

Research Article

Analysis of Immanuel Kant's Authentic Theodicy After Tropical Cyclone Seroja in Tunbaun

Johanes Marno Nigha*, Imelda Marina DJira, Merita Florawati Naisanu, Kurniawati Aseleo

Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Kupang, Kupang, Indonesia

Abstract.

The current research aims to understand the concept of Immanuel Kant's authentic theodicy in the Christian community of Tunbaun Village, Amarasi District, Kupang Regency, East Nusa Tenggara Province after the tropical cyclone Seroja in 2021. The methodology used is qualitative research with descriptive methods that present research results in clear and detailed words based on qualitative data. The author then uses literature review results, observations, and interviews, and synthesizes the context of authentic theodicy of the local community to produce the following findings: (1) Suffering due to natural disasters strengthens the moral values of society; (2) Growing hope for post-disaster life recovery; and (3) Christian community complaints to God as a result of their suffering arising through certain projections.

Keywords: Immanuel Kant's authentic theodicy, reflections on suffering, Tunbaun Village community post-disaster

Corresponding Author: Johanes Marno Nigha; email: marnonigha5@gmail.com

Published: 9 August 2024

Publishing services provided by Knowledge E

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the 6th SoRes Conference Committee.

1. INTRODUCTION

Tropical Cyclone Seroja caused extreme weather in NTT and NTB in early April 2021. This cyclone is the tenth cyclone detected in Indonesian territory and triggers hydrometeorological disasters such as heavy rains, strong winds and flash floods. Even though this Tropical Cyclone storm has occurred several times, this time the disaster resulted in so many victims, both property, lives and also residents who had to flee.[1] The disaster was later claimed as one of the major hydrometeorological disasters in the history of disasters in the NTT region. Massive damage occurred in several areas of NTT, such as Adonara, Malacca, Sabu, Sumba as well as the city of Kupang and Kupang district.

The theme of suffering in East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) province gained momentum again during the Covid 19 pandemic and also in the context of the disaster after the Seroja Tropical Cyclone storm. The Christian notion of God's goodness helps to open

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space for critical reflection on the concepts of hope and suffering. God is believed to be the Most Good One, but in the context of the Seroja tropical cyclone disaster, the question that arises is why does God allow suffering? Where is God's justice? There have been various answers given in the historical trajectory of theology to this question. The concept of questioning suffering in relation to the presence of God became known as the Theodice. The theme discussed in the theodice is the reflection of faith in God on the question of suffering.[2]

A number of previous studies have discussed several topics related to the theodice theme with different approaches and perspectives. Rantesalu discussed suffering from the point of view of evangelicals, namely that suffering and disasters are God's will and sovereignty.[3] Gunawan sees suffering through the concept of Theodice C.S. Lewis [4]. Djone discussed suffering that needs to be accepted by believers as part of God's calling. [5] Zaluchu sees human acceptance of suffering as God's sovereignty as well as recognition of Him.[6] In addition, Nembos reviews the meaning of suffering within the framework of the Bible and the Magisterium of the Catholic Church that suffering is the participation of God's people in the suffering of Christ.[7] Meanwhile, Widayanti discusses suffering as God's means to test humans so that they become obedient and perfect.[8]

The similarity of this study with previous research is in the use of qualitative descriptive methods, while the difference is in the discussion, the author tries to look at the suffering in the concept of Authentic Immanuel Kant's Teodice after the Seroja Tropical Cyclone storm in Tunbaun village, Amarasi District, Kupang Regency, NTT Province.

2. METHODS

This study used a qualitative research approach with descriptive data methods. The purpose of descriptive research according to Punaji Styosari is to provide an explanation and description of a situation, event, object or thing related to variables so that it can be explained as well as possible.[9] This study describes the results of research through clear and detailed words based on qualitative data.

The location of this research was carried out in the village of Tunbaun, Amarasi District, Kupang Regency. The research data sources used are primary data sources and secondary data sources. Primary data sources according to Sugiyono are data sources that directly provide data to data collectors.[10]. The data in question are the words and

actions of the population and research samples. The main data source was obtained from direct observation and interviews with victims of the Seroja tropical cyclone in Tunbaun village. Secondary data according to Sugiyono is understood as data that is not directly obtained by data collectors but through documents or other people.[10] Secondary data was obtained through a study of documents about Immanuel Kant's Authentic Theodice.

Data collection was made through observation and interviews. In the observation method, the researcher observes the research subject in one situation and records the results of these observations. The writer observes the state of the object directly and relates it to Immanuel Kant's Authentic Theodice concept. The context of the completeness of the data orally requires the researcher to conduct interviews. Interviews are a dialogue process carried out by researchers and informants to obtain information in relation to research conducted on informants. As emphasized by Lexi Moleong that the interview is a conversation made by the researcher and the respondent/resource person to obtain data.[11].

The author categorizes the collection of data sources used, including: First, explaining the conceptual framework of Immanuel Kant's Authentic Theodice and the author as an instrument for analyzing and summarizing the objects that have been considered. Second, the writer as an instrument observes and analyzes the object that has been considered. Furthermore, the authors grouped a number of research sources that they wanted to examine during interviews. In general, researchers interviewed community members in Tunbaun village who were victims of the aftermath of the Seroja Tropical Cyclone storm to help obtain research findings. The author has conducted interviews with a number of sources who are the subject of the author's consideration. The author examines the research object and explains a number of analyzes based on the conceptual framework of Immanuel Kant's Authentic Theodice and draws conclusions from the results of the discussion.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Concept of Theodice

One of the religious problems faced by modernity is the Theodice. This term was first used by the philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. This word refers to the Greek expression, *Theos* which means God and *Dike* which means justice, justification or defense

in a court process. The theodice question has actually been classically formulated by Epicurus "If God wants to overcome evil (*malum*) but He can't do it or He can't and doesn't want to do it either. If He wants but cannot, then He is weak, something that does not suit God. If He can but won't, then He is evil, and this too should be foreign to God. If He doesn't want to and can't, then He is both evil and weak and therefore not God either. But if He can and wants to, which is the right thing for God, where did the *malum* come from and why didn't He abolish it?[12]

Theodice Leibniz narrowed down into God's defense because of the appearance of ugliness in His creation. Leibniz then used the biblical text in Paul's letter to the Romans (Rom 3:5) as inspiration for his understanding of theodice. For Leibniz the suffering and ugliness that exist in the world have always been the means of the Divine plan. This can be done through proof only by using reason or reason.

Immanuel Kant was a philosopher (1724-1804) who appeared and criticized Leibniz's views and other theodice views which only put forward ratios. For Kant, such theodice thinking departs from the basic assumption that theodice is an attempt to liberate the divine from the accusation of reason towards him because of the appearance of evil or suffering (*malum*) in the world.

Kant saw that the human ratio in thinking about theodice was used beyond his ability. Talks about classical theodice reduce humans to ratios without regard to human feelings and praxis in dealing with suffering. A theodice with such a concept is called Kant a doctrinal theodice. Therefore Kant argues that this reduction is not justified because in suffering humans show themselves clearly as beings who feel and act. Theodice must also pay attention to these aspects.

Kant uses the story of Job within the framework of his philosophical explanation to explain his concept of an Authentic Theodice. Kant's concept is not only applicable in explaining the Theodice but practically addressing humanity's eternal question about suffering.

3.2. The Basic Interpretation of Immanuel Kant's Moral Action and His Concept of Theodice

Kant's practical philosophy was recognized as a revolution at that time, his philosophy is considered the first deontological ethics known in the West. Kant's argument is built on one of his important works The Critique of Pure Reason (*Kritik Derreinen Vernunft*). Kant suggests that all the concerns of the mind can be summed up in three important

questions. What can I know? This question is speculative. What should I do? This question is practical and what can I expect? This question is both speculative and practical.[13]

The process of assessing an action as moral or immoral according to Kant, is not the monopoly of a particular religion or nation, because it is part of the universal human inner wealth. Such morality comes from human beings. There is a feeling of obligation to act so that good will arises as if commanding, but not coercing. This obligatory commandment of human good will by Kant is called the *Kategirischer imperative* (Categorical imperative).

The moral law is a request from within, a commandment, an imperative. Act out of obligation and not out of obligation. Generally accepted decency must be based on a priori elements, namely good will, because there is nothing good other than good will. Good will does not depend on the results to be achieved, but acts good because it is good and for the sake of obligation. Doing something for the sake of obligation is a maxim that has moral values. Maxim is the principle underlying action. The categorical imperative states that “act only in accordance with the maxims you can expect, these maxims are at the same time general maxims.”

3.3. Authentic Theodice of Immanuel Kant

Moral action obliges one to act out of duty, and happiness is therefore an integral part of the highest good. The question that arises next is that in reality it is often found that evil people live in happiness and those who carry out virtuous actions in situations of misfortune, therefore the question that arises is whether the highest goodness is an illusion? For Kant, God and man are related to each other in a moral relationship.[14] The problem of God's existence cannot be ascertained by the ratio of humans who have limited abilities. Kant rejects the view that knowledge attained by reason and senses can be used as evidence for the existence of God. Kant explained that God who is discussed rationally is not “God himself” (nomena: object in itself) but “God who appears to us” namely our ideas or thoughts about God (phenomena: visible object).[14]

If humans have carried out all ethical actions then why does suffering continue and happiness stays away, where is God in human suffering? The experience of the earthquake in Lisbon that killed thousands of people in 1775 helped Kant reflect on his Theodice views and draw a line on the question of suffering or malum while simultaneously rejecting all the theodices that appeared before him.

Kant believed that presupposing the existence of God was essential to reason and practical morality. Therefore the most important thing no longer lies in trying to gain knowledge or confirming the existence of God, but in fulfilling man's practical moral requirements. God is thought of as the supreme lawgiver of the moral community. However, it is ratio and not God's arbitrary will become an author of the laws.

Human experience has two sides, namely as a way to know God as well as a side that is frightening and destroying. The goal of every true theodice is to strengthen the hope that God will use human reason to interpret his will, but because of this dual nature, God remains incomprehensible in the end and nature remains an unfathomable mystery to humans.[12]

Man cannot know God's will but accepts that in this world God reveals his will. What the world is like as a real and actual expression of God's will cannot be known to humans with certainty. Only God knows. This is a consequence of Kant's theodice problem. The right attitude in trying to answer questions about the experience of suffering is to let God be the interpreter and giver of information between His will and the world. For Kant, an understanding of theodice like this does not impose ratios speculatively, but an ability that arises from practical rational awareness can be seen as an explanatory and the voice of God. Ratios like this allow God to give meaning to humans.[15] This attitude is what Kant called the Authentic Theodice. This theodice holds God accountable and at the same time gives God the right to defend himself because of suffering in the world.

This theodice tries to use the same moral criteria in judging God, because of that humans have enough reasons to determine God as the One who is responsible for suffering. At the same time this theodice does not position itself as a defender of God. The phenomenon of ugliness is raised before Allah as a question for Him. In addition, this theodice applies the same categorical imperative function to God, that is, God must consciously base His actions and simultaneously be accountable for them. Kant posits that God knows and follows moral conventions like humans. If God follows other hidden moral provisions for humans, then God's logical consequences like that cannot be used as the final basis and categorical imperatives that guarantee humans to get true happiness.

3.4. Job as an Authentic Theodice Story

Kant saw the story of Job in the Bible as a form of the Authentic Theodice that he initiated. Job in the text of the Bible is disturbed by the discrepancy between his suffering

experience and the moral requirements that must be carried out. He later confessed that he did not understand the suffering he was experiencing. Job did not try to defend God but asked questions and at the same time let God speak. Job's story reaffirms the attitude of being honest, sincere, open to expressing doubts and firm rejection of the tendency to lie to one's own beliefs without basis. Job's attitude forms the basis for an authentic theodice.[15] Kant then speaks of theodice piety, as an attitude of surrender to God, justification of Himself with the hope that God will do that justification. Piety is not measured by efforts without a rational basis to defend God through various means and arguments [12]:

Kant then closed his interpretation of Job's story by quoting Job 27:5-6: "Until I perish I maintain that I am innocent. Until the end of my life I will not back down from my piety." Job believed that morality is the foundation of faith and not the other way around. This shows that Faith is then relied on when reason or experience can no longer reach the area of knowledge. But the faith that Kant is referring to is a practical faith. Because it is not a theoretical ratio that accepts faith but a practical ratio guided by the law of ratios.[16] Kant argued that humans are inhabitants of a moral world governed by the highest good. At this level virtue and happiness are regulated in fair proportions through categorical imperatives.[13] The basis is that God and the moral world can only be accepted if he guarantees the certainty of moral imperatives so that they can be accounted for morally and rationally. God can only be experienced when He Himself first speaks. Kant revealed that moral obligations can be fulfilled in life among moral communities. Those who imagine themselves to be God's people. This community is represented by the church. However, it should be remembered that what Kant meant was not a physical human organizational entity but a spiritual reality based on the principles of truth and which could be rationally proven. Therefore, religious communities that try to please God and ignore the implementation of moral actions, are considered doctrinal religions and even tend to be fake[17].

Chapter 38 of the Book of Job is seen as vindicating God. God speaks to man, God justifies himself and not by human defense. The right human attitude is to hope as a combination of awareness of the ability of reason and belief in the existence of God as the basis for moral demands. Only God is able to defend Himself while humans are unable to do so. Authentic Theodice then relies on the aspect of hope. Hoping that God Himself will defend Himself as a result of human suffering. There is a strong conflict between practical reason and pure reason. Practical reason requires God to defend Himself while pure reason does not allow it. Practical reason does not stop at

demanding that God act ethically but waits until those demands are fulfilled.[18] The story of Job shows evidence of this requirement in order to fulfill the calling of the imperative category.

The aspect of hope for God who defends Himself because of human suffering, helps human deadlock in the midst of suffering. People who persist in doing good in the midst of suffering actually express hope. Those who represent authentic theodice are oriented towards the demands of the will to carry out acts of freedom and justice. The moral demand of carrying out categorical imperatives is like continuing to help others in suffering as they were helped.

Actions based on authentic theodice like this testify to God as the basis of their hope. In the midst of suffering because nature is often blind to human moral levels, Allah is the creator of nature who is free and has morality as a practical condition for moral action [12]. Therefore the experience of suffering has a close relationship with hope. When suffering arises, the responsibility of hope is demanded and confirmed. Suffering raises the question of what to expect as well as what to do as a consequence of that hope. Moral praxis that is based on moral demands is the answer as well as an effort to revive hope in practical action in the midst of suffering.

3.5. Authentic Theodice in Tunbaun Village After the Seroja Disaster

The context of the discussion of Authentic Theodice in Tunbaun Village after the Seroja Tropical Cyclone is based on the following two discourses, namely the hope of happiness and the expression of relations among fellow citizens.

3.5.1. Hope of Happiness

The Tunbaun people in general live in the context of a homogeneous village community. The context of homogeneity in terms of language, cultural order and customary law rules helps them define the position of ethical action within a distinctive realm of moral law. This peculiarity becomes the basis of their morality in relations between citizens. The treasure of moral action as expressed by Kant in his categorical imperative is clearly seen in what was expressed by Mr. Bastian Runesi, one of the victims of this natural disaster. He recounted that one week after the storm, the difficulties they experienced were mainly related to food and drink and lack of money. They only expect public assistance. Thankful because there are people who help by giving rice and other food.

After one and two weeks there was a lot of help from everywhere. According to him, God is present through the help of these people (Runesi B. , Kesulitan yang dialami saat badai Seroja, 2021).

The same thing was conveyed by Tabita Runesi's mother. He revealed that a good relationship had been formed for a long time. Residents support each other in every situation also in a disaster situation. After the disaster, they lived from material and non-material support and assistance from many parties, both family, neighbors, donors and the church. (Runesi T. , 2021). The context of citizens' ethical actions based on Kant's categorical imperative was emphasized again by Mr. Barnabas Neti. According to him, they have lived as good neighbors. It is this neighbor who supports them when a disaster occurs (Neti, Relasi Diri dan Sesama sebelum dan Pasca Badai Seroja, 2021). Likewise Mr. Daniel Bana, for him the closeness and high sense of kinship ultimately made them support each other when disaster struck (Bana, Relasi Diri dan Sesama Sebelum dan Pasca Badai Seroja, 2021).

Claims to God in suffering for citizens are not the main thing in relation to moral action as expressed by Kant. This is clearly illustrated in what was conveyed by Mr. Barnabas Neti. According to him, disasters occur because of changes in nature. He believes that there is no relationship with God that gives them misfortune (Neti B., 2021). The lawsuit for his disappointment was addressed to the government. After a disaster comes a feeling of loss as well as the hope of finding a comfortable home. He was disappointed with the government's promise of housing assistance that had not been realized (Neti B. , Konsep Kebahagiaan Pasca Bencana Badai Siklon Seroja, 2021).

Mr. Septensia Obet Hetan emphasized the same thing. For him the most important thing in life is that he and his family are healthy. The happiness that he hopes for after the Hurricane is that he, his children and wife are healthy, besides that the need for food and drink is fulfilled. Another happiness and hope is that the government, according to their promise, can provide compensation for damage to the house. The hope of a modest home became important to him. "Even if it's simple, the important thing is we can live in peace, without fear. What do we want in this life, the important thing is that we can live in a safe place, we feel happy." (Hetan B. O., 2021).

There is awareness to defend God's position but at the same time sue His existence through the government. The awareness that happiness comes from God through those who come to help create an understanding of authentic theodice. Allah is believed to be the highest source of happiness and moral action for the people of Tunbaun.

Authentic Theodice is reflected in the victims' hope for happiness. God is expected and believed to restore life as before. This shows the eternal presence of God in human experience.[19] The moral actions of the Tunbaun people clearly arise because they are formed in self-relationships with others through daily activities and life struggles. The suffering experienced by the residents after the Seroja Tropical Cyclone disaster strengthened their morality but the claim for suffering to God was conveyed subtly without them realizing it through a lawsuit against the government's actions that did not keep promises. Even so, this clearly shows people's awareness of their dignity. Kant showed that all human inclinations and needs are valuable while that which has a purpose in itself is something with dignity.[20]

3.5.2. Expression of Mutual Relations

Dina Runesi said that before the disaster came, the life of the hamlet residents had been patterned in the form of helping each other. This happens because of the feeling of kinship from marriage relations and blood relations because of lineage. When disaster strikes, everything must be separated. Even though aid arrives, disaster victims are still obliged to find and build their own homes on separate land (Runesi, D. 2021).

Mr. Septensia Obet Hetan talked about good relations and they had been formed for a long time. Villagers support each other in every situation also in disaster situations. After the disaster, the people who became victims lived from material and non-material support and assistance from many parties, both family, neighbors, donors and the church (Hetan, S. O. 2021). Mr. Bastian Runesi experiences relationships with others not only formed because of their closeness in the community but also through prayers together every day within the same christian groups. This continues before the disaster until after the disaster (Runesi, B. 2021).

The context of Authentic Theodice appears in ethical actions, namely the building of good relationships and the hope of God's presence in a moral community. God and the morals of the world can only be accepted if he guarantees imperative certainty so that morals can be morally and rationally justified. God can only be experienced when He Himself first speaks. Kant revealed that moral obligations can be fulfilled in life among moral communities, namely those who imagine themselves to be God's people. This community is represented by the church. However, it should be remembered that what Kant meant was not a physical human organizational entity but a spiritual reality that was based on the principles of truth and could be proven rationally. The

experience of the community after the Seroja storm disaster in Tunbaun village shows transparently what Kant avoided. Religious communities that try to please God and ignore the implementation of moral actions, are considered doctrinal religions and even tend to be fake.[17] In the village of Tunbaun, before and after the disaster, the context of community relations was precisely shown, which had been patterned into ethical actions and a practical moral atmosphere. Citizens in their relations show the practice of moral action.

4. CONCLUSION

The theme of suffering in the NTT region gained momentum again during the Covid 19 pandemic and also in the context of the disaster after the Seroja Tropical Cyclone storm. The Christian notion of God's goodness helps to open space for critical reflection on the concepts of hope and suffering. Kant then comes to reaffirm the concept of hope in suffering with the idea of Authentic Theodice. The right attitude in trying to answer questions about the experience of suffering is to let God be the interpreter and giver of information between His will and the world. This kind of theodice understanding does not force ratios speculatively because ratios allow God to give meaning to humans. God's accountability is asked at the same time God is given the right to defend himself because of suffering in the world. This theodice tries to use the same moral criteria in judging God, because of that humans have enough reasons to determine God as the One who is responsible for suffering. At the same time this theodice does not position itself as a defender of God. The phenomenon of ugliness is raised before Allah as a question for Him. In addition, this theodice applies the same categorical imperative function to God, that is, God must consciously base His actions and simultaneously be accountable for them.

Kant posits that God knows and follows moral conventions like humans. If God follows other hidden moral provisions for humans, then God's logical consequences like that cannot be used as the final basis and categorical imperatives that guarantee humans to get true happiness. Kant saw the story of Job in the Bible as a form of the Authentic Theodice that he initiated. Job in the text of the Bible is disturbed by the discrepancy between his suffering experience and the moral requirements that must be carried out. He later confessed that he did not understand the suffering he was experiencing. Job did not try to defend God but asked questions and at the same time let God speak. Job's story reaffirms the attitude of being honest, sincere, open to expressing doubts and firm

rejection of the tendency to lie to one's own beliefs without basis. Job's attitude forms the basis for an authentic theodice. The experiences of the suffering of the residents after the Seroja storm in the village of Tunbaun show the authentic theodice practice which is unknowingly being practiced in the people's daily lives. Kant revealed that Authentic Theodice does not require abstraction by using brilliant ideas but can be carried out in practical life through community moral actions in society.

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