

Vives disguises man beneath the accoutrements of the mask in his first appearance on the world stage. We must peer beneath it. The actor is not all that he seems to be. By assigning this role to man, Vives is able to present him not as a philosophical abstraction, but as a concrete presence. As would become more evident in his later writings, especially the *De anima et vita*, he was more interested in investigating the secret mechanisms within man that govern his actions. It was not so important to him to know what the soul is as to know what are its functions.

This unpretentious *fabula* has received little scholarly attention until recently. It was included by Professor Kristeller as the tail-end piece of his collection, *Eight Renaissance Philosophers*, terribly translated into English by one of his students.<sup>17</sup> He considered it a mere imitation of Pico, but with due respect for the prodigious erudition of Professor Kristeller, I think perhaps that he did not read this fable very carefully or with sympathetic understanding. In many ways it is just as controversial as Pico's pronouncements, and one might even see this reduction to the stage as an allusive parody of its predecessor. It is a radical *bouleversement* of medieval logic and ontology. Vives has translated the '*distinguo's*' and certitudes of the Scholastics into a compelling theatrical representation with all of its illusions and ambiguities. He does not provide spoken parts, but if he had, it would have been the *sermo communis*, which he will later prescribe as the language of the stage in the *De ratione dicendi*.<sup>18</sup> The young author of the *Fabula de homine* would have been of one accord with the sentiments of the motto that still adorn Shakespeare's Globe Theater in London: 'Totus mundus agit histrionem.'

### *Rudolph Agricola's speech to the clergy of Worms* – Adrie van der Laan

De voordracht van Adrie van der Laan wordt gepubliceerd in Z. von Martels en V.M. Schmidt (red.), *Antiquity renewed. Late-classical and early-modern themes*, Leuven (Peeters) [2003].

---

<sup>17</sup> Juan Luis Vives, 'A Fable about Man', trans. Nancy Lenkeith in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, ed. Paul Oskar Kristeller, (Chicago 1948), pp. 385-393.

<sup>18</sup> *De ratione dicendi*, 3,38.