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Research paper

Henrik Ibsen may not have been one of the most liked and loved playwrights of his time. In fact, one will not be wrong if they stated that Ibsen was denounced by almost every leader who knew or even read about him. Of course that comes from his critics and what they would not let known to anyone is that they all had a soft spot for the principles that they learnt from the multiple works done by Henrik Ibsen. The critics will always publicize Ibsen as an atheist and a cynic. They accuse him of overanalyzing the human structures and even accused him of causing discord and animosity in families and communities by creating ideological scenes. However, at the end of the day the political cum working class and critics of Henrik Ibsen always retracted to their private lives and read from the same pieces of art that they criticized. How then is it possible that the leaders preach water and serve wine to their followers? The fact is that the leaders fear that the communities that they lead may follow the ideologies laid down by Ibsen which would aid them in realizing that the leaders are mere hypocrites and egocentric characters. Henrik Ibsen was accused of being a cynic but in this research paper, proof is provided that Ibsen only attracted criticism from those who felt that illumination of their lies, hypocrisy, and unscrupulous behavior would be triggered by the playwright's works.

In its contemporary meaning, cynicism relates to a mental state of distrust in others other than oneself, guided by emotions and instincts that were relied upon by the Stone Age generation before the agrarian revolution. Cynics generally reject every convention and in the case of Henrik Ibsen, he rejected the moral decadence prevalent in the political class and the so called democracy hence attracting such criticism. I would assume that Ibsen's critics only understood democracy to the extent of the mention of the word but not to the actual issues that Ibsen criticized. In essence, Ibsen was opposed to the issue of democracy as a cure-it-all ideology to the societal issues and problems that affected societal structures during his time. He was opposed to the aspects of manipulation of the communities during elections as much he felt the hatred for the abuse of office and power by the said democratically elected leaders. Through the said democratic leadership freedom of expression was suppressed to contain only that which the leaders desired while at the same time ensuring that liberal minds had no chance in the community. The communities were exposed to abuse while they believed that the leaders worked for the benefits and overall good of their followers. In the play *An Enemy of the People*, Ibsen's distrust of rogue leadership was reflected by the way the mayor and the doctor in the play secretly discussed the issues affecting the society and while the doctor was keen trying to correct the anomalies in the political system, the mayor was keen on manipulating the society for his own benefit. At the end of the play, Doctor Stockman was declared an enemy of the people and an outcast in the community.

Henrik Ibsen always proclaimed the emancipation of an individual as much as he preached liberalism. He worked for the attainment of the freedoms of all people not only in the physical terms but in the essence of the mental freedom that would allow people to roam into the world of liberal ideas. Ibsen believed that the freedom of mind and expression would always be

the most important tool granted to man that would help him to get solutions to that which seemed impossible to everybody else. Ibsen worked towards the emancipation of women in the society believing that through it, the world would be freed from the shackles of male chauvinism. This is a purely personal opinion but in a way, Ibsen foresaw a moment in time when the continued mental slavery would result to the collapse of systems through increased corruption of morals as long as people remained in the cocoons of mental slavery. Leaders would be utilizing the ignorance of the individuals as a means to power and it would continue until such a time when everybody in the world would be free and fearless to think liberally and reject any attempts by rogue leaders to use the power of the people for selfish gains. More than a century after Ibsen passed on, the world is almost the same as it was and it is now that prophecy of Ibsen comes to fruition and educational institutions are rushing to impart their students with Ibsen's ideologies. While Ibsen's critics accuse him for cynicism, his legacy remains in the teachings of how the world can free itself from group mentality and resort to free and liberal thinking.

Henrik Ibsen always held the idea that a single person may not be able to change the world but it takes a single person to make a difference. The intelligent simple minority may be looked down upon by the ignoramus majority but as events unfold, the truth sets in and the majority will always have something to learn and remember from the simple minority (Kautsky par.4). Ibsen was of the idea that human nature is full of dark fringes that must be assessed and illuminated. At the same time, life has many pitfalls that the intelligent few must illuminate and avoid. Ibsen's critics may argue that the individual and simple minority looks cynic and overly pessimistic but as Ibsen argues, facing societal problems requires courage, faith, and honesty to master and carry on the moral obligation of doing the right thing when it appears to be the most difficult decision. Ibsen insisted that it is only the intelligent minority that has the responsibility

of pointing out the failures of the governments and be the first to address them. Ibsen worked on and spread practical ideas and though they are considered cynic by selfish parties, the applicability of his ideas can be distilled from his plays (Kautsky par.4).

George Plekhanov happens to be one of the renowned critics of Henrik Ibsen and his works. Apart from accusing him for cynicism, George also states that the most striking thing about Henrik Ibsen was his preoccupation with morality and the problems of conscience. He considered Ibsen's love for ideas as a tool upon which modern revolt gets based upon. In *An Enemy of the People*, the play ended in a turmoil and suspense similar to any other play that Ibsen produced. What George Plekhanov fails to mention articulately in his 1908 critic is that the revolts always emanated from the fact that the bourgeois ideas were the cause of the revolts and that the political and working class only used Plekhanov's in their personal defense. The conclusion with regard to the criticism posed by George Plekhanov is that his argument was from the ignorant perspective of focusing of the buttered side of his piece of bread and that though the individualistic approach to solving societal issues, in the end it was valid and people always realize the truth that sets apart the selfish bourgeois from the intelligent few (Plekhanov par.1-3).

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