

# Forsskal's Defence of Dubia

(c) Dr Marie Isabel Matthews-Schlinzig

[549] Defence by **Forsskål**, against a critique of his doctoral dissertation presented in Göttingen: *Dubia de principiis Philosophiæ recentioris*<sup>\*</sup>

**Comment [MIMS1]:** Translator's note: F. is addressed as 'Herr M.', i.e. the holder of a master's degree.

Only recently I received, by post from a good friend in Germany, sheet F of the so-called **Continuation of the Correspondence on Important Matters**. [550] In it, my [doctoral] dissertation, presented in Göttingen in 1756, *Dubia de principiis Philosophiæ recentioris*, has been attacked with unusual fervour. But I must not say: my dissertation; but rather, as the title of that publication promises, only **the important matter** that in some places I disagreed with **Dr Crusius** in Leipzig. With these passages alone, as is meet, I have brought the terrible rancour of the author upon myself, and only they alone have been deemed worthy of his rebuttal. At this, one might almost find oneself suspecting that none other than **Dr Crusius** himself could have been so much incensed by this, my differing opinion. Yet I would never believe this man capable of having a character as black as this work indicates, especially because he approached me with modesty when I visited him in Leipzig, and indeed I have never done anything to him to deserve otherwise. If, however, I dare believe the report of a good friend, then this correspondence comes from a secretary in Mecklenburg who won a prize for a philosophical treatise in Berlin. If this is not so, then Secretary **Reinhard** will be gracious enough to reject this accusation. I do not want to discredit an innocent by ascribing this work to him. Yet, if this rumour proved not to be unfounded, one would find here just another very common [551] example of the weakness of human nature, in which a very small honour can readily provoke a very great arrogance. My adversary writes consistently as if he already were [the] real secretary of the whole world of letters, whose office and rights require he dole out rebukes p. 95 and deliver with complete confidence judgements on the possible talent p. 89 and acumen pp. 86, 91 of others. Yet let this letter-writer, be he who he may, who knows so very little of the rights of writers and the customs of politeness, know that I can accept no sovereign or master in the realm of scholarship; and that I, in such things which seem worthy of my own conviction, will never accept any judge other than myself.

**Comment [MIMS2]:** Add editor's note.

**Comment [MIMS3]:** Translator's note: F. uses the word 'gehalten' (= to hold) here. This suggests that an oral defence of the doctoral dissertation might have taken place.

It would be a sufficient response if I referred this zealous **Crusian** to the noble-minded letter by Prof. J. D. **Michaelis**, which is prefaced to my dissertation, in which he will find a vivid depiction of his way of philosophising and arguing. However, since he probably has read this [letter] and is nonetheless able to think in such a completely **Crusian** manner without blushing, and to write with so little modesty, he is yet to learn from his own example that filling a sheet of paper with incivilities and having it printed in Leipzig is a long way off from dismissing a writer. I [552] can patiently pass over his vile ideas, and I know for sure that they will – in the eyes of all impartial readers – never hurt my innocence, but only their own creator.

**Comment [MIMS4]:** Translator's note: 'Crusian' = an adept of the teachings of Christian August Crusius (1715–1775)

---

<sup>\*</sup> We insert this defence here verbatim as it has been sent to us.

I must touch upon only one thing, as it does not concern me but my fatherland, which he could not refrain from attacking at the same time. Have I done him any harm by being unable to agree in all matters with **Dr Crusius**? How does that give him the right to turn a minor private quarrel into a war against the whole nation, and since he mentions the Swedish, the Finnish, and Laplanders, does not hesitate p. 85 to make a juxtaposition between cultured people? This is an enormously great imprudence of which several, otherwise great German scholars – who I do not need to mention by name – have also been guilty since they like to speak disparagingly about the genius of whole peoples of the North. Since one finds good and bad gifts of nature side by side everywhere, there can be no greater injustice than to form a harsh opinion of whole nations on the basis of, for instance, individual people or even one's own conceit; and of this there is no more natural consequence than that, just as much as some careless people hold our intellectual powers in contempt, we in turn hold them and their hasty remarks in contempt as well. If we are to evaluate the climate, or, as I should prefer to say here, [553] the lifestyle and customs established in a country, one would rather have to assume that the more serious and less changeable Nordic peoples are no less capable of fully comprehending something than the peoples further south, among whom one, after all, tends to find altogether more changeableness now. If only in Sweden we had the freedom to think and write that England and Germany enjoy, it would become even more apparent that the cold does not inflict damage on the mind. There is no need to defend the fact that Sweden is a cultured people [*sic*], and words similar to those of my opponent can come only from people who have either highly cultivated their ignorance or their malice. But at the same time it is certain that if we were to do the Germans the injustice of judging them by this man's piece of writing, one could never let them pass for civilised people. But his own compatriots, whose demonstrations of civility toward me I will always gratefully and respectfully acknowledge, have themselves, in the **Göttingischen Anzeigen**, drawn attention to the most uncouth incivility in this piece of writing – and this is satisfaction enough for me. I put the remainder of this opponent's criticisms down to his ignorance and consider his way of defending himself and others as much too low and rude for me, even though through his attack I have been afforded an absolute right to respond to him in the same [554] manner in which he responded to me. If one's cause is just, one never has to make up for the weakness of one's arguments with incivilities in one's writing.

I would now like to go through my alleged mistakes one by one, but I ask **Dr Crusius** to excuse me if such fierce defenders of his force me to write at greater length against him than I would otherwise want to.

1) The author of the correspondence is piqued at me, p. 82, because I have written [something] against some of the small pieces of writing by **Dr Crusius**, namely his *disput. de usu & limitibus principii rationis determinantis*, and his letter *de summis rationis principiiis*, without having read his more elaborate, later pieces of work, such as the **Logic**. I, however, think that in order to understand and form an opinion of a dissertation that is not all too complicated, it will always suffice

**Comment [MIMS5]:** Translator's note: Reference to C. A. Crusius' *Weg zur Gewißheit und Zuverlässigkeit der menschlichen Erkenntnis*, Leipzig 1747.

just to read it, without being obliged at the same time to go through the author's opera omnia. I did not attack Crusius's Logic, and therefore do not consider it an obligation to have read it. Also, nothing can be more irksome than going through familiar subjects again in philosophical compendia; especially when overly frequent artificial words and many useless raisonnements render the same [compendia] even more unpleasant, which I have to confess the Crusian ones have become to me for both these reasons. [555]

2) **Allegedly, it is apparent that I did not take the time necessary for such scrutiny, partly from the unfortunate dispute** (we shall see this in due course) **and partly by my own admission, since I confess that only after I had formed my opinion did I receive the dissertation of Dr Crusius from the book stock of Professor Hollmann**, p. 89. I have to confess candidly here that until now I have as yet been unable to accept the following conclusion: he who has received the dissertation of **Dr Crusius** from the book stock of **Professor Hollmann** after he has already formed his opinion, cannot take the necessary time to scrutinise this dissertation. It would not exactly be a credit to **Dr Crusius** if he presented the Philosophical Truths – which are so evident that they must be well known to the whole world – in such a manner that one would need to spend a long time scrutinising when perusing his writings.

3) When I said that **Dr Crusius** ut nostra philosophantur tempora (by which I, however, also mean **Wolffians** and many others) quo brevius & obscurius loqui possis, decem propositionibus ex principio rat. suf. miro labore elicitis, singulis nova nomina et metaphysica imposuit, I **apparently was derisive at a very inopportune moment**, p. 83. [556] Because the author thinks the Logici and Metaphysici should be within their rights to use their own designations for things. I am quite glad to leave the right to fill Philosophical books with new and special languages to those who can delight in that; but I then reserve the right for myself not to read their writings. If, however, the question is whether their style of writing is pleasant, clear, and useful to the **sciences**, then I answer without compunction: No.

**Comment [MIMS6]:** Translator's note: 'Wolfian' = an adept of the teachings and philosophy of Christian Wolff (1679–1754)

**Comment [MIMS7]:** Translator's note: 'Wissenschaften' in the original.

It simply does no credit to the Logici and Metaphysici that the author puts them on a level with cobblers, and with hunters who are exceedingly pedantic in their use of unnecessary words. Yet there is some truth in this slight, which is not directed at them. They do indeed use the hunter's right to give names to **well-known** things that differ from the names used for them in ordinary life. The hunters, though, have this over such philosophers: they are all in agreement about their curious use of words. Among the ontologists, in contrast, everyone speaks – like at Babel – their own language. Even if not every word is itself strange and unintelligible, e.g. principium and contingentia, p. 85, equally, a new combination can still appear strange, e.g. principium contingentiae in the case of **Dr Crusius**. In the same manner: if a cobbler wished to call the last a **shoe-mould**, p. 84, it is indeed quite [557] obvious that only thereupon would he fall into making the same mistake for which I have rebuked some philosophers of

our time. This is because one should be sensible enough to retain the name for a thing that the majority of those who know this thing use. Therefore the cobbler must let the **last** keep this name, which almost everyone who possesses knowledge of the cobbler's tools – much loved by my opponent – will use for it. And for this reason the philosopher – if he wishes to be understood without difficulty – should, for things that the whole world is familiar with, also use the same name everybody else uses. Now, though, he has nothing else to present than propositions that all the world is already aware of, and merely to put them in order, for the Philosophical Truths feature daily in ordinary life and are recognised and assessed correctly by the unlearned too. I am talking about true Philosophy; which does not include physics. In everyday dealings, however, one philosophises with the words of ordinary life. Why do philosophers not avail themselves of precisely the same turns of phrase that are so familiar to the entire rational world, like the very truths that they hide behind different names. E.g. with the 10 propositions that **Dr Crusius** wants to deduce from the principle of sufficient reason, what else can be won by his giving each proposition an abstract name, than that he [558], **in the very few cases** where these propositions are especially to be considered, can state his own designation – which no one understands without a definition –, instead of the complete proposition – which everyone would recognise immediately? What else is, then, won with all that than that he – as I wrote in my dissertation – can talk more briefly and less clearly now and then? Yet it goes without saying that a lack of clarity renders a piece of work more unpleasant, and, because of the unnecessary loss of time, also less useful to the sciences. The Mathematici and Physici have their artificial words, p. 85, but they use them sparingly; nobody just changes the names, even if, per se, they are not the most suitable; but the most important difference in this is that here we are given unfamiliar names for unfamiliar things. Everything is the other way round with the Metaphysical Devisers-of-Words. And this is the only dispute of any significance that my opponent has stirred up. It is my profound wish that absolutely everyone who writes anything on Philosophy should first and foremost take pains to express the doctrines of the whole human race in the words of the common man. Thereupon a tremendous number of definitions and distinctions would have to disappear, and together with them a great heap of fatuous theorems that are built out of these names and distinctions, and plague in particular today's logics and ontologies. Thereupon [559] one would see whether philosophy, after such a large excision, would not add up to a much smaller book than it is these days, and whether it would not become a vastly more charming doctrine and one that is more similar to itself.

**Comment [MIMS8]:** Translator's note: 'Wissenschaften' in the original.

4) The author takes, presumably from the Göttingen review of my doctoral dissertation, p. 86, the objection that **I wrongly consider credere and prorsus non posse dubitare as one and the same**. Yet this I have never done. In Ch. I of my dissertation I speak everywhere of a **necessary belief**. And it is obvious that **to believe something by necessity** (non posse non credere) is completely the same as **not being able to doubt**. I only ask the author to apply the correct rule of explanation to me, too, which he very fairly, p. 88, advises should be observed

with the works of Crusius, namely to explain everything according to [its] context and reasons. I confess, however, that, since I said on pag. 7 of my dissertation: **Since we believe the truths ultimately because we cannot doubt them, we believe them not for the reason that renders them actual truths but we believe them only because we** (namely ex necessitate naturæ) **believe them**, I deliberately chose a small allusion that has, against my expectations, for some [560] readers obscured what I mean; and in this not misplaced cause can be found to make an objection against the narrow understanding of these words in isolation. However, immediately beforehand I do speak about the fact that everything ends with the naturali necessitate credendi (vid. l. c.), and surely anyone will readily grant me that I am able not to take each and every credere for a necessitas credendi, although a **necessary believing** can justifiably also be called a **belief**.

5) In relation to the first principio of Crusius: quæ cogitari non possunt, falsa sunt, the author makes two different objections against me. **Firstly**, p. 87, he claims it is no mistake that **Dr Crusius** has written cogitare for credere here, since – as I myself have also argued – in the German language: **I cannot think this** can sometimes be the equivalent of: **I cannot believe this**. Yet: how can he force a new meaning from the German **to think** onto the word cogitare in Latin – against all Latin auctores and Lexica? In the Latin writers, cogitare never is **to believe**. But that – and nothing else – is what the word in the cited Crusian proposition must be taken to be, if it is to be in keeping with his own opinion and the truth. The author says, p. 87, that **Dr Crusius** had employed the word **to think** here with the very same meaning [561] in which he used it in **psychology**. But **Dr Crusius** himself will not be able to admit that. Because in psychology, the word **to think** – just like the Latin cogitare – is used for **to have concepts of**, and the author himself as well as other people recognise that one can also have a concept of false things. Hence, in this understanding the principle cited could not be an indicator of truth.

**Further**, p. 88, the author says I should have interpreted **Dr Crusius** meetly and explicated his quæ cogitari nequeunt with the classical passages and the basic tenets of his teachings as follows: quæ cogitari nequeunt *tanquam vera*, falsa sunt. This reminder is perfectly right and just, and means in other words: I should have done all that I have done before the eyes of the whole world. Because just so have I explained the meaning of **Crusius** from the context in my dissertation pag. 9, even though I am not aware that he has expressed himself so clearly in any passage and added this *tanquam vera*. I indeed said pag. 8 sqq. that **Dr Crusius** had thought correctly but spoken incorrectly; and therefore these my words: certe ubi consuetiorem usum vocabuli retinere placuerit, apparebit, non satis commode dici, falsa eo agnoscitur, quod cogitari nequeant, partake of nothing that could distort the meaning [562] of the **Dr**. I indeed offer consuetiorem usum vocis as a counterpart to the Crusian use.

**Comment [MIMS9]:** Note to David: It is possible that this is also a reference to a specific work by Crusius. If it is such a reference, then the translation would have to be changed slightly (e.g. to 'the Psychology' or 'his Psychology') and a note added. More research is needed to ascertain this, and unfortunately I don't have access to the necessary resources.

I do not want to trouble myself and the reader unnecessarily with the **Metaphysical Possibilities, Word-Possibilities, and Statements of Fact** which follow here p. 88. I think these ingenious terms will only be needed in Crusian philosophy, and not further in the world.

6) P. 89 the author demands of me, that I should conceive of the infinite permanence of God. Yet that is demanding a great deal too much of me. But he says: **do we not know what permanence is? Do we not know what ending means? Do we not have a concept of the negation particle?** Oh Yes! The individual items are quite straightforward, but their combination presents quite a different problem. I would like to refer this man again to his own wood iron p. 89, and ask: do we not know what wood, what iron is? Do we not have a concept of the composition of substantivorum? Yet regardless of this he probably will still not understand what wood iron is. But here the difference is that wood iron is not only inconceivable but also absurd; everlasting permanence, however, is inconceivable. To be sure, I know what eternity without boundaries is not, but not what it is; if I try to contemplate it, the [563] thought always dissipates and cannot follow the infinite. Even the author will not be able to help me get any further.

7) I am also told I have no reason to fear that the secrets of revealed religion are at risk from the most important Crusian principle (*incogitabilia sunt falsa*) p. 89. Yet I will soon have sufficient reason to do so, if I were to conclude as **Dr Crusius** has concluded in his dissertation, which has been referred to earlier, *de usu & limitibus principii rat. determinantis*. There he says § 28, as I have also noted in my dissertation pag. 9: it could happen that from this principio ea rite deducantur, quæ contradicant iis, quæ ex contradictionis principio eruuntur. And they are then supposed to be the mysteria. Since I do not have the piece of writing itself to hand, I cite this now from the small excerpt which I made of his dissertation when reading through it. Yet I am certain that one will find it thus when looking it up. But is this not an obvious example of how the word *incogitabile* can easily deceive one and how it can be misunderstood? since the creator of this word himself has been fooled into conflating the **absurd** with the **incomprehensible**? For there is something incomprehensible in the mysteriis, but from that it does not follow that there is also something absurd or utterly beyond belief about them. And what could be more peculiar than [564] to specify such principles of reasoning that would lead to conclusions that contradict one another? How could all of them simultaneously be true? How could they become founts of truth and certainty? And if the secrets were based on some of them but were at the same time to be contrary to the principio contradictionis, would they not be at the greatest risk? No reasonable person would henceforth be able to believe and accept them.

8) P. 90 the author moves from §5 of my dissertation to 17, since again I have dared to advance against his Apollo. There I have shown that out of the 10 propositions which **Dr Crusius** has deduced from the principle of sufficient

reason, only 3 are not out of place, and that further the third of them is nothing but a corollary to the first. To this the author replies precisely what **Dr Crusius** himself said to me in Leipzig: that he only wanted to sum up all the references the Wolffians make to sufficient reason, although these 10 propositions did not exactly lie in themselves within the principle of sufficient reason. I am very satisfied with this explanation, and thus indeed the Dr is in complete agreement with me. Yet he will then not be able to hold it against me, as this proponent of his does, that previously I have only understood him literally according to his words – as he has not only not included this explanation in his writings that have been published on this actual matter, but also affects in his letter to Baron von Hardenberg [565] *de summis rationis principiis* that he had deduced these propositions from the principle of sufficient reason. Admittedly, much can be said about **sufficient reason** which nevertheless does not appertain to the so-called **principle of sufficient reason**. If e.g. someone recommends **not to undertake anything without sufficient reason**, then this has nothing to do with said principle. Because in saying that really nothing is ever undertaken without sufficient reason his understanding is already quite different. Thus many different kinds of propositions about **contradiction** can also be made, but that does not mean they may all be classified as just so many parts of the so-called **principle of contradiction** (*principio contradictionis*). Even if, as the author claims p. 91, **Dr Crusius** has changed and improved one thing or another here in his later writings, that is certainly very laudable of the **Dr**; this, however, does not concern me, since all I said is that he has made mistakes in the writings I consulted, [and] which could still mislead some readers, too. It is, however, necessary, to respond to the objections of the author in relation to each proposition.

The first Crusian proposition is this: *quicquid existere incipit, illud oritur ab alio ente, quod producendi hoc sufficientem* [566] *habuit potestatem, & in actu constitutum nec impeditum fuit*. I said this is true but that it does not only apply to the things which *existere incipiunt* or *oriuntur* there, but that it is true in general that all **changes** – also of things which already exist – presuppose a cause. But the author reminds us that if this were not also the rationale of **Dr Crusius**, I would not be able to say that the 5th proposition: *quicquid non est actio prima libera, illud, si oritur, a causa quadam efficiente ita producitur, ut positis iisdem circumstantiis aliter oriri aut abesse non potuerit*, or as I have put it more briefly: **what does not arise from a free cause, arises from an unfree cause** – of this proposition, I say, the author maintains, I would therefore not have been able to say that it is a corollary of the first? Why ever not? After all, I have – as is meet – understood his *oritur* in both propositions as he explains it in the first one, *existere incipit*, and one ordinarily does not say this of changes in things which already exist but of the emergence of things itself, of substances, either through creation or combination. Admittedly, one often says that, for instance, **a movement emerges**, but to my knowledge one is not wont to say that **a movement begins to exist**. In accordance with this I have understood and interpreted **Dr Crusius** here [567]. The author should therefore take *oritur* to

mean the same in both propositions, and see whether one does not follow from the other. And as much as this good man complains about my lack of reasoning here, he can just try it: I will yet be able to follow his without any particular effort.

In order to defend the position of this proposition, he says further that **after all, one could particularize important corollaries**, p. 91. That is true, but such a corollary must then not be specified as a different part of the first main proposition.

I criticize the 4th proposition: nihil est, vel fieri potest, nisi quatenus rebus coexistentibus, quæ simul ponuntur, non contradicit, as a consequence of the principle of contradiction that does not belong here. The author says pp. 91, 92 that **in §22 of the dissertation Dr Crusius admits that it** [i.e. the proposition] **does result from it** [i.e. the principle of contradiction], **and does not understand this to be an effective cause**. He defends this last point without my ever having denied it. Yet, he does not show – and I also do not believe – that this proposition is only something to do with the **word** of the principle of sufficient reason. The example he gives – **that, after all, a given angle and given sides of a triangle are the reason for the third side and the remaining angles** – will not resolve the matter. For the meaning [568] of the proposition surely will not be this: nothing has happened or can happen which does not have sufficient reason in coexistent things – which would be completely false.

The 6th proposition: intellectus humanus nihil judicat verum, nisi ob nexum cum tribus summis principiis &c. perceptum, does not, as I say, only permit us to understand that there has to be a cause, but at the same time also indicates the type of that cause. And in this manner one could present here as many new propositions as there are types of cause. Against this the author replies p. 92 that this just follows the usage of the Wolffians and their recourse to sufficient reason. If that were the case, the Wolffians would surely have had to express themselves as follows: **nobody believes anything without having sufficient reason for doing so**. Hardly anyone, however, will have claimed that, since according to the common way of speaking, **to follow sufficient reason** in this proposition means as much as to **observe the rules of wisdom**.

I noted of proposition 7, 8, 9 that they, too, do not belong here because they are something completely different from the principle of sufficient reason – namely, moral rules. At this point, it appears to the author as something very learned that one knows these are merely moral rules. For p. 92 he exclaims: **as if Dr Crusius had [569] had not just taught him that in §30, in comparison with the note to §44;** and here he thinks p. 91 – **if he considers the matter impartially** (as he does everywhere) – **that I have ploughed with the calf of the Dr.** I would like to present these three precious propositions before the eyes of my readers. The 7[th]: Veritati studendum, ejusque impedimenta sollicitè removenda sunt. The 8[th]: Non nisi rationi & legi congrue, sive prudenter & juste, agendum est. The

**Comment [MIMS10]:** Translator's note: turn of phrase of biblical origin, meaning e.g.: 'to let other people do something for you'; 'to benefit from something someone else has discovered (without acknowledging it)'; 'to take unfair advantage of another'.

9[th]: In nulla propositione tanquam vera acquiescendum est, nisi vel ob clare cognitam demonstrationem, vel ob perceptam obligationem ex perfectione Dei aut nostræ essentiæ fluentem, & secundum cognitionem hanc ubique prudenter & juste agendum est. And now I also think, without partiality, that those who know what is **moral**, will never need the help of **Dr Crusius**, or his calves, in order to understand that these propositions are moral. It is certainly not correct that, as the author claims p. 92, these same propositions express these Wolffian expressions: **that people can act without sufficient reason** (that is without *causam necessitantem*). Because **Dr Crusius** does not say here what people **can** do, but what they **should** do. To be sure, one **can** act against the Crusian rules, or, as is commonly said, one can undertake many things without having sufficient reason for doing them, but that means [570] not following those rules of wisdom. Because sufficient reason usually carries this meaning in moral propositions. As I also pointed out that the 9th proposition is merely a repetition of the 7th and 8th, the author replies p. 93 that **the Dr already said that § 32 13 years ago**. Regarding that, I am merely surprised that he did not also realize 13 years ago that no repeated proposition counts as new and special, otherwise he could make a thousand propositions from a single one.

Finally, I cited the 2nd and 3rd proposition of **Dr Crusius** and considered them incorrect. They are the following: *Cujus non-existentia cogitari potest, illud aliquando non fuit*, and: *Nullum ens est necessarium, nisi cuius non-existentia cogitari non potest*. Against this I pointed out that, after all, many Athei have thought non-existentiam Dei; and surely one may conclude here, as one would anyway, *ab esse ad posse*. And further, even if one believed that there is a creator, that is, that there is a God, so as a philosopher one **could still think** – without this being a contradiction – that this creator, too, might not be eternal, that perhaps he in turn might have his creator and his God, [and] this creator in turn his, and so forth. Now, in regard to this the author only manages to rant, which he will always find easier than proving something. But I ask the reader simply to remember [571], that I do not have the concept of God that Wolff and others have, to whose definition it should immediately be added that God is an *ens a se*, and *primum*. Like the whole world, I consider **my real creator** to be my God. I do not want to **assume** of him that he is by definition independent and eternal; rather, I want this to be **proven**. Were it not for revelation, then I would conclude as follows: even if my God were to have yet another God above him, I still owe **the creator closest to me** the greatest reverence and **obedience**, just as I have to obey my father more than my grandfather. (The Wolffians and some other people – I do not know on what grounds – assign this obedience to the first *ens a se*, even though they admit the possibility of a series of creators of the creator.) Yet only my creator has made himself known to me, no other. I therefore **assume** that the creator is the highest being; or at least that, if there are even higher beings, they do not wish to be worshipped by me. I therefore do not concern myself with any other than the one who has actually created the world and me. From revelation alone I learn with complete certainty that my creator and God is the only independent eternal being. But in philosophy I

cannot fancy [572] being able to demonstrate as many things as the newer philosophers.

9) The author further defends p. 94 **Dr Crusius** against § 29 of my dissertation, where I say: even if sin were a necessity in the world from the Creation per rationes sufficientes, it could still displease God, just as the unavoidable flaws of his instruments – which are compensated for by other, greater advantages – do an artist. But the author says: **Here there is talk only of displeasure such as that Xerxes felt about the stormy sea.** Is this really a comparison that befits God? Xerxes was utterly distraught at the Hellespontian storm, and in a childish manner had the sea that had torn apart his bridge whipped. I do not know what the author can find herein that is similar to God's displeasure at sin. If sin caused God such great dismay, surely he would in his omnipotence stop it at all times, just as now he tolerates it every day? But, if I may still say a word about the matter itself, it would indeed be possible to ask whether, within the necessary coherence of the whole world whose first originator and causa necessitans is God himself – which in my opinion must certainly follow from the principle of sufficient reason – whether, I say, in this necessity of consequences sin could have [573] been unavoidable? Would one not rather have to assume that, given the wisdom and the omnipotence of the Most High, it would have cost him only an order, a wish, to form a world in which all rational creatures set out to do nothing but good deeds from the same necessity as that from which they now, according to the principle of sufficient reason, carry out so much evil? For this principle leaves human beings with no more freedom of will than a false name, as I in my dissertation and others before me have demonstrated.

10) Finally, since I agree with Professor **Michaelis** that, in the system of the principle of sufficient reason, punishments also have their use, in that they can – as moral counterpoints – make the omission of sin a necessity for many; and because this was also pointed out against **Dr Crusius**, he had in turn to point something out to refute it. Since he cannot make the case as such, he again turns to the last subterfuge of those who can never fail. He changes the argument, and says p. 94: **The main question in this is whether these punishments are just?** I was not writing about that but only contested the Crusian opinion that, due to the principle of sufficient reason, the **use** of punishments disappears. That **Dr Crusius** claimed this, [573] the whole world can see from §9 of his dissertation, de usu & limitibus pr. rat. det., which I cited. Yet, supposing that the **justice** of punishments were also at stake, I would be able to defend that too. If the principle of sufficient reason were true, indeed, people would have no more freedom than one commonly attributes to unreasonable animals (which I for my part do not wish to deny this capacity because of morality) and mere machines. But who is wont to doubt the justice of punishments to animals, and – as it would be called in mere machines – of the necessary alterations? In God, any injustice against creatures is unthinkable, unless he does not want to keep the pledge he has given. People derive a right before the creator from God's prophecies, but I at any rate cannot find anywhere else that their rights against God might originate.

**Comment [ 11]:** Translator's note: full point in the original here.

But without having rights, one cannot suffer an injustice, since every injustice must go against someone's rights.

The author concludes with an obvious twisting of my words when he writes pp. 94 and 95 **that I said this of the Leibnizians: they have adopted teachings which, if they had been presented in a theatre by the harlequin, would have given [574] the entire audience plenty of things to laugh about.** My actual words in the dissertation pag. 26 are: Quæ enim in scriptis philosophorum, præter ordinem (dogmatum), novi speciem faciunt, vel barbararum multitudo vocum est, qua communis appellatio notissimarum rerum in aliam mutatur magis determinatam, minus intelligibilem; vel ejusmodi sunt, ut, histrionum fortuna, in scenam producta admirationem primum, mox risum moveant, brevique iterum evanescent, quemadmodum etiam cogitationi monadum, harmoniæ præ stabilitæ &c. nostra ætate accidere videmus. Those who actually understand Latin will see that I said that new philosophical inventions that are proclaimed **share the same fate** as theatrical legerdemainists: they attract amazement, laughter, and oblivion in that order. And I think that not only of the Leibnizians but of all those grand demonstrators who fancy they have discovered new truths that have previously been unknown to the world in the true Philosophy. Such teachings find their admirers for a time. Yet it is their certain fate that before long they will be spurned and forgotten. Countless examples prove this. And I can surely predict that the Wolffian proof of the existence of God from the [576] principle of sufficient reason, and the Crusian one – from the principio contingentiæ and necessitatis – will fare exactly as the Cartesian one – from the idea entis infiniti – fared before them. What is true in philosophy abides and persists. Because it is apparent to everyone. Only that which is false, which individual scholars add, will keep changing, and philosophy with it.

Uppsala, 1 August 1758 **Petrus Forsskål**