

Counter-Conduct and the Everyday: Anthropological Engagements with Philosophy

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This article critically examines counter-conduct as an analytical tool for understanding minority subjectivity. It revisits the concept within its Collège lecture context and alongside alternative descriptions of opposing governmental power. Its affinities with the anthropological notion of the “everyday” are explored in depth. The anthropological everyday, it is argued, points to nuances that enrich our understanding of the political. Heidegger’s notions of “everyday” and “they” are discussed alongside ethnographic insights from Greece and Cyprus. This anthropological-philosophical encounter yields a more meaningful understanding of counter-conduct, as embedded in the everyday, that addresses both its broad scope and its analytic specificity.

Introduction

The key feature of counter-conduct is undoubtedly its breadth: it may, at first glance, be defined as any kind of resistance. As such, it politicises the everyday and locates politics “everywhere”. It supplements earlier conceptualisations of power by making explicit what these everyday politics of resistance imply. In this article I want to explore this notion of the “everyday” as the hinge on which politicisation hangs. If counter-conduct is “any” kind of resistance, the question that the concept of the everyday answers is how it operates. Counter-conduct, Foucault is at pains to show, involves an understanding of how one is conducted and how this conduct could be otherwise. It has, in short, a reflective quality that also lends it a theoretical nuance beyond the “anything” of resistance. The anthropological everyday is exactly about this reflection. Yet Foucault’s account does not provide the conditions for reflection on everyday practice. By addressing this absence here I am proposing possibilities for how counter-conduct can operate conceptually. I then show that this operation is particularly instructive for the understanding of minority subjectivity.

In the following sections, I first consider the discursive context of the lectures within which counter-conduct emerges as a pivotal moment in Foucauldian thinking. I then elaborate on the meanings that emerge out of this context and their link to the politics of the everyday in anthropological theory and philosophy. Minority subjectivity is a particular case in point, where the politics of the everyday is

inevitably counter-conductive. By this I mean that minority subjectivity entails, in contrast to majority subjectivity, the constant reflection, rethinking and negotiation of the power that underlies everyday encounters. In that sense, counter-conduct is inevitable in the minority everyday, more than in other cases. Revisiting my own data from Greece and Cyprus, I locate the reflective counter-conductive moments which tie inextricably together the political and the everyday. My key objective is to introduce the philosophical-anthropological notion of the “everyday” into the discussion of counter-conduct and in doing so to exemplify how reflection operates as a condition of counter-conductive practice.

Locating the Everyday in Counter-Conduct

As one of the major concepts developed in Foucault’s lectures at the Collège de France, counter-conduct appears surprisingly briefly in both primary and secondary Foucauldian literature. This is all the more surprising because counter-conduct is intrinsically connected to other concepts emerging in his major books, like discourse, power and subjectivation. It is equally connected to concepts like governmentality and biopolitics that have emerged more recently through the wide availability of English translations of the Collège lectures (which may be considered a “second wave” of Foucauldian readings, prefigured by earlier selections).¹ It is telling that the series editor of the lectures translations singled out counter-conduct as a formative concept in Foucault’s later works.² While perhaps not always explicitly stated, counter-conduct emerges in these studies as constitutive of governmentality in the everyday, not at its limits (even though also there). As with the prison, the hospital and the quarantined neighbourhood,³ it is not the exceptionality of protest that is most instructive (e.g. as something that disrupts political order), but the ways in which it constitutes such order. And if the centrality of the prison, the hospital and the quarantine is calibrated on the basis of inventory, demographics and categorisation, the passage of counter-conduct to the central stage of the political is via the everyday (as is the case in the previous examples, but perhaps even more so, if only because of its unmediated political character).

Counter-conduct, it may be argued then, sits at the very foundation of political subjectivity – the crux of the entire Foucauldian *oeuvre*. But it is the more politically invested side of this subjectivity, and it therefore requires a much more dynamic grounding than previous accounts may have suggested. If subjectivity emerges out of conditions of being, counter-conduct stresses that these conditions are far

1. Carl Death, “Counter-Conducts: A Foucauldian Analytics of Protest”, *Social Movement Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (2010), pp. 235–251; Louisa Cadman, “How (Not) To Be Governed: Foucault, Critique, and the Political”, *Environment and Planning. D, Society and Space*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (2010), pp. 539–556; Arnold Davidson, “In Praise of Counter-Conduct”, *History of the Human Sciences*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2011), pp. 25–41; Louiza Odysseos, “Governing Dissent in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve: ‘Development’, Governmentality, and Subjectification amongst Botswana’s Bushmen”, *Globalizations*, Vol. 8, No. 4 (2011), pp. 439–455; Marit Rosol, “On Resistance in the Post-Political City: Conduct and Counter-Conduct in Vancouver”, *Space and Polity*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (2014), pp. 70–84.

2. Davidson, *op. cit.*

3. References are to well-known examples from, respectively, Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1977), Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Random House, 1978–1986) and Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic* (New York: Vintage, 1975).

from inert. The “just being” of any such condition is stripped away so that conduct and counter-conduct are always in process and always under question. This dynamic is a political dynamic. One way to thus read the theoretical intervention achieved by counter-conduct is in the politically dynamic shift from “just” being. This shift is what much of anthropology has theorised under the sign of “the everyday”. The everyday, as political and as in process, is (the locus of) counter-conduct. Much like the Panopticon was meant to be read not as an exceptional and localised device but one that arises and is diffused in the logic of government (and shows something specific about it), counter-conduct is a specific subjective orientation that arises everywhere. This reading of the everyday helps clarify the difference between specificity in orientation and generality in location. Such clarity is arguably missing from Foucault’s own account where counter-conduct is exemplified on the one hand through limit-cases (e.g. military desertion) and is on the other hand insisted upon as a term that goes beyond specific practices (e.g. dissidence).

The 1 March 1978 lecture, where counter-conduct is examined, prompts us to think of the “everyday” as a methodologically nuanced analytical tool. As an anthropologist, I am concerned to explore these nuances both within the discipline (where the everyday is a principal concept) and in regard to its reception in philosophy. Between the two disciplines, the term “everyday” has been exchanged on numerous occasions, and for different purposes; these exchanges could collectively be seen as a debate about the banality and sublimation of human practice in the twentieth century (where the state figures as a primary agent). In what follows I take a critical view of part of this exchange, which allows an understanding of the everyday as a means for grasping the political dynamics inherent in counter-conduct. I therefore read, in later sections, Veena Das’s anthropological take on the “everyday” against Heidegger’s notion of it and Nancy’s critique of the latter. Relating my own work to these philosophical anthropologies, I thus argue that the everyday, as a means of understanding the political in counter-conduct, is one plane on which a more nuanced understanding of minority subjectivity may take shape.

What I mean by “everyday” here partakes of the “social” but is not limited to it in the way that it is often used as a matter of course. It is a particular mode of being that although related to, cannot be equated to concepts like “normal”, “average”, “typical”, “unreflecting” and so on, which are all too often assumed in the conceptualisation of the social. At the same time, it is a mode of being, existing “by default” but yet not attached to some primordial universal essence. In the course of the article, I want to explain this “everyday” as an anthropological concept that philosophy has contextualised often problematically in the social-universal continuum. This makes it relevant to Foucauldian and philosophical analytics because it has the potential to re-situate our understanding of the political.

A Badly Constructed Word

I want to start with counter-conduct as a cognate concept to resistance, dissent or protest. These are not lexical alternatives to counter-conduct; they indicate its meaning by their difference to it. Foucault is unambiguous on that point. He introduces the word “counter-conduct” in the same lecture as “conduct” and with a disclaimer:

what I will propose to you is the doubtless badly constructed word “counter-conduct” —the latter having the sole advantage of allowing reference to the *active* sense of the word “conduct” —counter-conduct in the sense of struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others.⁴

From the outset, this explanation lays bare the problematics of activity/passivity embedded in any theory of action, and particularly in Foucauldian understandings of power. In exploring the formal elements of counter-conduct, Foucault devotes the latter half of his lecture to the emergence of counter-conduct within the Christian pastorate. Asceticism is presented there as “the first element of anti-pastoral or pastoral counter-conduct” because it pushes past the limits of Christian structures of power.⁵ It should be noted that the discussion develops on the premise that “[c]onflicts of conduct will occur on the border and edge of the political institution”.⁶ The political import of this view inheres in asceticism’s active component, which pastoral obedience rejects: “in obedience there is never anything of this joust with others or with oneself”.⁷ Recalling a preceding passing remark to Buddhist asceticism, one might relate the transformation of such counter-conduct in modernity to Gandhi’s *satyagraha*—occupying a position outside violence and outside passivity, embedded in the idea of force (often interpreted under the sign of “truth-” or “soul-force”). *Satyagraha* in fact might be seen as a bridge point between asceticism and the next element of pastoral counter-conduct Foucault examines: communities. These are communities formed on the basis of rejecting specific forms of authority. In these communities, the primacy of “being conducted otherwise” gains political force—the joust has a social aspect. But this social aspect is always tempered by the critique of authority (Gandhi’s Tolstoy farm is brought to mind as a modern alternative to Foucault’s examples).⁸ This critique of particular incarnations of authority (in the pastor) is a feature of another element he examines, mysticism. Mysticism is counter-conducting because it dispenses with the mediation of the pastor between God and self – and this dispensation exists also in the immediacy of the text and the imminent arrival of the Holy Spirit, elements with which Foucault ends his examples.

What counter-conduct offers, he concludes, is a way of revisiting the relations between active and passive positioning vis-à-vis power:

Rather than say that each class, group, or social force has its ideology that allows it to translate its aspirations into theory, aspirations and ideology from which corresponding institutional reorganizations are deduced, we should say: every transformation that modifies the relations of force between communities or groups, every conflict that confronts them or

4. Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–1978*. Vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan, 2009), p. 201, emphasis added.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 208.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 207.

8. Steger provides a compelling comparison between Foucauldian power and Gandhian resistance, which gives pause for rethinking Foucauldian conceptions of violence, even if underplaying the preoccupations of Foucault with analysis and Gandhi with a political project: Manfred B. Steger, “Searching for Satya through Ahimsa: Gandhi’s Challenge to Western Discourses of Power”, *Constellations*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2006), pp. 332–353.

brings them into competition calls for the utilization of tactics which allows the modification of relations of power and the bringing into play of theoretical elements which morally justify and give a basis to these tactics in rationality.⁹

The difference is between an inert and an active understanding of the process of positioning. Rather than speak about ideology that allows change to be explained, counter-conduct speaks of tactics that are used to modify relations. It propels a conceptual movement from ideology to practice, where “practice” takes form in the operationalisation of tactics. Indicative of this emphasis on action is also the fact that after the formulation of “counter-conduct” Foucault rejects the alternative term misconduct on the basis that it “only refers to the passive sense of the word, of behaviour: not conducting oneself properly”.¹⁰ It is in this sense the imbrication of concept and practice that distinguishes counter-conduct as a specific form of resistance. And it is this that renders it a constant, everyday event. It is also what renders it necessary for the perpetuation of power across the planes of law, religion and modern sovereignty. This necessity is carried over from the pastorate to the modern state.

And it is this movement that points to another key characteristic of counter-conduct: its specific orientation towards the political. Foucault articulates this in his rejection of the term dissidence. Exemplifying dissidence through reference to the Soviet Union and Solzhenitsyn, he says that dissidence “designate[s] a complex form of resistance and refusal, which involves a political refusal ... in a society where political authority ... [conducts] individuals in their daily life through a game of generalized obedience that takes the form of terror ... [whereby] those who command tremble with fear themselves”.¹¹ “[T]he word dissidence is too localized today in this kind of phenomena”, he concludes, “so let’s give up this word”.¹² As a “badly constructed word”, counter-conduct speaks to an inability of description for actions, behaviours, discourses, dispositions, that sit at the cusp of the political, uncertainly belonging to politics proper, yet thoroughly invested in power and its perpetuation—thus thoroughly political. This is what I further read in the long explanation for rejecting “dissidence” as a more eloquent substitute—there is just something too political about “dissidence”.

This rejection of dissidence hits upon the limitations that others have seen in Foucault’s political philosophy.¹³ Jacqueline Stevens, for example, has taken issue with

9. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, *op. cit.*, p. 216ff.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*

13. Foucault’s weariness of contemporary political commentary has been noted by a number of people to different extents, including Michael Welch, “Pastoral Power as Penal Resistance: Foucault and the Groupe d’Information sur les Prisons”, *Punishment & Society*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2010), pp. 47–63; Alain Beau- lieu, “Towards a Liberal Utopia: The Connection between Foucault’s Reporting on the Iranian Revolution and the Ethical Turn”, *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, Vol. 36, No. 7 (2010), pp. 801–818; Kim Su Rassmussen, “Foucault’s Genealogy of Racism”, *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 28, No. 5 (2011), pp. 34–51; Jessica Whyte, “Is Revolution Desirable? Michel Foucault on Revolution, Neoliberalism and Rights”, in Ben Golder (ed.), *Re-reading Foucault: On Law, Power and Rights* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), pp. 207–228. I am not here concerned with particular political stances or failure to take them, but rather with how we may today employ counter-conduct to inform our own. This is why I find Stevens’ methodological critique valuable.

the silence about the world wars in Foucault's writings and interprets it as a methodological problem:

the nation-state's ability throughout history to establish itself as sacred and not simply a welfare consortium is one of juridical power's continuities and not an epistemic break on which Foucault strategically, I believe, insists. On what other basis could his writings almost entirely marginalize the most important traumas of the twentieth century, namely World War I and World War II?¹⁴

Indeed, not only on this instance (of the world wars) but elsewhere too, Foucault stops short of following through the repercussions of his critical analysis of power for contemporary political configurations, events and issues. A penetrating critique of race and colonialism is an absence noted by others.¹⁵ More recently, analysts have looked to his lectures for hints as to how that gap would have been filled.¹⁶ They have also documented an engagement with humanitarian politics in speeches and political writings.¹⁷ Belying this misconstrued dis-engagement, the notion of counter-conduct provides a basis for a critical assessment of the proliferation of contemporary state power. I would argue that the continuities of juridical power from the sacred to the liberalism of welfare are traceable in counter-conduct, in as far as counter-conduct marks the limit at which law and its function is reflected upon and questioned rather than being followed as habit. In relating to the political as a positioning vis-à-vis authority and its rule-making powers, but without ascription of the specific formulations of dissidence (or resistance, or revolt, or protest) to this positioning, counter-conduct communicates the continuities of juridical power that Stevens correctly faults previous writings for missing.

Counter-conduct is thus present along the spectrum of subjectivity, as a specific relation to authority that marks religious as well as state politics. It moulds subjectivities—majority, minority and even radical, as I show in final sections—yet without determining particular forms of action. The “everywhere” of counter-conduct is temporal in a diachronic “everyday”, not only a contemporary one. The rejection of dissidence could in this sense also be due to its localisation in the Cold War Soviet Union. And thus perhaps it could be that localisation in the extremes of world wars that Foucault might have wanted to avoid in theorising conduct and counter-conduct as aspects of welfare democracies. The specific qualities of this anthropological everyday that I want to recover here point to a way for thinking the continuity of the everyday across planes of power yet without attaching it to a primordial essence, as a philosophical take might suggest.

14. Jacqueline Stevens, *States without Nations: Citizenship for Mortals* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 43.

15. Ann Laura Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Robert Young, “Foucault on Race and Colonialism”, *New Formations*, Vol. 25 (1995), pp. 57–65.

16. See David Macey, “Rethinking Biopolitics, Race and Power in the Wake of Foucault”, *Theory, Culture & Society*, Vol. 26, No. 6 (2009), pp. 186–205; Chloë Taylor, “Race and Racism in Foucault's Collège de France Lectures”, *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 6, No. 11 (2011), pp. 746–756; Rassmussen, *op. cit.*

17. Jessica Whyte, “Human Rights: Confronting Governments? Michel Foucault and the Right to Intervene”, in Matthew Stone, Illan rua Wall and Costas Douzinas (eds.), *New Critical Legal Thinking: Law and the Political* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2012), pp. 11–31.

Foucault's concern to cover something very specific through counter-conduct yet all the while maintaining its generality is echoed in each one of the terms he rejects in favour of this "badly constructed" alternative. Disobedience is rejected as "too weak no doubt"¹⁸ and fails to articulate the strength of Anabaptism, an example of pastoral counter-conduct he returns to frequently. Revolt, on the other hand, "is both too precise and too strong to designate much more diffuse and subdued forms of resistance".¹⁹ Insubordination "is a word that in a way is localized and attached to military insubordination",²⁰ even though it is an important example of counter-conduct. The consideration of insubordination in fact yields a historically honed-in perspective on counter-conduct: "a phenomenon of resistance of conduct appears here [in military insubordination] that no longer has the old form of desertion ... a moral counter-conduct".²¹

By comparison to these, resistance is perhaps the most interesting alternative, one that is not manifestly rejected, but which remains a point of reference throughout. It is worth pausing here to consider it as a term against which the generality and specificity of counter-conduct is elaborated. Resistance is the first term mentioned in the discussion of counter-conduct, where Foucault lays out his intention: "I would like to try to identify some of the points of resistance, some of the forms of attack and counter-attack that appeared *within* the field of the pastorate".²² Elaborating, he speaks of "movements of resistance and insubordination [that] appeared in correlation with [pastorate conduct] that could be called specific revolts of conduct ... whose objective is a different form of conduct".²³ In regard to these movements, what is at stake is "whether the *specificity* of refusal, revolts, and forms of resistance of conduct corresponded to the historical singularity of the pastorate".²⁴ This is an important question in the analysis of state power because it introduces the break between sacredness and welfare that Stevens identifies:

Just as there have been forms of resistance to *power as the exercise of political sovereignty*, and just as there have been other, equally intentional forms of resistance or refusal that were directed at *power in the form of economic exploitation*, have there not been forms of resistance to *power as conducting*?²⁵

Resistance, it seems, is the broader field of action within which counter-conduct occurs—counter-conduct is a form of resistance. I would like to revise this reading in light of the debates (post-Foucault of course but nevertheless benefiting our reading of the lectures) about resistance as a "weapon of the weak".²⁶ James Scott's definition of resistance has been embraced and critiqued, primarily within anthropology, because it widened the field of agency on the one hand, yet affirmed,

18. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, p. 198.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 194, italics in original.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, p. 195, emphasis added.

25. *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

26. James Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

on closer reading, essentialisms about effective and ineffective forms of action against authority on the other.²⁷ Foucault's counter-conduct also contains this implication when he ascribes to it, seven pages after the passage above, the quality of "someone actually acting". At the point of rejecting dissidence, he says that "there is a process of sanctification or hero worship" that skews the field of interpretation, not allowing us to include all "the components in the way in which someone actually acts in the very general field of politics or in the very general field of power relations ... that may well be found in fact in delinquents, mad people, and patients".²⁸ In light of the preceding discussion of action, I would like to suggest that we read "someone actually acts" as a slip; counter-conduct is a productive concept precisely because it is not confined to resistance as an "act". It can be a thought, a reflection, or the lack of reflection. It is there in being in the everyday. The talk of "act" presents it as political, but the inclusion of the categories "delinquents, mad people, and patients" points to it as non-politically charged. This is the primary political field that counter-conduct negotiates: power relations but not necessarily political charge.

In this specific understanding of resistance the problems of interiority/exteriority and action/passivity take on a different quality. The power of political sovereignty and the power of economic exploitation are more politically charged and in this sense they are different from the form of power as conducting (that makes up the wider field of the political). Power as conducting carries no such political charge. Resistance puts these three forms together, and counter-conduct clarifies their differentiation: it is "resistance to power as conducting" against "resistance to power" in the two other forms: political sovereignty and economic exploitation. This politico-economic nexus that stands opposite conduct has been the central axis of resistance studies *pace* Scott and it is significantly on this basis that its critics have insisted for a greater attention to the subjectivising aspects of such power. Foucault seems aware of the tension between an esoteric care of the self and an external politics of the state. This is why he frames the establishment of the pastorate against "disorder" as a form of counter-conduct itself—the two cannot but co-exist. It is also why he marks out counter-conduct vis-à-vis these other forms of protest. Of particular concern are "[p]olitical revolts against power exercised by a form of sovereignty ... [as well as] economic revolts against power inasmuch as it maintains or guarantees exploitation". Connections, he will submit, exist between revolts of conduct and political and economic ones. His examples are Luther, revolts around women's status, and finally the English Revolution, where he sees "a quite special dimension of the resistance of conduct, of conflicts around the problem of conduct".²⁹

These examples point to an understanding of "counter-conduct" as a matter of perspective: counter-conduct is not "that which is not Revolution", "that which is not political or economic revolt", but rather, any kind of resistance *that involves*

27. Examples include Timothy Mitchell, "Everyday Metaphors of Power", *Theory and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 5 (1990), pp. 545–577; Iris Jean-Klein, "Nationalism and Resistance: The Two Faces of Everyday Activism in Palestine during the Intifada", *Cultural Anthropology*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1991), pp. 83–126; Sherry Ortner, "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 37, No. 1 (1995), pp. 173–193; and Begoña Aretxaga, *Shattering Silence: Women, Nationalism, and Political Subjectivity in Northern Ireland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

28. Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 197.

taking account of how one is conducted and how this could be otherwise. This is ultimately what allows counter-conduct to transition from the pastorate to the state. It is not the “what” of action that determines counter-conduct, but the “how” of subjectivation: if conduct is about moulding a population so that its existence appears “natural” or “normal”, counter-conduct entails a reflection on this work, however implicit or intentional (applying to dissidents and insubordinates as much as to mad people and patients). It is simultaneously a work on the self and a work on power. This quality of counter-conduct exists in the pastorate as it does in modern statehood.

The significance of all of this is that it allows us to situate counter-conduct within the Foucauldian *oeuvre* as covering the entire power question of the political in the everyday. For if we are to see the cultural/moral question as an aspect of, and not “distinct from ... political power exercised by a form of sovereignty”,³⁰ then the conduct/counter-conduct structure is part of the political, including when it is exercised by a form of sovereignty. It establishes the continuity of the political everywhere and against the distinctions from the political power of sovereignty and economy (i.e. the politics on the side of big Revolutions, Government, or the Party). That this integration is so often missed, even in studies that strive to speak against the caricature separation between “macro-” and “micro-” politics, is cause to reconsider the everyday much more closely.

Anthropological Perspectives on the Everyday

An illustration of the everyday I am talking about is Veena Das’s anthropological reworking of the philosophy of ethics. This is how she describes the task of rendering the everyday a tool for reconceptualising ethics:

I will argue for a shift in perspective from thinking of ethics as made up of judgments we arrive at when we stand away from our ordinary practices to that of thinking of the ethical as a dimension of everyday life in which we are not aspiring to escape the ordinary but rather to descend into it as a way of becoming moral subjects. Such a descent into the ordinary does not mean that no attempt is made to work on this ordinary in the sense of cultivating critical attitudes toward one’s culture as it stands, and also working to improve one’s conditions of life but that such work is done not by orienting oneself to transcendental, objectively agreed-upon values but rather through the cultivation of sensibilities *within* the everyday. One way to put this is in terms of the labor of bringing about an eventual everyday from within the actual everyday.³¹

Das provides ample examples of how the everyday in its banal form entails moral judgements: in gestures, offerings and greetings, that may be modified in subtle ways to acknowledge difference in status (e.g. wealth) and avoid offence. These are examples that we may well recognise as “anthropological” and which have often migrated across disciplines, in many cases under the rubric of Bourdieuan “habitus”, to show that people around the world internalise rules of behaviour.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

31. Veena Das, “Ordinary Ethics”, in Didier Fassin (ed.), *A Companion to Moral Anthropology* (Malden: Wiley Blackwell, 2012), pp. 133–149, at p. 134.

Yet in Das's treatment, it is evident that this habit is not inert—it involves constant cultural reflection.

Das locates the insertion of daily moral judgements into situations marred by extreme violence. The difference between her "eventual everyday" and her "actual everyday" points to this violence—violence that makes it impossible to speak of the "everyday" as an "ordinary" condition. Deaths in war (e.g. the partition of India) or in disaster (e.g. Bhopal) are such instances that push the "everyday" well beyond the sphere of the ordinary, for those affected who have to continue inhabiting it. On this basis, she argues that the "everyday" needs to be reconceptualised as a condition that one descends in. She makes this comment directly against philosophies that take the "everyday" as the signifier of some universal human quality, elevated on a theoretical level of the sublime and often tied to the question of God. She thus concludes: "It seems that 'ordinary ethics' evident in such gestures has the potential to generate an eventual everyday from the ruins of the actual everyday by putting together the rubbles and ruins and learning to live in that very space of devastation yet once again".³² The "eventual everyday", as I read it, is not the transcendental aspect of the "actual everyday" because transcendence is understood in an upward move (sublimation). If it is transcendental, it is so in the opposite direction: drilling into the muck of violence far beyond (hence transcending) the ordinary from which normality must somehow be inhabited.

I find this notion of "descent" into the everyday extremely useful for engaging a discussion of counter-conduct and its manifestations. I will briefly consider one aspect of this descent here—the "cultivati[on of] critical attitudes toward one's culture",³³ which has been a point of focus in my own ethnographic work. I want to rethink some ethnographic episodes, which I have extensively presented elsewhere, through attention to the philosophical elaboration on the everyday found in Heidegger, which Das also gestures to, as well as to Nancy's critique of this Heideggerian everyday, which I will argue exhibits remarkable and subtle anthropological insights that can be invaluable to a cross-disciplinary discussion. I want to suggest that if the "ordinary" is substituted with "majority" then we may be closer to conceptualising myriads of "actual everyday" whose violence need not be unspeakable, but still entails a descent through being normalised.

One illuminating ethnographic moment in western Thrace, Greece, was the scene of a ceremonious visit by middle-aged women to the mother of a nine-year-old boy who had just had his circumcision operation. Western Thrace is an area of Greece inhabited by a number of ethnic groups, most notable amongst whom are "the Muslim minority" (as the legal appellation goes) who, in large numbers and against state rhetoric, self-identify as Turks.³⁴ The boy at this stage was being educated in a Greek elementary school, his mother having opted out of education in a minority school, because of the poor standards of these schools. The women engaged in small talk with the boy and his mother, and some of their questions were judged as intrusive and/or offensive according to the "everyday moral judgement" they articulated in telling me the story later. The mother at some point retreated to the kitchen to prepare another dessert platter and the boy grabbed

32. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 134.

34. Olga Demetriou, *Capricious Borders: Minority, Population and Counter-Conduct between Greece and Turkey* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), pp. 181–190.

the opportunity of her absence to sing the Greek national anthem, apparently without any provocation, “out of the blue”, she said.

When the incident was related to me by the hosts, they both laughed, the mother described feelings of embarrassment and the boy grinned mischievously. My question “why?” was answered by a nonchalant “I was just bored!” The national anthem was sung *at* the women, I was to understand, and indeed, I was told that they left soon after. My further understanding here is that this kind of offensive singing entailed a reflection, on the part of Sinan, the nine-year-old, on the political values of the minority community, which included a disdain for Greek national symbols and a fear that the Greek state was trying to assimilate the minority (schooling being one strategy). This was of course not a deep and tortured reflection of the kind philosophy engages in (and which other minority individuals shared with me at other points) but a reflection integrated into Sinan’s routines of life to such an extent that it could elicit an act of mockery directed at elderly women, as well as to the minority community at large and the Greek state, all at once. This, to me, is an example of counter-conduct borne of reflection on the self, the ways in which the self is conducted, and the ways in which the self can be conducted otherwise, and in the process also perhaps conduct others otherwise. Counter-conduct is not just in the “act”, but perhaps more so in the reflection; but equally importantly, this reflection is un-sublimated, almost unacknowledged in a moment of “simple” boredom.

The explanation of boredom relates “thick description”,³⁵ in the sense of an opening up of multiple analytic alternatives, at the same time as it evacuates it. It proposes that things could be otherwise: the ideology of nationalism could index something other than the subjection of the minority, and the minority could internalise an affect other than victimisation in relation to it. In this “otherwise” the singing of the anthem would not take place, and if it did, it would not be adversarial. This reflection is part and parcel of the act. But it is also denied, insistently un-sublimated, downgraded to “boredom”. The import of this explanation of boredom cannot really be grasped (or accepted) unless we dwell on a particular aspect of the everyday in Thrace: the operation of the “they” as reference to people of the minority community that exemplify a proper way of being. This “they”, I have argued elsewhere, operates in Thrace as a way of acknowledging *at the same time* both the self’s distinction from the idea of a “minority community” and its unquestionable immersion in it. It points to another layer of the jousting of counter-conduct where esoteric and social aspects (as in asceticism and communities, say) clash. The import of this complexity calls for a return to Heidegger and his foundational treatments of the “everyday” and the “they”, which inspired much of humanistic anthropology and Foucauldian analysis.

Re-reading Heideggerian Anthropology

Heidegger is the philosopher to whom many humanist anthropologists return, including Das, if in an oblique way—and of course the thinker on whom Foucauldian concepts also build. As Weiner points out, the discussion of the “they” in

35. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), pp. 3–32.

Heidegger's *Being and Time* is critical for anthropology because it effectively situates the socialisation that makes us act in the everyday unreflectingly (Weiner also reads this in direct relation to Bourdieu's habitus).³⁶ Weiner, as a Heideggerian anthropologist, sets himself the task of showing that the concealment on which this "they" rests can have positive aspects in non-Western societies, by comparison to the "deploring" effects it has on "the exercise of human freedom, creativity, and autonomy", as Heidegger, Bourdieu, Marx and Freud maintain in their Western accounts of the world.³⁷ While Weiner is correct to pick up the point of concealment as problematic in anthropological terms, I want to argue that to fall back on the Western/non-Western dichotomy to prove the point undermines its import and recasts the discipline as the "study of the exotic". In my reading of this Heideggerian passage, the problem is with the status accorded to reflection as necessarily a sublimated activity, not a banal one that might allow the ordinary to descend into the everyday, as Das would put it, and as Sinan might explain (if perhaps pushed to elaborate on his act). It is this possibility of reflection-as-joust that "habitus" fails to account for, and which counter-conduct engenders.

Let us consider the Heideggerian everyday more closely. Late on in his treatise, Heidegger explains "everydayness" (*alltäglichkeit*) as "the average ways of existing ... that kind of Being in which Dasein maintains itself proximally and for the most part".³⁸ Problematising this, he continues to say:

"Everydayness" manifestly stands for that way of existing in which Dasein maintains itself "every day" ["alle Tage"]. And yet this "every day" does not signify the sum of those "days" which have been allotted to Dasein in its "lifetime" ... what we have primarily in mind in the expression "everydayness" is a definite "how" of existence by which Dasein is dominated through and through "for life" ["zeitlebens"]. In our analyses we have often used the expression "proximally and for the most part". "Proximally" signifies the way in which Dasein is "manifest" in the "with-one-another" of publicness, even if "at bottom" everydayness is precisely something which, in an existentiell manner, it has "surmounted". "For the most part" signifies the way in which Dasein shows itself for Everyman, not always, but "as a rule".³⁹

It is important to note the terms of quantity and distance that Heidegger has throughout the text of *Being and Time* used in conjunction with the everyday (proximally and for the most part), which get their definition here. The first relates to a social/public aspect that infuses the everyday (with-one-another, publicness). The second relates to the normative/judicial aspect (as a rule). Equally importantly, the two are linked by a caveat that introduces a vertical dimension to the everyday: at bottom, everydayness is something to be surmounted. Tellingly, in the following paragraph, Heidegger will say that "[i]n everydayness Dasein can undergo dull 'suffering', sink away in the dullness of it, and evade it by seeking new ways in which its dispersion in its affairs may be further dispersed. In the moment of

36. James Weiner, *Tree Leaf Talk: A Heideggerian Anthropology* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), p. 6.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

38. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (London: Blackwell, 1962), p. 421, ¶71, §370.

39. *Ibid.*, italics in original.

vision, indeed, and often just ‘for that moment’, existence can even gain the mastery over the ‘everyday’; but it can never extinguish it”.⁴⁰ This transcendence has been shown to exist in a dialogic relationship with the “lostness” of everydayness, and to refer not to a beyond, but to an appropriation of the shared world.⁴¹

What I want to take issue with is the quality of reflection that allows this transcendence as philosophical rather than anthropological. Everydayness, in Das’s anthropological sense, does not have a bottom which reflection and philosophy can surmount. Reflection and philosophy must sink into the everyday in order to grasp it properly. Reflection and philosophy, I want to add, happen precisely at that very bottom within and beyond everydayness. The moment of vision is not a heroic moment; it can equally well be banal. It does not need to be Revolution, it can be counter-conduct. It is no coincidence that boredom appears in Heidegger as such a heroic moment of surmounting—but despite this interpretation of heroism from his mother who recounts Sinan’s actions to me, he insists on the banality of it: I was *just* bored!⁴²

Consider how this slant on the vector of everydayness would shift the normative and political import of the everyday, putting the “they” under scrutiny. From the same passage:

To this “how” [of existence in the everyday] there belongs further the comfortableness of the accustomed, even if it forces one to do something burdensome and “repugnant” ... In everydayness everything is all one and the same, but whatever the day may bring is taken as diversification. Everydayness is determinative for Dasein even when it has not chosen the “they” for its “hero”.⁴³

We could argue that the difference between Das’s descent into the everyday and Heidegger’s sinking into it is both political and anthropological. What Das has in mind as a movement of “descent” arises from rehabilitating ordinary life after devastation such as mass atrocities, death and poverty. Heidegger, on the other hand, considers death as an eventuality that Dasein (in its Being-toward-death quality) spends most of its time shying from, not a past event one must go on living in spite of. He thus characterises, in another passage, the everyday as a

state-of-mind which consists in an air of superiority with regard to the certain “fact” of death—a superiority which is “anxiously” concerned while seemingly free from anxiety. In this state-of-mind, everydayness acknowledges a “higher” certainty than one which is only empirical. One *knows* about the certainty of death, and yet “is” not authentically certain of one’s own. The falling everydayness of Dasein is acquainted with death’s certainty, and yet evades Being-certain.⁴⁴

40. *Ibid.*, §372.

41. Louiza Odysseos, *The Subject of Coexistence: Otherness in International Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), pp. 112–117.

42. We could of course “thickly” read a concealed heroification of the self in precisely this insistence but I think this would not alter the crucial point, which is the lack of purposeful, conscious and tortured reflection that attends Heideggerian sublimation reached by “philosophy proper”.

43. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, §371.

44. *Ibid.*, §258.

The anthropological interjection I read in Das is: what about other deaths, which are known, and certain, and indeed constitutive of Dasein? In posing this question, I want to also push it beyond the extreme cases of war, rape and abjection presented by Das. I want to submit that the concern with any eventual death (as in Heidegger) is a concern that assumes an ordinary death, a death that is “proximally and for the most part” average. So the constitution of Dasein, in so far as it pulls up the veil of contemplating its death, is in essence an “Everyman” constitution. In terms of my own ethnographic work with the “minority” in western Thrace, it is a “majority” Dasein. It is a constitution that harks back to a primordial human essence which is essentially depoliticised. Hence the problem of envisioning a non-heroic “they”; Jean-Luc Nancy articulates brilliantly this exasperation with Heidegger’s philosophical anthropology:

[o]ne cannot affirm that the meaning of Being must express itself starting from everydayness and then begin by neglecting the general differentiation of the everyday, its constantly renewed rupture, its intimate discord, its polymorphy and its polyphony, its relief and its variety ... “people”, or rather “peoples”, given the irreducible strangeness that constitutes them as such, are themselves primarily the exposing of the singularity according to which existence exists, irreducibly and primarily – and an exposition of singularity that experience claims to communicate with, in the sense of “to” and “along with”, the totality of beings.⁴⁵

What I take here from Nancy is, first, a re-orientation of philosophical anthropology. It should be remembered that right from his methodological introduction, Heidegger situates the phenomenology of Dasein against the “personalistic” movements in the philosophical anthropologies of his time,⁴⁶ which have been coloured by the Christian narrative,⁴⁷ while at the same time he finds anthropology valuable as a handmaiden for philosophical work. “To orient the analysis of Dasein towards the ‘life of primitive peoples’ can have positive significance [*Bedeutung*] as a method because ‘primitive phenomena’ are often less concealed and less complicated by extensive self-interpretation on the part of Dasein in question”, he says.⁴⁸ A disciplinary division of labour is thus outlined, where anthropology, as “the study of primitive peoples”, has little to offer intellectually, but can describe the link to a primordial human essence that phenomenology strives to discern from the concealment of a sublime “everyday”. Nancy seems to be suggesting that methodologically we can dispense with this quest for sameness (“existence exists in irreducible strangeness”) and still maintain a phenomenology of experience of singularity in communication with totality. This seems to expand the scope for anthropology in philosophy in significant ways.

This “irreducible strangeness” that defines the “general differentiation of the everyday” might be thought of as inaugurating the political of counter-conduct. It forces a reflection, even if unintentional (recall “mad people and patients”), through the acknowledgement of strangeness that counter-conduct necessitates.

45. Jean Luc Nancy, *Being Singular Plural* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 9.

46. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, §47.

47. *Ibid.*, §48.

48. *Ibid.*, ¶11, §51.

Taking up the case of minority, I want to argue that it can do that by politicising the (hitherto “social”) “they”.

The Heideggerian “they”, also translatable as “one”, has most commonly been discussed in societal terms, as positing a tension between conformity (social rules about what one generally does in certain situations) and conformism (constraining expectations about what one should do).⁴⁹ In terms of what I have discussed so far, I would like to revisit it here not as a concept that impinges on society as distinct from politics, but one that politicises the social through a politics of otherness and sets the plane for counter-conduct. An ethnographic reading of the “they” renders it part of the political precisely because (and not in contrast to the fact that) it points to the domain of “culture” and (cultural) norms. I say this in recognition of alternative readings of the “they” as depoliticised, “abscond[ing] from any substantive choice or commitment”.⁵⁰ I want to maintain that these are in fact also about a certain politics of the “they”. Odysseos rightly “points out that the ‘they’ provides notions about sovereign subjectivity that are deceptive”⁵¹ and locates the difficulty of the “they” there. What I suggest is that these notions can be read as part of the Foucauldian field of knowledge as power and thus ground the everyday politically.⁵²

Initially, Heidegger concedes a blurry field of identification and difference: Others, he says, are “those from whom, for the most part, one does *not* distinguish oneself—those among whom one is too”.⁵³ And later on, “[t]he Other can *be missing* only *in* and *for* Being-with. Being-alone is a deficient mode of Being-with ... Being-with and the facticity of Being with one another are not based on the occurrence together of several ‘subjects’ ... those entities towards which Dasein as Being-with comports itself ... are themselves Dasein. These entities are not objects of concern, but rather of *solicitude*”.⁵⁴ On this basis, it seems unproblematic to then infer that “because Dasein’s Being is Being-with, its understanding of Being implies the understanding of Others. This understanding, like any understanding, is not acquaintance derived from knowledge about them, but a primordially existential kind of Being, which, more than anything else, makes such knowledge and acquaintance possible”.⁵⁵ This claim may seem akin to Nancy’s “singular plural” and it would be easy to miss the critical, and political, point of “irreducible strangeness” that Nancy insists on: while Dasein’s irreducibility consists of the possibility of “knowledge and acquaintance”, that of the singular plural consists of strangeness—and the possibility that it may never be known. The difference is subtle but important.

49. Such interpretations are found in David Egan, “Das Man and Distantiality in Being and Time”, *Inquiry*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (2012), pp. 289–306; Edgar Boedeker Jr., “Individual and Community in Early Heidegger: Situating das Man, the Man-Self, and Self-Ownership in Dasein’s Ontological Structure”, *Inquiry*, Vol. 44, No. 1 (2001), pp. 63–99; Fred Dallmayr, “Ontology of Freedom: Heidegger and Political Philosophy”, *Political Theory*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (1984), pp. 204–234; Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World: A Commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991); John Haugeland, “Heidegger on Being a Person”, *Nous*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (1982), pp. 15–28.

50. Dallmayr, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

51. Odysseos, *The Subject of Co-existence*, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

52. What I am therefore also offering is a slightly different discussion to the well-known one on positive and negative aspects of the “they” (e.g. Dreyfus, *op. cit.*) as well as to the automatic attachment of the “they” to Nazi politics (e.g. Nelson Maldonado-Torres, “On the Coloniality of Being: Contributions to the Development of a Concept”, *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2–3 (2007), pp. 240–270, at pp. 250–251).

53. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, ¶ 26, §118, italics in original.

54. *Ibid.*, §121–122 (emphasis original).

55. *Ibid.*, §124.

Knowledge and strangeness differ politically: they entail different power relations. For Dasein, these relations take the form of caring about difference in different ways—“whether that difference is merely one that is to be evened out, whether one’s own Dasein has lagged behind the Others and wants to catch up in relationship to them, or whether one’s Dasein already has some priority over them and sets out to keep them suppressed”.⁵⁶ These politics of difference, expressed in the notion of distantiality, are disturbing, Heidegger says—“the more inconspicuous this kind of Being is to everyday Dasein itself, all the more stubbornly and primordially does it work itself out”.⁵⁷ Phenomenology thus ultimately unveils that “Being-with-one-another stands in *subjection* [*Botmässigkeit*] to Others”.⁵⁸ What is at stake has been a point of argument, where some readings suggest it is the subjection itself, others that it is the recognition of this subjection.⁵⁹ What is for me interesting, however, is the moral judgement passed on this politics of difference that reads, in the specific passage, almost as an outburst:

Thus the “they” maintains itself factually in the averageness of that which belongs to it, of that which it regards as valid and that which it does not, and of that to which it grants success and that to which it denies it. In this averageness with which it prescribes what can and may be ventured, it keeps watch over everything exceptional that thrusts itself to the fore. Every kind of priority gets noiselessly suppressed. Overnight, everything that is primordial gets glossed over as something that has long been well known. Everything gained by a struggle becomes just something to be manipulated. Every secret loses its force ... By publicness everything gets obscured, and what has thus been covered up gets passed off as something familiar and accessible to everyone ... It can be answerable for everything most easily, because it is not someone who needs to vouch for anything. It “was” always the “they” who did it, and yet it can be said that it has been “no one”. In Dasein’s everydayness the agency through which most things come about is one of which we must say that “it was no one”.⁶⁰

Such an aspect of the political everyday is indeed compelling. Through the “they” responsibility is deferred as a matter of course and the self is positioned in such a way as to be habitually victimised and yet maintain the agency of reflection to recognise that blame is to be apportioned and denounced. In the averageness that the “they” communicates lies a majoritarian anxiety. Majority, I would venture to suggest, is ultimately the cause of Dasein’s anxiety.

Ethnographic Reflections

Lay discourses on the “they” are abundant and it was without surprise that I encountered them in fieldwork, both among the minority in Greece and majorities and minorities in Cyprus. It was found in statements of exasperation at

56. *Ibid.*, §126.

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Ibid.*

59. Odysseos, convincingly arguing the latter, provides a review of this debate (*The Subject of Co-existence*, *op. cit.*).

60. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, §127.

government decisions, in critique of scandals unveiled by the media, in readings of media reports—readings that reserved judgement on the way events were presented and what may have actually been at stake (“who knows what is behind this?”).

For example in Cyprus, where conflict resulted in flight and abandoning of properties, “refugee” has come to signify a particular status of victimisation in Greek-Cypriot state rhetoric developed since the war of 1974. It is a mode of being marked by the trauma of abandonment and the resolve not to forget (the lands and properties abandoned). This structure of feeling interpellates both those who actually fled and those who did not.⁶¹ And yet equally widespread is the insistence of many individuals that they are refugees “otherwise”—that they may feel loss, but evaluate it differently to what is expected of them, or even yet feel indifference to it, or a lack of connection to lands, places and properties. They may consider that the material aspects of that loss, in the form of property values that can be monetarily compensated according to international legal decisions in the last decade, can be divorced from affective investments. Some of these individuals, expressly against the advice of their government, have sought compensation from the Immovable Property Commission set up by Turkey in northern Cyprus. Such action is described and articulated through an insistence on the right to experience and act on their refugeeness otherwise—and often justified on the basis that “they” have for decades, after all, “deceived us and exploited our pain”. In such cases, the “they” of the state, government, policy, of “high politics” was the source of true subjection, and the victimised Self responded by acting differently—opting for a different way of being governed.

A Heideggerian reading might suggest that the “they” helps to obscure the all-pervasive structures of power and falsely present the self as sovereign the moment it passes judgement and acts. A counter-conductive reading, on the other hand, might not disagree that even the act maintains the system, but evaluates the reflection (here in judgement) differently. This is what I am suggesting is the difference between a politics of knowing and a politics of strangeness. In Heideggerian everydayness, what we should know gets obscured but can be retrievable in moments of disclosure. In an everydayness that is of “irreducible strangeness” and “constantly renewed rupture” as Nancy suggests, that reflection is ever-present. Even if Heidegger might not foreclose the latter reading, he is at best not explicit about its political implications.

I have elsewhere⁶² analysed this through Rancière’s concept of dissensus,⁶³ whereby disagreement, and not harmonious consensus, comes to characterise the conduct of politics. It is a characteristic of the political, Rancière insists, and not some exceptional case where things get out of hand—it makes revolution always imminent. Dissensus is in this respect another facet of counter-conduct, perhaps even the “better constructed word” Foucault was looking for. In these terms, the example of Cypriot refugees is not some “particular” where war and legal

61. I have explored the structures of this “generalised refugeehood” along the lines summarised below in Olga Demetriou, “‘Struck by the Turks’: Reflections on Armenian Refugeehood in Cyprus”, *Patterns of Prejudice*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (2014), pp. 167–181.

62. Olga Demetriou, “Situating Loss in the Greek–Turkish Encounter in Cyprus”, in Vally Lytra (ed.), *When Greeks and Turks Meet: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Relationship since 1923* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), pp. 45–64.

63. Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010).

intricacies make such dissensus exceptional (even though it is undoubtedly particular in many respects, including war and legal intricacy). My point is that this locational particularity does not determine the presence of this form of counter-conduct (dissensus) per se. The “they” that founds it is a general one. As an ethnographic example, it does not serve to show exceptionalism, but generality.

In the examples I offered, the anthropological everyday allows us to particularise counter-conduct as constituting minority subjectivities in specific ways. For somebody to be able to mock one’s neighbours, as Sinan does, while also mocking the instrument of such mockery (an anthem) a double filter of reflection on the self, the community and the political is required, that is mostly absent from majority communities. This mode of subjectivity shows a “they” that drives everydayness that is more exposed than Heidegger seems ready to concede. It is a “they” that one unequivocally belongs to and profoundly understands, and yet in a different way to the “possibility of knowledge” Heidegger induces from the self–other equation. It is not primordial, as Heidegger suggests, because it is non-existent for the majority. It is cultural.

There are no secrets to the communal backwardness Sinan attacks in singing *at* the elderly women, even though the self’s radicality may be obscure to that communal “they”. A power dynamic is undoubtedly present, and it may at points constrain. But the difference between this self-integral “they” and the “they” of a higher order (the government) that even though familiar always subjects and stands in an antagonistic relationship to the self is qualitatively different. “Minority” works on both of these “they”s at once. This doubling is what fundamentally orders knowledge and strangeness. “Being refugee for you”, I was told by an Armenian in Cyprus displaced through the conflict but prior to 1974, “is ‘a different thing’” – the phrase “different thing” referred to a remark made to her by a Greek-Cypriot refugee who claimed that her loss in 1974 somehow counted differently and was more profound than Armenian displacements 10 years earlier. The “you” referred to the Greek-Cypriot “majority” and indexed the knowledge that I, as a majority member, did not have, and that this minority woman lived her everyday by. This doubling, then, makes “minority” a particular example of “community” as understood by Nancy through reflection when he defines the latter as “the resistance and insistence of community”.⁶⁴ This reflection is what we may pinpoint as the specificity of minority counter-conduct.

In another instance, a Cypriot Maronite tells documentary film-makers that when he was young he felt a double shame for the language he and his family and friends spoke: “we felt ashamed to hear other Maronites talk in Arabic to each other, and we felt even more ashamed for feeling ashamed ... so we were ashamed of being ashamed of being who we are”.⁶⁵ This double shame eloquently marks the specificity of minority counter-conduct that I have been talking about. And it also shows why minority counter-conduct can offer a vantage point from which to understand counter-conduct more generally. In this double shame, conduct and counter-conduct are enmeshed and shown to constitute each other. Conduct is instantiated by the internalisation of subjection in being ashamed to speak a language and being ashamed to be different. But counter-conduct

64. Jean Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), p. 42.

65. Costas Constantinou and Giorgos Skordis, *The Third Motherland* (documentary; Cyprus: Constantinou and Skordis, 2011); quote appears at 15:48.

emerges at the same moment as this internalisation, in the reflection that is necessary for realising that this subjection is at operation and that this subjection should be otherwise—the shame of being ashamed.

Perhaps the political of counter-conduct can be thought of as inhering in this “should”: whereas Foucault defines counter-conduct as the imagination of what “could” be otherwise, minority counter-conduct reminds us that this is not all, there is an additional move to be made from the “could” to the “should” for counter-conduct to be re-situated as a political concept. The victimisation permeating this example is more obvious than in the examples I have offered so far and perhaps exemplifies more directly Das’s “descent” into everydayness. But the lack of sublimation that marks this descent allows us to see the links with those less extreme examples: there is reflection here as well that enables counter-conduct to emerge, but this reflection is not the reflection of philosophical disclosure. It is an immediate “reflex” knowledge arising at the moment subjection is encountered and expressed more as feeling than thought. And yet it is part and parcel of the particular condition, in this case minority, not a primordial knowledge that Being is born with irrespective of multiplicity.

Counter-conduct is therefore a methodological pointer to this everyday, which is thoroughly politicised but in each context politicised differently. This methodological instruction is the significance of counter-conduct in its broad, political, but not politically charged (or politically determined) sense. It is what marks subjectivity as an always potentially dissensual mode of being. And yet it is not primordial, it does not precede conduct and its different forms. It arises with it and is thus differentiated. It is in this sense that counter-conduct, via consideration of the everyday, in each case, and in an anthropological sense, can enrich the critique of state power as it comes to structure that everyday—whether by conducting minority populations, failing to redress the rubble left behind by violence, or streamlining refugeehood.

Conclusion

In this article, I have approached counter-conduct as a conceptual operation, using anthropological insights to argue that counter-conduct is reflection on everyday practice. My methodological claim is that an anthropological perspective on counter-conduct offers possibilities for reconsidering some of the ideas that political philosophy consistently returns to—the notions of the everyday and otherness. Although the conceptualisation of “counter-conduct” offers significant liberating possibilities for rethinking big “political” questions such as agency, resistance and revolution, it hinges on a deeply nuanced understanding of the everyday that anthropology is well positioned to elucidate, but which has yet to be properly grasped outside the discipline. The stake in this claim is for a repositioning of the two disciplines on a more equal footing in the theorisation of “the everyday” as a political category and the plane of counter-conduct. Bringing insights from anthropological thought and ethnographic examples to bear on philosophical accounts of the “everyday” I hope to have shown that more engagement between the two disciplines could also imply more engagement with the political. The general, as the subject of philosophy, and the specific, as that of anthropology, are not ultimately about humanity vs. culture but about calibrations of power. It is these calibrations

that we constantly need to keep in mind in the ways we nuance the everyday, counter-conduct and, ultimately, the political. Counter-conduct is essential to inhabiting everydayness in general and especially for minority subjectivity. The implications of this for understanding minority subjectivities are tremendous, and they are also instructive about the political conditions of reflection everywhere.

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