

Political Apostasy in Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and George Bernard Shaw's *The Apple Cart*

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Abstract: Although Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw hail from different countries, the two playwrights lived almost the same realities and they are often considered some of the most distinguished playwrights in the European tradition. While Ibsen is often referred to as “the father of modern realism”, Shaw, who was significantly influenced by Ibsen, is a Nobel prize winner. The two iconoclastic dramatists of the 19th century addressed almost the same subjects and all castigated the practice of democracy in Europe. Without being anarchists, both playwrights set out to show the unreality of democracy and its conventional institutions. The article entitled “Political Apostasy in Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and George Bernard Shaw's *The Apple Cart*” focuses on the political views of the authors and their disagreement with certain political ideologies of their age. While examining the plays of the authors as serious political forums of satire, the study discusses the authors' satire of democracy and capitalism and highlights why such institutions should be dismantled. Seen from a Marxist perspective, the study combines the realm of political satire and futuristic visions of both authors and postulate that, for Ibsen, and for Shaw, all political institutions and ideologies that do not improve on the lot of mankind should be abandoned. According to the study, the authors share the Marxist ideology that governments are machineries of exploitation of the masses and the Marxist belief that capitalism is a system of government that alienates the masses. The unreal nature of democracy, royalty and capitalism is justified in the plays of the authors who are considered in this study as political philosophers. Although they did not propound a systematic body of political thought, they put forward in their plays a new agenda for anti-capitalist thought and action.

Keywords: Political Apostasy, Democracy, Satire, Capitalism, Governments, Marxists, Dismantled

1. Introduction

Democracy is a very fluid concept and its highly contestable nature makes it difficult to be pinned down to any specific meaning. All attempts at defining it have ended up with very disputable ideas. In spite of its problematic outlook, it is arguably the concept that has received the highest global attention since the twentieth century. While every civilisation tries to understand the concept from its own perspective, many critics have argued that democracy is a highly complex concept and it is very difficult to arrive at a consensus on its definition or full content. Although the concept has defined the political atmosphere of many countries around the world since its inception, it has been marked by a litany of complaints and calamities. Consequently, its feasibility and viability to respond to the

unprecedented volumes of difficulties facing humanity have been questioned. Democracies that have been known to be very strong and vibrant continue to face almost the same and, sometimes, worse, challenges to human freedom and progress. According to Sarah Repucci and Amy Slipowitz in an article entitled “Freedom in the World 2021: Democracy under Siege” [10], instead of symbolising a vibrant tool for social justice, equality and equity, as was understood at its conception, democracy has sometimes plunged the world into anarchy and confusion. The question whether democracy is the right system of governance by which men and women should deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world has remained a difficult one to answer. While the political plays

of Ibsen and Shaw do not seek to provide answers to such questions, they are seen here as political forums of debate and discussions which aim at a gradual and, sometimes, cataclysmic transformation of their societies.

Although democracy continues to resist and has a proven record to rebound from repeated setbacks, its ability to guarantee freedom, human dignity, economic empowerment, sustainable development and ecological concerns of the world is not convincing. Today, the impact of the long-term democratic decline has become increasingly global in nature and broad enough to be felt by those living under the cruelest dictatorships, as well as by citizens of long-standing democracies. These concerns, which are quite topical today, are prevalent in the political plays of Ibsen and Shaw and it is quite intriguing how they prophesied these almost two centuries ago. The authors are therefore studied here as anti-democratic actors who do not trust that democracy can ensure freedom, equality, justice and progress for mankind. In this sense, they analyse modern man's lack of direction and indicate that he must re-evaluate his political aims and systems and discard worn out values which no longer describe either human nature or contemporary political problems. The anti-establishment sentiments in their plays are seen here as deliberate attempts to shock their audiences into looking carefully at their own inadequate assumptions about politics and economics.

Shaw's lack of faith in democracy comes out clearly in his *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism, Capitalism, Sovietism and Fascism* where he states that:

The naked truth is that democracy or government by the people through votes for everybody has never been a complete reality; and to the very limited extent to which it has been a reality, it has not been a success. The extravagant hopes which have been attached to every extension of it have been disappointed... If there were any disfranchised class left for our democrats to pin their repeatedly disappointed hopes on, no doubt they would still clamour for a fresh set of Votes to jump the last ditch into their Utopias and the vogue of democracy might last a while yet. Possibly there may be here and there lunatics looking forward to votes for children, or for animals, to complete the democratic structure. But the majority shows signs of having had enough of it. [12]

Although Ibsen did not say this in the same words like Shaw did, the former's condemnation of democracy in *An Enemy of the People* is a clear illustration of Shaw's views. There is obviously a sense in which Shaw's political ideologies were significantly inspired by Ibsen as Shaw himself insinuates in his *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* [11]. Referring to this, Liu Maosheng and Long Yanxia in "The Political Rhapsody and Ethical Expression in Bernard Shaw's *The Apple Cart*" note that "it is impossible for the working class and the masses who live at the bottom of society to enjoy real democracy. On the contrary, the democratic politics they claimed is just a means and strategy for politicians to play politics" [9].

2. Democracy

"Democracy," as defined by Shaw in the preface to *The Apple Cart*, is the organisation of society for the benefit and at the expense of everybody indiscriminately and not for the benefit of a privileged class. According to Shaw, a major obstacle in the way of its realisation "is the delusion that the way of securing it is to give votes to everybody". He thinks that universal adult suffrage leads not to democracy, but "mobocracy," since most people "do not want liberty and have not been educated to want it" [2]. In respect of government of the people and for the people, Shaw was a democrat; but on the subject of government by the people, he was uncompromising, maintaining that Lincoln failed to understand that votes to anybody and votes for everybody nullified any hopes of political or social progress. Shaw would remove the higher functions of government from direct popular control, proposing educational programmes and tests in political science and public affairs not only for possible leaders but for voters as well.

Shaw makes provision for those voters who are incapable of passing any tests: they would be given opportunity "to squeal their complaints, agitate for pet remedies draft bills and call on the government to enact them, and criticize the government to their utmost with impunity" [2]. Everyone in Shaw's hierarchical state would be allowed freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of congress. Although Ibsen does not really set out to define democracy in any of his works as Shaw does, it is important to note that, in his political plays, he is not different from Shaw in political ideology. Like Shaw, Ibsen is against the practice of conventional democracy and also insists on freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of congress.

2.1. Anti-democratic Sentiments in an Enemy of the People

The primary anti-democratic contribution of Ibsen is arguably *An Enemy of the People*. Ibsen strongly condemns democracy because it does not favour the minority or the individual that, he like Shaw, defends in his works. Like Shaw in *The Apple Cart*, Ibsen attacks tyrannical majorities and ridicules the whole idea of democracy. Gilbert Keith Chesterton in George Bernard Shaw remarks that, "the playwright made no disguise for his passionate hatred of democracy" [5]. In *An Enemy of the People*, Dr. Stockman realises that something is not quite right with the town's environment. The environmentally conscious hero begins to examine what might be amiss. Having sifted the evidence, he seeks scientific help to confirm the cause of the contamination of the Spa water. He discovers that pollution is indeed the cause. Even worse, it is caused by the irresponsible actions of big business, in the form of a local tannery that allows effluent to run off upstream.

Having already suspected this inconvenient truth, Stockmann decides that something must be done. He writes a damning report full of irrefutable scientific evidence that the town's environment and its very long-term livelihood, are in peril. It seems as if this compelling mixture of hard science

and honest truth cannot fail. With his thoughtful daughter Petra as a close advisor, Stockman pledges to go public. Yet he does not take account of his elder brother, Peter, who also happens to be the town's mayor. Peter Stockmann considers Dr. Stockmann as an idealist eco-warrior who plans to wreck the town's economy in a whim and destroy the hard won social stability and prosperity on which his Mayoralty rests. Ever the politician, Peter, urges a cover-up in the name of the common good. In this, he is backed by the duplicitous local press, who prove to be nothing short of a nineteenth century Norwegian version of Fox News.

A conversation between Billing, an employee at the local paper, and Horster, a ship captain, takes place and Ibsen's satire on democracy comes out clearly.

Billing: But then, you cannot take part in the new election.

Horster: Is there to be a new election here?

Billing: Do you not know that?

Horster: No, I do not poke my nose in that business.

Billing: But you do care about public issues?

Horster: No, I do not understand such.

Billing: Yet, one must take part in the voting at least.

Horster: Also those who do not understand it?

Billing: Understand? Yes, what do you mean? Society is like a ship, everyone must take part in being at the helm.

Horster: Perhaps that's fine on land; but on board it would not work well. [1]

At first, it seems the popular majority and the leaders of society are separate. At that point, Dr. Stockmann has no problem getting support. The local paper will print his report on the unhealthy sanitary conditions of the local public bath. Editor Hovstad exclaims "The fable of the infallibility of the ruling must be shaken" [1]. A little later, Dr. Stockmann tells his brother: "Yes, but isn't it a citizen's duty to report to the public when he has caught a new idea!" Peter Stockmann responds: "Oh, the public certainly does not need any new ideas. The public is best served by the old, good, recognized ideas it already has" [1]. One realises that Ibsen's hatred for democracy arises in the application of the practice. When Horster says "Perhaps that's fine on land; but on board it would not work well", he simply means that the idea of democracy could just be a sham in the course of its application. Peter Stockmann represents the heartless and unscrupulous tyrants that the phenomenon of democracy harbours. He shamelessly discards new ideas and states that the society is well with old, recognised ideas.

This clinging to convention, that Peter Stockmann represents, destroys the society. As this study reveals, Ibsen and Shaw intend to destroy the "Peter Stockmanns" of the world and their conventional practices so that the new ideas of the "Dr. Stockmanns" can see the light of day. Within Stockmann's inability to convince anyone of the problem's severity, Ibsen delivers a pile-driving refutation of the Victorian era's exalted ideals of community and democracy.

To Ibsen, the pressure towards conformity to established conventions in democracies is often a barrier to individual expression and freedom. Peter Stockmann, who doubles as mayor of the town and chairman of the

board of directors in charge of the water, stops at nothing to prevent his brother's lecture. He fears that the lecture may threaten his selfish objectives. His self-aggrandisement pushes him to refer to Peter Stockmann as *an enemy of the people*.

Following Peter Stockmann's plans, the local paper will not print Dr. Stockmann's report. So he (Dr. Stockmann) has to give a lecture on the issue. No one will provide him the facilities for such a lecture but the ship captain Horster. When it seems that authority is not based on popular majority, Dr. Stockmann has no problem getting support, but when the majority and authority stand together, there is no haven.

Faced with the ills of democracy, the revolutionary (Dr. Stockmann) finds no support even in the masses for whose interest he fights. Dr. Stockmann's individuality brings to mind Joan's individual efforts in *Saint Joan* to help her people. This further establishes the fact that the individualism of Ibsen and Shaw is not equal to either selfishness or egotism. The individualism of both authors works for the good of the society. As this study postulates, the poor application of democracy stands on the way of such individualism and must be overthrown, if society has to progress. In spite of the fact that Dr. Stockmann has invited people to listen to his lecture, the mob takes control of the meeting by appointing publisher Aslaksen as chairman of the meeting. They try stopping him from talking about the sanitary problems. Dr. Stockmann gives in, but only to talk about something else:

I am of the mere opinion that I came under hard weather with the grave immorality the leading men had made themselves guilty of down at the bath. Leading men I cannot stand for my death; – I have had enough of such in my days. They are like billy goats in a young tree plant field; they make trouble everywhere; they stand in the way of a free man wherever he may twin and turn and I prefer to have them exterminated like other vermin. [1]

After a protest and some noise Dr. Stockmann continues:

Well, my fellow citizens; I shall not speak more of our leading men. If anyone, of what I have just said, should imagine that I am after their [leading men's] guts, then he is mistaken, – very mistaken indeed. For I have the healing comfort that the parasites, all these old people of a dying school of thought, they cause so excellently their own passing; there is no need for a doctor to hasten their departure. Nor is it people of that kind that is the most pressing danger; it is not they who are the most active in poisoning our immaterial sources of life and in infecting the ground under us; it is not they who are the most dangerous enemies of truth and freedom in our society. [1]

Upon the question from the masses on who it is, Dr. Stockmann responds: "Yes, you can be sure that I will name them! Because that is exactly the great discovery I made yesterday. The most dangerous enemy of truth of freedom amongst us is the compact majority. Yes, the damned, compact, liberal majority, – that's it! Now you know" [1]. Here, Ibsen challenges the backbone of democracy and

condemns the democratic principle that the majority is always right. For him, the assertion is the greatest enemy to truth and freedom.

As indicated in Letters and Speeches, Ibsen, in a letter, writes to his friend Brandes from Rome and states that:

And what shall one say of the conditions of the so-called liberal press? These leaders who speak and write of freedom and free-mindedness and who at the same time make themselves serfs of the presumed opinions of their subscribers! I more and more get confirmation that there is something demoralizing in engaging in politics and joining parties. Under no circumstances will I ever join a party that aims for the majority. Bjørnson says: the majority is always right. And as a practical politician I guess he has to say so. I, however, must necessarily say: the minority is always right. Of course, I am not thinking of the minority of men of stagnation, who are lagging behind in the big center party, which amongst us is called liberals; but I am thinking of that minority, which is ahead, where the majority has not yet reached. I mean, he is in the right who is most in line with the future. [7]

2.2. Majority Versus Minority

Like Shaw, Ibsen shatters the core of Democracy with his hatred and distrust for the Majority. One realises that, being advocates of freedom, truth and individualism, Ibsen and Shaw are bound to discourage democracy, since it hinders individual effort and conceals the truth. Dr. Stockman and King Magnus in *An Enemy of the People* and *The Apple Cart* respectively are epitomes of the kind of individualism that Ibsen preaches and the Shavian "Superman" that Shaw brandishes. Like Joan, Dr. Stockman would not give up, in spite of the rejection he suffers both from the officials of his society and from the masses for whose interest he fights. Later in the same letter Ibsen wrote:

To me freedom is the highest and first condition of life. At home one worries not about freedom, but only about freedoms, some more or some less, all according to party line. I also feel very embarrassed about this unfinished narrow-mindedness in our public dispute. Under its praiseworthy efforts in making our people a democratic society one has come without intent far on the path towards making us into a plebeian society. [7]

From Rome Ibsen again wrote to Brandes in a letter dated June 12, 1883:

You are of course right when you are saying that we all must work for the spread of our opinions. But I still hold that a spiritual pioneer never can assemble a majority with him. In ten years perhaps the majority is where Dr. Stockmann stood under the popular gathering. But during these ten years the doctor has not been standing still; he still stands at least ten years ahead of the majority; the majority, the mass, the lot never catches up with him; he can never have the majority with him. [7]

Ibsen seems to suggest here that the fight against the ills of democracy is one that must be won. One should strive to push the fight ahead, in spite of the too many challenges that

he/she faces from the deceitful and hypocritical majority. Dr. Stockman pushes his idea ahead and upon request from publisher Aslaksen to withdraw the claim, Dr. Stockmann responds: "Never, Mr. Aslaksen. It is the great majority in our society [community] that robs me of my freedom, and that wants to forbid my telling the truth" [1]. Editor Hovstad is surprised at the doctor's incessant unconventional proclamations and retorts: "The majority has always got right on its side". Billing, who wanted also every ignorant living soul to vote, adds: "And truth too, by God!" [1]. Dr. Stockmann continues:

The majority never has truth on its side, I say! This is one of these societal lies that a free, thinking man must revolt against. Who constitutes the majority of the inhabitants in a country? Is it the wise, or the stupid? I think we should agree that the stupid are in an extremely overwhelming majority all around the whole wide world. But it cannot be, damn it, that the stupid shall rule over the wise! [1]

Stockmann's speech brings to mind Ibsen's view that "The majority? What is the majority? The ignorant masses. Intelligence is always in the minority. How many do you think are entitled to an opinion of those who are in the majority? Most of them are blockheads" [1].

According to Ibsen, democracy refuses society the privilege of being ruled and governed by intelligent and fit individuals who are equal to the task. Like Shaw, Ibsen condemns the leaders of society and claims that the governed should not expect much from the democratically-elected governors because they are stupid and not qualified. The majority has power but cannot be right as Dr. Stockman states in the following speech "Well, well; you can shout me down; but you cannot reply. The majority has might on its side – sadly –; but it is not in the right. I and the other few individuals are in the right. The minority is always in the right" [1]. Ibsen considers himself as an aristocrat and not a democrat. His father was a patrician of Skien before his bankruptcy. So one could say Ibsen is a degraded aristocrat. He writes about the aristocratic rebel Cataline of Rome, but not about the slave rebel Spartacus. Ibsen fears revolting in real life, but he gladly makes rebels out of his characters. In a sense, Ibsen is an aristocratic rebel with a top hat.

Peter Stockmann succeeds in making the community consider Dr. Stockmann as *an enemy of the people*. The latter gets fired as doctor for the local bath. There is a campaign for people not to use him as a personal doctor. Horster gets fired for letting Dr. Stockmann use his facilities. No one dares to have anything to do with the popular enemy, not even the "independent" and wealthy employer of ship captain Horster. Dr. Stockmann's daughter, Petra, gets fired as a school teacher and his sons are sent home from school for a few days. At first, Dr. Stockmann's plan is to leave the country but, in the end, he chooses like the Shavian superman, to stay and fight.

The Doctor is seen here as a brave and noble person who can defy a mob consisting of moral cowards. His brother, the Burgomaster is a shred manipulator who can sway the mob to

his side. The irony of the play is that the good person, Dr. Stockmann, is the one branded as the enemy of the people. The doctor strives diligently throughout the play to expose the sordid condition of the baths so that people do not fall ill. For his efforts, he is labelled as the enemy of the people, while his brother, Peter Stockmann, is considered a hero for suppressing the truth. It is important to note here that, while the Doctor is jovial by nature and likes to be surrounded by intelligent, cheerful, hard-working people, Peter Stockmann is solemn and conservative, uncomfortable in the company of liberal minded people.

In *An Enemy of the People*, therefore, Ibsen vividly portrays the negative aspects of small-town politics where the majority of citizens are easily swayed by the controlling bureaucrats, who are often corrupt and self-serving. In contrast, he unifies the play by praising the responsibility and courage of Dr. Stockmann.

In the play Ibsen clearly criticises the "compact majority," who often act foolishly in refusing to accept the truth and follow blindly their elected leaders. In contrast to the ordinary citizen, the doctor has the courage to stand up to the authorities. As a result, Ibsen uses Dr. Stockmann to voice many of his own opinions in the play. He portrays the doctor as a noble reformer who dares to fight rather than compromise his principles. In fact, Ibsen calls Stockmann the strongest man in the world for he stands alone to fight his battle with the authorities, never budging in his beliefs, his correctness of purpose, or his self-assurance.

2.3. Science and Politics

Although *An Enemy of the People* is replete with sarcastic remarks about the compact majority, Ibsen is not only attacking the way democracy is practised. Also, he levels his criticism upon the unscrupulous leaders and their naïve followers. Because they have vested interests and secret agendas, the bureaucrats mislead and misguide the public in order to get what they want and to stay in power. Ibsen shows how such leaders make a mockery of democracy. Stockmann appropriately refers to them as a social pestilence.

Ibsen also regards people who advocate moderation as a way of life as social pests. He knows that moderation is meaningless when drastic measures are required to root out the evil that is corroding the society. Aslaksen is the symbol of moderation; he wants to please all the people all the time. As a result, he is fearful to take any stand, living on hypocrisy and lies. As Dr. Stockmann bluntly states, "I would rather ruin my native town than see it flourishing upon a lie." He even suggests that all persons who live upon a lie ought to be exterminated like vermin.

In the play and in life, Ibsen values the truth above everything. Dr. Stockmann is determined that the truth about the baths prevail in order to preserve the health and honour of the community. He states that suppression of truth is a "fraud, a lie, an absolute crime against the public, against society as a whole!" [1]. This is the key theme of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* and it runs through most of his plays.

In his effort to clean up the water supply, Dr. Stockmann

runs into political cowards, sold-out journalists, shortsighted armchair economists, and a benighted citizenry. His own principled idealism exacerbates the conflict. This is an early dramatisation of something we know better today: the difficulty of translating medical scientific knowledge into political action. Ibsen's well-intentioned blustery doctor heroically fails. This is partly because the local democratic processes are quite cynical since powerful people prevent him from getting his information to the citizens. This situation is very significant to most societies around the world where medical innovation and scientific discovery is frustrated by selfish politicians for selfish reasons.

Dr. Stockmann also suffers from a professional blindness that keeps him from understanding how anyone could possibly disagree that his scientific truth (he uses the word frequently) requires rebuilding the town's waterworks. He is a classic case of virtue-based ethics, sacrificing outcome for principle. He expects the weight of evidence and the authority of science to prevail and has contempt for democracy, everyday commerce, and interpersonal politics. This play addresses many social issues. It ties in family, truth, righteousness, community, and politics. It really demonstrates how one issue can have many "truths" to it and how different people, even within one's own family, can see the same thing in different perspectives. In human nature, we are not one to compromise. We see so many things as one way or another, right or wrong; rarely do we seek to find the common ground between the two. In this play, like in many of the plays of Ibsen and Shaw, no common ground is found and, in the end, it leaves a family broken up and a society left to wonder. Dr. Thomas Stockmann refuses to give in, and in doing so loses part of his family, his career and even his property but, nevertheless, remains true to himself. In my opinion, this characteristic is one of great strength. There are fewer and fewer people across the world today that believe so passionately in what they do and say and are willing to risk everything for it. Dr. Stockmann's character portrays extreme courage and independence.

Ibsen is insightful enough to have his hero cause some of his own problems with his naivety, arrogance and coldness. Shaw does the same in *Saint Joan* where Joan's personal conviction pushes her to undermine the confusion her rebellion would cause to the core of the Catholic faith. Although the strength and vitality of both protagonists are laudable, they are seen here as idealists who depend only on the truth they know, irrespective of their environments. There is a definite caution here to never overlook the importance of the politics of a situation, regardless of how right you are. Most importantly, the message of Ibsen and Shaw is that if you are sure you are right, it is a moral imperative to never give up because that is the only way you can help your society.

An Enemy of the People can be seen as a masterpiece conceived in the heat of the battle of democratic transition in Europe. It was published in 1882 when there were parliamentary elections in Norway that year. It is one of the most important election years in Norwegian history – if not

the most important. The liberals' plan was to pack the impeachment tribunal. The upcoming impeachment trial was a major cause of Norway's parliamentary government at the end of June in 1884. So, 1882 was an important year in its democratic transition. *An Enemy of the People* could as much be seen as a commentary on this transition and as a response to the critiques of Ghosts. That the losing side in the transition struggle basically was in the right in its critique of democracy makes the piece also highly relevant today.

2.4. The Ironic Title

The title of *An Enemy of the People* is totally ironic. Dr. Stockmann, who gets branded with this unfortunate label, is only trying to help the people. By exposing the pollution of the Baths, he is not only protecting their health, but also protecting them from the larger scandal that will inevitably erupt when all the tourists who come to bathe in the bacteria-ridden waters start puking up green stuff.

The label of "enemy" is made even more ironic by the fact that Dr. Stockmann is popular around town at the beginning of the play. His house is always full of guests, eating, drinking, and enjoying his hospitality. When the Doctor first makes his discovery, he is even toasted as a friend of the people. The town quickly turns on him, though, when they figure out how much money it will cost to make the necessary improvements to the Baths.

In the end, Dr. Stockmann seems to almost embrace the label. He accepts the fact that he will be viewed as a heretic and a rebel. Dr. Stockmann even seems to be empowered by his outsider status, claiming that the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone. The title of the play might be pointing out that people who try to do the best for the world, who try to change things for the better, are often rejected at first by the majority. The Doctor is not the first person in history to speak the truth and be punished. This brings to mind the case of the Political icon, Nelson Mandela, in South Africa who got imprisoned for several years because of the freedom he fights for. What is interesting is that such socially-committed individuals like Dr. Stockmann and Nelson Mandela are always given the respect they truly deserve at the end.

An Enemy of the People therefore presents a complex analysis of society and class. The play does not seem to champion one class over another. It does not present the woes of the upper class as they try to rule the land, nor does it show middle-class malaise, or even the struggles of the hardworking poor. Instead, the play takes all levels of society to task. In the end, it is not economic inequality that is highlighted in the play but intellectual inequality. The play proposes that the main problem with society is that it is run by the majority, a group made up of unintelligent people. The conflict of the play is a tense political battle. The tug and pull of political turf wars help drive the action of the play. Though the politics we see represented in the play exist strictly on a local level, national issues are addressed as well. Also, the patterns of local politics often echo the larger patterns that exist at the national level.

2.5. The Problem with Modern Politics

As the present researcher observes, the core of Ibsen's criticism on modern politics can be seen from three perspectives. The first perspective is that those who profess liberation are not themselves liberated. In Ibsen's *The League of Youth*, Stensgard uses his attacks on the establishment for personal gains. Stockmann is the contrast of the case and represents both Ibsen and Shaw's idea of the revolutionary who fights for the good of society. Like Joan in *Saint Joan*, he is sincere in his beliefs and stands by them. But his moral consistency pushes him to declare that he and the small elite are the guardians of truth.

The comedy and satire of *The League of the Youth* is, according to historian Halvdan Koht, born out of the threat of "photographing" society. The liberals were made the laughing stock, although the conservatives were not left entirely off the hook either. The liberals' strong tendencies of courting popular sentiments and waiting to see how the wind blows were attacked by the satire. Stensgaard is a character who, at the same time, lies to himself and the masses. There can also be found references to moves made cleverly and legally to improve one's chance of getting elected. A modern American real-life example of this would be the Clintons' move to New York so Hillary Clinton could be elected United States Senator. The League of Youth is at least as relevant today as it was then. Publisher Aslaksen from *The League of Youth* reappears in *An Enemy of the People*. He thus provides a link between these two anti-democratic and anti-political works, but the use of references specific to time and country does not make it as timeless and placeless as *An Enemy of the People*.

When *The League of Youth* was first staged in Christiania, in 1870, it was embraced with joy by the conservatives. The first night there was some booing. The second night there was booing in concert. The third night a fight broke out between the booers and the applauders. Ibsen visited Norway in 1885, and during this period he wrote to Brandes in a letter from Munich dated November 11, 1886:

The impressions, experiences, and observations from last year's summer trip were for a long time disturbing for me. [...] Never have I felt more foreign to my fellow Norwegians' Thun und Treiben than after the lessons the last year has given me. Never more appalled. Never more unpleasantly affected. But I am nevertheless not abandoning the hope that all this temporariness once could clear into a real cultural content in a real cultural form [...] It was an unhappy moment for the cause of progress when Johan Sverdrup [our first parliamentary prime minister] came to power; – and was gagged and cuffed. [7]

About two years later he again wrote to Brandes from Munich [October 30, 1888]:

By the way, to me the political development up there has certainly not been a disappointment. What has happened is nothing else than what I was prepared for. I knew beforehand that like this and not otherwise it had to go as

a necessity of nature. But the leaders of our Liberal Party lack totally world experience, and, thus, they had devoted themselves to the most unreasonable illusions. They wandered about imagining that an oppositional leader [Sverdrup] would and could stay the same after he had risen to power. [7]

It is therefore clear from Ibsen's letters that he had no trust in the political system of his time. Any democracy based on the truth of the majority is a lie to Ibsen. According to the author, even the political changes in his country cannot solve problems of freedom. To Ibsen, what matters is not the freedom of the country that gains independence but the freedom of the individuals in that country to carry an individual passion to fruition without conflict with fruitless democratic values. It is in the midst of this democratic pessimism that Ibsen writes in Rosmersholm that:

There is still much to be done in this country before we can be said to have achieved full freedom. But our present democracy scarcely has the power to accomplish that task. An element of nobility must enter into our political life, our government, our members of parliament and our press... And this nobility, which I hope may be granted to our people, will come to us from two sources, the only two sections of society which have not as yet been corrupted by party pressure. It will come to us from our women and our working men. The reshaping of social conditions which is now being undertaken in Europe is principally concerned with the future status of the workers and of women. That is what I am hoping and waiting for, and what I shall work for, all I can.. [8]

Ibsen has a very good point when it comes to the harmful effects of the political system by lighting a light of hope for the nobility of those who, at the time, did not have the right to vote. However, the tendency towards mass character that has marked these groups and the way history turned when these groups got their political influence can make one wonder whether there ever was a noble potential.

It is important to note that Ibsen knew Alfred Meissner, whose father had been doctor at the public bath in Teplitz in Bohemia in 1830. This doctor had warned against the use of the bath because of unsatisfactory sanitary conditions. Their house had been stoned, just as Dr. Stockmann's house is stoned. Ibsen also knew of pharmacist Harald Thaulow in Christiania, who had been brought to silence when trying to give warning of poor hygiene. Also, Ibsen was appalled by the stoning of a Hagbard Berner's residence in connection with the issue of "the pure Norwegian flag". Ibsen hated those who could not stand for anything on their own. There is little doubt that he most of all hated those who referred to the majority for what was right or wrong. The habit of the press to see how the wind of the subscribers blows was subject to his hatred as well. Both the popular majority and the undaring press are portrayed in *An Enemy of the People*.

The second perspective is that party politics invites opportunism. Those who want to win the majority over to their side must use rhetorical tricks, promise a bright future, and appeal to people's short term interests. Stensgard is the

orator without a cause. The printer, Aslaksen, in *An Enemy of the People* represents the other side. He does not require oratorical gifts, for as the chairman of the House Owner Association, it suffices to point out that the interest of the house owners are not served by the diffusion of the truth about the pollution of the spa.

The third perspective depends on the idea that the formation of public opinion invites half-truths. Given that political parties constitute interest constellations, the press might serve as a counter weight, informing the public opinion by objective information and independent opinions. However, the press orients itself to the prejudices of the readership, not to the truth. For this reason, information is filtered and adapted. In *An Enemy of the People*, it is not the readers, but capitalists' interest which puts pressure on the newspaper. Editor Hovstad of *The Courier* wants to stand up for the right opinions but, unfortunately, the creditors of the paper do not agree and they have power to stop it.

That the majority is not necessarily right is another perspective from which Ibsen criticises modern politics. People may be dominated by thinking in grooves. In *The League of Youth*, proprietor Brattsberg and the conservative party stay in power because they have always done it. Moreover, common sense may be delusive, and people may even deny reality even if they know better, as in *An Enemy of the People*. In Rosmersholm, some of the groups that join the cause of liberty and progress are just as intolerant as their political opponents.

As Ibsen demonstrates, if wishful thinking and life lies are common in the lives of individuals, they represent a greater danger when people behave in groups. It is much easier then, to deny one's own responsibility both when it comes to critical thinking and insight in consequences of one's actions, as demonstrated in *An Enemy of the People*. In the play, Ibsen is saying that in some areas, such as science, there is a meritocracy, not a democracy – that one correct person outweighs a thousand incorrect people.

2.6. Defective Democracy in *The Apple Cart*

As already mentioned, Shaw's hatred for tyranny and dictatorship does not mean that democracy could be a remedy. Democracy, according to Shaw, is not an effective means of choosing a government because man is unable either to choose leaders or to control the leaders so as to check the abuse of power entrusted to them. Shaw seems to say that no man in his present state is good enough to govern the other. Consequently, the only solution to man's political problem is like that applied to the religious problem-evolution and the emergence of the superman. Only a superman can ensure good governance. As Shaw himself states in the preface to *The Apple Cart*, "*The Apple Cart* exposes the unreality of both democracy and royalty as our idealists conceive them" [2]. Like with Barbara's religious idealism, Shaw has merely carried this political ideal-democracy, to its logical conclusion.

It is rather unfortunate that many critics have always misunderstood Shaw's stand in *The Apple Cart*. King

Magnus' display of intelligence and benevolence has misled many critics into thinking that Shaw favours the monarchical and dictatorial forms of government. The point must be made clear that Shaw's plea is that untrammelled democracy is as bad as monarchy. If there's no watchdog to mend it, it degenerates into plutocracy. Democracy is, thus, a mere illusion for Ibsen and Shaw. Shaw rightly compares democracy with a big balloon when he says his Preface to *The Apple Cart* that:

I am going to ask you to begin our study of Democracy by considering it first as a big balloon, filled with gas or hot air, and sent up so that you shall be kept looking up at the sky whilst other people are picking your pockets. When the balloon comes down to earth every five years or so, you are invited to get into the basket if you can throw out one of the people who are sitting tightly in it; but as you can afford neither the time nor the money, and there are forty millions of you and hardly room for six hundred in the basket, the balloon goes up again with much the same lot in it and leaves you where you were before. I think you will admit that the balloon as an image of Democracy corresponds to the parliamentary facts. [2]

This study will try to prove that this balloon, as an image of democracy, is an epitome of every election especially the facts of the parliamentary elections.

Some critics have failed to grasp Shaw's synthetic position at the end of *The Apple Cart* and this has misled their criticisms of the play. Critics have accused him of political apostasy claiming that he attributes intelligence and benevolent qualities to the royal candidate to the detriment of the democratically elected prime minister and his candidate. Ivor Brown mentions this when in Shaw: *The Critical Heritage* he states that, "it is by asking us to take king Magnus seriously that Mr Shaw upsets his own apple cart" [4]. The implication is that Shaw mixes his noble subject – democracy- by treating the king with favour.

Other critics have postulated that Shaw is preaching a return to monarchy. H. W. Nevins in *Shaw: The Critical Heritage* holds a similar view when he says "the question is whether a benevolent monarchy is not a better form of government than a democracy in which the citizens share through the franchise" [6]. These misinterpretations are as a result of the fact that these critics have failed to grasp Shaw's synthetic position at the end of *The Apple Cart*. Shaw suggests that we have a constitutional monarch who has limited powers to act as a watchdog for our popularly-elected ministers.

Shaw believes that our ministers, sometimes, make policies that are detrimental to national progress; not because they are corrupt individuals, but because they are in the grips of industrialists who may use the press to throw them down from power. However, the constitutional monarch need not fear such plutocrats. He would be able to say, (to his ministers) I have no elections to fear; and if any newspaper magnate dares offend me, that magnate's fashionable wife and marriageable daughters will soon make him understand that the King's displeasure is still a sentence of social death

within range of St James's Palace. Think of the things you dare not do! The persons you dare not offend! Well, a king with a little courage may tackle them for you.

Responsibilities which would break your backs may still be borne on a king's shoulders. But he must be a king, not a puppet. You would be responsible for a puppet: remember that. But whilst you continue to support me as a separate and independent estate of the realm, I am your scapegoat: you get the credit of all our popular legislation whilst you put the odium of all our resistance to ignorant popular clamour on me. [2]

M. H. Abrams et al in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature* come closer to Shaw's synthetic position when they describe the play as "...a paradoxical treatment of the problems of monarchy and democracy done with a mischievous desire to shock equally both left and right wing thinkers and again show the admiration of a strong man which is Shaw's personal heresy and goes oddly with his socialism" [3]. Shaw himself provides a response to this in the preface to the play when he says:

That so many critics who believe themselves to be ardent democrats should take the entirely personal triumph of the hereditary king over the elected minister to be a triumph of autocracy over democracy, and its dramatization an act of political apostasy on the part of the author; convinces me that our professed devotion to political principles is only a mask for our idolatry of eminent persons. The Apple Cart exposes the unreality of both democracy and royalty as our idealists conceive them. [2]

Shaw, therefore, detests both democracy and monarchy. His solution is found in a synthesis of the two, proposing a constitutional monarch who has limited powers and will be able to check the excesses of the ministers. Besides, Shaw makes it clear in the Preface that the conflict is not really between royalty and democracy. It is between the two and plutocracy, which having destroyed the royal power by frank force under democratic pretexts, has bought and swallowed democracy. King Magnus's little tactical victory, which bulks so largely in the playhouse, leaves him in a worse plight than his defeated opponent, who can always plead that he is only the instrument of the people's will. Meanwhile, the unfortunate monarch, making a desperate bid for dictatorship on the perfectly true plea that democracy has destroyed all other responsibility, is compelled to assume full responsibility himself and face all the reproaches that Mr Proteus can shirk.

2.7. The Problem with Democracy

Shaw's problem with democracy can be viewed from a dual perspective. The two main problems appear to be inseparable-the economic problem of how to produce and distribute our subsistence, and the political problem of how to select rulers and prevent them from abusing their authority in their own interests or those of their class or religion. To solve the economic problem, Shaw castigates the Capitalist system, which achieves miracles in production, but fails so ludicrously and disastrously to distribute its products

rationally or to produce in the order of social need. The solution of the political problem, for Shaw, is Votes for Everybody and Every Authority Elected by Vote, an expedient originally devised to prevent rulers from tyrannising by the very effectual method of preventing them from doing anything, and, thus, leaving everything to irresponsible private enterprise.

Shaw refutes blatantly the democratic clause of "Government by the People" on the grounds that the people cannot govern. He thinks that it is a physical impossibility for people to govern. Every citizen cannot be a ruler any more than every boy can be an engine driver or a pirate king. A nation of prime ministers or dictators is as absurd as an army of field marshals. Government by the people, according to Shaw, is not and can never be a reality. Shaw thinks that it is only a cry by which demagogues humbug us into voting for them. By this, Shaw is saying that democracy cannot be government by the people and can only be government by consent of the governed. Unfortunately, when democratic statesmen propose to govern us by our own consent, they find that we do not want to be governed at all, and that we regard rates and taxes as intolerable burdens.

One realises that as far as Shaw is concerned, democracy is not and shall never be "Government by the People" because the people cannot govern. Democracy can only be government by the consent of the governed. A nation of prime Ministers or Presidents will be very absurd. Hence, government by the People cannot and shall never be a democratic reality but a democratic illusion and a cry by which political demagogues like Bill Boanerges cajole their electorates into voting them into power, from whence they become a human terror. Ibsen seems to be saying the same thing in *An Enemy of the People* through Peter Stockmann who becomes an unscrupulous tyrant after deceiving the masses and winning the post of a mayor. Peter Stockmann endangers the life of the people he promised to serve because of greed and egotism. Some democratic idealists are of the opinion that mob actions and violent demonstrations could be a last effective resort to check and control the excesses of these tyrants. To Shaw, like Ibsen, neither violent strikes nor destructive demonstrations could be the answer. These unrefined and primitive methods of solving political problems are indecent and not the best. Shaw makes this clear in the Preface to *The Apple Cart* when he says:

I think we may take it that neither mob violence nor popular movements can be depended on as checks upon the abuse of power by governments. One might suppose that at least they would act as a last resort when an autocrat goes mad and commits outrageous excesses of tyranny and cruelty. But it is a curious fact that they never do. [2]

The ineffective or misdirected actions of a mob are very clearly demonstrated in *The Apple Cart* by Lysistrata, whose fear of mob actions stifles her ministerial functions even though she has the interest of the common man at heart. Breakages Limited threatens to wield public opinion against Lysistrata if she accepts to interfere with its huge-profit

making activities which are essentially detrimental to the entire nation.

Like Ibsen, Shaw also considers democratic governments ineffective and as worthless as other forms of government which enable inefficient people to acquire power. Both playwrights satirise the fact that democracy does not elect leaders on merit. The weakness of the democratic government in *The Apple Cart* is not very different from that of the mayor in *An Enemy of the People*. The democratic government in *The Apple Cart* presents a cabinet of clowns and selfish individuals elected to office owing to their glibness. Brown confirms this in Shaw: The Critical Heritage when he says that the play presents:

...a rather melancholy but somberly ambitious king Magnus defending a royal veto and authority against his democratically elected cabinet ministers, who are, with the exception of a young ex-school mistress who appears to take her new office of power mistress seriously; a company of clowns fancifully dressed in green and gold. [4]

Democracy produces leaders who forget the plight of their people and concentrate on enriching themselves at the expense of the people who voted them to power. This is very common in most young democracies in Africa. This is the problem with the practice of democracy and, as Ibsen and Shaw point out, the leaders of the society voted by a majority hardly have the potential and goodwill to lead. Most Parliamentarians and Presidents are supposedly democratically elected but the electorate in most African countries continue to wallow in misery and poverty to the indifference of the leaders. The majority, therefore, is a foolish majority which is unable to know who can govern well. It is important, however, to mention that, although Ibsen and Shaw satirise such principles of democracy, they do not advocate a monarchy or a society without leaders. Shaw states in the Preface to *The Apple Cart* that one of the problems of democracy is that it leads to plutocracy. The wealthy politicians can easily either buy votes or use their financial influence on the poor electorate to alter their choices. A poor and helpless electorate according to Shaw, is not fit to choose its leaders especially through a democratic means. For Ibsen and Shaw, man in his present state is unable to govern another man. Shaw stipulates that, for man to govern, he must be a "Superman" with an extra potential to create meaningful change for the benefit of the whole society and not only for himself. Shaw's Superman as seen in plays like *Saint Joan* and *Major Barbara* is an individual who believe in himself and can fight even as an individual to cause change. Such an individual is not selfish as the leaders that democracy brings to power but is committed to the plight of man.

People like Bill Boanerges and Alamanda in *The Apple Cart* and Peter Stockmann in Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* destroy all contacts with their electorate once they achieve power. Bill Boanerges has no concern for the masses and only imagines the day his constituency shall become a republic with him as the first republican president. We realise that democracy as practised in *The Apple Cart* defeats its intentions because instead of establishing democratic and

reliable governments, it abolishes them. The attempt by King Magnus's popularly elected Prime Minister to deprive him of the right to influence public opinion through the press and the platform and to reduce him to a cipher and above all the minister's refusal to stand up or face another election show how undemocratic democratic governments can be.

It is important to note that the government of *The Apple Cart*, supposedly democratic, refuses social progress. It is rather King Magnus who is bothered about capital flight and expresses fear that the country's vital industries are being allowed to sink into a minor place and are being ignored as the democratic government gives priority to luxury goods which are at moment finding a temporary well-playing market. Magnus's fear for the situation is seen when he says: "I feel as if I were sitting at the volcano" [2]. The elected government is one that denies the people both social and economic progress.

2.8. No to Monarchy

However, Shaw has neither preference nor sympathy for the monarchical system of government. Shaw considers it as bad as democracy and, although he appears to have carried his support for it further than he really intended as was the case with Undershaft in *Major Barbara*, Shawian satire also falls heavily on the royal system of government. Both the democratic and royal systems of government easily bring fools, windbags and even dictators to power. This is so in the case of the royal system because kings come to power not through merit but through inheritance and affiliations to the royal family. King Magnus confirms this himself when he says "... as for me, I am king because I was the nephew of my uncle and because my two elder brothers died. If I had been the stupidest man in the country, I should still be its king. I have not won my situation by merit" [2].

It is clear, therefore, that, like the democratic system of government, the monarchical system can destroy a people because it accepts leaders and governors who lack the ability and intelligence to rule. Such leaders can wreck the nation and put the people's fate in jeopardy. Shaw's intention, as this chapter demonstrates, is to stamp out such worthless systems of government as democracy and the royal system because they are mere illusions and cannot stand the test of time. In juxtaposing the two systems of government, Shaw does not favour any but seeks to synthesise the two in order to come out with a more practicable system of government.

In Shaw's opinion, benevolent monarchies and democracies are idealisations which have never been realised. Even government itself is a very imperfectly realised ideal. Benevolence is not a qualification for rulership, Shaw seems to say, and capable rulers have often been infernal scoundrels, and benevolent monarchs hopelessly incapable rulers. One of the points that Shaw drives through in the play is the recognition that there is no governing class. As this study postulates, the real governors are not a class, but members of all classes. King Magnus notices that Boanerges, who was picked out of the gutter by a policeman, is of the governing class and the revelation that comes to Boanerges is that the

King is also a member of the governing class. By this, Shaw is surely portraying that a good leader is not a class issue. A good leader can come from any class.

Ibsen and Shaw believe that the personal qualities of one good man might contribute more to the general good of mankind than the abstract theories of parties or forms of governments led by men who, in the enjoyment of power, relegate their original principles and promises to the background. The good man whose personal efforts can benefit society, according to Shaw, can only be found in the Superman. Shaw's admiration for the intelligent and good natured Magnus, which some critics have unfortunately misinterpreted as royalist sympathies, betrays his essential longing for that superior being – the superman – as governor of his race. The superman, according to Shaw, is the only man with the wisdom, conscience and public spirit that befits a governor. Hence, the superman is the only qualified ruler.

Like Ibsen, Shaw hates the way democracy is practised but thinks that neither monarchy's, mob violence nor popular movements can be depended on as checks upon the abuse of power by governments. One might suppose that, at least, they would act as a last resort when an autocrat goes mad and commits outrageous excesses of tyranny and cruelty. But it is a curious fact that they never do. One realises here that Ibsen and Shaw castigate conventional politics for putting man's individual efforts at the mercy of political institutions and theories. This is reminiscent of the religious perspective of both authors which equally puts individual effort above institutions and constituted authority. As this research seeks to illustrate, conventional political institutions and theories stand on the way of individual effort and force the society to retrogress rather than progress.

2.9. The Stronger Individual

As already highlighted, the individualism of both Ibsen and Shaw works for the benefit of the society and not for the individual alone. By admiring and empowering King Magnus in *The Apple Cart*, Shaw seems to say like Ibsen in *An Enemy of the People* that the majority is weaker than the individual or better still, that individual effort yields more fruits than institutional norms that no longer stand the test of time. The individualism of both authors transcends religious barriers into their political vision as they both condemn democracy and its belief in the majority. Here, individual effort reduces the whole idea of the almighty majority to a lie and Ibsen and Shaw establish in *An Enemy of the People* and in *Saint Joan* respectively that the best person is he who stands alone and fights for the whole society.

According to Ibsen and Shaw, genuine democracy can never be realised until the whole population is educated politically and socially and is capable of accepting all the responsibilities involved. This ideal, according to the authors, has not been realised in any modern democracy. When Shaw stated that democracy required a population of Supermen, he meant that democracy required a population of adequately educated humans which capitalism or capitalist democracy was incapable of bringing about. For Shaw, democracy in its

advanced state, or what he calls genuine democracy, is synonymous with socialism or democratic socialism.

Perhaps the true position of Ibsen and Shaw can only be described as "independent thinkers." They do not like being tied to any rigid system, which is why many of their plays show "vitality" struggling against "system" (and of course socialism can be one of those systems, as Shaw suggests in "The Illusions of Socialism"). Their works in general are aimed at forcing everyone to think for themselves and to feel free to argue for whatever perspective one arrived at. Therefore, their dramatic works in particular tend to feature hot debates on issues of governance at both the governmental and more personal levels. In their plays, both authors allow their "strong" characters to seemingly "win" or drive home their arguments, although they also show "strong" characters being tripped up by their own arguments at times. Ultimately, there are no clear winners in the world of irony that the authors inhabit and no absolute villains and no absolute heroes. What matters is the clarifying debate that the plays harbour. Perhaps the greatest evil in the Ibsenian and Shavian universes is to be "discouraged" to the extent that one drops out of the debate. A further point is that even as a Fabian, Shaw said that the Fabian objective was not to change the world but to argue as effectively as possible for a point of view that needed to be considered when people in general went about changing the world.

The principal action of almost every Ibsenian and Shavian play can be described as the interplay among characters struggling either to defend and maintain a certain polity (or system of relationships) or to overthrow the old polity and create a new one or, failing that, to either find "a separate peace" or negotiate a truce. Whether it is gender, family, generational, class, tribal, ethnic, professional, institutional, aesthetic, religious, or the politics of governments, the "stories" of Ibsen and Shaw are often about the usually comic or tragic-comic struggle for power and authority in the general evolutionary process.

However, it is important to note that most conflicts in the plays of both authors end with a de facto vote and a decision on the part of key characters to take action, often life-changing for them and maybe for their cultures as well, whether consensus has been reached or not. That Ibsen and Shaw's "problem plays" typically end problematically, without "the problem" being solved, does not prevent the characters from, nevertheless, taking action and addressing problems in individual ways.

3. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the distrust that Ibsen and Shaw have for conventional politics. Although both authors detest tyranny and dictatorship in all its forms, they do not think that democracy is the solution to the problems of mankind. They are, therefore, not at ease with the practice of democracy and they demonstrate in their plays that democracy would hardly make any sense if it continues to be practised as a form of government and not as a way of

life. When it is practised in blatant ignorance of its workability as a philosophy of life, the authors contend, it becomes a half-democracy which is worse than no democracy. Contrary to the popular democratic slogan, the plays of the authors reveal that democracy would hardly ever be a government by the people, because there is no reliable method to ensure the election of the best qualified leaders at the helm of affairs. Also, they demonstrate in their plays that the democratic notion of the majority is a lie. According to them, the majority is foolish and cannot help mankind. The plays suggest that individual effort should be given a chance, if society has to progress. Democracy, for Ibsen and for Shaw, is not an effective means of choosing a government. Shaw thinks that no man in his present state is good enough to be another's governor or master. Consequently, the only solution to man's political problem is like the one applied to the religious problem-evolution and the emergence of the superman. Only a superman can ensure good governance.

Ibsen and Shaw saw democracy as a speculative or idealistic goal which would hardly be achieved. Slogans of democratic rights end in empty slogans and although democracy is understood and interpreted in terms of political equality, there is no effort on the part of the slogan-makers to address the urgent economic equality concerns of the masses. For the authors, democracy produces leaders who are both incompetent and selfish and worse than some dictators and tyrants. Consequently, democracy is seen in their works as an idealistic misnomer which would hardly produce any political salvation to mankind the way it is practised.

Characters like Dr. Stockmann in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and King Magnus in Shaw's *The Apple Cart* are seen here as exponents of "superwomen" who defy political institutions and go ahead to do what is right. Such "superwomen" according to Ibsen and Shaw are never found in the "majority". Through personal effort, they can effect change for the benefit of the whole society. Capitalism, according to the authors, leads to societal ills like prostitution, poverty, sexism, racism, classism and female marginalisation. However, although Ibsen and Shaw hate capitalism, they are not socialists in the conventional sense. Like in the case of religion, the authors think that, for society to progress, neither capitalism nor socialism should be rejected completely. Rather, they advocate a synthesis of these conflicting ideas.

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