

# ALLEGORY OF THE BEAST: A REFLECTION ON NUCLEAR ENERGY

What do we think about nuclear power?

More importantly, what does the *modern world* think about nuclear power? Is it, to use an infuriatingly vague term, “safe”? Are the benefits offered by nuclear energy worth the risks? Perhaps most relevant of all, is the widespread implementation of nuclear energy systems something that we as a global society can live *without*?

For the past several weeks, we have looked to these questions not only as relevant topics of discussion given the nuclear incidents currently unfolding in Japan, but as a broader indicator of basic human nature as well.

Support for nuclear energy programs in recent years, as well as the concerns that have been raised with respect to the perceived “threat” of nuclear contamination, pollution or some kind of large-scale disaster looming just around the corner, speak volumes about us as a species very much on the brink – caught between the impending decline of the oil era and looming uncertainty as to what will take its place in meeting our colossal energy needs. As the debate over the advantages and perils of nuclear power wears tirelessly on, one cannot help but wonder why it is that such fear exists, and why, as some have suggested, nuclear energy might not be “worth the risk”.



Gas Masks litter the floor of a derelict building in Chernobyl (click on image for source).

One of the most prominent (and telling) facets of the issue seems very much to have to do with notions of “control” – namely, the uniqueness of nuclear power as an inherently “uncontrollable” energy source. To say that the raw energy-generating capabilities of uranium-235 or plutonium-239 can be harnessed with the aid of modern technology and made to produce useable power in a workable format is not to say that nuclear technologies are entirely “controlled”, as historic nuclear disasters like Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and the more recent Fukushima incidents have clearly demonstrated. Try as we might to stabilize or otherwise control it, nuclear energy cannot simply be “shut off” at the point of generation, as one might do to an overloaded or malfunctioning hydro station. As we have learned time and again, nuclear accidents often represent a loss of (and defiance toward) control which we as a modern society are unaccustomed to facing, save maybe for the occasional large-scale natural disaster. When compounded with the incredible longevity and toxicity of nuclear waste and the horrors that humanity has already endured at the hands of nuclear warfare, the arguments in opposition of nuclear energy become inherently more relatable and call into question the perceived “safety” of a system reliant upon nuclear fuels.

In our discussion of these ideas, we thought that it would be interesting to represent the issue of nuclear energy as a sort of allegory, whereby the issues posed in the nuclear debate were personified and explored in a metaphorical context. Thus, what we have created is a modern legend which we have dubbed “The Allegory of the Beast”; take a listen and the meaning of the title will become clear immediately, as should the themes explored and their connection to the ongoing debate surrounding nuclear power in the modern world. Enjoy!

Source : <http://www.sassweb.ca/3bb3/nuclear/allegory-of-the-beast-a-reflection-on-nuclear-energy>