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## Japan, Radiation and Reason

The control of the nuclear reactors at Fukushima Daiich was overwhelmed by the loss of all sources of power, and the consequences are very bad news.

But that does not directly affect to the message of the book "Radiation and Reason" - it brings good news, for the effect of radiation on health is a quite separate matter to questions of reactor stability. For historical reasons the regulation safety levels for radiation (1 mSv per year) have been drawn as low as possible to quell popular concerns about radiation. The acute levels that endanger life are much, much higher, either by early death (>2,000 mSv) or increased cancer risk in later years (>100mSv). Much higher doses (>20,000 mSv) are given to the public during radiotherapy treatment over several weeks - the fact that they survive is proof for all to see that cells of the body do repair the radiation damage over hours and days. If radiation dose is spread out in time, the ill effects are drastically reduced. In summary, radiation is about 1000 times less dangerous than popularly supposed.

So what about Japan? It is good news that iodine tablets are being given, unlike at Chernobyl. We should not forget the few dozen exceptionally brave workers on the site who are risking fatal levels. But everybody else in the world should stop worrying about the bogey word "radiation" and concentrate on what really matters - the tsunami survivors, the situation in the Middle East and the world economy. The latest UNSCEAR report on Chernobyl chronicles the damage done by panic reactions - only a few dozen workers at the plant died from radiation.