307 Reason (*Racio*)

Reason (and reckoning) are understood in two ways: one way for the power of the mind, another way for computation.

Concerning reason, understood in the first way, it is said, Job 38[:33]: “Do you know the order of heaven, and can you set down the reason thereof on the earth?” To which question responds Solomon, Eccle. 8[:17]: “I understood that man can find no reason of all those works of God that are done under the sun.” But much less those which are above the sun, since they are more removed from our assessments. This reason is given to man so that according to it he may rule himself and that he may provide for himself necessities. Wherefore also to the Rom. 12[:1] it is said, “may your service be reasonable.” Where however nature had given to all animate beings for their necessities, such as horns for arms, hide for clothing, sandals for shoes, and so for things. There she gave to man reason through which he can provide for himself necessities. Just as the Philosopher teaches, book 14, *De animalibus*.[[1]](#endnote-1)

Wherefore Seneca, *Epistula* 86,[[2]](#endnote-2) nature made us teachable and gave us reason, imperfect, but capable of being perfected. And therefore, man ought to help himself as far as he can through reason and not let everything to God, for otherwise he tempts God. Wherefore Seneca, *Epistula* 76,[[3]](#endnote-3) if you would have all things under your control, put yourself under the control of reason; if reason becomes your ruler, you will become ruler over many.

¶ Concerning reckoning understood in the second way, it is read in Matt. 25[:14, 19]: “A man going into a far country,” and it follows, “After a long time he reckoned with them.” For God gives to his servants his goods, graces and virtues which are the greatest goods. According to Augustine, *De natura boni*,[[4]](#endnote-4) about these matters, he wants to exact a reckoning with man. Wherefore it is said in Luke 16[:2]: “Give an account of your stewardship: for now, you can be steward no longer.” And he will judge all according to what he will find. Now is the time for working, after the judgment will be the time for receiving the wages. Therefore, it is said in Eccle. 9[:10]: “Whatsoever your hand is able to do, do it earnestly: for neither work, nor reason, nor wisdom, nor knowledge shall be in hell, whither you are hastening.” For in Matt. 12[:36] it is said “that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment.” No one speaks for another. For in Rom. 14[:10] it is said, “For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”

Concerning these matters, see more below in chapter [311] To Return (*Reddere*).

1. Aristotle, *De animalibus,* cf. *Nichomachean Ethics* 1.6 1096b27-30 (Barnes 2:1733): But what then do we mean by the good? It is surely not like the things that only chance to have the same name. Are goods one, then, by being derived from one good or by all contributing to one good, or are they rather one by analogy? Certainly as sight is in the body, so is reason in the soul, and so on in other cases. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Seneca, *Epistula* 49.12 (LCL 75: 328-329): Dociles natura nos edidit et rationem dedit inperfectam, sed quae perfici posset.

   At our birth nature made us teachable, and gave us reason, not perfect, but capable of being perfected. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Seneca, *Epistula* 37.4 (LCL 75: 254-255): Vade certo gradu; si vis omnia tibi subicere, te subice rationi; multos reges si ratio te rexerit.

   Proceed with steady step, and if you would have all things under your control, put yourself under the control of reason; if reason becomes your ruler, you will become ruler over many. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Augustine, *Regula Monacharum* 30 (PL 30:417): Ecce rex in manu potenti venit: a cunctis vult exigere rationem, certe de cogitationibus minimis, certe de levibus et otiosis verbis. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)