

WELCOME SPEECH

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It gives me great pleasure to welcome the API Community members from around Asia, and all the API fellows, to the 8th API Regional Workshop in Osaka.

Osaka has been the economic heart of Japan for more than a thousand years. It has been a major influence on Japan, not only by virtue of its economic strength, but also because of its contribution to Japanese culture and society.

Just a thirty-minute walk from this hall, there used to be a school called Tekijuku. Tekijuku was a private school founded in 1838, at the close of the Edo Period, by a medical doctor and scholar of Western science called Ogata Kouan. The original objective of the school was to educate doctors. However, at a time when Japan was closed to the outside world, there was no better place than this school for the country's finest minds to gather and imbibe Western ideology and knowledge. Over 600 students graduated from Tekijuku over the course of its thirty-year history. Among the talented graduates were individuals who lay the foundation for the modernization of Japan.

One such individual is Yukichi Fukuzawa. At Tekijuku, Fukuzawa studied ideology and technology, which were not taught in any other school in Japan at the time. After graduation, Fukuzawa established a school in Tokyo which would later become the Keio University. As a member of the Shogunate delegation, he travelled to Europe, America, and Asia. Upon his return to Japan, he wrote about the knowledge, ideologies and thoughts he had encountered in his travels, and the books he wrote became widely read throughout Japan. The image of Fukuzawa, an individual who helped bring Japan into the modern era, graces the current 10,000-yen note.

At the beginning of the Meiji Era, most intellectuals, including graduates of Tekijuku, sought a position in the government. However, Fukuzawa remained to his dying day an ordinary citizen, having no special rank or title. His ideas about modernization, while

revolutionary at the time, strike a chord with us today—ideas like education as a path to independence, gender equality, and an international perspective.

Fukuzawa's most famous work, *Gakumon no Susume*, or "The Encouragement of Learning", contains a reference to the American Declaration of Independence – "Heaven does not create one man above or below another man". This concept had a major impact on the values of the Japanese people who, up to that point, had been enclosed in a society founded upon class and social status. These words and the name of Fukuzawa are, to this day, to be found in school textbooks around the country.

Fukuzawa deftly highlighted the absurdities that were taken for granted during his lifetime and provided fresh solutions. He was an enlightened and intelligent leader, brave enough to state plainly the message dictated to him by his own conscience, even when this flew in the face of public opinion or authority. He was, in short, the epitome of a public intellectual.

Now, one hundred and fifty years on from the time of Fukuzawa, we are once again greeting a major revolution: events that demand a reevaluation of the meaning of capitalism itself; political and economic problems that transcend national barriers; regional integration. Many people, confused in the face of these rapid changes, are now seeking solutions.

In this modern age, as was the case in Fukuzawa's time, we require public intellectuals who can discuss problems and find solutions from the viewpoint of the man on the street; public intellectuals who will work to spread benefit throughout the public sphere. Public intellectuals are people who are willing to raise their voices against the tide of the time and change public opinion. They are people who are not afraid to find and implement solutions to problems in our irrational world.

I often remind myself that three things are important when seeking a solution to a problem. Firstly, one must have a powerful passion to take the initiative and meet a challenge head on. Secondly, one needs the bravery to

stand up to a lack of understanding and, at times, resistance to, one's own activities. Thirdly, one must have the perseverance to work with dedication and not lose sight of one's goal until a solution is found and put into effect.

It goes without saying that the specialist knowledge, analytic ability, and actions of the API Fellows are vital elements in bringing change to society. Furthermore, we must remember never to underestimate what can be set in motion by a single individual. Just as a single match can give rise to a forest fire, so can the actions of one person ignite social reform, when backed by a strong belief.

Fukuzawa Yukichi changed Japanese society in the Meiji Era, and his efforts are praised to this day. At times, one must work alone; at other times, with the assistance of one's peers. For Fukuzawa, the human networks and inspiration that he found at the Tekijuku school were the source and driving force behind his momentous activities.

The purpose of the API Fellowship is not merely to support theoretical study. As you are all very much aware, the aim of the program is to build a community of public intellectuals in the Asian region. It is my heartfelt wish that the API Fellowship, and the API Community, can become the Tekijuku of the present time.

And it is the dream of all of us who set this API Program in motion that each of you, as members of the 300-strong API Community, will assist and inspire your counterparts within the community to work together towards a common goal, always striving to bring about real and lasting change to society.

In closing, I would like to ask for your kind cooperation as we work to develop the API Community, and say that, I hope, for both your activities and for this workshop, the very best of success.