

A Clockwork Orange

The freedom of choice and the rehabilitating form of corrections encase the realm of *A Clockwork Orange*, by Anthony Burgess. It produces the question about man's free will and the ability to choose one's destiny, good or evil.

"If he can only perform good or only perform evil, then he is a clockwork orange-meaning that he has the appearance of an organism lovely with colour and juice but is in fact only a clockwork toy to be wound up by God or the Devil or State"(Burgess ix).

Burgess expresses the idea that man can not be completely good or evil and must have both in order to create a moral choice. The book deals upon reforming a criminal with only good morals and conditioning an automated response to "evil." Burgess enforces the idea of the medical model of corrections, in terms of rehabilitating an offender, which is up to the individual. That one should determine the cause and then find an exclusive treatment to resolve that individual's case, then apply it. This is the case with the character Alex, a juvenile delinquent introduced into prisonization then conditioned by governmental moral standards. This lack of personal moral choice imposed upon Alex creates conflicting situations in which he has no control over. This is apparent when trying to readjust into society. As conflicts arise within the spectrum of criminal justice the main focus is revolved around the corrections aspect of reforming the criminal element.

Within the confines of the seventies Londoner. The character, Alex is created as the ultimate juvenile delinquent leading a small gang. Living within his own world the use of old Londoner language and attire reflect the non-conformity with society. Let loose within a large metropolitan, Alex is engulfed in the affairs of several criminal practices, from rape to aggravated assault. As a juvenile delinquent, Alex is finally caught and seen as an adult offender. Like all offenders he promotes his innocence and sets blame upon his companions. "Where are the others? Where are my stinking traitorous droogs? One of my cursed grahzny bratties chained me on the glazzies. Get them before they get away. It was their idea, brothers. They like forced me to do it"(Burgess 74).

Betrayed by his cohorts Alex is beaten by local officials and confesses to all the crimes. As a point to retribution a sergeant states, "Violence makes violence"(Burgess 80) and proceeds to through Alex back into the cell. All the while Alex detests the treatment and conditions of the local jail, " So I was kicked and punched and bullied off to the cells and put in with about ten or twelve other plennies, a lot of them drunk"(Burgess 81). Unlike the fair treatment of most juveniles Alex was finally getting the taste of adult corrections, being held in a drunk tank along with other felons. Faced with the reality of prison life, Alex is introduced to prisonization by the same system which incarcerated him. Showing him one must be tough and violent to survive within the penal system.

The term prisonization refers to the effect when an offender is subjected to the culture, morals, rules, and values of a penal institution. Then this is inscribed into his or her own behavior and deems them fit as a norm. This is the case involving Alex when he must prove his worth in a correctional institution by beating a fellow inmate.

"If we can't have sleep let's have some education, our new friend here had better be taught a lesson ...I fisted him all over, dancing about with my boots on though unlaced, and then I tripped him and he went crash crash on the floor. I gave him a real horror show kick on the gulliver"(Burgess 102).

Although being brutal deems fit for Alex, he realizes that only repentance and good behavior in the eyes of the officials can release him from the jaws of justices. So in order to be viewed as a reforming criminal Alex turns to religion. As the prison minister clearly states,

"Is it going to be in and out of institutions like this, though more in than out for most of you, or are you going to attend to the Divine Word and realize the

punishment that await the unrepentant sinner in the next world, as well as in this?"(Burgess 90)

and the main focus for reforming is in the hands of God and individual moral choice. Through religion Alex soon becomes a model prisoner, externally, yet internally still willing to do anything to get out. This also included experimental rehabilitation methods done by the state.

Being a juvenile in an adult prison one would have the urgency to be released as quickly as possible. When the word got out of a new experimental reforming process and a chance for early release, it immediately caught Alex's attention. To be chosen, this meant constant pressuring and questioning to the officials, plus showing that he is trying to reform. " You've been very helpful and, I consider, shown a genuine desire to reform. You will, if you continue this manner, earn your remission with no trouble at all"(Burgess 94). However Alex's intent on reforming was not a religious aspect but the quickest. He finally realizes a new way to get out and questions the proceedings. "I don't know what it's called, I said, All I know is that it gets you out quickly and makes sure you don't get in again"(Burgess 95). However the minister has doubts about the medical treatment techniques involved in forcing a person to be morally better. He brings up the question of what makes a real moral person. "I must confess I share those doubts. The question is whether such a technique can really make a man good. Goodness comes from within, 6655321. Goodness is something chosen. When a man cannot choose he ceases to be a man"(Burgess 95). This does not deter Alex from the thought of early release but only intensifies his desires. With his determination and pure will Alex is finally permitted to be experimented on for rehabilitation.

With an early release in site Alex's willingness overshadows any curiosities of the treatment. Transferred from a state prison to a private facility insures his release from incarceration. "In a little over a fortnight you will be out again in the big free world, no longer a number"(Burgess 108). With the increase in population comes an increase crime, this has also brought on encouraging new rehabilitating techniques to corrections. Stated by one government official the importance of reforming in corrections rather than retribution. "The government cannot be concerned any longer with out moded penalogical theories. Cram criminals together and see what happens. You get concentrated criminality, crime in the midst of punishment . . . Kill the criminal reflex, that's all"(Burgess 105,106).

The rehabilitating technique used upon Alex is that of responsive conditioning with the use of drugs and visual aids. Conditioning is the implementation of either teaching or forcing one to feel or think a certain way when given a decision. Alex is therefore forced to feel and think negative responses when shown evil sites or thoughts. Yet the an error had occurred when the state was conditioning "good" into him. The use of classical music along with the treatment conditioned Alex to respond to that as well.

As Alex detested the use of music, he states the cruelty of the technique, "But it's not fair on the music. It's not fair I should feel ill when I'm slooshying lovely Ludwig van and G.F. Handel and others"(Burgess 133). Yet the state feels the use of music is only an enhancement to the treatment, "It's a useful emotional heightener, that's all I know"(Burgess 131). As the treatment ends the sick feeling is only increased when Alex is confronted with any "evil." With this conditioning set in place Alex is finally released into society and deemed healthy, pure of all morals.

The readjustment into society's values seems to be the main question. Was the implementation of conditioning a person to strictly good morals proper and humane? As the title suggests one can not be purely good or evil to be a man. One must have both in order to create humanistic choice. If not, the creation would be that of a robot like person incapable of feeling or self awareness. As Alex is released into the world as the states' example of a "healthy" person, he is tested by all extremes. One test was the incapability to defend himself against the smallest attacks on his character. Another error the state had provided is the use of music in the treatment of Alex. Not only does he feel physically sick when he

thinks or looks at violence but also when he hears classical music. "It was that these doctors bratchnies had so fixed things that any music that was like for the emotions would make me just sick like viddyng or wanting to do violence"(Burgess 161). Within the conditioning techniques of repulsing him to violence, the state had also forced him to hate music. The use of this correctional treatment failed due to the implementations on morality of human choice. Is it better to have a criminal make human choices, good or bad, or a purely good person not capable of making any choices. As most opinions state, criminals should all be locked up or dealt with in some harsh manner. There are also those who believe that offenders are diseased by some element and can and/or should be cured. As far as corrections is concerned, society can not lock up every offender and can not come up with plausible means of curing the criminal element. With the rise in population there will always be a rise in crime. However this does seem to be the present trend, 5.3 million people were on probation, in jail, in prison, or on parole in 1995 (B.J.S. 1). As seen in Alex's case the corrections techniques to cure the element did not work. Perhaps the best means was to incarcerate him for his term and let him pay his debt to society. The only correct method of corrections is that of self correcting ones.