

# Political Corruption and Intellectual Activism in Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People*

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**Résumé** – Le présent article traite des problèmes liés à la corruption politique et de l'engagement de l'élite intellectuelle en matière de la politique. La politique étant définie comme la gestion des affaires de la cité n'est pas toujours sans reproche pour ceux qui l'exercent. La politique loin d'être une lutte pour la cause commune se veut une guerre d'intérêts souvent égoïstes. L'homme politique pour la plupart du temps veut satisfaire ses propres egos au lieu du bien être commun. Pour cela, il met tous les moyens en place pour aboutir ; parmi les stratégies dont il fait usage l'on peut noter la manipulation de la presse, de la conscience des masses et l'exercice de l'opportunisme, c'est-à-dire profiter des failles, exploiter des occasions inattendues à ses propres fins. Par conséquent, cet article vise à montrer comment un intellectuel engagé dans la politique, peut inverser la tendance en jouant un rôle déterminant dans la gestion saine des affaires de la cité victime de manipulation politique.

**Key Words:** politics, corruption, opportunism, manipulation and intellectual activism.

## 1. Introduction

Politics as the science of government is critically fundamental to all human societies. However, it important to know that there are both good and bad politics. Bad politics is concerned with politics based on individual welfare whereas good politics aims at boosting the public life standards. Good politics leads to good governance and the advantages entitled to it are not to be overlooked. As a result, every human society under the sun dreams of good governance, because human beings aspire to a descent life, a peaceful and joyful existence which cannot be attained outside democratic principles of government. There is a saying that a blind man cannot lead a blind man, if he does both will end up in a pit. Thus, a blind man needs a good-sighted man to guide him for a good destination. This should be the same with political life. Under normal circumstances, an intellectual could be an idealistic political leader. An intellectual when in political situation should be prepared to take all the challenges necessary for good governance in order to contribute to communal welfare. However, we assist to bad politics today and many intellectuals fall victims to this bad leadership oppressing and suppressing their fellow men for the sake of their personal egos.

Our article, therefore intends to explore the issues of politics and discuss the responsibility of an intellectual political activist as viewed in the play *An Enemy of the People* by the Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen. Should an intellectual view politics as something opposed to morality as the Lithuanian-born French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas lets us believe: "politics is opposed to morality, as philosophy to naïveté"<sup>6</sup>?

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<sup>6</sup>Quoted by Bill Swainson, ed. *Encarta Book of Quotations*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2000, p. 562.

## 2. The Essence of Politics

According to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, Politics is the art or science of government. It is the art or science of guiding and influencing the governmental policies. Politics is also the art or science concerned with winning and holding control over a government. Political activities are characterized by artful and often dishonest practices.

Our intention in this section therefore is to explore human nature in terms of political issues. There is a saying that man is political by nature. Aristotle (384 BC-322 BC), a Greek philosopher wrote in his book titled *Politics* that, "Man is by nature a political animal."<sup>7</sup> This implies that from his birth man is predisposed to do politics; this because man is a social being. In his book *The Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes begins with the analysis of human nature in terms of politics. In his analysis he claims that man is essentially selfish, he is moved to action not by his intellect or reason, but by his appetites, desires and passions<sup>8</sup>.

These observations made about politics land us on the ground that politics nurtures in its nature the germs of unfair competitions. But, before a proper delineation of false faith in politics let us apprehend the idealistic vision of this human art or science known as politics. Politics being defined as the art or science of government should be a very good thing for the leadership of every human society.

According to anthropologists and sociologists, man unlike other animals, is a social being. Paul Bohannan, a social anthropologist, once wrote:

Man is, in other words, a social being. All animals are, of course, to a greater or lesser degree social – all in fact can be seen as a single community of the living. But social man is man in touch with his own kind. Alone, without communication with other human beings, he is not wholly human<sup>9</sup>.

This quotation suggests that man cannot live alone; he needs the cooperation of his fellow human beings for a meaningful existence. To live in group supposes the presence of a leader who will guide and coordinate his peers.

According to Thomas Hobbes, human happiness cannot be attained under the state of nature. This means that if man refuses to organize himself like other animals he will not be happy. For him to enjoy his life he needs to organize himself in social groups endowed with leaders known as politicians.

Likewise, J-J Rousseau believes that any government should provide their society with sustainable happiness, peace and indeed security: "Government is there to provide the greatest happiness for the greater number; to a Marxist the answer may

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted by Bill Swainson, *ibid*, p. 32.

<sup>8</sup> Quoted by Norman L. Geisler, and Paul D. Feinberg, *Introduction to Philosophy. A Christian Perspective*, New York: Baker Books, 1980. p.63

<sup>9</sup> Paul Bohannan, *Social Anthropology*. New Delhi: Surjeet Publications, 1963 (2007), p.3.

be to put an end to the exploitation of man by man. Rousseau says that the state gives men security and protects their property.”<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, unlike Lenin who thinks that the state is a structure put up in place to oppress and suppress other classes in society, both Hobbes and Rousseau strongly uphold that a human government or state is meant for the welfare of any society. This standpoint is quite convincing to me that if human beings, thanks to their intellectual abilities, organize themselves in groups, societies and communities it is for their own good.

Niccolo De Bernado Machiavelli, an Italian political philosopher also agrees on the belief that human beings without exception, desire a strong and effective government. Following behind the same steps, I argue that politics implies a good sense of morality. For me without high moral standards politics cannot reach its ultimate goal of providing people with peace, security and happiness. Plato can testify to it that ethics is political and politics is ethical. Both concepts call for each other. A good political leader is the one who is morally sound. I espouse the policy of philosopher-king, the policy according to which kingship should be the rightful vocation of philosophers, wise and knowledgeable people who hate and fight against all kinds of corruption for the sake of a shared social welfare.

However, my analytic and critical observation of politics as applied in *An Enemy of the People* and politics as it is handled worldwide, leads me to the conclusion that far from being the source of a good social leadership politics may be a dirty selfish game seeking to oppress and suppress according to Lenin’s terms. In his critical look at politics, Machiavelli finds that politics is an end in itself. According to him, the purpose of politics is to preserve and increase political power itself. Most governments depend largely on force and craft to achieve their political ends. The use of these immoral means makes of politics a filthy game. People in power always fool the masses, the general public. Through the manipulation of language during propagandas or campaigns politicians cause people believe that they are virtuous people seeking the emancipation and prosperity of everybody without exception. Yet, they are fighting for their own stomachs. George Orwell made this remark in his essay “Politics and the English Language” when he claimed: “One ought to recognize that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language.”<sup>11</sup> Even while in hard times or chaotic periods, politicians use deceitful language as a powerful weapon to control people’s mind, soul and body letting them see white where things are critically black creating unachievable hope and optimism in them. Politicians mind more the appearance than the reality knowing that people are much more lured by their sight of appearances than believing in what is invisibly true and real.

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<sup>10</sup> Quoted by E. Kolawole Ogundowole, *Aspects of European Political Philosophy: An Introductory Handbook*. Lagos: Correct Counsels Ltd, 2004.pp.2-3

<sup>11</sup> Quoted by Bill Swainson, *ibid*, p. 711.

Backing this state of things, Machiavelli argues: "it is desirable to present an appearance of virtue before the ignorant public."<sup>12</sup> For a politician, the end justifies the means, the rationality or justification matters a little, what is important is the results not the procedure. Nietzsche as well as Machiavelli admits that for politics power is an end in itself to be achieved without any regard to moral standards or ethical character. A ruler will perish if he always says the truth; he must be as cunning as a fox, as false as the weather and as fierce as a lion for his political survival.

In this vein, E. Kolawole Ogundowole comments on Machiavellian stand that a ruler must therefore have the characteristics of a fox in order to outwit his opponents with cunning and stealth of a lion in order to intimidate his enemies. It is useful for a prince to be faithless on occasions. Thus, if a politician is not as false as a fox he cannot stand before his political rivals and if he is not as ferocious as a lion he cannot intimidate his subjects and rule over them effectively. Politicians are people who are talented in counterfeiting virtues. A prince therefore, disregards the question of whether his actions would be called virtuous or vicious. A ruler is a person who knows how to cope with the situations prevailing, whether he uses leniency or loyalty, cruelty or villainy, the end is to bring the situations under control. Then, I can claim that the choices of a politician depend greatly on circumstances, making him an opportunist. Indeed, every politician is opportunistic, that is he takes advantage of opportunities or circumstances often with little regard for moral principles or consequences. Politicians know how to exploit opportunities and circumstances when they arise. Politicians are not fools, they are over sensible people who know how to listen to their environment and outwit it.

For Henrik Ibsen in *An enemy of the People* which is our play of study, a party leader is like a wolf:

Dr Stockmann: Well, look here - I will explain! It is the party leaders that must be exterminated. A party leader is like a wolf, you see - like a voracious wolf. He requires a certain number of smaller victims to prey upon each year, if he is to live. Just look at Hovstad and Aslaksen!<sup>13</sup>

A politician is insatiable, greedy and therefore cannot be honest and sincere in politics. Political life is a struggle; the conduct of life according to religious Christian values for instance could endanger political effectiveness. Christianity by preaching meekness or preaching against selfishness might soften men and weaken a political life. Religion and politics are incompatible. A ruler must be selfish, Machiavelli thinks that, for a ruler to achieve success he must rely always on himself, he should rely on his own strength or ability in order to have a stable state. These sorts of things are to me the basic causes of political corruption. To sum up I can deduce that

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<sup>12</sup> Quoted by E. Kolawole Ogundowole, *Aspects of European Political Philosophy*, *ibid*, p.44.

<sup>13</sup> K. L. Knickerbocker, and H. Willard Reninger, *Interpreting Literature*. Third Edition. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1965, p. 623.

politics in essence is something good but it is people who involve themselves in it who corrupt it making it a hideous human business.

### **3. Political Corruptive Manipulation and Opportunism in *An Enemy of the People***

As stated by *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, corruption is the impairment of integrity, virtue, or moral principles. Corruption is an inducement to wrong things by improper or unlawful means. Corruption is again, a departure from the original or from what is pure or correct.

The word manipulation comes from the verb 'to manipulate' whose meanings are multiple with reference to *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*. First, to manipulate, means to treat or operate with or as if with the hands or by mechanical means especially in a skilful manner. Secondly, it means to control or play upon by artful, unfair, or insidious means especially to one's own advantage. Lastly, to manipulate means to change by artful or unfair means so as to serve one's purpose.

According to the same dictionary, the term opportunism means the art, policy or practice of taking advantage of opportunities or circumstances often with little regard for [moral] principles or consequences. An opportunist is someone that is opportunistic or practices opportunism. One is said to be opportunistic when he is used to taking advantage of opportunities as they arise, it is when someone is exploiting opportunities with little regard to principles and consequences, a politician feeding on whatever that is available.

These definitions of the three key terms - corruption, manipulation and opportunism - are conditioning my examination of this section. My analyses are showing how some characters in the play are corruptive, corruptible and manipulatable or manipulated taking advantage of circumstances arising to bend other characters to serve their selfish, desires and purposes within a political environment.

*An Enemy of the People*, is a play whose central matter is about corruptive political manipulation, opportunism and intellectual activism. Peter Stockmann is the Mayor of the town and Chief Constable, a ruthless politician, the Chairman of the Baths' Committee who manipulates the corruptive and corruptible local press or newspapermen for his own political survival. As I said above, politics is concerned with winning power and holding it, Peter Stockmann is a local governor; he has fought to win his political position and will not like to lose it. Hovstad supports him that any fight is good for survival: "Hovstad: It is a natural law; every animal must fight for its own livelihood."<sup>14</sup> Therefore, he is trying to do all he can in order to hinder anything that will get him out of the place. When his junior brother Thomas Stockmann, a practicing medical doctor, Medical Officer of the Municipal Baths after some medical experiments, disinterestedly reveals him that the baths' drainage is

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<sup>14</sup> K. L. Knickerbocker, and H. Willard Reninger, *Interpreting Literature*, *ibid*, p. 622.

seriously contaminated, Peter Stockmann, pushed by his selfish motives, rejects the doctor's objective scientific findings on the ground that such revelations will undermine the town's welfare. It is also important to know that the mayor formerly denies the findings of the doctor on the pretext that he is not convincing. Soon after, he lets his junior brother know that the necessary repairs of the contaminated baths would be too expensive for the town. His inconsistencies are obvious.

*An Enemy of the People* also addresses the irrational tendencies of the masses, and the hypocritical corrupt nature of the political system that they support. It is the story of one brave man's struggle to do the right thing and speak the truth in the face of extreme social intolerance<sup>15</sup>. The play's protagonist, Dr Stockmann, represents the playwright's own voice. Dr Stockmann's scientific experiments on the baths constitute the bone of contention in the play and the source of character revelation. Dr. Stockmann makes a discovery that he thinks will help the town. He presses for changes to be made to the baths, but the town turns on him. Not only have his scientific experiments been a waste of time, and not only will the townspeople suffer, but his freedom of speech and self-respect are being attacked. He then decides that the only reason that the leaders have turned on him is that they are afraid of the people. He, thus, lashes out at the people. He is motivated both by his anger and by true realizations about the corruption of the town together with the political activists, the mayor, the newspapermen and leaders of sociopolitical associations.

This scientific discover serves as an opportunity to the town political activists to satisfy their selfish needs on the detriment of the town's welfare. The newspaper men want to seize this opportunity to criticize the local government.

Hovstad, the editor of the newspaper *People's Messenger* tells the doctor that he hopes to use the information about the pollution of the baths as a starting point for an all-out attack on the city's leadership. He says that the real pollution comes from the city leaders. The doctor agrees that conservatism is bad, but he is hesitant to attack the town's leadership, which is made up of the most qualified men, including his own brother the mayor.

Aslaksen, the newspaper's printer is the chairman of two Associations: the Temperance Society and the powerful Householders' Association; he wants to assure Dr. Stockmann that he can count on his support. He wants to stage a moderate demonstration in favor of fixing the baths. Dr. Stockmann does not think this will be necessary, as he is convinced that the baths' board of directors will see that the repairs are necessary. Aslaksen emphasizes that he does not want to upset the town leaders. Aslaksen wants to support the move to fix the baths, but already he shows himself to be prudent to a fault. If the mayor can make the project look risky or dangerous to Aslaksen, he might withdraw his support.

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<sup>15</sup> William Archer, "An Enemy of the People and The Wild Duck" in *Twentieth-Century Literary Criticism*, Vol52, Detroit: Gale Research, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994, (2007), p.45.

These two political people Hovstad and Aslaksen are being opportunistic about the issue of the baths' contamination. The state of the baths coheres with the state of the moral state of these political activists. The Baths' corruption is synonymous with their moral corruption. They are trying to manipulate Dr Stockmann for their personal reasons. Hovstad and Aslaksen agree that Dr. Stockmann will be very useful to them, although for different purposes. Even Hovstad's enthusiastic support foreshadows danger. He wants to use the report to topple the local bureaucracy. He seems to be interested in how useful the report is to him and not how this report will call the Mayor and the Baths' Committee to their responsibilities. In other words, if someone can convince him that publicizing the report is not in his best interests, he might not print it. Hovstad on his side wants to use the Doctor as a political firebrand. Aslaksen is also running for council secretary.

At the same time, Hovstad and his assistant Billing would like to get rid of Aslaksen and benefit alone from the Doctor's discoveries knowing well that he is a friend, a colleague who often lets them print on credit. Hovstad and his assistant Billing depend on him for printing on credit, but they do not want to compete with him on the current favourable opportunity. They want to be alone in the favours of Dr. Stockmann who might be able to help finance the paper. They are supporting Dr. Stockmann because they would like him to share his inheritance from his rich father-in-law Morten Kiil with them. We can see that selfish interests are motivating these political men in their support of Dr Stockmann against the Mayor. While Aslaksen wants political promotion Hovstad wants the Doctor to become his financial asset.

But, since their support for the Doctor is conditioned it will not last for long, if another opportunity is offered to them they will undoubtedly seize it, they are at the mercy of time's whims and circumstances. They are opportunistic manipulators and are themselves liable to somebody else's manipulation. Let us see how they are manipulated in their turn by the Mayor who is politically wittier than them.

The Mayor is interested in maintaining his position as the town leader. He is even very disturbed when Dr. Stockmann talks of a younger generation growing up to change things. He also seems very insecure, which is no doubt related to the rather competitive spirit shared by him and his brother the Doctor. The popular opinion that the Baths were the idea of Dr. Stockmann enrages the Mayor. The Mayor is upset that the Doctor conducted the investigation without informing him. He believes that the report exaggerates the situation. He says that the cost to make the suggested repairs would be very expensive and will take two years. To justify his denial of his brother's findings he says that he is not convinced that there is a real problem. He goes on to describe how losing the Baths would be a catastrophe to the town's economy. To create a false hope in Dr Stockmann he says that the board might be willing to make some changes in a few years.

Dr. Stockmann reminds the Mayor that if his original plan for the construction of the Baths had been followed, there would be no problem. It means that the Mayor had already turned a death ear on him before. The Mayor insists that instead of arguing with him the Doctor should merely submit to his authority. He demands

that the Doctor conduct further studies and make a public announcement that his findings were false. Because the Doctor has been employed by him he claims that, when acting as an employee, the Doctor has no individual rights.

Because he does not want the discoveries of the Doctor to impinge on his authority and power as the local Governor, the Mayor goes so far as to manipulate the newspapermen to hinder the propagation of the bad news about the Baths. The Mayor cunningly tells Hovstad and Aslaksen that if the doctor's plan for the Baths goes through, it will mean a huge sacrifice for the town. The expenses will have to come out of a municipal loan, and the Baths will have to be shut down for two years. Hovstad and Aslaksen begin to change their minds about supporting Dr. Stockmann. The Mayor assures them that the Doctor's report is pure fantasy, a personal invention. Consequently, Aslaksen and Hovstad let him know that they will not print the article for the Doctor. Hovstad says he will not dare, because the subscribers control the paper and the proposal would ruin the town. Happy with Hovstad's new decision the Mayor gives him an official statement he can print to quell any rumors. The Doctor then resolves to hold a public meeting, but Aslaksen tells him that he will not find an organization to give him a hall.

Let us witness the reversal of situations, the decisional inconsistency, the changing of the mind and the many-sided nature of Hovstad and Aslaksen before and after the Mayor had poisoned their corruptible mind.

Hovstad and Aslaksen's utterances before manipulation:

Hovstad: It is very desirable that the public should be informed of it without delay.<sup>16</sup>

Aslaksen: There is no denying that the Doctor is a true friend to the town – a real friend to the community, that he is.<sup>17</sup>

Hovstad and Aslaksen's utterances after manipulation:

Petra: And are you going to be the one to give it to them? ....

Hovstad: You are perfectly right, but an editor cannot always act as he would prefer. He is often obliged to bow to the wishes of the public in unimportant matters. Politics are the most important thing in life – for a newspaper, anyway. [...]

Petra: For shame...you are not a spider!<sup>18</sup>

Aslaksen: That I won't, Doctor.

[...]

Peter Stockmann (The Mayor): Ah! – may I ask then if Mr. Hovstad intends to join this agitation?

Hovstad: No, Mr. Mayor.

Aslaksen: No, Mr. Hovstad is it not such a fool as to go and ruin his paper and himself for the sake of an imaginary grievance.

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<sup>16</sup> K. L. Knickerbocker, and H. Willard Reninger, *Interpreting Literature*, *ibid*, p. 581.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p. 595.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p. 597.



Hovstad: You have represented your case in a false light, Doctor, and therefore I am unable to give you my support.

Dr. Stockmann: A false light! Leave that part of it to me. Only print my article; I am quite capable of defending it.

Hovstad: I am not going to print it. I cannot and will not and dare not print it.

Dr. Stockmann: You dare not? What nonsense! – You are the editor; and an editor controls his paper, I suppose!<sup>19</sup>

Until recently, we have seen the Mayor turning on Dr. Stockmann. When that happened, the Doctor still felt confident because he had the media power of Hovstad's *People's Messenger* and Aslaksen's Householders' Association behind him. Now, we see Hovstad and Aslaksen turning against the Doctor they have been supporting so far. We can pitifully remark that the Mayor has had an easy time persuading and convincing them to turn against Dr. Stockmann. This power of persuasion of the Mayor is what I term manipulation. The Mayor has influenced their mind causing it to bend to his will. The Mayor has caused a reversal of situation in their mind set up; he has successfully manipulated them just as they were trying to manipulate the Doctor. There is no surprise that economic arguments and the lack of visible evidence of the Doctor's findings have been used to change Hovstad's mind. Consequently we can come to conclusion that Hovstad and Aslaksen who seized the opportunity offered to them by the Baths' experimentation, have on the first place manipulated Dr Stockmann, and have finally ended themselves as political manipulated manipulators. They manipulated the Doctor and the Mayor more powerful than they, manipulated them without great efforts.

We understand that Ibsen is trying to show us that the media people Hovstad and Aslaksen and the Mayor of the Norwegian town are not trustworthy politicians; they are simply victims of political corruption, they are unreliable characters according to the dictates of politics. We learn that Hovstad and Aslaksen's support of the doctor is partly motivated by their individual desires and not the town-dwellers' well-being. Hovstad and Aslaksen wanted to use the Doctor for their various ends against moral norms. From the beginning, Hovstad is eager to use the Doctor as a way to stimulate some sort of political revolution. When the Mayor brings his carefully crafted arguments to men whose integrity is already compromised, they are easily won over to his side, they have fallen victim to the Mayor's tactful manipulation.

Whereas the Doctor remains consistent in his opinions throughout the play, the newspapermen's ideas change faster than the weather. The Doctor and even the corruptive Mayor have clear motivations: The Mayor wants to stay in power, whereas the Doctor is concerned with morality, science and public welfare. The newspapermen, on the other hand, have many motivations, and, therefore, they cannot come to a clear conclusion. Hovstad is a leftist radical, but he also wants to

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<sup>19</sup> K. L. Knickerbocker, and H. Willard Reninger, *Interpreting Literature*, ibid, p. 603.

keep the paper in business, and he is also interested in Petra the Doctor's daughter. Ibsen uses these characters to illustrate how difficult it is to have a clear opinion in modern society politics. Hovstad and Aslaksen cannot afford to have dangerous opinions and are, therefore, helpless when the Mayor has total control on them. Their political life is a proof that politics is a game, a filthy game most of the time, if you know how to play it well you will prosper, you will survive, but if you do not know you become a victim, a hollow and blatant loser. The French Emperor, Napoleon Bonaparte (1769-1821) when in 1809 he had to divorce the empress Josephine for political reasons, has this to say: "I still love you, but in politics there is no heart, only head"<sup>20</sup> This statement shows that politics can be a heartless human business.

#### **4. Intellectual Activism in Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People***

Whereas the term intellectual, according to *Popular English Dictionary*, means possessing intellect in high degree, pertaining to or performed by the intellect, the term intellect, means the faculty of the human mind by which it understands and reasons; a mind, especially a brilliant one; a person who possesses a brilliant mind.

The *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* states that activism is the fact of working to achieve political or social change, especially as a member of an organization with particular aims.

Louis McHenry Howe (1871-1936), a US Presidential Adviser during a speech he was giving at Columbia University on 17<sup>th</sup> January, 1933, made the hereby claim: "You can't adopt politics as a profession and remain honest"<sup>21</sup>. This supposes that to be a politician can deprive a person of honesty. However, I believe that an intellectual should see it as a challenge to conciliate honesty with politics.

This section aims at showing how an intellectual can combat socio-political evils and corruption within his social environment. An intellectual has a brilliant mind and should therefore enlighten and guide his people to their welfare. An intellectual possesses the intellect in high degree allowing him reflect profoundly on political issues. The intellectual is sounder in spirit than in flesh or matter and therefore, cannot be easily lured by material possession. Knowing that the matter is ephemeral, the intellectual does not worry to get it alone but to share it with his fellow men. In a word, an intellectual prefers communal welfare to egoistic individual welfare.

The Mayor wants to use his political power to crush Dr Stockmann down, but according to Christina Summers and Fred summers, "it is the point of the victim that is authoritative"<sup>22</sup>.

In *An Enemy of the People*, unlike the Mayor and the newspapermen, Dr. Stockmann is an epitome of a politically committed intellectual. He stands against political corruption and fights for the progress and development of his society. The

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<sup>20</sup>Quoted by Bill Swainson, *ibid*, p. 685.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p. 450.

<sup>22</sup> Christina Sommers and Fred Sommers, *Vice & Virtue in Everyday Life, Introductory Reading in Ethics, Sixth Edition*. Belmont: Wadsworth/Thompson Learning, 2004, p. 9.

Doctor, therefore, clings to his revolutionary ideas, just as he clings to his moral obligation to publicize his findings and to save the people from the consequences of bathing in polluted water. He is not ready to do things that go against moral norms to satisfy just his selfish passions and desires. He is even prepared to fight corruption at the expenses of his own life, that of his dear family.

Dr Stockmann: The whole place is a pesthouse!

[...]

Dr Stockmann: The whole bath establishment is a whited, poisoned sepulcher,

I tell you – the gravest possible danger to the public health! All the nastiness up at Mølledal, all that stinking filth, is infecting the water in the conduit-pipes leading to the reservoir; and the same cursed, filthy poison oozes on the shore too –

[...]

Dr Stockmann: Indeed I have been busy, Katherine. But here I had none of the necessary scientific apparatus, so I sent samples, both of the drinking-water and of the sea-water, up to the University, to have an accurate analysis made by a chemist.

[...]

Dr Stockmann: [Showing him the letter.] Here it is! It proves the presence of decomposing organic matter in the water – it is full of infusoria. The water is absolutely dangerous to use, either internally or externally.<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Stockmann makes a discovery that he thinks will help the town. He presses for changes to be made to the Baths, but the town turns on him. Not only have his scientific experiments been a waste of time, and not only will the townspeople suffer, but his freedom of speech and self-respect are being jeopardized. He then decides that the only reason that the leaders have turned on him is that they are afraid of the people. Dr. Stockmann believes that an intellectual is a freethinker, his opinions and decisions should be based on reason and not on any sort of authority, and he denies political dogmas according to which a politician should be as cunning as a fox and as fierce as a lion, and even vicious enough to counterfeit the virtue according Machiavellian terms.

With regard to Machiavelli, Christian virtues can endanger political effectiveness. But, this truth matters a little to the hero Dr Stockmann who strongly believes that to say the truth, to be true to one's consciousness should be the burning desire of the intellectual political activists. The Doctor is fully aware that any truth hurts, but it should not hurt an intellectual the owner of an enlightened spirit. When he made the experimentation on the Baths he knew that people especially his own brother the Mayor, will not like the results but he insisted on publishing them. He does not care what people and even the Mayor he is trying to help will say. His motivation lies in the fact that he is an intellectual and should therefore abide by the scientific truth no matter what will happen as a result. He simply has to abide by his duties as an intellectual and a citizen:

Dr Stockmann: [Walking about happily.] Nonsense! As a matter of fact I have done nothing more than my duty. I have only made a lucky find – that's all.

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<sup>23</sup> K. L. Knickerbocker, and H. Willard Reninger, *Interpreting Literature*, *ibid*, p. 580.

[...]

Dr Stockmann: Thank you, thank you, my dear fellows! I feel tremendously happy! It is a splendid thing for a man to be able to feel that he has a service to his native town and to his fellow-citizens.<sup>24</sup>

The Mayor claims to have employed him and that he has to abide by his authority for fear of losing his job but the Doctor is ready to make this sacrifice. The Doctor is not afraid of losing his job because for him morality is better than material possessions and the communal interest is preferable to the personal one. Between his own family and the society he prefers society. If the community survives his family will survive, but if the community is in trouble his family is in trouble. His choice may seem a silly one to whomever, but he has made the choice of a true intellectual, come what may. Even when these people for whom he was fighting refused under the Mayor's manipulation to recognize his sacrifices and devotion to their cause he merely told them that he is a freethinker not their like. The Doctor wants people to know that he is not as short-sighted as they are; he is an intellectual, he is not a snob but a freethinker. According to Dr Stockmann, a free man has no right to dirty and defile himself with whatsoever: "Dr Stockmann: ... A free man has no right to soil himself with filth; he has no right to behave in a way that would justify his spitting in his own face."<sup>25</sup> He is quite reasonable that an intellectual, a free man should value his dignity rather than doing silly, stupid things for his promotion.

Out of political manipulation everybody in the town considers him as 'an enemy of the people' instead of 'a friend of the people' as the Doctor himself wished. Such an insulting name because they falsely think that he is against people's welfare and constitutes a danger for the society. You can see how dangerous an intellectual's mission is! Dr Stockmann is made an outcast, a pariah by his own people for telling them the truth to clear their profound ignorance and better their public health. Under the political manipulation people prefer ignorance to enlightenment. I am very sorry, but the present-day world is so. People are no more their real selves; they are shaped and fashioned body and soul by their corrupt political leaders.

As a result, an intellectual has a great challenge, that of fighting political corruption even at the risk of his life. This intellectual assignment has caused Dr Stockmann a dirty name 'an enemy of the people' but he does not regret his heroism, he is miserable and very great at the same time, for it is not easy to act like him challenging political institutions. He is losing his job for telling the truth, the political wolves are exiling him and driving him out of the country; the Mayor has handed a letter over to him, a letter of dismissal from his job as the Medical Officer of the Baths' Committee:

Peter Stockmann (The Mayor): (Taking a big letter from his pocket.) I have this document for you, from the Baths' Committee.

Dr. Stockmann: My dismissal?

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<sup>24</sup> K. L. Knickerbocker, and H. Willard Reninger, *Interpreting Literature*, *ibid*, p. 581.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 618.

Peter Stockmann: Yes dating from today.<sup>26</sup>

So is important to know that the Doctor is really a courageous intellectual who wants a change even at his own perils. He acting like a real intellectual not a fake one like the newspapermen Hovstad, Billing and Aslaksen.

For instance, when Dr. Stockmann accuses Hovstad of not acting as an intellectual, a freethinker, Hovstad defends himself on the grounds that he has never claimed to be a freethinker in print. In other words, Hovstad does not deny that he is a freethinker in private, but he merely asserts that he is never a freethinker in the public eye. He is afraid to let the majority know that he is a freethinker. By claiming never to be a freethinker in print, Hovstad proves my point that not everybody can act like the Doctor. The Doctor is, as a result a model political intellectual activist. If Hovstad and Aslaksen were as intellectual as the Doctor, if they were as intelligent individuals as him, they would not have allowed the Mayor and the manipulated citizens around to act on their opinions. Both people Hovstad and Aslaksen who formerly tried to support the Doctor, have finally humiliated him publicly condemning him unjustly for public betrayal:

Hovstad: [Shouting above the din.] A man must be a public enemy to wish to ruin a whole community!

Aslaksen: By the votes of everyone here except a tipsy man, this meeting of citizens declares Dr. Thomas Stockmann to be an enemy of the people. [Shouts and applause.]<sup>27</sup>

Then the doctor retaliates and sermons them severely and properly for their false faith:

Dr. Stockmann: [With growing fervor.] 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.<sup>28</sup>

We can clearly see that the doctor is a committed impartial intellectual who cannot stand all kinds of evil; an evil person or human institution should not live, he vehemently tells Hovstad that he deserves death for willingly telling lies on his behalf and for corrupting the whole community which also deserves destruction for being corrupted.

The doctor remarks that the whole community is decayed and corrupted and there is need to do something to redeem people. His discovery of the Baths' contamination metaphorically mirrors the corruption of his community; this is what he told his ignorant people when they were sneering at him:

A Number of voices: [Shouting.] Don't talk about [about] the Baths! We don't hear you! None of that!

Dr Stockmann: I have already told you that what I want to speak about is the great discovery I have made lately - the discovery that all the sources of our moral life are

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<sup>26</sup> K. L. Knickerbocker, and H. Willard Reninger, *Interpreting Literature*, ibid, pp. 617

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, p. 613.

<sup>28</sup> K. L. Knickerbocker, and H. Willard Reninger, *Interpreting Literature*, ibid, p. 612.

poisoned and that the whole fabric of our civic community is founded on the pestiferous soil of falsehood.<sup>29</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

Throughout this article I have scrutinized politics and shown the tenfold responsibilities of an intellectual committed in political domains. An intellectual as an enlightened person should fight against all forms of political forces seeking to undermine and jeopardize the communal welfare. It is also one of his duties to share his enlightenment with the masses obscured and blinded by political malevolent powers and must be ready to sacrifice his own life to stand against the malign political forces at work for the sake of his people who may be grateful or not since a sacrifice does not necessarily expect anything in return. A sacrifice, as it goes, is self-rewarding. An intellectual must simply play his role of spokesman and torch bearer in his community. This can be witnessed through the character of Dr Stockmann who has set the tone and is therefore ostracized and known in the play as 'an enemy of the people' just because he is trying hard to help his people out of the Mayor's manneristic manipulations.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid, p.607.