

Editorial

This is the 25th anniversary of *Intellectual Discourse* (ID). I thought it would be proper on this occasion to remember and revisit the journey of the journal and establish its credibility on a stronger foundation. When Professor Abdul Rashid Moten, who has been involved in the publication of ID since its inception, volunteered an article on its development I welcomed it wholeheartedly. I wanted his experiences to be shared with ID readers as his article illustrates the difficulties in running an academic journal. However, by the time I took over the ID editorship, I believe, circumstances had changed radically.

The editorship of ID became critical because of funding problems. Universities in Malaysia were all hard hit by the financial crisis and ID was asked to develop a strategy to become a self-supporting establishment. The first suggestion that was put forward to us was to reduce the cost of publication. Therefore, immediately we subscribed to turn ID into an online journal. Notwithstanding, we needed to publish some hard copies and there were also other expenses such as language editing charges, salary for at least one editorial assistant and other operating costs which demanded that we generate our own funds. Interestingly at the same time came the suggestion that ID could charge potential authors some sort of publication fee, an idea that I have categorically rejected in the past. I thought it was embarrassing to ask accomplished academics to pay for publishing their works, and I knew for certain that senior academics would not entertain the idea of paying for their scholarly contributions to be published. How then can an academic journal survive without contributions from senior academics? Well, we developed an approach to move forward by adopting what we call a ‘middle way’. We had to abandon the policy of not charging authors’ publication fee as has been indicated by Professor Moten in his recollection. Hence we informed our potential contributors about our dilemma and many of them agreed to pay because their research grants accommodated such payments. Therefore starting from the

current issue of the journal, we began to charge publication fee from authors with research grants. We also decided to charge all authors for language editing. Through incorporating these changes, we were able to sustain the journal as demonstrated by the current issue.

We have included 11 articles in this issue. Besides the article reflecting ID's history, we have included three articles on Islamic reformers in contemporary history, one on the study of civilizations and one each on economics, psychology, sociology, education, philosophy and science. In attempting to represent the Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (KIRK&HS), we have tried to maintain a balance between various disciplines.

However, I would like to air one fundamental problem about articles we receive for ID in particular and about research in general. We receive a lot of submissions, but truth be told, I find a lack of purpose in many articles. I find an absence of an integration of the intellect and heart in many writings. The aim of many authors seems to be merely to get an article published in an indexed journal. I find many articles deficient in the desire of educating citizens about specific issues that concern society. For example, we hear a lot about the rise of extremism among Muslim youth, the destruction of the World Trade Center in New York – the so-called 9/11 and the involvement of young Muslim men in carrying out the act – but hardly do we hear of any discussion about the investigations of these crucial events. The evidences that have been produced thus far are passports found in the wreckage of the building and a flying manual found in the taxi in which the potential hijackers of the planes that had hit the World Trade Center were travelling before they boarded the ill-fated planes, and etc. But hardly any credible academic writing has raised the question as to how passports could survive when iron has melted in the tragedy. Even reputed academics do not hesitate to accept the media rhetoric that the hijackers were from Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries.

No observer of international affairs should ignore the overall development of events. Following the collapse of the former Soviet Union, one orientalist coined the term 'clash of civilizations' and the term was then picked up by another reputed academic to identify who America's potential new enemies were in order to guide US foreign policy makers. This was followed by the tragic event of 9/11. Was there

a connection? Following that, the clash of civilizations theory became the corner-stone of the Bush Administration's foreign policy. Then Afghanistan was carpet bombed and Iraq was invaded; yet hardly any academic has effectively challenged the main stream rhetoric about the involvement of Muslim youth in extremism.

Another under-researched issue that comes to my mind is the matter of race relations in Malaysia. I have been living and teaching in Malaysia for the past 27 years. Although I do not teach Malaysian history, I frequently encounter questions about the subject. My friends and acquaintances from overseas have raised questions about Malaysia's affirmative action program favoring ethnic Malays. A policy favoring the majority community? Why? Isn't it discrimination against minority communities? These are, of course, legitimate questions. But have we also asked other related legitimate questions? Why did the British colonial administration favor non-Malay communities in economic development in Malaya? Why did they need to create Malay reserve land in Malaya? A reserve land for the majority community! Why? There are numerous other related questions. Why was there a huge discrepancy in the percentage of Malay voters between the last election held under the British colonial administration and the first election held under the independent Malaysian government? Most interestingly, this is not known to high school graduates. My Malaysian undergraduates are not aware of this information. Why is this information not part of the history textbooks?

Many people are of the belief that the ideas of extremism and race relations are very sensitive and therefore should not be touched upon. If this is the case, then what is the purpose of education and of studying history? Or for that matter, any other social science or humanities disciplines?

In our view, the purpose of academic discourse is to explore all possible questions that impact society in a transparent manner. *Intellectual Discourse* provides a platform for this purpose. It is my fervent hope that articles submitted to ID will fulfill this expectation.

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