the subject. The past tense of the word "has" shows that this point of ambiguity is irrelevant, so that the proposition can be framed so as to ignore it. But it need not be so framed: one of Caesar's old soldiers may in later years have sat on the bank of the river and meditated on the assassination of Caesar, and on Caesar's passage over the little river tranquilly flowing before his gaze. This would have been a different proposition from the more direct one which I am now considering. Nothing could better illustrate the hopeless ambiguity of language; since both propositions fit the same verbal phraseology. There is yet a third proposition: a modern traveler sitting on the bank of the Rubicon, and meditating on his direct perceptions of actual occasions can locate, relatively to himself by spatio-temporal specifications, an event which inferentially and conjecturally he believes to include a portion of the past history of the Rubicon as directly known to him. He also, by an analogous process of inference and conjecture, and of spatio-temporal specification, locates relatively to himself another event which he believes to

[33] *Ibidem*, p. 195.
[34] *Ibidem*.
[35] *Ibidem*.

contain the life of Caesar of whom he has no direct knowledge. The proposition meditated on by this traveler sitting on the bank of the modern river is evidently a different proposition to that in the mind of Caesar's old soldier. Then there is the proposition which might have been in the mind of one of the crowd who listened to Antony's speech, a man who had seen Caesar and not the Rubicon. It is obvious that in this way an indefinite number of highly special propositions can be produced, differing from each other by fine gradations. Everything depends upon the differences in direct perceptive knowledge which these various propositions presuppose for their subjects. But there are propositions of a more general type, for which "Caesar" and "Rubicon" have more generalized, vaguer meanings. In these vaguer meanings, "Caesar" and "Rubicon" indicate the entities, if any, located by anyone member of a *type* of routes, starting from a certain *type* of inference and conjecture. Also there are some such propositions in which the fact of there being such entities, to be thus located, is part of the content whereby the judgment is true or false; and there are other propositions in which even this requisite is evaded, so far as truth or falsehood is concerned. It is by reason of these various types of more abstract propositions that we can conceive the hypothetical existence of the more special propositions which for some of us, as judging subjects, would be meaningless.

This discussion should show the futility of taking any verbal statement, such as "Caesar has crossed the Rubicon," and arguing about *the* meaning. Also any proposition, which satisfies the verbal form so as to be one of its possibilities of meaning, defines its own locus of subjects; and only for such subjects is there the possibility of a judgment whose content is that proposition.'[36]

Then follows the appeal to 'Caesar' in Part III: "The Theory of Prehensions," Chapter IV: "Propositions and Feelings," Section II: 'Proposition not Necessarily Judged, Propositional Feelings not Necessarily Conscious; New Propositions Arise; Possible Percipient Subjects within the 'Scope of a Proposition'." It starts from the fact that 'a proposition has neither the particularity of a feeling, nor the reality of a nexus. It is a datum for feeling, awaiting a subject feeling it. Its relevance to the actual world by means of its logical subjects makes it a lure for feeling'[37] and we arrive at the difference between propositions and judgments, a distinction which philosophers do not usually make, and some logicians believe that propositions are mere prerogatives or privileges of judgments. It thus seems that truth no longer matters since such differences lead to the fact that 'in the real world it is more important that a proposition be interesting than that it be true. The

[36] *Ibidem*, pp. 195-196. A call to Isabelle Stengers seems appropriate: 'Every proposition, of course, is abstract, even the one that includes as its logical subject […]. Yet abstraction explains nothing. On the contrary, it is the proposition's regime of existence, the feeling of which it is the object, and the role this feeling will play in experience, that decide upon the abstraction and its role, even the simple descriptive statement that may float in schooltime memory: "Caesar, that was the guy who crossed the Rubicon".' See Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, p. 417.

[37] *Ibidem*, p. 259.

importance of truth is, that it adds to interest.'[38] It comes down to another difference, that between 'judgment feelings' as a subdivision of 'propositional feelings,' which are not 'conscious feelings,' and 'physical feeling,' which is a component 'of an integral propositional feeling', just as 'every proposition involves its logical subjects; and it cannot be the proposition which it is, unless those logical subjects are the actual entities which they are.'[39] Well, in this case, the sentence 'Caesar crossed the Rubicon' can be felt by Caesar but it cannot be felt in the same way and at the same time by Hannibal, because they are different worlds from a spatial-temporal point of view as we are dealing with different logical subjects. There is no connection between Hannibal and this sentence, and Hannibal can only feel connections with this sentence by analogy, without the analogy being mandatory. Then, the form of the words is different, which makes the language allegorical, equivocal, implicit, indirect, insinuating, metaphorical or veiled, i.e., 'language is always elliptical, and depends for its meaning upon the circumstances of its publication. For example, the word "Caesar" may mean a puppy dog, or a negro slave, or the first Roman emperor. The actual entities whose actual worlds include the logical subjects of a proposition will be said to fall within the "locus" of that proposition.'[40]

Finally, we find the occurrence of 'Caesar' in Part V: "Final Interpretation," Chapter III: "God and the World," Section I: "Permanence and Flux, God as Unmoved Mover; Conceptions of God: Imperial Ruler, Moral Energy, Philosophical Principle." None of the five meanings of occurrence, however, refer to Julius Caesar at the end of *Process and Reality*. The meaning of this occurrence is: 'When the Western world accepted Christianity, Caesar conquered […]. But the deeper idolatry, of fashioning God in the image of the Egyptian, Persian, and Roman imperial rulers was retained. The Church gave unto God the attributes which belonged exclusively to Caesar […]. There is, however, in the Galilean origin of Christianity, yet another suggestion which does not fit in very well with any of the three main strands of thought. It does not emphasize the ruling Caesar, or the ruthless moralist, or the unmoved mover.'[41]

9. LISTINGS AND INDIRECT LINKS

In Chapter II ("The Human Soul") of *Adventures of Ideas*, Whitehead mentions the classical Mediterranean civilization and the fact that, in political theory, the great leaders, no matter how different they were ('think of the differences between Pericles and Cleon, Plato and Alexander the Great, Marius and

[38] *Ibidem.*
[39] *Ibidem.*
[40] *Ibidem*, p. 260.
[41] *Ibidem*, pp. 342–343.

Sulla, Cicero and Caesar'[42]), agree on a common point: the classical civilizations, since they could not support themselves economically, needed a population of slaves to perform the jobs that the civilized Greeks or Romans did not perform because it was beneath their dignity. Then we have a reference to *1 Corinthians* 10, 11 and in the relevant place (Chapter IV: "Aspects of Freedom"), Whitehead says something curious: 'The saying, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" was uttered by Christ in the reign of Tiberius, and not by Plato four hundred years earlier'[43]; personally I am not aware of any interference by Plato in this saying, the place is, so to speak, common (*locus communis*). 'Caesar' is only mentioned (in Chapter V: "From Force to Persuasion") as the beginning of the temporal grant of the Roman Empire alongside Augustus and until the fall of Rome ('the limits of this period may be approximately assigned from Caesar and Augustus at the commencement down to the taking of Rome by Alaric in the year 410 A.D.'[44]).

'Caesar' is also mentioned indirectly in *Modes of Thought* (Part I: "Creative Impulse"; Lecture II: "Expression"): 'The distinction between men and animals is in one sense only a difference in degree. But the extent of the degree makes all the difference. The Rubicon has been crossed.'[45]

10. 'IRON AND STEEL' – SMALL AMBIGUITIES

'It is Whitehead's opinion that a few great men can exert a decisive influence in human affairs, not only "iron and steel" but also men who "wield the pen",'[46] and Johnson then quotes the place mentioned above in *Science and the Modern World*[47] where Whitehead talks about the great conquerors from Alexander to Caesar and Napoleon who influenced the course of history. It is true that Whitehead uses the expression 'iron and steel', it appears in *Adventures of Ideas*, but the meaning is completely different. It is about the relationship of trade with technology, how this relationship influences the modes of production and production itself – and all this was possible thanks to the ancient Greeks who gave Europe clear thinking and deductive reasoning, even if sometimes the consequences were not what was expected. 'But its effect on intellectual capacity can only be compared with that of fire and iron and steel for the production of the blades of Damascus and Toledo. Mankind was now armed intellectually, as well as physically.'[48]

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[42] Idem, *Adventures of Ideas*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1933, p. 14.

[43] *Ibidem*, p. 69.

[44] *Ibidem*, p. 101.

[45] Idem, *Modes of Thought*, New York, The Macmillan Company, 1938, p. 38.

[46] *The Wit and Wisdom of Whitehead*. Edited with an Introductory Essay by A. H. Johnson, Boston, The Beacon Press, 1947, p. 17.

[47] Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World*, p. 292.

[48] Idem, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 108.

As for the phrase 'wield the pen', it does not appear, at least not in *Adventures of Ideas*. Something similar appears but it is not about 'pen' but about 'thunder', not about man but about a god (the god who 'wields the thunder') and it can be connected to Plato to whom Whitehead also refers[49] (to the *Sophist* and the *Timaeus*, without giving precise directions). Here is the place from *Adventures of Ideas*: 'The alternative doctrine, prevalent then and now, sees either in the many gods or in the one God, the final coercive forces wielding the thunder.'[50] Whitehead does not give precise indications in *Adventures of Ideas* but refers to *Timaeus*, the *Sophist* and *The Laws* in the same book at pp. 136, 153, 187 where he adds to the three dialogues a fourth one, *Theaetetus*, and then again to the *Sophist* (pp. 203 and 230). What Whitehead means is that the definition of being is power (see the *Sophist*, 247 e: 'a thing really is if it has any capacity at all, either by nature to do something to something else' – to be means nothing but being capable of something; 248 d-e: 'You mean that if knowing is doing something'), that Plato's divinity, at least that of the last dialogues, is permissive not coercive (see *Timaeus*: 29 e: 'He was good, and one who is good can never become jealous of anything' and 69 b: 'the things we see were in a condition of disorderliness when the god introduced as much proportionality into them and in as many ways – making each thing proportional both to itself and to other things – as was possible for making them be commensurable and proportionate'). Likewise the places where Whitehead speaks of Plato's true receptacle in the *Timaeus* (49 a-53 c) in *Adventures of Ideas*[51]. This is to mention the places in *Process and Reality*, not many, where he treats the same problem and compares Newton with Plato[52]. Anyway, Whitehead's conclusion is: 'The *Timaeus* of Plato, and the *Scholium* of Newton – the two statements of cosmological theory which have had the chief influence on Western thought,'[53] and Plato together with Aristotle are 'the two founders of all Western thought.'[54]

11. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

'There is a story, perhaps apocryphal, concerning a visit made by Alfred North Whitehead to the University of Virginia. He drove from the station to the campus in a horse drawn vehicle under the guidance of a garrulous "darkie". Said the driver: "Are you a traveler"? "Yes", replied Whitehead … Long silence…

[49] *Ibidem*, note 2, p. 213.

[50] *Ibidem*, p. 213.

[51] *Ibidem*, pp. 156, 171–172, 188, 192–193, 197 and especially pp. 240–241 in §19 entitled "Plato's Receptacle" where Whitehead actually distinguishes between "Receptacle" - *hupodochè* and "Locus"/"space" – *chôra*; also to mention pp. 380-381.

[52] Idem, *Process and Reality*, Part II: "Discussions and Applications", Chapter II: "The Order of Nature", Section III: "Evolutions of Societies, Decay, Chaos, the *Timaeus*, the *Scholium*, Milton", pp. 93-96.

[53] *Ibidem*, p. 93.

[54] *Ibidem*, "Preface", p. XI.

"What do you sell?" "Wit and wisdom", replied Whitehead … Long silence… At the end of the drive the darkie remarked, "I've never seen a traveler before who wouldn't show me some of his goods".'[55]

And I end this text with a word from Isabelle Stengers: 'It could be one of those little games journalists play on television talk shows about books: "Who was the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century whose name begins with W"? Most learned people in America would answer "Wittgenstein". Sorry. The right answer is "Whitehead".'[56][56].

And finally, the two together according to Russell's testimony: 'Whitehead described to me the first time that Wittgenstein came to see him. He was shown into the drawing room during afternoon tea. He appeared scarcely aware of the presence of Mrs Whitehead, but marched up and down the room for some time in silence, and at last said explosively: "A proposition has two poles. It is *apb*". Whitehead, in telling me, said: I naturally asked what are *a* and b, but I found that I had said quite the wrong thing. "a and b are indefinable", Wittgenstein answered in a voice of thunder.'[57]

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[55] A. H. Johnson, "The Wit and Wisdom of Whitehead", in *Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Jul., 1946), p. 223. The anecdote is repeated by Johnson in *The Wit and Wisdom of Whitehead.* Edited with an Introductory Essay by A. H. Johnson, Boston, The Beacon Press, 1947, in "Preface", p. V.

[56] Isabelle Stengers, *Thinking with Whitehead*, p. IX.

[57] *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell 1914–1944*, Boston-Toronto, An Atlantic Monthly Press Book, Little, Brown and Company, 1968, pp. 139–140.

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