

## Demystifying Violence in Stanley Kubrick's Movie, *A Clockwork Orange* *Orange: A Zizekian Perspective*

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### Abstract

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines violence as the “use of physical force so as to injure, abuse, damage, or destroy”. In this regard, violence is a dominating theme in the movie, *A Clockwork Orange*. Removing it from the equation, the movie loses its soul. The movie is too violent in its treatment and for the very reason, invited a lot of criticism and animosity from various quarters. It was highly controversial at the time of its release for its unusually explicit demonstrations of sex and violence. What exactly could be the purpose of this “ultra-violence”? Does it necessarily have a purpose and motive? A brief overview of the movie must be helpful in better understanding the various dimensions of violence in it.

Keywords: Violence, Iota of Doubt, Crime, Ludovico, Humanization.

The movie, “A Clockwork Orange” by Stanley Kubrick is based on the 1962 novel by Anthony Burgess by the same name. As the title suggests, the movie mainly addresses the issue of the conflict between two opposing and incompatible forces- the organic and the inorganic. Violence is as organic as a naturally occurring orange, to the protagonist, Alex DeLarge, a juvenile delinquent and the leader of a gang which commits random acts of violence. He seems to be an eccentric and a sociopath whose motive for committing violence is ambiguous even though he clearly derives pleasure from these heinous acts. Rape and Sex, both physically and symbolically, are very much integral to his acts of brutality.

Alex, who is largely driven by the pleasure principle, exists in an apparently free state without any kind of external restrictions as if his very existence is pre-discursive until the state intervenes and arrests him for the crime of committing murder. The transformation begins as the reality principle, in the form of the juridico-political power structures, is forced upon him. Alex willingly subjects himself to the Ludovico technique, which is an experimental aversion therapy for rehabilitating criminals, introduced recently and was not experimented on anyone until then. Despite hearing the rumors about its danger and risk, Alex subjects himself to the treatment as it might help him leave the prison earlier than otherwise. The therapy operates on force-feeding the individual with visuals of violence and cruelty until he develops an absolute aversion to it. Following the treatment, even the ninth symphony of Beethoven gives him nausea as it was played along with the visuals during the treatment and as a result develops an aversion towards his favorite piece of music as well. The idea behind the therapy is to make him a “fit” and “proper” citizen for the state. Alex, following the treatment, is castrated of his ability to commit violence even though the thought and desire to do the same recurs in his mind. “Purged” of all the violence, he appears to be a “proper” citizen for the state but the movie ends on an ambiguous, surreal note where Alex envisions a free state devoid of all restrictions.

A detailed overview of the movie is desirable to gain a better understanding of the theme of violence in it. The movie begins in the futuristic Britain, in a bar named Korova, where Alex and his fellow droogs, Georgie, Dim and Pete, spend an evening, preparing them for some “ultra-violence”. The extreme close up shot of Alex’s eye, as the movie begins, and the gradual zoom out gives the impression of an all watching eye. After getting intoxicated, they engage in various bouts of violent acts including the rape of a woman. Sex is very much part of their violent enterprises. At first, they target an old vagabond, who is drunk and merrily sings under a bridge. The long leaning shadow of the gang advancing towards the old

man foreshadows the old man's fate. He gets brutally assaulted by Alex and party. In the following scene, Alex encounters Billy boy's gang who were assaulting a woman on a stage. The dialogues, background score etc. give the scene, as much as to the rest of the movie, a surrealistic and dramatic quality. They drive through the country and reach the home of F. Alexander, a writer, where they beat him up to the point of crippling him for life and rape his wife before his eyes. Before the act, Alex sings the song, "Singin' in the Rain". In the next scene, he hears Beethoven's ninth symphony. Next day, as he misses school, he is confronted by the probation officer, Mr. P.R Deltoid, who, being aware of Alex's nature, warns him again.

That very night, Alex picks up two girls and takes them to his apartment to have sex with them. The sex scene is fast forwarded to avoid censoring. Alex's droogs expresses their discontentment with Alex's leadership and are not satisfied with the petty crimes they usually indulge in. They demand for more exciting ones that could earn them more money. Alex, offended by this "new way" of affairs, in which his authority is challenged and taken over by Georgie, beats up his fellow droogs and forcefully makes them feel his power and authority.

To cheer up his gang, Alex takes them to the rich "Cat-lady" into whose house only Alex manages to invade. The events that followed ended up in the death of the lady as Alex smashes the head of the fallen lady with a massive phallic sculpture. On hearing the siren, Alex tries to flee, only to see him being smashed on the head with a bottle by Dim, leaving him alone to be arrested by the police.

In prison, Mr. Deltoid comes to meet Alex, informs him of the death of Alex's victim, and expresses his inability to save Alex anymore. Alex, who is now branded as a murderer, is intimidated by the news and all his desperate pleas for help fell into the cold ears of the probation officer and others. He is sentenced to fourteen years in Prison at H.M Prison Parkmoor.

Unlike the other inmates, Alex apparently seems to be interested in the sermon and the bible, which quickly invited the favor of the priest who shows a special affection towards him. Alex, despite the rumors of the Ludovico technique, submits himself willingly for the experimental aversion therapy before the Minister of Interior's Law.

As part of the treatment, Alex is strapped to a chair; his eyes kept open using a clamp and his head covered with wires and related instruments. He is injected with drugs and is made to watch scenes of sex and violence, all the while eye drops are constantly put into his eyes. This scene gives a creepy feeling to most viewers and has the potential to make a person sick as much as it makes Alex. The therapy lasts for a fortnight after which Alex develops an absolute aversion towards all kinds of possible violence and, unintentionally, even towards his favorite piece of music, Ludwig Van Beethoven's ninth symphony, as it was played along with the violent scenes.

Two weeks later, the minister demonstrates Alex's rehabilitation to other officials. Alex cannot fight back an actor who beats him on stage and is even forced to lick his shoes. The next demonstration was with a topless woman, whose presence seems to bring back the libido in Alex but ends up getting nauseated as he attempts to grab the woman's breasts. The therapy is approved to be effective by the gathered officials who also acknowledge the full rehabilitation of Alex. The only person who challenged the treatment was the priest who observed the therapy as dehumanizing as it limits the individual to make the right moral choice between good and evil. But, he is silenced by the Minister who finds it as a trivial reason for banning a therapy which is found to be effective in cutting down crimes.

As a freed man, Alex returns to his home as a "reformed" person, only to see him abandoned by his parents, who lend his room to someone called Joe. In the street, he confronts the old vagrant he attacked before, whom, on recognizing Alex, beats him up along with his friends. Alex finds himself helpless to resist or fight back. He is rescued from the old

vagrants by two police officers who turn out to be the old gang mates of Alex- Dim and Georgie. They beat him up in the countryside, and nearly drown him before abandoning him.

Tired and exhausted, Alex makes it to a doorstep before he collapses. It turns out to be the home of the writer whom he crippled and whose wife he raped. A muscular man called Julian takes him in and the writer, at first fails to recognize Alex. The writer comes to know that Alex is the one who was subjected to the Ludovico therapy and feels sympathetic towards him. He offers to help him and informs his friends to come and visit Alex in order to make the public aware of the dangers of the new therapy and most importantly, to make him as a political weapon against the present government. While bathing, Alex breaks into singing, "Singin' in the rain", which makes the writer recognize him as the hoodlum who assaulted him and his wife. With the help of his friends, the writer drugs Alex and locks him up in a room where he makes him listen to the ninth symphony of Beethoven. Unable to withstand the sickening feeling, Alex jumps out of the window to die but his life was saved even though he got badly injured in the fall.

The reports that came out following Alex's predicament were highly unfavorable for the government. The media accused the minister for the implementation of such an inhuman therapy. The minister, finding himself in trouble, apologizes to Alex and offers him a job in return. In the last scene, Alex, hearing the ninth symphony, envisions himself having sex with a girl in snow while others merrily cheer for them.

Zizek's observations on Violence can be used to delineate the nature and purpose of the multiple dimensions of violence in the movie. The droogs' savagery and ruthlessness can be seen as what Zizek would call, "subjective violence". The external or physical manifestations of violence would amount to this particular category which is the often recognized form of violence. When someone makes the claim that the movie is deeply entrenched in "violence", he is obviously referring to this external demonstration of violence.

Such kind of violence also presupposes an “identifiable agent” performing the act. In the movie, violence has a clear source or agent, which is Alex and his fellow droogs.

The inhuman and insensitive acts get manifested only in the background of a “non-violent zero level”. The society in which Alex lives is seemingly non-violent and law-abiding. There are police, hospitals, and other well functioning legal and political machineries. All such social institutions strive to keep the law in place and make the social and personal life of its subjects better. People like the writer and the cat-lady lead a seemingly stable and comfortable life which gives the impression of a well operating society. Their comfortable life could be the result of the strong implementation of law and order. Often times it turns out that the life they lead becomes the “norm” and no one dares to challenge it. Here, one can clearly observe a correspondence between law and the “normal” state of affairs.

Foucault would argue that the juridical systems of power produce the subjects they subsequently come to represent. It operates on the negative terms of limitation, prohibition, regulation, control, and even “protection” of individuals. Judith Butler introduces Foucault’s thoughts on the operation of law on individuals in shaping their identities, in her work, *Gender Trouble*, as “the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, deformed, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures” (2). Law produces what it claims merely to represent and even conceals what it produces and hence, essentializes and naturalizes it. Similarly, the normality of Alex’s society is constructed by law which justifies and sustains it. The law is evasive and self-sustaining which produces the illusion that the apparent normalcy is “pre-discursive” and hence, unquestionably objective and “natural”. In other words, it conceals the operation of law and its role in producing the seemingly normal state of affairs.

The random acts of violence that Alex and his friends commit appear to be “violent” precisely because it operates on the background of “normalcy”. What it points to is the problem behind the very logic of this “objective” normality. Such an argument, needless to say, is not an attempt to trivialize the vicious and heartless deeds of the droogs. The violence perpetrated on Alex by the state and its machinery is not enough reason to free him from the onus of the physical atrocities he committed. He is, without an iota of doubt, culpable of what he did. As Jackson Burgess puts it in his review of the movie in the *Film Quarterly*, “the proposition that what is done to Alex is “worse” than what he does is nonsense in any ordinary human terms. A club over the head may be cruder than a syringe in the arm, but that doesn’t make it somehow more humanly personal” (35).

It is important to put the “normality” of Alex’s society under scrutiny in order to better understand the violence deep-rooted in the system. Zizek calls the apparent normality as an embodiment of “objective violence” which remains invisible to the common eyes. The mere fact that a society remains calm and stable doesn’t guarantee its non-violent nature; rather, the stability and the calmness could be the result of a series of violence that go unnoticed and unrecorded. It could equally be due to the “catastrophic consequences of the smooth functioning of our economic and political system” (2). It doesn’t necessarily mean that the privileged ones are instrumental in any kind of direct brutality. Instead, their mere existence, through which they derive the privileges of an unjust system, makes them culpable.

A Marxist perspective might be helpful in understanding this kind of an exploitation which amounts to “systemic violence”. The cat-lady and the writer were, undoubtedly, shocked and all the more surprised to see violence unleashed on them. What harm did they do? Apparently none. But, that doesn’t make them immune to the outbursts of random violence. One could argue that they happened to be the unlucky random victims of Alex. This argument is highly valid as, apart from the few reasons like money and desire for pleasure,

the droog's violence is largely without any definite motive. Peter Hoyng, in the article titled, "Ambiguities of Violence in Beethoven's Ninth through the Eyes of Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*", goes to the extent of claiming that "...they don't rape and attack women and men for any particular purpose, such as sex or money; there seems to be no motivation other than the fun gained through the exercise of their power. Their random acts of aggression are staged as the art of violence, as a superior form of self expression" (164).

But it also raises a serious question as to why the beneficiaries of an unjust system become the direct targets of revolutionary counter-violence. Unlike subjective violence, systemic violence doesn't have a definite agent but clearly, there are people who are benefited by it who become the ready targets of counter-violence. As Harry van der Linden in the essay, "On the Violence of Systemic Violence: A Critique of Slavoj Žižek" argues:

It is obviously the case that unjust social structures are kept in place by individuals who fulfill, in varying degrees, indispensable roles in the continuation of the structures. These individuals sustain or execute "systemic violence," profit from it, and can be held in varying degrees morally responsible for it. Thus it would appear that these individuals are appropriate targets for counter-violence. (8)

It is also intriguing to consider the dimension of violence at the level of the symbolic universe. When Mr Deltoid visits Alex, who is caught by the police, he calls him a "murderer", effectively reducing Alex to an act he is held responsible for. Naming could be an arbitrary act but there is an element of symbolic violence which reduces the organic unity of an individual to a single feature. Alex, who is taken to the prison, is given a number which would be his identity from then on. He is reduced to a mere six digit number and is identified with the information written on the committal form. "Name?" the officer, while verifying the committal report, asks Alex who is recently brought there. "Alexander DeLarge" he replies. In the following conversation, the officer reminds him that he is now in H. M Prison

Parkmoor where the inmates are expected to address the officers as “Sir”. “You are now 655321” (*A Clockwork Orange*), the officer tells him. In Prison, such a reductionism is practiced so as to keep the inmates in order and control. Reductionism helps to maintain an indifferent attitude towards the inmates who are dehumanized for the efficient operation of the punitive or legal machinery. If dehumanization is not violence, then what is?

Demonization or “Othering” of a community or a group of people is no less a violent act. One is not essentially a “demon” or the “other”, instead, ideology and power operates in the construction of such categories. Similarly, “enemy” is also a constructed entity. Language, indisputably, play a crucial role in the making of the enemy. One can even argue that the author, by virtue of his indulgence with the symbolic universe, which is simply through the act of writing, performs violence and hence, is guilty of symbolic violence. Jackson Burges ends his review thus: “Visual horrors abound in *A Clockwork Orange*, yet the worst moment may not be any of the murders, rapes, tortures, or beatings, but the moment when you notice that the film's monster, the manager of the aversion therapy to which Alex is subjected, has a Jewish name. Mere bad taste? Or the fearful symmetry of a nightmare?” (36).

It is important not to miss out the gruesome treatment at the Ludovico centre. The violence shown in this part of the movie is, without question, spine-chilling. One can make a utilitarian claim justifying the violence, as it shapes the individual to be a “fit” citizen for the state. It might, as the minister claims, cut down crimes in the society which is more important than any other moral considerations. One might be tempted to think whether it is not fair and just to reciprocate violence with violence. What is wrong in adopting violence if it can bring down crimes and other offences? Isn't it what most governing systems have always adopted in the form of punishments and public demonstrations of the same, as a form of deterrent, by posing a threat to those daring to violate the law? But, “the end justifies the means” logic cannot purge itself from the staggering violence it adopts as its means to contain violence.

The attempt here is not to quantify the violence on both sides so as to make a comparison between the intensity of it neither is it an attempt to see if greater amount of violence can contain the minor ones. Instead, it is more important not to miss out even the apparently subtle dimension of violence as it might have much deeper roots and far reaching impacts than it seems to have.

The cultivated non-violence in the movie also brings forth a number of very pertinent moral and ethical questions. Can a person be made good by containing violence? Presuming that containment is an encroachment into the ability of an individual to make choices, what is the nature of this cultivated “goodness”? Isn’t a man capable of choosing evil equally capable of choosing good? In other words, what is the validity of goodness which is not chosen? What is the nature of Alex’s “goodness”? The answer to these questions according to the priest is summarized by Steven M. Cahn in his essay titled, “*A Clockwork Orange* is not about Violence”. Cahn writes: “...his (Alex’s) later state of conditioned non-violence is portrayed as more undesirable. He may be a “true Christian”, who will be allowed to go “free”, as the government minister insists, but, as the prison chaplain claims, Alex is obviously not free, because he has not accepted “Christian” values through choice” (155).

There is certainly an element of violence involved in stripping Alex of his ability to make choices. But the priest’s claims are equally problematic as it presumes an individual as a free agent capable of making choices. This brings forth the more profound problem of freedom and agency. Are human beings essentially free? How far are we able to make unbiased choices? Alex, like any other individual, can be hardly considered as a free agent when external forces such as the society and family among others constantly intervenes in shaping his/her identity and consciousness. In fact, we are always in a state of conditioning and formation. Alex is conditioned at the Ludovico centre and is unconditioned towards the end of the movie when the ineffectiveness and the dangers behind the therapy are exposed. Is

it enough to see conditioning and un-conditioning as two mutually exclusive and mechanically opposed categories? Is it possible to objectively condition or un-condition an individual? In fact, we are in a constant state of conditioning and, as Cahn argues, “the Ludovico conditioning technique is merely a concentrated version of what goes on every minute of every human being’s life” (156). If we can reach a consensus regarding conditioning as a form of violence, then certainly we are always prone to and subjected to violence.

In the background of this perennial violence in the form of conditioning, it must be profitable to bring in the ideas of the well known French philosopher and social theorist, Michel Foucault who believes that each individual is a result of the insidious operation of power. An autonomous individual who is absolutely free of all kinds of external forces is nothing short of an imagined category. Foucault asserts his position in an interview, which got published under the title, “An Aesthetics of Existence”, in which he claims that “there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere...the subject is constituted through practices of subjection, or, in a more autonomous way, through practices of liberation” (50).

Even though Foucault dismisses the existence of a sovereign subject, his mature works on “power” acknowledges the individual as someone with “agency”. Power operates on an individual having the agency to resist. Evidently, the point here is that, violence which absolutely strips off an individual of his agency is cruder than power. But, the simple reason that violence dismisses an individual of the potential chances of resistance doesn’t make power less of an evil. In fact, the modern operation of power which shapes and conditions the individual is operating on a more modified version of violence. As Mark Bevir puts it in the essay, “Foucault and Critique: Deploying Agency against Autonomy”:

Sometimes his (Foucault's) distaste for the normalizing effects of modern power even leads him to imply it is worse -more damaging- than overt violence. After all, violence is at least visible and honest, whereas modern power renders us insipid and uniform while pretending to liberate our true, inner selves. Power might be preferable to violence in that it recognises the other as an agent, but if the strength of modern power is such that the other uses his agency only to normalize himself, then perhaps we should prefer an honest violence to a deceitful power. (75)

The subtle and insidious operation of power is a crucial controlling force in Alex's society. Instead of striking directly, power always poses the threat of a potential strike. Fear is, evidently, a steering force for the operation of power. Fear is controlling the mind and body of the subjects which is effectively the principle of the "post political bio-politics". People are mobilized through fear for the efficient functioning of the system which is why Zizek claims that "bio-politics is ultimately a politics of fear" (40). On the superficial level, Alex and his friends seem to be an exception to this principle as they are apparently not bothered by law and order, let alone feel threatened by it. Within their capacity, they challenge and violate the law in all possible means. But, does it mean that the movie somehow proposes an alternative hypothesis regarding the operation of law which, in some sense, spares certain individuals who are absolutely unfettered from the shackles of the over-arching reach of law? A closer reading of the movie would prove otherwise. Even the droogs who seem to be liberated from law is also very much controlled and shaped by it.

The fear factor is evident in Alex and his friends when they sense the presence of the law near them. They pretend to be in a free state devoid of all constraints and seem to be daringly fearless only as long as they don't feel the proximity of the hard power of law. If it wasn't out of fear for the repercussions of violating the law, they wouldn't have fled sensing the presence of the Police while fighting the Billy boy's gang. Clearly, the law is scary and

the droogs are scared of it. They are not ready to confront it directly instead tries to evade from it. The law is threatening, by which it keeps the subjects under check and ensures their “proper” behaviour. The threat of law is personified by the probation officer, Mr. P.R Deltoid who confronts Alex on the day after the “ultra-violence” and warns him of his behaviour. The blow that Alex receives on his groins from the probation officer is metaphorically the blow of law itself. The surprise on Alex’s face, when told by Mr. Deltoid that his victim has died, is the fear he has deep within him for the law. He is terrified to realize the fact that he is now a “murderer”. “You try to frighten me. Admit so, sir”, Alex, who is taken aback by the news of the cat-lady’s death, tells the probation officer. Evidently, the protagonist is intimidated by law. Fear controls his self and shapes his consciousness.

When law conditions the subjects through fear and the principle of the “post-political bio-politics”, violence comes as a response to it. This category of violence is crucial in illustrating the need for understanding violence in a much broader way instead of being judgmental about it or to dub all forms of violence as simply “violent” or “evil”. Again, the attempt here is not to justify or to endorse violence but to make some sense of what seems to be mere “irrational” outbursts of violence. To avoid contradiction, it has to be made clear that the violence discussed here is not necessarily a “meaningful” one and any attempt to find meaning would be a futile exercise. In short, violence doesn’t necessarily come with a purpose or motive. It could be random and “irrational” like the Paris riots of 2005. Nevertheless, it might serve the great purpose of restoring the balance of justice in society. In other words, such “divine violence”, which lacks any “deeper meanings”, is a blow at the tendencies of normalization of violence. Such counter-violence is a way of responding to violence. The visibility of the counter-violence and the invisibility of the systemic violence against which it operates make the former morally deplorable. The point being made here is

not a statement that systemic violence is benign rather it is a sign of our inability to discern the violence rooted in the system.

Now, the violence rooted in Alex's society is an interesting idea worth pursuing. Certainly, there is violence in embracing a system which privileges certain groups over the other. In most cases it is understood in a Marxian sense. Those who are well-off in a society is not necessarily so because of their merit still less so due to any inherent qualities rather it is due to a series of violence perpetrated in order to sustain the unjust system as it is. The economic aspect of this systemic violence is already taken up and addressed. It seems equally important to consider the other dimensions of it. First of all, we must embark on the question of the corrupt nature of law. The state sees Alex only as an object for its own good. Its only concern is to cut-down crimes so that the society can be made "fit" for living; fit for those benefitted out of the system no matter how unjust or improper it is structured. For that, it sees the inevitability of making the individual "fit" for the state. And it goes without saying; an ideal "fit" subject is the one who enables the state the possibility to carry out its functions without any resistance. The state is not meant for the benefit of its people but for the benefit of itself and by extension, needless to say, those reaping the fruits of the inequitable system.

The law, which dominates, operates though its own ideology by which the individual is "interpellated" to become a mere "subject" having hardly any "agency". Louis Althusser, in his seminal essay, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus", asserts that "*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, by the functioning of the category of the subject". He further clarifies that "*individuals are always-already subjects*" by which he means that they are born into "ideological configurations" or constituted systems of knowledge. In the movie, there is a well devised ideology behind the operation of law which shapes the individuals to act in a particular fashion. The low angle shot of the police officers and the probation officer and the high angle shot of a bleeding Alex clearly shows the

position of the law and its subjects. The dominating officers are an embodiment of law while the submissive Alex who pleads for mercy is the “subject” personified. One must also not miss the shining yellow light bulb above the heads of the interrogating officers. It is very much a metaphor for what Foucault might call the “panopticon” which is a building and a system of control developed by the British philosopher and social theorist, Jeremy Bentham. In this system, power operates through fear, surveillance and conditioning. The subjects are made to behave properly through constant surveillance and self-disciplining. The thought that they are being watched at any given point of time and are hence, “constantly visible” makes the subjects behave in a manner that would not invite sanction from the authorities in power. “Visibility is a trap” (200), Foucault claims, in his work, *Discipline and Punish*, as it is only a strategy adopted by the modern penal system to keep the inmates in better control. This system is thought to be much efficient in most regards unlike the direct application of violence and pain. The fact that it is more effective and supposedly “humane” makes it the most preferable choice for the modern liberal states. Alex is also brought into such a “humane” punishment system where he will be disciplined through surveillance and conditioning.

The soft power of law successfully operates clearly because there is hard power in its background which remains as a potential force ready to be unleashed if needed. The soft power amounts to what Althusser calls the “Ideological State Apparatus” (ISA) and the hard power as the “Repressive State Apparatus” (RSA). RSA contains the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc. and its operation is very much similar to the operation of “subjective violence” which is why Althusser makes it explicit that “repressive suggests that the State Apparatus in question ‘functions by violence’”. Clearly there is violence in the operation of RSA.

The state sponsored violence finds its expression in the movie in multiple occasions ranging from the physical beating of Alex by the Police to the newly introduced aversion therapy. Alex, the “agent” of violence, upon getting arrested becomes the object of it. The police pay back Alex in the same coin when he finally gets arrested by them. Since he “resisted his lawful arrestors” the police men brutally beat him up. “Violence makes violence”, says one of the police men who were in charge of Alex’s interrogation. This clearly is a sign of the violent nature of law which is no different from the violence of the ones whom it tries to keep in check. The sad reality is that the violent nature of law often goes unnoticed and most importantly there is a societal sanctioning of such violence. The same society which finds subjective violence as disturbing is interestingly not at all bothered by the systemic as well as the subjective violence of law. Hoyng argues that “while the individual is punished when he violates laws, society as a whole authorizes and sanctions violence through law. Hence, the system of law can be seen, in fact, as a subliminal act of collective aggression” (164). The corrupt nature of law is exposed in the scene where Alex, just like the viewers, is surprised to know that the droogs, who accompanied him for the violent acts, are absorbed into the police force. People who used to violate and undermine the law have now become the keepers of it.

Unlike the individual violence of Alex, the state sanctioned violence is not necessarily violent in appearance rather it is more “humanized”. The modern law believes in “humanizing” punishment where the Ludovico therapy comes as a best case for analysis. The Ludovico therapy was introduced by the state not out of any genuine concern for the people but mainly out of anticipating the political benefits it could bring the government by introducing an effective and “humane” therapy to cut down crimes. Without working out the pros and cons of the therapy, the government is too eager to introduce it on someone, only to create a better image of itself before the public. In this situation, Alex is nothing more than a

laboratory rat for the state. The human factor is absolutely negated and what takes precedence is the selfish interest of the state.

This systemic state violence amounts to what Benjamin calls “Mythic Violence”, which is a law-making one. Social injustice is validated, sustained and perpetrated by law which makes it a form of violence. It tries to establish the power of law which controls and regulates the individuals for the sake of law itself. The Ludovico therapy and a series of other violence committed by the state are examples of this law-making violence. It is in this background of systemic violence comes the relevance of Divine violence, something that could re-establish justice in an unjust system. When the wrongs and the injustices in a society gets accumulated and increases, divine violence come as a natural retaliatory response which strikes to bring back the lost balance to the society. Justice stands superior to law in divine violence. Benjamin, in the essay, “Critique of Violence”, contrasts mythic violence with divine violence as thus: “If mythical violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; if the former sets boundaries, the latter boundlessly destroys them; if mythical violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; if the former threatens, the latter strikes; if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood” (297).

How far does Alex’s actions amount to divine violence is a question worth considering. The violence he perpetrates is, to some extent, a response to the systemic violence in the society. It is like a “shock therapy” for the people who derive the privileges of an unjust system. Surely, it is a blow against tendencies that seek to maintain and preserve law. But, it would not be right to claim that Alex’s violence is strictly divine in nature. The claim also is not that his violence is a mere outburst of madness, rather the divine violence, if at all there is any, in Alex’s actions is a failure.

Jump cut to the ending of the movie. After the government got exposed for introducing a dangerous therapy, it started its works on regaining its lost popularity. They try to “un-condition” Alex and offer him a job in return as a compensation for the atrocities he had to face. The government uses him as an instrument for changing the present public opinion. Most importantly, Alex is a tool for the government to stay in power and to continue with the present exploitative system. If the success of divine violence, if at all there is any, is the restructuring of the present social order for a more just and equitable one, then, needless to say, the violence in the movie is anything but successful. It failed miserably in dismantling the unjust system or to bring justice to where it lacks. The shrewdness of modern law is clear in its ability to absorb forces that attempt to thwart or challenge the system.

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