

ON DR. STOCKMANN'S PARRHESIA: IBSEN'S *AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE* IN THE LIGHT OF FOUCAULT

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ABSTRACT. An honest intellectual dutifully standing with truth against lies and treacheries of his society is a *parrhesiastic* figure in Foucault's terminology. Foucault takes *parrhesia* as the fearless and frank speech regarding the truth of something or a situation before truth-mongering and public deception and he takes the *parrhesiastic* as the spokesperson for truth. In this light, Dr. Stockmann in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* occupies a unique position within Ibsen's political philosophy. Dutifully criticizing what the majority blindly take for granted from their liar leaders in the name of democracy, Dr. Stockmann fulfills the role of a *parrhesiastic* figure that stands against socio-political corruption. He enters a *parrhesiastic game* with both the majority and the officialdom to fulfill his *democratic parrhesia* as a truthful citizen before the duped community, while covertly preparing for his own *philosophic parrhesia* or self-care within the conformist community. However, his final failure lies in his confrontation with democracy itself, which wrongly gives the right of speaking even to the liars. This article thus aims at analyzing Ibsen's play through a Foucauldian perspective regarding the concept of *parrhesia* and its relation to democracy. It is to reveal Ibsen's satire on the fake ideology of democracy and highlight the necessity of humanity's *parrhesiastic* self-care for the well-being of the self and the others.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As one of the most paradoxical concepts in the civil world, democracy is not necessarily a positive phenomenon within political systems since people's individual liberty to act and behave as they desire is never plausible. This issue is mostly manifested in the positive and negative

senses of the concept of *parrhesia* and how Foucault illuminates its anti-democratic status in the figure of the *parrhesiast*, someone who practices *parrhesia*.

According to Foucault in *Fearless Speech*, *parrhesia* stands for fearless speech and the *parrhesiastes* or the *parrhesiast* is the one who fearlessly speaks the truth. The truth is there both for its announcer and its denouncer, so that the *parrhesiast* is not concerned with the essence of truth. He/she is concerned with the *act* and *courage* of telling the truth to those ignorant of it or blind to it. Thus, *parrhesia* is not “a skill” but “a stance” and “a mode of action;” it is a useful role which the *parrhesiast* undertakes for the well-being of others in the community, the city or the state (Foucault 2011:14). It should be noted that Foucault traces the concept of *parrhesia* back to ancient Greek dialectics. *Parrhesia* was a basic component of democracy as it was practiced in ancient Athens. As Wallace (2002) points out, ancient Athenians had the freedom to say almost anything in their assemblies. Even such playwrights as Aristophanes made use of such right to say everything in order to ridicule certain people (pp. 222f.). However, there were also limitations against saying everything with regard to certain issues in politics, morals, and religion, depending on the context and time. As Roberts says, “Athenians boasted of their *parrhesia*, their right to speak their minds, but that right was limited.” Roberts refers to Isokrates (8.14) in arguing that “*parrhesia* was the privilege of the wildest speakers in the Assembly and the comic poets in the theatre.” Such “sensitive subjects” as “political principles, morals and religion” were thus the red lines which had to be respected at certain times. Even there were limits to what could be said about certain individuals. Sometimes, depending on circumstances, “blasphemy” and “slander” were allowed. For example, “the prosecution of Sokrates for impiety may be regarded as a move to check his freedom of expression” (Roberts 2005:148). If a person was considered as “immoral” or his/her views went contrary to “popular opinion,” then there were great dangers against his/her life in having used such unchained “freedom of speech” (Wallace 2002:223)

On the literary ground, in so far as criticizing others have always been categorized under satire, the question was “What limits were set to the comic poet’s freedom of speech?” For Aristophanes and Euripides the limitations were the same political, moral, and religious issues. As Roberts (2005:148) says, certain passages in Euripides (*Hippolytos*, for example) show that Athenians were so proud of their *parrhesia*, but that was limited. It is also clear from passages in Aristophanes’ *Akharnians* that making fun of the community was a risk. On the modern stage, Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People* (1882) is a good case in point. Ibsen’s writes in a letter accompanying the manuscript of the play to his publisher that “I am still a little uncertain whether to call it a comedy or simply a play; it has much of the character of a comedy, but there is also a serious basic theme” (cited in Knutson 1993:161).

An Enemy of the People is a “social-political drama” about a social rebel in which Ibsen “analyzes the effects of the aristocratic individual on the democratic community” (Brustein 1965:52). According to Clurman (1977), the plot of the play was based on a two real events which had been reported to Ibsen. In the 1830s, “a German doctor warned the people at a spa that an outbreak of cholera had occurred there. The ‘sea-season’ at the resort was ruined: the townsfolk stoned the doctor’s house and he had to flee.” The other case was in Norway of “a chemist who had denounced the Christiania Steam Kitchens for neglect of the poor.” When he tried to give a lecture to emphasize his earlier criticism, the chairman attempted to disturb it and the audience made him withdraw (pp. 127f.). The same course of events happens in Ibsen’s play. In this light, the play begins with Dr. Stockmann receiving a letter from a laboratory that shows his experiments regarding the health of the Baths, which is the town spa and a source of income for stockholders and many of the people, have proven it to be filthy and a source of illness for visitors. Accordingly, the water channels should be re-designed and the spa must be closed for a while. The news makes his brother Peter, who is also the mayor, angry. The local press, run by Hovstad and Billing, initially comes to support Dr. Stockmann and publish his article. Feeling that he is the savior of the society as such, Dr. Stockmann is advised by his wife to share the honor of the discovery with his brother to extinguish his jealousy, with which he agrees. On their second meeting, Hovstad tells Dr. Stockmann that the contaminated water is a metaphor for the corrupt politics of the town’s governing circle and he wishes to bring that circle down by publishing the article to criticize their management and supporting his own party, the Liberals, in the elections. Aslaksen, the paper’s printer, also offers Dr. Stockmann his support. Peter Stockmann, however, is afraid of the expenses of reengineering the Baths since it takes two years. The economy of the town will therefore collapse and he also asserts that Dr. Stockmann is exaggerating. While Dr. Stockmann insists on the health issues and how Peter ignored his warnings, Peter is concerned with his own authority. Peter threatens to dismiss his brother from the board of directors of the Baths and that his reputation as a doctor will be ruined. Dr. Stockmann even rejects his brother’s suggestion to write another report to assert that his earlier report was mistaken. In the newspaper office, Billing and Hovstad agree that Dr. Stockmann’s report strengthens their campaign against Peter. As such, their motivation in supporting Dr. Stockmann is for their own political interests. Peter visits them in their office and makes an alliance with them against Dr. Stockmann in order to counter the idea that the baths are contaminated. He explains that re-engineering the Baths is costly, leading to tax the working people, the shopkeepers, and the small homeowners since the shareholders of the Baths refuse to give more money for it. Realizing that printing Dr. Stockmann’s report will hurt the town financially,

the three doubt the truthfulness of the report and decide to ignore it. They agree to print the Peter's statement about the safety of the Baths than Dr. Stockmann's scientific report on its toxicity. Dr. Stockmann's triumph is short-lived since Aslaksen and Hovstad tell him that they do not dare to print his report. Dr. Stockmann claims that he is not defeated, that if the paper will not print his essay, he will issue it as a pamphlet, or, better, he will rent a hall in town and read his paper in public. Captain Horster provides Dr. Stockmann with a room in his house for his speech. The townspeople, having been already brainwashed by Peter and the press, doubt Dr. Stockmann's claims before he even talks about them. No one supports him and Peter inflames the crowd, arguing that no unreliable or exaggerated statement about the hygienic condition of the Baths is logical. When Dr. Stockmann is finally allowed to speak, he shortly refers to the pollution of the Baths and moves on to talk about what he considers to be a worse problem, namely the opinion of the majority. He argues that the majority is never right, while the intellectual minority who can see beyond what the mob sees are right. He argues that people must be educated to cultivate their intelligence for the sake of true democracy. In his view, his townsmen will build their fortune on fraud. This statement angers the crowd who then condemns him and dubs him as a *public enemy* or an *enemy of the people*. The mob decides to stone Dr. Stockmann's house and break his windows. In the next morning, the windows of Dr. Stockmann's house are smashed; the glazier does not accept to repair the windows; the landlord sends a notice that the family is being evicted; Petra returns home from school, having been just fired; Dr. Stockmann's sons return home stoned and bleeding. The only person sympathizing with the family is Captain Horster who has been removed from his position as a ship's captain since he supported Dr. Stockmann. Later, Peter presents his brother with a notice of termination from the Board of Directors of the Baths, informs him that no one is going to employ him either, and advises to leave town for six months and then return to apologize for his claims. Dr. Stockmann refuses to cooperate. Morten Kiil has left a considerable amount of money to his daughter and grandchildren, so Dr. Stockmann is happy that his family will be financially supported. Kiil enters and reveals that the value of the Baths has collapsed due to Dr. Stockmann's claim. Kiil has thus bought the shares in the Baths with a cheap price with the money intended for his daughter and grandchildren. Since the polluted water comes mainly from Kiil's tannery, he hopes to force Dr. Stockmann to recant so that his (Kiil's) name will be cleared. If Stockmann does not agree, the shares will have no value; otherwise, the shares will become valuable. The financial future of Dr. Stockmann's family thus depends on his decision. Hovstad and Aslaksen, suspecting Kiil's activities, ask Dr. Stockmann to promote the Baths. If this happens, they will turn public opinion in his favor and can save their paper from

collapse. Dr. Stockmann rejects them and informs Kiil that he will not participate in his scheme. He tells his wife that they will stay in the town, that he will continue to write against the corruption he has uncovered. Captain Horster offers to let the Stockmanns live in his house, and Dr. Stockmann points out that he still has his poor patients who most need his care. Dr. Stockmann even proclaims that his sons shall not go back to school, that he will teach them himself. He will open a school with Petra in Captain Horster's dining room where the meeting took place and will get other students from the poor to educate them into decent people. He himself feels unbeatably strong because he is standing alone, away from corruptive self-interest or public pressure.

Dr. Stockmann's story presents us with a world of democratic paradoxes, on the socio-political level, in which the citizens' rights over their destiny is in fact against their general well-being. In other words, they cannot distinguish the social truth from the social lie because of the nature of democracy itself. There occur conflicts between the wise minority and the ignorant majority in this play, while the ignorant majority is mostly duped into slavery by the treacherous leaders they have chosen. Such a democracy, as presented by Ibsen, can be further explored by investigating into the right of *parrhesia* in a seemingly democratic society. As Foucault (2011) holds in *The Courage of Truth*, the right of *parrhesia* is not inclusive, befitting merely certain individuals; *parrhesia* initially includes all the citizens. But the point is that where democracy rules, rather no true *parrhesiast* can exist. The true *parrhesiast* mostly embodies features which those in power cannot tolerate. Ibsen's hero, Dr. Stockmann, is remarkable in this regard, and a Foucauldian character-analysis into this parrhesiastic figure helps us with important messages of the play: "Ibsen's private conviction about the filth and disease of modern municipal life, the tyranny of the compact majority, the mediocrity of parliamentary democracy, the cupidity of the Conservatives, and the hypocrisy of the Liberal press" (Brustein 1965:71).

2. PARRHESIA AND DR. STOCKMANN

An Enemy of the People is "the most straightforwardly polemical work Ibsen ever wrote." Ibsen has enriched this play with "the quality of a revolutionary pamphlet" (Brustein 1965:71), and Dr. Stockmann, as Ibsen's alter-ego and his charismatic social rebel, echoes the dramatist's concerns with the revelation of truth in the form of *parrhesia*. The word *parrhesia* was initially documented in Euripides' texts as the individual's "right to speak" or "to take the floor and speak publicly" regarding his personal views about the truth regarding the well-being of the city or the state (Foucault 2011:34). Dr. Stockmann, as an intellectual member of his society, initially embodies the

features of such parrhesiastic figure in its democratic form. As a citizen of a town seemingly ruled democratically, Dr. Stockmann possesses the right to express his opinion over the truth of the Baths to other citizens and officials, whether it is accepted or not. As such, he enjoys the right of *parrhesia* which was, in its ancient Greek form, given to any person who was the wisest regarding the political well-being of the state. Accordingly, Dr. Stockmann enters a “parrhesiastic game” with the mayor, journalists, and citizens, a game in which the one with the right of *parrhesia* tries to reveal “the moral qualities which are required, first, to know the truth, and, secondly, to convey such truth to others” (Foucault 2001:15). In ancient Greek democracy, as Roberts says,

Parrhesia had a public aspect (an equal right to address the Assembly) and a private one—the right to say what you thought in most settings. But even on the comic stage, there was no license to mock certain deities or rites or to attack religion in general or democracy in general. Anti-democratic writing, such as the Old Oligarch’s pamphlet, and anti-democratic talk at home would have been unlikely to incur public displeasure. (Roberts 2005:201)

Parrhesiastic figures could be staged, as such figures are found in texts by Aristophanes and Euripides, but limitations did exist which banned the parrhesiast from exposing truth without any problem. The parrhesiast essentially had features like “frankness,” “truth,” “criticism,” and “duty,” as Foucault delineates them, which had to be accompanied by “danger” in so far as he/she risked his/her life for truth. Under each quality the parrhesiast proved him/herself as the true manifestation a socio-politically honest person. Ibsen’s Dr. Stockmann follows the same traditional model and can be argued to really win the title of a *parrhesiast* in the same way that a priest is canonized.

“Frankness” necessitates the fearless speaker “to say everything” that is in his/her mind and heart through discourse, avoiding rhetorician, using the most literal terminology (Foucault 2001:12). Frankness is then divided into the “pejorative” and the “positive” sense. The “pejorative sense,” or “bad *parrhesia*,” is a form of “chattering,” a characteristic of “the bad democratic constitution” where everyone is allowed to say anything in public regardless of its consequences (ibid., pp. 13f.). It is to express “whatever comes to mind without reference to any principle of reason or truth” and, therefore, a “bad democratic city” emerges from the power relations between its citizens (Foucault 2011:10). The “positive” sense is to mindfully say that something is “really true,” a fact arising from “an exact coincidence between [the parrhesiast’s] belief and truth.” Having the right to say the truth thus requires the moral quality both in knowing the truth and in honestly conveying it to others, although the parrhesiast may sometimes necessarily remain silent before others while he knows the truth (Foucault 2001:14). Accordingly, frankness to tell the truth is part of Dr. Stockmann’s attempts at revealing the

filthiness of the Baths. He is strikingly frank in addressing Peter and the mob regarding the truth surrounding the spa. By scientifically investigating into its condition, Dr. Stockmann believes that the water supply is filthy. Being assured of his discovery, he tells Peter that “the whole Bath establishment is a whited, poisoned sepulchre, I tell you—the gravest possible danger to the public health!” and that “the whole place is a pest-house” (Ibsen 2005:27). As a firm believer in what he says with an “absolute honesty,” according to Gosse (as cited in Egan 2003:89), Dr. Stockmann persists in telling people the truth, although he is warned against his action by Peter. Instances of Dr. Stockmann’s conversation with Peter and the journalists as well as his public speech to unveil the problem with the spa reveal his utmost frankness.

The next factor is the parrhesiast’s “courage” to say something contrary to the majority’s belief which is a proof of his sincerity (Foucault 2001:15). In order to say such dangerous things for any change within the society, the parrhesiast should have an appropriate social status. Besides, taking risks to speak the truth may subject the parrhesiast to a “parrhesiastic game” of life and death (ibid., p. 16). As such, the parrhesiast holds “a specific relationship” to himself as he risks his life in telling the truth “instead of reposing in the security of a life where the truth goes unspoken” (ibid., p. 17). *Parrhesia* thus appears dangerous inasmuch as it calls for courage on the part of the parrhesiast, a heroic attempt which may not be respected by the majority. Except those who please the majority by saying what the latter likes to hear, truth-tellers are not listened to. Conversely, the majority may react negatively to the truth by punishing the parrhesiast who merely speaks “for noble reasons” and “opposes the will of all” (Foucault 2011:37). In this light, it is not then surprising that Dr. Stockmann is covertly warned by his brother and the journalists that they will not support him and that his position will be at stake if he follows his own path. Nevertheless, Dr. Stockmann risks his life in speaking the truth. In accepting the “parrhesiastic game,” Dr. Stockmann risks his life for truth rather than enjoying the security of living as a high member of the town without telling the truth. He ignores all dangers and performs his task “in the name of truth and for the sake of [his] conscience” (Ibsen 2005:73). “By the authority of science” (McFarlane 1960:15), Dr. Stockmann persists in telling the truth “strongly and bravely in the very teeth of the government,” as Meyer says (1963:11). In Ledger’s view,

Dr. Stockmann takes an extreme liberal-individualist position, determined to exercise his right to free speech, his right to publicize the truth, no matter what the consequences are for the wider community. He is at once a libertarian, an individualist and, significantly, anti-democratic, eventually campaigning for an aristocracy of the intellect. He maintains that the rights of the individual and abstract concepts of liberty and truth are more important than owning and

defending property, earning a fortune and taking care of the interests of one's own family, all of which were central preoccupations of nine-century bourgeois liberalism. (Ledger 2008:30)

However, at the heart of the "parrhesiastic game" lies a pact between the parrhesiast and his addressees. They must recognize the importance of listening to the person who risks his life and safety in telling them the truth and showing them their "greatness of soul by accepting being told the truth." This kind of pact establishes the "true game of *parrhesia*" (Foucault 2011:12f.). Dr. Stockmann wants "to see the matter put right, naturally" (Ibsen 2005:29), while his own life will be in danger as the town stands against him and his family. The town's lack of toleration in the face of truth is then democratically paradoxical since they are disillusioned about their well-being.

Regarding "criticism," the parrhesiast may advise an "interlocutor," who might be in a higher social position than the parrhesiast, to behave righteously or to correct his misdeeds. The parrhesiast may thus insult the interlocutor's pride and authenticity by telling him what to do (Foucault 2001:17). This critical characteristic of the parrhesiast is initially satiric. Dr. Stockmann's lines in the play are not pure rhetoric. Knutson (1993:161) argues that Ibsen "invites us to look upon [Dr.] Stockmann with indulgence and good humor". The play is full of "mechanical repetition[s]," or "the imposition of machine-like regularity upon spontaneous, unpredictable human nature," which give the play comic effects. Many of these repetitions come from Dr. Stockmann: he curses the mob repeatedly in his speech with "mechanical regularity" through such words as "devil," "damned," "cursed," etc. (ibid., p. 171). Ibsen also attributes to Dr. Stockmann "a degree of self-involvement that could be problematical were it not mitigated comically by his guileless histrionic nature." Ibsen in fact emphasizes this "self-inflation" by having Dr. Stockmann use "mirth-provoking" jargons just like those of his enemies (Knutson 1993:166). Dr. Stockmann sees himself as a "newly awakened lionhearted" man, for example (Ibsen 2005:96). This boasting is "mock-heroic cant" (Knutson 1993:166), as it is in Peter's threat against Dr. Stockmann's claims: "I shall smite them to the ground—I shall crush them—I shall break down all their defenses, before the eyes of the honest public! That is what I shall do!" (Ibsen 2005:72). Furthermore, "In detailing the community's reactions to [Dr.] Stockmann's unpalatable truth," Ibsen criticizes and "caricatures" three sources of power in particular. The first one is "the petty officialdom that struts about in the person of Peter Stockmann." He has, "with pretentious gravity," multiple roles as mentioned in the *dramatis personae*: mayor, chief of police, chairman of the spa board, "and so forth," adds Ibsen with some "ironic jab." The next one is the printer Aslasken who represents "the landed petit-bourgeois" in his role as the leader of the property owners association (Knutson 1993:162).

His "philosophy of moderation" is "comically epitomized" in occupying the local Temperance Union – the Norwegian term for that organization is "Moderation Association." And finally, the journalists Hovstad and Billing, "the self-proclaimed champions of the free and independent press fearlessly exposing the moral rot of the community," represent the most revealing types of "opportunism and deceit" (ibid., p. 163). Dr. Stockmann is to face these centers of hypocrisy and criticize them following his social duty. This critical characteristic of the parrhesiast may then lead to his banishment or punishment since he is alone in his/her quest. The "uncritical acceptance" of issues which seem "natural, necessary, or ineluctable" turns power relations immobile, so that certain ideas and deeds are taken as valuable, while others are devalued as "invalid, immoral, or deviant" and worthy of "social sanction, legal punishment, or eradication" (Taylor 2011:4).

Even a well-governed city needs the parrhesiast for the moral conducts of its citizens, as Foucault highlights by quoting from Plato's *Laws* in *Fearless Speech*. Thus, while the guardians of the state rule the society, the parrhesiast plays the spokesperson for truth and the well-being of the society. It is thus required that the parrhesiast possess a political position to influence the decisions made by the rulers. However, the parrhesiast merely convinces others to take care of their deeds and does not force them to do so. As Ledger (2008:29) points out, "Stockmann has an abstract, absolute conception of truth and a firm belief that freedom of speech is every individual's right, whatever the wishes or needs of the majority. He expects the press in a liberal and democratic society to be free and independent, uncompromised by capital interests." It then follows that although "freedom of speech is one of the main tenets of modern liberal democracy," it is "thoroughly "at odds with those capital interests on which liberal democracies are founded". Thus, Peter tells Dr. Stockmann that "as a subordinate member of the staff of the Baths, you have no right to express any opinion which runs contrary to that of your superiors." Dr. Stockmann has nothing to say but to wonder: "I, a doctor, a man of science, have no right to!" (Ibsen 2005:58).

In "democratic parrhesia," the parrhesiast must be a citizen himself to be allowed to speak to the assembly. In other words, he must be one of the best citizens, possessing those specific personal, moral, and social qualities which grant an individual the privilege to speak. However, the parrhesiast risks his privilege to speak freely by disclosing a fact which threatens the majority on surface value (Foucault 2001:18). This aspect of *parrhesia* generally occurs within the framework of "community life" as far as the parrhesiast's activities are concerned with the political concerns of the city (ibid., p. 108). Consequently, when the parrhesiast is deprived of his right, he is in a slave's position, and no "parrhesiastic game" can take place. Rejected by the majority, the parrhesiast is then bound to exile or punishment, and the majority is

ironically “protected” from the truth revealed by the parrhesiast (ibid., p. 18). That is the reason why, as a respectable person of the town, Dr. Stockmann proves trustworthy and honest enough to be the Medical Officer of the Municipal Baths unless he discloses the truth of the spa, a fact causing his rejection by the majority. His *democratic parrhesia*, as a member of the town, thus costs him both his position and his respect in the town. Being against setting up the spa from the beginning, he finally decides to reveal the truth: “I wrote opposing the plans before the work was begun. But at that time no one would listen to me. Well, I am going to let them have it now” (Ibsen 2005:30). Now he is sure that his critique follows his duty to reveal a truth which others have ignored and are unwilling to reveal.

According to Symons, Dr. Stockmann is a “soberly heroic doctor who dares and loses all but the consciousness of duty in a fight against unconquerable prejudice” (as cited in Egan 2003:100). Truth-telling implies a “duty” for the parrhesiast, although he may keep silent for expediency or survival (Foucault 2001:19). Just like Socrates who risked his life for the sake of his duty, Dr. Stockmann takes it as his duty to inform them of the filth of the spa and its dangers for their health. He believes that “it is a splendid thing for a man to be able to feel that he has done a service to his native town and to his fellow-citizens” (Ibsen 2005:32). As such, he believes that he has done his “duty” (ibid., p. 121). Still further, when Peter denounces Dr. Stockmann’s right of challenging him regarding the Baths, Dr. Stockmann says that “there is only one single thing in the world a free man has no right to do,” and that is “not to soil himself with filth; he has no right to behave in a way that would justify his spitting in his own face” (ibid., p. 136). In fact, Dr. Stockmann exemplifies the “social responsibility” which his opponents have substituted with “self-interest” (Milne 2008:52). In Dr. Stockmann’s own words, he persists on taking his “stand on right and truth” (Ibsen 2005:63). However, he is duped of his service when he is labeled a public enemy than a public servant. In Johnsen’s words, this change of social value stands for “the social process of polarization around a ‘friend’ of the people,” that is, social values can be changed in a way that a friend of people becomes “an enemy of the people” (Johnsen 2003:56). As Herbert Marcuse (2005:6) holds, an “unhistorical” existence, away from the “historical” one, includes “the isolated individual and the unconscious masses alike” who may “misunderstand” the historical situation or even “rebel against it,” but even in that case their existence lacks the foundation to provide for the radical action. Accordingly, neither an isolated individual nor a pure conformist to the mass may ever understand the historical necessity of the time. That is why, although Dr. Stockmann is potent enough to perform Ibsen’s “naked rebellion” (Brustein 1965:71), he comes to recognize “the imperfections of modern humanity” (Brustein 1965:71), and is

ironically enough left sterile on his own. Nevertheless, Dr. Stockmann fulfills the features of a parrhesiast. In a Foucauldian interpretation, Dr. Stockmann

uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy. (Foucault 2001:20)

3. PARRHESIA AND DEMOCRACY

In Act 4, Ibsen gathers “all groups of the community at the meeting. The powerful, children and women, partisans, a drunk, workmen, new bourgeois; all represent as such a miniature democracy” (Berntzen 2011:19). The “parrhesiastic game” in fact culminates in Act 4. *Parrhesia* is a practice which provides for “the free existence of a free citizen” in giving him/her the right to exercise his “privileges in the midst of others, in relation to others, and over others” (Foucault 2011:34f.). Such benefit is accessible to all the citizens in a democratic society, as represented in the meeting in Act 4. In other words, democracy, as founded by constitution, allows all people to legally exercise power over their destiny and each other. Such egalitarianism is doomed to bestow equal positions to all kinds of *parrhesia*, to the degree that even “bad, immoral, or ignorant speakers” may find the opportunity to speak and thus “lead the citizenry into tyranny” or endanger the city (ibid., p. 77). Thus, several ordinary men arrive early into the lecture room and begin to slander Dr. Stockmann. As such, *parrhesia* may be dangerous for democracy itself, hence the “dangerous relations” that seemingly exist “between democracy, logos, freedom, and truth” (ibid.), and the challenges for the parrhesiast. Therefore, if democratic institutions prove impotent to accommodate truth-telling in the form of *parrhesia*, it is due to the lack of “ethical differentiation” that they suffer from (ibid., p. 35).

Addressing the townspeople in frank words, Dr. Stockmann talks about and reveals the truth behind the recent pollution of the Baths. His frankness is based on his authentic documents, while he is aware of the fact that his speech puts him and his family in danger. Yet he risks criticizing the officials in favor of his moral and civil duty in saving people from further harm. The discrepancy here is between the true parrhesiast and the false one; the former, represented by Dr. Stockmann, has the right of parrhesia due to his knowledge and sense of truth and the latter, manifested in Peter and the journalists, has the right but not in a right way because of the paradoxical propagandas of democracy. Morten Kiil once tells Dr. Stockmann that “[your action] would just serve [the whole town], and teach them a lesson. They think themselves so much cleverer than we old fellows” (Ibsen 2005:37). This satirical remark

points to public illusory claims over intellectuality and the well-being of the city in contrast to the leadership of the intellectuals. In fact, intellectuals do not conform to communal demands. As Kaufman holds, Ibsen's criticism in the play is against both "abstract demand claiming absolute validity and all codes and social norms making similar claims for conformity." As Kaufman continues, Ibsen instead tries to establish "a new truth" which "imposes a much greater responsibility upon the individual than either the "ideal demand" or submission to "generally accepted codes." However, people have been duped into believing that their interests are the same as those of the ruling truth-mongers; they have been submerged in the "life's lie" rather than attracted towards the "truth" (Kaufman 1965:19). Hovstad, before taking side with Peter, criticizes the pretensions of the officialdom to be concerned with the well-being of the city. As a journalist, Hovstad believes that "the whole of the town's interests have, little by little, got into the hands of a pack of officials," their "friends and adherents," and the rich who have the rest of the town "entirely in their hands" (Ibsen 2005:40). However, people still take side with this group of minorities since they think these leaders watch over the interests of people as well. Such blindness on the side of people is ironical when we consider the fact that, democratically but not righteously, they have the right of *parrhesia*. The problem is that "granting freedom of speech to everyone risks mixing up true and false" (Foucault 2011:44). Peter Stockmann, Johnsen (2003:57) suggests, "identifies himself with the whole community to hide his own self-interest." He has tried to keep the community "from turning on him" through his former "spotless reputation" and "ostentatious self-denial." Such leaders claim "to have no personal desire which could compete with others—they only desire for everyone, the whole community", while in essence he is exactly behaving in a way not to make people suspect his motives. Peter is paradoxically given the right of *parrhesia* and, acknowledged by the majority, he only talks about issues that people wish for. It is Peter's "unexceptional opinion that to act on behalf of one's community is to be a good fellow whatever the lies it entails." Ibsen here considers the community as "Vanity Fair, redeemed only by the few who see it rightly" (May 1985:66). Shaw writes that

It has never been proven that democracy is the best form of government; it exists because "the people willed to have it," and just as men, forced to submit to kings, idealized them, citizens now idealize "Monsieur Tout-le-Monde [Mr. Everybody], and make it blasphemy against Democracy to deny that the majority is always right, although that, as Ibsen says, is a lie. (Shaw 1913:94)

As such, he is mostly a "flatterer" than a parrhesiast. The "honest orator," on the other hand, just like Dr. Stockmann, possesses the courage and ability to contradict the public desire when he knows what they do not know. He has

“a critical and pedagogical role to play,” obliging him to try to “transform the will of the citizens so that they will serve the best interests of the city” (Foucault 2001:82). It is then obvious that in the ideological tension between Dr. Stockmann and Peter regarding the Baths, the former plays the parrhesiast and the latter the flatterer. And yet Dr. Stockmann, to reveal the truth, has to surpass his own brother who uses the very means of democracy to stimulate the mob against him. Accordingly, “*parrhesia* in its positive, critical sense” cannot exist where democracy exists (Foucault 2001:83). The parrhesiast *is* to reveal what would guarantee the “salvation or welfare” of the populace, and thus, *parrhesia* involves the personal features of a “courageous orator and political leader” as well (ibid., p. 102). We thus see Dr. Stockmann as a *political parrhesiast* craving for the welfare of the townspeople. As Foucault says, parrhesia is politically “opposed to the demos’ will, or to those who flatter the desires of the majority or the monarch” or the officials (ibid.). In Dr. Stockmann’s words, liars and flatters as such are but “vermin” and “wolf:”

What does the destruction of a community matter, if it lives on lies? It ought to be razed to the ground. I tell you-- All who live by lies ought to be exterminated like vermin! You will end by infecting the whole country; you will bring about such a state of things that the whole country will deserve to be ruined. (Ibsen 2005:119)

And later, “A party leader is like a wolf, you see--like a voracious wolf. He requires a certain number of smaller victims to prey upon every year, if he is to live (ibid., p. 152). Peter is ready to restore Dr. Stockmann’s position to him if only the latter withdraws his claims. He also considers the public opinion as “an extremely mutable thing.” Wondered at Peter’s decision, Dr. Stockmann dubs his actions as “foxy tricks” (ibid., p. 136). Peter’s tyranny against the truth of the Baths is further clarified in his opposition against Dr. Stockmann. As Foucault (2011:13) says, not only *parrhesia* is the truth-teller’s courage in telling the truth despite risks, but also it is “the interlocutor’s courage in agreeing to accept the hurtful truth that he hears”. Peter’s deliberate abnegation of the problem of the Baths thus highlights his tyrannical nature against truth. Such a parrhesiast as Dr. Stockmann may thus enrage his enemy, who is here somebody in charge of the majority, and “arouse the hostility of the city” under the tyrant’s control in his speech about truth, merely to be rewarded with “vengeance and punishment” (ibid., pp. 24f.).

Dr. Stockmann is against the fact that “the common folk, the ignorant” of the community should have “the same right to pronounce judgment and to, approve, to direct and to govern, as the isolated, intellectually superior personalities in it” (Ibsen 2005:114). Addressing the mob in Act IV, Dr. Stockmann believes that “broad-mindedness is almost precisely the same thing as morality,” and thus “it is absolutely inexcusable . . . to proclaim . . . the false doctrine that it is the masses, the crowd, the compact majority, that have

the monopoly of broad-mindedness and morality” (ibid., pp. 117f.). Accordingly, the majority mostly refuses to attend the parrhesiastic game with the parrhesiast and thus stands against him. Then follows the mob’s uproar in renouncing Dr. Stockmann, against which he says:

raising up the masses would mean nothing more or less than setting them straightway upon the paths of depravity! . . . ignorance, poverty, ugly conditions of life . . . do the devil’s work! . . . Lack of oxygen weakens the conscience. And there must be a plentiful lack of oxygen in very many houses in this town, I should think, judging from the fact that the whole compact majority can be unconscientious enough to wish to build the town’s prosperity on a quagmire of falsehood and deceit. (ibid., p. 118)

Dr. Stockmann’s satire is directed at the majority’s resistance to the truth, as it is stimulated by the liberal press. When Ibsen wrote to the Danish critic Georg Brandes to thank him for defending the play, he noted that the conservatives’ harsh reaction did not surprise him and that

What can be said of the attitude assumed by the so-called liberal press—of these leaders of the people who speak and write of freedom of action and thought but who at the same time make themselves the slaves of the supposed opinions of their subscribers? . . . It will never, in any case, be possible for me to join a party that has the majority on its side. (Ibsen 1964:198)

According to Ledger (2008:27), “The savage satire” of the play “is directed against the moral timidity” of the liberal press in Norway. Although it is “the sheep-like ignorance of the masses” which Ibsen is mostly afraid of, he finds the source of their ignorance in “those members of the liberal bourgeoisie who choose to misinform them” (ibid., p. 28). His verbal attacks against the majority become even more straightforward later: “the whole lot of them in the town are cowards; not a man among them dares do anything for fear of the others” (Ibsen 2005:126), and that “every man is the slave of his Party” (ibid., p. 127). Johnsen (2003:65) argues that “the town is in a state of crisis” and “the amount of free-floating resentment and rivalry is remarkable.” The members of the “compact majority” is “the most cowardly rearguard characters in the play” and they are merely after their “property values” rather than the truth (Sandberg 2015:93f.). The presumed democratic state of such a city is thus anti-parrhesiastic as far as the individuals, who might be the members of different parties, may not be able to express their ideas in case of knowing the truth. As Dr. Stockmann says, truth is relative: “truths are by no means as long-lived at Methuselah” (Ibsen 2005:112). This further illuminates the fact that *democratic parrhesia* cannot be true in a democratic state where there are parties which do not necessarily accord with each other. This point

highlights Dr. Stockmann's famous motto, that "the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone" (ibid., p. 155), belonging to no party and being independent. Ibsen has further contrasted "the enlightened and persecuted minority with the ignorant, powerful majority" (Benét 1998:498), a majority that in Dr. Stockmann's words "turn every idea topsy-turvy" and "make a regular hotchpotch of right and wrong" (Ibsen 2005:128). This "hotchpotch" of people, mostly in the form of parties that brainwash individuals into objects, is further compared to "a sausage machine" which mashes up all sorts of heads together into the same mincemeat-fatheads and blockheads, all in one mash" (ibid., p. 133). Such people "disguise themselves ideally" and falsely "pose as society, The People, as Democracy, as the Solid Liberal Majority" (Shaw 1913:94). Just as Hovstad initially believes in the play, the pollution of the Baths is simply "a metaphor for the corruption of the spirit" (Shepherd-Barr 2015:89), a metaphor for the corruption in "*all* civil and political institutions" (Ledger 2008:30), "a symptom of spiritual disease" (May 1985:66), or "an analogy for a corrupt society" which is highlighted by Dr. Stockmann in his public speech, and the play is offered as "a polemic." Ibsen thus attacks "the compact, complacent liberal majority" and the "sentimental devotion to 'the mass'" while emphasizing "the aristocratic principle" of the "the conscious minority" against the "mediocrities who win popular applause" (Williams 1964:85). These "mediocrities" are in fact, in Foucault's words, the demagogues who act as flatterers and "people's courtier[s]" (2011:59). Those like Peter Stockmann, Aslaksen, and Billing are merely concerned with their own "self-interest at the expense of the common good" (Milne 2008:52). On the other hand, such demagogues ironically consider themselves as people's chosen leaders who can determine the well-being of the city and its citizens – one can argue that they wrongly think that they are the heroes of their age, as Thomas Carlyle would put it – while in principle they are serving themselves. For Carlyle, there is "no confidence" in the effectiveness of democratic institutions. He considers only a few individuals in every age to be "leaders" and the rest of the people are "followers and are happy only as followers." A well-organized society has certain "gifted leaders" who have "scope to govern effectively." Such leaders are, for Carlyle, "heroes" of the age. For "liberals and democrats," however, such heroes are "dictators" (Greenblatt 2006:1005).

Dr. Stockmann is in fact that Carlylean hero whose certain belief in the underlying corruption at work in the town makes him a dictator in people's mind. In Carlyle's political philosophy, "the democratic assumption that all voters are equally capable of choice and the assumption that people value liberty more than they value order seemed to him nonsense" (ibid.). In Foucault's view, namely "the best" in a state or city attempt to decide "the city's good, interest, and utility." What is useful for the city is simultaneously beneficial for them as well. Accordingly, by encouraging the citizens to decide

and take actions in favor of the city, “the best” are only taking care of their own interests (Foucault 2011:42). The distinction between true and false discourse is therefore hard in democracy since the citizens cannot distinguish between good and bad speakers, between parrhesiasts and liars. What happens in Ibsen’s play thus highlights the hymen that separates true leaders from traitors within democracy and how people are simply duped into believing what is essentially false. While Dr. Stockmann is “an epitome of a politically committed intellectual” in making his best to fight back political corruption for the well-being of his society (Walla 2014:23), his heroship is inversely considered as blasphemy.

Another issue which in Ibsen’s ideology leads to social injustice is conformism. Following Dr. Stockmann’s public speech and disgrace, citizens refrain from making any contacts with him and his family as they do not *dare* to offend the public opinion about him. This is in contrast to the nature of *democratic parrhesia* in which each citizen has the right to tell what he thinks is true. Due to self-interest and the fear of banishment or punishment, they “conform to policies they do not approve of but fear to oppose.” So democracy is in fact represented as controlled by “mobocracy” (Milne 2008:53), or “a mob community” in Meyer’s words (1963:8). The mob are “the most numerous,” but they are not “the best,” and “not being the best, they are the worst,” thus Foucault says (2011:42). The coward public and the few powerful truth-mongers, who dupe the public, thus act as two forces which in Ibsen’s view destabilize democracy. Still further, “the brutality of police-states” reinforces the stabilization of lies, as Lucas believes (cf. Lucas 1962; as cited in Milne 2008:64). Values then seem to be overthrown as democracy provides a place where *parrhesia* increasingly turns into an impossible phenomenon. In democratic societies, *parrhesia* is ironically dangerous for the overall well-being of the city as it involves everyone’s freedom to express their opinions according to their passions or interests. In such parrhesiastic freedom, false and true discourses all get mixed up in the “game of democracy” (Foucault 2011:35f.). In Heims’ opinion, although Dr. Stockmann was initially certain about his position and public respect, he comes to know that these survive as long as he “conforms” to the social necessities of democracy rather than serving “his sense of duty to truth” for the well-being of it. The play thus scrutinizes the possibility of the corruption of democracy “through the manipulation of public opinion by instruments of mass media.” Democracy is thus turned over its head and Dr. Stockmann is labeled “a public enemy” than “the community’s savior” (as cited in Milne 2008:58).

“Doctor Stockmann and I got on so very well together; we agree on so many subjects,” Ibsen wrote his publisher when he sent him the manuscript of *Enemy*, “but the doctor is more muddle-headed than I am; . . . he has other peculiarities that permit him to say things which would not be taken so well if

I myself said them” (Ibsen 1964:210). Ibsen even highlighted his affinity with his protagonist in choosing his name: “Stockmann” is after the house in which Ibsen was born and lived as a child, “Stockmannsgaarden” (the Stockmann property), in Skien, Norway (Templeton 2018:110). As “Ibsen’s doppelganger,” Dr. Stockmann tries to uncover “social disease and corruption,” and as such, he is like “a physician who uncovers diseased water and social corruption” (Milne 2008:43). The parrhesiast acts likewise and is concerned with the well-being of his city and fellow-citizens. It is rather interesting that Dr. Stockmann, a physician, is giving his speech of truth in a Captain’s house. The description of Captain Horster’s house at the beginning of Act IV suggests a small ship in which passengers enter for a journey toward salvation under Dr. Stockmann’s leadership on the platform. As Foucault interprets Philodemus, *parrhesia* is not only “a quality, virtue, or personal attitude,” but also “a *techné*” with similarities to “the art of medicine and to the art of piloting a boat.” To be useful, both of these arts should follow rules and principles. In a sense, “navigation, medicine, and the practice of *parrhesia* are all ‘clinical techniques’.” In either art, the pilot/captain or the physician must decide, order, instruct, and exercise power over their subjects for their safety and health (Foucault 2011:110f.). However, “although we live in a democracy, there is no *parrhesia*” (ibid., p. 38); it disappears following the distorting effects of institutions and “the indulgence of flattery” (ibid., p. 39). The truth cannot be basically told “in the form of democracy understood as the right for everyone to speak;” it can be announced only when an “ethical discrimination” or “an essential quantitative division between the good and bad” is “marked, maintained, and institutionalized.” It is only after this that the political field is ready for the annunciation of truth in favor of all people (ibid., p. 44). As Shepherd-Barr suggests, *An Enemy of the People*

expresses this through its eugenics as well as its environmentalism. Doctor Stockmann looks forward to the day when there will be an aristocracy of the liberated; he talks about the “vermin” and the “curs” up north (i.e., the uneducated and impoverished) whom he was forced to treat as a doctor but whom he would be perfectly happy to see eliminated . . . (Shepherd-Barr 2015:88)

Valorizing truth-telling based on philosophy and the philosopher’s “ethical choice” suggests that democracy shall be eliminated; there must be “either democracy or truth-telling” (Foucault 2011:45). As such, Dr. Stockmann undertakes, in what Foucault later expresses, “the Platonic reversal” which includes “the validation of truth-telling as the defining principle of a politeia (of a political structure, a constitution, a type of regime) from which, precisely, democracy is carefully excluded.” Having criticized “democratic *parrhesia*,” since there cannot exist “courageous truth-telling” in democracy, “the Platonic reversal” indicates that a “good politeia” must be established on

“a true discourse,” excluding “democracy and demagogues” (Foucault 2011:45). Templeton argues that

It is true that Dr. Stockmann, at the height of his fulminations, loses his self-control and becomes a ranting demagogue, making himself the “enemy of the people,” but he has excellent reasons for despising his fellow townspeople. The utterly self-interested citizens whom Dr. Stockmann denounces, intoxicated by their rhetoric of hate, become a screaming mob throwing stones through the Stockmann family’s windows. Their symbolic representative is the town drunk who careens through the act-four town meeting. And Ibsen deliberately passed on to Dr. Stockmann his own low opinion of “the people.” (Templeton 2018:109)

The rejection of *parrhesia* and the parrhesiast in democratic institutions is due to the fact that “the structure of democracy” cannot accommodate “ethical differentiation” the absence of which in democratic societies highlights the homelessness of truth and its exclusion from people’s ontological sphere (Foucault 2011:64). In Heims’ words, Dr. Stockmann’s “moral rectitude” has therefore no meaning for people (as cited in Milne 2008:57). As Foucault holds,

Democracy can give only one place to moral excellence, a place which itself embodies the refusal of democracy. If there really is someone virtuous, let democracy disappear and let men obey this man of virtue, this man of ethical excellence, like a king. (Foucault 2011:52)

“Dr. Stockmann has turned aristocrat,” Hovstad addresses Dr. Stockman in his speech in Act IV (Ibsen 2005:112). For Lucas (1962; as cited in Milne 2008:63), this sentence can be applied to Ibsen himself as “only a half-truth;” Ibsen himself went on with his liberalism, but he had recognized that “there is no real progress for communities without progress in the individuals composing them.” Hence his belief that “democratic liberty required, also, an aristocratic element ‘of character, of mind and will’” (ibid.). In fact, Dr. Stockmann’s aristocracy is a virtuous deed against the slave virtues of the mob. In Heims’ view, Ibsen is not actually condemning democracy altogether, while he is attacking ignorance (as cited in Milne 2008:58). Ibsen in fact uses “Dr. Stockmann as a Parrhesiastes” to have a word with truthful people: the world can be clean of corruption only without “mental pollution” as manifested in public “lying, complacency, selfishness, and neglect” (Abedi 2017:29).

In his “depiction of society as infected public,” Ibsen believed that the people of his time “were not mature enough to hear the truth and should instead be left in peace with their stupid life-lies” (Fulsås 2011:3). As Johnsen (2003:57) says, in the modern period, “crowds abstracted by politicians and journalists substitute for real crowds.” Journalists and politicians thus mostly

speak for a crowd that is “too large to gather.” The consequence is that only an “imaginary crowd abstracted by journalism . . . investigates, castigates, and pillories in the name of the public.” Such a crowd “cannot act decisively” (ibid.), since they neither represent all people nor are necessarily wise enough to decide for all. A true democracy can thus, in Dr. Stockmann’s view, be established through a “liberal-minded and high-minded” citizenry (Ibsen 2005:153), who can “drive all the wolves out of the country” (ibid., p. 154). In Ibsen’s own words, “What is the majority? The ignored mass! The intelligence is always in the minority” (Meyer 1963:14). In a letter to his Brabdes, Ibsen held that

[I] must of necessity say, ‘The minority is always right.’ Naturally I am not thinking of that minority of standpatters who are left behind by the great middle party that we call liberal. I mean that minority which leads the van and pushes on to points the majority has not reached. I mean: that man is right who has allied himself most closely with the future. (Ibsen 1964:198f).

Templeton (2018:109) suggests that Dr. Stockmann “paraphrases Ibsen’s letter in his definition of the minority”:

I am thinking of the few, the scattered few amongst us, who have absorbed new and vigorous truths. Such men stand, as it were, at the outposts, so far ahead that the compact majority has not yet been able to come up with them; and there they are fighting for truths that are too newly-born into the world of consciousness to have any considerable number of people on their side as yet” (Ibsen 2005:112).

Dr. Stockmann, as an “Ibsenist creature” (von Hofmannsthal 1962:86), as “an Ibsenian hero who speaks truth to power” (Templeton 2018:110), cannot let himself “be beaten off the field by public opinion and the compact majority and all that devilry,” only to prove that

the liberals are the most insidious enemies of freedom – that party programmes strangle every young and vigorous truth – that considerations of expediency turn morality and justice upside down – and that they will end by making life here unbearable. (Ibsen 2005:151)

His final decision then is to establish a school of *parrhesia* where attendants can govern themselves and internalize truth-telling as a moral duty. This school will educate “street urchins” and “regular ragamuffins” in order to save them from ignorance and establish a better democracy (Milne 2008:58); this school will nurture the “mongrels” to sow “the seeds of new thinking for new generations” (Shepherd-Barr 2015:88). Ibsen’s attack on the majority then reveals itself as he directs his criticism against the narrow-mindedness of a “well-trained herd” following “self-satisfaction” than the truth. What is

important for Ibsen is then “the revolutionizing of the human mind” (Kaufman 1965:19), which is going to have its starting point at Dr. Stockmann’s new school, reflecting the theme of revolt against the populace that Nietzsche ignited in his followers’ minds. Brustein (1965:22) holds that “Ibsen looked forward to ‘an aristocracy of character, of will, of mind’” and Nietzsche looked forward to “new nobility . . . which shall be the adversary of all populace and potentate rule”. Gjesdal (2014:109) also holds that “the kind of elitist sentiments of Dr. Stockmann” are often associated with Nietzsche’s thinking in so far as Nietzsche’s work was “much debated and discussed in Scandinavia when Ibsen was working on the play”.

Dr. Stockmann’s parrhesiastic attempt at revolutionizing is also directed towards his own character development, which is in parallel lines with the ancient practice of *parrhesia* as a means to human perfection. *Parrhesia* is also an attempt against “self-ignorance” (Foucault 2001:102f.), and Dr. Stockmann’s moral conscience helps him out of such ignorance. In Ibsen’s ideology, “all human knowledge, judgment, and action” can only claim a relative truth because of the fact that humanity is subjected to motives which change over time, and that the consequences of our attempts at truth are not always known. Thus, the most potent individual is always working for “self-liberation and purification” since one cannot reject one’s role in the overall progress of society (Kaufman 1965:22). *Parrhesia* is “a practice” (Foucault 2001:106), a practice in shaping proper relations both with one’s self and others.

4. CONCLUSION

Democracy provides people in any society with the power of free speech. This power assumes a right for each individual to speak freely for his/her own rights. However, not many individuals can think about the truth or conscientiously tell the truth when the well-being of all of the people in a society is concerned. If we consider it a duty on the part of the intellectuals to distinguish right from wrong and speak for truth, Ibsen’s Dr. Stockman stands for that role and as a *parrhesiast* enters such a “parrhesiastic game” with his fellow citizens to tell them the truth. As such, he is in fact a *democratic parrhesiast* in serving the well-being of all. The paradox, which leads to his failure, lies in his confrontation with democracy itself, which is a negative form of *parrhesia* or an abused but existent aspect of the term that blocks truth-telling in its righteous form. Dr. Stockmann’s failure as a *democratic parrhesiast* highlights Ibsen’s covert attack on democracy as a sugarcoated pill that hides truth-mongers behind the scenes of democratic power relations. Political truth-mongers in fact symbiotically live off the ignorance of the mob that constitutes the foundation of democracy. Democracy then becomes

mobocracy which leaves no place for the righteous citizen acting for the benefit of all. Dr. Stockmann's final decision in the face of such catastrophe is then to raise a new race who can internalize virtues such as truth-telling and social responsibility, as in ancient philosophic schools where *parrhesia* was an essential part of the path to an individual's perfection, hence *philosophic parrhesia*.

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