



**DUALITY IS THE BITTERSWEET REALITY AS REVEALED IN ANTONY  
BURGESS' A *CLOCKWORK ORANGE***

**ANITHARAJ.A**

Assistant Professor of English  
V. V. Vanniaperumal College for Women  
Virudhunagar, Tamil Nadu, India.

**ABSTRACT**

Antony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* is a significant novel which dwells deep in the psychological and social meanings of life. The novel revolves around Alex DeLarge in a dystopian future where society has been reduced to into a concrete chaos. This paper intends to expose the duality of human nature and it questions the totalitarian regimes that brainwashes public into a clockwork stage. Humanity becomes organic inside and mechanical outside. The paper concludes to the point that no human means of do-goodery will perfect man or make him into the state's archetype.

**INTRODUCTION**

Dual nature theory is a unified theory of our behavior combining ethics with political philosophy. Moreover it is an evolutionary theory of morality. It shows that individual and group behavior are totally different that one must take them apart before one can understand how they have been evolved. The theory thus explains morality as a propensity for adjustable rules of selective self-restraint and group behavior as an essential and evolved part of our nature, which is crucial in the evolutionary selection of our fitness

and totally amoral but readily controlled by law.

The theory of Human Natures duality is explicitly visible in Anthony Burgess' dystopian magnum opus, *A Clockwork Orange*, published in 1962. The novel is set in a near future English society which attributes a subculture of sensational youth violence. The narrator of the novel, Alex, a teenage hoodlum is the anti-hero of the novel. Alex narrates his violent exploits and his experience with state authorities' intent on reforming him. This paper intends to

showcase the duality in the character of Alex, who stands as a representation the entire mankind's nature.

Burgess addresses the central theme of the novel as Duality is the Ultimate Reality, who also reflects that the world is a combination of contradictory forces. *A Clockwork Orange* brims with oppositions such as: vice against virtue, subjectivity against objectivity, man against machine, individual against government, adolescence against adulthood, and intelligence against impulse. Though we prefer good over evil both must coexist to make the world complete. The notion of duality comes into play in *A Clockwork Orange* particularly during the debate over good and evil, where Alex at one point discredits the legitimacy of government that does not account for individual, which is an intuitive human psychology.

### **PREVIEW OF THE NOVEL**

In his essay, "Clockwork Oranges", Burgess asserts that "this title would be appropriate for a story about the application of Pavlovian or mechanical laws to an organism which, like a fruit, was capable of color and sweetness. The title of the novel alludes to the protagonist's negative emotional responses towards the feeling of evil, which prevent

the exercise of his free will subsequent to the administration of the Ludovico Technique. To induce this conditioning, Alex is forced to watch scenes of violence on a screen that are systematically paired with negative physical stimulation. The negative physical stimulation takes the form of nausea and feelings of terror, which are caused by an emetic medicine administered just before the presentation of the films.

The novel revolves around the teenage protagonist Alex DeLarge the leader of a gang of hooligans called Droogs. The gang to fulfill their collective fancies commits sexual crimes which are activated by the use of drugs. Alex is a man of classical taste. He is an ardent lover of Beethoven which he often listen during such acts, this intensifies his pleasure. His act of violence continues until he is convicted for sexual assault of a woman. In the prison Alex opts for an intense rehabilitation treatment called Ludovico technique believing it to be an easy way out. The treatment is an aversion therapy, in which Alex is injected with nausea-inducing drugs while watching graphically violent films, eventually conditioning him to become severely ill at the mere thought of violence. As an accidental effect, the soundtrack of one such violent film is Beethoven's Ninth

Symphony. As a result Alex is unable to enjoy his beloved classical music as before. Alex is stripped not only of his violence but also of his free taste for violence and his free will.

After returning from prison Alex becomes homeless. Alex gets brutalized by his former team mate Dim and Billyboy, a rival Gang leader. Later he gets rescued by F. Alexander, the husband of his former victim who doesn't recognize Alex. Once he recognizes Alex he throws him in an upper-story bedroom as bombarding Beethoven blasts over speakers. This drives Alex insane and forces him to attempt suicide by leaping from the window. As a result he is restored with his former violent instincts which he reflects in his words as "I was cured all right"(180). Finally Alex gets reformed on his own will after meeting his other former mate, Pete who is leading a peaceful and happy married life.

### **THE TRANSPARENCY OF FREE WILL**

According to Burgess, the freedom to choose is the big human attribute by which he means that the existence of moral choice is the one attribute that separates human beings from machines or lower animals. This is the principal premise of *A Clockwork Orange*. In the novel Alex declares his free will by

preferring a sinful path, which ultimately leads to government robbing him of his self-determination. Burgess purposefully makes Alex an anti hero with a record of aggression, rape, and robbery. By doing so he propels the notion that humanity must be allowed to make their own moral choices, even if that freedom leads to degeneracy. When Alex is deprived of his power to choose his own moral course of action, Alex becomes nothing more than a thing. A human being's legitimacy as a moral agent is predicated on the notion that good and evil exist as separate, equally valid choices. Without evil as a valid option, the choice to be good becomes nothing more than an empty, meaningless gesture.

F. Alexander aptly describes the novel's central idea through commenting on Alex that the treatment has turned him into something other a human being. He has no power of choice any longer. Burgess's novel advocates the idea that morality is a matter of choice and determination and further puts forth the notion that good behaviour is futile if one does not willingly choose goodness.

### **THE INNATE WICKEDNESS OF ADMINISTRATION**

Behavioral economists argue that human being does many things

automatically and are often guided by psychological and social biases. This characteristic feature of Humans is what makes the human more human. This is completely corrupted by the influence of government on an individual. This idea is reflected in *The Clockwork Orange* wherein Antony Burgess deprecates the institution of government, which aims to restrain the individuality of an individual in favor of the collective. This conception is expressed by Alex when he broods that modern history is the story of individuals fighting against the mechanical oppressive government. In the novel we witness the government going any length to guarantee its endurance of the society. Using hi-tech techniques and the menace of violence as a medium the State seeks to control Alex and his fellow citizens, though they are least dangerous and predictable. After clearing out the prisons by making cynical criminals undisruptive, the government begins to imprison rebel, like F. Alexander, who turns public against the government which shakes its stability.

## CONCLUSION

Antony Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* proves to be a unique masterpiece as it holds up not only the good but also the so called evil characteristics of a human being. It is

controversial because it glorifies a certain kind of amoral violence. It is also an anti-authoritarian, catholic allegorical novel is morally baffled but tremendously powerful. The leading man of the novel is true representation of human being without any camouflage that we are forced to wear for the sake of society. Alex's violence is horrific, yet it is an aesthetically calculated fact of his existence. His personality makes the cold Ludivico technique more negatively abusive than positively therapeutic. Alex may be a sadist, but the state's autocratic control is another violent act, rather than a solution. Duality is the ultimate reality which men often try to evade from. They try to live in an ideal state but they forget the fact that it is a bubble which may pop at any moment. In the end they must face the bitter sweet reality that is the dual nature of the world. Men are well-born or well-bred or they are savage. This is beautifully expressed in much maligned and misunderstood classic of Burgess.

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