

President Kiyokazu WASHIDA's speech at the Graduation Ceremony, March 2010

First of all, I'd like to extend my sincere congratulations to the 3,435 undergraduates, 2,092 graduates, and 659 doctor's degree recipients. I also would like to express my admiration for your parents who have supported your learning and research to this day. You have now completed your studies and research in special fields at Osaka University and will enter the world as a professional. As you embark on this new phase of your life, I'd like to challenge you on behalf of the university. Specifically, I challenge you to live as liberally educated and responsible professionals. Such a challenge is a well-worn cliché, but please permit me to explain my way of thinking as you step into your new role.

When you enrolled in this university, you often heard the word "orientation". In "Orientation" here, we explained what it was like in the university, how to get involved in learning and extracurricular activities, and how and when to participate in such. As you know, "orientation" refers to positioning oneself in relation to a particular object, putting oneself in a definite position. Living life starts with knowing where you are in the world in which you must live. That is, life starts with positioning, or mapping.

On the other hand, losing one's way, not knowing one's position, lacking a place for oneself, is referred to as being "disoriented". That is "loss of one's sense of direction, position, or one's relationship to one's surroundings". Being disoriented is a critical situation, but it is also a chance. Needless to say, being disoriented may be a step toward destruction and collapse; however, it also gives one a chance to change one's way of life.

After birth, a baby changes from passively receiving nutrition through an umbilical cord from its mother to breathing and taking nutrition by itself. During this transition, the journey through the birth canal, the baby is in state of being suffocated. This drastic change in its life requires the new baby to have the power to endure a situation in which he/she cannot breathe. The same can be said for the process leading to a totally new orientation. Our old orientation is not useful so we must endure a situation like the baby in which we cannot breathe. If you are not tough enough to endure this situation, it may be impossible to change your way of life.

This is also true not only for one's way of living as an individual, but for social enterprises and corporations. There are few businesses that proceed straight to a goal. Most businesses lose their way, become disoriented, time and again. Correcting one's course is not once or twice. As is often the case, we sometimes are forced to withdraw. At such times, one must stop and ascertain the facts, ascertain one's position correctly—that is, "orientation" is needed.

One might say that reorienting oneself requires more than one eye. Just as we can see the world more clearly with two lights than with one light, likewise we can see the path we should proceed on more clearly with more than one eye.

Please permit me to elaborate concerning these eyes and what having external viewpoints means. Generally, to specialize in something, research, work, or whatever, means going into it in a more detailed way. When you enrolled in university, you chose a school, you chose a major in the school, and then you chose a project to study—you narrowed the object of your concern. In the process, you undoubtedly became acquainted with the world's advanced research standards and moved with them and tried hard to

exceed them. You were struggling to be a professional in your field. However, for professionals to make truly good use of their specialty, knowledge about that particular field alone is not enough because a specialty cannot be oriented to the real world unless it incorporates other specialties.

When establishing one idea as a system, adopting one discovery to medical practice, or holding an exhibition to exhibit one artistic works, one needs to join forces with other professionals such as those in law, accounting, procurement, and public relations. In order to work on a project with professionals in other fields, it is necessary to be able to explain your own specialty in detail so that other specialists, specialists who are amateurs in your specialty, will gain sight into your perception. Also, you need to motivate them. To this end, you have to understand their commitment to quality, talk with them in a way that will inspire them. In order to acquire such skills, you need to associate with people in different fields on a regular basis. Those wishing to be doctors, those wishing to work in a legal profession, those wishing to become teachers, researchers, or developers of technology, need to receive training in debating issues earnestly on a daily basis. One cannot communicate just using jargon from one's specialty because there are few issues worthy of real discussion that don't require a comprehensive viewpoint. Thus, specialists must position their knowledge in a compilation of scholarship; in other words, they must map their knowledge in the bigger framework of society. Having a proper understanding of what you know and what you don't know, what you can do and what you cannot do, is to be liberally educated.

As I said earlier, a liberal education is akin to having more than one eye. Learning from foreign cultures and history leads to looking at the present situation from viewpoints other than just the here and now. With such compound sight, you can see the depth in the world. In other words, you will gain the perspective of value. The perspective of value is the ability to classify things, in any situation, into four categories: what we must not lose sight of, what does neither good nor harm, what is unnecessary, and what is impermissible.

In the coming months and years, you will be active in various fields and face unexpected predicaments more than once. In such situations, your liberal education will come to your aid. However, in order to be and continue to be liberally educated, your learning must continue. Multiple ways of thought, global perspectives, can give you other eyes. If you feel the need to formally study again, please come back to the university. Osaka University will keep its doors open for those of you who wish to study.

Now, I'd like to talk about something else that's very important: Responsibility.

As many of you know, not too long ago, at the end of his inauguration speech, US President Obama said, "What is required of us now is a new era of responsibility — a recognition, on the part of every American, that we have duties to ourselves, our nation and the world; duties that we do not grudgingly accept but rather seize gladly." Responsibility and obligation — these are old virtues of an ethic. His remarks echo back to the inauguration speech of John F Kennedy in 1961: "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country."

Through these remarks, the President Kennedy appealed to people to think of what we should do and what we are requested to do rather than what we want our country to do for us. President Obama used the word, "Responsibility".

"Responsibility" in English has a distinctive implication that the Japanese word "Sekinin" does not.

“Responsibility” means the state or fact of being responsible, of being ready to respond to request from others. Going further back, “respond” derives from a Latin word, “re-spondere,” meaning to re-promise. Traditionally, Western people have seen the “responsibility” of a person as responding to calls or prompting from others. Therefore, occupations have been referred to as a “calling”, meaning missions or divine vocations, too. Specifically, a “calling” is a response to a call from God.

The Japanese word “Sekinin” has no such meaning. Mention “Sekinin” and we think of meeting obligations as a member of an organization such as a nation or company. In such a case, the “Sekinin” is that of an anonymous person and, thus, my “Sekinin” does not include the meaning of my being called by someone, by God.

Following the Great Hanshin Earthquake, an unprecedented number of volunteers came to help people in the affected areas. One might be able to refer to them as persons called by God. In the areas and places they came from, they were often persons of little import, persons whose labor was seldom appreciated and seldom praised. These volunteers came to the evacuation centers with a sense of responsibility. They came as if called, and, in each other’s eyes, this was natural and they thanked one another. In those days, if asked about their motivation for their volunteer activities, they seldom referred to “Sekinin”; however, if Japanese had had a word equivalent to “responsibility” I’m sure they would have mentioned that word.

Of course, being aware that you are a person who has been called by name has its risky aspects. A person who feels he/she has been called may quite easily begin to flatter himself/herself that he/she is elite and promising. Or such a person may expect the respect of admiration of others and try to take advantage of them. In such a case, the person’s ego is going in the wrong direction; the person has become disoriented and denies others. What is crucial is being able to respond to others’ silent screams and needs. Of import is being to open to others’ faint voices, and being able to respond, asking, “Can I help you?”

I hope that each of you will develop such a benevolent and tolerant attitude, that is, “liberality” not as an employee, consumer, audience, or customer, but as a citizen of the world. The most important thing is not to respond quickly, but to consider what the real need is and to respond and meet that need.

When making decisions in such situations, the important thing is, as I said earlier, possessing a liberal education. You will face various crises in your life. You may face profound questions such as why you are here on this earth or doubt if your existence has a meaning. Your friends may be a sympathetic audience on such occasions. Words or writings from persons who lived in previous ages, who faced similar difficulties, are also dependable and helpful.

Those who came before us refer to businesspersons and others who devoted themselves to improving the lot of their fellow humans, who searched for the meaning of life, and artists who consoled them with their art. The words, achievements, or works of such people may comfort you too in crises in the future. I hope you will continue to turn to such wisdom after leaving the university.

In the future, when you become persons about whom people say, “We can rely on you” or “We wish you were here at times like this,” then and not till then, Osaka University that sent you forth will have confirmed its reason for existence.

I would like to close by wishing you all good fortune and may you live your life to the fullest.