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Shame as a Form of Alienation. On Sociological Articulation of Rahel Jaeggi's Theory

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Abstract. This paper advances the hypothesis of a theoretical affinity between alienation and shame. This attempt will be circumscribed by a narrow intention based on the work of the philosopher Rahel Jaeggi (2014). Specifically, the paper will try to outline a sociological translation of Jaeggi's thought, attempting at the same time to identify interpretive affinities between a Meadian social-theoretical reading of shame and a sociological translation of the German philosopher's theory of alienation, which is widely debated in the context of social philosophy. Shame and alienation can be associated in reference to their common twofold root: they are, at one and the same time, social events, objectified and exteriorized, and individual events, linked to subjective experience. Moreover, they both show further ambivalences. They are necessary to the stabilization of social bonds, but at the same time they can indicate the emergence of social pathologies. As we will see, a Meadian reading of shame can thus help to compensate for Jaeggi's lack of discussion of the social aspects of alienation and, at the same time, emphasize the alienation side of shame.

Keywords. Alienation, Shame, Intersubjectivity, Jaeggi, Mead.

INTRODUCTION

This paper advances, in a necessarily synthetic and schematic way, the hypothesis of a theoretical affinity between alienation and shame. This attempt will be circumscribed by a narrow intention based on the work of the philosopher Rahel Jaeggi (2014) a leading figure in the latest generation of scholars from the Critical theory tradition of the Frankfurt school. Specifically, the paper will try to outline a sociological translation of Jaeggi's thought, attempting at the same time to identify interpretive and conceptual affinities between a Meadian social-theoretical reading of shame and a hypothetical sociological translation of the German philosopher's theory of alienation, which is widely debated in the context of social philosophy. We will not consider, therefore, in this forum, the numerous theoretical declinations of alienation, leaving in the background its conceptual history. Nor will we address the most recent and significant philosophical and sociological research on this theme (Ten Houten 2016, Rosa 2013, Fischbach 2009, Haber 2007, Seeman 1991). By argumentative choice, we will maintain our focus within the perimeter of Rahel Jaeggi's theory of alienation, utilizing it as a conceptual base for some creative sociology.

In the final analysis, the aim of this paper is to construct a conceptual bridge between shame and alienation. As we will see, these two phenomena can be associated in reference to their common twofold root: they are, at one and the same time, social events, objectified and exteriorized, and individual events, linked to subjective experience. Moreover, they both show further ambivalences. They are necessary to the stabilization of social bonds (Scheff 2000, 2003, 2004), but at the same time they can indicate the emergence of social pathologies (Honneth 1996a, 1996b, 2004, 2006). They are similar not only in their intersubjective genesis, but also in their social outcome. They can only be overcome socially, by way of a reconfiguration of social relations, and not merely by an individual determination of the will. The fundamental hypothesis of this essay is that a Meadian reading of shame can thus help to compensate for Jaeggi's lack of discussion of the social aspects of alienation and, at the same time, emphasize the alienation side of shame. As some authoritative critical remarks to the work of Jaeggi (Sörensen 2016) have highlighted, the theory of the German philosopher seems to focus primarily on the subjective side of the phenomenon of alienation. Although Jaeggi's theory naively does not separate the subjective dimension of alienation from that of the social dimensions in which it is located, it seems to focus in a privileged way on the formal process of subjective re-appropriation of social institutions. Through a Meadian translation of Jaeggi's theory and through a Meadian reading of shame it will be possible to emphasize the points of contact that share a sociological reading of Jaeggi's theory of alienation and a peculiar social interpretation of shame inspired by Mead's social theory.

A RELATION OF RELATIONLESSNESS. ALIENATION AS A DISORDER IN THE PROCESSES OF APPROPRIATION OF SELF AND THE WORLD

The role of alienation in human relationships is fundamental in delineating the overall theoretical horizon of the first generation of critical theory. For Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, the alienated nature of social relationships within Western societies in the second post-war was such a clear and indisputable diagnostic element as to constitute a sort of premise, or implicit assumption, of all of their various critical analyses of the social world (Adorno 1973; Marcuse 1991; Adorno and Horkheimer 2002). Rahel Jaeggi, a member of the fourth generation of the Frankfurt school – following the second dominated by the figure of Habermas, and the third dominated by Honneth – has,

for some years now, been developing a project for the critical re-proposal of the concept of alienation. Jaeggi's fundamental theses are the following: alienation signals *a relation of relationlessness*; alienation expresses an *impairment of the ability to appropriate one's self or the world*.

We will now try briefly to reconstruct just how these theses, particularly the second, are developed by Jaeggi, clarifying immediately how the heart of this definition opens the door to an original sociological hypothesis on the conceptual affinities between shame and alienation. As we shall see, in fact, shame, viewed through some special theoretical lenses, can be understood precisely in terms of *a relation of relationlessness* and in terms of *compressed recognition of the possibilities of appropriating one's self and one's social relations*.

Jaeggi's initial objective is to conduct a serial critical analyses of some classical conceptions of alienation in order to demonstrate their inadequacy with respect to the feasibility of their critical re-proposal or updating. The various positions examined, for the most part deriving from Rousseau, Marx, Heidegger, Sartre all seem to be characterized by essentialist or metaphysical assumptions (Jaeggi 2014). An updating of the concept of alienation can no longer be based, Jaeggi argues, either on essentialist arguments, by making reference to an organic nucleus that defines an alienation-immune condition that one can "go back to", or on paternalistic arguments, by attributing to some privileged subject the possibility of distinguishing an alienated condition from a disalienated one – take, for example, the subjectivity of class or of the intellectual –, or to perfectionist arguments, according to which there exists a set of virtues and qualities that allow one to achieve a condition objectively definable as morally *good*.

Jaeggi proposes a formal concept of alienation centered on the *how* of volition rather than the *what*. Alienation cannot be delineated in relation to *a true object of our will*, but only in relation to a precise way of relating, in exercising volition, toward ourselves and to the object of our volition. The "weak" normative criterion that helps to define a condition of alienation is, for Jaeggi, immanent to the formation of volition: "instances of alienation can be understood as obstructions of volition and thereby – formulated more generally – as obstructions in the relations individuals have to themselves and the world" (Jaeggi 2014, 34). The concept of *appropriation* is fundamental to Jaeggi's analysis. Indeed, alienation "concerns the way these acts of relating to self and world are carried out and, that is, whether processes of appropriation fail or are impeded" (Jaeggi 2014, 36). Alienation can be understood, then, as *impairment of*

processes of appropriation, or as a deficient practice of appropriation.

Since appropriation takes on such a fundamental importance in the development of Jaeggi's thesis, let's take a look now, in extreme synthesis, at its characteristic aspects:

1. Appropriation refers to the capacity to identify with what one wills and to realize oneself in it.
2. Relations with the world and the relation with one's self are co-original. The impairment of the relation with the self is also and always an impairment of the relation with the world. Self-appropriation means appropriation of the conditions of one's capacity to act. Thus, the alienated person is one who cannot relate to him/herself and therefore fails to make those conditions his/her own.
3. Appropriation is not a mere re-appropriation of something given in essentialist terms. It is a productive process: that which one appropriates is at the same time the result of the process of appropriation. The appropriated and the appropriator constitute themselves to a certain extent in the process of appropriation. Conversely, there is no appropriated or appropriator outside of the process of appropriation.
4. Appropriation, therefore, cannot leave unaltered what is appropriated. To appropriate to oneself a social role means much more than mechanically reproducing it. It comes to be formed and transformed by the perspective assumed by the appropriator and by *that which s/he does* with it.
5. Based on the preceding points, the process of appropriation is also tied to present and previously given material, and therefore also to an autonomous dynamic and determination of what is not at one's disposal. As formulated by Jaeggi, the concept of appropriation displays a tension "between what is previously given and what is formable, between taking over and creating, between subject's sovereignty and its dependence" (Jaeggi 2014, 39).
6. Thus defined, the model of alienation does not presuppose the idea of an authentic self and overcoming alienation does not mean returning to an interior nucleus of the non-alienated self. The reference to the theme of alienation leads to an idea of self-realization in which there is no distinction between interior life and the outside world. "My account of alienation leads to a conception of *self-realization* as a process of "giving one-self reality" in the world that transcends the distinctions between inner and outer world. Inner life, too, is an inner *world*" (Jaeggi 2014, 152).

7. The diagnosis of alienation is suspended between a subjectivist and an objectivist perspective. The objective conditions which one must re-appropriate are neither given entirely independently of the appropriation nor entirely contingent and produced by the subject (Jaeggi 2014, 153).

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SELF AND OF THE SOCIAL WORLD IN GEORGE HERBERT MEAD. RE-APPROPRIATION AS A SOCIAL PROCESS.

The social theory of George Herbert Mead constitutes a particularly useful and effective resource for the purposes of this essay in two ways: in sociologizing the fundamental aspects of Jaeggi's thesis, which we have summarily reconstructed; in doing so with an eye toward showing how this operation of translation allows us to highlight and appreciate some theoretical-conceptual affinities between shame and alienation.

I will examine point 2 in section 3. With respect to point 1, on the other hand, if Jaeggi delineates the concept of appropriation as we have suggested, by assigning it a crucial role in the definition of alienation, then our hypothesis turns on the idea that the social thought of Mead constitutes a resource that allows us to articulate some of the sociological potentialities that Jaeggi leaves substantially unexamined. To focus on these affinities, we will refer specifically to the Meadian declination of intersubjectivity as a process constitutive both of the Self and of social meanings and the dialectical relation between *Me* and *I*, the two components of the Self. The reference to Mead can therefore allow to decline the concept formulated by Jaeggi of *relation of relationlessness* in terms of sociologically dialectical intertwining between social world, roles and institutions, and subjective experience. The reference to Mead seems therefore to be particularly effective in helping to explain what in Jaeggi's theory is still included, though not explained in all its potential: alienation is a concept that refers both to the subject and to the structure. The point of departure seems to be that in Mead, as in Jaeggi, appropriation is a process. The process, however, is defined by the pragmatist precisely by virtue of its social character, *as a quintessentially social process*. Appropriation is for all intents and purposes a *social process*.

With respect to the classics of sociology, it could be said that the theory of Mead, concentrating as it does on the centrality of intersubjective relations in the emergence of self-consciousness and subjectivity, is somewhat of an exception (Habermas 1992, 1987; Blumer 1969, 1981, 1992; Joas 1997; Carreira de Silva 2002,

2008). For a variety of reasons, which we cannot fully examine here, the classics of sociology did not fully capture or deeply analyze the fundamentally constitutive character of intersubjective recognition in the emergence of individual consciousness (Habermas 1987, Joas 1996, 1997; Honneth 1996a, 2007a; O'Meara 1987; Crespi 2004). Mead's canonization as one of the classics of sociology, though widely shared even earlier (Blumer 1969, 1981) was definitively certified by Jurgen Habermas and by the central role that the German sociologist attributes to Mead in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1984, 1987). Within his fundamental sociological work, Habermas emphasizes the properly and fully sociological dimension of the dynamic according to which the constitution and reproduction of the Self cannot but take place within the processual dimension of intersubjectivity. In Mead, intersubjectivity is in fact a central process in the understanding of the mechanisms of the constitution, on the one hand, of society and, on the other, of the subjective personality. The formation of subjectivity is a social act, tied to the well-known dynamic of *taking the attitude of the other*. Intersubjectivity, therefore, is not so much a relation between already constituted subjects as it is a dimension that cannot be reduced to the priority of the individual consciousness over other consciousnesses. *The recognition of the other as self* is antecedent to the emergence of the subject's own self-consciousness. Self-consciousness would not be such "unless the individual brought himself into the same experiential field as that the other individual selves in relation to whom he acts in any given social situation" (Mead 2015, 138). The individual does not experience the self and the world in an object immediate way but only insofar as he becomes an object to himself just as other individuals are for him, or for his experience, objects; and he becomes an object for himself only by assuming the attitudes that other individuals who live together with him in the same social environment have towards him (Mead 2015, 140).

Mead makes use of the concepts of *Me* and *I* to define this particular circular dynamic between constantly open possibilities of re-subjectification and intersubjective pre-conditions. The *Me* is the objectified objectification, while the *I* is the subject of the not yet objectified *Me*, which needs social relation to arrive at a new objectification. The *I* – apart from the conceptual-theoretical weaknesses that accompany it and which we are not able to address on this occasion (Victoroff 1953, Lewis 1979, Habermas 1992, Joas 1996, 1997) – can be understood as the response given by the individual to the attitude assumed toward him by others, at the moment in which he assumes an attitude toward them. The *I* is the subjective

response to the already socially objectified *Me*. Subjective identity determination, like intersubjectively constituted social meanings, is not reducible to the mere acceptance of the given objectifications, but always contemplates a creative element in the re-appropriation of what is *already* extant.

We can now briefly examine how the concept of appropriation as proposed by Jaeggi can find an effective sociological translation through comparison with Mead.

1. In order to put into action his own will, each subject cannot but identify himself with what he already socially is (*Me*), since the social is constitutive of subjectivity, without, however, coinciding integrally with that determination (*I*). In accepting the objectification of our socially produced self, we can at the same time intervene on our self for the purpose of reconfiguring it creatively. 1.1 This reconfiguration comes about through process. Creative reconfiguration is: the operation of re-appropriation in and of itself, stimulated by the emergence of original *Is*; their provisional fixing in original *Mes* that are always subject to possible new reconfigurations; 1.2 process is social; its engine is relational and recognitional.
2. The co-originality of the relation with the world and the relation with the self is guaranteed by an intersubjective and recognitional social fabric. 2.1 Society and the individual are not dichotomized: a change in the fabric of social meanings acts inevitably on the structure of the individual personality, just as individual demands, being also from their inception social demands, act interactively on the social world. 2.2 Alienation affects, therefore, those who, in some manner, are not able to relate to themselves by creatively re-appropriating the social conditions that nonetheless constitute them, because they do not possess/intercept the recognitional resources that activate/re-activate the process.
3. In-re-appropriating herself/himself of his social pre-conditions, the subject, contemporaneously, reproduces something already extant (*Me*) and creates something original (*I*) 3.1 Appropriation is not a mere social reproduction, but is, at one and the same time, acceptance and change. It is a productive social process: the intersubjective conditions it appropriates are reconfigured by way of the very same social process of appropriation. 3.2 The subject and its social meanings are the always open and provisional result of this social process of creative appropriation of what has been given. There is, therefore, nothing appropriated outside of appropriation.

4. Mead does not make a sharp distinction between interior life and social life, between subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Subjectivity is formed precisely in what is immersed in a common fabric constituted of a set of other individual selves who take on with respect to themselves the attitude of the other. To become such a subject, the human he needs to "take the attitudes of other human individuals toward himself and toward one another within the social process, and to bring that social process as a whole into his individual experience" (Mead 2015, 154).
5. Mead resolves the tension between subject and object socially, both in an organic dimension and a strictly social dimension (Joas 1996, 1997). Objects of the world and subjective experience both have a social nature, in the sense that objects of the world can be understood by way of an individual perspective just as it would be in the perspective of others (Joas 1997). In a more specifically social dimension, the conditions which one must re-appropriate are neither entirely given independently of the re-appropriation nor entirely attributable to the creative capacity of the subject.

ALIENATION AND SHAME: BUILDING A SOCIOLOGICAL CONCEPTUAL BRIDGE THROUGH MEAD'S SOCIAL THEORY

We will now focus on the second point of our hypothesis, or the possible affinities between a Meadian reading of shame and Jaeggi's theory of alienation. First off, let me clarify, in definitional terms, how shame is to be understood here in reference to a larger family of emotions, which includes the phenomena of mortification and humiliation in the broadest sense of those terms, thus applying the noted thesis of Thomas Scheff (2000, 2003) on the semantic extension of shame. Scheff defines shame sociologically as an extended family of emotions that includes among its members numerous variants, from embarrassment to mortification, from despondency to humiliation. We will not go any further here into the definitional details of shame, in favor of letting the theoretical argument accompany and shape its semantic contours.

By interpreting in a plastic and creative way the *Me/I* theory, I would like to make a social-theory distinction between two forms of shame. I would suggest defining *Me's Shame* as a sociologically important shame: objectified, externalized, socialized. *Me's shame* can be seen as a form of shame that blends with meanings already socially objectified and extant. This form, originates,

therefore, from the violation of the shared social expectations tied to the provisional stabilization of a nucleus of meanings, roles, and relations. Take, for example, the shame brought to bear (a shame, therefore, that is directed from society *toward* an individual; the subject of the shame being properly "society") on a police officer who brutalizes a defenseless person, or on a professor of sociology who does not know the work of Max Weber. Here, the *Me* is to be understood both as the intersubjective recognition constitutive of the subject, and as the institutionalization and provisional stabilization of social meanings and recognitional relations. The *Me*, used in this way, can also take on an oppressive valence if it should enter into tension or contradiction with subjective expectations, plans, or desires of recognition and hypotheses of creative re-appropriation of what is already extant, or rather of the unfolding of self-realization through the social realization of an original *I*. Think, for example, of the shame felt by an evicted tenant in the experience of an eviction caused by loss of a job and accompanied by the lack of assistance from responsible institutions. The evicted newly unemployed former tenant is thus labeled as a loser, a failure – an experience in which the hypothesis of being recognized for whom he wants to be and of having access to new self-definitions by creatively re-appropriating himself of (non-dominating) relationships and (non-reifying) meanings, dissolves before it can be socially realized. So, *I's shame* can be in synthesis defined as a block of the intersubjective possibilities of re-significance of what is already socially effective.

Rather than prolonging our discussion of *Me's Shame*, we will now try to develop briefly the hypothesis concerning the affinities between Jaeggi's conception of alienation and *I's shame* distinguishing three different forms: *destructive I's shame*, *critical I's shame*, *I's no shame*. Once *I's shame* surface as a block of social sources of resubjectification, it could lead to an ever open exit: a regressive one; an emancipative one. An initial observation is that *I's Shame* seems itself to emerge in the same way as alienation. We do not mean to propose that every form of alienation includes the emergence of shame, but that shame, in its theoretical form identified as *I's Shame*, is also always accompanied by the phenomenon of alienation: *I's Shame* is, therefore, *also* alienation but not *only* alienation. *I's Shame*, as we have seen, is definable through recourse to the idea of a block in the process of re-appropriation, which, translated in social-theory terms with reference to Mead, becomes a block of the recognitional resources of self-realization. Indeed, *I's Shame* signals the emergence of a weak point, a block, an interruption, of the recognitional procedu-

re that otherwise permits the unfolding of the dialectic between what is socially objectified and its performative re-appropriation. The block of re-appropriation – and here lies the socially innovative heart of the interpretation proposed in this paper – contemplates a dialectically emancipatory unfolding, an open and positive or dis-alienating result, or a dialectically regressive result of exasperation of the shame and, therefore, of a further stiffening of the negative, or alienating, dimension. The empirical discriminant of the dual result lies in the possibility, or lack thereof, of the subject's success in discovering renewed recognitional resources.

We propose to articulate the theoretical-conceptual affinities between shame and alienation as follows:

1. “Destructive *I's Shame*” and alienation

We would propose to define *Destructive I Shame* as a form of shame that emerges from the compression of the possibilities of social realization of the demands of the *I* through an encounter with a recognitional relationality which permits its social realization. Such compression involves a progressive erosion of the resources needed for self-redefinition, which can ultimately lead to the psychic, moral, or even physical annihilation of the subject (Honneth, 1996a, 2007b). *Destructive I's Shame*, signals the social non-transcendibility of the negative moment of offense and humiliation. The greatest risk attached to *I's Shame* is that the shame of one's own ashamedness can crush all self-expression, to the point of unleashing a destructive impulse. To suggest one emblematic example, take the figure of the *muselmann*, one who has survived biologically the experience of the concentration camp, but who is by now speechless and robbed of his identity after having suffered the most radical violation of the bond of recognition (Agamben 1998). Or think of the ever more numerous cases of suicide tied to homophobic discrimination (Barbagli 2009).

In this form of shame, the hypothesis regarding the dimension of alienation may be partially conceived in the same way as it is outlined by Jaeggi, as, that is, an interrupted process. The process of appropriation is blocked; the nature of that block, however, unlike what we find in the theory of the German philosopher, is exquisitely social. A deficient relationship with the world, defined as social recognition deficit, compresses the chances of re-subjectification and impairs, as Jaeggi would have it, the relation with the self mediated by the relation with the world. Alienation emerges as the result of deficient social relations, which do not permit the unfolding of the process of relating between the appropriator and the thing appropriated, or better, a socially progressive rela-

tion between subject and social norms, roles, and relations. Re-appropriation is blocked because what is already socially extant rigidifies at the expense of legitimate hopes for self-realization. We might speak of *destructive I's Shame*, as Jaeggi does of alienation, as a *relation of relationlessness*, since social relationality shows itself to be deficient, assuming exclusively its negative dimension: objectifying, oppressive, and mortifying, unable to tune in to its own social pre-conditions and, consequently, without a chance of an open and progressive unfolding.

2. “Critical *I's Shame*” and alienation

Critical I's Shame can be defined in synthesis as a socially emancipated shame. It emerges from a block of recognitional resources. Faced with this block, the subject manages, contrary to what happens in *Destructive I's Shame*, to intercept renewed recognitional resources, alternative to those that had provoked its emergence, which enable him to overcome it. As we have seen with respect to Mead's general theory, the subject, in order to become other than what he *already* is, must necessarily move outside of himself by moving through his relational network, to then return to himself by establishing a new *Me*, different from the preceding objective image of himself and more adherent to whom he would like to be. *Critical I's Shame* is defined as the dialectical resolution of the contradiction that subsists between perspectives transmitted by the *I* and the social conditions for its realization. It constitutes a sort of possible connection between *I's Shame* and *Me's Shame*. In the dialectical relation between these two distinct types of shame, *Critical I's Shame* is the social resolution, dialectical and never definitive, of the contradictions between the socially objectified conditions of subjectification and ever more open hypotheses of re-subjectification.

In this case, the hypothesis regarding the affinities between shame and alienation develops as the disalienating unfolding of the process of appropriation. In the face of a block of the recognitional resources of self-realization, there follows a reprise of the process of re-appropriation mediated by renewed recognitional relations. In the re-appropriation of social relations and the Self, the humiliated and/or alienated subject produces at the same time a new relation with himself and with the world. In this case, recognition plays a performative role: it emancipates from a negative condition and contributes to the creation of that which is appropriated, in complete harmony with what we have seen of Jaeggi's theory. The humiliated and/or alienated subject intercepts renewed recognitional resources that allow him to creatively re-appropriate his social pre-conditions,

succeeding in the end in socially realizing the interrupted perspectives transmitted by the *I*. Alienation emerges socially as a deficit of recognition and, at the same time, it encounters a disalienating recognitional process. Disalienation corresponds to a contemporaneous critical redefinition of subjectivity and social norms. To return to the example given earlier, think of the tenant evicted for unintentional late payment, labelled as a culpable failure, who, by participating in renewed relations of solidarity in a movement for the right to housing, manages to accede to an original and satisfying re-definition of himself through the critical re-definition of the social meaning of failure and guilt mediated by a renewed form of recognition.

3. "I's no Shame" and alienation

The condition of *I's no shame* signals an absence of *I Shame* which is accompanied by a dimension of alienation. Unlike *destructive I's Shame*, *I's no Shame* signals an absence of shame owing to tendency of the *I* toward an unlimited expansion, which illusorily unhinges itself from its social pre-conditions, Meadianly understood as the intersubjective preconditions of subjectivity. It is not, therefore, a rigidity of social norms and relations that blocks the unfolding of the process of re-appropriation, but rather a tendency to affirm one's own subjectivity by untethering it from its own social pre-conditions. The affinity between absence of shame and alienation can be traced, therefore, to a hypertrophic tendency of the subject to unhinge himself from his social pre-conditions, thus compromising the very conditions for the unfolding of the appropriation process. Appropriation is reduced, in this case, to a form of manipulation or of illusory concealment. The subject tends to repress, more or less intentionally, the intersubjective bond that ties him to others, thus eroding the very pre-conditions which he must relate to in order to continue producing creatively that which he appropriates. In accordance with Jaeggi's thesis, in this case too *No I shame* amounts to a *relation of relationlessness*: relation with the other takes on a merely instrumental or utilitarian form. In the case of *No-I shame*, alienation thus coincides with an incapacity to appropriate the pre-conditions of subjectivity, not because of a deficit of recognitional conditions, but because of a hypertrophic tendency of the subjective perspective toward the repression of the intersubjective bond.

This analysis of the three forms certainly does not pretend to exhaust the possibilities for the development of interpretive hypothesis with regard to the theoretical affinities between shame and alienation. The objecti-

ve here is narrower and more specific. By carrying out this initial development of the hypothesis regarding the relationship between shame and alienation, we have highlighted, with the assistance of Mead, the theoretical point that the overcoming of the condition of self-negativity never involves only and exclusively a subjective modification of consciousness or personal experience, regardless of any change in the social world, nor a mere structural modification of the social world, whose consequences then mechanistically produce repercussions on personal experience. Rather, the overcoming of this condition of negativity depends, as we have seen, on an intersubjective dimension, primarily of a recognitional nature, in which personal experience and social world penetrate each other by way of a continual development of a progressively dynamic interrelationship.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has advanced no pretensions of being an exhaustive treatment of the vast theme of alienation. Rather, its aim is circumscribed to the attempt to show a possible sociological translation of one of the most recent and important theories of alienation. This aim has been pursued by way of the formulation of a hypothesis regarding the theoretical-social affinities between shame and alienation. We have attempted to argue that the possible point of contact between these two articulations of the same objective can be found in the conception of intersubjectivity between individual and society typical of the social theory of George Herbert Mead. As we have attempted to demonstrate, shame and alienation can share the same connotation of process. Compared to Jaeggi's thesis, the Meadian hypothesis for the interpretation of shame proposed here insists on the quintessentially social character of the process. *I Shame*, in fact, can assume the guise of regressive alienation to the point of the annihilation of the Self, or that of a social redefinition of the Self very close to the subject's expectations of self-realization. Apart from their differences, both positions, Jaeggi's on alienation and the hypothesis proposed here on shame, share a common non-essentialist matrix. Shame, like alienation, is not defined as a condition from which one can be emancipated permanently in order to return to an original nucleus of authentic subjectivity, or as a form of definitive reconciliation with ourselves. The concept of appropriation, which as we have seen is crucial in both phenomena, indicates that its normative criteria are all immanent to the process itself. There is nothing, Jaeggi writes, "that exists already as something outside the process itself" (Jaeggi 2014, 153). We have tried to demon-

strate that the general assumptions of Jaeggi's thesis find a more explicit sociological translation in the Meadian hypothesis proposed here, a translation tied to the theme of a non-dichotomic relation between social and individual, between intersubjectivity and processes of subjectification. The tension between interdependence and the creative sovereignty of the subject around which Jaeggi develops her thesis, is supported by the Meadian interpretation presented here: the subject is socially constituted by way of the progressively generalized intersubjective relationship. The subject never coincides entirely with that which is socially objectified and it is always oriented toward open possibilities for its transcendence. The Meadian translation of shame has allowed us, ultimately, to work sociologically on Jaeggi's fundamental conceptual structure and to bring to light an initial hypothesis, to be further developed in the future, about the alienation side of shame.

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