

Translation

Acceptance Speech of  
**PROFESSOR MUHAMMAD A. AL-OMARI**  
Co-Winner of the 2007  
King Faisal International Prize for Arabic Language and Literature

Monday 16 April 2007 (28.3.1428H.)

*In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate*

Your Royal Highness, Prince Sultan Ibn Abd Al Aziz  
Crown Prince, Deputy Premier,  
Minister of Defense and Aviation and Inspector General  
Your Highnesses  
Your Excellencies  
Distinguished Guests

Assalam Alaikum

It is a great honor to see one's name added to the list of distinguished laureates of the King Faisal International Prize.

I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the sponsors of this valuable prize for identifying research of the highest quality and benefit to humanity in different vital specialties, and also for being not only a recognition of past accomplishments but also an incentive for further pursuit.

On this happy occasion I would also to express my gratitude to the institutions that considered my work worthy of nomination; I am greatly honored by their confidence and appreciation.

One of the advantages of this occasion is that it allowed me to renew my relations with this hospitable country and meet my colleagues from the Department of Arabic Language at King Saud University, whom I was honored to work with in the mid 1970's and whose courtesy and kindness are beyond my description.

The choice of Arabic rhetoric as this year's topic for the Arabic Language and Literature Prize was a timely one, given the present situation of the World of which we in the Arab and Islamic worlds are an integral part, since past as well as present rhetoric encompasses - in its broader sense - two important percepts of human civilization: beauty and virtue. It is a science that deals with all forms of artistic expression - poetry, narrative, imagery ....etc and all forms of argumentation and persuasion, both in their technical and moral dimensions.

Rhetoric is like medicine - the latter cures the ailments of the body while the former cures the ailment of discourse and both require moral obligations to guard them against drifting away from their noble objectives. The ancient Arab scholar, Hazim Kartajanni, previously identified this common feature of rhetoric and medicine, and stressed the need of the scholars of both fields to master several other related disciplines before being able to practice their respective specialties.

The ancient Arabic rhetoric was once a rich and flourishing science but much like its Western counterpart, it has subsequently suffered for several centuries from the weakness of linguistics, logic and philosophical knowledge. This has led to its shrinkage into remnants of its original features, such as disjointed ancient examples and old definitions that continued to be taught in schools, and eventually it dissolved into other fields such as linguistics, logic and semantics. In that way, the true science of rhetoric was over-taken by other disciplines such as semantics anthology, argumentative logic and linguistic exchange etc., which neither absorbed rhetoric in its entirety

nor expressed its beauty and power of persuasion. However, scrupulous researchers inadvertently realized that the tools needed to build the “literary theory” and the “logic of persuasion” are embodied in the ancient science of rhetoric. This realization has prompted Western scholars to review ancient rhetoric and identify its components and utilize them in re-structuring a modern and successful form of rhetoric. Meanwhile, Arabic rhetoric remained marginalized, aside from isolated and at times discouraged individual attempts to revive it.

It was within that context that I strived to re-study, systematize and critically review ancient Arabic rhetoric, identify its functions and determine which one of its components could be employed in building a modern Arabic rhetoric science that interacts effectively with other cultures through the universal rule of give and take.

Assalam Alaikum