



# Relational Sociology: A New Paradigm for the Social Sciences (Ontological Explorations)

By Pierpaolo Donati

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‘Simultaneous invention’ has become commonplace in the natural sciences, but is still virtually unknown within the sphere of social science. The convergence of two highly compatible versions of Critical Realism from two independent sources is a striking exception. Pierpaolo Donati’s *Relational Sociology* develops ‘upwards’ from sociology into a Realist meta-theory, unlike Roy Baskhar’s philosophy of science that works ‘downwards’ and ‘underlabours’ for the social sciences.

This book systematically introduces Donati’s Relational Sociology to an English readership for the first time since he began to advance his approach thirty years ago. In this eagerly awaited book, Pierpaolo Donati shifts the focus of sociological theory onto the relational order at all levels. He argues that society is constituted by the relations people create with one another, their emergent properties and powers, and internal and external causal effects.

*Relational Sociology* provides a distinctive variant upon the Realist theoretical conspectus, especially because of its ability to account for social integration. It will stimulate debate amongst realists themselves and, of course, with the adversaries of realism. It is a valuable new resource for students of social theory and practising social theorists.

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Review

**'Pierpaolo Donati's book is an ambitious attempt to formulate a social theory appropriate to our age, based on the primacy of what he terms social relations which, for Donati, are crucial in upholding the distinctiveness of humanity. This book is a call to arms, sounding the alarm about the unwelcome effects of many social theories that threaten to drive the human out of the social or else submerge the human within the social and so drown out its distinctive individuality.'**

*-Barry Vaughn, National Economic and Social Council, in the Journal of Critical Realism, vol 11 iss 2 p.255-261*

About the Author

**Pierpaolo Donati** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Bologna (Italy). Past-President of the Italian Sociological Association, he is known as the founder of 'relational sociology' or the 'relational theory of society', an independently developed form of critical realism. He has published more than 600 works (see: *Building a Relational Theory of Society: A Sociological Journey*, in M. Deflem ed., *Sociologists in a Global Age. Biographical Perspectives*, Ashgate, Aldershot, 2007).

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