

*Speech by*

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Arabic Language and Literature  
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The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman Bin Abdulaziz,

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I would like, first of all, to express my sense of overwhelming honor to have my name included in the roster of King Faisal Prize awardees along with a select number of scholars and researchers from the East and the West. This prize, which is nearing its fortieth anniversary, continues to confirm that the trees of knowledge, wisdom, and constructive deeds blossom and bloom whenever they are devoted to serving the advancement of humanity and faithful to a set of noble values.

I would not have realized as I was writing the first pages on biography more than a quarter of a century ago that my research would culminate in gaining such an honor. All I remember was my concern that our Arab-Islamic culture should retrieve its global standing by having its essence driven by both its original foundations and modernization. I ardently wanted to see our Arab-Islamic culture contribute, thanks to its own uniqueness, to the formulation of a new humanity. I was hoping to add a little something to the domain of science. I was like an ant carrying, as part of an ant colony, its burden to the ant nest.

It was perhaps this sense of longing for a better future that enticed me to engage in the world of biography. In this type of writing genre, one reveals the depths of his inner self and whatever yearnings, contradictions, and confusions stir him, wondering about his position in the universe while being on a quest for his individual essence.

Perhaps as a young man, I could see in the reflection of others as they made their way through life some features of my own individual identity melting into the collective identity as seen in my dreams. Isn't literature but knowledge and acquaintanceship, as well as a free and deep dialogue that can be either quiet or noisy, being held as self-witness by the writing or reading consciousness as part of the epic of Man since Prometheus stole the fire of knowledge and civilization?

Ladies & Gentlemen,

Allow me to convey my heartfelt thanks to the administrators of King Faisal Prize. My appreciation also goes to the organizers, referees, and the selection committee. I am grateful to them all for having honored me with this prize which will constitute a hallmark in my autobiography if ever I write it.