

**Is the Earthquake Disaster Trying
Philosophy?
: An Attempt of “Philosophical practice” in
the Disaster-struck Areas**

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Abstract

The Great East Japan Earthquake struck at 14:46 on 11 March 2011 off the Sanriku coast. The earthquake had a moment magnitude of 9.0 at a depth of 24 km, and registered a 7 on the Japan Meteorological Agency seismic intensity scale in northern Miyagi Prefecture.

According to a report by the Metropolitan Police Emergency Disaster Security Headquarters, as of 10 June 2014, known casualties included 15,887 deaths and 2615 missing persons.

Explosions and venting at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant will likely result in the unprecedented scattering of radioactive material, particularly along the coastlines and rivers of the Tohoku and Kanto regions, and continues to profoundly affect the agriculture, livestock, and fisheries of these areas.

We have experienced numerous separations and deaths since the earthquake. We are currently being forced to question anew various values including our views on life and death, such as love, conscience, kindness, loyalty, and fairness, that we had developed comfortably in tranquility. In such circumstances, the "philosophical practice" that is occurring at the philosophical café where the participants' words (ideas) are strengthened through dialogues with others may be needed. It is only in such circumstances may it be possible to examine whether "philosophical practice" can play a major role in crisis management after the earthquake.

Key words: The Great East Japan Earthquake, dialogue, philosophical practice, philosophy café (Café philosophique)

Introduction

The 2011 Tohoku Earthquake (also called the Great East Japan Earthquake) struck at 14:46 on 11 March 2011 off the Sanriku coast. The earthquake had a moment magnitude of 9.0 at a depth of 24 km, and registered a 7 on the Japan Meteorological Agency seismic intensity scale in northern Miyagi Prefecture. The resulting tsunami caused extensive damage, reaching estimated heights of 15.8 m at the city gymnasium in Rikuzentakata, Iwate Prefecture, and 14.8 m at the Onagawa Fishing Port, Miyagi Prefecture. At its peak, the tsunami's waves reached astonishing heights of 38.9 m in the Aneyoshi District and 37.9 m in the Taro District of Miyako, Iwate Prefecture.

According to a report by the Metropolitan Police Emergency Disaster Security Headquarters, as of 10 July 2013, known casualties included 15,883 deaths and 2667 missing persons, and property damage included 126,467 buildings totally destroyed, 272,244 buildings partially destroyed, 4200 cases of road damage, and 116 cases of bridge damage. Explosions and venting at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant will likely result in the unprecedented scattering of radioactive material, particularly along the coastlines and rivers of the Tohoku and Kanto regions, and continues to profoundly affect the agriculture, livestock, and fisheries of these areas. Even now, agricultural products from Fukushima Prefecture such as raw milk and shiitake mushrooms remain subject to shipment and consumption restrictions under the Nuclear Disaster Special Measures Law.

1. "Philosophical practice" through dialogue in disaster-affected Sendai.

"Philosophy easily triumphs over past ills and ills to come, but present ills (ongoing misfortunes) triumph over philosophy," wrote François de La Rochefoucauld in *The Maxim*, a work full of developed aphorisms. Rochefoucauld has often been regarded as the representative of classic moralists, and has incorporated sharp psychological analyses and pessimistic observations of people into the style referred to as aphorism. If La Rochefoucauld was right, philosophy won't be of any use for dealing with the Great East Japan Earthquake, a "present ills." The utility of the act of philosophy, namely "philosophical practice", is also being tested now by the earthquake.

The present work discusses the "philosophical practice" through dialogue that is occurring at the philosophy café in disaster-affected Sendai. It also touches on the current trend in "philosophical practice" that has been developed since the 1980s as a new paradigm in philosophy by Western philosophers such as Gerd Achenback, Peter Harteloh, and Ran Lahav. In the current paradigm, according to Martha C. Nussbaum, philosophy is being reinterpreted as something to be practiced not as a "detached intellectual technique dedicated to display of cleverness," but as an immersed and worldly art of grappling with human misery," and "as a way of addressing the most painful problems of human life."⁸⁰

We have experienced numerous separations and deaths since the earthquake. We are currently being forced to question anew various values including our views on life and death, such as love, conscience, kindness, loyalty, and fairness, that we had developed comfortably in tranquility. In such circumstances, the "philosophical practice" that is occurring at the philosophical café where the participants' words (ideas) are strengthened through dialogues with others may be needed. It is only in such circumstances may it be possible to examine whether "philosophical practice" can play a major role in crisis management after the earthquake.

2. Paving the venue for dialogue : Philosophy café (Café philosophique)

2-1. What is Philosophy café (Café philosophique) ?

philosophy café (Café philosophique) is a practice that aims to facilitate frank and philosophical dialogues between participants by dissolving socially important relationships such as those between a teacher and student or a boss and subordinate. A theme is given at each meeting (e.g.=exempli gratia, whether or not our bodies are really ours) and primordial questions are asked about it. While the purpose is to facilitate philosophical dialogues, it is not necessary for participants to have knowledge of philosophy; however, to avoid mindless chat,

⁸⁰ Nussbaum, Martha C., *The Therapy of Desire*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.3,485.

a facilitator encourages them to talk as well as listen to each other. This is what makes this practice special.

Moreover, the dialogues do not presuppose dichotomous positions such as agreement and disagreement. Instead, they aim at strengthening each participant's ideas through dialogue with others. In this sense, Café philosophique can be said to be a "neutral arena for the development of open thinking".⁸¹

2-2. Philosophy café and "philosophical practice"

The Philosophy café (Café philosophique) approach is thought to have been started by Marc Saute, then philosophy professor at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques de Paris, at Café des Phares in the Place de la Bastille in the 1990s. In the same way as philosophical counseling, Philosophy café can be said to be one form of "philosophical practice" that is spreading through Western society. The German philosopher Gerd Achenbach opened a "clinic" (philosophical clinic, philosophical practice) near Cologne in 1981, said to be the forerunner of Saute's Café philosophique. Since then, his philosophical practice (philosophical clinic) has gradually become adopted by others, and in 1982, Gesellschaft für Philosophische Praxis was established. After 1997, the organization was reorganized as Gesellschaft für Philosophische Praxis,⁸² and its activities have since spread to other parts of the world including the Netherlands, France, Israel, the United States, Norway, and South Africa.

2-3. What is "dialogue"?

To facilitate dialogue among the participants, Café philosophique dissolves the participants' socially important relationships. However, it does not necessarily dissolve the participant's social attributes. This is because "dialogues, in the first place, are nothing but narrations by individuals based on their own actual feelings, experiences, beliefs, and values. They are not objective

⁸¹ Gerbers, Will A. J. F., "Philosophical Practice, Pastoral Work, and Suicide Survivors", *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*. Ran Lahav and Maria da Venza Tillmans, eds Lanham, NY: University Press of America, 1995, 158.

⁸² See the Internationale Gesellschaft für Philosophische Praxis (IGPP) website: <http://www.igpp.org/>

discussions in the search for solutions without personal opinions". In other words, according to Yoshimichi Nakajima, ⁸³"dialogues are different from arguments, which are based on a language usage apart from our own reality".

He continues by saying that those who engage in dialogues, on the one hand, do not do so with an "objective attitude" that is independent of their own situation; on the other hand, they do not necessarily engage in dialogues with a "subjective attitude" completely bounded by their own situations. "Rather, dialogues occur in between. Dialogue participants begin to talk in search of the objective truth that maintains their own situations, experiences, and feelings". ⁸⁴

3. “Re-narrative” of the earthquake

3-1. Attempts to express the incident of the earthquake in words” of our own.

The leading members of Café philosophique events in Sendai ⁸⁵include Sendai City officials, nurses who have been coming to volunteer in Ishinomaki City since right after the earthquake, high school teachers in Fukushima who have been busy handling matters at their schools that became designated emergency shelters, and college students who had been staying in shelters after their houses were swept away by the tsunami. Instead of lingering on their being “earthquake victims” and living in this inconvenient situation without a purpose, these members seemed to engage in dialogues with various others in attempts to "recapture the incident of the earthquake" and "express it in words" of our own. ⁸⁶

Many victims of the earthquake who came to participate in each Café

⁸³ Nakajima, Yoshimichi. *Taiwa no nai shakai: Omoiyari to yasashisaga assatsu surumono*. Tokyo: PHP, 1997, 102

⁸⁴ Ibid., 135.

⁸⁵ Since the earthquake, it has been run as as the "Thinking Table, Cafe Philosophique @ Sendai" with the cooperation of Sendai Mediatheque, operated by Sendai City Board of Education.

⁸⁶ Excerpts from Yo Hemmi, a writer from Ishinomaki City, in the NHK documentary Gareki, aired after the earthquake.

philosophique event must have felt the same way. In other words, they might have intuitively believed that they would have to "distance" themselves from the "incident" (the earthquake) in order to see things that cannot be or are difficult to be seen from the perspective of "those involved" (the earthquake victims).

3-2. The need for "re-narratives" of the earthquake

Now the patience to search for the roots of the incident is needed, rather than skillfully interpreting the incident using precise philosophical terminology and concepts.

According to Kiyokazu Washida,⁸⁷ "many people in the earthquake-affected areas are now confronted by the need for re-narratives. They need to reconsider who they are, and in order to accept unreasonable and unfathomable realities as undeniable facts, they have to re-narrate the stories that they have weaved in a different form, something we frequently need to do in life. This requires past memories to be retold. In this sense, the transition from the present self to the new self is an undeniably risky task. He sees this as those who have lost their parents, children, houses, or jobs being pushed backed, without a choice, to the starting point of their dialogue".

4. Philosophical practice: "Philosophy as a way of life"

4-1. "An attempt to redefine philosophy as a way of life" (Pierre Hadot)

Regardless of the "present ills (ongoing misfortunes) ", as de La Rochefoucauld brings up, Some have argued that philosophy has no use after reviewing the results of practice by means of philosophy (transmission of classical work as a whole) with those of other natural sciences and humanities.⁸⁸ "Philosophical practice" as "a new paradigm" can be said to have emerged in the 1980's to refute such an idea.

⁸⁷ Washida, Kiyokazu. "'Hedatari' was zoufukusuru bakari" *Asahi Shinbun*, June 10, 2011, morning edition.

⁸⁸ Revel, Jean-François, "Le moment est venu de proposer l'abandon du mot philosophie", *Pourquoi des philosophie?*, ed. J. Pauvert, 1985.

"Philosophical practice" is a movement searching for the ways in which philosophy can be widely practiced in society as a whole, where its practice is not monopolized by experts and professionals. The common denominator in the movement is that participants in a philosophical dialogue begin the dialogue with issues they encounter in their daily lives or in society.

One of the advocates of "Philosophical practice", Peter Harteloh, of the Erasmus Institute for Philosophical Practice, also argues that academic philosophy is in name only and that "Philosophical practice" is the twentieth century's movement against it for having become so remote from issues and topics in daily life.⁸⁹ As well, he considers the practice as "an attempt to redefine philosophy as a way of life", a view also held by the French historian of philosophy Pierre Hadot.

Hadot, in his work *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, examines in detail how ancient Hellenistic philosophy and Roman philosophy appeared in the first place as "a therapeutic passion" meant to bring out about "a profound transformation of the individual's mode of seeing and being, a transformation of our vision of the world...and a metamorphosis of our personality".⁹⁰

4-2. Philosophy as "the art of living" Ancient philosophy and "Philosophical practice"

As Peter B. Raabe, the author of *Philosophical Counseling*, points out, "many schools of ancient philosophy viewed philosophy as 'the art of living', not as the study of pure and abstract theories or interpretation of original texts."⁹¹ In other words, ancient philosophy had a clear intention toward practical self-improvement, as Hadot's has made clear in his study of the history of philosophy.

Surprisingly, many philosophers attempt to determine what philosophical

⁸⁹ This is taken from Peter Harteloh's lecture "Philosophical Practice as a New Paradigm in Philosophy" given at Rikkyo University in March 2012.

⁹⁰ Hadot, Pierre, *Philosophy As a Way of Life*, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1995, 82.

⁹¹ Raabe, Peter B., *Philosophical Counseling. Theory and Practice*, Praeger Publishers, 2001, 4. This work has been translated into Japanese. Raabi, Peter B., *Tetsugaku kaunsering: Rironto jissen*, translated by Tsuneo Kato, Hiroyuki Matsuda, Haruo Kishimoto, and Nobuyoshi Mizuno, Tokyo: Hosei University Press, 2006.

practice should be from among the features of ancient philosophy. These movements can be said to be "a return to the ancient roots of the practice of philosophy"⁹² or "a new version of ancient traditions".⁹³

4-3. "Sokratische Methode" (Leonard Nelson)

"Philosophical practice" that "connects philosophy and daily lives" can be practiced in a variety of ways, including Café philosophique, philosophical counseling, and Socratic dialogue. The foundation of these attempts is a philosophical educational method known as the "Sokratische Methode", introduced by early 20th-century German philosopher Leonard Nelson (1882–1927). In a lecture he gave at the Göttingen Education Association in 1922, Nelson explained that the "Sokratische Methode is a pedagogical method of "Kunst des Philosophierens", not of philosophy itself.

It is a method not to instruct about philosophers, but to instruct learners to become philosophers."⁹⁴ He especially emphasized the "regressive Abstraktion" method⁹⁵ that abstracts contingent facts used for individual judgments and clarifies obscure assumptions applied to concrete cases. The method involves regressive examination of results and premises. By introducing this method into philosophy education, Nelson was attempting to spread "philosophical practice to instruct learners to become philosophers."

5. What is "Philosophical practice" through Café philosophique events for ?

5-1. " A continuous reinterpretations of oneself and the world."

⁹² Raabe, Peter B., *Philosophical Counseling. Theory and Practice*, Praeger Publishers, 2001, 3.

⁹³ Lahav, Ran, "Introduction", *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*, Ran Lahav and Maria Da Venza Tillmanns, ed. University Press of America, 1995, ix.

⁹⁴ Nelson, Leonard, *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 1, Felix Meiner; Die sokratische Methode, Mit einem Vorwort von Gisela Raupach-Strey, Verlag Weber, Zucht & Co.

Leonard Nelson, "The Socratic Method", *Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy: Selected Essays*, translated by Thomas K. Brown III, Yale University Press, 1949, 1-40.

⁹⁵ his abstraction by reflection is similar to induction in natural science in that it moves from specifics to universality. However, it differs from it in that it eliminates accidental things by going back to the knowledge used as assumptions for judgment. For possibilities and issues of Nelson's philosophical educational pedagogy, please refer to Terada, Toshiro, "Leonard Nelson's Socrates teki houhou" *Rinsho-tesugaku*, 3, 2001, 65-66.

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Peter Harteloh proposes several characteristics of "Philosophical practice" ⁹⁶ to engage in philosophical dialogues with those without philosophical training, to connect philosophy and daily lives, and to practice these in public places outside academic college campuses. However, what should this "Philosophical practice" be ministered for? Where does this necessity come from? Moreover, what is the "goal" of such practice and what "results" are expected?

Gerd Achenbach, the founder of the modern philosophical counseling movement, disagrees with "a goal-oriented procedure", calling it "the 'first mistake' in the practice of philosophy", and instead argues for "an open-ended procedure consisting of a continuous reinterpretations of oneself and the world." In addition, he emphasizes, citing Karl Jaspers, that "invention of a finite goal is technical —

and not philosophical practice."⁹⁷ He concludes that even if "philosophical practice" has some goal, it cannot be anything but "to maintain philosophical skepticism concerning everything which considers itself 'true'."⁹⁸ There are no expected "results" or "effects".

Similarly, Ran Lahav interprets "philosophical practice" as nothing less than what assigns a great "value to the process of pursuit itself", not what pursues "a finished product, such as a philosophical theory" and concludes that "philosophical practice" is a movement which "encourages the unique expression of individuals' concrete ways of being in this world (in their own words) , not constructing general and abstract theories."⁹⁹

5-2. "Philosophy unties the knots in our thinking." (Ludwig Wittgenstein)

⁹⁶ This is how Harteloh described philosophical practice in his lecture "Philosophical Practice as a New Paradigm in Philosophy" given at Rikkyo University in March 2012.

⁹⁷ Achenbach, Gerd, "About the Center of Philosophical Practice", *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice*, Wim van der Vlist, ed. Leusden: Verenig voor Filosofische Praktijk, 1996, 13.

⁹⁸ Achenbach, Gerd, "Philosophy, Philosophical Practice, and Psychotherapy", *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*, Ran Lahav and Maria Da Venza Tillmanns, ed., University Press of America, 1995, 73.

⁹⁹ Lahav, Ran, "What is Philosophical in Philosophical Counseling?" *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, Vol.13, No.3, 1996, 260.

However, "philosophical practice" is not to be interpreted from an "open-ended perspective" only. While researchers (practitioners) of "philosophical practice" hold various opinions, there is a lenient, yet clear direction toward it having "goals" and "results". A careful reading of related articles by various researchers and practitioners reveals that what underlines their diverse opinions is Wittgenstein's notion that "philosophy unties the knots in our thinking".¹⁰⁰ For example, Karl Pfeifer points out that Wittgenstein saw tight "knots" in thinking as "pathological symptoms of intellectual disease", and various necessary philosophical methods were "therapy" to untie such "knots".¹⁰¹

Following Wittgenstein, Steven Segal also emphasizes the "reflexive therapeutic activity" of philosophy in his article "Philosophy As a Therapeutic Activity" and argues that "it is in fact a reflexive therapeutic activity in that it allows the individual to change the way he or she experiences the world by reflexively deconstructing the texts or stories that shape the way he or she relates to the world."¹⁰²

James Tuedio, who attempted to find ways in which philosophy should be practiced in Gadamer hermeneutics, points out in his article "Postmodern Perspectives in Philosophical Practice" that "effective philosophical facilitation" is connected to whether the participants of philosophical dialogues can be given the ability of "critical examination and reconstruction of dysfunctional conceptual elements underlying their narrative construction of problematized relations and events in their life."¹⁰³ As just described, many researchers and practitioners of "philosophical practice" see the "use of philosophical practice", as Susan Robbins states it,¹⁰⁴ in Wittgenstein's idea of "untying(untying) the knots".

¹⁰⁰ Wittgenstein, Ludwig, *Philosophical Investigations*, translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1958, sec. 67.

¹⁰¹ Pfeifer, Karl, "Philosophy Outside the Academy: The Role of Philosophy in People-Oriented Professions and the Prospects for Philosophical Counseling", *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*, Vol.14, No.2, Autumn1994, 66.

¹⁰² Segal, Steven, "Philosophy Outside the Academy", *Inquiry: Critical Thinking Across the Disciplines*, Vol.17, No.3, Spring1998, 36-47.

¹⁰³ Tuedio, James A., "Postmodern Perspectives in Philosophical Practice", *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice*, Wim van der Vlist, ed., 1996, 183.

¹⁰⁴ Robbins, Susan, "Letter on Certification", *Newsletter of the American Society for Philosophy, Counseling, and Psychotherapy*, Vol.2, Issue 3, November 1997, 5.

6. "Meaning crisis" and "Worldview interpretation"

6-1. Reweaving a "worldview" and "disturbed equilibrium"

Of course, the "effects" of philosophical practice are not limited to that. Lahav believes that "philosophical practice" including philosophical counseling assumes a central role, such as "worldview interpretation". According to Lahav, "a worldview is one out of several ways of organizing, analyzing, categorizing, noting patterns, drawing implications, making sense, and more generally assigning meanings to, one's life-events." Philosophical practitioner as "an experts in worldview interpretation"¹⁰⁵ are said to offer the participants "a system of coordinates by helping them to uncover various meaning that are expressed in their way of life, and critically examine those problematic aspects that express their predicaments—such as meaning crisis, feeling of boredom and emptiness, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, anxiety, etc."

They do so in order to reweave their "worldview" that has been significantly broken apart, for example, by the Great East Japan Earthquake. It can be restated using Bauke Zijlstra's words that this attempt at "philosophical practice" is the "'disturbed equilibrium' of those in suffering—that is, to recover both the equilibrium in disturbed life and the equilibrium in disturbed thoughts on their lives."¹⁰⁶

6-2. Obtaining the words to describe the earthquake disaster through dialogue

Many things are being put to the test in the affected areas following the earthquake, and these include questioning views on life and death. It is necessary to actually connect philosophy to daily life in order to recover, as Zijlstra says, "the equilibrium in disturbed lives". In particular, according to Barbara Norman,

¹⁰⁵ Lahav, Ran, "A Conceptual Framework for Philosophical Counseling: Worldview Interpretation", *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*, Ran Lahav and Maria Da Venza Tillmanns, ed., University Press of America, 1995, 9, 10, 15

¹⁰⁶ Zijlstra, Bauke, "The Philosophical Counselor as an Equilibrist", *Perspectives in Philosophical Practice*, Wim van der Vlist, ed., 1996, 35.

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it is necessary to offer a place where the dialogue participants can 'vocalize' their individual interpretations of difficult conditions they are in and to support the obtaining the new words through the participants' mutual critical evaluations. Such words can be established when the participants listen to others with empathy and ask questions with a simple understanding of the immediate suffering at issue." Norman, incidentally, refers to such relationship between dialogue participants as "the art of ecological relationship and interpretation." By this she means "open-minded questioning and a constant reinterpretation of the (social and other) environment."¹⁰⁷

7. "Connecting philosophy to daily life" after the earthquake

7-1 "Thinking Table, Cafe Philosophique"

For just this purpose, after the earthquake Café philosophique events were started in cooperation with Sendai Mediatheque, under the Sendai City Board of Education.

The events are officially known as "Thinking Table, Cafe Philosophique." There, through dialogue with the participants of difficult tasks posed by the earthquake, themes were set for each session and repeated philosophical dialogues were conducted. The themes of each session were as follows: session 1 (June 11, 2011), "Earthquake and literature: 'assigning words to the dead'"; session 2 (August 7, 2011), "Guilt about talking about the earthquake?"; session 3 (September 25, 2011), "What is assistance?"; session 4 (October 23, 2011), "Who are the parties involved in the earthquake?";

Session 5 (November 27, 2011), "A compelling question: Which should we choose, private or public?"; session 6 (December 24, 2011), "Is it possible to understand the suffering of earthquake victims?"; session 7 (January 22, 2012), "Losing a hometown?"; and session 8 (February 10, 2012), "What should reconstruction bring back?" During session 9, held on March 18, 2012, after the

¹⁰⁷ Norman, Barbara, "Philosophical Counseling: The Arts of Ecological Relationship and Interpretation", *Essays on Philosophical Counseling*, Ran Lahav and Maria Da Venza Tillmanns, ed., University Press of America, 1995, 56.

viewing the work 《Prypiat》 directed and filmed by Nikolaus Geyrhalter, discussion was made on the problems faced by those who live in "the Zone", four kilometers from Chernobyl nuclear plant. The participants also engaged in various dialogues such as "how to live with a nuclear power plant" and the "political meaning of naming a 'restricted area Zone'".

Beyond that, we have held many sessions on theme of "How do we have to teach the earthquake to children?" and all that.

Aside from the Café philosophique events held in Sendai, earthquake-related Café philosophique events were held in other earthquake-affected areas such as Morioka, Fukushima, and Yamagata. Every issue discussed confirmed that the earthquake has been testing us with many issues.

7-2. The feeling of guilt that the people of Tohoku have been carrying.

What has been discussed the most is the feeling of guilt that the people of Tohoku have been carrying, regardless of whether they are victims of the earthquake or not. What has been the most surprising experience of Café philosophique is that it revealed many victims have a strong feeling of guilt that they could not save their family, that they have survived, and that there are others who suffered a lot worse than they did. This could be due to the fact that most of the damage was caused by the tsunami that hit. There is a clear difference between those who suffered great damage and who did not, and the victims feel guilty about this. Some even have the extreme belief that everybody should have suffered the same extent of suffering.

Where does this feeling of guilt come from? Is guilt something that the victims really have to feel? Not surprisingly, there are no clear answers to these questions. There is no other way but to think about it ourselves and restate stories (re-narrative) through dialogues with others. We should not rephrase this guilt as "survivors' guilt" and pretend to comprehend it. Therefore, hasn't Café philosophique fulfilled a meaningful function after the earthquake to provide a place for self-reflection and re-engagement in dialogues?

7-3. The feeling of guilt that has been occurred between public and private.

The issue of guilt in the earthquake-affected area has been seen in various fields in the complex context of public and private and loyalty and self-sacrifice. Immediately after radiation leakage in the Fukushima Dai-ichi Nuclear Power Plant accident triggered by the earthquake, Japan's media covered on a daily basis workers handling the accident at the plant. Café philosophique staff reported that a worker, who after having been exposed to excessive radiation had been immediately sent to an evacuation shelter to meet his family, said that he "felt guilty leaving other hardworking workers behind."

His words express the guilt he felt, despite his fear of the radiation, about having to leave others to continue this "public" task. This feeling of guilt is somehow linked to the fact that, immediately after the accident, the foreign media clamored to cover the self-sacrifice of the workers handling the accident and named them the "Fukushima 50". CSB Evening News on March 16, 2012 reported, based on information CBS News Nuclear Safety Consultant Cham Dallas heard from a Japanese government official, that one of the "Fukushima 50" had said that he "would not be afraid of death because it was his duty." ¹⁰⁸

It was also reported that most of the 198 staff at a hospital in Minami-Soma City in Fukushima had evacuated, leaving only 17 nurses with the patients. A news show featured these nurses who were torn between the choice to stay at the hospital to protect the patients and to evacuate to protect their own children from radiation. It is clear therefore that some of these nurses were torn by feelings of guilt to prioritize "private" over "public". Borrowing the words of Eric Felten, columnist of the Wall Street Journal, the issue of guilt might also need to be dealt with in the context of loyalty¹⁰⁹ as "vexing virtue".

Conclusion

Can "philosophical practice" play a major role in crisis management after the earthquake ?

¹⁰⁸ Axelrod, Jim, "Fukushima heroes: Not afraid to die", *CBS News*, March 15, 2011: <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/03/15/eveningnews/main20043554.shtml>

¹⁰⁹ Felten, Eric. *Chuuseishin, kono yakkaina bitoku*, translated by Takako Shirakawa, Tokyo: Hayakawa shobo, 2011.

Some earthquake victims criticized the launching of Café philosophique with the earthquake as the theme, arguing that philosophy is useless in the face of the unprecedented level of damage caused by the earthquake: philosophy could not bring back the victims swept away by the tsunami, nor could it help those who had lost their homes. They saw such activity as meaningless. However, once the events began, many citizens who were victims of the earthquake participated. There were over eighty participants in each session and numerous dialogues were conducted.

Certainly, philosophy may not be able to provide direct "assistance" in ongoing disasters and in that sense, as de La Rochefoucauld argues, philosophy will be of no good use in dealing with ongoing misfortunes. However, doesn't it seem that there is a way that philosophy can provide assistance and at some speed? Only after such points are considered will the meaning of "philosophical practice" in the earthquake-affected areas become evident.

Conclusion

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