

## Developing a Critical Planetary Romanticism (CPR) for the Earth: (Re)Attuning to the Worlds we Live In

Whitney A. Bauman  
Florida International University  
Miami, FL USA

### Abstract:

Both Modern and Post-Modern thought have (until recently) been guilty of limiting the field of reflection to that of the human. Dominant Western, Modern thought famously, takes humans to be exceptional to the rest of the natural world and often understands nature as resource. Post-modernity in its critique of Modernity, has often been scared of nature because its ability to fix ideas with what is “natural” or “given.” Recently more immanent ways of thinking (new materialisms, object-oriented ontologies, neo-animisms, and affect theories among others) have taken humans seriously as part of the rest of the evolving planetary community. Sometimes these have been in dialogue with older traditions of immanence found in many of the world’s religions, but often these older traditions have been ignored. The first part of this paper articulates a critical planetary romanticism (CPR) for the Earth, drawing from both “old” and “new” forms of immanent thought. It must be critical, in order to pay deep attention to how different co-constructions of the worlds affect different bodies differently. We need all sorts of critical theories and studies (race, feminist, queer, class, animal, disability, etc.) in order to keep our focus on those bodies that are treated unjustly and or abjected from any given co-construction of the world. It must be planetary in scale to prevent the “romantic” connection between our bodies and nature from becoming confused with one’s own culture, bioregion, or nation. And, the Romanticism is necessary in order to recognize our embeddedness in the rest of the evolving planetary community.

The second part of this paper then asks how we might think about the role of “religion” and “religiosity” within this Critical Planetary Romanticism. I argue that if (etymologically) religion is about “re-reading” and “re-assembling” (binding back) the worlds in which we live on a moment-by-moment basis, then religion might be thought of as the process of constant (re)attunement to the worlds in which we live. Such religiosity can come from historical-traditional religious texts, practices, and thinking, but also from scientific discoveries, the insights of critical theories, reading a good bit of fiction, and/or experiences of the more than human world (just to name a few). Such constant (re)attunement is needed as we live in open, evolving, planetary systems. Finally, this (re)attunement to the worlds in which we live helps us to remember that many different worlds, at any given point in time, make up the planetary community. There is no single world in which we all must be incorporated, but rather the many worlds (human and non) make up what we call the planetary at any given moment.

**Brief Bio:** Whitney Bauman is Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Florida International University in Miami. His research and teaching interests focus on “religion and science,” and “religion and ecology / nature.” His most recent books include: *Religion and Ecology: Developing a Planetary Ethic* (Columbia University Press 2014), and (with Kevin O’Brien) *Environmental Ethics and Uncertainty: Wrestling with Wicked Problems* (Routledge

2019). He is currently working on a manuscript that deals with the ideas of Rachel Carson and Marjory Stoneman Douglas. In 2018, along with Kocku von Stuckrad, he co-founded Counterpoint: Navigating Knowledges in Berlin, a non-profit organization that seeks to bring academic voices around issues of globalization and climate change into dialogue with a wider public audience.