

Politološka lektira: što čitati

Kristijan Krkač: *Alone amidst the ruins of the future. Philosophy and sustainability of multiple simultaneous disasters*

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Im Anfang war die Tat. This phrase appears as the subtitle to the fifth and last section of Kristijan Krkač's *Alone amidst the ruins of the future. Philosophy and sustainability of multiple simultaneous disasters*. It seems to embody the various philosophical and practical conundrums and blind alleys which the book tries to explore, but to understand how it does that one must first allow for its original context to illuminate the reader. The phrase can be translated as "In the beginning was the deed", or perhaps "the act". We originally find it in Goethe's *Faust*, with Faust himself trying to translate the opening line of the Gospel of John ("In the beginning was the Word"), when after several alternatives he settles on 'Tat', meaning act or deed. Because of this tension between thought and action, perfectly encapsulated within the dichotomy of *vita contemplativa* and *vita activa*, the line from Faust allows Krkač and the reader to begin to understand the difficulties faced by simultaneous natural and manmade disasters.

On the one hand, there is the impulse and need to act immediately, to rescue, provide aid, alleviate suffering, begin to rebuild as soon as possible. On the other hand, there is the realization that disaster and crisis might be part of a permanent state of affairs, which needs to be understood, thought out, laid out in proper categories, not only so that action can be more efficient, but because it is also important to understand the wider social,

political, economic, and indeed, intellectual and spiritual ramifications of such action. Namely, because disaster relief and other actions can take the form of extreme measures against extreme circumstances, it will make a significant difference whether we consider the circumstances an extreme deviation from the norm, or whether we regard these circumstances as normal, therefore adjusting our understanding of the response. This can certainly make a big difference in terms of how one is allowed to react.

Krkač attempts to deal with a number of the above categories in five chapters, originally written and published as standalone papers in various scholarly journals. Although thematically very connected it is obvious that the chapters were woven into a single unit only later, which is not only a common occurrence among established authors but also quite familiar to Krkač's readers who are accustomed to his Wittgensteinian approach of connecting topics via family resemblance rather than by searching for an essentialist common denominator. The Foreword (pp.7-21) written by prominent scholar David Crowther, however, puts the reader, himself, and the main author, on a path towards such a possible common denominator, and is worth reading rather than skipping, which is not always the case with forewords to such works.

The first chapter, titled Philosophy of disasters (pp. 63-88), lays the conceptual groundwork for a philosophy of un/natural disasters, with a particular focus on multiple simultaneous disasters (MSDs). Using Croatia's crisis-ridden year of 2020 as a motivating case, it introduces core philosophical dimensions—ontology, epistemology, theory of action, and ethics—and asks what it means for disasters to exist, appear, be known, and be acted upon. The chapter argues that traditional ways of understanding isolated disasters fail when several crises overlap, and it frames MSDs as a distinct phenomenon requiring new conceptual tools rather than mere extensions of existing disaster theory.

The second chapter, titled Epistemology and ontology of disasters (pp. 89-128), deepens the analysis by focusing on how MSDs are known and experienced, especially through the distinction between appearance and reality and the notion of practical know-how. Drawing on globally significant disasters from 2021 (floods, wildfires, systemic failures), it shows that even when data exists, societies often lack actionable understanding of MSDs. The central claim is that preparedness and comprehension lag far behind the complexity of

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overlapping crises, revealing a global epistemic gap that undermines effective decision-making before, during, and after disasters.

The third chapter, titled Aesthetics, religion, and ethics of disasters (pp. 129-162), explores how MSDs (multiple simultaneous disasters) reshape aesthetic perception, religious interpretation, and moral judgment. It challenges the simplistic opposition between beauty and disaster, showing that aesthetic responses to catastrophe are more complex than assumed. From the viewpoint of religion, the chapter warns that misinterpretations can fuel confusion, fatalism, or harmful action. From the viewpoint of ethics, it argues that standard moral theories are insufficient for MSDs and introduces attention, adaptation, and responsiveness (AAR) as key ethical determinants guiding appropriate human conduct in conditions of uncertainty and overload.

The fourth chapter, titled A philosophy of warning and alarming disasters (pp. 163-193), turns from interpretation to prevention and response, developing a philosophical account of warning and alarm systems for MSDs. Rather than proposing specific technologies, it addresses conceptual paradoxes that plague existing systems—such as timing, credibility, overload, and conflicting signals. Through conceptual-morphological analysis, the chapter proposes a universal framework for MSD warning grounded in the AAR model, arguing that philosophical clarity is a necessary precondition for effective technical and institutional solutions.

The fifth chapter, titled Human action in disaster: *Im Anfang war die Tat* (pp. 195-219) centers on human action under MSD conditions, asking what meaningful and responsible action looks like when crises overlap and clarity collapses. It prioritizes the role of individual civilian action, examines its limits, and rejects overly optimistic accounts of rational control. Using the AAR model, the chapter narrows the range of plausible actions and offers directional guidance rather than final answers, ending on a sober, slightly pessimistic note claiming that while better action is possible, MSDs will continue to strain human agency, understanding, and moral confidence.

Trying to take into account the whole of Krkač's book, we cannot conclusively answer the fundamental philosophical question about disasters, whether they are deviations from normal life and thus truly disasters, or whether they are the norm, which puts us in the difficult position of not quite knowing what a disaster truly is, if anything. In either case,

however, they seem to cause us to constantly act. That which would cause us normally to build, in fact always causes us to rebuild, because disasters tear down, and make us think of our future from a strange new perspective which we have yet to grasp intellectually. Somehow, beyond clear understanding or comprehension, yet with the poignant madness of prophecy, Krkač reminds us that the future is never something which we build, but rather always rebuild.