

**“On extrinsic denominations” (LH IV, iii, 5a-e, Bl. 15):  
Transcription and English Translation<sup>1</sup>**

**Massimo Mugnai, Scuola Normale Superiore, Pisa**

[*Denominatio extrinseca.*<sup>2</sup>]

Denominatio prorsus extrinseca in rebus completis nulla est; neque aliquid videtur aut noscitur quin ea re afficiatur atque immutetur realiter, quod est intrinsecae denominationis. Sed in abstractis usum habet haec denominationis distinctio dum aliquid denominamus a mutatione, quam ponimus, neque tamen in considerationem adducimus, quae inde in caeteris rebus mutationes intrinsecae consequuntur. Exemplum dabit Motus, quem ubi verum intelligimus atque realem, et mathematice tractamus, mutationem distantiae denominativam agnoscimus in utroque eorum, quorum mutatur distantia; realem in eo tantum corpore, quod verum est subjectum motus altero quiesc[iente]<sup>3</sup>. Parentius<sup>4</sup> autor Elementorum Mechanicorum ait initio operis per *Motum* a se intelligi accessum aut recessum successivum corporis A, respectu alterius B, quod supponitur esse in *Quiete*. Sed ita *Quies* ingreditur Motus definitionem quod contra esse oportebat. Et si quis postulet Quietis definitionem circulus orietur; praeterquam quod alterum quiescere necesse non est. Dicendum erat *Motum* esse mutationem distantiae in subjecto reali, seu ubi denominationem intrinsecam facit. Notandum in hac mutatione distantiae tamen relationem ad ambo pertinere, fundamentum relationis (qualitatem scilicet aut mutationem) tantum in eo esse, quod intrinsece denominatur.

[*On extrinsic denominations.*]

There is no extrinsic denomination at all in complete things; and nothing can be known or seen without being affected and undergoing a real change by this very fact, and this is typical of all intrinsic denominations<sup>5</sup>. In abstract matters, however, we have recourse to this distinction of denominations just when we name something according to a change which we are attributing to it, without noticing the intrinsic changes that from this very fact follow in all the remaining things. A good example is that of *motion*: when we mean a true and actual motion and we are considering it from the mathematical point of view, we recognize a change denominating the distance in both things of which the distance is changed. We recognize, however, a real change only in that body which is the true subject of motion, whereas the other is at rest. Parentius, the author of the *Elements of Mechanics*, says at the beginning of this work, that by *motion* he understands the approaching or the subsequent withdrawing of body A in respect to body B, which is supposed to be at rest. Thus, however, being at rest enters the definition of motion: but it should have been the other way around. And if someone asks for the definition of being at rest, it will give rise to a circle, besides the fact that it is not necessary that the other body be at rest. One should say that *Motion* is the change of distance in a real subject, i.e. where it gives rise to the intrinsic denomination. We have to observe, however, that in this change of distance the relation concerns both subjects, whereas the foundation of the relation (i.e. either the quality or the change) is in that subject only, which is intrinsically denominated.

*Notes*

<sup>1</sup>The text is written on a small piece of paper, on which someone (probably not Leibniz) had previously written few words in German (an address?, a short note?). Leibniz has ignored, for the most part, the German words and has simply overwritten them, thus giving rise to a text, in particular towards the end, very hard to read. For the date of composition we have a clear *terminus post quem*: Parent's *Elements of mechanics* (1700). Therefore, we may conjecture that Leibniz wrote this remark in the early months of 1702 (see below, note 4).

<sup>2</sup>The title is mine [M.M.] not Leibniz's.

<sup>3</sup>Leibniz's manuscript has: "quiescere".

<sup>4</sup>Cfr. Antoine Parent (1666-1716), *Elemens de mecanique et physique*, Paris,

1700. In his correspondence with Bernoulli, Leibniz mentions many times Parent's *Elements of mechanics and physics*: in a letter dated 24 June 1702 he speaks of this book as if he had read it very recently (cf. GM 3, p. 708).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. VE 1086: "All extrinsic denominations are founded, I believe, on intrinsic denominations and a thing which has been seen, really differs from the same thing which was not seen[...]. Indeed, given the universal interconnection of things, the Emperor of China whom I know differs intrinsically from the same Emperor of China whom I have yet to know. [Omnes denominationes extrinsecae meo iudicio fundatae sunt in intrinsecis, et res visa realiter differt a non visa[...]. Immo ob connexionem rerum universalem differt intrinsecis qualitatibus Monarcha Sinarum cognitio mihi, a seipso mihi nondum cognito.]" The distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic denomination is clearly stated by Johann Christoph Hundeshagen, an author with whom Leibniz was surely familiar (Johannes Christophorus Hundeshagen, *Logica, tabulis succinctis inclusa*, Jenae, MDCLXXIV, p. 13): "What is denominated is the subject of that which denominates, i.e. the subject of which the predicate is accidentally predicated: for instance, the body in respect to blackness, the snow in respect to whiteness. And the form which denominates sometimes inheres and sometimes does not inhere in the denominated subject. Thus, from this originates a twofold denomination: intrinsic and extrinsic; for instance: if I say the wall is white, then we have an intrinsic denomination, whereas if I say the man is just before God we have an extrinsic denomination. ["Denominatum est subjectum denominantis, seu id, de quo denominativum accidentaliter praedicatur, tale est corpus respectu nigredine, nix respectu albedinis; et quidem forma denominans inest interdum subjecto seu denominato, interdum vero non inest. Unde duplex oritur denominatio, intrinseca et extrinseca: v.g. Si dico: paries est albus, est denominatio intrinseca. Sin vero dico: paries videtur, homo est justus coram Deo, est denominatio extrinseca."]

Massimo Mugnai  
Scuola Normale Superiore  
Piazza dei Cavalieri 7  
56126 - Pisa, Italy  
m.mugnai@sns.it