

VIOLATION OF MORAL VALUES IN BERNARD SHAW'S *THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA*

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INTISARI

The Doctor's Dilemma adalah sebuah drama yang ditulis oleh Bernard Shaw, yang dikenal sebagai drama tragis yang menjadi sukses dan telah diproduksi ulang beberapa kali. Drama tersebut juga memiliki nilai-nilai moral yang terkandung di dalamnya. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menemukan sikap yang mengandung standar moral, alasan dari pandangan skeptis Bernard Shaw kepada dokter-dokter, dan untuk mempelajari keadaan-keadaan penanganan medis di awal abad ke-20 dengan menganalisa kata pengantar, dialog-dialog, dan narasi di dalam drama tersebut. Penelitian ini pada dasarnya mengadopsi gabungan dari pendekatan mimetic dan expressive yang mengaitkan *The Doctor's Dilemma* sebagai ekspresi dari ide Shaw dan gambaran dari dunia medis dan social pada awal abad ke-20. Analisis difokuskan pada pelanggaran mengenai etika kedokteran dan norma social dikarenakan kedua hal tersebut dominan di dalam drama. Hasil dari analisis ini yaitu tokoh-tokoh dokter di dalam drama gagal untuk menjaga sumpah mereka sebagai pegawai medis karena mereka melanggar lima dari delapan poin tentang tugas umum mereka yang berdasarkan dari etika kedokteran. Kemudian, ditemukan pula beberapa karakter yang tidak menaati norma social seperti menjadi orang yang tidak jujur, dan melakukan beberapa aksi untuk mendapatkan keuntungan pribadi.

Kata Kunci: etika-etika kedokteran, norma-norma sosial, nilai-nilai moral.

ABSTRACT

The Doctor's Dilemma is known as tragic play which has become a success and has been reproduced several times. This play has moral values concealed within it. This study aims to find out the moral actions, the reason for Bernard Shaw's skeptical perception towards physicians, and to learn the circumstances of medical treatment in the early 20th century by analyzing the preface, dialogues, and stage directions in the play. This study basically adopts a combination of mimetic and expressive approaches which regard *The Doctor's Dilemma* as the expression of Shaw's idea and portraits of medical and social life in early 20th century. The analysis is focused on the violation of medical ethics and social norms because they are

the dominant in the play. The results of the analysis are the failure of the physician characters in the play to keep their oath as medical attendants because they violate five of eight general duties based on the medical ethic. Then, it is also found out that several characters do not obey the social norm, such as being dishonest, and doing some actions to pursue their personal benefits.

Keywords: *medical ethics, social norms, moral values.*

INTRODUCTION

George Bernard Shaw's tragic play *The Doctor's Dilemma* was first staged in 1906. Shaw attracts the reader's attention by using the word "Dilemma", and making them wonder "what kind of dilemma does the physician have". *The Doctor's Dilemma* is one of Shaw's literary works which successfully entertains the audience (www.shawfest.com). People know that a physician is a great person in the medical world—a savior for those who are ill; a noble profession. But Shaw has his own perception of a physician's life. He has some arguments that the readers can discover through his words in this tragedy play.

The objectives of this research are to find out the reason for Bernard Shaw's skeptical point of view towards physicians, to learn about the circumstances of medical treatment in the 20th century and to analyze moral values depicted in the play.

This play is examined by using the theory of mimetic criticism and expressive criticism. These two criticisms can be used to explain and judge a work of literature, referring to the outer world, author and the work itself (Abrams, 1999:51).

as stated by M.H Abrams:

Mimetic criticism views the literary work as an imitation, or reflection, or representation

of the world and human life, and the primary criterion applied to a work is the "truth" of its representation to the subject matter that it represents, or should represent. This mode of criticism, which first appeared in Plato and

(in a qualified way) in Aristotle, remains characteristics of modern theories of literary realism (Abrams, 1999:51).

Expressive criticism treats the relation between literary works to its

author. In *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H Abrams said that expressive criticism

defines a literary work as an expression, or overflow, or utterance of feelings, or as the product of the author's imagination operating on his or her perceptions, thoughts, and feelings; it tends to judge the work by its sincerity, or its adequacy to the author's vision or state of mind; and it often seeks in the work evidences of particular temperament and experiences of the author who, consciously or unconsciously, has revealed himself or herself in it (Abrams, 1999:51-52).

This theory is used in this paper because of the malicious and sarcastic words of Shaw in the preface and dialogues of *The Doctor's Dilemma* that inform the readers about his expression and criticism towards medical treatment. Mimetic criticism is used to examine the world and human life which are described and represented by Shaw in *The Doctor's Dilemma*. Mimetic criticism is used by elaborating the connection of history, society, and the author. While expressive criticism shows the expression of Shaw's disappointment provided toward physicians, can be learned from the author's biography.

The method of research used in this study is library research and intensive reading. These methods are crucial and necessary to conduct the research. The sources are taken from the written materials in the library. The primary data is the literary work itself, *The Doctor's Dilemma*. In order to get a better understanding of the play, the research involves other books. The secondary data are taken from the relevant book of Bernard Shaw's life and the background of London in the 20th century. For the primary data is *The Doctor's Dilemma* and the secondary data are *Bernard Shaw, Theory of Literature, Medical Ethics and Social Norms*.

SHAW'S BIOGRAPHY

George Bernard Shaw was born in Dublin in 1856. He was the son of an opera singer, who came to London at the age of twenty and was accepted with open arms by Sidney Webbs and the Fabian Society (Entwistle, 1952: 201). Bernard Shaw certainly has all the virtues. Somehow English people have an impression and a tradition that an Irishman is genial, unreasonable, and sentimental. Sometimes when the Irishman goes on asking for a thing because he wants it; and tries to hurt his enemies, because they are his enemies (Chesterton, 1950:19). Bernard Shaw has the sense of that personality of the Irishman which can be seen through his works.

Chesterton, in his book entitled *George Bernard Shaw*, says that Shaw himself stated an Irishman has two eyes; one eye of Irishman sees that a dream is inspiring but on the other eye says that it was a dream. That is the humor and sentiment of an Englishman, that causes him to wink the other eye. Bernard Shaw entered England as an alien, invader, and conqueror. He entered England as an Irishman, not an Englishman (Cesterton, 1950: 20-23).

The Doctor's Dilemma cannot really show that Bernard Shaw was in dilemma because he is a consistent person who has persistently made up his mind when he knows something about the facts. *The Doctor's Dilemma* tells about the modern doctors who are in doubt whether they should give a treatment to a patient who is an artist of vast power and promise, but also mischievous and deceitful. That patient has a chance of life if he is treated for his disease, *Tuberculosis*. Nevertheless, one of those physician's colleagues, who is a kind but poor and somehow incompetent medical colleague also needs their treatment to cure his illness (Chesterton, 1950: 217). The physicians should not be in dilemma like what Chesterton said, "I

am sure any decent doctor would do without any dilemma at all: to treat the man simply as a man, and give him no more and no less favor than he would to anybody else."

Shaw is like Ibsen,

"Who used drama as a medium form ventilating all manner of topics which preoccupied his fertile and versatile mind. His work is admirable, clear, striking, and forth-right and also contains lively dialogues. Shaw might well have been the second English dramatist. He has determination to take a serious or important matter and use it as material for a play. He observes the social problems, history, philosophy, fantasy, and all came within his range, to expose the causes of human failure and of human evils. He proves himself as the master of satire,"

(Enwistle, 1952: 201-202).

MEDICAL ETHICS

Physicians are known as the noblest profession which should have carried out morality, ethics and good attitude. Those three components are important to prevent their nobility from becoming the most corrupted or the ugliest profession. According to M. Scott Peck via Tarmidzi, "Our view of reality is like a map which negotiates the terrain of life. If the map is true and accurate, we will generally know how to get there. If the map is false and inaccurate, we will generally get lost" (Tarmidzi, 2003: 15). According to Abraham Edel, "because of ethics, the outline is becoming clearer today. Drives, demands, needs, selection—in short the striving to live and grow and what in the widest sense we call valuing" (Edel, 1955:122). Typical values include honesty, integrity, compassion, courage, honor, responsibility, patriotism, respect and fairness (<http://www.navran.com/article-values-morals-ethics.html>). All of these

points are covered by medical ethics. Thus, the medical ethics is included into moral values which is used to determine whether it meets that standard, comes close or far exceeds.

There was a previous medical ethics of *The Hippocratic Oath* used in the early 20th century and originally written in Greek in the late 5th century BC. This is one of the "most widely known of Greek medical texts which requires a new physician to swear upon a number of healing gods that he will uphold a number of professional ethical standards" (en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hippocratic_oath).

Nevertheless, the oath has been modified multiple times and the most significant revision to be first drafted is the international medical ethics or the so-called Declaration of Geneva, taken from World Medical Association International Code of Medical Ethics, adopted by the 3rd General Assembly of the World Medical Association, London, England, October 1949 (history.nih.gov/research/downloads/ICME.pdf). This version of medical ethics is clearer than previous medical ethics. These medical ethics say a physician shall:

- Always maintain the highest standard of professional conduct
- Not permit motives of profit to influence the free and independent exercise of professional judgment on behalf of patients;
- In all types of medical practice, be dedicated to providing competent medical service in full technical and moral independence, with compassion and respect for human dignity
- Deal honestly with patients and colleagues, and strive to expose those physicians deficient in character or competence, or who engage in fraud or deception; respect the right of patients, of colleagues, and of other health

professionals, and shall safeguard patient confidences

- Act only in the patient's interest when providing medical care which might have the effect of weakening the physical and mental condition of the patient
- Use great caution in divulging discoveries or new techniques or treatment through non-professional channels
- Certify only that which he has personally verified.

SOCIAL NORMS

A norm is a means to achieve a social end, such as cooperation, retribution, or fairness. "Social norms are rules developed by a group of people that specify how people must, should, may, should not, and must not behave in various situations"

(<http://www.sociologyguide.com/basic-concepts/Social-Norms.php>). According to Bicchieri (2006) via plato.stanford.edu, is explained that "Social norms ought to be understood as a kind of grammar of social interactions. Like a grammar, a system of norms specifies what is acceptable and what is not in a society or group".

There is a common principle why a certain ethic must be applied (<http://www.iep.utm.edu/ethics/>):

1. Personal benefit: acknowledge the extent to which an action produces beneficial consequences for the individual in question.
2. Social benefit: acknowledge the extent to which an action produces beneficial consequences for society.
3. Principle of benevolence: help those in need.
4. Principle of paternalism: assist others in pursuing their best interests when they cannot do so themselves.
5. Principle of harm: do not harm others.

6. Principle of honesty: do not deceive others.
7. Principle of lawfulness: do not violate the law.
8. Principle of autonomy: acknowledge a person's freedom over his/her actions or physical body.
9. Principle of justice: acknowledge a person's right to due process, fair compensation for harm done, and fair distribution of benefits.
10. Rights: acknowledge a person's rights to life, information, privacy, free expression and safety.

Since there is no exact list of social norms which is applied in England, that universal theory can be used to analyze the characters' actions and behavior in *The Doctor's Dilemma*.

VIOLATION OF MEDICAL ETHICS

In *The Doctor's Dilemma*, Shaw personally gave a long preface about physician and medical treatment. He stated that, "Doctors are full of stories about each other's blunders and errors" (Shaw, 1911:17). This statement shows his view of the physicians. He thought that the physicians cannot be sure in their own treatment during the first great epidemic of influenza and tuberculosis at the end of the nineteenth century in London.

In the play, Shaw portrayed a fictional character named Sir Patrick who reminds Dr. Ridgeon about his patient in the past named Jane Marsh, whose arm rotted because of Dr. Ridgeon's blunder because he uses Jane Marsh as his guinea pig for his experiment of the inoculation because he does not know whether the result is good or not. Shaw thought the doubtfulness of those physicians led them into malpractice because they can ruin another man by it. As he stated in the preface of *The Doctor's Dilemma* that, "the effect of this state of things is to make the medical profession a conspiracy to hide its own short-comings" (Shaw, 1911:17).

Shaw depicted the history in England. In his lifetime, there is a British bacteriologist and immunologist named Sir Almroth Wright, had discovered about the important of opsonin in Koch's tuberculin. Before he discovered it, there was an incident which has caused the appalling result which led to the hasty dropping in 1894. Shaw said that the incident is not an accident, but a perfectly orderly expectedness because of the use of dangerously strong "vaccines" at the wrong moment (Shaw, 1911:32). Shaw said that to ascertain the right moment a laboratory and an expert staffs are needed.

There is a similarity between Sir Almroth Wright and a character in the *The Doctor's Dilemma* named Dr. Ridgeon, who used Koch's tuberculin to cure, but at the same time they hurt their patient with it. The medical ethics codes show that the physicians must not harm their patients and use them as their experiment, because it violates the medical ethics. Medical treatment is not a gamble. A physician should give the best treatment to the patients and try to cure them from their illness. However in the play, Dr. Ridgeon gives the tuberculin that makes Jane's arm rotten.

The word "kill" which Shaw frequently used appears twenty eight times in *The Doctor's Dilemma*. That word refers to the physician whom he thought they are just killing the patient and do not have conscience. Dr. Ridgeon is depicted as a physician who does not have humanitarianism and morality. He rudely says "To inject a vaccine into a patient without first testing his opsonin is a near murder as a respectable practitioner can get. If I wanted to kill a man, I should kill him that way" (Shaw, 1958:99). There is a statement said by his colleague "Bloomfield Bonington kills less people than you do" (Shaw, 1958:115). It gives information that Ridgeon kills more patients than Bloomfield. In other words,

he murders his patient, but he is not sued by the justice of law.

Shaw said that it happened because everything is on the side of the physician; "when men die of disease they are said to die from natural causes. When they recover (and they mostly do) the doctors gets the credit of curing them" (Shaw, 1911: 18). After that, Dr. Ridgeon also prefers to meet his colleagues and celebrate his successful discovery rather than curing his patient, Jennifer Dubedat's husband. He tells his assistant to send her away while Jennifer desperately needs his help for reviving her lovely husband. Dr. Ridgeon violates one of his duties as a physician, namely that "A physician shall, in all types of medical practice, be dedicated to providing competent medical service in full technical and moral independence, with compassion and respect for human dignity" (history.nih.gov/research/downloads/ICME.pdf) but he hands over Louis Dubedat to his incompetent colleague without attempts to do the treatment.

Shaw, who described in the preface of *The Doctor's Dilemma*, said a physician is also a human being who can feel hungry, tired, or sick. Nevertheless, in Dr. Ridgeon's case, he is not in the condition where he feels hungry, weary, or sleepy. He is not in the middle of doing surgery, or any treatment of curing a patient. He only talks petty things with his colleagues, Sir Patrick, while there is one patient who urgently needs his treatment for saving his life.

Dr. Ridgeon also described as a physician who has high pecuniary interest. It is reasonable because in England in early 20th century, the majority of average doctor, nation's staff of doctors, had minimal income; and medical advice and treatment were rarely used (Ensor, 1952:519-520). Shaw believed there is no distinction between the science of the

herbalist and the registered physician and called physician is worse than railway porter, because he had experience where his relative consulted to the physician and was given many stiff doses, but his relative preferred not to take them and she adapted to Christian Science.

At the end of the play, Dr. Ridgeon acknowledges his failure to keep his professional conduct as a physician. He purposely decides to give up on curing Louis Dubedat, and hands Louis to Sir Ralph because he wants to pursue his aim which is dating Louis Dubedat's wife, Jennifer Dubedat. The medicine is used purposely by Sir Ralph to cure Louis but it kills him. There are three ethics violated by Dr. Ridgeon: "*a physician shall always maintain the highest standard of professional conduct*", "*a physician shall not permit motives of profit to influence the free and independent exercise of professional judgment on behalf of patients*" and "*shall deal honestly with patients and colleagues, and strive to expose those physicians deficient in character or competence, or who engage in fraud or deception*" (history.nih.gov/research/downloads/ICME.pdf). He already knows that the condition of the patient is important and before doing the treatment, the physician must stimulate the phagocytes and give that treatment when the patient is in the positive phase.

Shaw, who is a part of society, has the right to criticize or praise something that satisfied or unfulfilled his needs. He said that every general practitioner or physician is supposed to master of the whole range of medical and surgical work at a moment's notice (Shaw, 1911:73). When his needs did not meet with satisfaction, he used *The Doctor's Dilemma* as his medium to pursuit that satisfaction, but he did not want to go beyond the warrant of his own experience.

In short, Shaw's skeptical act towards physician is within reason based on his knowledge.

VIOLATION OF SOCIAL NORMS

Social norms are the unwritten rules about how to behave and provided with an expected idea of how to behave in the particular social group or culture (<http://www.simplypsychology.org/social-roles.html>). Social norms are the accepted standard of behavior by the society. People need social norms to guide, to direct, to fulfill the predictability of the standard of behavior and to understand each other's actions.

In *The Doctor's Dilemma*, there are several characters that violate the social norms. One of them is a fictional character named Louis Dubedat, an artist and a husband of Jennifer Dubedat, violates the principle of harm and principle of honesty just for his personal benefit. He sells a pig in a poke or cheats many physicians when they had dinner together. He tells different stories to trick them to lend him some cash, but he never pays it back. He is also not telling Jennifer Dubedat, his current wife, that he had already married Minnie Tinwell, his first wife. Minnie says to the physicians that she has lost some of her money on their marriage and Louis left her without saying anything to her. Jennifer sincerely warns Louis to avoid borrowing money and not to do some frauds because it will give a negative image for him.

Louis Dubedat obviously violates the principle of honesty and benevolence. He deceives other people, and makes them irritating because of his actions. Thus, this incident leads the perception of the society into cynicism and changes Sir Patrick's and Dr. Ridgeon's decision. They use it as the reason for preferring to save Blekinsop's life rather than Louis Dubedat's, because Dr. Ridgeon thinks that Blekinshop is a decent and honest man,

whose life is more valuable than Louis' life.

Not only Louis Dubedat, the physicians also make a mistake and violate the social norms when they take an action to threaten and intimidate Louis with death. They call Louis as a blackguard and ignorance of the law by using a justification of what Louis does is only blackmail his family. They use harmful words towards Louis Dubedat such as *Scoundrel, Reptile, and Specimen*.

One of them, Dr. Bloomfield, does the conspiracy with other physicians who spread the superstition (Shaw, 1958:110). He want his patient to believe in the medicine that he writes on the prescription, because physicians and apothecaries live by selling bottles and boxes of physician's stuff to be taken in spoonfuls or in pellets. He spreads the issue just for his and other physicians' benefit.

He also says that he shrugs off his responsibility when a patient finally dies: "But as to most of the rest, if I once began to argue about them, unquestionably the verdict would be, Better dead. When they actually do die, I sometimes have to offer that consolation, thinly disguised, to the family. The fact that they spend money so extravagantly on medical attendance really would not justify me in wasting my talents – such as they are – in keeping them alive" (Shaw, 1958: 155). He says that Louis is better dead and also brags his social status, says that he is higher than Louis.

In 1941, George Orwell wrote that Britain was "the most class-ridden society under the sun. It is a land of snobbery and privilege, ruled largely by the old and silly". (<http://en.wikipedia.org>). Shaw wants to imply that in the English society in early 20th century there was something amiss in its social classes which must be addressed, as everyone in this world has the same right to live without being discriminated or judged in terms of social classes. Shaw presents the poor Louis

Dubedat as a representative of the lower class. Louis' poverty is the reason for his being abandoned in the medical treatment and treated as a victim of the physicians. He also does not have enough money to live. He is alienated and degraded.

In the end of the play, Shaw described pure and kind character, Jennifer Dubedat, does not suspect or blame the physicians for the death of her husband, Louis Dubedat. Though Ridgeon does not want to regret his action and acknowledge his mistake in front of Jennifer, Jennifer says that she only pities Ridgeon for his vain of self-sacrifice. She does not angry with him anymore and also believes that is not Ridgeon's fault. For Jennifer, it is like the principle of rights, just like Ridgeon does not like Louis and also does not believe in him.

Because of Jennifer's generosity, the other physicians give her empathy, respect, and apology for turning her life into agony. The kindness of Jennifer shows that there is a good picture followed by bad picture in the society and good picture is easily to be accepted than bad picture which is rejected and thrown away by the people who stick to social norm.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis in the previous chapter, the reason behind the skeptical attitude of Bernard Shaw is because he said that he has never been able to distinguish between the herbalist and the registered physician. He has a relative who consulted a physician about some ordinary symptoms and was given a strong dose. His relative recovered only through conversion to Christian Science without taking those medicines. He also found out about many malpractices through some physicians' blunders because of the latter's financial interest, aiming to have a lot of money from poor patients.

The physicians in *The Doctor's Dilemma* are depicted as characters who violate medical ethics and the principles of social norms. They do not preserve their duties as physicians. Five physicians and one surgeon —Sir Colenso Ridgeon, Blekinshop, Schutzmacher, Bloomfield Bonington, Sir Patrick Cullen and Walpole—n all violate five out of eight physician ethics. These honorable and genius physicians have failed to keep their oaths.

Shaw wants to present his criticism about the morality, health and social issues because he declared himself as a socialist who is concerned with medical issues and social ills in early 20th century England. He used to write a work within his knowledge and criticism relating to the issue and portraits the human condition which happened in his lifetime. Shaw brought the issue of social background and medical profession to enhance *General Medical Council* and *National Health Service*.

Other principles of moral convictions which are used to measure the positive or negative actions of the character in *The Doctor's Dilemma*, also classify those medical attendants as murderers and Louis Dubedat as a cheater and scoundrel. These characters take their consequences from their action, such as a lost pride, never reaches the goal and also being rejected by the society.

Even though the negative acts are reflected by the main characters, moral values can be learned from minor characters which are depicted in *The Doctor's Dilemma*. These characters do their positive reaction regarding the immoral action of the other characters. For instance, the assistant of Dr. Ridgeon named Emmy, and the wives of Louis named Jennifer and Minnie, they keep their positive behavior according to the rule in the medical ethic [for Emmy] and

society [Jennifer and Minnie]. Their moral acts also maintain their dignity and positive image which fulfill the expectation from the society.

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