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# Nuclear discourses

## after the TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant Accident

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# Foreword

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- ❖ My talk here contains few new insights; it is mostly a repetition of what I have stated in various forums since the TEPCO nuclear accident.
- ❖ I nevertheless repeat these points here on this occasion, because the situation that I have analysed in the past not only continues, but prevails.

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- ❖ TEPCO Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant disaster
- ❖ Language and laws as social reality
- ❖ Post-accident discourse, unduly appropriated
- ❖ From discursal mess to politico-legal nonsense
- ❖ Risk communication, or a travesty thereof

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# Questions to be answered

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- ❖ “As ordinary people demanded zero risk, we were sort of hesitant to discuss regulatory measures [in the Nuclear Safety Commission] under the assumption that there are risks” (Dr. Haruki Madarame, former head of the Nuclear Safety Commission, 18 September 2012).
- ❖ “One year after the accident, ‘radiation panic’ shows no signs of abating” (Dr. Keiichi Nakagawa, University of Tokyo Hospital, 11 March 2012).

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# Questions to be answered

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- ❖ “Why do ordinary citizens demand ‘zero risk’ in radiation-related matters?” (Professor Dr Shigenobu Nagataki, at an MOE committee meeting, 2012)
  - ❖ There are many other risks;
  - ❖ Low-level radiation “does not cause immediate health harm.
- ❖ So why demand zero risk in the case of radiation?
- ❖ Perhaps those people are ignorant?
- ❖ Therefore need proper and effective *risk communication*?

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# Questions to be answered

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- ❖ Need proper and effective *risk communication*...
- ❖ Eleven Ministries and Agencies requested several billions yen for a risk communication package to promote the return of refugees for FY 2014.  
(Reconstruction Agency, 18 February, 2014)
- ❖ There are many “risk communication” projects:
  - ❖ Governmental advertisements in newspapers, pamphlets, etc.

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# TEPCO Nuclear Plant disaster

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“There were many opportunities for taking preventive measures prior to March 11. The accident occurred because TEPCO did not take these measures, and NISA and the Nuclear Safety Commission (NSC) went along. **They either intentionally postponed putting safety measures in place, or made decisions based on their organization’s self interest, and not in the interest of public safety.**” (The National Diet of Japan, *The Official Report of the Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission: Executive Summary*. 2012, p. 16.)

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# TEPCO Nuclear Plant disaster

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“The TEPCO Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident was the result of collusion between the government, the regulators and TEPCO, and the lack of governance by said parties. They effectively betrayed **the nation’s right to be safe from nuclear accidents.**” (The National Diet of Japan, *The Official Report of the Fukushima Nuclear Accident Independent Investigation Commission: Executive Summary*. 2012, p. 16.)

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# TEPCO Nuclear Plant disaster

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- ❖ Recall what the government had been claiming:  
“These [safety] measures are designed in such a way that they ‘have a margin that is more sufficient (sic) than what can be expected.’” (MEXT: *Challenge! Nuclear World*, February 2010)

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# TEPCO Nuclear Plant disaster

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“As to whether people should evacuate or not after the nuclear accident, the very fact that **they are forced to choose one or the other is a common damage** inflicted on people by the accident.” (Ken Fujikawa “The structure of damage caused by the Fukushima Nuclear Power Plant accident damage and its characteristics,” *Kankyo Shakaigaku Kenkyu*, 18. cited from Ryoichi Yoshimura, [in the Nuclear Safety Commission] “Nuclear accident and reparation” <http://www.ritsumeilaw.jp/column/column201304.html>.)

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# TEPCO Nuclear Plant disaster

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“All people shall have the right to maintain the minimum standards of wholesome and cultured living.

In all spheres of life, the State shall use its endeavors for the promotion and extension of social welfare and security, and of public health.”

Article 25, Constitution of Japan

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# TEPCO Nuclear Plant disaster

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- ❖ Citizen's rights to be safe etc. were violated by the accident, which was caused by the negligence of the government, regulatory bodies and TEPCO.
- ❖ Rights are still being violated, as is demonstrated by the facts that 125,000 people are still unable to return home, and the situation in which people are forced to choose goes on, without proper support.

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# TEPCO Nuclear Plant disaster

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**These are  
violations of human rights**

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# Questions to be answered

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- ❖ “Why do ordinary citizens demand ‘zero risk’ in radiation-related activities when the MOE is very low?”

## Red herring

- ❖ The demand for zero risk is a red herring unless this issue is addressed within the framework of rights violations.
- ❖ Low MOE does not mean zero harm.
- ❖ So why do ordinary citizens demand zero risk?
- ❖ Perhaps they are concerned about their rights.
- ❖ Therefore need proper and effective *risk communication*?



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# True question to be answered

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**WHY DO THESE  
MISLEADING QUESTIONS  
AND CORRESPONDINGLY  
MISGUIDED DISCUSSIONS,  
INCLUDING SO-CALLED  
“RISK COMMUNICATION,”  
UNDULY PREVAIL?**

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# Language and laws as social reality

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Fleeze! (sic)

- ❖ Then you freeze...

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# Language and laws as social reality

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- ❖ Language in general is binding.
- ❖ Laws are binding as well,  
not because their violations lead to punishment,  
but because they *are* binding.
- ❖ Individual utterances and legal tokens make sense,  
personally and socially, on the basis of this deontic  
nature of language and laws

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# Language and laws as social reality

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- ❖ Massive misuse of language and utterances can destroy the linguistic, legal and social infrastructure, and:
  - ❖ Introduce unhealthy relationships among actors;
  - ❖ Conceal the real issues to be addressed;
  - ❖ Relativise truth in the flood of lies and nonsense.

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# Post-accident discourse

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“You can keep working even after getting married to our son” (would-be parents in law)

- ❖ These people do not have the right to make comments like this to you.
- ❖ If you let this go, they will assume the right to intervene in your life as they see fit.
- ❖ If society as a whole lets this go, those who rightly claim that your would-be parents in law have no right to command you will be “marked.”

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# Post-accident discourse

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- ❖ Has established an arrangement of communication
  1. In which perpetrators give opinions to victims;
  2. In which those who are responsible have restricted the discorsal agenda to “radiation,” which has effectively downplayed the social and rights issues;
  3. Within which so-called radiation “experts” have provided a plethora of scientifically unfounded claims (mostly downplaying the risk of radiation).



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# Post-accident discourse (1)

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To the residents in Kanto and Tohoku area: Rain will cause no health effects (20 March 2011; Prime Minister's Office\*)

Rain will cause no health effects. Be reassured. A higher level of radiation than the natural level may be detected, but it should be minuscule and will have no health effects. There is no difference between the normal situation and the current situation in the sense that you do not need to worry about this.

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# Post-accident discourse (1)

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- ❖ Massive bombardment of similar calls by government and “experts” to people:
  - ❖ no problem;
  - ❖ no immediate health effects;
  - ❖ smoking is more dangerous;
  - ❖ you cannot assume zero risk anyway;
  - ❖ stress is more hazardous...

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# Post-accident discourse (1)

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- ❖ Government and “experts”?

“The TEPCO nuclear accident was the result of collusion between the government, the regulators and TEPCO, and the lack of governance by said parties. They effectively betrayed the nation’s right to be safe from nuclear accidents.”

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# Post-accident discourse (1)

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- ❖ Those who are responsible for the accident secured the position to impose their opinions on victims:
  - ❖ Government (and “experts”) (who have betrayed the citizens’ “right to be safe”) make decisions;
  - ❖ Pretending that it’s on your behalf.

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# Post-accident discourse

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- ❖ Has established an arrangement of communication
  1. In which perpetrators give opinions to victims;
  2. In which those who are responsible have restricted the discorsal agenda to “radiation,” which has effectively downplayed the social and rights issues;
  3. Within which so-called radiation “experts” have provided a plethora of scientifically unfounded claims (mostly downplaying the risk of radiation).

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# Post-accident discourse (2)

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- ❖ Government, media, and “experts” have kept talking about the issue of the potential health risks of “radiation” in a dually misleading sense.
- ❖ Mostly, they have talked as if there is an agreement that this is THE ISSUE;
- ❖ But some profoundly confused people have explicitly stated (and thus exposed) this point.

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# Post-accident discourse (2)

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“‘Chronic exposure to low-dose radiation will cause death by cancer.’ The largest issue, the largest cause of worry for us, which hangs like a black cloud above us, is no more and no less this proposition.”

“But why are people worried about this, while no physical harm has yet to become apparent?”

Professor Masaki Ichinose, Division of Philosophy,  
Faculty of Letters, The University of Tokyo

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# Post-accident discourse (2)

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“They either intentionally postponed putting safety measures in place, or made decisions based on their organization’s self interest, and not in the interest of public safety.”

“[T]hat they are forced to choose one or the other is the common damage inflicted on people by the accident.”



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# Post-accident discourse (2)

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- ❖ Suppose that somebody splashed water on you in the street and you got angry and worried.
- ❖ Then imagine da professor of da philosophy (sic) came to you and said, with a serious expression (but no serious thought or no thought at all for that matter):

“But why are you worried about this, when no physical harm has yet to become apparent?”
- ❖ This amounts to what is called “second harassment.”

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# Post-accident discourse (2)

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- ❖ “Dually misleading”:
  - ❖ Health issues detached from the wider context of human rights violations inflicted on people by the negligence of the government and TEPCO;
  - ❖ Definition of health trivialized by restricting it to “physical” damage.

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# Post-accident discourse (2)

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❖ WHO states (legally binding in Japan):

“good health is a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.” (WHO statute)

“Health is a *fundamental human right*, recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)” (WHO additional explanation).

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# Post-accident discourse

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- ❖ Has established an arrangement of communication
  1. In which perpetrators give opinions to victims;
  2. In which those who are responsible have restricted the discorsal agenda to “radiation,” which has effectively downplayed the social and rights issues;
  3. Within which so-called radiation “experts” have provided a plethora of scientifically unfounded claims (mostly downplaying the risk of radiation).

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# Post-accident discourse (3)

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- ❖ Along with these came a massive bombardment of scientifically unfounded—and all too often just outright wrong—claims by so-called “experts,” e.g.:

“Sea fish do not concentrate radioactive iodine because they retain iodine in their body.” (Dr. Keiichi Nakagawa, University of Tokyo Hospital, Nihon TV, 28 March 2011)

“No negative health effects occur below 100 mSv” (Dr. Shun’ichi Yamashita, Talk at Nihonmatsu, 3 May 2011, similar “expert opinions” are omnipresent)

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# Post-accident discourse

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1. Those who are responsible kept the position to talk to people, make decisions
  - ❖ Peculiarities of the accident
  - ❖ Leadership of the accident
  - ❖ **Responsibilities unaddressed** ety.
2. Discourse
  - ❖ Witnesses
  - ❖ **Problems personalised**
  - ❖ Witnesses
3. Misinformation in relation to health risks of radiation:
  - ❖ Overwriting the scientific knowledge by political aims

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# Politico-legal nonsense

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“The agreement for ‘daily’ situation is that general public should not be at stake here. To change laws and regulations without due process simply because they are violated is not legally valid (nor socially or intellectually valid, for that matter) keep I told you rep 100mSw Nihonr

“It is a situation where the laws do not hold in an emergency situations” (Professor Emeritus Otsura Niwa, *Hokkaido Shimbun*, 7 June 2013)



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# Politico-legal nonsense

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- ❖ The existing guiding (and binding) principles:  
“Evidence is growing that pollution at levels or concentrations below existing alert thresholds can cause or contribute to human health problems and our countries' present levels of protection may not, in some cases, provide children with adequate protection. ... We affirm that prevention of exposure is the single most effective means of protecting children against environmental threats.” (G8 Miami Declaration, 1997)

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# Politico-legal nonsense

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- ❖ The existing guiding (and binding) principles:
- ❖ “Preventive measures” one of the four pillars of the 2nd (22 December 2000), the 3rd (7 April 2006) and the 4th (27 April 2014) Basic Information Plan:  
  
“For these [potentially serious] issues, a lack of scientific knowledge does not justify delay in implementing due measures; based on the concept of “preventive policy,” we should implement preventive measures while at the same time endeavoring to enhance our scientific knowledge.”

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# Politico-legal nonsense

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“Losses caused by nuclear power should not be much different from those caused by the use of cars. But I have never heard people claiming that we should stop using cars because they cause deaths by car accidents. ... It is then necessary to make people understand that nuclear power is as important as cars.” (Dr. Yoichi Kaya, *ATOMOS*, 54(8), 2014)

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# Politico-legal nonsense

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- ❖ Legally, the following factors are taken into account:
  - ❖ Perpetrators and victims cannot be swapped;
  - ❖ It is difficult to avoid harm by taking personal actions;
  - ❖ Perpetrators' acts are for commercial profit;
  - ❖ Violations continue for a long time;
  - ❖ Violations cannot be expected;
  - ❖ Alternative ways exist

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# Politico-legal nonsense

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- ❖ Limit of additional dose 1 mSv / y for ordinary citizens
- ❖ Potential annual dose over 5.2 mSv in controlled areas
- ❖ Despite the claims of all these so-called “experts,” these regulations are still binding from the point of view of the legislative and regulative principle and intent.

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# Politico-legal nonsense

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- ❖ The declaration of “back to normality” following the nuclear accident (then-Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda, 16 December 2011)
- ❖ “Contaminated water is completely blocked.” (Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, 7 September 2013, in Buenos Aires)
- ❖ “The situation is completely under control.” (Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, 16 October 2013)

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# Politico-legal nonsense

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❖ Massive erosion of the deontic nature of language and laws:

- Unfounded claims prevail
- Semi-legal claims prevail
- Outright lies prevail

all serving as the basis of socio-political planning and decision making

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# A travesty of risk communication

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- ❖ Responsibilities? Forget them, as we are in an emergency;
- ❖ Laws and regulations? Forget them, as we are in an emergency;
- ❖ Science? Forget it, as we are “experts” and in an emergency;
- ❖ Emergency? Forget it, as after ignoring responsibilities, laws and regulations, and science, there’s nothing to worry about in this emergency situation.

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# A travesty of risk communication

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❖ They can then talk like this:

“We can conclude that this nuclear accident kindly reminded us of the fact that we live ‘a limited time of life full of risks.’ ... I sincerely hope that Japanese turn this ordeal into something positive.” (Dr. Keiichi Nakagawa, *Mainichi Shimbun*, 25 May 2011)

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# A travesty of risk communication

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- ❖ Some worried and complaining people remain, who perhaps failed to forget responsibilities, laws and / or scientific opinions.
- ❖ As these annoying issues exist no more (as we've conveniently forgotten them all), the problem should be solved by making these complaining creatures recognise "the fact that we live 'a limited time of life full of risks.'"
- ❖ *Thusly the answer: Risk communication!*

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# Questions to be answered

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- ❖ Need proper and effective *risk communication*...
- ❖ Eleven Ministries and Agencies requested several billions of budget for the risk communication package to promote return of refugees for FY 2014 (Reconstruction Agency, 18 February, 2014)
- ❖ Many “risk communication” projects:
  - ❖ Governmental advertisements in newspapers; pamphlets; Ethos; Dialogue Seminar; and on and on...

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# Afterword

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- ❖ In a desert which lacks the deontic nature of language and laws:
  - ❖ fantasies, consisting of a farrago of trivia, lies and nonsense, prevail
  - ❖ 'risk communication,' or travesty thereof, also prevails, to promote these fantasies
- ❖ Many mainstream media at large colluded with this, perhaps unconsciously (but in some cases consciously)