

Preface

I would like to extend a heartfelt greeting to all of the sociological and social welfare studies researchers from around the world, particularly everyone who travelled to Japan from all over the globe in order to take part and be involved in the discussions at the 18th World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama. We in the Japan Consortium for Sociological Societies would like to declare our enthusiastic solidarity with all of you. In addition, we would also like to present you with this book, *Messages to the World*, which exemplifies the past, present, and future of Japanese sociological and social welfare studies.

The Japan Consortium for Sociological Societies was launched in April 2007 as a crosscutting organization linking the academic societies related to sociology and social welfare studies in the Science Council of Japan. As you are well aware, the environment surrounding academic research has been undergoing profound changes brought about by the advances in globalization. As academic structures grow more diverse and fragmented, interdisciplinary fields have been expanding without limit. What is more, factors like the internationalization of scholarship and the creation of new disciplines have necessitated that researchers respond to a variety of different matters. Faced with the emergence of this sort of new research environment, the Japan Consortium for Sociological Societies was founded in order to prompt greater collaboration and exchange between academic societies. As such, the Consortium has established its website and creates and distributes newsletters. In addition, it holds a symposium once every year through the joint sponsorship of the Science Council of Japan.

The Japan Consortium for Sociological Societies had planned to publish this book, *Messages to the World*, for the holding of the World Congress of Sociology in Yokohama in 2014 in order to make people aware of the history and current state of Japanese sociological and social welfare studies. As such, we put together an editing organization in order to accomplish this. I will avoid discussing the details of this, as this will be explained later on by SHOJI Kôkichi, but one important point that emerged with respect to the editing process was how to situate the events of March 11, 2011 (hereafter abbreviated as “3/11”) when all was said and done. 3/11, especially the nuclear accident in Fukushima, exposed the dark underside of modernity. Or to put it another way, it was a case of modernity’s frailties resolutely manifesting themselves in the foreground of society.

Of course it goes without saying, but this matter has raised fundamental questions concerning the status of the sociological and social welfare studies that analyze and conceptualize society. Over and above that, it has also reopened questions concerning the position upon which sociologists and social welfare scholars each stand. Speaking in terms of the academic societies that constitute the Japan Consortium for Sociological Societies, it has given each of them the opportunity for self-validation and gotten them to start their own unique efforts when it comes to 3/11. Of course, these efforts have only just gotten underway, and so the results they have achieved thus far will only be reflected in this volume of *Messages to the World* in a partial manner. If you can read into this that Japanese sociological and social welfare studies may be questioning how to stand when confronted with the unprecedented and difficult circumstances of 3/11, or how to use these to

amplify their own importance, nothing could give us more pleasure than that.

Right now in the afflicted regions, especially in Fukushima, many of the victims are forced to live out their days in despair with no future to speak of beneath unending nuclear devastation and neoliberal restoration policies. I believe that now is the time for us to surmount the shared despair felt with the victims and set forth an alternative body of knowledge on restoration that is rooted in guaranteeing human dignity and rights. It is my hope that this collection of messages will serve as a foothold for sharing this attempt with people all over the world.

July 2014

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