In Pursuit of Utopia: "A Pakistani, an Arab and a Scotsman 'Return' to Cyprus…"

Christopher Kyriakides*

RÉSUMÉ

Le but de cet article est d' évaluer un des effets immédiats de la globalisation sur la politique et la société grecques. Bien que la Grèce a été, le plus souvent considérée comme un pays qui a pendant longtemps souffert des tendances massives de l' émigration jusqu' à tout récemment, l' ère après la Guerre Froide l' a trouvée à se battre contre l'immigration et les conséquences qui en résultent. Des flux migratoires vers l' Europe sont à peine nouveaux, plus particulièrement, si l' on tient compte que l' Union européenne soutient le concept du 'mouvement de population', bien que pas à une grande échelle. Dans le cas de la Grèce, cependant, les autorités locales de même que la société l'ont trouvé difficile de s'adapter aux nouvelles réalités dictées par la globalisation. L'intention de cet article est d'illustrer le phénomène de l'immigration en Grèce immédiatement après la chute du communisme en Europe.

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the role of aspiration in the formation of migrant experience, and argues that sparks of utopia are inherent to the human migratory process. A relationship between racism and anti-utopianism is drawn out in the tentative formation of a theory of migrant reception. Drawing on personal experience of transnational migration, the author narrates an ethnographic journey from second-generation migrant born and raised in Scotland of Greek Cypriot parents, to his recent 'return', illustrating that rejection of identity proliferation – the antithesis of conservative multiculturalism – can be experienced as liberatory. Personal narrative is situated within a wider socio-political analysis of modernity's shifting public-private divide, the contours of which are played out in the post-cold war demise of Left-Right ideological contest. The author contends that a politics of identity proliferation (multiculturalism) compliments the current capitalist dystopia, and concludes by arguing for a new utopian vision.

* European University Cyprus

Voices of Charlie[1]

"Cyprus is changing!" is a hard statement to ignore, especially as I have heard it uttered, in one form or another, so many times since arriving in 2006. The first time was part commentary, part complaint. A cousin explained, "our neighborhood is no longer recognizable, many foreigners have settled". Apparently, her "once mainly-Greek" inner-city locale, and the "closeness" of her "memorable", tightly bound community had been eroded by immigrants. An alternative complaint often-heard, particularly from work-colleagues, is that, "Cypriots have a problem with foreigners and that needs to change!" There are two sides to the coin of small-change it seems, or are there more, and at what cost? There I was sitting in the cafeteria of the newly opened IKEA furniture showroom in Nicosia. An elderly gentleman and his middle-aged son joined my table. In moments we were companions as we journeyed through the old man's stories of youth, followed his route from trainee engineer for the British in the 1950s; detoured via the industrial accident that prematurely ended his army career - a fortuitous calamity without which he would not have "made" his "name" as a successful taverna owner; and then, we arrived at *my* present destination. "Where are you from?", he enquired of me. "Father from Kolossi, Mother from Nicosia," I replied, "but they left in '55, and we were born and brought up in Scotland". "Even better!" his son interjected, "I work in the ports, with a lot of Scots, not like the English… I've been to Glasgow, my cousin married a Scot, Scots are more like us than the English". His father informed me that my "Greek was very good considering" I "had not lived in Cyprus". Acknowledging his 'compliment', I ventured an experience of my own: "when I speak Greek, people seem amused. It is as if my '55 Greek inherited from parents is not widely spoken anymore". Father, now somber, offered solace, "your Greek is Cypriot, it is not strictly Greek. You speak my language, and I understand you perfectly". After a pause, he added, "Cyprus has changed". His departing tale was of kindness and generosity once witnessed and demonstrated towards "strangers". His moral - Cypriots had lost their groundedness, their compassionate hospitality. Cypriots were now "selfish, untrustworthy and greedy". As the three of us finished our respective portions of fifteen meatballs, fries and cranberry in our newfound haven of multiple consumer choice, the irony of our insatiable sameness did not escape me. The old man's perception of change and our mutual desire for 'contemporary styles at affordable prices' were not mere illusions. So, is Cyprus really changing?

An answer to this question depends very much on first agreeing what

Cyprus once was, and hence, has changed from; second, on what Cyprus has become or is in the process of becoming. The dialectical relationship between both points is obvious. Also obvious is that no such agreement currently exists. Would Christofias and Papadopoulos agree? Did Makarios and Grivas?[2] As a sociologist I am immediately struck by more difficulties. When we say "Cyprus", do we mean the institutions located in Cyprus - political, economic and social-, or are we referring to "the people" of Cyprus? Are we talking about cultural habits, customs, language, symbols? Do we mean "the environment" – rural, urban, nautical? Or is it health that concerns us? Perhaps history? One could be forgiven for suggesting that "all of the above" is the correct answer. But if that is the case, then answering our question becomes a formidable task.

Empirical or substantive focus is usually influenced by the theoretical stance adopted. As a Universalist, I begin from the assumption that Human Beings make 'all of the above'. Humans are the subjects of history and hence of historical change, I argue. How then have human beings changed Cyprus? Are human beings changing aspects included within 'all of the above'? And if human beings have changed, what would such changes mean for Cyprus? Many of you reading this will immediately protest, "what is this 'human being' you demand of us?" And you would be in prodigious company. When the 18th century French conservative counter-revolutionary, Joseph de Maistre (1965) mocked, "there is no such thing as *man* in the world…" only "Frenchmen, Italians, Russians, and so on" (p. 80), his particularist essentialist claim was in its day a moribund critique of universalism that would reappear in many guises over the coming two centuries, especially when quests for social progress threatened the established order of things. To explain…

Recently I had the pleasure of being interviewed by a PhD student from the University of Sussex. Her thesis topic was *British born Greek Cypriots who return to Cyprus.* During the interview I felt compelled to state that although I had been born in Britain and my parents were Greek Cypriots, it did not necessarily mean that I was either British or Greek Cypriot. Moreover, as I had never lived in Cyprus prior to my arrival in 2006, I could not be said to be 'returning', could I? My aim was that of drawing out the complexity involved in the conflict between these external ascriptions and the possibility, if not the development, of something new, which may not be captured within existing policy or academic remits (for a discussion of this 'newness' in relation to British national identities and Muslims, see Kyriakides et al,

2009). "My parents migrated to Scotland in 1955," I explained. "I was born in Glasgow in '71. For the first 15 years of my life, I was identified as Pakistani, for the next 15 years I was identified as Arab, then, when I moved to Cyprus, I was identified for the first time as a Scotsman!" So, one could say that I am 'all of the above'. Alternatively, one might say, 'I am none of the above'. I have an 'identity of nothingness'. In 1970s Scotland, as in Britain, the word 'Paki' (short for Pakistani) was common currency among racists, a means of designating anyone who was not white or black. The expletive was an expression of the desire to keep 'us' out of history. We were not subjects who had the right to act effectively and decisively, to compete legitimately for resources - economic or cultural – deemed British.

The British labour movement at that time was powerful, and enjoyed a privileged place in the post-war welfare compromise with capital (Kavanagh & Morris, 1994, Mercer, 1996). The movement was however primarily stalinist, 'socialist in one country', and hence, worked within the confines of Britain. In its support for racist immigration controls (Miles and Phizacklea, 1977; Sivanandan, 1976), the British labour movement proved its patriotism. Bereft of an internationalist agenda, the rights and circumstances of racialised 'non-white' migrants were practically ignored (Thompson, 1988, Solomos, 1993). I recalled to my interviewer how as a child growing up in Scotland I would be asked: "where are you from?" When I replied, "Scotland", the response was often "yes, but where are you really from?" In addition, childhood holidays to Cyprus all-to-often reminded me that I was "not really" Greek Cypriot: "Εν Σκωτσεζούϊν" (he's a small Scot) was how I was introduced and dismissed. My 'existential' crisis was eventually partially resolved as a nineteen-year-old attending student parties. Drunken enquiries as to my "real origin" were met with my now-standard rejoinder: "I originate from carbon". Baffled looks were treated to the addition: "well doesn't everything on the planet?" I was smug, especially when they remained baffled. But in my smug amusement I felt some liberation.

My Greek-Cypriot migrant parents, like many of those Pakistani parents who settled in Glasgow after World War Two, arrived with hopes, fears and above all the aspiration to build a life denied them, for their children. Being immigrants, and branded 'non-white', placed them in the precarious position of having to work twice as hard as the then indigenous population and in worse conditions (Smith, 1977). At least, that is how my parents experienced their situation. And work they did, '24/7', until eventually like some migrants they entered the British middle class (CMEB 2000). They

faced discrimination and cruelty, but still made friends and became part of what they and other migrants had made – a new community, which would no longer accept Britishness as homogenously 'white' (see Gilroy, 1993). Some fought to become part of History by challenging the racially exclusive boundaries, which unsettled us. Others *settled* for a share in Britannia's dwindling surplus as diminishing futures were rebranded into 'new horizons'. In 'the end' the ahistorical construction of Britishness as 'white' was undermined even if the current cultural relativist 'Cool Britannia' does not represent History's realization (see Kyriakides, 2008). That was the Britain I left in 2006, but what is key is that I took with me a sense of aspiration, a yearning for a better future, which had been instilled by the migrant experience of nothingness. It was that aspiration which enabled the rejection of imposed ethnic origin, freedom from the determining categories of exclusion and inclusion, thus clearing a way for the making of humanness. Nothingness did not entail the absence of everything, for it was the *hope of freedom* that compelled the rejection of 'identities' imposed. Only a refusal to bow to the power of external determinacy kept that hope alive. And in that rejection a space was created for the emergence of something new. The space drew upon migrant aspiration, which in turn allowed for creation. The pre-requisite for the existence of aspiration, creation and renewal, as Castoriadis (1991) might say, for the breaking of eidos, is Utopia.

Practices of Mastery

It was Thomas More, the 15/16th century English statesman who coined the term utopia, a play on the Greek *ou-topos*, meaning "no place", and *eu-topos*, meaning "good place" (Sargent, 1982). The two senses are intimately connected – the image of a perfect topos (place) does not correspond to a really existing location, but is the means of acquiring improvement in the present. Utopia relates to a journey - not to a final destination - from the present to an improved future. Nothingness, ou-topos, is a premise for freedom the end-point, eutopos. The bridge between experience and vision is provided by hope. But if freedom is the supreme destination of hope (Bloch 1959), what is the basis of hope?

Paleoanthropology offers a partial answer (Klien 2000). The relatively genetically homogenous Homo Sapiens (Cann et al 1987, Ingman et al 2000) - Latin for "wise man" or "knowing man" - from which the present 6.6 billion world population is descended, evolved in East Africa 100-200, 000 years BP

(before present)[3], migrating outward 55-60, 000 years BP via the Middle East, Asia, Europe, Australia and the Americas (Hudjashov et al, 2007). Capable of abstract reasoning, introspection and language, Homo Sapiens took advantage of glacial cooling; we beachcombed, harvested marine foods, hunted, and hence followed rivers, lower ocean levels, warmer climates and migrating animals. Out of Africa (Stringer & McKie, 1996) came our culturally universal *predisposition* for creative action which enabled the overcoming of monumental natural catastrophes that occasionally threatened human existence (Ambrose, 1998). Whilst such actions were reactive, it is in this reactivity that we find the spark, all-be-it undeveloped, of utopia. Implicit to utopia is the reciprocal relationship between creative action and possibility of improvement. The making of Human History requires *experience* of that possibility. The most basic and fundamental (although not always conscious) experience of improvement lies in the orientation human beings adopt towards nature. Through the creative manipulation of nature, humans have learnt that they can wilfully change their circumstances. The ability to build shelter from natural elements, the discovery of fire, fishing and hunting are all *practices of mastery* which underpin the experience of positive change – the movement, made by application of will - from a cold and hungry present, to an *improved* 'place' where hunger and exposure are no longer as problematic. Within this migratory movement we find the embryonic development of the belief in a better future amid the failure of practices as represented by the determining power of natural calamity.

Experience of successful and failed practices of mastery situates human beings at the centre of the human story. The book of Genesis, for example, presents a moral compass situating good and evil around the Garden of Eden. The Hebrew word "adam" is a generic word meaning "humanity"; the name "Adam" a masculine form from the word "adamah" which means "ground" as in "formed from the ground". The narrative of the emergence of the 'first man' represents the belief that all nature was infused with life. Man emerges from and reverts to earth imbued with vital substance. Whilst both generic and individualised uses of "adam" are interweaved throughout Genesis, the generic sense dominates and applies whenever "adam" connotes a passive subject of divine creation (McCurdy et al, n. d). The fear and 'worship' of nature (the new God) steals the fire of divine ordinance, this new knowledge sparking celestial jealousy. Experience of the power of nature and the questioning of God, casts "Man" from the Garden of Eden - from ignorant bliss. Instilled with self-doubt, anxiety and guilt, human beings face

the reality of their own mortality. With this knowledge emerges the possibility of the active subject. Humans become conscious, not only of their own actions, but of the power which their actions contain. Fromm (1966) used *Adam and Eve* allegorically. *Eating from the Tree of Knowledge* symbolised awakening; awareness of being both part of and separate from nature. Their "naked shame" reflects consciousness of themselves as mortal and powerless in the face of natural and social forces. Dis-united from the universe and hence from their pre-human 'instinctive' existence brings guilt and shame, the solution of which lies in the development of exclusively human powers. Raised consciousness is implicit in the emergence of the belief that humans make the human world and are ultimately the masters of our own destiny; that Human will, not nature, is destiny's author. Hence, only with human mastery through practices do we have the possibility of dreams or visions of *paradise on earth*. Human mastery of nature has provided the basis, in part, for a non-nihilistic wilfully determined and future-orientated terrestrial existence. "To measure the life 'as it is' by a life 'as it might or should be' is a defining, constitutive feature of humanity" (Bauman, 2003, p. 11).

There is another equally fundamental shaper of experience, which affects our understanding and belief in the possibility of improvement. Human beings live, not only in relation to nature, but also in relation to each other. Human existence is crucially social. It is the social nature of human beings, which shapes the experience of practices of mastery. Individuals internalise social experience, which permeates the expression of will. The shape is provided by historical context. In the modern world, social life, through technological advancement, transcends the determining power of natural scarcity, such that the human life-world is related but distinct from the natural-world. Nature is socialised – utopia informed by the self-mastering practices of social progress.

As Bauman (1976) notes, the modern shaping of the life-world includes two qualitative and complimentary conditions – "impersonalism" and "plebiscitism". Impersonalism refers to the interaction of standardised anonymous beings, the individual universalised as a socially non-distinct public persona. Non-modern personal, idiosyncratic particularisms are "off-limits", but continue nonetheless to be expressed, shaped by social impersonalism. Plebiscitism refers to political process through which human beings are transformed from the subjects of monarchs into citizens of state, their collective will positing and striving for an idealised autonomy.

Citizens are equal for as long as they are indistinguishable – difference is the private mirror of the impersonal public universal body-politic. However, the idealisation of autonomy is not simply a reference to 'the individual'. In the sense advocated by Plato, it is the pursuit of a transcendent, idealised and perfectible human condition that impels subjects out of their private worlds into the polity of collective expression. As Castoriadis (1991) argued, it is the positing of autonomy, the radical utopia, that brings possibility of real freedom. Hence, Prometheus stole the fire of the Gods. Nevertheless, in the modern polity, the ideology of autonomous subjectivity has been cohered by political conflict. Historically the Right wished to attain the individual in opposition to the collective subject of the Left. Their different orientations compelled the pursuit of qualitatively divergent futures. Where the Right stressed the past as a source of authority, taking a conservative stance against radical change in order to avoid a worse future, the Left traditionally took a progressive anti-conservative stance in pursuit of radical future-orientated change.

Sennet (1993) provides insightful flesh on the bones of the modern public-private divide. The late 18th and early 19th century public was delimited by relationships between strangers who must utilise roles and codes of behaviour approximating interaction appropriate to *cosmopolitan* anonymity – the 'bond of a crowd' (1993, p. 3). The public is the realm of anonymous exchange between cosmopolitans. Social and ethnic origins were of less concern in a diverse urban public sphere as they had been in the era of Kings and serfs, of feudal privilege. The claims of the modern civil cosmopolitan public were balanced against those of the 'natural' private – the family. Neither was preferred, each deemed important and mutually reinforcing. Only with the revolutions of the 19th century were Enlightenment public-private divides re-interpreted. Enter the anti-modern ideology of race (Lukacs, 1980).

When the 18th century German philosopher Johann Gottfried von Herder coined the highly influential idea of the national *Volk,* he opposed racial differentiation. However, culture separated the nations in as dire a way as racial determinacy eventually would. National *Volksgeist*, from intuition to sentiment, to language, to thought, was organically unique to a people, making cultures incommensurable. People were determined inter-generationally by inner voice, not outward physique. The nation was the teleological end-point of an organically founded and continuous spirit. But as Malik (1996) notes, Herder's *Volksgeist* could very easily, and did, translate into a theory of the incommensurability of 'races'. Balibar (1991) puts it

slightly differently: 'theoretical racism' incorporates a philosophy of history which `makes history the consequence of a hidden secret revealed to men about their own nature and their own birth' (p. 55). It 'makes visible the invisible cause of the fate of societies and peoples'. An 'ideal synthesis of transformation and fixity, of repetition and destiny' (p. 57) substitutes the signifier of culture for that of race, attaching the secret of heritage, ancestry, rootedness' (p. 57). The formation of this tendency lay in a collapse of the belief in social progress – the basis of the bourgeois epoch. The Enlightenment promise of equality contradicted by the inability of the capitalist system to deliver on that promise provoked ruling elite crisis (Malik, 1996). The agitating masses of Europe in 1848 and India in 1857, led to a post-hoc rationalisation of bourgeois rule (Lukacs, 1980). The ideology of racial (i. e. non-human) determinacy, and its nationalist homologue came to permeate a now secularised and collapsing public-private order. Those feudal particularisms, once privately acquiescent, were publicly recast under the guise of scientific racism – the antithesis of utopia. In turn, the collapse of bourgeois social progress precipitated the irrationalist elevation of natural limitation. The earlier 19th century works of anti-revolutionary Thomas Malthus, who believed that population growth, specifically of the urban poor and working classes, outstripped natural resources and should be curtailed, gained currency of explanation (Case & Fair, 1995). Malthus' anti-utopian critique was levelled at the utopian works of William Godwin and The Marquis de Condorcet (see Avery, 1996). Through later notables such as Darwin and Spencer (see Young, 1985), neo-Malthusian anti-humanism laid the groundwork for future policies of eugenics. Only with the eventual mass annihilation of Holocaust and the rise of anti-colonial movements for self-determination, do we witness the full crystallisation of the battle of utopia against the dystopic destruction of reason. It is to the post-colonial context that I shall now turn.

Cypriot res publica

Ironically Cyprus became a Democratic Republic at a time when the public sphere was being significantly eroded in established sovereign democratic states (Sennet, 1993). The one enmity, now international, which kept the battle over the public sphere alive, was the rivalry between Left and Right (Furedi, 1993). The transition to a Cypriot public between the Treaty of Guarantee in 1960 and the Turkish invasion of 1974, from that public introduced in part by the British, was arrested in its infancy by rival Greek-

Turkish ethno-nationalisms (Bryant, 2004a; Faustmann & Peristianis 2006), but maintained a cold-war momentum (Hitchens, 1997). The plebiscitarian and impersonalisation pre-requisites of modernity could not fully take hold in a newly emerging global post-colonial context. In Cyprus, the public, what Sennet describes as a cosmopolitan space in which strangers meet, lying beyond private informal family and friend relations, remained stunted by fixed ethnicities - the existence of compulsory voting reveals starkly the desire to create a public by compulsion. Such compulsion is the antithesis of the impersonalised public entered 'voluntarily' by cosmopolitan moderns and this is mirrored in the continuing reliance placed on family and friendship networks when it comes to crucial questions of buying/selling a house or finding a job. A level of informality traverses the Greek Cypriot social space, and, lest things fall apart, the state oversees that which informality cannot hold. Put another way, the state has a set of legitimacy problems, which go hand in hand with an occupied governing zone over which the Republic has diminished authority. The 1960 Treaty of Guarantee inset the upward assurance of security to Greece, Turkey and Britain. Despite compulsory military service, the state of the Republic relies *militarily* on the presence of third-powers – the UN – diminishing its powers of legitimacy in that it does not control the legitimate expression of force in a sovereign territory; and *socially* – the EU – since its 2004 accession, extending public contract to a notoriously bureaucratic and unaccountable supra-national regime.

In a sense Greek Cypriot President Tassos Papadopoulos acknowledged the Republic's vulnerability when he asked Greek Cypriots, in a tearful TV broadcast of April 7, 2004, to reject the *Annan Plan*, centrepiece of the 2004 referendum. The 75% of the electorate who subsequently voted against the establishment of a United Cyprus Republic, reciprocated – in effect voting for the continuation of the UN presence and crucially for the acknowledgment that the Cypriot state could not guarantee their rights and security on its own. One observer remarked that Greek-Cypriots voted "against the future" (Kadritzke, 2004) whilst another explained the no-vote as "certainty of the future" (Bryant, 2004b). However, it could be argued that the Greek-Cypriot no-vote reflected the perceived *absence* of a future. This would not make Greek-Cypriots any different from post-cold war peoples across the globe. The collapse of the future, predicated on the end of utopian experiments in social planning and policy is the hallmark legacy of the failure of 'communism'. The political orientation endorsed by Left-Right rivalry, which previously compelled utopian public action, has little purchase on

contemporary politics. For sure, there are some who still hold their positions, but contemporary culture is powerfully a-political, and hence anti-utopian. The collapse of the public sphere has in turn precipitated a governing style which seeks to connect with anxiety - a private emotional concern (see Nolan, 1998, Furedi, 2004). Papadopoulos' emotional appeal was symptomatic of a governing style orientated around the collapse of utopia – a diminished public sphere. In a socio-historical context where nothing lies beyond the self, the latter becomes beginning and end of 'political' action. The conversion of political discourse into emotionalism follows.

What does all of this tell us about migrant experience?

When they enter Cyprus, migrants are in-effect entering an arrested public sphere, one in which private informal relations hold more sway. It is not therefore simply the case that impersonal institutionalised mechanisms block access. Rather, exclusions are inherently personal. Migrant aspiration is circumscribed within a personalised social milieu that denies the possibility of transcendence in the human world – 'who you know' makes a difference. For example[4]: a Greek-Cypriot male drives his Middle Eastern wife to the Ledra street crossing in Nicosia, she has a meeting at the Fulbright Centre situated between Greek and Turkish Cypriot zones. The patrolling police officer stops her and asks for her passport – an inconsistent practice. On seeing this, husband gets out of his car and approaches to assist but is immediately reprimanded by the officer: "you do your job and let me do mine!" The husband replies: "this woman is my wife, so this is MY job, and it certainly is not YOURS!" On hearing this, the police officer is defensive and backs down: "oh, you are Greek Cypriot, well if that is the case then it is OK my friend", he ingratiates. Wife later informs husband that she was worried the police officer thought he could take advantage of her, as a foreign women he saw her as vulnerable. When he discovered she was married to a Greek, he realised he had broken a code of belonging and backed off. She received her social status from her personal relationship to a Greek. If the police guard had been public-minded, marital status and being married to a Greek i. e. a private relationship, would not have altered his initial approach. Indeed, it is doubtful if there would have been an initial approach to alter. This is not an isolated case. Migrants often complain that their reception by immigration department personnel reflects the personal disposition of whichever immigration officer happens to be on duty at the time. At times reception is helpful, at others deliberately obstructive. Also, immigration and nationality law is interpreted subjectively, barriers or their

removal are often a consequence of what immigration officers *feel* should be the case. *Public* servants engaging with strangers would orientate their interaction along impersonalised cosmopolitan codes of behaviour, leaving little room for subjective feeling.

If one should care to take a Sunday afternoon stroll along the pedestrianised downtown waterfront walkway of Limassol known as Molos, one would be struck by the hustle and bustle of the market bazaar, which meets there. A remarkable soiree brightens an otherwise sedate esplanade. Sri-Lankan, Philipino, Indian, and Arab consumers gather on their Sunday afternoon-off to engage in a bit of relaxed leisure time. Pedestrian strolling space is indeed an invention of modern city planning reflecting the spatial and temporal needs of capital exchange relations and the urbanite cosmopolitan clientele engaged in those relations. However, what is equally notable about Molos' urbanized gathering of strangers is the absence of Greek Cypriots - retailers or consumers. Where are they? Experience offers an answer. A new acquaintance and his wife from Nicosia called in on me during their recent visit to Limassol. I invited them to join my usual Sunday afternoon saunter. On arrival at Molos, my guests engaged in a private quarrel, the details of which I was not privy to. As their quarrel escalated, the husband pointed to a Sri Lankan female standing no more than ten yards from us and shouted at his wife in Greek, "if you don't stop moaning, I am going to run off with that black prostitute!" What struck me was the ease of discursive movement from private quarrel to public outburst, and that the target of that outburst was discarded through racialised and sexist enmity. Belief translates into behavior; the target's *absence* represents the *presence* of racist ideology. Such disregard for cosmopolitan exchange between strangers revealed itself once more that afternoon. We were sitting on a bench eating ice cream when a young man and four young women, all Sri Lankan, strolled passed. Whilst they were still in earshot and for no apparent reason my acquaintance raised his voice: "look at that goat with his four bitches". The targets did not react, but that they were aware and weary of such approaches I was certain. I recognized a sense of resignation on their part that comes through continuous exposure to second-class treatment without remedy. My acquaintance would not have made such comments to a group of Greek Cypriot strollers, of that I am equally certain.

Jacoby (1999) has argued that the irony of multiculturalism, our celebration of cultural difference, is that in actual fact we tend towards its antithesis – "sameness". Market forces carry us towards convergence whilst

aggrandizing our incessant self-gratifying contemporary need to present ourselves as different. In the absence of Politics, we are presented with a myriad of choices giving us the impression that we all have unique cultural dispositions. We are sold difference as "cultural authenticity" which in actuality distracts us from our *real* similarity in the present socio-historical context - our banal ability to choose identities like new hats. The irony of 'successful' assimilation is that we are assimilated to believe in our inherent difference. We make our difference 'meaningful'. The politics of multiculturalism fits well with capitalisms' ceaseless demand for short-term profits, but I remain uncertain if multiculturalism as an anti-assimilationist code enjoys any widespread adherence in the Cyprus of present. Perhaps migrants are thought of as inassimilable? "True racism", states Castoriadis, "does not permit others to recant …racism does not want the conversion of the others – it wants their death" (1997, p. 27). Since capitalism's inception, its globalizing tendencies have suggested an opposite trajectory – the tendency towards uniformity and the political corollary - equality. The equality of difference marks no straightforward reversal of this trend. It is the political failure of the promise of human equality which renders us in constant negotiation with an absent centre - an unequal present, once challenged by utopia, is rebranded in utopia's absence, as 'equality'. Thus, we celebrate difference in the absence of freedom. My first trip to IKEA Nicosia could have been replicated at IKEA Glasgow – same commodities, same meatballs, *same* desire for difference. We are sold the promise of 'uniqueness' this time wrapped in Greek signage which points us in a circular route through an array of commodities to satisfy any home-maker fetish. Each time we take the journey, we arrive at a new destination which may titillate but ultimately leaves us feeling lost - *short-changed?* Maybe we are all IKEA migrants now? Should the reader be so inclined, politics could also orientate itself around the freedom to choose "within the coordinates of existing power relations" leaving "an intervention which undermines those very coordinates" absent (Zizek, 2001, p. 7).

It is true we live in deeply anti-utopian times; indeed, at present one might more fruitfully search for the Holy Grail than for a better world. As Metzaros (1995) notes, the idea that "There Is No Alternative" is a blindly deterministic and pessimistic slogan of our time. Utopia is almost always paired in the contemporary imagination with totalitarianism and fascism. Current orthodoxy holds that a line be drawn from the Enlightenment to the Bolsheviks to the Nazis to Al Qaeda, each of which are deemed to have

begun from a utopian premise that ultimately leads to the imposition of a totalizing world-view. This dehistorical distortion is the legacy of Hayek, Popper and Berlin, but it is challengeable. Jacoby (2005) writes against the grain of history when he defends what he calls "iconoclast" in opposition to "blueprint" utopians. Where the latter picture a future, give a name to it and plan it down to its finest detail, argues Jacoby, the former refuse to give a name to their god. The blueprint utopians suffocate aspiration in the name of a defined end because all ideas and actions that do not conform to that end are banished – invalidated. For iconoclasts the aspiration towards a glorious future on Earth overrides the need to define it. Theirs is a qualitatively different aspiration to those who look for quantitative guarantees prior to committal. The absence of the future is a blueprint legacy and it is the banality of cultural relativism that fills the void left by the nihilism of pre-determinacy at 'History's End'. The lack of belief in a positive future, in social progress, leads to the celebration of a mythical past. Iconoclastic utopianism stands against such pessimistic determinacy. It is in this vein that I write this paper.

The anti-imperialist Franz Fanon (1963) spoke for many when he castigated the Western Left for failing in its humanist mission. However, Fanon did not dismiss a humanist project. Rather, the task of creating a new humanist agenda, a "new man", argued Fanon, now fell to anti-colonial peoples who would lead in their struggle towards History. Evidently, as is the case with Cyprus, there is no automatic relation between colonial and human liberation. Nevertheless, if it is true that utopias, "help to lay bare and make conspicuous the major divisions of interest within a society" (Bauman. 1976, p. 15), then the question with which this paper opened should be re-posed. Not only need we enquire as to the nature of our (un)changing society. Rather, we must ask: are *you* (un)changing it?

The Republic of Cyprus was a cold-war casualty, but within that catastrophe meaning and hope continued to challenge an arrested Cypriot public sphere. Current Cypriot enmity towards migrants reflects the perception that a Greek-Cypriot social space is diminishing, because the cold-war rivalry of Left and Right, and hence the utopias which gave meaning to that space have all but gone, with little else to take their place. In the absence of utopia, dystopic tendencies can arise. It is the personalized dystopic contours of Greek-Cypriot self-identity which greet the migrant newcomer. The solution should be the positing of a world beyond self-identity. However, it seems that the trajectory is in the opposite direction. A

series of lifestyle choices is what remains, sold to us in an ethnically culturalised package of "authentic self-identities". Next time you meet a migrant at IKEA or Molos keep in mind that it was the human pursuit of an improved life that brought them to Cyprus, and it is that pursuit which provides the spark of aspiration so necessary for the creation, based on vision, of a better place.

NOTES

1. 'Charlie' is a nickname, derived from 'Prince Charles', given by Greek Cypriots to Anglo-born Greek Cypriots. Although sometimes used affectionately, it usually carries derogatory connotations.

2. Dimitris Christofias has been General Secretary of the Cypriot Communist Party – AKEL since 1989. Tassos Papadopoulos of the centrist Democratic Party (DIKO) has been President of the Republic of Cyprus since 2003. Archbishop Makarios III was the first President of the Republic of Cyprus (1960-1977). George Grivas, leader of the anti-colonialist EOKA (1955-1959) and founder of EOKA B (1971), which formed a coup against the Makarios Presidency in 1974 with the aim of establishing Cypriot unification with Greece.

3. I am referring here to the Mitochondrial DNA and the Y chromosome - the only two parts of the human genome that are not affected by evolutionary mechanisms designed to generate inter-generational diversity. Both remain unchanged from generation to generation. All 6. 6 billion of the current human population have inherited the same Mitochondria from one woman who lived in Africa approximately 150, 000 years ago, 'Mitochondrial Eve'. All men have inherited their Y chromosomes from a man who lived approximately 60, 000 years ago, 'Y-chromosomal Adam'.

4. All examples cited are taken from personal field notes collected in 2006 and 2007.

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