

In raising the question, ‘What Role for Philosophy in the Arab World?’ I have argued in favor of replacing the traditional ‘philosopher-king for all’- or what I now wish to call the ‘monochromatic model’ of both understanding philosophy and doing it- by a ‘philosopher-king of each’, or what I would like to call a ‘multicolored model’. By ‘replacing’ I just meant identifying this as the model to be guided by in one’s system of education, and in one’s political culture. This is the aspect of philosophy the Arab World to my mind most urgently needs. It is how one approaches a subject, rather than what the subject is, and it encourages synthetic or dialectical thinking as opposed to, or in addition to analytic or deductive thinking; and group thinking (e.g. problem-solving) in addition to insular (e.g. mathematical) thinking. Ultimately, it educates one how to educate oneself. And of course I was concentrating particularly on the Arab World, where grand theories (monochromic or single truth answers) about what has been wrong and what should be done about it seem to have had little to do with, or no bearing at all on what actually happens (witness how so-called experts, from both East and West, manage to brandish their scholarly acumen only *after* the event!). One matchstick, as I already noted, turned

out to be more powerful than entire political theories and systems.

In a multicolored model, while Reason would still be considered sovereign, it would be sovereign in the sense of its being more or less evenly spread in the population. Its 'reign' would not be viewed as being confined to a moral guardian, a single philosophy or social theory, a Ruler, an elitist group, or to one sect or community in a larger population rather than to another. Its 'output' therefore would by definition be multi-dimensional, vibrant and evolving, rather than one-sided and stale. The multicolored model is by its very nature democratic. It is one where citizens are presumed 'adult' enough to engage fully and as equals in the deliberation of the issues that concern their lives, and thereby also in the formulation of the answers that the community needs. Answers according to this model, as indicated last week, would be *made*, not discovered or found. They would neither be presumed to exist as preset models nor as holy tablets in the possession of an elect few. They would be deliberated, discussed, negotiated, explained, critiqued, until some form of agreement or common position is formed. But here, all men are presumed equal, all as imperfect as each other.

The monochromic model on the other hand is elitist. By ‘elitist’ I just mean the sense where absolute answers to political or moral questions are presumed to lie within the province of a few elect –‘guardians’, in the language of the previous lectures. They needn’t be elected. But they could be. They not only presume to hold the (single-truth) answers, but also the role of defining the main features- cultural, political, economic, and otherwise- that characterize the system where they and the others live. People sharing their political space but living beyond that province are in some manner or the other regarded as outsiders. They are excluded –from privileges, opportunities, rights, services, etc. They are presumed different, possibly even deficient –belonging to a lower caste or class or gender or nationality or religion, etc. Society thus comes to be separated between a ruling class or elite and the rest. Such ruling elites are visible throughout the Arab World. But also elsewhere.

While the emphasis in the previous lectures was primarily on intellectuals and thought-systems in the Arab World, the majority being informed by the belief in the ‘monochromic’ model as what would provide answers to their quests, I also tried to show that, in the Palestinian sphere at least, the situation was somewhat different. Here, important matters were debated publicly, and decisions on the whole reflected public

compromises reached. But the monochromic model or culture we are considering, while referring primarily to theorists, is clearly not confined to them. Political actors- especially autocratic rulers, as well as regimes or systems of government- have been and continue to be equally affected, equally persuaded of one-dimensional or monolithic modes of thinking and of unique or single-truth answers. Except that in their case, typically, they act as though they have already found the answer everyone is looking for. It is they themselves! What else does autocracy mean? In Cairo, for example, Mubarak tries to convey the image that while he represents reason -while he knows all the answers- the mob that has risen against him represents chaos and fanaticism. Or worse, it represents evil, in the form of radical Islam. If he were to be left with the reigns in his hands, the country would do better than otherwise. It would do better because he knows better.

Of course, if the country were doing better the Mubarak Government would not be faced today with a rebellion. Why would the people wish to rebel in the first place if their needs are being met even in a monochromic regime? Even Satan himself couldn't arouse them to act, if they weren't inclined to do so in the first place. And apart from political opportunists who ride the wave of public anger, and wish to be the ones holding the reigns, the ordinary demonstrator

really has no political ambitions whatsoever. All he has is a need for a Government that does its duty of providing proper services to him, so that he could get on with his normal life. If he could trust an efficient company to provide those services for him he would probably be quite happy to go along with such an option. Again: all that most of us want is a context that allows us to get on with our lives. Indeed, the ordinary demonstrator might not even bother to understand how Government works at all, or what its defense or foreign policy is like, or its fiscal or monetary policy, as long as he feels that what he considers to be his own well-being and his own human security is not being threatened, but is on the contrary being safeguarded and served in measurable and verifiable ways in the best possible manner. Furthermore, this ordinary demonstrator in Egypt might even feel –given the monochromic nature of his regime- that far better than possibly rigged elections at home, what might best guarantee a Government that serves him best may well be one that is answerable to the international community as a whole –if the international community, that is, wished to lend a helping hand. The international community could set those standards of measure, and could institute means of verifying that they have been met; it could also take one further step by holding the system responsible for making sure these measures are being met, for example by

instituting a corresponding scale of punitive measures and sanctions if they were not met, such as the withholding of aid funds, or the initiation of a series of boycott actions on different fronts. It is true that such a system, being one-dimensional or monochromic, would not be democratic, with or without elections, and would indeed be *exclusivist*, by denying the ordinary people the exercise of their full abilities to determine their lives. But the system would not be so seemingly unjust as to be unworkable, or *intolerable*, as indeed it seems to have been even with elections. And it would probably work, at least as a transitional period, gently leading to the establishment of a political system based on the other, truly democratic model.

I have basically said what I have said so far with the Arab World primarily in mind. But I am now about to make an extremely hazardous crossing, one that requires the exercise of our imagination if it's not to be discounted from the outset as a heresy. This is a crossing from one side of the Sinai to the other. The crossing I mean to take is that from the Mubarak Government and his dispossessed and excluded population as a paradigm of the monochromic political model, to the Israeli Government and the Palestinian population under its rule –I mean, the entire population

that is under its rule. Of course, there are many obvious reasons why the two political systems are incomparable, the most obvious being that Israel's dispossessed and excluded Palestinians are not Jewish, and they have national claims, unlike the poverty-stricken Egyptians, whose Government is at least Egyptian. But I will ask your indulgence as I try to make out my case, or as I try to explain the logical rather than the mythological nature of my crossing.

But let me first assuage any fears anyone might have by saying that I am all for a reasonable partition of the land under Israel's rule, such that a Palestinian State could emerge having East Jerusalem as its capital, and to consider this a final solution to the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. I would also welcome, as an alternative, the emergence of a single democratic and bi-national State. So if either of these two options were to be offered now, or in the future, I would happily go along with it, no questions asked. But let us assume that neither of these two options are on the table, whether for now, or for the foreseeable future. And let us further assume that what we have to deal with is simply what we already have, which is a very limited set of basic freedoms for the Palestinian population in Gaza and the West Bank, but no political rights (having political leaderships, even if elected, is not the same as having political rights). Let us also

assume that day by day and year by year, and as has been the case for the past 43 years, Israel continues to entrench itself further in all of the non-populated areas over which the PA has no control whatsoever (so-called Area 'C' as well as Israeli-designated nature reserve areas); in the expanded area of East Jerusalem; as well as in those areas over which the PA has limited control (the so-called Area 'B') -in effect, in what makes up close to about 92% of the territory of the occupied West Bank. By 'entrenching' I mean 'rooting itself', not only in terms of the number of the population (which now is close to about half a million living beyond the '67 borders), but also psychologically, emotionally, infra-structurally, and, above all, militarily. The situation, clearly, would then easily qualify (if it is not already qualified) for being describable as monochromic –the overriding or predominant single color in this case being Jewish.

Now, under these monochromic circumstances, I would argue *a best* scenario, that is, one that best fits the context, rather than one that transcends it, is that whereby, in parallel manner to what has been said in the case of a Mubarak-type regime in a pre-revolutionary state, Palestinians can access all but those features of the monochromic regime which do not cause it to lose its color. This would be like the advise a sage might have given Mubarak before the

revolution to extend basic civil rights and opportunities to the excluded classes of the Egyptian population in order to safeguard the stability of his monochromatic regime! Stated in different language, or in practical terms, all Palestinians under Israeli rule could be offered -and those wishing it could be given- full residence rights. Residents, unlike citizens, do not have a say in government affairs. The ruling class, caste, or community can therefore retain its coveted status. As residents Palestinians could then access all those services and utilities that are available in the monochromatic system, and which are now denied them. These would include freedom of movement, freedom of work, freedom of residence, access to education, health, social benefits, legal and property rights, etc. In the Gulf States, where citizens form a minority, all residents enjoy all but those services or privileges that are deemed to lie within the monochromatic province of the ruling class –for example being in charge of matters of state. The system seems on the whole to work quite well, expatriate residents there enjoying the ability to make a life for themselves without needing to participate in the political decision-making of Government. Lebanon presents a sorry contrast, where it has been an unfortunate feature of life for Palestinian refugees there to be denied proper access to the system. For example, Palestinians from refugee camps are denied

qualifying in one of more than seventy different professions. They are confined to the camps, whose infrastructure or habitation space they cannot improve. The only hospital in Beirut serving the camps there is fed electricity and water through pipes which intertwine with telephone lines above the muddied, narrow and zigzagged alleys, where an emergency patient could either die of electric shock on the way to hospital, or die once at the hospital due to a sudden damp-caused fuse of electricity-powered facilities.

Let me first answer the questions: Why would this be a *best case* scenario, and for whom? In a sense, the answer to the second question (for whom?) is a partial answer to the first (why?). Briefly, it should be a best scenario for the two parties, the ruler and the ruled. If it is shown to be so, then that by itself would suffice to show that it would indeed be better than any other scenario which might be good for only one of them. I submit, then, that extending residence rights to the ruled Palestinian population would provide them with a far better range of utilities, services and goods that they could freely access than what is available under existing conditions –even if the nature of these existing conditions were improved, such as to turn over more of Area B villages and townships to Area A authority, or to grant 50000 extra housing units for Jerusalem’s Arabs. For example, a worker in Gaza could once

again freely find a job opportunity anywhere in the country. A Gaza businessman or professional could henceforth travel abroad directly from Ben Gurion airport rather than go the long route via Cairo. A cancer patient in Nablus could directly access the best Israeli hospital services. And so on. Needless to say, the entire structure of enclosures around areas, villages or cities would simply be lifted, and the abhorrent wall dismantled.

But what good would it do for Israel? It would lift the pressure off Israel having to make territorial concessions in a peace deal, it would ensure having continued military defense lines along the eastern borders (as it is trying to achieve through negotiations), and it would ensure that it remained monochromic (i.e., Jewish) even as it continued to rule over the Palestinian population living there, and to have overall control over their territory. In addition, it would by such a measure have created living conditions for the Palestinians that minimize causes for instability and disruptions. In a word, it would defuse what otherwise seems to be a combustible situation, especially in light of the political volcanoes that are sweeping through the Arab World.

I must again remind you: we are discussing ‘what would be good for’ Israel or the Palestinians not in

absolute terms, but in terms of the context. So let us now turn to see whether this context, remaining as it is, isn't better than introducing the adjustment I suggest to it: On the Israeli side, it might be argued that maintaining the situation precisely, or almost precisely as it is, would be far better. The Palestinians would continue to be confined to their limited zones under our overall military supervision, they would run their internal affairs by themselves, they would be kept out of our public spaces and utilities, and we wouldn't have to pay a penny for any of this; on the contrary, we would continue to be their major exporter of goods and services, and they would continue to be our next-door captive market. In addition, to the above, with the PA now firmly in place, we could continue to play the game that this is all a transitory phase, and that they will eventually be able to satisfy their national aspiration for a State of their own.

What about the Palestinians? Their best argument would be that perseverance and diligence in building up the PA structures would eventually yield the desired result of statehood, as the world will not tolerate Israel's continued denial of Palestinian national aspirations. This is Salam Fayyad's argument. But secondly, however limited in scope it is, the PA structure is an achievement to be held onto dearly. With it best ways can continue to be found for

supporting the free development of the Palestinian economy and to ensure the steadfastness of the people, especially through the continued inflow of funds.

Regardless of how one might evaluate those arguments on their own merits (for example, whether Palestinian economy is truly improving or not, or whether the U.S. and E.U. will indeed continue financing the occupation or not) I do not believe it requires much for any of us to conclude that both these Israeli and Palestinian perspectives are not really sustainable. Clearly, the comfortable situation that Israel enjoys by having this arrangement will automatically begin to transform once the illusion of the kind of State Palestinians are hoping for (primarily, East Jerusalem as capital) disappears. By our very assumption of a continued status quo, time by itself can be relied upon to eventually kill it. Israel will once again therefore find itself seated on a rumbling volcano, with less peace options for it to choose from.

Both Israelis and Palestinians might agree with this assessment that the present status quo is not tenable, or sustainable. Even so, they may still argue in favor of the existing status quo, not because it is better, but because the alternative being offered is worse, or because they have reservations about that alternative. On the Israeli side, two major reservations may be

cited, and on the Palestinian side, three. The first Israeli reservation has to do with security. Wouldn't the Israeli public space that will suddenly open up to Arabs from Gaza to Jenin become easy target to suicide and similar attacks? Second, wouldn't such an arrangement inevitably begin to dilute the Jewish nature of the State, possibly leading to bi-nationalism? The Palestinian reservations are also straightforward: wouldn't it be degrading to accept to be residents, without full rights, in their own country? Secondly, wouldn't such a move mean forsaking the national dream for a Palestinian State? Finally, what guarantees are there in the first place that Israel might indeed make available all the privileges accruant from a resident status?

The second reservation each party has, it may be noted, is similar, the one really being a mirror of the other – the concern, namely, that the national project each party entertains might become forsaken by such a move. But this is primarily a reservation of a speculative nature, and it is one about which no immediate satisfactory answer can be given. By 'speculative' is meant here that the future could easily go either way. Perhaps, for example, the very reality that will begin to emerge once civil rights are extended will persuade those who weren't persuaded before (or those who weren't sufficiently persuaded) that a

mutual compromise based on a definitive partition is much better than allowing this new situation to develop to a point of no return.

But it is the other reservations that are more difficult to deal with. Take security: many Israelis will claim that life for them has become safer since the wall was built, and the Palestinians have become confined to certain geographic zones. This statement is true of course, but only if the comparison is being made with the post Camp-David period. But if we bring back to mind especially the better part of the '67-'87 period, when in fact free movement existed throughout the country, the statement then becomes false. Arguably, what brought about terrorism is high expectation followed by failure. Just like what brought about a surge in settlements was the looming threat of territorial concessions. The mere attempt to reach peace paradoxically initiated the dynamic to kill the chances for it!

The other very important point to make regarding security in the Israeli-Palestinian context is that it is arguably best attained when a potentially irredentist population is least dissatisfied. Bettering the living conditions of the Palestinians would surely achieve that goal. Longer term, the new situation may even lay better ground for 'permanent' security, with the two

populations becoming used to living peacefully with one another.

From the Palestinian side, the immediate reaction may be that of being indignant –that this would be an *unworthy* offer: how can one accept to have resident status instead of full citizenship? But here Palestinians can debate the matter among themselves and decide, on an individual basis, whether any or all of them would prefer such a status as a transitional arrangement to continuing to live under the limiting conditions they now live under. The point to remember here is that it is not as if the option in the first place is between being a citizen and being a resident. The option, rather, would be between more limiting and less limiting restrictive measures. It is quite possible of course that the new Palestinian ruling class (the PA officialdom) would have its own reasons to be against such an arrangement. But this needn't be the case, at least under certain conditions, as we shall later see.

The Palestinians' third concern, we said, might be one having to do with guarantees. How could they guarantee that Israel would indeed give them what accrue from having residence rights? Here the answer is two-fold. One, having the status without the guarantee of its longevity is arguably sufficient by itself. But second, as indicated in the case of

Egyptians, the best guarantees may come not from an elected government but from the international community. After all, this is the least the international community can offer to do having failed to lift the occupation off the backs of the Palestinians. This it can do through a system of sanctions. In other words, it should stand to reason that, if the international community cannot impose sanctions against Israel to end the occupation, it can at least impose such sanctions if Israel refuses to *offer* those basic civilian rights, and *only* those rights, to the Palestinians under its rule that are enjoyed by Israeli citizens.

Let me in my closing remarks once more return to what we called the ‘second’ concern, or the concern for the disappearance of the national project. One interesting feature of it is its mutuality: it is the one concern both sides have in common. Even so, and in spite of cynical international relations theories that tell us that international players determine policies on the basis of pure interest, this looming common interest has failed miserably in getting the two sides to find a way to save their distinct national projects. I am not sure whether this tells us that those theories are wrong, or whether one or both projects do not after all constitute a sufficient interest. But whatever the case, the truth of the matter here is that, in the long run, the perfect fulfillment of either of the two national projects

seems more and more to be an unrealizable idea. The closest perhaps to that idea (as well as to the other idea, paradoxically, of a one state solution) may well be the construction of crisscrossing ethnic cantons with two parallel governments with sovereignty extended throughout the land that would coordinate matters of common concern between them. In such circumstances members of one group living in the canton of another can be citizens of their group but enjoy resident status in the canton where they happen to live.

I would submit that, preparing to reach out for that goal, a best path forward is the extending of full civil rights to the Palestinian population currently under Israel's rule. I do not propose that the PA should forthwith therefore dissolve itself, or stop developing the cantons where it is able to operate, or that it should cease receiving aid. I only propose that the Palestinian population be released from the geographic as well as capability confinements of the zones run by the PA. In effect, what I propose is simply to extend the rights the Arabs of Jerusalem have to the other Palestinians under Israeli rule. But if the PA is to stay, I would propose that what it could do is to disinvest itself from the security apparatus that it has unfortunately become saddled with, and which is more fitting for authoritarian regimes like those of Mubarak and Ben Ali than for a people whose craving is freedom.