

The omitted chapter



The new American edition of the novel *A Clockwork Orange* features a final chapter that was omitted from the original American edition against the author's preference. Anthony Burgess, the novel's author, provided for the new edition an introduction to explain not only the significance of the twenty-first chapter but also the purpose of the entire book which was the fundamental importance of moral choice. Burgess states that the twenty-first chapter was intended to show the maturation or moral progress of the youthful protagonist, Alex. The omission of the twenty-first chapter resulted, according to Burgess, in the reduction of the novel from fiction to fable, something untrue to life. Human beings change, and Burgess wanted his protagonist to mature rather than stay in adolescent aggression. The twenty-first chapter shows this change, and the chapter is important because it includes Alex's mature assessment of his own adolescence and shows the importance of maturity to moral freedom which is Burgess's main point. Burgess has presented his definition of moral freedom in both his introduction and in his novel. This definition will be discussed and it will be shown how Burgess relates it to three kinds of clockwork oranges. Burgess's definition of moral freedom as the ability to perform both good and evil is presented by implication in his discussion of the first kind of clockwork orange. In his introduction, he states that if one "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 (since this is increasingly replacing both) the Almighty State." Burgess goes on to say, "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.” This hypothetical type of clockwork orange nowhere appears in the novel because Alex is neither totally good nor totally evil but a mixture of both. This remains true even after Alex’s conditioning by the Government. It is true that the Government tries to make Alex totally good through conditioning; however, since it is a coerced goodness, against Alex’s will, total goodness is not achieved. Burgess is correct when he states that evil has to exist along with good in order that moral choice may operate. He is not correct, however, when he states that it is inhuman to be totally good. He does not consider the possibility of totally good human beings that consistently choose good, either morally or amorally. One can have a perfectly good environment such as Heaven or the Garden of Eden where evil is only a possibility awaiting actualization by the free choice of totally good beings such as Lucifer the archangel or Adam the first man. Good beings may cause evil, and moral freedom only requires that one knows a possibility is evil before one chooses it. Only then can moral guilt be valid. If beings can only choose good or only choose evil, then they do not have moral freedom and the concepts of reward and punishment do not apply. Burgess calls such beings ‘clockwork oranges’ and says that they would be inhuman. Personally, I wouldn’t use the word ‘inhuman’. I prefer the word ‘amoral’ and believe that it is possible to have amoral humans who are still free. Such humans would not be clockwork toys that have no free choices. They would be created beings with plenty of free choices but no moral ones. In other words, the ability to do evil is missing or removed. All choices would be amoral. Such, I believe, will be the state of those humans who enter Heaven. There will be no sin and suffering in the future Heaven because I think that God will remove the possibility of sin and suffering. Only amoral

good will be possible. This is a personal opinion which I think the Christian scriptures allow. Although Burgess considers one kind of clockwork orange inhuman, he does allow for another kind of clockwork orange that is human. Burgess's little Alex is a clockwork orange until he reaches maturity in the twenty-first chapter. Stanley Hyman, a literary critic, provided an afterword for the original American edition of *A Clockwork Orange*. In it he states that "Alex always was a clockwork orange, a machine for mechanical violence far below the level of choice...". One must remember that this afterword was written for an edition in which the important twenty-first chapter was missing. In that chapter, Alex himself states: Youth must go, ah yes. But youth is only being in a way like it might be an animal. No, it is not just like being an animal so much as being like one of these malenky toys you viddy being sold in the streets, like little chellovecks made out of tin and with a spring inside and then a winding handle on the outside and you wind it up grr grr grr and off it itties, like walking, O my brothers. But it itties in a straight line and bangs straight into things bang bang and it cannot help what it is doing. Being young is like being like one of these malenky machines. Alex goes on to apply this condition to his own hypothetical son and says that even if he explained this condition to him, he wouldn't understand or want to understand. He would probably end up killing somebody and Alex wouldn't be able to stop him any more than he would be able to stop his own son. And this repetition of youthful, clockwork aggression would continue until the end of the world. This repetition is compared to someone, like God, continuously turning an orange in his hands. Also, for the perceptive reader, it is compared to the repetition of the phrase "what's it going to be then, eh?" which begins the first chapter of

each part until Alex states his intention of finding a wife to mother his son which is “ like a new chapter beginning”. He then concludes, “ That’s what it’s going to be then, brothers, as I come to the like end of this tale.” Alex grows up and becomes morally responsible. He is no longer a human clockwork orange. Alex was also a clockwork orange after being conditioned in prison. In other words, he was a clockwork orange in two different senses at the same time. But this conditioning will be addressed later, after we examine the state of his being a clockwork orange by nature. Alex’s adolescent state was not a case of total evil which Burgess calls an inhuman type of clockwork orange. Immature Alex was a mixture of good and evil possibilities with evil taking the upper hand. He liked the good of classical music even if he associated it with the evils of violence. What made Alex a type of clockwork orange was his lack of a moral sense of obligation that made him “ bang straight into things” as he put it. Burgess defines this lack of moral obligation in Part One, Chapter Four, where Alex says he does evil because he likes it just as some people do good because they like it. According to Alex, what causes good or evil is desire. There is no sense of moral obligation or the possibility of moral guilt hovering over Alex when he chooses evil. He chooses evil because he likes it, nothing more. Instead of choosing good by a sense of moral obligation, his behavior is conditioned by his desires and in that sense he is a clockwork orange. One understandable complaint that may be raised against the novel is the fact that Alex appears to know that what he is doing is evil because he says so. He associates himself with the ‘ bad shop’. So how can it be said that he lacks a sense of moral obligation and, therefore, lacks moral freedom? The only answer I can give is that maybe the immature Alex had no personal sense of obligation

even if he knew that his behavior was called ‘ bad’ or ‘ evil’ by his society. This interpretation would save Burgess from an apparent contradiction by having Alex associate his youth with a wind-up toy which is the opposite of moral freedom. But this interpretation is weak because Alex’s sarcasm throughout the novel implies that he really believes that some of his behavior is evil and he occasionally feigns sincerity to social authorities in order to better his condition. Also, Alex appears on occasion to sincerely protest the evil of others and on one occasion even calls his conditioning against classical music a “ sin”. So, one is left with what appears to be a contradiction and the twenty-first chapter does not seem to resolve it. Perhaps a deeper analysis of this novel will. The adolescent Alex was operating under what Burgess in his introduction calls ‘ Original Sin’. Original sin is the natural and repetitive violence that occurs under the providence of God and will continue until the end of the world, as the mature Alex points out. The term ‘ Original Sin’ is theological and refers to Adam’s first sin and its effects as inherited from his descendants. The doctrine states that everyone inherits a sinful nature and physical death as a result of Adam’s sin. There are differences of opinion among Christians as to whether Adam’s guilt was also imputed to his descendants. Those who follow the tradition of John Calvin (1509 – 1564) hold that all are guilty with Adam for their sinful natures. On the other hand, those who follow the tradition of Jacobus (or James) Arminius (1560 – 1609) hold that a sinful nature and physical death are inherited from Adam but guilt occurs only from a personal choice to sin which is possible only after one reaches an age of moral accountability. There is a third tradition, following Pelagius (360 – 420), that denies original sin altogether. This tradition is referenced in Burgess’s introduction when he

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mentions his own “ Pelagian unwillingness to accept that a human being could be a model of unregenerable evil”. This reference is a bit misleading because Burgess seems to agree with the idea of original sin shared by both Reformed Calvinists and Arminians and is merely disagreeing with the idea of unregenerable evil. Aside from the question of guilt, both Calvinists and Arminians agree that all humans inherit a sinful nature that is played out automatically in youth until the time when maturity brings moral perception which does not remove original sin but at least checks it. One thing that is debatable is when youths in general become morally perceptive. Burgess seems to say that it occurs at around eighteen years of age, the time when Alex starts reflecting and changing his ways in chapter twenty-one. But irregardless of the age, the point is that it does occur and naturally so. It is not something that is freely chosen. Moral freedom is possible only after moral perception is given by God. Only God, not humans, can create moral freedom. The third type of clockwork orange is the one which Alex undergoes when he is conditioned by the Government against certain desires for violence and classical music. This type of clockwork orange is easily confused with the one previously discussed because of differing definitions of moral freedom. Some think that doing what you desire is moral freedom whereas others, like myself, think that doing what you know you ought to do is moral freedom. Desires can be good or evil, so the difference is between doing what you feel verses doing what you know is right or wrong. I reject the Reformed Calvinist position which holds that the will always chooses according to its strongest inclination at the moment. I believe that the will can reject its strongest inclination if it knows that it is wrong. Only then is one morally free. To be moved by nothing but desires is to be a clockwork

orange as Alex was before he became morally responsible. Mortimer J. Adler, a contemporary American philosopher, in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, distinguishes three fundamental types of freedom. One type is circumstantial freedom. This is the freedom to do as one pleases. Alex loses his ability to do certain things he wants to do because he is conditioned to feel physically sick whenever certain things are desired. What makes this type of clockwork orange so interesting and controversial is the fact that circumstantial freedom is the type of freedom that the Government restricts whenever it locks up somebody for breaking the law. Prisons are intended to restrict circumstantial freedom so that murderers and rapists, for example, can't murder and rape any more. But, as the novel shows, this is no guarantee against "crime in the midst of punishment". A man is murdered in prison. So, the Government in the novel moves this restriction of circumstantial freedom from the physical to the psychological realm by the use of conditioning. Alex becomes a walking prison! He is conditioned by physical sickness to refrain from fulfilling the evil desires he wants to fulfill. The Government's move from the physical to the psychological realm raises the question of whether moral freedom, which occurs in the psychological realm, can be removed. This question is valid even without considering whether youthful Alex, before his conditioning, had moral freedom or not. The novel's prison chaplain, and possibly Burgess also, was terribly worried that such conditioning could remove the possibility of moral choice. I, however, do not think it can. Moral pain (felt guilt) is different than physical pain. Alex, apparently, didn't feel any moral pain when he indulged in ultra-violence. But even if he had, such guilt would not be strong enough to stop him from performing acts of violence. On the other hand, his conditioning, based on

physical pain, did stop him from performing acts of violence. My contention is that moral freedom could co-exist with the conditioning because moral freedom does not require physical performance as much as mental assent, even if the mental assent results in physical sickness. Also, since only God can give moral freedom, only he can remove it. None of the previous observations, however, should be taken as consenting to psychological or behavioural conditioning. The intent was only to emphasize the difference between moral and circumstantial freedom. The moral protest to such conditioning is based on the fact that no human has the right to say who should be conditioned and who shouldn't as if some humans (like Doctors Brodsky and Branom in the novel) are morally perfect. As Alex points out, the ones who made the films he had to watch are just as bad, if not more so, than the criminals performing the gruesome acts in the films. Why should he have to be sick when watching those films when Brodsky and others sit around and say how excellent the whole thing is. This, I believe, is the novel's most powerful point. It basically states that there are no morally perfect humans since original sin infects everybody and willful sin is still possible. Human governments cannot make individuals morally perfect ('a true Christian' as Dr. Brodsky said) so they shouldn't try. Attempts to do so will only result in a conditioned type of clockwork orange, a coerced goodness, and not a natural or chosen one. It is the mutual responsibility of God and the individual to reach moral perfection; the one giving moral freedom and removing original sin and the other rightly exercising that freedom to include acceptance of God's forgiveness for willful sin.