

THE UNDERLYING MOTIVES AND MANIFESTATIONS OF GREGERS WERLE'S AND HJALMAR EKDAL'S PSYCHE IN HENRIK IBSENS' *THE WILD DUCK*

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Abstract

This research aims to discover motives and manifestations of the main characters' psyche namely Gregers Werle and Hjalmar Ekdal in Henrik Ibsen's drama, *The Wild Duck*, using Lacan's psychoanalysis theory. This research is a qualitative research. Hence, analysis method is employed in analyzing the data content. The findings of the study bespeak that the main characters of *The Wild Duck* (Gregers Werle and Hjalmar Ekdal) possess mental disorders which are presented in their behavior and thoughts. Gregers Werle possesses neurotic characteristics that are promoted in his personality. The motives of his personality are the repressed excessive paternal domination in his unconscious that makes him to be independent and persistent. Meanwhile, Hjalmar Ekdal possesses psychotic characteristics that are promoted in his personality. The motives of his personality are the foreclosed of the father function which lead to delusive life, and those make him an ignorant and self-centered person.

Keywords: neurotics, psychotic, paternal domination, repression, foreclosure, *The Wild Duck*

INTRODUCTION

The issue of mental health problem is unavoidably wide spreading across the world. Therefore, people need to be aware of this phenomenon, so people are able to take the right assessment. Moreover, that people with mental health problem need to have a proper treatment is essential because particular mental health problems need to be treated differently from others, or it might cause fatal consequences. In regard of the issue, Jacques Lacan, a renowned French psychoanalyst, in categorising mental health problem uses the term 'structure' (or latter called as 'clinical structure' by Lacanian psychoanalyst) which consist of three major categories: neurosis, psychosis, and perversion (Evans, 1996:196). The three structures are form of behavioural diagnosis that is defined by

a different operation: neurosis by the operation of repression, perversion by the operation of disavowal, and psychosis by the operation of foreclosure (Evans, 1996:157). These categories help to distinguish the nature of one's psyche.

In regard to mental health problem, this issue is observable in literary works for it is the reflection of human life. Furthermore, like a dream, literature is also a product of human psychological experiences that are possible to be interpreted. A drama entitled *The Wild Duck* (1884) by prominent playwright Henrik Ibsen presents psychological issue concerning mental health problem of the main characters in highly philosophical way. Henrik Ibsen is known for his coruscating wit in writing his works. He uses aesthetically figurative method to his works, especially in *The Wild Duck* by applying

exquisite symbolism and metaphor. The play which explores the duality of illusion and reality in everyday lives of the characters is considered as Ibsen's greatest work. This is well presented in the main characters' life where Gregers Werle and Hialmar Ekdal are trapped in the situation where illusion and reality are blurring.

Gregers Werle strongly believes that truth needs to be pursued, and that everyone should behold high integrity. He, on top of that, intrudes Hialmar's illusive life which leads to Hialmar's fall, for he cannot bear beholding truth. Concerning this situation, both characters are in unavoidable chance to possess mental health problem. *The Wild Duck* presents two main characters who are presumably possessing the aforementioned mental health problem as already categorized by Lacan. Hence, this research tries to reveal the underlying motives and manifestations of Gregers Werle's and Hialmar Ekdal psyche.

The issue of mental health is important to be discussed because it is relevant to today's life, and it is also important to have knowledge about it, so people able to recognize the phenomena and to give a proper treatment and judgement regarding mental disorders. By understanding the matter, people will have a broader perspective in seeing one's character and personality, particularly one who suffers from similarly mental health problems.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative research/textual analysis method. The analysis was presented in textual description which

concerned to the value and interpretation of the researcher.

This research interpreted dialogues and narration of a drama text entitled *The Wild Duck* by Ibsen to seek deeper value of this drama from psychoanalysis perspective. The analysis is presented by relating Lacanian psychoanalysis theory of clinical structures with the issue in the drama.

Data Sources

The data used in this research were taken from Henrik Ibsen's drama text entitled *The Wild Duck* which is first published in 1884. The data used some expressions from the drama text which related to the topic of the discussion which is the motives and the manifestations of the main characters of Henry Ibsen's *The Wild Duck*.

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Data collecting technique

Data were collected through several steps. First step was multiple reading the drama text, *The Wild Duck*, and also finding necessary information about the chosen topic within the drama text. Second step was re-reading to assure that there was no false information or omitted information. Third was taking notes

which were done to make marks on the important points to be evaluated in the next step. Evaluating the data is necessary to ensure the relevance towards the topic being discussed. Finally, data were categorized accordingly.

Data analysis

In analysing data of this research, the researcher has gone through several additional steps which were necessary to analyse the data. Those steps are:

1. reading Henrik Ibsen's *The Wild Duck* comprehensively for several times to sharpen the insight concerning the work,
2. evaluating and scrutinizing the necessary details of *The Wild Duck* concerning the topic of the research,
3. taking notes and marking some expressions needed to the analysis,
4. identifying and categorizing data which related to the research question,
5. analyzing and deciding the type of research used to this analysis, and
6. making interpretations based on the personal knowledge and understanding which are supported by information from valid sources.

DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the discussion of the study which is divided into two sub-chapters; the first sub-chapter discusses motives of Gregers Werle's and Hjalmar Ekdal's psyche, the second sub-chapter discusses the manifestations of Gregers Werle's and Hjalmar Ekdal's psyche.

A. Underlying motives of Gregers Werle's and Hjalmar Ekdal's psyche

To uncover motives of someone's personality, it is needed to trace back to the unconscious mind. Hence, this research tries to uncover the characters unconscious motivation which becomes the major possible reason to explain their individual personality. Moreover, by this discussion, the researcher enunciates that Gregers Werle depicts a type of neurotic character and Hjalmar Ekdal depicts psychotic character. With theories borrowed from Lacan, this research will put some light in apprehending both characters' disposition.

1. Underlying motive of Gregers Werle's psyche

This part of discussion will focus on the way excessive paternal domination and repression form neurotic characteristics within Gregers' personality.

a) Paternal Dominance

According to Freud, Oedipus complex in individual's early development has the highest chance to be a neurotic (Eagleton, 1983:158). Hence, Gregers has possible chance of possessing some characteristics of neurotic, for he had encountered excessive paternal domination that generates Oedipus complex since he was a child. Moreover, regarding Oedipus complex, Lacan uses the three Orders to explain his theory. Lacan suggests: 'the third time' of the Oedipus complex is marked by the intervention of the real father (Evans,

1996:132).” It is natural that oedipal moment happened in the realm of imaginary and symbolic. The oedipal moment is needed to gain sense of self and to introduce law in these orders. However, when it happens in the order of the real, it might have different consequences to someone’s personality. Gregers’ remarkable personality in *The Wild Duck* is compelled by the intervention of Werle who has powerful paternal dominance which will never be overpowered by Gregers. Therefore, the major motive that responsible of Gregers’ personality is the Oedipus complex, because it determines his behaviour and thought.

It is clear, in the quotation below, that Gregers has the compulsion towards her mother that becomes the major characteristic of neurotic.

Relling: Yes. Yours is a complicated case. First of all, there is that plaguy integrity-fever; and then what's worse you are always in a delirium of hero-worship; you must always have something to adore, outside yourself (Ibsen, 1886:Act.V).

Relling, who notices about Gregers’ oedipal nature mentions that Gregers has someone he extremely adores outside himself which is related to his mental sickness. In this drama, Gregers worship no other than his mother, and he highly adores her principals especially concerning Werle. This strongly indicates the oedipal nature of his character which responsible for his personality.

a) Repression

Another motive of Gregers Werle’s personality is repression which leads him to possess the major characteristic of obsessional neurotic. Furthermore, regarding Obsessional

neurotic, Lacan (via Evans, 1996:129) argues that it performs a compulsive ritual that enables him to escape the lack in the ‘Other’, the castration of the ‘Other’, which is often represented in fantasy as some terrible disaster. Neurotic performs a compulsive ritual in order to escape the abominable catastrophe in someone’s world, and if the ritual fails to be performed, a terrible calamity will take place. In the story of *The wild Duck*, Gregers has the compulsion of fulfilling his mission in live that escapes him from his catastrophe as the result of his repressed feeling regarding paternal dominance.

Looking deeper in apprehending Gregers’ character, it can be noticed that he carries the characteristic of obsessional neurotic which initiated from his repressed feeling. Throughout the story, Gregers tries to present his ‘claim of ideal’, the principal that he has been presenting since he was young, towards Hjalmar’s life. Claim of ideal is a principal that all people should hold high integrity in their life, and nothing shall be concealed within the family life, so life will be worth living. This is the result of the failure of the function of symbolic father which is repressed in the unconsciousness.

Here are some statements that show Gregers’ compulsive ritual as an obsessional neurotic.

Gregers: If I should choose, I should like best to be a clever dog. Yes, an amazingly clever dog; one that goes to the bottom after wild ducks when they dive and bite themselves fast in tangle and sea-weed, down among the ooze (Ibsen, 1886:Act.II).

Gregers wanting to be a clever dog is basically comes from the idea that he wants to save the wounded wild duck, which he means is the Ekdal Family, by the claim of ideal, the claim that he has been presenting since he was young. This is how Gregers escapes his abominable catastrophe by intervening and exerting his claim of ideal to Hjalmar's life.

2. Underlying motive of Hjalmar Ekdal's psyche

Through this part of discussion, the researcher tries to disclose that Hjalmar has some degree of psychotic character arising from his delusive mind and the lack of paternal function.

a) Delusional Reality

In *The Wild Duck*, Hjalmar often mention about his invention that will bring uphill climb of honour to Ekdal family. However, the invention that he proud of is a part of life illusion that his friend, Relling, gives him for a good reason. Without the life illusion, Hjalmar would not be able to life happily with his little family. It is proved when the life illusion is removed from him, a big catastrophe comes to his life.

Regarding Hjalmar's delusive life, a theory from Freud which Lacan rooted from is able to explain the base of this matter. Freud suggests that psychosis is caused by the failure of ego to repress the unconscious desire, and this leads to the ruptured of the ego and the external world which make the unconscious to build the delusional reality (Eagleton, 1983:159).

The dialogue bellows shows Hjlamar's delusive live.

Hjalmar: I swore that if I consecrated my powers to this handicraft, I would so exalt it that it should become both an art and a science. And to that end I determined to make this great invention (Ibsen, 1968:Act.III).”

Hjalmar believes that he has strong determination and hope regarding his invention. He believes that his invention will be grand and beneficial, so he is very optimistic about his invention. The invention makes him eager to be useful to his family. Although, at the end it is known that the invention is part of his delusive life, but it gives his optimism to live his life.

b) Foreclosure

The motive which answers Hjalmar delusive life is a theory of psychotic introduced by Lacan. Lacan suggests that the exclusion of the father function from symbolic order leads to psychosis (Evans, 1996:122). Therefore, Hjalmar is unavoidable to embodies psychotic characteristic.

Taking a close look to the paternal function in Hjalmar's life, it provides big contribution to his psychotic character. First, Hjalmar's father is a pariah, and he does not gain respect from the society. In fact old Ekdal is a delusive person himself because he could not live the way he wants to. Old Ekdal who used to pleased bear-haunting in the wood, now shooting rabbit in his small garret to satisfy his hunting impulse. Moreover, from the day he is imprisoned for doing illegal business for Werle, he lives miserably for all the rest of his life. This makes Hjalmar distressed because the lack of paternal authority that leads to the imbalance paternal function in the symbolic order.

The dialogue below shows that Hjalmar is ashamed of his father because of foreclosed paternal function. “**Gregers:** And you could stand there and deny that you knew him!” (Ibsen, 1968:Act.I). Hjalmar avoids his father in the dinner party of Werle to welcome the arrival of Gregers which is attended by some nobles of the town. In the party, Old Ekdal is treated as a pariah that makes Hjalmar ashamed and humiliated. Therefore he chooses to avoid his father.

B. The manifestations of the motives of Gregers Werle’s and Hjalmar Ekdal’s psyche

This part of discussion will discuss about the personality traits of Gregers Werle and Hjalmar Ekdal regarding their individual character that are displaying neurotic and psychotic character. First, it will specifically discuss about Gregers, who is being independent and persistent as the result of neurotic characteristics, and next is Hjalmar’s who is being self-centred and ignorant which characterizing psychotic characteristics within him.

1. The manifestations of the motives of Gregers Werle’s psyche

In the first part of discussion, it is revealed that Gregers is castrated by his overpowering father even since his early teens, and it is repressed in his unconsciousness which precedes basic characteristics of obsessional neurotic. In consequence, it gives unavoidable impact towards Gregers’ personality. Hence, the

researcher will uncover the manifestations of the motives of Gregers’ personality in *The Wild Duck*. In this part of discussion, the researcher will disclose two major manifestations of the motives to Gregers’ personality: independent and persistent.

a) Independent

In *The Wild Duck*, Gregers is portrayed as someone who refuses to depend on other people, even his father, and it is strongly depicted in the drama. Actually, the relationship between Gregers and his father becomes the highlight of *The Wild Duck*. The strong rivalry between them captures one of the major manifestations of the motives of Gregers personality. The excessive paternal domination naturally put him into the deep whole of hopelessness in competing the phallus of his father. Even after the death of his mother, Gregers is still overstrained regarding his overpowering father.

It is clear in the quotation below that Gregers never believes his father due to the paternal dominance. “**Gregers:** You want to make use of me in some way.” (Ibsen, 1968:Act.I). This dialogue shows that Gregers does not believe his father, and is always suspects his father for using him in some-way. This feeling of suspicious makes him an independent person. This is in-line with the theory of Fink (1997:117-118) that says, Obsessive/obsessional neurotic sees himself as a whole and aware of his own thought, and does not need everyone else to tell him their opinion regarding his thought. Hence he refuses to depend on other people.

Gregers independence is caused by the humiliation he has been receiving from his father. Gregers who lives under the shadow of his father escapes to prove that he is not a lacking man as he has always been feeling all the time by living independently. Moreover, that Gregers holds thigh his principal regarding integrity, will make him a man of high independence in the end. "**Relling:** Well, I'll tell you, Mrs. Ekdal. He is suffering from an acute attack of integrity." (Ibsen, 1968:Act.III). Relling, who is a doctor, describes that Gregers suffers from the acute attack of integrity. Due to his conflicting past life which allows him to hold high integrity, Gregers cannot believe and rely to other people and to the worst, he is disturbed by other's lack of integrity. Therefore, he interferes Hjalmar family in order to lay awareness of his own thought without being governed by others. More importantly, Gregers is faced to the problem that not every person is independent of their own thought.

b) Persistence

Besides independent, Gregers is highly persistent. His principal and belief are unbreakable. However, when his belief is proved wrong Gregers is still persistent.

This below dialogue also shows Gregers' persistence regarding his claim.

Relling: We will talk of this again, when the grass has first withered on her grave. Then you'll hear him spouting about "the child too early torn from her father's heart;" then you'll see him steep himself in syrup of sentiment and self-admiration and self-pity. Just you wait!

Gregers: If you are right and I am wrong, then life is not worth living. (Ibsen, 1968:Act.V)

This part of dialogue tells that Gregers, after knowing that his claim of ideal ruins Hjalmar's life, fails to acknowledge that he has been wrong concerning the idea he had been presenting all this time. Furthermore, after knowing that Hjalmar is not happy with his life since he interferes the family, and giving Hjalmar's daughter (Hedwig) the idea to sacrifice and die in vain, Gregers keeps holding to his principal, and assumes that live is not worth living without integrity.

Paternal domination and repression in Gregers' life bring many manifestationss regarding his personality. His personality circuitously forms obstacle that prevent him from sustaining relationship with other people. He refuses to acknowledge the adversarial belief which is already been proven before his eyes, and being persistence to what he believes in although it is inapplicable to most people. Moreover, Gregers does not aware of Hjalmar's feeling, and he does not know that Hjalmar requires illusion in his life to keep himself sane and to have hope to live his life.

2. The manifestations of the motives of Hjalmar Ekdal's psyche

In this part of discussion, the manifestationss of Hjalmar Ekdal personality will be divided into two major categories: self-centered and ignorant. These two categories are vividly portrayed in the way Hjalmar Ekdal. For this reason, the researcher particularly discusses both categories below.

a) Self-centered

It is previously stated that Hjalmar is a highly respected man in Ekdal family because he believes that he is a virtuous, hard-working man who provides the needs of the family. Although it was all illusion which Relling has postulated in Hjalmar, the illusion is helpful to maintain his life worth living. Relling helps Hjalmar in maintaining his psychological health. To keep Hjalmar's life safe, Relling become helpful to Hjalmar by alleviating his psychological problem with life-illusion. On top of that, Hjalmar is a self-centered man that is being inconsiderate of other members of the family despite his incapability.

In a glance, Hjalmar seems to be looking like a humble husband and father, but he actually is not. Looking further exploring Hjalmar's personality, the reader of this drama will find that Hjalmar is rather self-centred. It is shown by the dialogue below:

Hjalmar: (*breaking off the melody, holds out his left hand to GINA, and says with emotion*): Our roof may be poor and humble, Gina, but it is home. And with all my heart I say: here dwells my happiness." (Ibsen, 1968:Act.II).

Hjalmar is satisfied with his ordinary life, because he thinks he gives his all to make that happens. Ekdal family according to Hjalmar is his happiness, despite his small house, weak-eyed-daughter, and poor-old-father. Home is the only place Hjalmar can be someone who he wants to be, a hard-working father and the bread winner of the family. However, on top of that, Hjalmar wants to show that he is, unlike his father, a highly honored man which takes all the responsibility of his family's dignity. In this

below quotation, it is clear that Hjalmar is a self-centered person. "**Hjalmar:** I can rise up his self-respect from the dead, by restoring the name of Ekdal to honour and dignity." (Ibsen, 1968:Act.III). Being the pillar of his family, being a good father and husband is his ambition, but it is part of his delusive life. This is the reason that makes him a self-centered man. He, somehow, needs to convince himself that he is able to afford a 'normal life'. Hence, he tends to hide behind the language to make himself a person he wants him to be, instead of acting like one.

Hjalmar: I could almost say: so much the better! Is it not humiliating for a man like me to see his grey-haired father treated as a pariah? But now I believe the fullness of time is at hand. (*Takes a fresh piece of bread and butter.*) As sure as I have a mission in life, I mean to fulfill it now! (Ibsen, 1968:Act.II)

Hjalmar avoids his father who is spotted in Werle's dinner party as a worker. He is ashamed of his father, and it hurts his pride to know that the old Ekdal is treated as pariah. Hjalmar, in the aforementioned dialogue, mentions that he stats his mission in life in order to uplift the honor of his family, or more precisely his own honor, so he will be no more humiliated by his powerless father.

b) Ignorant

Due to his illusive life, not only self-centered, Hjalmar is ignorant. He gives up his family, his happiness, by allowing Gregers' claim of ideal to be applied to his life, which in the end brings calamity to his life. Gregers comes to Hjalmar's life to pull off the illusion by laying his claim of ideal. Gregers, after

learning that Werle gets involved in Hjalmar's life to his personal purposes tries to tell Hjalmar the truth, and this action ruins the life illusion in Hjalmar's life and bring a great impact to him, especially to his personality.

Hjalmar who had a bright personality turns to a hopeless and bad-tempered man. "Hjalmar: H'm, true. Well, then, from the day after tomorrow. I should almost like to wring that cursed wild duck's neck! (Ibsen, 1968:Act.IV)." Hjalmar who used to treasure the wild duck having intention to wring the wild duck's neck because he is disappointed to the truth he has been discovered regarding his marriage with Gina. Hedwig, who seems to treasure the wild duck the most, is shocked and hurt by that. Hjalmar is ignorant for not able to control himself for saying that he is about to curse the wild duck's neck which leads Hedwigs from killing herself at the end.

Hjalmar is also extremely disappointed with Gina. After hearing the truth from Gregers, Hjalmar cannot accept the fact that he has been betrayed by his wife. "**Hjalmar:** (*walks about*): And this is my Hedvig's mother. And to know that all I see before me (*kicks at a chair*) all that I call my home I owe to a favoured predecessor! Oh, that scoundrel Werle!" (Ibsen, 1968:Act.IV). Hjalmar is aggrieved about Gina who did not tell him about her affair with Werle, and about Hedwig's biological father. Without considering what has Gina sacrifices for him, Hjalmar is raged with anger. He does not realize that Gina is the one who gives the family a life worth living for running the house and the works at the same time.

Hjalmar is also unhappy about Relling who unconsciously leads him to undergo life illusion. "Hjalmar (*talks to himself in a low tone of irritation, whilst he empties the table-drawer*): You're a scoundrel, Relling! You're a low fellow! Ah, you shameless tempter! I wish I could get someone to stick a knife into you! (Ibsen, 1968:Act.IV)." Knowing the truth from Gregers, Hjalmar curses on Relling because he feels betrayed by him for hiding the truth that leads him to undergo a fake life without recognizing what have Relling brings to his family.

Relling is the one who gives 'cure' to Hjalmar's mental sickness, and leads him to the life-illusion that keeps Hjalmar's life alright. This is presented in the dialogue below: "**Gregers:** And what remedy are you applying in Hjalmar's case? **Relling:** My usual one. I am cultivating the life-illusion in him" (Ibsen, 1968:Act.V). Relling helps Hjalmar in maintaining his psychical health. To keep Hjalmar's life safe, Relling become helpful to Hjalmar by alleviating his psychical problem with life-illusion. However, the ignorant Hjalmar does not realize that Relling is the one who saves his family from disaster because he believes he is capable of all. It is explained by Fink (1997:84) that says "Certainty is characteristics of psychosis, whereas doubt is not". Hjalmar does not doubt his judgments of others, and believes that he is certain tha he is capable to afford a normal and happy life by himself. He does not know that the calamity will fall in his world without the help of others. To prevent the catastrophe in Hjalmar's life,

illusion is needed. Therefore, when life-illusion is removed from his life, his calamity befalls. For those reasons, Hjalmar is an ignorant. He disrespects others who gives him happiness in his life, and forgetting everything they have done for his good sake.

Regarding the aforementioned personality traits of Hjalmar Ekdal, it is inline with Lacan (via Evans, 1996:156-159) theory that said the fail of paternal function will have a result on the symbolic order that make psychotic cannot relate to the morality and conscience, so they tend to take immediate action regarding their drives. Hjalmar fails to reflect on his life that he has been supported by others due to have a good life because he is a lacking person. He disregarded and abandoned his family and friends after all that they have done to provide him happiness. The agony blinds Hjalmar's rationality without further consideration.

CONCLUSION

By the discussion the underlying motives and its manifestations of Gregers Werle and Hjalmar Ekdal's Personality in Henrik Ibsens' *The Wild Duck*, a conclusion can be drawn:

1. Underlying motives of Greger Werle's and Hjalmar Ekdal's psyche

Gregers Werle carries the characteristics of obsessional neurosis which is resulted from the repression of excessive paternal domination of his father, Hakon Werle. This proceeds his action in performing compulsive ritual to avoid his abominate catastrophe. The catastrophe is not about Ekdal's family that will be more suffering from the dishonesty within the family,

but it is about how Gregers deals with the humiliation that he is lack of phallus. He, who has always been castrated by his father eager to help Hjalmar's family who had been disregarded by Werle. Hence he struggle to gain recognition that he is, too, a man of honour.

Another character, Hjalmar Ekdal, carries the characteristics of psychotic which is resulted from the absence of symbolic paternal function. This makes Hjalmar distressed because the lack of paternal authority that leads to the imbalance paternal function in the symbolic order. Hjalmar is not able to recognize father function in his life, because his Old Ekdal does not fulfill his role in the symbolic order as symbolic father which leads Hjalmar to possess psychotic characteristic. Hjalmar's foreclosed paternal function gives him no option but to live in the illusion. In contrast to Gregers who does a 'ritual' to avoid the disclosure of the truth about him-self, Hjalmar needs to escape the illusion to find the truth of him-self.

2. The manifestations of the motives of Gregers Werle's and Hjalmar Ekdal's psyche

Gregers Werle escapes the truth regarding himself by forcing his belief to others and refuses to acknowledge other's belief opposing to his. He believes on holding integrity in life. Hence, his personality circuitously forms obstacle that prevent him from depending to other people because not many people can live beholding the truth. He refuses to acknowledge the adversarial belief which is already been proven before his eyes, and being persistence to what he believes in although it is inapplicable to

most people. Moreover, Gregers does not aware of Hjalmar's feeling, and he does not know that Hjalmar requires illusion in his life to keep himself sane and to have hope to live his life.

Hjalmar bears the psychotic characteristics that lead him to be a self-centered and Ignorant person. He is being inconsiderate of other members of the family despite his incapability. Moreover, he gives up his family, his happiness, by allowing Gregers' claim of ideal to be applied to his life, which in the end brings calamity to his life.

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