

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Resonance as a Conceptual Lever for Transforming Educational Practices and Institutions

Nicolas Cuneen

University of Louvain (UCLouvain), Ottignies-Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium

Correspondence: Nicolas Cuneen (nicolas.cuneen@uclouvain.be)

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ABSTRACT

This article offers a preliminary analysis of how Hartmut Rosa's concept of *resonance* might meaningfully participate in the transformation of educational practices and institutions, through an exploration of its operational potential. The paper begins by briefly framing the issue of relational vs. individualized educational goals and addressing the complicated relationship between resonance and skill development. Two hypotheses that open up avenues for further research are then explored. The first hypothesis addressed the relationship between resonance theory and moral education through a confrontation with recent literature in education sciences on the development of responsibility, following the idea that, for educational policy to shift away from the skills approach that gels uncomfortably with resonance pedagogy, the latter would need to articulate its capacity to effectively promote a wide range of desirable outcomes beyond the theoretically indigenous aim of dispositional resonance. The second hypothesis posits two ways that resonance theory might affect decision-making processes within educational institutions, examining the role that teachers might play in securing the institutional conditions of resonant pedagogical relationships and proposing a preliminary practical interpretation of Rosa's idea of a resonance compass. The paper closes with a short reflection on the practical distinction between *resonance* and *responsiveness* as conceptual levers for educational change, examining what sets resonance pedagogy apart from other relational approaches.

In his recent work on *resonance*, Hartmut Rosa makes a number of unique contributions to contemporary critical theory, not the least of which is his success in making meaningful and substantive claims about the structural requirements for leading a good life. One of the great strengths of Rosa's endeavor is his theory's ability to articulate those necessarily ephemeral experiences of resonance with the potentially sustainable forms of social, institutional, and relational architecture that allow for human life to be regularly populated with such experiences. The theoretical conception of such *axes of resonance*, as Rosa calls them, translates the otherwise critical-romantic categories of resonance and alienation into an actionable framework for pursuing a new collective relationship with the world.

Of the eleven resonance axes explored in *Resonance*, the one regarding educational institutions represents somewhat of an outlier in that, as a formative space, it has a unique impact on all the other axes. As an axe of resonance, schools can enable students to "cultivate relationships to the world" (Rosa 2019, 241) by developing a form of *dispositional resonance*, a habitual attitude whereby we "[confront] the world, including what is strange, new and other, with both intrinsic interest (*that could be interesting/ exciting/fascinating*) and high expectations of self-efficacy" (247). Viewed through the lens of resonance theory, the goal of education is explicitly to open up and establish axes of resonance that will allow individuals to sustainably transform themselves and the world throughout their lives. As Rosa states in

his preface (19), the development and maintenance of such axes depend not only on the institutional and physical configuration of the world but also on a subject's disposition, as well as the relationship between this configuration and disposition.

Since this one resonance axe seems to so heavily condition access to all the other scaffolding of a good life, one could expect the elaboration of an educational politics to be a priority within resonance theory. And yet, true to the apolitical tone of his work, Rosa shies away from the task. With regard to society as a whole, Rosa notes that while his theory “does not pursue its own political agenda,” it may serve as “a compass in contemporary political debates, as it provides a standard for action” (458). And yet, when it comes to educational politics and institutions, he takes a further step back in claiming that he cannot simply provide a “resonance compass” for schools, but that he thinks one could be built (Rosa 2022, 146).

Instead, his writings and interviews on education offer a theoretical lens that provides a sort of perspective shift, where the value of educational practices is grounded in a specific *mode of relation*. Applying his fundamental conceptual opposition of resonance and alienation to the field of pedagogy, he paints two ideal types of pedagogical relationships: One that transforms students and teachers alike by sparking their desire to learn together and from one another in responsive dialogue, and one where silence, fear or hostility end up stunting the dynamic process of self-transformation for all those involved. The vibrant language of Rosa's conceptual apparatus poignantly and faithfully captures those moments of pedagogical joy and despair that we have all experienced in our lives at least as students, if not also as educators.

The purpose of this contribution is to make some tentative steps forward in determining how the concept of resonance might meaningfully participate in the transformation of educational practices and institutions. Rosa makes it clear that his concept is intended to be both descriptive and normative; here, I intend to explore its *operational* potential within the field of education. After briefly framing the issue of relational vs. individualized educational goals, I will put forward two hypotheses that open up avenues for further research. The first hypothesis explores the relationship between resonance theory and moral education through a confrontation with recent literature in education sciences on the development of responsibility. This follows the idea that, for educational policy to shift away from the skills approach that gels uncomfortably with resonance pedagogy, it would be interesting for the latter to articulate its capacity to effectively promote a wide range of desirable outcomes beyond the theoretically indigenous aim of dispositional resonance, integrating the legitimate ambitions of the skills paradigm but also those of ethical and civic education. The second hypothesis posits two ways that resonance theory might affect decision-making processes within educational institutions, examining the role that teachers might play in securing the institutional conditions of resonant pedagogical relationships and proposing a preliminary practical interpretation of Rosa's idea of a resonance compass. The paper will close with a short reflection on the practical distinction between *resonance* and *responsiveness* as conceptual levers for educational change, examining what sets resonance pedagogy apart from other relational approaches.

1 | Valuing the Quality of Relations Over Individualized Outcomes

In the realm of pedagogy, the core of Rosa's proposal is a perspective shift wherein the quality of educational practices is to be measured along a scale ranging from alienating to resonant. In the wake of Ivan Illich¹ and Pink Floyd (Rosa 2019, 240), he decries the alienating practices taking place in educational institutions across the world and fears that this tendency toward alienation has only become more pervasive as we have moved away from the period of “dark pedagogy” into a perhaps less violent but more sterile institutional framework (Rosa 2022, 65). These practices can only lead to the development of dispositional alienation, an attitude toward the world that extinguishes curiosity and openness to otherness, which becomes spontaneously perceived as boring, unappealing, harmful, or threatening. Against the foil provided by this compelling image of classroom-driven alienation and the lasting damage it can produce, Rosa is able to provide a rich description of those educational moments that go right, when the fire starts crackling, ears perk up and the classroom embarks in an earnest collective quest for new knowledge. The proposed educational ideal, which we will return to in a moment, consists of a specific mode of relation between the three poles that constitute the pedagogical relationship—teacher, student and material—one that enables the people and the program to speak and to be heard. For Rosa, educational practices and institutions contribute to creating good lives in a better world to the extent that the relationships within them are resonant.

This is in stark contrast with the way that educational practices are typically addressed in today's world. As Peter Taubman (2009) makes the well-documented case in *Teaching by Numbers*, the value of educational institutions and practices is typically measured through individualized outcomes that are aggregated so as to render salient certain trends and provide contrastable data points. Relevant student outcomes include the basic indicators of success—diplomas and test scores indicating skill and knowledge acquisition—as well as its precursors: student engagement, the meta-cognitive skills behind academic and behavioral discipline, or even students' self-efficacy beliefs. Similarly, teachers' performance and value are made measurable through various methods that boil relational practices down to the individual person: academic qualifications, pass rates, sick days taken, hours of yearly professional training, etc. In the “audit culture” (88) that has emerged and spread through global education governance, decisions are often made based on what will lead to an increase in these measurable-because-individualized outcomes. This culture has worked its way into the language of policy, which, having wholly adopted the skills approach, mandates their development through the vocabulary of standards, assessment, and accountability. The global educational reform movement that has emerged is largely built around international student assessments that offer a narrow definition of success (Sahlberg 2016).

In the current state of affairs, then, a fundamentally relational practice—education—is tending toward dissection into pieces for study and improvement, with a focus on the acquisition of measurable skills whose comparability across contexts lends an allure of objectivity to reform legitimization practices.

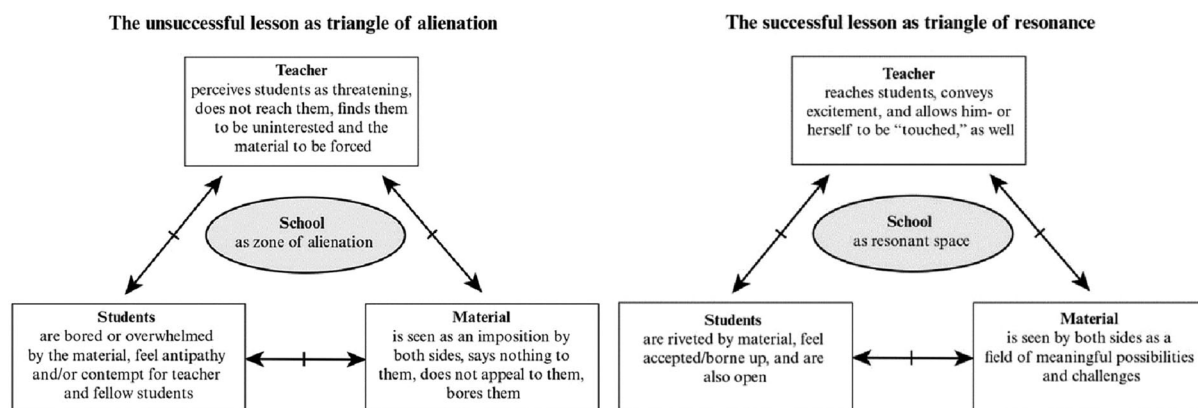


FIGURE 1 | Triangles of educational alienation and resonance (Rosa 2019, 242–243).

Rosa insists, however, that this is not the right way to go about steering educational practices, which should instead be modeled around a specific mode of relation, lest we miss the forest for the trees. In the section of *Resonance* on education and in his interviews on pedagogy, Rosa offers up an alternative framework in which the triadic relationship (teacher–student–material) comes first, both theoretically and practically (Figure 1). In Rosa’s pedagogical ideal, resonant learning starts from a spark, lit by the kindling of intrinsic interest and the inkling of self-efficacy. What emerges is a relational dynamic in which fragments of the world—people, objects, books, processes—are given voice, that is, they are made to *speak* and *be heard* in a way that touches students and teachers alike. By giving life to the objects of study, the teacher plays a key role in enabling their assimilation by students, who may then transform the world fragment through their response or transform their relationship with themselves thanks to the contact with otherness. Indeed, at the core of educational resonance is truly a responsive relationship with otherness in all its forms, one that allows participants to decenter themselves by hearing the other’s voice without reducing it to a self-confirming echo. Such a dynamic involves nontrivial subjective vulnerability and thus requires a sufficiently safe space, but safety is not synonymous with harmony. On the contrary, resonance allows for and encourages contradiction—not conflict, but fruitful friction between viewpoints and ways of approaching the world. This friction indeed constitutes an entry point for the assimilation of otherness.

Resonance occurs in the classroom when a teacher abandons the prepared sequence of her lesson plan in order to explore a particularly good question raised by a student that has piqued everyone’s attention. It occurs when a teacher pays close attention to an issue that frustrates or worries her students and organizes an exercise in which they can address it together and each affected student can speak from their heart and create a new, empowering relationship with the issue. Resonance may arise when a class lets themselves be touched by a novel or film, and the atmosphere of trust permits open expression of the stirred feelings. Resonance can also be experienced in the lecture hall, when a professor finds clever ways to let their students express themselves—even anonymously—and incorporates their words into her own speech, or when she captures their rapt attention by sharing compelling stories with theatrical skill. Educational institutions are rife with resonant relations and experiences,

whether or not they intentionally seek to cultivate them, and even when alienation reins.

Rosa’s perspective shift thus calls us to reevaluate our educational practices in the light of this mode of relation. What makes an educational practice good or bad, by contributing to or undermining actors’ capacities to build a sustainably good life, is the *quality of the triadic relationship*, not the output of diplomas, grades, disciplinary hearings, etc. An individualized outcome is posited as the explicit goal of the pedagogical relationship—dispositional resonance—but this posture toward the world does not appear measurable in any way that could usefully inform policy or practice, despite Rosa’s (2022, 43) poetic indication that resonance is measurable in the eyes. If anything is measurable in the resonance paradigm, it is the relationship itself, whose quality could in principle be measured through careful qualitative research².

This way of approaching the value of educational practices is thus in strong dissonance with the skills-based approach that has become dominant in global education policy. As Rosa (2022) puts it, focusing excessively on skills and their evaluation can lead to resonance-killing fear or simply cognitive habits of true-or-false reasoning that are incompatible with self-transformation through the assimilation of otherness. And yet, the development of skills is vital, not only for schools to fulfill their various societal and economic mandates but also in the emancipatory logic of resonance. Skills are like resources, they widen the range of action possibilities through which a subject can respond to a situation and may thus enable immediate resonant experiences or participate in the creation of stable resonance axes. In Rosa’s discussion of the economic and social *minima* required for one to flourish, he is careful not to reject the importance of resources and their minimally equitable distribution, despite his main posture of cautioning against their fetishization. The same could be said for skills, whose practical and economic versatility has made them a perfect candidate for framing educational aims in an ethically pluralistic society. Indeed, it would be difficult to argue that the maintenance of key resonance axes does not require a robust set of skills; while work is the obvious example, many skills are exercised when resonantly participating in politics and sports, when making art, and even when cultivating friendship. In the end, nothing says that resonance-dominant logic is incompatible with the development and evaluation of skills, as long as the

We will return to the issue of securing the conditions of resonant relationships in a moment. First, let us take a look at how resonance pedagogy might begin to more systematically integrate and articulate the goals of moral education, as a contribution to the development of a more complete and compelling educational politics.

There is a growing body of literature in the education sciences regarding the development of responsibility, one that provides an interesting conceptual bridge between resonance logic and

The skillset that Hagège focuses the most on is that of attention, which she deliberately and explicitly (38) reduces to its purely cognitive sense: executive control over consciousness's focusing

power. For the author, this is our main tool for keeping ahead of the ego's cunning ways of tricking us back into our fully relative worldview and thus closing our ears to the ethical demands of the world around us. As such, Hagège devotes enormous importance to the deliberate practice of regaining momentary control over our attentional processes: meditation. In her view, schools should invest heavily in meditative practices in order to develop the core attentional competencies necessary for responsibility.

From a resonance-theoretical perspective, Hagège's work brings us so close and yet leaves us so far. As soon as she captures the dialogical nature of responsibility, she reduces its development to a set of trainable skills. The author goes so far as to thematize the relationship between resonance³ and harmony before settling on harmony as one of the guiding criteria for determining the skillsets relevant to responsibility, alongside coherence, relatedness, empathy, vigilant attention, and creativity. The skills and criteria that Hagège identifies are certainly important for creating a responsible relationship with the world, but, in order to fit into the dominant educational paradigm, her proposal ends up being 'merely' pedagogical in that it argues for the inclusion of new curricula (largely centered around meditation) but ignores the relational and institutional conditions that determine how the material would be taught.

The intuition behind this brief exploration of Hagège's work is that the fundamentally relational dimension of responsibility *development* becomes clear when attention is no longer reduced to its cognitive sense. Indeed, one's attention at any given moment is determined by a large number of elements, going from the macro-level of the global mediasphere down to the interpersonal dynamics of collective, in-person attention (Citton 2017/2014). We have a somewhat limited capacity to override the attention-grabbing aspects of these, a capacity that is increased to the extent that we gain control over our attentional environments. For Hagège, we become more responsible by training the cognitive override muscle to increase its potential for sustained vigilance, but even if we can override the immediate influences of our attention, what determines what we will override them toward? It is not enough to pay attention to the ethical demands that surround us to act responsibly, which may lead to varying interpretations of our own contextual duties. We must also pay attention to the value of our actions, their moral quality, and how they affect other people. While we could say with Honneth (1996) that autonomy requires us to relate to ourselves positively as a bearer of value through our actions, so as to be motivated to act in accordance with our representations of the good, a positive relationship with oneself is ethically sterile if one simply is not paying attention.

This brings us to the following educational question: How can a teacher help their students build a durable habit of paying attention to the value of their actions? My hypothesis is that in order to become habitually attentive to the value of our actions, we need other people to pay attention to it within a certain mode of relation. When we value someone's perspective, we pay attention to what *they* value. When a beloved teacher really gives their attention to a student, the student becomes extremely attentive to the teacher's evaluative perspective, which they imaginatively reconstruct based on received feedback. The more responsive the pedagogical relationship is, the better the teacher's

evaluative eye can be understood in depth and thus durably absorbed. When the teacher is able to be open and honest—to be vulnerable enough to speak in their own voice—their sense of good and bad, right and wrong, shines through. The students they manage to reach may then probe this normative posture by interacting in class and getting feedback on their submitted work, leading to a progressive internalization of the evaluative perspective. At the same time, when a respected teacher focuses their attention on a student's responses to the world, this draws the student's attention to the value of their own words and actions, first in reaction to and then in anticipation of their teacher's gaze.

In this view, students learn to be responsible by understanding in depth, and thus rendering accessible through imaginative reconstruction of, a series of evaluative postures from people who have earned their respect and esteem thanks to the quality of the relationship they were able to build: *they learn to pay attention to what their teachers value because they value their relationships with their teachers*. Having these normative postures available populates their ethical workspace with memories and imagined reactions, with criteria and methodological considerations—material from which they can reflexively build their own strong evaluations. Those same resonant pedagogical relationships then build ethically relevant attentional dispositions when *students learn to pay attention to what their teachers pay attention to: the value of their responses to the world*.

More specifically, instead of viewing ethical attention as a process of pure selection (choosing what to attend to), it can be helpfully viewed as a process of attending to a given action *in light of specific values*. The values that we identify with may feed this attention, but identification is not always enough to ensure vigilance. When a student really likes a teacher *and* is convinced that the teacher will examine their work with attention that is competent, context-informed, assiduous, and benevolently critical, this may develop a habit of anticipating the teacher's evaluation and thus developing a disposition to attending to their own actions in light of their teacher's apparent evaluative criteria. Affection feeds identification with the teacher's inferred values, thus supporting long-term intrinsic motivation once the evaluative framework has receded, and regular attentive evaluations support vigilance in their application. Collective experiences of resonance nourish these healthy and eminently useful affective bonds between teachers and students, who manage to connect through their shared excitement for whatever object of study has been brought to life and made to speak; by connecting to the same world fragment in a vivifying and motivating way, they also develop a lasting connection with each other. This is, of course, possible only if curriculum imperatives do not overly limit teachers' capacity to explore the world with their students. Indeed, while resonance pedagogy certainly requires teachers to enjoy greater negative freedom, an issue we will shortly return to, it may also be a key vector of generating students' positive freedom by bolstering their capacity to orient themselves with reference to values they deeply identify with, thanks to their relationships with likable teachers that model them compellingly.

Schools are rife with experiences of evaluation, but the majority of these do not nourish lasting attentional habits because they emerge from a deeply alienating framework. Instead of absorbing

a beloved teacher's understanding of good and bad, students figure out how to jump through the right hoops in order to move on to the next stage. This is because the evaluations tend either to be mediated through forms of abstraction and quantification or to emanate from educational actors that demonstrate neither real sustained attention nor benevolent care toward the student in question. In other words, the lack of a positive and sustained relation skews the internalization of an ethically relevant evaluative posture.

This schematic take on responsibility education offers a rough sketch of how educational objectives grounded in a skills framework might be usefully reinterpreted through relational logic following Rosa's resonance-theoretical perspective shift. In this view, securing the conditions of resonant relationships becomes far more important than new curricula aimed at training specific skills that might bolster responsible action. Instead, the quality of the pedagogical relationship appears as a central element in the development of not only strong evaluations, fed by those of esteemed teachers and peers, but also the attentional habits necessary to regularly perceive and thematize the value borne by one's actions in different contexts. Our ethical capacity is not something to be trained in a specialized class, but instead grows from the internalized legacy of the teachers that have marked us throughout our educational history; the gift of their attention is preserved as a moral example that students whom they have touched may continue to draw from, long after the pedagogical relationship itself has come to an end.

3 | Securing the Institutional Conditions of Resonant Pedagogical Relationships

This brings us to the crucial issue of securing the institutional conditions necessary for resonant pedagogical relationships to emerge and flourish. Redefining policy through the conceptual apparatus of resonance theory (or another relation-focused homologue) would not only be politically difficult but could also lead to a variety of practical outcomes. In this section, I want to explore two possible ways in which an educational politics of resonance could be implemented.

If a school or society decides that resonant pedagogical relationships represent the best expression of their educational values, how would they go about fostering them? A resonant pedagogical relationship cannot be forced into being, but Rosa stipulates some basic conditions for its emergence. For students and teachers to reach each other, there must be an absence of fear, teachers must believe they have *something to say* about the material, and students "must approach the material openly ... and trust that they can *make it speak*" (Rosa 2019, 245), and the relational atmosphere between students must be one that does not require them to adopt defensive postures to fend off various forms of harassment.

Based on these preliminary indications, a first possibility would be for academics, education officials, and policy-makers to extensively investigate these conditions and take them seriously when making decisions or writing policy. The interpretation of these conditions would likely vary drastically; the requirement of trust and spaces that enable vulnerability, for example,

could lead an educational authority to implement new classes, to train teachers in trust-creating pedagogical techniques, to tighten security protocols and strengthen harassment reporting mechanisms, to reduce class sizes so as to make the relationship more manageable, or to design the school around a fundamental trust in teachers and their professional capacities (Sahlberg and Walker 2021). Resonance-informed decision-makers might pay more attention to the conditions behind teachers' attentional needs (class size, lesson length, administrative duties, etc.), which constitute the basic parameters that allow them to hear their students well enough to respond in their own voice. Indeed, schools would need to minimize the attentional needs that distract teachers from their students' voices, restructure teacher evaluation processes that deform what they hear by promoting defensive postures⁴, and avoid overly directive curriculum mandates that prevent teachers from seizing spontaneous opportunities to explore a world fragment that has come alive. Along those same lines, the need for teachers to feel like they have something to say about the material could motivate policy-makers to move away from standardized curricula in favor of a process(-inquiry) model where, instead of setting measurable content or skill objectives, the curriculum consists of a set of hypotheses and procedural principles that guide a collaborative research process led by the teacher but heavily involving students (McKernan 2008; Stenhouse 1975). For the material to speak to students and teachers alike, it needs to be tailored to the meso-context of the moment and place, as well as to the micro-context of students' specific interests. A resonance-appropriate approach to curriculum would thus involve expanding teachers' negative freedom. Furthermore, schools would need to prioritize existing relationships by paying greater attention to the non-fungibility of actors, swapping around teachers and students only as a last resort and not as a routine administrative principle. Finally, preservice teacher training would likely see an important overhaul with the inclusion of new classes aimed at making a subject come alive or connecting with students. While some level of standardization with regard to curriculum will certainly need to be maintained, there are methods for turning dry yet important subjects into exciting stories, such as Kieran Egan's narrative-imaginative approach (Egan 1986, 2005). Similarly, techniques can be learned to deepen and maintain links with students. For example, teachers can be trained to be aware of similarities between themselves and students that are appropriate to draw attention to, as a way of bond-building. Similarly, teachers can be coached in context-relevant acting: Constant authenticity is exhausting, so they must learn how to appear fully engaged when they are not (Sidorkin 2023).

While these ideas illustrate a step forward in prioritizing the pedagogical relationship, the option that they represent is limited insofar as the factors that lead to resonant pedagogical relationships are so contextually variable. Some classes are easy to connect with, and others remain out of reach in seemingly similar circumstances. In many cases, specific factors need to be addressed in order to build resonant relationships. This requires teachers (1) to identify the relational impact of the obstacles at play, (2) to express these issues clearly and be convinced of the legitimacy of their relational needs, and (3) to actually be taken seriously when the relational cost of a given decision or established practice is too high. Teachers have always needed their needs to be taken seriously, but as long these needs are

interpreted in a classic (non-relational) framework, technocratic response structures maintain an allure of legitimacy: Someone in a higher position and with a better diploma certainly knows better than the teachers what they need. If we are to put the relationship first, however, it becomes clear that no external expert knows better than the teachers themselves what they need to click with their students.

The alternative, then, is for resonance theory to *become a vector of collective teacher efficacy and autonomy*. Teachers' collective control over the conditions of their professional working environment could be relegitimized and refocused through the creation and application of a responsive and context-specific 'resonance compass': a tool for identifying the contextually relevant factors that enable resonant pedagogical relationships and for taking institutional action to invest in these and to address any systematic obstacles. Such a guiding mechanism would require every institution to be constantly engaged in heavily qualitative action research (Elliot 1991), but most importantly to act on what they hear and see. There would need to be a significant budget set aside for teachers not just to devote time to understanding and expressing their needs but also to provide leeway when those needs cannot be met without the expenditure of further resources. Indeed, despite Rosa's desire to shift away from resource-based thinking, it must be acknowledged that pedagogical resonance is a resource-heavy endeavor. It requires, more than anything else, the attentive presence of educators whose qualifications are extensive enough to both execute their task competently and to ensure the trust of parents, without which they cannot exercise their legitimate pedagogical authority.

Most importantly, such a bespoke resonance compass would need to be the affair of the entire willing teaching staff, not just a handful of specialists. This would require teachers to be educated in some abridged form of resonance theory in order to better identify opportunities and obstacles, to clearly express their unmet needs in terms of resonance cultivation, and to understand the well-justified foundations of these needs. The language of resonance—hearing and being heard, speaking in one's own voice, transforming ourselves by assimilating otherness, learning through intrinsic interest and self-efficacy—would need to be normalized within the educational profession in order for teachers to feel like their real relational needs are able to be perceived as legitimate by other professionals and society as a whole. Principals could promote this by acting as discourse generators (Sidorkin 2023), demonstrating the school's interest in resonance and thus showing teachers that the energy they dedicate to resonant relationships is justified and valued.

Concretely, a resonance compass would need to be implemented on multiple levels, though its use would be concentrated in the bottom rungs of existing institutional hierarchies. Teachers, trained in the language of resonance and assured of its importance, would be made attentive to the conditions and occurrences of resonance within their classrooms. Time would be dedicated to the collective discussion of what is noticed, giving teachers a specific framework in which they could help each other articulate their experiences, consolidate knowledge on recurring issues, motivate each other by sharing experiences of joyous resonance, console each other by making space to share inevitable experiences of alienation, and, in doing so, improve the quality of

their own collegial relationships. Just as with the student–teacher relationship, collective teacher efficacy requires an atmosphere of trust and a certain degree of affect-laden solidarity. This cannot be achieved when each teacher stays in their own corner or when meetings are built around issues that inspire indifference or hostility; structured and institutionally sanctioned discussions of *pedagogical resonance* may be a key way to generate autonomy-supporting *collegial resonance*. When teachers learn to trust one another and share a motivating vision of their collective needs, they can better leverage their concerted voice, for example, to insist that the physical configuration of their classrooms is not conducive to resonant learning. The knowledge generated at the classroom level would then need to trickle up through dedicated channels to regional policy, which could provide schools with both a mandate and funds for meeting their relational needs. Pedagogical resonance—an *educational experience wherein students and teachers enter into a vivifying dialogue with each other and with learning material, in a way that mobilizes self-efficacy and fosters voluntary self-transformation through attentive contact with otherness*—would need to be codified through legislation as an official objective of educational institutions.

A resonance compass also needs to include tools to measure the quality of pedagogical relationships in a way that can meet a minimal threshold of accountability and provide a modicum of standardization, thus ensuring a certain degree of educational equity. Relational measurement is difficult and expensive, but not impossible, and different approaches may cover each other's blind spots. The first method involves identifying proxy measures that provide indirect information regarding the quality of relationships, such as self-reported satisfaction or well-being, student retention rates, student engagement, or even academic performance. This is already a step forward from purely academic measures, because it demonstrates the value that institutions accord to the indices of good relationships. As Alexander Sidorkin points out, “decision-making does not occur after we measure and evaluate.... The most important decision-making precedes measurement, not the other way around. By deciding what to measure, we pre-determine the outcome of the entire process” (2023, 78–79). Proxy measures have two big limits, however: They massively rely on self-reporting, which is prone to many biases, and if the data produced are improperly interpreted (i.e., through an individualistic lens), resulting decisions could end up undermining relational conditions. Such measurements would thus need to be both explicitly justified by and interpreted through a resonance-theoretical framework.

A second method could involve hiring semi-integrated relationship experts. The idea would be to embed such experts in the classroom with the teacher and students for a significant amount of time. Their front-facing role would be to help out and get to know everyone, but they would also be observing students' relationships with their teachers and the material, and nudging them in the right direction. In order to prevent teachers from anticipating decontextualized moral judgments or, worse, a career-impacting extrinsic evaluation, two conditions would need to be met. First, the experts would need to be present as much as possible, perhaps two full days a week at a minimum, in order to immerse themselves in the relational atmosphere and reduce the behavior-altering effects of a stranger's presence. This means that a school would require a whole team of such

experts, each assigned to a maximum of two classrooms. Second, teachers would have to be fully reassured that this person's observations will have no impact whatsoever on their professional advancement or status. They need to pro-actively dismantle teachers' feelings of being evaluated and be trained in strategies to do so. A framework of legal protections may also be in order.

Following this bottom-up approach, resonance theory might help to transform educational practices and institutions by empowering teachers to secure the conditions of their profession's most important dynamic: the pedagogical relationship. While some constants might emerge, the contextual variability of educational needs would likely lead to a wide range of solutions and measures. In some cases, teachers' most pressing need may indeed end up being the implementation of a daily meditation practice after recess!

4 | Choosing the Right Conceptual Tools

If an educational politics of resonance would, in the end, require educators of all stripes to become versed in resonance theory, we are forced to take seriously the question of the concept's audibility. As one author puts it, what is the potential resonance of *resonance* (Susen 2020)? Would it not be wiser to adopt a vocabulary less prone to ideological distortion (Rosa 2019, 186), something less *out there*? Perhaps *responsiveness* is the more politically appropriate option for transforming educational practice; beyond its role as the middle term between resonance and responsibility, its legacy in the literature on responsive governance might make it more palatable to policymakers. Shouldn't we set our sights on the more reasonable goal of responsive pedagogical relationships instead of going all-in on resonance?

While this remains an open topic for discussion, there are some indications that *resonance* remains the better option. In the field of education, *responsiveness* introduces a tension between teachers' availability and their autonomy—the margin in which they can, not only as professionals but also as people, decide how and to what extent they will invest themselves in a given pedagogical relationship. The resonant relationship enabled by this margin is what must be protected, not some form of on-demand availability. Resonance can be neither coerced nor fully suppressed, but attempts to force its onset by making teachers more accessible are likely to backfire. An educational politics articulated around responsiveness would end up undermining teachers' attentional autonomy (Cuneen 2021b) and thus weakening their capacity to attend to the pedagogical needs that populate their environment.

Indeed, while resonant relationships are necessarily responsive, responsive relationships are not always resonant. Modern computers and AI chatbots are incredibly responsive, and while they do constitute a form of otherness, their alterity is not one that lends itself easily to transformation through assimilation. The resistance we meet when interacting with other humans stems from the differences in each person's relationship with themselves, and the friction produced can become an entryway to a new way of relating to the world or oneself. With computers, on the other hand, the impact of resistance is typically reduced to frustration with a tool whose performance does not meet our ever-growing expectations of precise control. While expectations of control and

availability—two forms of accessibility—may be legitimate with regard to tools, they are unfit for human relationships within which we seek to encourage regular experiences of resonance (Rosa 2019).

In light of this, resonance theory seems to offer a more appropriate and sustainable framework for relational pedagogy than, for example, care ethics, which is articulated around an ideal of attentive responsiveness and has enjoyed considerable success in contemporary educational philosophy. Nel Nodding's (2013) approach, like Rosa's, is structured around the pedagogical relationship and is largely allergic to any talk of skills. However, there are a few key differences. By asking teachers to focus on caring for students, their attention is mainly drawn to students' present needs, both expressed and inferred. The meeting of needs is important, but it is not necessarily vivifying and motivating. Teachers are likely to get further in captivating their students' attention by finding ways to make their intrinsic interests dialogue with the material at hand. Rosa's focus on making the material speak constitutes an important correction in this regard. Furthermore, to the extent that students are the object of care, there may be a deep tension between the experience of themselves as moral patients and the constitution of their selves as moral agents (Gray and Wegner 2009), which resonance pedagogy may contribute toward through the attentional dynamics of responsibility described above. While there may be deep value in other relational approaches (i.e., Sidorkin 2023) that avoid the normative monism of both care and resonance pedagogy, the latter nevertheless has one key strength: the language of hearing and being heard, of speaking in one's own voice and making the world speak, of sparking interest and fostering openness to otherness—this language is eminently compelling and articulates a fundamental aspect of every person's relationship to the world.

Despite its somewhat esoteric or romantic feel, the concept of *resonance* thus continues to demonstrate unique potential in capturing and thus building toward the educational practices that can contribute to the creation of a new collective relationship with the world. Operationalizing this concept would require us to pay close attention to its projective surface—the experiences, ideas, and dynamics that users feel capable of expressing through it—but the effort may well be worth it. At least in the field of education, the triangles of pedagogical resonance and alienation are likely to resonate with teachers and thus initiate a perspective shift from which more concrete action, ranging from a relation-centered policy shift to the creation of resonance-focused steering mechanisms within individual institutions, may emerge.

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Endnotes

¹“Now young people are prealienated by schools that isolate them while they pretend to be both producers and consumers of their own knowledge, which is conceived of as a commodity put on the market

in school. School makes alienation preparatory to life, thus depriving education of reality and work of creativity" (Illich, 1971, 46–47).

²As we will address later on, there is, however, a potential danger in such research to the extent that it is carried out by third parties to the pedagogical relationship. This research configuration, wherein an invited observer evaluates a relatively brief moment of an ongoing educative practice, runs the risk of becoming yet another accountability measure that may undermine teachers' attentional autonomy and thus their ability to cultivate resonant pedagogical relationships.

³As a physical phenomenon, no reference to Rosa (Hagège 2019, 134–146).

⁴Most notably, through the anticipation of decontextualized extrinsic evaluations of their professional performance (Cuneen 2021a, 325–326).

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