

## PRÄSÄKULAR/POSTSÄKULAR – “POUR EN FINIR AVEC LE JUGEMENT”

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### ***The Foreclosure of Nature and the Secularized World in Post-Shakespearian Worlds and Times***

Husserl's invention of the life-world has made manifest and brought to a head what A.N. Whitehead, in a most striking turn from mathematics to a new meta-physical cosmology, had called, a couple of years before Husserl, the “bifurcation of nature” (*The Concept of Nature*, 1920). In a remarkable décalage both phenomenology and epistemology became aware of a basic condition of the world, which according to Husserl and Whitehead had remained unrecognized over centuries in whose development the sciences had, according to common lore up to now, brought about a newer and truer conception of the world and nature. Since this is the common ground discovered by both theories: the total “closure of nature” towards an equally total *evidence* of the life world.

Interestingly, recent assessments like Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age* (2008) do not deal with a challenge like Whitehead's. Even in Taylor's reading of William James's *Varieties of Religious Experience*, also one of the main references of Whitehead's conversion from mathematics to a new metaphysics, the eclipse of nature and Whitehead's bifurcation thesis are conspicuously absent. Nature as the excluded other of the *Secular Age* – as its scientifically manageable implication (no cognitive content left for religiously alienated experience), becomes the playground for secular ‘expressisms’ (Taylor's term), i.e. quasi literary attitudes left to the life-world's life in the world and, as such, the residue of the former literary sphere in the *Secular Age*. Whitehead's turn, on the other hand, indicates a new fate or, rather, achievement of the literary, even a new conception of history. Going back to the *theatrum mundi* revolution, this achievement does not consist in a resistance to the secular, but to the scientific entanglement and misunderstanding of it. Ambiguity – the apparently undecidable nature of literary expression – is the soil, where the flowers of a new rhetoric grow, and a ‘crypsis’ of nature originates (Milton's term), that counteracts and transforms the bifurcation of nature against the mythic grain of scientific progress.