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ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL RECOVERY OF DURKHEIM

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ABSTRACT: *When Parsons derived action theory from Durkheim's sociology, he also argued with Durkheim, disputed his claims, and expressly rejected some of his fundamental principles. Accordingly, American functionalism contained a hidden "negative image" of Durkheim. Parsons's student, Harold Garfinkel, addressed functionalism at its weak points, eventually overthrowing most of what Parsons had to say about society. Some of these weak points were predicated on Parsons's rejection of Durkheim, including explicit rejection of Durkheim's equivalences between society, morality, and objective reality. Garfinkel's ethnomethodology therefore rejected what had been premised on Parsons's rejection of Durkheim. In so doing, it reversed the negative image of Durkheim back to its positive classical form and empirically demonstrated some of Durkheim's most troubling principles. Since Garfinkel did not deliberately recover Durkheim in this manner, the dynamics of this case make it an interesting study of how theorists read other theorists.*

One goal of this paper is to demonstrate and make explicit some substantive connections between Durkheim's sociological theory and theoretical principles derived from ethnomethodological studies. I believe that ethnomethodology includes the empirical verification of some of the most important aspects of Durkheim's general thesis. While Garfinkel did not frame his own work this way, and while ethnomethodologists have been reluctant to express their findings in a manner of bold sociological theorizing (but see Heritage 1984; Maynard and Clayman 1991; Wilson and Zimmerman 1979/1980), illuminating these connections not only advances understanding of Durkheim and of ethnomethodology but also sets the stage for an improved theoretical vision of society (Hilbert 1992).

Another goal of this paper is to demonstrate that the substantive connections between Durkheim and ethnomethodology are also historical connections. They

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do not derive simply from reading one text in terms of another but can be traced concretely through the work of Parsons, whose early interpretations of Durkheim (as well as of Weber, Marshall, and Pareto) established the outline of a theory whose later form provided the terms of Garfinkel's empirical studies (see Heritage 1984:7–36). In rejecting Parsons on the basis of these studies, Garfinkel appears to have rejected all that Parsons based his theory on; yet the subtle surprise is that Garfinkel rejected Parsons at precisely the points where Parsons took exception to Durkheim, argued against him, or expressly dismissed him. The resultant connections between Durkheim and ethnomethodology on an almost one-to-one basis are therefore not fortuitous but are born within the dynamics whereby theories are appropriated, tested, rejected, and renewed, i.e., the dynamics whereby theorists read other theorists (Ritzer 1990, 1991).

To restate the dynamics of the present case in more succinct form: Parsons disputed Durkheim on logical grounds having to do with Parsons's own theory, the one he said Durkheim would have reached himself had he not made the mistakes that he did. Parsons therefore eventually produced a functionalist sociology based on Durkheim, but it was Durkheim in an inverted form, a Durkheim organized in service to Parsons's own evolving theory. Consequently, American functionalism contained this inverted Durkheim at its foundation. Thus, when Garfinkel inherited functionalism from his teacher, he necessarily inherited this "negative image" of Durkheim as well, albeit not identified as such. Later, when Garfinkel launched his empirical studies based on Parsonian themes,[1] he turned up more than Parsonian functionalism could contain; ultimately ethnomethodology overthrew or rejected almost everything Parsons had to say about society (Heritage 1984:33). Yet ethnomethodological probes into the weak spaces in functionalist theory also reversed the damage Parsons had done to Durkheim. In the empirical negation of Parsonian themes, Garfinkel "negated the negation," so to speak, recovering precisely what Parsons had suppressed; the negative image was reversed back to its positive form, as found in Durkheim's sociology. Durkheim's ideas passed through Parsons almost like recessive genes that came out again in their phenotypical form in Garfinkel's empirical studies and their derivatives. This is all the more fascinating when we remember that Garfinkel made no explicit effort to reconnect with Durkheim or even to spell out his own theory systematically.

For purposes of this paper, I limit my illustrations to two Durkheimian principles, which I refer to as *Durkheim's equivalences*. These are the equivalences between society, on the one hand, and morality and objective reality on the other. For each of these I shall begin with a review of the equivalence in Durkheim's work, move on to describe what happened to the equivalence in Parsons's derivation of voluntarism from Durkheim, and conclude by demonstrating how empirical ethnomethodological studies not only addressed and rejected Parsons directly but also simultaneously, though not deliberately, recovered and empirically validated the very Durkheimian equivalence in question.

DURKHEIM'S SOCIETY/MORALITY EQUIVALENCE

Durkheim directed his sociology in part against several conventional ideas of his day, including Tönnies's ([1887] 1963) contention that social evolution is driving out morality as the dominant regulating force in modern society and replacing it with individualism and legalistic contracts (Giddens 1971:77,226; Lukes 1972:140–147). Durkheim's response was that individualism is itself a form of collective morality and that contracts are unworkable without an underlying morality that provides for their possibility (Durkheim 1933:172–229, 396–402; Giddens 1971:69–72; Lukes 1972:147–157). What Tönnies called the decline of morality is really only a transformation of its content: the evolution from mechanical to organic solidarity (Durkheim 1933).

That modern society is moral is no happenstance of history for Durkheim. Society *is* moral. When people confront moral reality, they are confronting society: society and morality are the same thing, as are social facts and moral facts (Durkheim 1933:228). Thus, an amoral society is just as inconceivable as a working legal contract without a moral commitment to contract-following not contained in the contract itself (Durkheim 1933:200–206). Morality is not just something that makes society run smoothly as though society would run sloppily without it. Absence of morality *is* absence of society; such absence is part and parcel of anomie (Hilbert 1986, 1992). Durkheim's general sociology was directed to this unified field of social/moral phenomena as an order sui generis transcending individual psychology and behavior (Durkheim 1938; Lukes 1972:9; Pope, Cohen, and Hazelrigg 1975).

PARSONS AND SOCIETY/MORALITY

Parsons could not abide an equivalence between society and morality because his own theory places the two in analytically distinct spheres, the *factual order* and the *normative order*, respectively. Indeed, Parsons sees the problematic relationship between these two orders as the primary topic of investigation for sociology (Parsons 1968:91; see Zimmerman and Wieder 1970:286; Alexander 1984:22). Factual order is an organized behavioral order available to the objective observer. It can be seen in the ways bodies line up in banks and supermarkets; it is witnessable in the ways people sit and space themselves in theaters and classrooms. On a larger scale, it is observable in rates of behavior, such as divorce and crime. Factual order is observable irrespective of the people manifesting it at any given moment and independently of their ideas about their behavior. It is an order available to sociologists in the same way that the motions of planets are available to astronomers. It is objective and factual, not moral as such. It is, in a word, the society.

Normative order, by contrast, is moral and emerges in Parsons's theory as the *cause* of factual order. Normative order is a system of norms and values to which

people voluntarily surrender their deepest subjective respect. Respect is secured through the processes of socialization and internalization. Normative order thereby becomes the content of actors' subjectivity about behavior and motivates them to act from within. It is above all *prescriptive*, so that when actors subscribe to it, they can follow it and do what it tells them to do, the result being their objective behavior, the society.

Parsons's voluntarist scheme lies at the foundation of functionalist sociology.[2] It is the rule-governed model of society in its simplest expression (see Wilson 1970). But we should note that a theory that attributes the *cause* of observable society to something else—here morality—necessarily challenges the Durkheimian sui generis principle, or the idea that society is *self*-generating and *self*-creating. Durkheim's organicism implies that society does not require an external animating principle to make it work: society is wholly sufficient at its own level of integrity. Likewise with the general organicist idea that "the whole is more than the sum of its parts": there is no impression left here that something *beyond* the whole is required to make the parts work as they do. A true Durkheimian challenge would be to discover how the society works to produce itself from within itself, by itself, with no help from the outside. But Parsons found the causal principle operating from the outside: the normative order. Moreover, Parsons's assignment of morality to a distinctive causal sphere external to factual society contradicts Durkheim's claim that society and morality are one. Parsons splits Durkheim's order sui generis into two orders: society and morality.

Nevertheless, Parsons derived his theory from Durkheim by claiming that Durkheim's hypothetical society of "perfect integration" logically implies another perfectly integrated system (Parsons 1968:377), which Parsons variously calls: "a body of rules" (1968:314); "a body of normative rules" (1968:320); or "a vast body of customary rules" (1968:312). This is despite the fact that Parsons freely acknowledges: "This aspect of integration significantly enough Durkheim scarcely takes notice of at all" (1968:377n). Indeed, Durkheim's great failing, according to Parsons, was his inability to recognize normative order, a failure that Parsons sought to remedy.

As for Durkheim's society/morality equivalence, this was an "error" according to Parsons (1968:392), one close to the heart of Durkheim's inability to see normative order. In accounting for this error, Parsons asks: "How, then, did Durkheim come to *identify* society and moral obligation?" (1968:392, emphasis in original). Parsons grounds the error in Durkheim's failure to distinguish his interest in scientific ethics, normatively conceived, from the empirical study of morality, descriptively conceived (1968:394–395). Given Durkheim's confusion on this point, moral reality seems to be available to the scientist just as it is available to commonsense actors. In addition to "heredity and environment," morality seems to Durkheim to be a third objective cause of human behavior, and it must be equivalent to society—a mistaken conclusion that Parsons attributes to Durkheim's overcommitment to positivism (1968:392–393). Parsons's alternative is to argue that morality is not available for science in the way it is for actors, which is

to say that the moral validity of norms cannot be a scientific question. But, according to Parsons, morality is nevertheless available to science in another way: as an objectively present system of norms and values. Thus, "causal efficacy," not "moral validity," becomes the sociologist's preoccupation (1968:393). In this manner, then, Parsons provided a rationale for suppressing Durkheim's society/morality equivalence and producing a theory based on the ability of prescriptive morality to cause objective society.

ETHNOMETHODOLOGY AND SOCIETY/MORALITY

Ethnomethodology recovered the society/morality equivalence, but not by addressing Durkheim directly. Garfinkel's (1967) empirical studies overturned the very possibility of normative order, and they overturned factual order as well. In doing so they observed moral constraint and order-maintenance as self-organizing, thereby recovering the equivalence of objective society and moral regulation as a single order sui generis.

One of the key Parsonian issues that ethnomethodologists addressed concerns the "logic" by which prescriptive normative order could possibly guide behavior (Heritage 1984:18–19). In fact, early ethnomethodologists argued against the very feasibility of such a prescriptive system (Wieder 1970, 1974, 1974a; Wilson 1970; Zimmerman and Pollner 1970; Zimmerman and Wieder 1970; Hilbert 1981, 1990). The critique derives in part from Garfinkel's (1967:4–11) observations about *indexicality*. Simply put, indexicality is Garfinkel's term for a property of semantic expressions, indicating that their specific sense or meaning varies with the context and is, at the general level, equivocal and imprecise. Garfinkel demonstrates that indexicality is without remedy since terms used to clarify other terms are themselves indexical. Moreover, attempts to standardize meanings by contexts are bound to fail since contexts are specified with indexical expressions; indeed every use of "context" is, without exception, indexical (Garfinkel 1967:10).

Indexicality extends to any element of linguistic expression, and ethnomethodologists are by no means only interested in rules. However, the principle as it applies to Parsons yields this maxim: rules are, in and of themselves, analytically incapable of prescribing. No amount of specification and precision will allow a normative order to dictate behavior to people who have internalized the order. No behavior flows unambiguously from norms. Another way of stating this is to say that no computer, programmed with a functionalist-deduced system of norms and values, no matter how carefully and exhaustively specified, could possibly carry out the routine competence displayed by everyday actors (see Dreyfus 1979; Suchman 1987).[3]

Within the Parsonian scheme, then, the resultant question might look like this: How could unavoidably ambiguous rules of behavior produce the stable factual order we see before us? Indeed, a society/morality split yields this imponderable question, but Garfinkel is not faced with the problem since he speaks not only of indexical expressions but indexical actions (Garfinkel 1967:5:10–11).

Just as linguistic expressions, including rules, mean nothing in particular at the general level, likewise no human behavior is any behavior in particular by virtue of its objective identity in objective nature. That is, behavior is not inherently behavior-of-a-type, i.e., typical behavior, such that it can be seen by empirical sociologists to repeat itself or fall into patterns by fitting with other behavior. In short, Garfinkel not only denies the prescriptive integrity of Parsons's normative order; he denies Parsons's factual order as well. Alternatively, Garfinkel examines how societal members use indexical expressions (including rules) to organize indexical actions to produce what, *for them*, is stable social order.

This is the phenomenon Garfinkel (1967) calls *reflexivity* (see Pollner 1991). While human behavior is empirical for ethnomethodology and in that sense retains its "factual" status for science, that behavior includes actors' verbal displays, including actors' talk and theorizing about their own behavior. Actors organize their behavior as the behavior-that-it-is, as behavior of a certain sort—structured, recognizable, and patterned—through their use of indexical expressions. At the same time, this behavior-as-organized provides factual contexts for managing the ambiguity of indexical expressions.

For Garfinkel, then, social order cannot be addressed without examining how people actually produce the order they talk about and take for granted as factual. These methods of order production are observable in what members of a setting do and say; these methods are thus part of the setting they organize as factual. As Garfinkel (1967:8) put it: ". . . members' accounts, of every sort, in all their logical modes, with all of their uses, and for every method for their assembly are constituent features of the settings they make observable." In other words, description of social order is part of the very order it describes.

Despite the impossibility of prescriptive morality, members' structure-making practices are morally regulated through members' attention to certain knowledge that not all accounts are equally satisfactory (Bittner 1967; Hilbert 1986; Zimmerman 1970, 1974). Indeed, constant awareness of the possibility of error and correction contributes to the commonsense impression that prescriptive morality must be operating in the background. If there are correct and incorrect ways to use an organizing concept, so the expression goes, then there must be a "something" to which specific uses more or less conform.[4] Yet, as an empirical matter, the constraint upon members' artful practices is a constraint members exercise on each other—a "here and now" constraint, one generated from within the setting it constrains (Zimmerman and Pollner 1970)—although members may collectively attribute it to the object of their folklore, prescriptive morality (Hilbert 1990b:796n). Notice that constraint is still external to individual will or volition in the spirit of Durkheim. However, it is an empirical constraint manifested in the actions of concrete others; not just *any* account will do because participants will not *allow* it.

Thus, where Parsons sees two orders, both structured and one causing the other, Garfinkel sees neither one. More strictly, he sees one self-organizing, "incarnate" order (Garfinkel 1967:1). This incarnate order recovers Durkheim's

sui generis principle, i.e., the "self-generating" nature of society. Garfinkel's approach has the advantage of retaining the singularity of the Durkheimian phenomenon as well as retaining its status as empirical and morally regulated.

One place to find the society/morality equivalence is in settings where members are expressly concerned with moral regulation and attend to their folk-impression that behavior is rule-governed. Predictably, ethnomethodological studies of rule-use have shown that rules are implicated in the very identity of behavior as factual even as those same rules are presumed by members to be prescriptive and explanatory. Stated differently, when members prescribe, predict, or explain behavior, they necessarily and simultaneously generate the factual behavior they are talking about.

Superb examples of this phenomenon permeate Wieder's (1974, 1974a) ethnography of a halfway house. Here Wieder found a set of rules for governing residential life, a "convict code," which included the following: do not snitch; do not cop out; do not take advantage of other residents; share what you have; help other residents; do not mess with other residents' interests; do not trust staff; and show loyalty to other residents (Wieder 1974:115–118). If Wieder had organized his study according to functionalist principles, this code would have become the rules that explain the factually observable behavior of convicts in and around the halfway house. But, instead, he extended the analysis to include the "telling" of the code as a part of that very behavior. Notably, the code was analytically incapable of prescribing specific behaviors; indeed its expression as eight governing rules was Wieder's own rendition, a far more organized and prescriptive format than what he actually observed in the halfway house. In practice, residents, though oriented to the code as a set of rules, could not recite the rules in the ethnographers' style (Wieder 1974:115).

The embeddedness of the convict code in residential life makes Wieder's study a revealing glimpse at reflexivity, the order sui generis, and the society/morality equivalence. For the very factual behavior engaged in by residents depended on the code in more ways than Parsons will allow. Not only was the code invoked by residents, by staff, and by Wieder himself as an explanation of observed behavior, and not only was it invoked as a guide for future behavior, but it was invoked as an index of what the behavior on display actually was, how it was patterned, objective, and factual: "[H]earing the code and employing it as a 'guide to perception' gave behaviors of residents a specific and stable sense" (Wieder 1974:131). Thus, the factual status of what was explained by the code depended on the code for its very identity. If the notion of a device used both to generate and explain a phenomenon seems uncomfortably circular, it is nonetheless precisely what empirical observation reveals as a fundamental property of social order. Wieder captures this duality: "Somehow through the vehicle of ordinary conversation, residents made it happen that their behavior would be seen as regular, independent of their particular doing, and done as a matter of normative requirement" (1974:146).

Reflexivity within the halfway house is further illustrated by the fact that the

code was often "heard" in the nonverbal behavior at hand rather than the reverse. Novices did not first learn the code and then follow it; often they learned the code in the process of seeing or participating in behavior, indeed even "conforming" to the code. Eventually Wieder turned these ethnographic observations on himself as ethnographer within the setting, revealing how he came to learn the code, often, ironically, through such behavior as residents' refusal to discuss it with him.

It should be emphasized that, while no member of the halfway house setting was "free" in the sense of being able to generate general rules in any way whatsoever or being able to engage in behavior without constant attention to the constraining aspect of the social environment, these constraints were those exercised or exercisable by members on one another rather than by any authority emanating from the logical integrity of deductive norms. Sanctions for violations of the code could be severe, but the specifics of compliance were matters of persuasion and control with the ever-present possibility of failure. Compliance was more like successful social "passing" (Garfinkel 1967:116–185; Hilbert 1980) or "impression management" (Goffman 1959:208–237) than conformity to a body of rules. Thus, constraint is produced from within the social order it constrains.

Still, prescription is one of the many practical uses to which rules are put. Given the analytic impossibility of prescription, one might wonder how members could use rules for that purpose. It is instructive to note, in terms of an order sui generis, that even where rules are used to prescribe the order that is sought and expected, they depend for that use upon routine knowledge of that very order; they cannot stand outside that order and prescribe it (see Bittner 1965). Moreover, what that order consists of, as well as the specific intent of a prescriptive rule, is unique to every occasion of its being artfully constructed or "reproduced" and cannot thereby be specified in advance of this construction (Hilbert 1981, 1982; Wieder 1974, 1974a; Zimmerman and Pollner 1970). Thus, each instance of a rule–prescribing behavior involves the active determination, by members working artfully together, of other "underlying rules" or underlying meanings of present rules (including their exceptions) that were never specified but which became, in the course of their construction, oriented to as things "known all along" (Zimmerman 1970). Simultaneously, each of these determinations is an occasion to construct more case-specific knowledge about the routine workings of competent behavior as it factually exists. Thus, reflexivity is no less a phenomenon for the prescriptive use of rules than it is for a descriptive use; indeed *the analytic distinction between normative prescription and factual description drops out of the sociologist's lexicon altogether.*

The reflexive properties of prescriptive rules were observed by Garfinkel (1967:18–24) in his famous investigation of coding practices. Here, coding rules were prescriptive and rationally designed to enable coders to explicate the criteria that the clinical staff used to process patients through various treatment

stages. The premise was that, while these criteria as written and routinely spoken were loose, their underlying stability could be captured by: (a) keeping rigorous and very detailed records on patients' clinic careers, and (b) coding this information in a methodologically precise way in order to discover standard selection criteria for patients moving through these treatment phases. Coding instructions had to be precise in order to characterize what was otherwise loose as stable, quantifiable, and subject to a reliability test. Garfinkel's central finding was that coders—in order to follow coding instructions and code folder contents—had to use more knowledge than was contained in the coding instructions *or* in the patient folders. This included "loose" knowledge about routine clinic events and operations—information that was itself not coded, standardized, or even thematized prior to its use or its construction for use in coding particular cases. In other words, coders had to use the "loose" knowledge that they were standardizing in order to assess the adequacy of the standardization. In this sense the loose knowledge took priority over clinic events, folder contents, and coding instructions.

Garfinkel called this coders' work "*ad hoc*" considerations, noting that, while conventional research could see them as unwelcomed and obtrusive flaws in objective coding practices, they were nevertheless essential to the very discovery of folder events as correctly coded. That is, they were part and parcel of recognizing what the instructions were instructing coders to do in each instance of a folder event being coded. Indeed, asking coders to suppress these *ad hoc* considerations produced bewilderment (Garfinkel 1967:21). Thus, prescriptive rules occur within a setting and are about that setting, not standing outside that setting as its cause. It is not the case, therefore, that coders' activities could be understood from the outside by consulting the instructions they followed, no matter how precisely they were formulated. Rather, the intent of the instructions was, as was their use, ongoing and accomplished features of the setting itself. So was the reasonableness and the very identity of specific instances of coders' activities having been performed well.

That a setting "self-organizes" in this way is deeply suggestive of a Durkheimian order sui generis. In the coding example, sufficiency in following the instructions, as well as the prescriptive adequacy of the instructions, was achieved in the art of following them, that is, in the course of observable behavior. As Garfinkel (1967:20) put it, "How *ever* coders did it, it was sufficient to produce whatever they got."

Thus, normative and factual order are the self-same order sui generis. It is the order that Durkheim called society, and it is empirical in both its normative and factual aspects. Ethnomethodological research reveals it to be more like an ongoing work of art, more like a jazz musicians' jam session, than a computer program. Its normative dimension cannot be separated from its factual status. It can be observed in both these aspects, as can the consequences of these aspects for members of it, but it cannot be observed in either aspect independently of the

other. It is enforced, moreover, on the membership, but it is, in the final analysis, and as a matter of empirical observation, members who are enforcing it and using it.

DURKHEIM'S SOCIETY/REALITY EQUIVALENCE

Durkheim had more to say about society than that it is self-creating. Society is also, in Durkheim's (1947) most radical commentary, equivalent to objective reality as known and recognized by societal members. This is easiest to spot in mechanical solidarity, for here the equivalence is quite literal:

> For the Australian, things themselves, everything which is in the universe, are part of the tribe; they are constituent elements of it and, so to speak, regular members of it; just like men, they have a determined place in the general scheme of organization of the society (Durkheim 1947:141)

What might be termed the ultimate reality of a society, the god in the society, that which embraces all knowable reality and sees beyond what any individual knows, is equivalent to that very society (Durkheim, 1947:206). The sacred energy embodied in sacred objects, which among North American Indians and Melanesians is called *mana* (Durkheim 1947:194), is represented in Australia by the totem that identifies the clan group (Giddens 1971:109; Coser 1971:138). The unity expressed in elementary ontological systems "merely reproduces the unity" of mechanically–based solidarity (Durkheim 1947:145).

As the division of labor advances and as mechanical solidarity gives way to organic solidarity, this unity of world vision breaks down (cf. Berger, Berger, and Kellner 1973:63–82). More precisely, it recedes into the background to become the underlying supporting axioms for more complicated systems of thought and experiences congruent with the advancing complexity of society (Durkheim 1947:431–447; Giddens 1971:112–115). In short, knowledge (which is to say knowledge of reality) becomes diversified, such diversification finding its resting point on an "ultimate" unifying principle of moral rationalism, or rational individualism, the same working principle that sustains laws and contracts (Alexander 1982:263–267; 276–279).

Thus, in the modern world, no less than in earlier cultures, society remains the wellspring of the possible when it comes to experiencing the world, no matter how complex the world is found to be (Coser 1971:139–140). Cosmologies, ontologies, and all of their derivatives, which is to say entire systems of thought, *including those of the natural sciences*, are socially derived (Durkheim 1947:13–20). In terms of social evolution, scientific thinking owes its origins to the religious experiences of mechanical solidarity (Bloor 1976:40–44; Lukes 1972:444–449).

In this manner, the society sui generis provides for its membership the possibility of reality. Notably, reality is invariably and inevitably experienced, by

anyone experiencing it, in a mode identical to the empirical features of Durkheimian society: exteriority and constraint. This is because reality *is* the society. The result is that reality displays, in experience, an organization all its own, one that transcends individual consciousness and cannot be apprehended in any old way the individual chooses. The individual is *obliged* to experience the world in certain ways and not others, even though these obligations seem to the individual to arise from the objectively arranged nature of reality as such. Reality thereby is moral, not surprising given the society/reality equivalence in light of the society/morality equivalence. The independence of reality from the subjective knower therefore is the independence of society from each person. The human experience of reality is actively regulated (Hilbert 1986).[5]

PARSONS AND SOCIETY/REALITY

Parsons could no more tolerate a society/reality equivalence than he could a society/morality equivalence. At least two Parsonian commitments rule it out. First, any notion that individual experience of reality is morally regulated by society displaces subjectivity from its natural place in Parsons's scheme. Parsons needed subjectivity to emanate from within the individual as a basis of respect and voluntary surrender to normative order, which then assimilates to consciousness and regulates behavior. In other words, subjectivity is assigned a causal role in Parsons's formula. Secondly, Parsons needed factual order to exist independently of anyone's experience or ideas about it. While normative order may *cause* it and it is social in that sense, the very existence of factual order is objective and not a matter of social practices. Factual order is an inherently organized scientific reality available for the looking. In short, Parsons needed nonsocial reality.[6]

So Parsons worked diligently to undo Durkheim's society/reality equivalence (Parsons 1968:428–429). The equivalence, says Parsons, leads to a "complete ethical and religious relativism" (Parsons 1968:429). In the same paragraph, he contradicts Durkheim's comments about the social dimension of science, suggesting that scientific ideas do not take symbolic form the way religious ideas do. Later, he criticizes the moral regulation of experience directly for being idealist; this is the familiar claim that Durkheim in his late work abandoned science and moved "clean over" to idealism (Parsons 1968:445).

Notice how intimately connected Parsons's idealist charge is to his own theoretical commitments, particularly his assignment of subjectivity to the causal sphere. If society equals reality and if experience is thereby strictly social, then ideas would be preeminent, a priori, "eternal objects," says Parsons (1968:444–445). Ideas that cause behavior would themselves be neither caused nor regulated. They would be free-floating, unattached to anything, coming from nowhere. And if they both caused and were equivalent to society, then society itself would be free-floating and uncaused or in some circular fashion could only cause itself. Hence, according to Parsons, Durkheim's free-floating ideas render

his late sociology idealistic. The only alternative for Durkheim, says Parsons, the only way for him to account for constraint, would have been for him to adopt a radical environmental determinism, which does not allow subjectivity at all. But Durkheim's empirical rigor led him to the subjective dimension of society at almost every turn (Parsons 1968:446); he thereupon made the mistake of thinking that subjective experience and society were the same thing. Parsons says that this constraint-free society is just as objectionable as the radically deterministic model of pure positivism (1968:446): nothing would stand outside of ideas as obstacles to their realization. There would be no boundaries in terms of which actors could have ideas. Parsons rescues Durkheim from this dilemma by grounding ideas in subjective respect for an objectively present normative order. In doing so, Parsons gives short shrift to Durkheim's notion that regulation can be exterior to and constraining upon each individual and yet sui generis within the society of which individuals are members.

ETHNOMETHODOLOGY AND SOCIETY/REALITY

Once again, ethnomethodology recovered a Durkheimian equivalence, but not by addressing Durkheim directly. Ethnomethodological investigation into the reflexively self-organizing social order produced enormous insights into the social character of objective reality—consistent in some general ways with social construction theory (Berger and Luckmann 1967) but with an added dimension. The special offering ethnomethodology brought to reality-construction theory was to demonstrate how reality and experience are *actively regulated* (Mehan and Wood 1975), coterminous with the active regulation of factual/moral society.

In general, the ethnomethodological principle can be stated this way: whatever activity it takes to sustain stable social order, that activity is equivalent to the very practices that it takes to experience the world correctly, i.e., correctly within that social order. The empirical order sui generis for Durkheim and the reflexively self-organizing membership activity for ethnomethodology are identical to and exhaustive of reality-as-known-and-experienced. In other words, what members of an order bump up against and know as "reality" is available to sociology as the empirical activity that provides for the possibility of perceived social order. Thus, experiencing social order from within that order is simultaneously to experience reality from within that same regulated reality.

Garfinkel's work is most illuminating in this area. An excellent example is his study of how members of the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center (SPC) investigate cases of death to determine "what really happened," i.e., how deaths actually took place, deaths whose candidate causes include suicide, murder, accident, and natural causes (Garfinkel 1967:11–18). Here the practices used to generate facts about cases, relevant evidence, and conclusions about "what really happened" as historical events in actuality are identical with the very practices that defined competent SPC membership, i.e., "conformity" with good investigative work. As Garfinkel expresses the equivalence:

> Members were required in their occupational capacities to formulate accounts of how a death really-for-all-practical-purposes-happened. 'Really' made unavoidable reference to daily, ordinary, occupational workings (1967:13–14).

Such occupational capacities included loose access to "what everybody knows" about the world (for example how people die, what kinds of events lead to what kinds of appearances) *inseparable* from "what everybody knows" about the SPC and competent SPC membership. Knowledge of the latter included matters that a naturalistic philosopher might say have nothing whatever to do with reality or actual mode of death: how a decision might be handled by relevant others, what an investigator's investigating procedures might be later decided to have consisted of, how a decision might need to include nonforeclosure on the possibility of later revision in light of new evidence, how all of this ties in with careers and professional advancement, the politics of the coroner's office, and so on. But in the setting, these two "knowledges" collapse into each other; moreover, they collapse into the *methods* of producing a socially adequate account. The point here is that there is no "what really happened" that stands outside of whatever SPC members arrive at as "what really happened" in the exercise of their professional duties. Mutual constraint exercised on each other contributes to investigators' impression that "what really happened" stands outside of anyone's doing, just as it contributes to impressions of a corpus of investigative procedures (formal norms) that investigators "conform" to. However, the construction of the event is an accomplishment of this very regulating activity. Nothing counts as the reality-that-was-never-arrived at except insofar as it too is hypothesized by investigators as a display of competent membership, e.g., to cover oneself in advance of possible revision, reinterpretation, or new evidence.

According to Durkheim, reality itself, not just pieces of it, are embodiments of society. This is most evident in mechanical solidarity where society and reality are one, but while the unity of world vision appears to break down in advancing organic solidarity, this unity is actually receding into the background where it expresses itself as axioms, assumptions, and idealizations that provide for the possibility of diversified knowledge and individualized experience (see Hilbert 1986). These are, of course, the foundational assumptions of moral individualism and rationality that Durkheim astutely identifies as the unifying bonds that underlie an increasingly complex and differentiated organic society, functionally identical to the unity of mechanical solidarity.

In a fascinating and pathfinding book, Pollner (1987) articulates these foundational assumptions, the most general of which is the positing of "reality" as an entity in the first place. Reality, in a manner consistent with a Durkheimian transcendence displayed by society, is presumed by believers to be massive, objectively determinate, inconceivably complex, presently unknown in its entirety, discoverable through methods of rational inquiry, ideally knowable in its entirety in some hypothesized and hypothetical future, having as its features

exactly the features that it has independent of anybody's assertions or ideas about it, coherent and internally consistent containing no contradictions or even any apparent contradictions that could not ultimately be reconciled through further inquiry, and above all factual (Pollner 1987:26–47). These are the assumptions hardly anyone ever mentions, so it sounds peculiar to speak of them as "assumptions." Nevertheless, Pollner found their use to be a continual, ongoing, visible, and indispensable feature of people in a variety of settings.

For example, Pollner documents how, in a traffic court, the factual status of events in reality, as they truly and actually happened, as investigated, discovered and known, as well as the evolving revelation of reality as Great Object, is congruent with whatever it is that judges do that makes them competent judges. That is, the methods of reality-investigation are the methods of competent judging. Producing social order in this sense is simultaneously reality-recognition and discovery. The "out there" status of this accomplishment, expressed either way, is sustained by the constraints everyone knows prevents one from producing social order at random. As in the case of SPC investigations, competent judging may include a "more might be known" clause that allows for the possibility of a future reopening of the case and reinvestigation in light of new evidence—*if* the judge can demonstrate that such a reopening would not find fault with the conclusion drawn in the case as evolved up to the present. In that sense, reality is always and irremediably a reality for all practical purposes. But, when all that members do to construct reality, which is simultaneously what they do to sustain membership and stable social order, is taken under the sociologist's umbrella, nothing counts as the reality "beyond" that activity or the "what really happened" that stands outside it.

As I noted, Durkheim's equivalence of society and reality extends to the reality of the natural sciences (Durkheim 1947:13–29). In an interesting article, Garfinkel, Lynch and Livingston (1981) demonstrate precisely this principle. Their research material included transcripts of taped conversations among astronomers discovering a pulsar at Steward Observatory on January 16, 1969. From the astronomers' point of view, as expressed in their own astronomical journal article, the pulsar had properties consistent with "reality" as Pollner discusses it. As astronomers viewed it, the pulsar existed prior to its discovery, its features are the cause of whatever is correctly seen or said about it, and its existence, features, and discovery are "anonymous" to the actual discoverers in that discoverers' idiosyncratic work is demonstrably irrelevant to their discovery and in that the discovery resulted from adhering to "disembodied proper procedures," such that anyone following these procedures under these exact circumstances would necessarily make exactly the same discovery (Garfinkel et al. 1981:138–139).

Yet analysis of the transcripts reveals quite a different phenomenon. They reveal the *ad hoc* quality of the work, the artful dimension not reported in the journal article, and simultaneously the pulsar as an artfully constructed cultural object. Garfinkel, drawing upon an analogy with the potter's wheel and the

potter's object, "construed the [Independent Galilean Pulsar] as a 'cultural object' and in that status incorporated it into [the astronomers'] night's work as a feature of their work's 'natural accountability'," resulting in an empirical "*intertwining* of worldly objects and embodied practices" (Garfinkel et al. 1981:137, emphasis in original). That is, the *real time* quality of these practices, and the sociologists' concern with "the pulsar for the way it is *in hand* at all times in the inquiry" (1981:137), revealed the sui generis quality of astronomers' work as it progressed: what they did determined what they had done, in a prospective/retrospective fashion, concluding with the pulsar as an independent object fitting into and consistent with an independent scientifically objective universe, as well as the work of discovery as having conformed to formal scientific recipes. The method, in short, was invariably situated, as was the pulsar, any evidence of it, or anything that would later be construed to have been evidence of it. Here again is the congruence of reality and "conformity" or competence. As Garfinkel put it:

> It is astonishingly clear in that tape that the possibility of [the astronomers'] discovery and achievements inhabits their work from its outset. But it does so as a situationally conditioned presence and *not* as the pulsar 'out there.' The possibility of their discovery and achievement is *observable to them* and is a discussable for them in this: *their night's work poses for them their tasks of its own astronomical accountability. It does so as the lived presence of 'first time through' in the unfolding vicissitudes of their Runs.* In its own historicity the night's work poses for [the astronomers] their tasks of their work's astronomical observability-and-discourseability. The optical pulsar as a technical phenomenon of astronomy is not different than those tasks (Garfinkel, et al. 1981:140, emphasis in original).

Or again:

> It is the locally produced and locally recognized orderliness of [the astronomers'] embodied practices as of which the exhibitable objectivity and the observable analyzability and intelligibility of the phenomenon's technical, identifying details consists—definitely, exactly, only and entirely (Garfinkel et al. 1981:141).

One could not ask ethnomethodology for a stronger statement about the equivalence between social practices and objective reality. Moreover, the equivalence in idealized expression, society as stable behavior "out there" and reality as Great Object "out there," recapture Durkheim's society/reality equivalence. The impression of society/reality is sustained by the constraint people exercise on each other and that everyone knows about, experiences, and counts on. This point is all the more forceful when we recall the reflexivity inherent in this work. Thus the order sui generis, which is available as empirical social practices for sociology, is experienced from within that order both as structured social order

and as objective reality. This also contributes to a deeper understanding of Durkheim's claim that all systems of scientific thought, including scientific cosmologies and ontologies, are socially derived. Indeed, the pulsar study cited above is part of an evolving sociology of science literature that treats the objective facts of the universe in just this way, including mathematical facts (see Gilbert and Mulkay 1984; Livingston 1986; Lynch 1982, 1985; Mehan and Wood 1975).

DISCUSSION

Early ethnomethodologists (Zimmerman and Pollner 1970; Zimmerman and Wieder 1970) criticized functionalist theory for "going native" in the very society it set out to study in that it produced a formalized version of the society from within itself, from the point of view of its membership. The commonsense theory includes the view that society is a stable behavioral order and that the behavioral order is rule-governed. From the equivalences registered in this paper, it is apparent that to go native in a society is simultaneously to go native in the reality the society is equivalent to. Thus would Parsons reproduce the commonsense impression that there is an "out there" reality distinguishable from the moral reality that societal members share (see Parsons 1968:422).

Going native in the society under study is the only way Parsons could have read Durkheim's society/reality equivalence as relativistic and idealist. Indeed, Parsons had to see Durkheim himself as also native within that very reality. Only in that way could one see Durkheim's equivalence of society and its god (Durkheim 1947:206) as a theological statement or his comments about the social dimension of science (Durkheim 1947:13–20) as a philosophical statement about reality that physicists and chemists have to accept or reject on their own disciplinary terms. For if Durkheim is *not* native in the society, then he is writing neither as a religious practitioner nor as a philosopher of natural science, but instead as a sociologist offering another topic of investigation entirely.

Given this topical change, Durkheim's investigations into the social dimension of knowledge are not philosophical statements for natural scientists to suffer. Durkheimian principles do not contradict what natural scientists think about reality, but address an entirely different level of phenomena. Durkheim makes statements exclusively about the social: *nothing counts* as knowledge about reality independent of social regulation; there is *nothing to know*—better, nothing to *know with*. Social categories are the *media* of knowledge and reality experience. This is no different than saying that the sacred energy of the aboriginal totem cannot be derived directly from the plant or animal it represents (Durkheim 1947:205–206). Nothing counts as pre-social reality that gets coded and put into social categories.

In announcing their indifference to both factual order and normative order (see Zimmerman and Wieder 1970), ethnomethodologists were necessarily indif-

ferent to socially produced objective reality as well. We have seen this indifference in the studies summarized above. Garfinkel and his colleagues (1981) were not the least bit interested in the pulsar and, in fact, their study did not depend upon its existence. Likewise Garfinkel's study investigating SPC activity (1967:11–18) was utterly indifferent to how or whether anybody died, focusing instead upon investigators' methods of producing an adequate account. Indeed Pollner (1987) was indifferent to the very existence of reality per se in his study of the methods of its production.

Of course one consequence of "going native" in society/reality is that Durkheim's claims about an equivalence of reality and society appear to make reality in general equal to the structured society that functionalists describe and take for granted as part of that reality, an absurdity apparently derived from Durkheim. No wonder Parsons rejected the equivalence. And no wonder functionalist versions of Durkheim divide his work into two periods, generally focusing on the normative aspect and either disregarding or making only passing reference to the alleged idealism. It is in part the power of such impressions in academic circles (but see Giddens 1971:105–107; Pope 1973; Warner 1978) that would allow or even require ethnomethodologists to leave Durkheim entirely and to strike new ground inspired by more recent developments in philosophy. Thus does ethnomethodology seem disconnected from sociology when it might otherwise be seen as sociological to the very heart of the discipline's origins.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have examined two instances of a dynamic whereby Parsons's rejection of Durkheimian themes produced a theory which, when tested by Garfinkel, led by way of double negation to the empirical recovery of those very themes. Though not directly addressing Durkheim, ethnomethodology revealed an empirical self-creating order which is thoroughly factual and thoroughly moral. Moreover, this order sui generis is congruent with objective reality as known and experienced from within this order. This recovery is both an empirical verification of otherwise fairly abstract ideas and a remarkable case study of the history of ideas couched in the processes whereby theorists read and interpret each other.[7]

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NOTES

1. Parsonian themes addressed by ethnomethodology include social structure, normative prescription, subjectivity, and intersubjectivity. It may seem odd to some readers to realize Garfinkel's roots in Parsonian sociology, but to miss this fundamental point is to miss the heart of

Garfinkel's insights (see Heritage 1984:7–36). Garfinkel himself recently discussed this fundamental point (Garfinkel 1988).

2. Despite some authors' impressions that the transition from voluntarism to structural-functionalism was "muddled" (Alexander 1978; Menzies 1977), Parsons himself saw functionalist development as a refinement of voluntaristic theory in that normative systems stabilize behavior into corresponding systems of concrete action (see Parsons 1968:xv-xx).

3. Indeed functionalism conceives the actor as a computer or robot-like machine responding to cultural givens. In Garfinkel's (1967:66–75) terms, functionalist actors are "judgmental dopes." That human actors are not in fact "dopes" is no doubt related to problems and failures of artificial intelligence (Dreyfus 1979; Suchman 1987).

4. This dovetails with Durkheim's observation about the necessity of crime (i.e., its recognition and punishment) for the maintenance of the collective conscience and the ongoing impression of collective morality (see Hilbert 1986, 1989, 1992).

5. Because of the society/reality equivalence, the withering of society in times of anomie necessarily includes the withering of objective reality and experience (Hilbert 1984, 1986, 1989, 1992).

6. The concept of nonsocial reality inhabits Parsons's sociology in other ways as well. A distinction (see Parsons 1968:422) between scientific, empirical, nonsocial reality (which scientists know about but which commonsense actors may be ignorant of) and non-empirical, social reality (which commonsense actors think is true but which scientists know is false) lies at the very foundation of Parsons's formulation of the sociological problem of order. How these two realities exercise *different kinds* of constraint on actors figures into his critique of radical positivism, for example (Parsons 1968:60–69). In other words, "heredity and environment" are "givens," givens that for Parsons are insufficient to explain order but whose existential status he never questions. Moreover, Parsons needed to include "subjective respect" vis-a-vis norms precisely because without it, normative order assimilates to natural environmental constraints to which people adapt—rendering sociology the same as radical positivism (Parsons 1968:378–383). Parsons's inability—or unwillingness—to drop this distinction or to accept Durkheim's society/reality equivalence is also tied to his characterizations of Durkheim in other ways—including the idea that Durkheim was always making false starts and changing theoretical directions (see Parsons 1968:304). For example, Parsons saw Durkheim as being sidetracked by biological and other nonsocial concerns with his concept of "dynamic density," which for Durkheim helped cause the transition from mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity. Parsons calls dynamic density "pure population pressure" (Parsons 1968:320–324), completely ignoring its equivalence to "moral density" for Durkheim.

7. These two equivalences are not the only classical themes that Parsons suppressed and that ethnomethodology recovered. Other Durkheimian themes include: the empirical status of morality, the analytic insufficiency of rules, the necessity of ritual repair, and the role of deviance recruitment in the prevention of anomie. On the Weberian side we have the following: an indifference to the existence of institutional order; an indifference to the substantive accuracy of members' subjective orientations; the universal basis of the compellingness of ideas; the analytic integrity of ideal types methodologically conceived; and Western rationalization as a distinct analytic possibility and empirical process (see Hilbert 1992, 1987). Ethnomethodologists have

not been quick to claim their classical roots, partly because of functionalism's traditional claim on the classics. Functionalism's hegemony through the 1950s (Davis 1959; Ritzer 1988:201–202) was deeply intertwined with Parsonian orthodoxies about what Durkheim and Weber were up to. In fact, as Alexander (1987:34–46) reminds us, substantive challenges to functionalist theory were often intertwined with efforts to "de-Parsonize" the classics (Pope 1973; Cohen, Hazelrigg, and Pope 1975). Where Durkheim, for example, remains un-de-Parsonized, he is often rejected, along with functionalism, in some of these challenges (Collins 1988:107). I suspect that this dynamic was at work in ethnomethodological studies of Parsons. Ethnomethodology's radical program vis-a-vis Parsons, together with Parsons's readings of the classics, produced an impression of ethnomethodology, even among ethnomethodologists, as being discontinuous with sociology when it might have presented itself as near the very heart of the discipline. Indeed, Garfinkel (1988) considers ethnomethodology to be *radically* sociological.

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