

**STRUGGLE FOR PUBLIC WELFARE IN AN *ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE*  
DRAMA (1882) BY HENRIK IBSEN: A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH.**



**PUBLICATION ARTICLES**

Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for Getting Bachelor Degree of Education

in English Department

By:

**NURCAHYANI RETNO PAMBUDI**

**A320090138**

**SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION  
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA**

**2013**

**APPROVAL**

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**Proposed by**

**NURCAHYANI RETNO PAMBUDI**

**A320090138**

Consultant I



**(Drs. M. Thoyibi, M.S)**

Consultant II



**(Titis Setyabudi, S.S, M.Hum)**

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*Nurcahyani Retno Pambudi*

*M. Thoyibi*

*Titis Setyabudi*

*English Department, FKIP-UMS*

Jl. A. Yani Pabelan Kartasura Tromol Pos 1 Surakarta 57102

Telp. (0271) 717417 Fax. (0271) 715448

**ABSTRACT**

*The research is proposed to analyze the social problem in An Enemy of the People drama. The major problem in this article is to explain how the social problem reflected in An Enemy of the People drama. The object of the study is An Enemy of the People drama written by Henrik Ibsen. Qualitative study is a method which is used to analyze the sociological problem reflected in the novel. The result of this study is Henrik Ibsen shows the social reality of Norway. Although Norway in late nineteenth century was developing country, Henrik Ibsen also criticized the society for ignoring the bad impact of the development public and physical environment.*

***Key word: Social Problem, An Enemy of the People, Sociological approach.***

## **A. Introduction**

*An Enemy of the People* (original Norwegian title: En folkefiende) is an 1882 play by Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. Ibsen wrote it in response to the public outcry against his play *Ghosts*, which at that time was considered scandalous. In 1950s this work was adapted by Arthur Miller and the production starred Academy Award winner Fredric March and his wife Florence Eldridge.

Henrik Ibsen grew up in a poor family in Norway on 20 March 1828. After being apprenticed to an apothecary in his teens, he began the study of medicine, but soon turned to play writing. His early plays gained little popular recognition, but in 1863 he went to Italy on a scholarship, and here he began writing the plays, including *Peer Gynt*, that were to make him the most famous playwright in the history of Norway. His early plays were in verse, but beginning in 1877, he turned to prose plays, producing, among others, *A Doll's House*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Ghosts*, *An Enemy of the People*, and *The Wild Duck*. He became the director of the Norwegian National Theater in Christiania, the town in which he died in 1906.

According to Alan Swingewood (1972:11) sociology is essentially the scientific, objective study of man in society, the study of social institution and of social processes; it seeks to answer the question of how society is possible, how it works, why it persists. The main purpose of any viable sociology of literature must be to discover the 'core of meaning' which one finds at the heart of

different works of literature and which express many aspects of thought and feeling on subjects as varied as social class, work, love, religion, nature, and art.

The previous study is by Mordecai Roshwald (2004). A new critical edition of novel entitled *The Alienated Moralist in An Enemy of the People*. Roshwald concludes that the doctor is a defiant and militant moralist. He believes that he is true and the people are wrong. Consequently he suffers for his independent and unbending stand, is not an unfamiliar phenomenon, whether in the annals of human history or in the experience of contemporary societies. Then, Candra Bagus Santoso (2008) by his research paper *Making Meaningful Choices In Ibsen's An Enemy Of The People Drama (1882): An Existentialist Criticism*. He focused in how the actor makes a meaningful choice in his problem. Candra shows what actors do to finish some problem with the government in his city. He uses an existentialist criticism to analyze this drama.

The next literature review is from Marilyn Stasio. In his journal he discuss about the plot of the drama. Marilyn also explain about An Enemy of the People movie that will be play in Samuel J. Friedman Theater. This main character of the movie are Boyd Gaines as Dr. Thomas Stockmann and Richard Thomas as Peter Stockmann.

The journal write by Anna Westerstahl Stenport in titled *Global Ibsen: Performing multiple Modernities* and Joan Templeton in titled *Making the Theater Matter*. In their journal they discuss about the life journey of the father of

modern drama, Henrik Ibsen. In the journal explains some things which finished by Henrik Ibsen. Beside that Anna also proclaims that establish some social event to reminded Henrik Ibsen.

The similarity of the previous studies with the writer study is that they have same object of study that is Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* drama. The other author write about the life journey of Henrik Ibsen and the other else about alienated and making meaningful choice in *An Enemy of the People* drama. Meanwhile, the writer focuses on the Struggle for Public Welfare reflected in the major character. The writer will use a sociological approach to analyze the drama. So, the title of the study that will be conducted by the writer is *Struggle for Public Welfare in An Enemy of the People drama (1882) by Henrik Ibsen: A Sociological Approach*.

## **B. Research Method**

Dealing with research method, there will be at least four points that need to be involved in this research, namely, type of the study, object of the study, type of data and data source, technique of collecting data, and technique of analyzing data.

Firstly, in thus study, the writer applies qualitative research. The data sources are books, information, author bibliography, and the relevant information. Its purpose is to analyze using sociological approach. The steps to

conduct the research are as follow: 1) determining the type of the study, 2) determining the object of the study, 3) determining data and data source, 4) determining technique of data collection, and finally 5) determining technique of data analyses. Secondly, The object of the study is *An Enemy of the People* by Henrik Ibsen and was published in 1882. The researcher will involve some required steps: 1) determining the type of the study, 2) determining the object of the study, 3) determining data and data source, 4) determining technique of data collection, and finally 5) determining technique of data analyses. The last, in analyzing the data, the writer applies a descriptive qualitative. The steps taken by the writer in analyzing the data are as follows: the first is analyzing the data based on its structural analysis. The second step is analyzing the data based on sociological approach. Focus will be paid on the social problem reflected.

### **C. Finding and Discussion**

The analyzing of the sociological analysis is divided into some aspects, namely, social aspect, economic aspect, politic aspect, cultural aspect, religious aspect, and science in Norway.

#### **1. Social Aspect**

Social aspect in *An Enemy of the People* drama shows in some characters there is Peter Stockmann as the mayor in southern Norway, Dr Stockmann as the official in Bath. In this case there are different treatments. The member of the government has more power than general society. It is proven when Dr.

Stockmann says about right thing but many people and the government are against him.

Dr. Stockmann family accepts their guest with kindness and the best treatment in their home; it shows in some dialogues Mrs. Stockmann always offers the dinner to every guest who comes to her house. Dr. Stockmann and Mrs. Stockmann also serve the best beverage to their guest. For example when Mrs. Stockmann serves the roast beef to the billing, and serves some brandy to Horster and Billing.

In the late 1890s Norway was undergoing industrialization. The new society prospered, but created new kinds of social problems, and concurrently, Seip claims, a whole new political awareness regarding society's responsibility to deal with them.

It shows in below dialogue:

*A Citizen (calls out).* Are you going to make out we are dogs, now?

*Another Citizen.* We are not animals, Doctor!

*Dr. Stockmann.* Yes but, bless my soul, we are, my friend! It is true we are the finest animals anyone could wish for; but, even among us, exceptionally fine animals are rare. There is a tremendous difference between poodle-men and cur-men. And the amusing part of it is, that Mr. Hovstad quite agrees with me as long as it is a question of four-footed animals—

*Hovstad.* Yes, it is true enough as far as they are concerned.

(AEOTP, 1882:99)



The other social aspect example is in public meeting, a drunken man is not allowed to join the voting. The other, society does not admit the existing of the drunken man. This shows bellow:

***The Drunken Man*** (*who has got among the audience again*). I want a blue one, I do! And I want a white one too!

***Voices.*** It's that drunken chap again! Turn him out!  
(AEOTP, 1882:104)

## 2. Economical Aspect

According to the Michael Funk in *Industriekultur in Norwegen* Norway is the country with the greatest potential for water power in Europe. Between 1890 and 1900 the first eleven water power stations were built, today there are more than 600. In November 2009 the world's first osmotic power station, using the pressure that results from mixing freshwater and salt water for the production of energy, went into operation in Hurum on the Oslofjord.

The setting time of the drama is late nineteenth century, and the setting of place is in Norway. In *An Enemy of the People* drama Henrik Ibsen focuses on the problem about the bath. In this drama Henrik Ibsen shows that the main income of the city is from the Bath. From the water power station the city gets many incomes. The bath gives many incomes to Norway. It includes in one of the infestation for Norway. This statement proves that:

***Hovstad.*** The Baths, yes.

***Peter Stockmann.*** Exactly—our fine, new, handsome Baths. Mark my words, Mr. Hovstad—the Baths will become the focus of our municipal life! Not a doubt of it!

*Mrs. Stockmann.* That is just what Thomas says.

*Peter Stockmann.* Think how extraordinarily the place has developed within the last year or two! Money has been flowing in, and there is some life and some business doing in the town. Houses and landed property are rising in value every day.

(AEOTP, 1882:8)

### **3. Political Aspect**

Nationalism in Norway grew in the 19th century. Matters came to a head in 1882. The Norwegian parliament or Storting passed a law, which stated that members of the government must take part in debates in the Storting. The Storting passed the law 3 times but each time the Swedish king Oscar II voted it. Eventually the Norwegians decided to impeach the entire government. They were impeached and convicted in 1884 and forced to resign. Afterwards the king was forced to give in. From then on Norway was a parliamentary democracy. In 1898 all men (except those receiving poor relief) were given the vote.

In late nineteenth century Norway occurs some troubles in vote a leader for the country. Firstly, man who has a right to vote the King of Norway is a member of government. But after the Swedish King Oscar II resign, the system is a parliamentary democracy. In this term Norway fixed they leader with the vote not just in a member of the government but also in entire of the society. It is shown by Henrik Ibsen in *An Enemy of the People* drama in some conversation which declares that the decision in the country is in the society's decision.

It is proven in a parliamentary democracy at late nineteenth century Norway which shown by Henrik Ibsen when the Dr. Stockmann said about the disease in the bath to the society. He expects all of the people in Norway will support him and the government will finish the problem. This problem shows in dialogue below,

**Peter Stockmann.** And even if that were true? If I perhaps guard my reputation somewhat anxiously, it is in the interests of the town.

Without moral authority I am powerless to direct public affairs as seems, to my judgment, to be best for the common good. And on that account—and for various other reasons too—it appears to me to be a matter of importance that your report should not be delivered to the Committee. In the interests of the public, you must withhold it. Then, later on, I will raise the question and we will do our best, privately; but, nothing of this unfortunate affair not a single word of it—must come to the ears of the public.

**Dr. Stockmann.** I am afraid you will not be able to prevent that now, my dear Peter.

(AEOTP, 1882:47)

This dialogue shows that in Norway at those times the condition of politic is so terrible. The leader of the country is in not normal position. It shows in the statement of the Thomas Stockmann, he feels not comfort with the attitude of his brother. Peter does not accept the opinion of his brother because he worries that his position will be taken over by Dr. Stockmann.

In late nineteenth century the power is in upper class, the leader of the government. It shows that the Peter Stockmann has more power to influence the societies not to believe the Dr. Stockmann's opinion. Although the opinion is

true but society more believe at Peter Stockmann. So the upper class has more power to establish the rule or the policy in Norway.

#### **4. Cultural Aspect**

Most Norwegians live within a few miles of the sea, which has played a pivotal role in their country's history. Norway's great Viking era took place during the ninth century AD, when the Vikings (Norse explorers and pirates) extended their territory as far as Dublin (Ireland) and Normandy (France). Their leader, Harald Fairhair, unified the country around the year 900, and King Olaf converted the Norwegians to Christianity. The Vikings were the first to cross the Atlantic Ocean, a feat accomplished with Erik the Red's voyages to Iceland and Greenland. Erik's son, Leif Erikson, landed on the coast of North America in the year 1001.

Many scholars regard the looting in 793 of the monastery of Lindisfarne, off England's northeast coast, as the beginning of the Viking Age. In parts of west and southwest Europe the Vikings are still regarded today as cruel brigands who wrought havoc on their victims with fire and swords. This is only partially true. The Vikings also came on peaceful errands, to trade and to colonize. Norwegian Vikings settled in the Orkney Isles, the Shetlands, the Hebrides, and on the Isle of Man. The mainland of northern Scotland and Ireland also became their home, and Dublin, founded by the Vikings in the 840s, was under Nordic rule up to 1171.

In Norway a thousand year ago there is a Viking culture. Nowadays the Viking is just like a fairy tale for the children. Morten, Hovstad, Ejlif and Billing tell about Viking in below conversation:

*Hovstad.* What do you want to be, then?

*Morten.* I should like best to be a Viking,

*Ejlif.* You would have to be a pagan then.

*Morten.* Well, I could become a pagan, couldn't I?

*Billing.* I agree with you, Morten! My sentiments, exactly.

*Mrs. Stockmann* (*signalling to him*). I am sure that is not true, Mr. Billing.

(AEOTP, 1882:21)

The Norway culture is shown in some behavior of Mrs. Stockmann and her family in accepting guest. She always prepares the best thing to her guest. Brandy is always ready to serve for feting her guest.

## **5. Religious Aspect**

In the nineteenth century Norway was a deeply religious society. The church and the “call” had an influence in the daily life of society that can hardly be understood in the secularised North Europe of the twenty-first century. The nucleus of the religious impulse in Norwegian nineteenth century politics and society was situated in the western peripheries of the Norwegian kingdom.

But some of the Norway society is atheist. They do not believe about existing of Allah or God. It shows in this dialogue that the old society in Norway is Pagan. Pagan is synonym of atheism.

*Ejlif.* You would have to be a pagan then.

*Morten.* Well, I could become a pagan, couldn't I?

*Billing.* I agree with you, Morten! My sentiments, exactly.

*Mrs. Stockmann* (*signalling to him*). I am sure that is not true, Mr. Billing.

(AEOTP, 1882:21)

## 6. Science and Technology Aspect

In late nineteenth century the common communication to send a message in Norway is by letter. People use letter to send a message to the other people in so far of theirs. The letter send by a postman. So they just held some communication by the letter. It shows when Petra tells her father that she brings the letter from the postman to Dr. Stockmann.

*Petra* (*coming to the table*). Thanks, I would rather do it; you always mix it too strong. But I forgot, father—I have a letter for you. (*Goes to the chair where she has laid her things.*)

*Dr. Stockmann.* A letter? From whom?

*Petra* (*looking in her coat pocket*). The postman gave it to me just as I was going out.

(AEOTP, 1882:19)

## 7. Conclusion

After analyzing *An Enemy of the People* in order to understand how the sociological approach is reflected, the writer concludes the result based on the sociological approach, Henrik Ibsen want to how the modernization occurred in Norway society, but he also criticize the society is not sensitive about the

problem occurred. Because they do not have enough knowledge, so they do wrong decision when someone will help them to solve their problem.

The pedagogical implication which is shown in this drama is the society society does not get the education about the bath from the government. So they do not have enough knowledge to understand how the disease can contaminate the water. The other reason is the detail cause is not yet explained by Dr. Stockmann to society so they do not believe with him.

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