

# A Disputation concerning Man

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1. Philosophy or human wisdom defines man as an animal having reason, sensation, and body.
2. It is not necessary at this time to debate whether man is properly or improperly called an animal.
3. But this must be known that this definition describes man only as a mortal and in relation to this life.
4. And it is certainly true that reason is the most important and the highest in rank among all things and, in comparison with other things of his life, the best and something divine.
5. It is the inventor and mentor of all the arts, medicines, laws, and of whatever wisdom, power, virtue, and glory men possess in this life.
6. By virtue of this fact it ought to be named the essential difference by which man is distinguished from the animals and other things.
7. Holy Scripture also makes it lord over the earth, birds, fish, and cattle, saying, "Have dominion" [Gen. 1:28].
8. That is, that it is a sun and a kind of god appointed to administer these things in this life.
9. Nor did God after the fall of Adam take away this majesty of reason, but rather confirmed it.
10. In spite of the fact that it is of such majesty, it does not know itself a priori, but only a posteriori.
11. Therefore, if philosophy or reason itself is compared with theology, it will appear that we know almost nothing about man,
12. Inasmuch as we seem scarcely to perceive his material cause sufficiently.
13. For philosophy does not know the efficient cause for certain, nor likewise the final cause,
14. Because it posits no other final cause than the peace of this life, and does not know that the efficient cause is God the creator.
15. Indeed, concerning the formal cause, which they call soul, there is not and never will be agreement among the philosophers.
16. For so far as Aristotle defines it as first driving force of the body, which has the power to live, he too wished to deceive readers and hearers.
17. Nor is there any hope that man in this principal part can himself know what he is until he sees himself in his origin which is God.
18. And what is deplorable is that he does not have full and unerring control over either his counsel or thought but is subject to error and deception therein.
19. But as this life is, such is the definition and knowledge of man, that is, fragmentary, fleeting, and exceedingly material.
20. Theology to be sure from the fullness of its wisdom defines man as whole and perfect:

21. Namely, that man is a creature of God consisting of body and a living soul, made in the beginning after the image of God, without sin, so that he should procreate and rule over the created things, and never die,

22. But after the fall of Adam, certainly, he was subject to the power of the devil, sin and death, a twofold evil for his powers, unconquerable and eternal.

23. He can be freed and given eternal life only through the Son of God, Jesus Christ (if he believes in him).

24. Since these things stand firm and that most beautiful and most excellent of all creatures, which reason is even after sin, remains under the power of the devil, it must still be concluded

25. That the whole man and every man, whether he be king, lord, servant, wise, just, and richly endowed with the good things of this life, nevertheless is and remains guilty of sin and death, under the power of Satan.

26. Therefore those who say that natural things have remained untainted after the fall philosophize impiously in opposition to theology.

27. The same is true of those who say that a man "in doing what is in him" is able to merit the grace of God and life;

28. So also, of those who introduce Aristotle (who knows nothing of theological man) to witness that reason aspires to the best things;

29. Also, those who say that the light of God's countenance is in man, as an imprint on us, that is, free will which forms the precept right and the will good;

30. In like manner, that it rests with man to choose good and evil, or life and death, etc.

31. All such neither understand what man is nor do they know what they are talking about.

32. Paul in Romans 3 [:28], "We hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works," briefly sums up the definition of man, saying, "Man is justified by faith."

33. Certainly, whoever says that a man must be justified says that he is a transgressor and unjust and thus asserts that he is guilty before God, but must be saved by grace.

34. And he takes man in general, that is, universally, so that he consigned the whole world, or whatever is called man, to sin [Rom. 11:32].

35. Therefore, man in this life is the simple material of God for the form of his future life.

36. Just as the whole creation which is now subject to vanity [Rom. 8:20] is for God the material for its future glorious form.

37. And as earth and heaven were in the beginning for the form completed after six days, that is, its material,

38. So is man in this life for his future form, when the image of God has been remolded and perfected.

39. Meanwhile, man lives in sins and daily is either justified or becomes more polluted.

40. Hence, Paul does not even deign to call that realm of reason world, but rather calls it the form of the world [Gal. 4:3].