

## The Perplexing Choice in Existence Predicament: An Existential Interpretation of Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*

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**Abstract:** Anthony Burgess's novel *A Clockwork Orange* explores human being's predicament of freedom — the contradiction between Libertarianism and Totalitarianism. The issues Burgess explores in this fiction share affinities with what Sartrean existentialism elucidate. The focus of this article is "Choice and Responsibility" according to the basic Sartrean principles such as freedom, choice, responsibility to probe into the profound social significance contained in the novel: the authentic freedom is the freedom to choose.

**Key words:** Freedom; Choice; Responsibility; Authentic existence

In Sartre's philosophy of Existentialism, human being can enjoy freedom through a series of free and constant choices, while at the same time, one should pay for this freedom, one should shoulder the responsibility and commitment accompanying the freedom. Freedom entails relevant responsibility. Free will guarantees the freedom to make the choice, more importantly, it implies the acceptance of the consequences caused by the choice. Just as Adam and Eve, they chose to shift their punishment to their offsprings, Alex experiences thrice choices between good and evil, ultimately choosing the moral growth to regain his authentic freedom. If "man is condemned to be free", he must take the "condemned" responsibility. Burgess deliberately arranges the structure of the story in the symmetrical arrangement: the three parts of the novel respectively stands for Alex's thrice choices. During this process, he goes from being the victimizer to victim, willful agent of evil to deterministic subject of good, then from the forced and mechanical good man to the natural and mature good man. The cycle of recurring phases is an ascending period of an individual existence.

### 1. ALEX'S THRICE CHOICES AND HIS "CONDEMNED" RESPONSIBILITY

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In *ACO*, Burgess adds some elements of music to this literary work, making the structure of the novel be patterned after musical forms. The novel, which is divided into three parts of seven chapters each, assumes an ABA form, analogous to an operatic aria. Accordingly, Parts 1 and 3 are mirrors of each other and feature inversions of the same plot, while Part 2 is substantially different. In Part 1, Alex preys on unwitting and unwilling victims, in Part 3 those same victims wittingly and willingly prey on him. These formal symmetries help us to make comparisons as the thematic material develops over the course of the novel. Part 2 focuses on the detailed process of “Ludovico Treatment” that young Alex undergoes, and after he endures the inhuman “conditioning”, the vicious Alex finally gets the imposed “goodness”. “The tribunal division of *ACO*—Alex damned, Alex purged, Alex resurrected—can be taken, depending on one’s predilections at the start, as the falling-rising pattern of comedy or the rising-falling pattern of tragedy.” (Morris, 1971) As a successful novelist who has the insightful philosophical awareness, Burgess sharpens our sensibilities to comprehend the thematic significance of *ACO* by means of layout of the structure and presentation of the theme. Alex’s experience seems to be a concentric circle of choice from the esthetic (ugliness, beauty) to the moral (sin, redemption).

Sartre’s existentialism focuses on human freedom conceived in terms of individual responsibility and authenticity. He believes that without given essence or nature, man should forge our own values and meanings through a series of choices and actions. “Obligated to make our own choices, we can either confront the anguish (or Angst) of this responsibility, or evading it by claiming obedience to some determining convention or duty, thus acting in “bad faith”. Paradoxically, we are ‘condemned to be free’ (Baldick, 2000).” Furthermore, Sartre depicts the relationship between freedom and responsibility precisely in his first play, *Les Mouches* (The Flies, 1943), examining the themes of one’s commits and responsibilities. In the story, set in the ancient, mythical Greece, Orestes kills the murderers of Agamemnon, thus freeing the people of the city from the burden of guilt. According to Sartre’s existentialist view, only one chooses to assume responsibility of acting in a particular situation, like Orestes, makes effective use of one’s freedom.

The three parts of *ACO* are of equal length, each having seven chapters. As a matter of fact, the voting age in England was 21, and is considered a rite of passage into adulthood. This is also one of the protagonist’s symbols of maturity. Alex concludes that there is a cycle of recurring phases in which each young undergoes a period of existence as a violent, mechanical man; then he matures, gets greater freedom of choice, and his violence subsides. Alex truly grows as a human being only in the last chapter, after the government removing his conditioning and he can see the error of his ways for himself, without the prompting of an external, controlling force. As an authentic individual, Alex makes thrice choices to forge his own value, meanwhile, he has to shoulder the corresponding responsibilities along with the free choices. Fortunately, experiencing both the extreme ecstasy and extreme anguish in the predicament of choice and responsibility, he ultimately acquires the real immaturity both in mind and body.

### 1.1 Choosing the Evil and the Bitter Fruit of Abusing Freedom

According to Existentialism, if God doesn’t exist, man is free, man’s freedom lies in his sensible choices by his will in the life consisting a series of actions. From the viewpoint of Christianity, the self is an autonomous moral being with the power and duty of choice. In each part of the story, there is the opening lines---“*What’s it going to be then?*” It is an offer for Alex to make his own choices. In Part 1, as a vicious anti-hero, Alex chooses the evil actions to embody his absolute free will. His extra-violent life is the appropriate illustration for Sartre’s “*existence precedes essence*”. Alex remains completely uninterested in explaining his actions in terms of abstract or theoretical notions such as “liberty”, but he simply experiences his evil life directly, sensuously and joyously while he is free. Just as there exists an impulse to do good, there exists an equally powerful impulse to do bad that cannot be reasoned away, as Alex says, “*what I do I do because I like to do.*”(p.17) “Having discovered that existence has always meant freedom, but never been taught “goodness,” Alex responds predictably and inevitably to the killing burden of choice (Morris, 1971).” In this way, Alex had chosen consciously and authentically the evil action before his brainwashing.

Alex’s name has at least contains three relevant meanings: the allusion to Alexander the Great (Alex is the gang’s leader); the Latinate meaning of “without law” (“A-lex”); and the allusion to Alex’s

creative use of “Nadast”-based slang (a “lexicon” is a dictionary). As one of the most vicious portrait appears in contemporary novels, Alex behaves like a robot programmed for violence. He and his “droogs” becomes one of the major social problems threatening the state’s order and peace. He commits in robbery, burglary, assault, rape and even murder. He is definitely an evil person who should be punished. Yet there are both good and evil in Alex’s cosmos, and freedom to choose evil over good becomes the chief consideration of the book. Alex’s words:

*“But, brothers, this biting of their toe-nails over what is the cause of badness is what turns me into a fine laughing malchick[boy]. They don’t go into what is the cause of goodness, so why of the other shop? If lewdies[people] are good that’s because they like it, and I wouldn’t ever interfere with their pleasures, and so of the other shop. And I was patronizing the other shop. More, badness is of the self, the one, the you or me on our oddy knockies, and that self is made by old Bog or God and is his great pride and radosty[joy]. But the not-self cannot have the bad, meaning they of the government and the judges and the schools cannot the bad because they cannot allow the self. And is not our modern history, my brothers, the story of brave malenky[little] selves fighting these big machines? I am serious with you, brothers, over this. But what I do I do because I like to do (Burgess, 1986: 44-45).”*

Human beings, no matter how depraved, should choose their own way of life on the basis of their own evaluation and judgment. Alex’s story begins with his question: “*What’s it going to be then, eh?*” Coming from the bottom of his heart, this question appears four times in chapter 1, it is no doubt that Alex is seeking his direction of life and also the premise of his individual choice. Whether the choices of free will is a means to satisfy one’s desire or realize one’s self-mastery and self-perfection, the dignity of the “divine choice” should be respected and cherished. “For the center of the universe was now existence; man’s solitary life was enough just in *being* (Petix, 1986).”

Similarly, denying modern theories of psychological and physiological determinism, Sartre claims that we are always free to choose each and every characteristic about ourselves, we are also free to choose the code that we live by. As far as Alex is concerned, he has the paramount power to decide and choose his living codes. He is addicted to violence and classical music, which provide him the similar kind of aesthetic pleasure; he speaks highly stylized slang called “Nadsat”, through which he creates his own world as well as the spiritual empire of individuality. The above-mentioned three aspects are Alex’s living codes. Living such a life based on his active choices, he is not the machine in the society, the slave of the totalitarian state, but the master of his destiny. So he said “*what I do I do because I like to do*”, which becomes his motto with prime importance. For Alex, the nature of choice which, by definition, must be free. Alex always makes choice for choice’s sake, so he said: “*badness is of the self, the one, the you or me on our oddy knockies, and that self is made by old Bog or God and is his great pride and radosty[joy]*.” He believed that evil, as well as good, are equally valid alternatives for individual to choose. Through his willing choice of evil, he defines himself, creates himself and affirms himself.

Nonetheless, Alex had to taste the bitter fruit of abusing absolute freedom in the end of the first chapter, which is the “condemned” responsibility accompanying with his individual free choice. Alex chooses to sin, but the world cannot live with his choice. His lawless freedom is eventually induces his capture, and he is ultimately sentenced for 14 years. Although Alex has proven that violence can spring out of the self as “original sin” and not the environment, he could not escape the deserved punishment for his infringement to innocent people.

Like a coin having two sides, freedom entails responsibility, according to Sartre’s standpoints. One’s freedom includes the freedom to choose who he/she is, the freedom to choose the values one lives by, and the freedom to interpret as one may, to the extent that it would be overwhelming to confront and accept the full responsibility entailed by it. “Furthermore this absolute responsibility is not resignation; it is simply the logical requirement of the consequences of our freedom (Sartre, 1956).” Sartre believed that once a choice is made, the responsibility must be shouldered (the responsibility of being free to choose), and one has to be responsible for others as well as for oneself.

In the end of the Part 1, Alex, who has mercilessly beat an old cat woman to death, is arrested by the police mainly because of the betrayal of his traitorous “droogs”. The close friends in the past betray him when he is in trouble and in need of help, the former proud leader of the thuggish gang should lonely

confronts the serious consequence of the group's wrong deeds, the world is full of violence and alienation before, but is full of deceit and treachery now. Burgess describes the protagonist's arrest in a plain expression, but we could foresee the tragic future of young Alex.

“‘Away,’ I creeched[sceam] to Dim. ‘The rozzes[policemen] are coming.’ Dim said: ‘You stay to meet them huh huh huh,’ and then I viddied[see] that he had his oozy out, and then he upped with it and it snaked wgishhhhh and he chained me gentle and artistic like on the glazlids[eyelids], me just closing them up in time (Burgess, 1986: 70).”

Dim hits Alex's eye with his chain, and subsequently, Alex cannot see, so the police arrive immediately and arrest him. Alex's inability to see ironically foreshadows “Ludovico's Technique” in part 2, in which his eyes are kept open, on the other hand, here it symbolizes his blindness in the whole chapter. The greater irony is that his love for music now victimizes him violently, as opposed to allowing him to victimize others, for he beats the old woman with her little silver statue of Beethoven. For our arrogant narrator who enjoys his free will, it is the predestined result, his evil choices lead to the inescapable responsibility, but the responsibility is so heavy a burden that the immature Alex could not shoulder. Inevitably, Alex tastes the bitter fruit of his free will and fall into the abyss of anguish, this is also the situation some existentialists mentions, such as Kierkegaard's *Angst* and “*fear and trembling*”, Heidegger's “*dread*” and Sartre's “*nausea*”.

## 1.2 Choosing the Imposed Goodness and the Total Deprivation of Freedom

As we know, Sartre bases his Existentialism on human free will, and he does equate freedom with the capacity to choose, so freedom for Sartre is “the autonomy of choice”(Sartre, 1948:483). If “not to choose” is also an alternative of free choice, it is evident that the “individual right to choose” should be guaranteed. In *ACO*, Burgess shares the point of view of Sartre, emphasizing the significance of free choice, to some extent, perhaps choice is more important than goodness. In second part of the story, Alex takes the overloaded responsibility for what he chooses at a costly price---the loss of free will and the deprivation of free choice.

In an effect to get out of prison earlier, Alex chooses the treatment himself, accepting to be a “trailblazer” of the experimental “Ludivico Treatment”, a conditioned reflex rehabilitation based on Skinner's polemical Behaviorism, aiming to eliminate his capacity to choose socially deleterious courses of actions. He is injected daily and is forced to watch films of incredible brutality, accompanied by his beloved symphonic music. In the past, violence has given him pleasurable sensation, but now he has to suffer from the unbearable nausea. At the end of the treatment, he is so conditioned that the thought of doing any violence makes him desperately ill, as does the sound of classic music. When the two-week-long therapy finishes, he becomes non-aggressive, nonviolent, and respectful to established societal codes. He is harmless but helpless as well. Shortly after his release, he becomes the victim of the vengeful attacks by his former victims. Being robbed of the free choice, he is just a mechanical “clockwork orange”, a programmed good machine and no longer a person. Sacrificing the humanity, the imposed goodness could not lead to moral maturity.

According to Burgess's viewpoints, human beings, no matter how depraved, shouldn't be deprived of their freedom of self-determination. The state's destruction of Alex's ability to make his own moral choices represents a greater evil than any of Alex's crimes, since turning Alex into an automation ultimately sanctions the notion that human nature is indispensable. As one critic points out: “In a more significant way, his (Alex's) small-scale brutalities reflect no deeper abnormality than those of larger scale perfected by the engineers of power poliycis (Burgess, 1986: 70).” In particular, Burgess has intended Alex's sickness—the *nausea* lodged in nonchoice—to symbolize a new concept of *Angst* neatly antithetical to Kierkegaard's “fear and trembling” accruing from the infinite possibilities of choice. In a sense, the novel is a “black comedy” to analyze the horror of life without choice, whether for the evil or for the good, but he believes that to choose evil rather than to be denied the right of choice. Although moral action and ethical rightness are essential to the life in an ordered community, and the choice of good is cogent, deprivation of the right to choose is inhuman. As a result, the society will become a brutal,

resigned, mechanical world—a world turned clockwork—love must come from fate, good from evil, peace from violence, and redemption from the sin.

The seeds and fruits of freedom are equally bitter, but man is now only harvesting only what he has sown. In Part 2, the imprisoned Alex still asked the same question as the Part 1: “*What’s it going to be then, eh?*” But differently, the question should not be answered by himself but the governor of the State Jail, the Minister of the Interior, even the totalitarian state because Alex is now a spiritual slave and punished prisoner who cannot control his direction of life. At that time, our narrator Alex “*not your little droog Alex*”(p.86), but only the number 6655321, the cold number is the identity of Alex, the identity shows that he is only a little monster caged in the “*human zoo*”, having no freedom both in body and soul.

However, in order to shorten the fourteen-year-long term of imprisonment, in order to leave the prison which Alex called “*hellhole or human zoo*” (p.86) as earlier as possible, Alex voluntarily choose to be the “*guinea pig*” of the experimental technique called “*Ludovico*”. Coincidentally, a cell scuffle results in Alex’s killing a new prisoner, and the new Minister of the Interior asks the prison Governor to use Alex as a subject for the new treatment to the government “*needing all our prison space for political offenders*.”(p.102) When the governor of the prison asks Alex whether he is willing to sign the form to undergo the “*Reclamation Treatment*”, the poor Alex accepts the arrangement pleasantly.

“*Oh, yes, sir. Thank you very much, sir. I’ve done my best here, really I have. I’m very grateful to all concerned.*”

‘*Don’t be,*’ like signed the Governor. ‘*This is not a reward. This is far from being a reward. Now, there is a form here to be signed. It says that you are willing to have the residue of your sentence commuted to submission to what is called here, ridiculous expression, Reclamation Treatment. Will you sigh?*’

‘*Most certainly I will sign,*’ I said, ‘*Sir, and very many thanks.*’ (Burgess, 1986: 105) ”

The following description of the process of the treatment may be the most horrible part in this novel, the brutality and the abnormality of “*Ludovico Treatment*” is depicted in great details by the author. Burgess is like a cool-minded cameraman, shows the frightening picture vividly and honestly. Although the scientific method is an imaginative one which will happen in the future, he makes its function and effect convincing. As he explains in “*Introduction: A Clockwork Orange Resucked*,” “*it is not the novelist’s job to preach, it is his duty to show* (Burgess, 1987: 74-76).” Alex is drugged, tied down and subjected to very heavy doses of violence film. By this method of vicarious participation in an extraordinary amount of violence, the violent part of his mind can be changed, or more simply, the subject can be conditioned so that even the thought of violence can make him physically ill. It is as if he underwent a psychic frontal lobotomy, which altered his entire personality. Alex describes the first session of the “*therapy*”, in fact, he is doubted the strange method although he thinks it will bring him new life he has been longing for.

“*And then I found they were strapping my rookers[arm] to the chair-arms and my nogas[foot] were like stuck to a foot-rest. It seemed a bit bezoomny[crazy] to me but I let them go on with what they wanted to get on with. If I was to be a free young malchick[boy] again in a fortnight’s tome, I would put up with much in the meantime, O my brothers. One veshch[thing] I did not like, though, was when they put like clips on the skin of my forehead, so that my top glaz-lids[eyelids] were pulled up and up and up and I could not shut my glazzies[eyes] no matter how I tried* (Burgess, 1986: 113).”

Finally, Alex must face a big day to show the effect of the experimental “*Ludovico Technique*”. Dr. Brodsky introduces Alex as a violent hoodlum who has been converted into a peaceful. Decent young man over the past two weeks, whereas two years of prison only made him worse. Confronting a big man who flicks Alex, he couldn’t beat him or revenge with his razor, but licks the boots to stop his sickness. The next demonstration focusing on a beautiful young lady who is scantily clad, Alex’s first thought is of having violent sex with her, however, Alex throws himself at her feet and makes a worshipful speech to remedy the sickness accompanying the desire. The demonstration brings Part 2 to the climax, which reinforces the theme of the whole story. As the chaplain explains, Alex’s choice to do good is not a

choice at all, but a reaction to the pain his original immoral desires cause. It is still a reflex and has turned him, as Alex himself says, into a clockwork orange, half-machine and half-man. Consequently, Alex suffers greatly—emotionally, mentally and even physically, as a result of the Ludovico “therapy”. In fact, “Not to be able to choose is not to be human. If evil were somehow to be eradicated, its opposite—goodness—would, having no meaning, cease to exist (Stinson, 1991).” It is as inhuman to be totally good as it is to be totally evil. The important thing is moral choice. Evil has to exist along with good, in order that moral choice may operate. Alex chooses the imposed goodness, but the choice throws him into the real hell, a hell without a slim hope to be saved.

### 1.3 Choosing the Natural Goodness and the Moral Growth

According to Sartre, We are thrown into existence first without a predetermined nature and only later do we construct our nature or essence through our free choice and actions. Hence, human being, no matter how depraved, shouldn't be deprived of their freedom of self-determination. Influenced by some outlook of Existential philosophy, Burgess argues that forcing man to be good rather than allowing him to choose good and evil leads to dehumanization. Natural goodness activated by individual free choice foreshadows the moral growth.

Being a “free” harmless man, Alex is released from the prison. Lonely and bereft of vitality, he has runs into and brutally beaten by his former droog and gang foe. What's worse, he quickly becomes the pawn of a liberal political organization to overthrow the totalitarian regime. He attempts suicide by jumping out of a window, but the fall didn't kill him. After the government removes the conditioning, he felt “cured” and again is free to love music and violence. Free to will and free to choose again, even if he wills to sin, Alex is capable of salvation. In the view of Burgess, all individuals, even those as violent as Alex, could reform and acquire the moral growth. The moral maturity comes with age. Therefore, Alex eventually matures in Part 3, Chapter 7, the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter of the novel, in which he is becoming bored with his violent, youthful activities, looking forward to the experiences of marriage and children, and viewing his former life as an episode outgrown. So it is a symbolic maturity because the voting age in England was 21 and is considered a rite of passage into adulthood. In this light, Alex's natural goodness paves the way for his authentic existence. His maturation also provides hope for Christian redemption: over time, Man can erase the effects of Original Sin by choosing goodness.

In Chapter 21, Burgess presents a mellowing, increasingly reflective, eighteen-year-old Alex who is coming to see that this previous violent behavior was childishy perverse. He thinks of marriage, stability, and the son he one day hopes to have. He contemplates explaining to his son all his past crimes as an admonition. Although Kubrick's film version boldly truncated the last chapter and left the readers with a stark presentation of unregenerate evil and carries more social impact, Burgess prefers his own ending, with his own world view, his own theology. When man has reached a hopeless impasse in his savage quest for improvement, he must make the sensible moral choice. The individual is a “*creature of growth and capable of sweetness*”, as F. Alexander puts it in his typescript, so he could be liberated or saved. Therefore, “Alex's tale is still a story of liberation: he has escaped from not only the literal prison of Staja 84F but also the figurative prisons of adolescent boyhood and ‘clockwork’ humanity (Ray, 1981).” In Christian term, Alex as a sinner must be permitted to enhance the possibilities for his salvation by choosing good over evil. A man rendered incapable of moral choice can never attain salvation; but a sinner may choose to repent and win redemption.

By contrast, the state condemns Alex's brutality, it also sanctions and encourages the avengers' brutality, even though it has been exacted its own vengeance in the form of prison term. Absolutely, the “brainwashed” Alex becomes a harmless and useless “machine”, so he couldn't live in the evil world full of tension and absurdity. He becomes a prey of other “human animal” and finds no little room to stand; but after the suicide jumping, when the “therapy” was removed from the his mind and body, the “cured” Alex regain the power of violence, he doesn't acquire the real improvement by means of this “blood for blood or tit for tat” method, just begins with the “starting line” and ends with the same line. If there is no any self-perfection and improvement, what is the usage of the so-called “therapy.” As the prison chaplain points out “*Goodness comes from within. Goodness is something chosen.*”(p.93) The real maturity comes from the individual's active action, through his iron-willed determination and positive actions, subsequently, the authentic good could be achieved and the real growth could be attained. Alex

reflects what he has done before and conceive the bright future, especially he encounters one of his old friends, Pete, who lives a normal and moral life with his wife, at that time, goodness comes from Alex's heart, from within, at that time, he still the master of his own life, full of vigor and strength, at that time, he realize what is good and what is wrong, at that time, he shoulder the responsibility of the cost of growth. In last chapter, he contemplates like this:

*"Perhaps I was getting too old for the sort of jeezny[life] I had been leading, brothers. I was eighteen now, just gone. Eighteen was not a young age."*

*"I kept viddying[see] like vision, like these cartoons in the gazattas. There was your Humble Narrator Alex coming home from work to a good hot plate of dinner, and there was this pitisa[woman] all welcoming and greeting like loving. But I could not think who it might be. But I had this sudden very strong idea that if I walked into the room next to this room where the fire was burning away and my hot dinner laid on the table, there I should find what I really wanted, and now it all tied up, that picture scissored out of the gazetta and meeting Old Pete like that. For in that other room in a cot wae laying gurgling goo goo goo my son. Yes yes yes, brothers, my son (Burgess, 1986: 210-211)."*

Alex finally comes of age. He casts off his violent, immature past and embraces a peaceful, mature, middle-class lifestyle. The most important thing about this transition, as opposed to his previous two reversals, is that he willfully chooses to change. Youth, as Alex's images describe, is mechanical and deterministic. Only those who have seen enough of life to make informed choices can claim free will and escape from the fate of being a clockwork orange. Burgess chose Alex's maturation to come in the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter, since 21 used to be the voting age in Britain and is otherwise considered the rite of passage into adulthood. The eighteen-year-old makes the most sensible choice in his young life to reach the destination of maturation only through his free will.

According to Existentialism viewpoints, since we have no inward nature that determines who we are, we can only define ourselves by projecting into the future, but the real only evidence that we are headed in one direction or the other is by an examination of how we act. Alex chooses the right direction coming from authentic self, chooses the moral road to pursue his maturation. Although he didn't find the correct path of life in the past, he determines to draw a newly different picture in the future. From a sinner to a clockwork orange, from a mechanical inhuman machine to a morally mature man, he experiences the sensuous ecstasy and beauty as well as the unbearable torture and suffering of deprivation of the right to choose; he also endures the different phases between the sin and the salvation. As an eighteen-year-old big boy, he tries the excitement of eating the forbidden fruits as Adam, he tastes the bitter fruits of free will as Satan, he is bound to reap the harvests of moral growth as Angel.

We Chinese have a saying: "If a man plants melons, he will reap melons, if he sows beans, he will reap beans." Good begets good, and evil leads to evil. We are all the sum total of our actions. Young Alex once misses the road to right direction of meaningful life, he is lost in the labyrinth of freedom, he reaps the predestined bitter melon. But now, he reaps the fresh melons in a right way, he will deliver the message of maturation and goodness through his imagined son, which justify his valuable life and self worth. Alex gets the insight of life:

*"But now as I end this story, I am not young, not no longer, oh no. Alex like groweth up, oh yes. ....Tomorrow is all like sweet flowers and the turning vonny[smell] earth and the stars and the old Luna up there and your old droog Alex all on his oddy knocky seeking like a mate. And all that cal (Burgess, 1986: 212).*

The future of growth will be filled with sweet flowers and bright sunshine. Alex bids adieu to the dark past and embraces the glittering future. Life is full of bitterness and sweetness, but future always foreshadows the hope and growth. Young Alex will not only seek a spouse as his decision, but also a home for his heart, a soft heart of a real person. Alex's world often seems funny and always childishly pitiable because it reflects the condition which existentialists have describes as "the Absurd", this is a disparity between reality and the protagonist's vision. Fortunately, in the absurd world, young Alex finds the exit in the maze of life, although there is a distance between the brutal reality and beautiful vision, he

begins a new page of life, more fortunately, he is the compiler, a designer, a writer of his own life, the opportunity itself is the most valuable treasure that everyone should catch and cherish.

## 2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF FREE CHOICE: AUTHENTIC FREEDOM IS THE FREEDOM OF CHOICE

Evidently, the basic issue Burgess has suggested in *ACO* is the significance of free choice. He declared "Choice, choice is all that matters, and to impose the good is evil, to act evil is better than to have good imposed(Burgess, 1986)." He stressed that good behavior is meaningless if one does not actively choose goodness.

In this light, Burgess shares the similar philosophical underpinning with Existentialism. Sartre defines being-for-itself as authentic being. He believed that the inauthentic being is the being for things and the authentic being is the being of the human being. So human being must strive to gain the authentic being through free choice. If Alex is deprived of the capability of moral choice by science, he appears to be a "clockwork orange", an organic machine, a thing instead of a human. At that time, no matter how benevolently and kindly he behaves, his existence is inauthentic, his so-called freedom is inauthentic. Such an inauthentic being is bound to bring about a serious contemporary malaise, it's a kind of anguish and despair in form of "nausea". As a guinea pig, Alex experiences the "nausea" caused by "Ludovico Technology". By accident, his body is conditioned to associate not only violence but his beloved classical music with "nausea". The physical and spiritual discomfort and anxiety is also posed in Sartre's "nausea", Heidegger's "dread", and Kierkegaard's "Angst" and "fear and trembling."

Sartre preserves the values of "authenticity" and individual "responsibility." Literally, "authenticity" means to make or create oneself. In his principle work *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre puts forwards two types of "being", the authentic being and inauthentic being. The former is the "being-in-itself", which is fixed and static, and the latter is the "being-for-itself", which is fluid and free and it is open towards the future. We human beings must strive for the "authentic" being. Hence, the human being is free to realize his aims, to materialize his dreams, he has only the destiny he forges for himself. According to Sartre, to be authentic is to embrace our existence as an open-ended field of multiple possibilities of self-identity from which we choose. "Only by opening ourselves to an experimental horizon of possible identities can we then choose freely in any given circumstance (Kearney, 1986)." Otherwise, we will face the "bad faith", in which human being imprisoned himself with inauthenticity for he has refused to take the challenge of responsibility and the anxiety along with his freedom.

Burgess shares the identical view of "authentic" self with Sartre. Alex is as much a "clockwork orange" before as after the Ludovico treatment is ironically and comically portrayed. In the whole story of Alex's adventure, Burgess concentrates on the nature of choice must be free and he intends to make us commit ourselves to choice for choice's sake. This is the responsibility accompanying with the pursuit of "authentic being", and we should shoulder the responsibility. Originally, Alex may be predestined to do evil, he chooses the evil as an equally valid and rational choice as well as the good; at last, when Alex's ability to choose is restored, he is tired of violence, and reforms. Although these two choices are opposite polar, both of them are "authentic" choices representing the "authentic being." By contrast, the second choice which deprives the power of choosing leads to the protagonist's dehumanization. The choice is no doubt the "inauthentic" choice, embodying the darkest side of human nature. In particular, undergoing the "Ludovico Treatment", Alex lives a painful life without the dignity and self-esteem, his weakness and impotency are exhibited and despised by the so-called authority whose task is to remove the violence with a scientific method instead of educating in a human way. The demonstration of effect of the treatment is the vivid illustration of the poor Alex like an inhuman machine:

*"And, my brothers, believe it or kiss my sharrie[expletive to be used with "kiss my—], I got down on my knees and pushed my red yahzick[tongue] out a mile and a half to lick his grahzny[dirty] vonny[smelling] boots. But all this veck[man] did was to kick me not too hard on the rot (Burgess, 1986)."*



Facing the aggressive man who meant to make Alex become furious, Alex has no dignity at all, the “horrible killing sickness” prevents him from self-protection, let alone the willful revenge. Being deprived of the valuable right to choose, Alex is not a human any longer, such a “good man” is predestined to be eliminated from the society, for the society itself is a dog-eat-dog society. The state attempts to transform the violent tough into a peaceful citizen, but finally succeeded in rendering Alex incapable of self-defense. When a man loses the power of self-defense, he has no root to live on, he will become the fragile apparatus in the gigantic “clockwork orange” as the state, having the possibility to be ruined every moment. If the inauthentic choice “plants” the “imposed goodness” to human’s mind, the goodness will have no significance and the wrong direction will lead to the complete failure. Alex could not bear the extreme agony caused by the inauthentic choice, so do Burgess and Sartre.

What’s worse, the state has also rendered Alex incapable of enjoying the music of his adored “Ludwig Van”. This is a more vicious effect aroused from the inhuman reform, which exposes the evil nature of inauthentic choice. When the doctors show Alex a World War II Nazi film depicting death in many forms, the soundtrack plays Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony. Alex calls it a “sin” to mix Beethoven up with such violent films. The despaired Alex pleads to keep the violence out of the technique, but Dr. Brodsky believes that many activities, even heavenly ones like music, contain some degree of violence. The beautiful music is now negatively associates with violence, the human’s basic aesthetic pleasure is deprived. As a result, the human is no longer the human, but the inferior animal, human’s colorful life is not the real life, but a torture whose existence is for existence’s sake. To quote from Burgess own account of the novel:

*“The state has succeeded in its primary aim: to deny Alex’s free moral choice, which, to the State, means choice of evil. But it has added an unforeseen punishment: the gates of heaven are closed to the boy, since music is a figure of celestial bliss. The state has committed a double sin: it has destroyed a human being, since humanity is defined by freedom or moral choice, it has also destroyed an angel (Ray, 1981).”*

To sum up, the State’s destruction of Alex’s ability to make his own moral choices represents a greater evil than any of Alex’s crimes, since turning Alex into an automation ultimately sanctions the notion that human nature is dispensable. Alex truly grows a human being only in the last chapter, after the government removes his conditioning and he can see the error of his ways for himself, without the prompting of an external, controlling force. The authentic freedom could be acquired only through individual’s own free choices, any deterministic forces could not let one to pursue his “authenticity”, otherwise, man will never control the right direction of meaningful life.

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