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"Environmental Pollution and Professional Responsibility: Ibsen's *A Public Enemy* as a Seminar on Science Communication and Ethics"

Zwart, Hub

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Dr Stockmann, the principal character in Henrik Ibsen's *A Public Enemy*, is a classic example of a whistle-blower who, upon detecting and disclosing a serious case of environmental pollution, quickly finds himself transformed from a public benefactor into a political outcast by those in power. If we submit the play to a "second reading," however, it becomes clear that the ethical intricacies of whistle-blowing are interwoven with epistemological issues. Basically, the play is about the complex task of communicating scientific (notably microbiological) data to lay audiences. This becomes even more apparent when we realise that Stockmann was a contemporary of real "microbe hunters" such as Pasteur and Koch. The play's basic message is that epoch-making scientists (such as Pasteur and Koch) not only produced convincing and reliable data from a scientific point of view, but also acquired the skills and insights needed to enter into a dialogue with their cultural and societal environment.
— Text from The White Horse Press website

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