

# A RELATIONAL REALIST VISION FOR EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE

BASEM ADI





<https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

©2023 Basem Adi



This work is licensed under an Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International (CC BY-NC 4.0). This license allows you to share, copy, distribute and transmit the text; to adapt the text for non-commercial purposes of the text providing attribution is made to the authors (but not in any way that suggests that they endorse you or your use of the work). Attribution should include the following information:

Basem Adi, *A Relational Realist Vision for Education Policy and Practice*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2023, <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0327>

Further details about the CC BY-NC license are available at <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

Copyright and permissions for the reuse of many of the images included in this publication differ from the above. This information is provided in the captions and in the list of illustrations. Every effort has been made to identify and contact copyright holders and any omission or error will be corrected if notification is made to the publisher.

All external links were active at the time of publication unless otherwise stated and have been archived via the Internet Archive Wayback Machine at <https://archive.org/web>

Any digital material and resources associated with this volume will be available at <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0327#resources>

ISBN Paperback: 978-1-80064-898-2

ISBN Hardback: 978-1-80064-899-9

ISBN Digital (PDF): 978-1-80064-900-2

ISBN Digital ebook (EPUB): 978-1-80064-901-9

ISBN XML: 978-1-80064-903-3

ISBN HTML: 978-1-80064-904-0

DOI: 10.11647/OBP.0327

Cover image: Tamanna Rume, Yellow color pencil isolated on blue paper background (2020), [https://unsplash.com/photos/FtJEat\\_S7Q4](https://unsplash.com/photos/FtJEat_S7Q4)

Cover design: Jeevanjot Kaur Nagpal

# 5. Student Development as the Referential Reality of Education

---

This chapter proposes an alternative education service based on the relational realist approach. I aim to show how it can lead to an alternative value horizon and different practices by institutional organisation on the level of face-to-face interactions. In presenting this case, the chapter is divided into two main areas that are inter-related and establish an alternative to system-based *lib/lab* approaches:

1. A relational epistemology that starts from the ontology of the relation is applied to Parsons's AGIL functional model.<sup>1</sup> The goal is to utilise this model in a relational way in which the value-pattern (L) of the model is deemed emergent from the relation, that is, its *symbolic reference*. In a relational epistemic approach, the evolutionary relationship between observer and observed connects the learner to the schooling environment from the learner's perspective (the value-pattern of the relation).
2. The hegemony of the *lib/lab* model in education compromises learners' autonomy and, thus, the potential development of all students. Employability is the dominant rationale that informs education policies and practices. In this context, the parameters of learner needs are derived from an external mode of determination

---

1 The AGIL scheme is appropriated in a way that moves from Parsons's emphasis on the functionalist prerequisites of an institutionalised system of action to an analytic compass that coheres with a stratified and emergent understanding of social reality. In the case of the relational understanding of social reality, relations consist of four orientations of meaning – means (A), goals (G), norms (I) and values (L). The relationality of these four dimensions analytically accounts for the emergence of social facts. Hence the fundamental point of reference when accounting for the emergence of social facts is not the norms of integration of environmental interchanges – as is the case in Parsons's AGIL – but the reciprocal interaction between the dimensions of social relations (Donati 2011).

— the complex and changing needs of the economy. This extrinsic definition of education's parameters influences curriculum planning, assessment design, and learners' credentialing. The learner is a human capital resource whose skills are pre-directed in an up-down centralised outcome-based approach to sociability. While system-based large-scale group testing screens and categorises students into graded bands, the relational alternative starts from reciprocity that buttresses the learner's agency in the learning process. The learning environment, when defined by its relationships, is understood as the place of emergence of value patterns that guide the nature of ties that bind reciprocally oriented subjects.

## Talent Development is Education's Referential Reality

The realist *philosophical ontology* considers the nature of social reality and emphasises the interplay within relationships that generate this reality. It starts from the premise, discussed in earlier chapters, that social reality is relational, that is, the relation is not derived from pre-identified elements but is a *sui generis* emergent reality. From this perspective, we differentiate the human (*refero*) and the interconnectedness of the human to the socio-cultural context. Relational education, in admitting these previously discussed preliminaries, derives its legitimacy from the capabilities of those involved to transform their environment in ways that acknowledge this interconnectedness in reference to the transcendental dimension that defines the function of social roles, whether at the institutional level or within the classroom. In this context, talent development — that is, the development of the human element — is education's relational orientation and referential object. The epistemic quadrangle, discussed in Chapter Two, is a knowledge approach enacted, in contrast to system-based models, from within the relationality of learning environments to advance its referential object (*latent reality*). The approach links personal morphogenesis to the socio-culture context of education provision (social morphogenesis).

The referential detachment of the epistemic quadrangle means a reciprocal orientation of subjects-in-relation that directs transformative social formations and practices. In the case of education practice, the model describes how the ontological reality of the learner is represented and responded to within relationships. Responsive practices judge the efficacy of education practices according to how the relative autonomy

of the student — as a concrete singularity — is directed from within a socio-cultural context. Accordingly, the relational *symbolic code* of the socio-cultural context ties the teacher to the learner and recognises three main concerns in education:

1. The teacher is in referential detachment to the learner's reality as Alter (the learner as a concrete singularity).
2. The socio-cultural context mediates the epistemic relation between *Ego and Alter*. Social reflexivity, through reciprocal partnerships, transforms this context to maximise talent development. As required outcomes morphogenetically return to the reflexive interplay within relationships, the parameters of sociability need to be expanded to produce relational goods that further the efficacy of learner development. Thus, the *relational goods* generated produce Added Social Value (ASV) in the form of innovative practices that further learning efficacy. Talent development then becomes a relational good sustained by ASV that extends to other social domains and is part of broader societal reflexivity within a synergy of interconnected networks.
3. Based on an in-gear conception, which will be discussed in the next chapter, the development of learner agency does not equate to an individualistic notion of learning and knowing (Freire in dialogue with Shor 1987: 99). Learning and knowing are necessary components of a single dialogic undertaking due to the emergence of the human person in and from relational contexts. Consequently, personal emergence means autonomy is relative to the context that provides meaning and direction.

## Re-Thinking Parsons's AGIL Functional Scheme in a Relational Way

This section will re-think the AGIL scheme utilising the relational general approach. The significance of the AGIL functional scheme is that it is grounded in modernity's *symbolic code* and is present in the representation of the social in the *lib/lab* approach to policy. First, before proposing a relational re-think of this scheme, it is necessary to outline the theory and its problems briefly. The issues shown will become the basis of the noted relational re-think of Parsons's AGIL scheme.

### An Outline of Parsons's *AGIL Scheme*

Parsons sought to abstract the underlying mechanisms that produce uniformities at the level of interactional dynamics. The observed uniformities are generated by the integrative role of normative expectations, institutionalised in social relationships, which individual actors then internalise. This functionalist model aims to posit a relational interconnection between social systems and personalities through reciprocated expectations that are simultaneously objects of the situation. The fundamental starting point is the structure of relations between the involved actors in the interactive process:

Since a social system is a system of processes of interaction between actors, it is the structure of relations between the actors involved in the interactive process which is essentially the structure of the social system (Parsons 2005: 15).

Signs and symbols are aspects of pattern-maintenance that define the standards reciprocated between actors. These standards are the basis of the relationship's organisation, considering the broader institutionalised environment. Shared expectations (uniformities), therefore, define empirically significant sociological problems. While differentiated capacities or abilities of actors exist, they are not primary determinations of social systems:

There are differentiated capacities or abilities but for the general population parsimony may be applied. It is relatively unlikely that large-scale social systems are primarily determined by biological differences in the capabilities of populations (Parsons 2005: 5).

The analysis of subjective motivation thus alludes to a broader problem of integration into the cultural system that shapes reciprocated expectations. The problem of integration, for Parsons, is the fundamental relationship common to all types and modes of interactional orientation (Parsons 2005: 7). Value-orientations formulate which aspects of the cultural tradition are articulated in the action system and form part of the motivational mechanisms of individual actors.

As a result, the structure of social systems and their motivational mechanisms objectively exist on an independent level to the personality system. Within the structure of the action frame of reference, with its

value-orientation, it is possible to analyse the connection between the personality system and social system. Successful integration between personality and social systems generates a functioning societal system that meets the prerequisites of maintaining the system's longevity. Thus, the processes within the action frame of reference — the conditions of interaction as analytical objects — structure the relations between actors. The system is a network of such relationships.

With their institutionalised relationships, social systems need motivated individuals to fulfil their given status-role. In the relations between actors, the status-role connects the personality system to the structure of relations. Parsons distinguishes the social actor (a bundle of statuses and roles) from the personality system. The structure of relations exists independently and provides motivational mechanisms for individuals to take up conveyed bundles of statuses and roles. The conformity of the personality system to a distinct status-role is mutually interdependent on the motivational mechanisms of the social structures of relations.

The personality system needs to participate actively to maintain the structure of relations, and the structures themselves need to adapt to meet the needs of individuals. Adequate mechanisms are necessary to ensure individuals are motivated to meet personal needs through pre-given status-roles and thus perform their required 'maintenance patterns'. Accordingly, status-roles are constituted by a dynamic interchange between the personality system, cultural system, and the broader structures of relations in the social system. According to Parsons, the integration of the personality system, through the internalisation of common value patterns, is the 'major point of reference for all analysis which may claim to be a dynamic process of social analysis' (Parsons 2005: 27). Personality and social systems, though distinct levels in the dynamics of mutual interchange, are made up of the same 'stuff' (Parsons 2005: 11). Both levels require adequate interchanges to function effectively.

In this analysis, the AGIL functional approach to the personality and social systems emphasises alignment and the glue that generates this alignment is found in the cultural system's value-patterns. These value-patterns align the need-dispositions of the personality and the role-expectations of the social system:

We know certain fundamental relations between the institutionalisation and the internalisation of culture. Above all, perhaps, we know that the fundamental common sector of personalities and social systems consists in the value-patterns which define role-expectations. The motivational structures thus organised are units both of personality as a system and of the social system in which the actor participates; they are need-dispositions of the personality and they are role-expectations of the social system (Parsons 2005: 363).

The relationship between the need-dispositions of the personality, role-expectations of the social system, and internalised-institutionalised value-patterns of culture organises action systems. Managing the organism's relationship by considering role expectations and value-patterns defines the system of action as a boundary-maintaining system.<sup>2</sup> The relationship of the need-dispositions is, therefore, understood in terms of its interdependence on its environment:

This fundamental relationship between need-dispositions of the personality, role-expectations of the social system and internalised-institutionalised value-patterns of the culture, is the fundamental nodal point of the organisation of systems of action. It is the point at which both the interdependence and the independence from each other of personality, social system and culture focus (Parsons 2005: 363).

The systems of action are viewed from the perspective of structured relationships. Thus, the personality system works parallel to the AGIL of the social system with regard to the institutionalisation of value-patterns. It is the value-pattern that regulates the personality system's subjective orientation and goal-directed behaviour. For this reason, the role-status of the social system should be adequately responsive to the need-dispositions of personalities. To sustain motivational structures is, simultaneously, to fulfil social system needs.

---

2 A system of action refers to relations between interdependent organisms and non-social objects within a shared environment. The organism's system of relations to its environment is the frame of reference of a system of action: 'It is this relational system which is the system of action, not the organism as a system' (Parsons 2005: 364). As the system of action is identified as relational, its interchanges with the environment implicate boundary-maintaining processes to distinguish it as an organism. Parsons terms the system as boundary-maintaining through 'certain constancies of pattern' (Parsons 2005: 324) that establish a fundamental point of reference for analysing its environmental interchanges.



Parsons states this relationship between individual and system needs in terms of status-roles that connect the institutionalisation of value-patterns with their internalisation at the personality level. The dyadic relationship of *Ego and Alter* is aligned through roles that integrate the personality system into a social system. It is the *system* of interaction as a collectivity with its roles that pre-suppose the process of interaction through norms regulated through common values.<sup>3</sup> Parsons writes,

As personalities, each individual may be considered a system with its own values, goals, etc., facing the other as part of an 'environment' that provides certain opportunities for goal-attainment as well as certain limitations and sources of frustrations. Though interdependence can be taken into account at this level, this isn't equivalent to treating the process of interaction as a social system. True, the action of alter is an essential part of the conditions bearing on the attainment of ego's goals, but the vital sociological question concerns the nature and degree of the integration of the *system* of interaction as a social system (Parsons 1985: 164).

### Transcending System-Based Value-Patterns

Parsons's analysis of dynamic processes starts from the integration of interchanges between the personality system, the cultural system, and the broader structure of relations that make up the social system. What is the rationale that defines this dynamic process? It is the perspective of institutionalised value-patterns and the normative integration of the personality system into these value-patterns. Parsons's framework resonates with modernity's *symbolic code* insofar as it aims to provide enough space for individuals to identify their needs but regulates the environment, which determines the agreed-upon reciprocal interchanges. The relational autonomy of the personality system is pre-defined in the context of this system-based structured dialectic of freedom and control.

---

3 Collectivity, according to Parsons, is a 'system of concretely interactive specific roles'. Thus, collectivity is more specific than institutions and refers to particular systems of interaction. Institutions, on the other hand, organise roles through a 'complex of patterned elements in role expectations which may apply to an indefinite number of collectivity' (Parsons 2005: 25). Rather than being context-specific, institutions refer to the fundamental functional problem of organising role expectations through normative patterns (Johnson 2008).

With its focus on adaptation and reproduction of the normative foundation, Parsons's AGIL of the social relation is a salient feature of *lib/lab* governance and its never-ending goal to integrate the personality system. Governance does not aim to know and develop Alter; instead, it seeks to regulate the relationship with Ego and sustain system performance by adaptation through further functional differentiation. As discussed in previous chapters, this direction in governance attempts to maintain outcomes through mechanisms that seek to motivate and direct subjective orientation. The insular system-based approach of *lib/lab* governance negates the learner's *latent reality*. This negation compromises the utilisation of contextual resources, including organisational settings, when innovating learner-based concepts and practices. To start from the structure of the social relation is to compromise the autonomy of participants. What is needed instead are associational formations to direct education to better meet the needs of learners as irreducible agents and co-creators of their learning.

The epistemology of relational realist sociology re-works the AGIL scheme so that the autonomy of agents in education — whether personal or collective — is translated into concepts and practices that start from the supra-functional (latent) dimension of the relation<sup>4</sup>. The mediation between the observer and this supra-functional dimension is reflexive as the concepts and practices developed within relations are emergent from reconstitutive *morphogenetic cycles*. These cycles continuously transform previously emergent outcomes. Reflexive mediations — seeking to know rather than to regulate — manage the boundaries between *refero* and *religo* within the 'black box' of sociability. Both *refero* and *religo* represent different components of the social relation's AGIL. (L) and (G) identify the model's referential axis (*refero*), while (A) and (I) identify its organisational axis (*religo*) — see Figure 7.

---

4 The supra-functional denotes the activity of individuals or collectives oriented toward the performative dynamics of the relation and the outcomes they produce. It is within and through relations that the human element is co-emergent (the *latent reality*). Hence, the supra-functional is in opposition to the functional model of differentiation that continuously aims to align the need-dispositions of the personality and the role-expectations of the social system (Donati 2011).

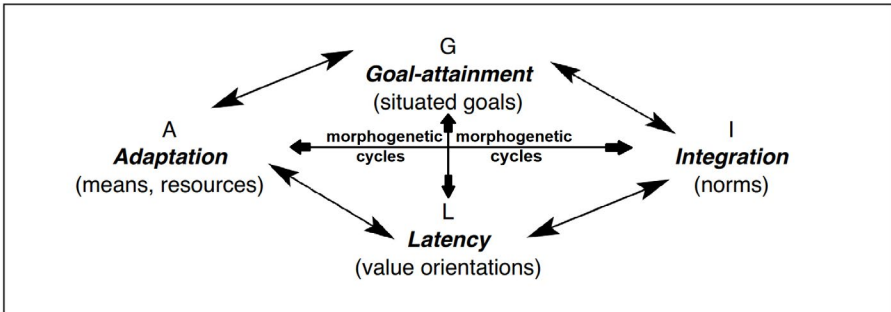


Fig. 7 The components of social relations according to the AGIL scheme (Donati 2011: 87). The diagram has been adapted to show the interchange between the referential (L-I) and organisational (A-G) dimensions of social relations in the context of the morphogenetic emergence of *relational goods*.

Reciprocal and reflexive management of boundaries means the regulated passive subject of system-based functionalism is replaced with an active one given license within the internal dynamics of the relation to co-manage his/her relationality. The reciprocal management of relational differentiation between *Ego and Alter* deepens social inclusion and produces *Added Social Value (ASV)*. In turn, this *ASV* does not address functional needs but, rather, enhances the sources of social capital (trust, cooperation, and reciprocity) that expand the parameters of sociability. A relational re-thinking of the AGIL scheme replaces the question of integration with a non-system-defined reflexivity from which *relational goods*, producing *ASV*, are generated.

To reiterate, the reflexive imperative within the relation implicates a reflective system that is responsive to the different needs of its participants (*Relational Subjects*). When participants are active, they can redraw the system using the powers and relational autonomy of the personal and collective. Reflexivity also means autonomy to know the latent dimension — the epistemic quadrangle's reference being the normative foundation of the relational *symbolic code* — and, through dialogue (non-negation of *Alter*), adopts a *meta-reflexive* stance that goes beyond pre-defined value-horizons. The relation's components are related through the reflexive imperative, whose symbolic identity is grounded in the relational epistemological approach.

A relational model, then, does not make interventions that seek to enhance the efficacy of system-defined motivational mechanisms; rather, it ascribes the responsibility of integration to the reflexive imperative that discerns and then dedicates itself to making the right reciprocal connections that generate effective *relational goods*. As explained in the previous chapter, the context in which *relational goods* are generated is the cyclical relationship between the parameters of sociability and *relational goods*, that is, *relational goods* are generated by the environment of sociability, and the parameters of sociability are renewed by the generation of *relational goods*.

Based on the above, a relational rethinking of AGIL raises the following points that impact the organisation and identity of education services. Each of these will be further expanded:

1. Social integration is emergent from the relationality of the different elements of the relation. The referential axis (transcendence) shapes the direction and dynamics of organisational ties that produce this integration (*religo*).
2. As discussed in Chapter Four, the referential axis of AGIL is enacted inside the dynamics of interaction. Integration based on interactive processes means relational concepts and practices must be established to achieve this integration. There is no *a priori* definition of pedagogy or pedagogical outcomes that achieve pre-defined motivational mechanisms for learning. Instead, outcomes follow *ex-post facto* and are based on the inner dynamics of the learning environment. Education takes its fullest sense when the interactive dynamics of learning are the basis of curriculum planning and assessment. The learner takes an active role in directing his or her learning and how subject content is delivered.
3. The relational nature of cognitive processes discussed previously implicates a dialogical conception of the curriculum and learning connected to the world. This conception — the basis of a realist theory of education but also of knowledge — is necessarily interactive. Thus, considering the path of personal morphogenesis, each student has a unique trajectory that is embodied and necessarily develops in dialogue with the world.

## Continuity between Primary and Secondary Relational Goods

As stated, relational social integration is normatively shaped by the referential axis (the ‘We-ness’ of the relation). The referential axis consists of the latency dimension (L) and goals pursued (G). Goals pursued are informed by a reciprocal exchange between interactants guided by their relation’s *latent ontological reality* (L). Hence, the social system adapts morphogenetically to change its direction to integrate (I) and meet the needs of its diverse participants in a relationally inclusive manner. The generation of *primary and secondary relational goods* is necessary to maintain synergy and continuity between the referential and organisational dimensions of AGIL.<sup>5</sup>

Primary *relational goods* pertain to networks of proximity that facilitate intersubjective interactions in informal settings, while secondary *relational goods* refer to the formal associative features of networks that extend beyond the familiarity of face-to-face interactions (Donati & Archer 2015). The associative nature of secondary *relational goods* means they play an impersonal organisational role that manages differentiation in immediate primary relations based on the relation’s greater identity (its ‘We-ness’). The continuity between the subjective, intersubjective, and impersonal dimensions of the relation — correlates with the referential and structural axis of AGIL — shapes the patterns of sociability. These patterns are the *ASV* produced within the parameters of sociability and the renewal of *relational goods* that are subsequently generated in *morphogenetic cycles*.

As noted in the previous chapter, sociability is defined as social relationality in which people’s trust and cooperation are acted in the context of a *symbolic reference* (‘We-ness’) emergent from reciprocal

---

5 The primary *Relational Subject* operates within informal face-to-face interactions. On the other hand, secondary *Relational Subjects* operate within formal social networks that organise informal relations in transformative ways. The weaving of both through the generation of *relational goods* enhances the capacity of *Relational Subjects* to produce further primary and secondary *relational goods*. As a result, there is mutual reinforcement between the activities of primary and secondary *Relational Subjects* that generate *relational goods* in informal face-to-face interactions and in the more organised associations of social solidarity that formalise immediate interactions (Archer & Donati 2015).

interactions and connections. The reflexive transformation of the parameters of this sociability develops collective subjects (Donati 2011). Consequently, the organisational elements of the relation are in dialogue with the interactive dynamics that generate the experiences and practices of teachers and students. The features of these organisational elements encourage classroom teaching and assessment practices that guide and reflexively nurture education's developmental mission. Learning aims and objectives are not pre-set according to an outcome-based preconception that valorises system-led initiatives (Kelly 2004). Instead, developmental goals are tied to what students do and the cultivated experiences during the learning process: the student is an active partner in his or her learning. The morphogenetic interplay between intersubjective proximity and its organisational background is guided by this reciprocal *symbolic code* of non-negation (the referential axis of the relation).

## Relational Concepts and Practices

Organisational ties emerge from the *meta-reflexive* management of the interconnection between the referential and organisational axis. Whether individual or social, *meta-reflexive* management requires, in Freire's terms, 'critical consciousness' to engage in relations with the world (Freire 2000). Any learning intended to be educational develops the potential capacities of relationally autonomous learners and should change their direction in relation to the world (Freire in dialogue with Shor 1987a; Freire in dialogue with Shor 1987b). Participants are transformed when the concepts adopted and practices utilised are situated in and through their relationality with the world. So-called 'situated pedagogy'—explored in the next chapter—adapts learning, taking into account the shifting subjective access point at the beginning of each learning cycle.<sup>6</sup>

---

6 Subjective access points are identified in the socialised experiences of students; these experiences are an entry to critical investigation. Utilising access points, subject content is made relevant when approaching the object of investigation. Situated pedagogy is an implication of the two-way dialogue and part of the codification and de-codification process from which the content is re-presented to the students (see Chapter Six). While a subjective input point represents the developmental point of the student at the beginning of a learning cycle, subjective access points identify the

Subjective access points become the site of reciprocal exchanges between *Ego and Alter* that change the organisational dynamics and the diverse ways students are integrated into the learning process.

Furthermore, society is a network of networks, and the development of critical consciousness has ramifications for other social domains. In contrast to a system-based integration model, the critical consciousness developed in the relational model expands the horizons of value-patterns to cultural possibilities that transcend existing forms of mediation. Participants navigating the continuity between education and broader societal networks, buttressed by relational reciprocity, are encouraged and enabled to seek situated solutions within society's 'black box'.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, practices that change the learner's direction to the world are necessarily relationally referential and require solutions that are not extrinsically defined; they are directed instead by a relational theory of knowledge.

## The Directive Liberating Approach

The development of learner autonomy does not mean the negation of interdependence between diverse levels of reality and the learner's place in the world. As argued, the person is emergent from natural, practical, and discursive orders and these orders work as both constraints and enablements. Learning and learner autonomy are inherently relational, as we cannot disengage from the world. Learners must co-create with teachers their autonomy — an idea that will be expanded in the next chapter; this model of relational education is not a *laissez-faire* approach to learning. Consequently, student ownership (enablement) of their learning is directed (constraint), leading to a 'directive liberating approach' — one that distinguishes the distinct roles of the teacher and student in learning relationships (Freire in dialogue with Shor 1987a; Freire in dialogue with Shor 1987b; Chambers 2019).

---

ongoing experiences of the students as part of the re-presentation of subject content within classroom dynamics.

7 The 'black box' refers to the internal dynamics of sociability — the social processes that generate transformation (morphogenesis) or reproduction (morphostasis) as an emergent relational effect.

In learning, the epistemic quadrangle is an evolutionary epistemology defined by the relational character of cognitive processes and how these processes are mediated between the observer and the world. The relational theory of knowing, however, does not mean an authoritarian regulation of freedom. Answers are not pre-given; instead, knowledge develops through open and critical mediation within relationships. The dialogical posture, according to Freire, is a direct response to epistemological inquietude as what is already known can be known better:

In my view, each class is a class through which students and teachers engage in a search for the knowledge already obtained so they can adopt a dialogical posture as a response to their epistemological inquietude that forces the revision of what is already known so they can know it better (Freire in dialogue with Macedo 1995: 383).

As Freire suggests, in epistemological relationships, to direct the learner is to affirm the pre-existence of subject criteria and knowledge. Dialogue is a process of learning and knowing (Freire in dialogue with Macedo 1995), and the student is enabled to take part in this dialogue in line with pre-existing constraints of obtained knowledge (control). At the same time, the liberating aspect of this direction means the dialogical application of knowledge and learning cannot be disconnected from the learner's changing subjective access point. Thus, personal morphogenesis is still the referential component of practice. Based on the interplay of constraint and enablement, two realities should be considered:

1. Subject knowledge and criteria are embedded in an evolutionary cultural repository that mediates judgmental reason towards the object of reference. The importance of this knowledge is not negated when we start from the student's perspective.
2. The enablement of agentic authority means the learner is directed dialogically to utilise obtained knowledge when naming the object of knowledge. So, the goal is to develop the learner to use received mediations, then the learner becomes an object of knowledge for teachers. The teacher scaffolds the learner towards greater self-reliance and, in the process, situates existing mediations in reciprocal reference to the learner's morphogenesis. Therefore, mediations are not passively received but adapted to the learner's stage of development (the subjective access point). As each learner has an irreducible morphogenetic trajectory, then directing him or



her cannot become a disconnected judgement of learning. Instead, it collaborates with the learner *for* learning and is intrinsically tied to what the learner does as an active agent. A teacher, then, enables even as he or she constrains with direction, fostering relational participation and critical reflection in reference to the object of knowledge.

## Concluding Remarks

This chapter aimed to show the implications of a relational epistemological approach for an alternative horizon that includes the level of face-to-face interactions and the formal patterns that organise these interactions. The chapter — continuing the theme of immanent critique — first looked to show the conceptual circularity of Parsons functionalist system-based AGIL scheme. In the functionalist scheme, social systems and their institutionalised relationships rely upon motivated individuals who can fulfil their status-roles. As the problem of integration is viewed as common to all types and modes of interactional orientation, value-orientations formulate what aspects of the cultural system are articulated as part of the motivation mechanisms of individual actors. The AGIL of the social system works parallel to the personality system with regard to the institutionalisation of value patterns that pre-exist in the bundle of status-roles. Therefore, the status-role becomes the essential concept in sociology and the fundamental category that integrates the personality system into the social system of interaction.

As is the case in the modernist *symbolic code*, the dyadic relationship between *Ego and Alter* is construed as something to be integrated into the pre-existing perspective of structured relationships. The AGIL scheme's relational turn as proposed in this chapter, however, views the autonomy of the learner — in the form of changing subjective access points — as something to be known rather than regulated. As a result, the AGIL scheme is rethought to put the transcendence of the human as the starting point (the value-horizon of the relation (L)). By placing the human element as the starting point, dyadic relationships from the perspective of Alter become the object of referential detachment that are managed *meta-reflexively* within the 'black box' of sociability. The morphogenetic relation between sociability and *relational goods* defines

the mediations between both that enhance the value of the learner and learning.

The *ASV* produced in the educational process demonstrates the enrichment of sources of social capital through the reciprocal management of relations of proximity between *Ego and Alter*. The referential axis of AGIL views organisational ties (*religo*) through the prism of these relations of proximity. At the same time, relations of proximity are coordinated through the structural axis of AGIL. The structural axis directs the patterns of sociability in the *ASV* that renew relational goods. Hence, the synergy between *primary and secondary relational goods* ensures continuity between the referential and structural axis of AGIL. The shape of outcomes, in the form of formal settings, emerges in response to the referential axis and is based on the inner dynamics of learning. In terms of teaching and learning, three points are made salient:

1. Goals pursued are informed by reciprocal exchanges between interactants in reference to the relation's (L) dimension.
2. Relational concepts and practices are developed in situated ways that are responsive to the relational nature of cognitive processes.
3. The directive liberating approach means the development of the learner's autonomy is in relational dialogue with the world.

The dialectic between constraint and enablement implicates an understanding of subject criteria that pre-exists the learner and supplies avenues to revise the already known so it can be known better. Dialogue becomes a process that directs the learner in response to his changing subjective access points (the liberating dimension of enablement) when developing capabilities to know better. Within the interactive dynamics of teaching and learning, agentic authority is developed by scaffolding the learner towards greater self-reliance, considering subject knowledge and criteria. Thus, criteria are utilised in a responsive way to direct learning in dialogue with the learner's development.