Words in the Music: Anthony Burgess's Ode to Hope (Part I: Burgess and Dostoevsky)

音楽は語る　― アンソニー・バージェスの希望の歌 ―
（第１部：バージェスとドストエフスキー）

Izumi DRYDEN*　　Laurence M. DRYDEN*

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Keyword

① Anthony Burgess and the International Anthony Burgess Foundation

② Fyodor Dostoevsky and Anna Dostoevsky

③ Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Rossini, and Wagner

④ *A Clockwork Orange* and *Crime and Punishment*

⑤ Christian theology and morality

Abstract

In this article, the first of a two-part series, we consider the influences of the nineteenth-century Russian author Fyodor Dostoevsky on Anthony Burgess, the twentieth-century British author who was also an accomplished pianist and aspiring composer. In addition, we examine the two authors' shared interests in the music of Mozart, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Rossini, and Wagner. Overall we seek to clarify the literary, musical, religious, moral, and psychological sources of inspiration in the life and prolific work of Anthony Burgess, one of Britain's most musical writers.

*　金城学院大学キリスト教文化研究所客員研究所員

Introduction

This article is the first of a two-part series that reports on the findings of our research trip to academic libraries and literary archives in the United Kingdom in early 2018.[*] The purpose of the trip was to enrich our long-standing interests in the relationships between literature and music. Our previous studies in this specialized area have dealt with musical themes in the works of the British writer E. M. Forster (Edward Morgan Forster, 1879-1970), as found in his seven novels and numerous short stories and essays, as well as in his work on the libretto of Benjamin Britten's opera, *Billy Budd*. From Forster it was a natural next step to another "musical" English writer of a subsequent generation, Anthony Burgess (John Anthony Burgess Wilson, 1917-1993). Burgess, a prolific writer as well as an accomplished pianist and composer, once defined himself in this way: "I wish people would think of me as a musician who writes novels, instead of a novelist who writes music on the side" (qtd. in Clemons). During our trip to the UK in the bitterly cold winter of 2018, we visited several research libraries, but our most fruitful and enjoyable hours were spent in the archives of the International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester, England. For three days we were warmly received there in several comforting senses and were allowed to examine and copy nearly a thousand pages of documents provided to us by the archivist, Anna Edwards; by the director, Professor Andrew Biswell; and by other staff.

The International Anthony Burgess Foundation, it should be noted, is an independent charity founded by Burgess's second wife and widow, Liana Burgess. According to its mission statement, the Foundation "encourages and supports public and scholarly interest in all aspects of the life and work of Anthony Burgess," and,

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to these ends, it maintains "an extensive library, archive and study centre containing Burgess's books, music and papers" (*The International*). The Foundation is connected with Manchester Metropolitan University and is located near its campus in central Manchester, largely because Burgess was born, raised, and educated in and near the city.

The material we examined at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation covers an exceptionally wide range of Burgess's polymathic interests and achievements. Burgess was a writer of prodigious output — sixty-nine books, including over thirty novels, numerous works of literary and cultural criticism, and countless journalistic pieces. In this current article, of necessity, we present a limited selection of what we learned about Burgess at the Foundation. Throughout this article we cite reviews, articles, and books by and about Burgess that we found in the Foundation's collection, many of which are not available elsewhere.

In this first article of a two-part series, we consider the influence of the nineteenth-century Russian writer Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky (1821-1881) on the religious and moral themes, musical motifs, and overall directions of Burgess's thinking and writing, both before and long after Burgess published his novel *A Clockwork Orange* in 1962. In the second article of this series, to be forthcoming, we survey the interests and calculate the debts that Burgess acknowledged to composers and their music — Mozart, Beethoven, Wagner, even Leonardo da Vinci — all of which served as influences on many of Burgess's own works and otherwise engaged his protean interests. The aim of both articles, the current one and the one to come, is to examine the clues and weigh the evidence concerning Burgess's references in his writings to music and to religion and morality, with unavoidable attention given to *A Clockwork Orange*. The ultimate aim is to illuminate Burgess's artistic choices in making musical and religious allusions, motifs, and themes such important elements in his own literary and critical output, with the hope that by

doing so we can better understand what drove and shaped Anthony Burgess as a writer, a composer, and an artist.

1. Burgess and Dostoevsky

Anthony Burgess found the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky to be perplexing but nonetheless illuminating and, in the end, inspiring. In “Sleuth of Souls,” a review of *Dostoevsky*, a biography by John Jones, Burgess cites an observation about nineteenth-century Russian literature: “Tolstoy for heroes, Gogol for men, Dostoevsky for boys — as somebody, not I, once said” (Burgess, “Sleuth”). The phrase “Dostoevsky for boys” may imply that this Russian master’s works are limited to depicting the experience of adolescent males. Not coincidentally, however, it was from Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment* (1866) that Burgess admittedly drew inspiration for what is, for better or worse, his most well-known work, *A Clockwork Orange*. Burgess’s 1962 novel was, after all, about adolescent males, and very violent ones, too, who were both similar to and different from the young Russian protagonist of *Crime and Punishment*, Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov.

Dostoevsky tells us that Raskolnikov is twenty-three years old and living in a tiny rented attic room in St. Petersburg. We also learn that he is desperately poor and mentally disordered, a former law student who was expelled from university for his inability to pay tuition. Chronically delirious from hunger, Raskolnikov grows deeply resentful of the supposedly unearned material comfort of a pawnbroker, the sixty-year-old woman named Alyona Ivanovna, to whom he pawns his father’s watch in exchange for a pittance.

After lengthy and fevered reflection, Raskolnikov resolves to murder and rob Alyona Ivanovna. His motives for doing so are complex and reflect the social and intellectual milieu of the mid-nineteenth century: 1) His poverty drives him to steal

the old woman's money for his own survival; 2) His twisted sense of justice allows him to believe that he is eliminating a social parasite and redistributing her wealth; 3) His will to power drives him to prove that he can be a "superman," beyond guilt, above the issues of good and evil; 4) His desire for "displaced vengeance" makes him associate the pawnbroker Alyona Ivanovna with his own mother, Pulkheria Alexandrovna, against whom he harbors some deep resentments about his upbringing; 5) His lack of religious beliefs or any moral framework leads him, paradoxically, to hope for redemption through punishment; 6) His inner turmoil, a form of madness, leads him to kill, paradoxically in hopes of regaining some control over himself ("Pain and Suffering" 177).

Perhaps because he has overthought everything, Raskolnikov bungles the murder, clubbing Alyona Ivanovna to death with multiple blows to her head with an axe and then inadvertently killing the woman's half-sister Lizaveta who stumbles upon the scene. He is so agitated that he flees with only a handful of items and a small purse of money, leaving most of the wealth in the house untouched.

For the rest of the novel, Raskolnikov passes through various states of tormented delirium, alternately consumed by guilt, by fear of discovery, and by strange compulsive desires to call attention to himself and confess his crimes in hope of atonement. He is pursued by the detective Porfiry, who suspects him on psychological grounds but has no proof. He becomes emotionally attached to the saintly Sonya, a teenaged girl who has turned to prostitution solely to provide for her indigent family. Eventually Raskolnikov confesses his crimes to Sonya, but he is subsequently blackmailed by his own sister Dunya's unscrupulous suitor, Svidrigaïlov, who overhears his confession to Sonya and threatens to expose him to the authorities. Both the detective Porfiry and the loving Sonya urge Raskolnikov to confess, telling him that by doing so he could lighten his sentence from death to prison time, and that he could also thereby work out his personal salvation.

Raskolnikov is tempted to believe that he might get away with his crimes after Svidrigaïlov shoots and kills himself over Dunya's rejection of him. Nonetheless, Sonya persuades Raskolnikov to confess, to the great relief of his deeply troubled conscience. Porfiry is true to his promise of reduced punishment in exchange for a confession. Raskolnikov does not receive the death penalty but instead is sentenced to eight years of hard labor in a Siberian prison. There he struggles under harsh conditions, but his personal salvation and moral redemption begin. By his bedside he keeps a copy of the New Testament, which, appropriately, concerns another story of sacrificial murder and redemption. Moreover, he has the support of Sonya's unconditional love, as she has moved to the town near the prison to be able to visit him. While it is not stated directly, the ending of the novel may seem to invoke the mysterious operation of divine grace. But then, the ending was also determined by Raskolnikov's personal decision to confess his crimes, prompted by Sonya's love for him.

By considerable contrast, Burgess's protagonist, young Alex, appears to be a comfortable middle-class teenager living in a futuristic British setting. Beneath the surface, however, Alex is a hormonally driven fifteen-year-old juvenile delinquent who, over the next several years, commits a series of unspeakably violent crimes including rape and assault, and finally murder for which he is sent to prison. There he undergoes a brutally effective re-education treatment program at the hands of the government, and after a number of complicated plot twists he returns to society, at least in the original British edition, as a mature twenty-one-year-old adult.

Violent crime and religious-based morality are intertwined themes in both *Crime and Punishment* and *A Clockwork Orange,* though these themes are naturally expressed through local inflections. As Burgess reflects on Dostoevsky, "The novels most admired — *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brother Karamazov* — are immensely long detective stories seasoned with the Russian soul" (Burgess,

"Sleuth"). By comparison, *A Clockwork Orange* might be described as a much shorter crime story seasoned with an English Catholic soul.

The influences of Dostoevsky and Russian culture on *A Clockwork Orange* were strong indeed. According to Andrew Biswell, Burgess's biographer and the current director of the International Anthony Burgess Foundation, Burgess read *Crime and Punishment* in English translation and was learning Russian before and during the trip he made to the Soviet Union with his first wife, Lynne, in June of 1961, just after he had finished an early draft of *A Clockwork Orange* (Biswell 237-238). Burgess traveled to Russia on a working holiday for himself and his wife, intending to listen to Russian native-speakers. He wanted to hear "real Russian" in order to help him replace quickly-dated English slang in the novel with Russian-derived slang that he himself created for Alex and his gang of juvenile delinquents to speak. After returning to Britain, Burgess achieved these intentions in his revision of *A Clockwork Orange*. (Biswell 238).

A good part of the trip was spent in Leningrad, formerly called, and now again called, St. Petersburg, the city which, as the setting of *Crime and Punishment*, Burgess particularly wanted to see. While there, Burgess had a memorable conversation about *Crime and Punishment*: "[A] waiter in a Leningrad restaurant said to me: 'It was a crime to write it, and it is a punishment to read it.'" (Biswell 237; Burgess, "Sleuth"). The mordant wit of this remark might be considered a perfect example of what, with some reservation, could be called Slavic humor, were it not also possible that Burgess might simply have invented the anecdote.

Burgess's humor and general outlook certainly had their dark ironic undertones. In his childhood, for example, Burgess acquired a sense, rightly or wrongly, that Roman Catholicism, the faith in which he was raised, was all about punishment. Taking his ambivalent religious views in adulthood into account, it is understandable that Burgess would be attracted to the deeply Christian, albeit Orthodox, sensibility

of Dostoevsky's novels, particularly one which includes the very word "punishment" in its title. The sense that we are all guilty and are all deserving of punishment crosses sectarian lines.

2. Two Literary Ancestors of Young Alex

Nevertheless, in respect to such issues as free will and redemption, Burgess considers *Crime and Punishment* to be seriously flawed, claiming that it "goes too far perhaps, but a recent rereading of the book worried me because it all seemed so muddled" (Burgess, "Sleuth"). Burgess ruminates on his evolving views of Dostoevsky's novel and by extension on his own novel, noting, "The existential choice — proving you have free will by exercising it in crime — is perhaps the product of Camusian hindsight" (Burgess, "Sleuth"). Burgess alludes here to *The Stranger* (1942/1989) by the 1957 Nobel laureate in literature, French writer Albert Camus (1913-1960), a reference that complicates matters and requires clarification.

Dostoevsky's young Russian student Raskolnikov, a deeply disturbed character, is preoccupied with the social injustice of his station in life and, driven by his obsessions, he chooses to murder his pawnbroker as a way, in his own mind, of setting matters right. By contrast, Camus's anti-hero in *The Stranger*, Meursault, is a Frenchman in his late twenties or early thirties who resides and is gainfully employed in French colonial Algeria but who is existentially alienated from others, from society, and from himself. Unlike Raskolnikov, however, Meursault is passive and untroubled by matters of conscience. In the course of the narrative, he forms a friendship with one man, Raymond, and enters into an intimate relationship with one woman, Marie, though he remains curiously disengaged emotionally from both of them.

Then at the novel's turning point, in a moment of deep self-eclipse, Meursault inadvertently becomes murderous. Helping his friend Raymond settle a personal

score with members of the Muslim community, Meursault shoots and kills an Arab whom he does not even know, in an act of sun-blinded moral indifference and passivity. Indeed, his violent act seems not even to involve him, as he states merely that "the trigger gave" (Camus 60). But in a crucial moment just before the shooting, Meursault reflects, "It was then that I realized that you could either shoot or not shoot" (Camus 56). In this brief interval, Meursault suddenly becomes aware of the possibility of moral choice, but his awareness soon passes. At his trial, Meursault is convicted and condemned to death largely on the basis of testimony regarding an ostensibly unrelated matter — his failure some days before the murder to mourn the death of his own mother — evidence of questionable relevance which nonetheless persuades the court that Meursault is a soulless monster. In Meursault's own disengaged mind, however, his ways of understanding himself — his unsure sense of his own free will, his tenuous connections with his fellow humans and with society itself, his belief in the essential meaningless of existence — flicker dimly and evolve slowly, reaching clarity only while he is imprisoned and has time to contemplate his own impending execution.

Meursault, like Raskolnikov, may be considered a case of arrested development both socially and psychologically, and, as such, the two characters are literary ancestors to the protagonist of *A Clockwork Orange*, the young British sociopath named Alex who joyfully exercises his free will through violent criminal acts against random strangers. There are, of course, some significant differences. Both Raskolnikov and Meursault are introverted loners, and their crimes are limited to single episodes: Raskolnikov kills the pawnbroker and inadvertently kills her half-sister and then steals a handful of goods, while Meursault shoots and kills an Arab in a street quarrel. By contrast, Alex is the extroverted leader of a gang of teenage thugs who roam the streets in nightly orgies of violence. Alex's crimes include serial predatory acts of rape and brutal assault, and at least one violent murder,

over the course of several years, mixed with a jubilant ardor for Beethoven's music that figuratively and sometimes literally plays in the background of Alex's violent antics.

Imprisoned for murder, Alex subsequently loses his free will, his capacity to make moral choices — and, along with it, his perverse *joie de vivre* — through the government's scientific "Reclamation Treatment." In this aversive therapy program ironically called "Ludovico's Technique," Alex is physically restrained and force-fed nausea-inducing drugs while, with his eyes clamped wide open, he is subjected to videos of violent acts accompanied by high-decibel blasts of Beethoven. (For Ludovico's Technique, read Ludwig's.) In this way, the time-honored formula of "crime and punishment" is transformed into a thoroughly modern and scientific "crime and treatment" which reduces Alex to a state of abject helplessness, unable to defend himself physically or even to enjoy music, let alone engage in behavior that is remotely violent or sexual.

Indeed, this "treatment," which amounts to Alex's moral castration, is what most deeply troubles Burgess: In the name of social order, the state has robbed Alex of his free will, his ability to make independent moral choices. It could be argued — and persuasively, too — that effectively neutering serial perpetrators of violent crime provides a valuable service to society. But Burgess recoils from such social engineering, decrying it as the thin end of a totalitarian wedge, stating, "In effect the book *A Clockwork Orange* says that it is better for a man to do evil of his own free will than for the state to turn him into a machine which can only do good" (Burgess, "Anthony Burgess Interviewed in Italy in 1974" para. 3).

Alex has been transformed from a serial offender to a model prisoner, albeit one as unnatural and mechanical as "a clockwork orange," but before the novel's end he is figuratively reborn at least twice more. Through a near-death experience Alex regains his sense of free will and his knowledge of the ability to choose

between good and evil. At first, he leans towards his bad old ways of vice and violence, but in the end, he chooses the road to social conformity and decency and adopts the requisites for adjusting to the norms of adult life. There is no muddle or chaos at the end of the novel, at least as Burgess originally wrote it.

Alex's attainment of maturity is seriously compromised, however, by the ending of Stanley Kubrick's controversial adaptation of the novel in the 1971 film of the same title. The controversy arose largely because Kubrick based his film adaptation on the American edition of the novel which, for supposed commercial purposes, omits Alex's arrival at maturity in chapter twenty-one and ends instead with Alex's jubilant rebirth to the possibilities of mayhem in chapter twenty, complemented by his fully regained ardor for the music of Beethoven.

3. Burgess's "Christian Sermon" on Free Will

Soon after the Kubrick film premièred in 1971, and for many years afterwards, Burgess had to defend his 1962 novel of the same title against charges that it glorified and glamorized violence and supposedly provided models for copy-cat violence, in ways contrary to his intentions. (Burgess, "Interviewed in Italy in 1974" paras. 28-32). Indeed, Kubrick's film, *A Clockwork Orange,* may have done more to glamorize violence than any other mainstream film of its time, with the possible exception of *Bonnie and Clyde* a few years earlier in 1967. By comparison, Burgess's 1962 novel was not widely known or read — that is, before the Kubrick film seemed to make the Burgess novel the source of the controversy. Burgess's defense was to argue that his novel, in its original British form at least, is a philosophical inquiry into the nature of good and evil, examined in light of theological issues raised by the Church Father, St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430 CE), who wrote in his early fifth-century work, *The City of God,* about the necessity of free will in matters of human choice and conduct, mediated by divine grace.

Burgess encapsulates his defense of the novel in these words, "It Is a Christian Sermon," a phrase which serves as the subtitle to an article Burgess published in an English newspaper in early 1972, at a time when Kubrick's film was still playing in theatres and the scandal continued to rage in the public mind over the film's graphic depictions of violence and sexuality and their potential for providing negative models for young people to imitate (Burgess, "Is Clockwork Orange Dangerous?").

Throughout all of his works, not simply in *A Clockwork Orange*, Burgess insists that free will, the right to choose between right and wrong, is central to the humanity of every single person, both living and fictional. Three years after Kubrick's film muddied the moral and theological waters, Burgess commented again: "In a sense this book [*A Clockwork Orange*] does state what I'm always trying to state in my work; that man is free, that man was granted the gift of free will and that he can choose, and that if he decides to choose evil rather than to choose good, this is in his nature and it is not the task of the state to kill this capacity for choice" (Burgess, "Interviewed" para. 2). While the issue of free will derives largely from the Catholic theology of Augustine, what happens to Alex at the end of the book is not strictly Augustinian. If it were, Alex would have had to receive sanctifying grace through divine intervention, which in Augustinian terms is an absolute requirement before the corrupting forces of Original Sin can be countered (a position which, theologically, is also a major source of Calvinism). But such divine intervention is nowhere in evidence in *A Clockwork Orange*.

Biswell argues persuasively that Alex's vacillation between returning to his former waywardness and accepting the obligations of maturity late in the novel can be understood in relation to the tension between strict Augustinianism and the more forgiving Pelagianism which Augustine refutes at length in numerous writings. The Celtic monk Pelagius, a highly learned contemporary of Augustine, proposed that human beings, even young ones, could of their own free will choose to obey

God's commandments and more generally do what is right, without the necessity of God's intervening, sanctifying grace ("God's Grace" 220-221). Unfortunately, for his modest suggestion that human beings might not be inherently sinful, wicked, and depraved, Pelagius found himself despised and rejected, denounced as a heretic, and hounded into exile by his pious Church brethren, Augustine foremost among them. (The experience of Pelagius serves as a painful example, recurring throughout history, of the fate of anyone who dares to question the ruling hierarchy: "No good deed shall go unpunished.")

The bifurcated endings of *A Clockwork Orange* can, consequently, be understood in Augustinian and Pelagian terms. First, Biswell notes, "By emphasizing the unreformed sinfulness of Alex, the twentieth chapter reveals itself to be an Augustinian conclusion. Alex has been 'cured' but not saved" (248). And then, regarding Alex's freely chosen path to maturity in chapter twenty-one, Biswell writes:

> This turning away from ultra-violence may be interpreted as Pelagianism, in the sense that Alex acknowledges his potential for goodness autonomously, without the direct intervention of divine grace. At no point does he express remorse for his former wickedness, yet the position he articulates here is a willed and reasoned turning away from his former criminality. For this reason, the twenty-first chapter is a Pelagian conclusion. These theological resonances are everywhere present, though nowhere stated, in the novel's two possible endings. (Biswell 249)

Bringing this discussion of the theological roots of Burgess's views on free will to closure, Burgess, who does not seem like a conventional Roman Catholic anyway in his novels and public pronouncements, appears to embrace the views of Pelagius, heretic or otherwise. Burgess asserts, at least in the indirect, unstated implications of his fiction and in his more direct public statements, that free will is a gift which

human beings should cherish and honor; moreover, humans should be satisfied with this gift and should not harbor any expectations of divine grace when, in times of moral crisis and personal trial, they must find within themselves the wherewithal to make moral choices.

4. Questions about Christian Happiness and Divine Madness

Returning now to Dostoevsky, in what may be a welcome if temporary relief from theological and sectarian turmoil, it is clear that on artistic grounds Burgess does not approve of Dostoevsky's presentation of Raskolnikov, any more than he approved of Kubrick's presentation of Alex. Burgess criticizes Dostoevsky for the ways in which he constructed his central character: "The novel would have been more interesting if Raskolnikov could have been a decent sane young man turned into a murderer by social or metaphysical pressures beyond his control. But Raskolnikov is a neurotic and perhaps even mad. Come to think of it, all Dostoevsky's criminal heroes are mad" (Burgess, "Sleuth"). Similarly, the Franco-American literary critic René Girard (René Theophile Girard, 1923-2015), writing in *Resurrection from the Underground: Feodor Dostoevsky*, finds fault with the ending of *Crime and Punishment* by observing that "in spite of Sonya and the Christian conclusion, [it] still remains quite distant from final certainty" (Girard 30). Burgess may have tried to eradicate such Dostoevskyian uncertainty when he adapted elements from *Crime and Punishment* into his own novel *A Clockwork Orange*. In the twenty-first chapter of Burgess's original British edition, Alex — who, significantly, has just turned twenty-one years old — puts aside childish things, gives up, to use rather understated terms, the waywardness of his youthful indiscretions, and embraces the responsibilities of dawning adulthood. (As a side note, Alex ironically retraces a path taken by Augustine himself, who was raised a Christian by his literally saintly mother but who then renounced his faith and

lived a thoroughly dissolute life for several years in his young adulthood before returning like the classic prodigal and assuming his place as a major figure in the early Church.)

Echoing Girard, Burgess criticizes the uncertainty of the ending and of much else in *Crime and Punishment*, saying, "I'm uncomfortable with Dostoevsky because sanity so rarely seems to be at the core of his work" (Burgess, "Sleuth"). But in his defense, Dostoevsky may have been uncertain whether humans are essentially sane or insane, possibly by generalizing from his own personal experience and observation of life. Burgess explains Dostoevsky's uncertainty by conceding, "Evidently Dostoevsky was before his time" (Burgess, "Sleuth"), and by continuing to offer backhanded compliments to Dostoevsky's prescience:

> Prophecy and hallucination are hard to separate. The great formless mind of Dostoevsky encloses us all. We are all the dreams of his dementia. For dementia, if you wish, read: universe we can never hope wholly to understand. It would be consoling to believe that the creator of this universe, if no one else, understood his own creation. But he did not. He did not understand women, for instance. Nor was he sure about morality. (Burgess, "Sleuth")

From a certain point of view, however, the madman and the prophet can be hard to distinguish, as sometimes they may be one and the same. In ways that imply that Dostoevsky was indeed "before his time," there are intimations of Dostoevsky's life and work in the views on madness expressed by the twentieth-century Scottish psychiatrist R. D. Laing (Ronald David Laing, 1927-1989). Laing was a radical theorist and clinical practitioner who claimed that "madness need not be all breakdown. It may also be break-through. It is potentially liberation and renewal as well as enslavement and existential death" (Laing 110). In such a view, the "egoic" self, the consistent identity by which most people live their lives, is an

illusion. As described in Buddhism and other Eastern traditions, this illusion of the self, or “maya,” is a veil which seekers of enlightenment must go beyond in order to partake of what Laing calls the “*transcendental experiences* [which seem to be] the original wellspring of all religions.” Indeed, Laing suggests, some people who are clinically labeled as mad may, in fact, be following such an archetypal journey of spiritual death and rebirth (Laing 112-113). This pattern of spiritual progress, it should be noted, is not inconsistent with the ultimate goals of Christianity.

Laing’s theories about madness may represent a social variation on the family-based model of insanity defined by the British cultural anthropologist Gregory Bateson who, in the 1950s, developed the double bind theory of schizophrenia. (Laing notes with approval Bateson’s innovative research on schizophrenia, in Laing 93-99). Essentially the double bind is a contradictory situation in communication in which the central figure, considered the “victim,” is trapped by two conflicting demands, with the added “Kafkaesque” complication that the context and terms are not clearly spelled out and the victim may not be able to define the situation in which s/he is caught. Bateson, in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, identifies of the “necessary ingredients” of the double bind, summarized thusly:

1. “*Two* or more persons,” one of whom is designated as the “victim.” The others are usually close to the victim, i.e., parents and other family.
2. “*Repeated experience*,” so that the double bind is a “recurrent theme in the experience of the victim,” and as such, does not involve a single traumatic event but becomes “an habitual expectation.”
3. “*A primary negative injunction*” which is imposed on the victim by others: (a) “Do not do so and so, or I will punish you,”; (b) “If you do not do so and so, I will punish you.”

Bateson describes this toxic model as “learning based on avoidance of punishment” rather than on “reward seeking.” Further negative injunctions add contradictory

messages and prohibitions against escape, until "the victim has learned to perceive his universe in double bind patterns," any part of which is enough "to precipitate panic or rage" (Bateson 206-207).

Bateson argues that double binds are common enough in daily life, including "play, humor, poetry, ritual, and fiction." Unfortunately, the double bind generates toxic forms of communication and interaction when two conflicting demands operate on different logical levels, neither of which can be ignored or escaped. The victim is torn both ways, so that regardless of which demand s/he tries to meet, it cannot be met. "I must do it, but I can't do it" is typical of the experience of the double bind victim, which, in extreme cases, can lead to schizophrenic symptoms of hearing voices and entering a separate reality.

Raskolnikov's dilemma could be described as a double bind which produces the psychotic delirium in which he spends most of the novel. He faces the choices of 1) continuing to conceal his crime and being tormented by his conscience or 2) confessing his crime and facing the prospect of execution or at the very least a long prison sentence. Neither choice is palatable, and so he chooses neither, and his suffering is prolonged and intensified as he delays making a choice. In effect, in his situation he's damned if does and damned if he doesn't. It is only through the persuasive mediations of Porfiry and Sonya that Raskolnikov is freed from his double bind and can choose freely to take a course of action that will, of course, involve personal suffering but which will, in the end, lead him to atonement and redemption.

The experience of Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* may illustrate another double bind and how he overcame it. Through the government's aversive therapy treatment, Alex is reduced to an unnatural machine, a "clockwork orange." He has lost his free will, his ability to choose between good and evil. He is, in effect, less than human. If he disobeys, he will be punished. If he obeys, he denies his own humanity. For

Alex the solution to his double bind comes in his discovery of “a third way,” an alternative like Raskolnikov’s that transcends the dualistic dead-end that the double bind creates. If neither choice is palatable or even possible, the only viable route to survival is transcendence. For Alex the solution is to choose to put aside his violent past and, as it were, grow up. Similarly for Raskolnikov, the solution that breaks the maladaptive cycle of the double bind is confession and acceptance of his punishment “like a man,” in the outdated phrase, or, in more current and inclusive terms, if less concise ones, like a mature human being exercising free will to make moral choices.

In this series of reflections on sanity and forms of non-sanity, and in light of the perspectives of Burgess’s contemporaries Laing and Bateson — or possibly in spite of them — Burgess may have been suggesting that Dostoevsky himself possessed or, like a shaman in a traditional society, was possessed by a sort of divine madness, which inspired his art but also left him with serious blind spots in his understanding of human rationality and emotions. These blind spots included Dostoevsky’s supposed failure to understand women (a common accusation levied against male writers, literary and journalistic), and his unsure grasp of morality, another purported weak point for many authors, including most poets and artists, if not Burgess himself.

5. Burgess on Dostoevsky and Music

Burgess’s feelings were not at all mixed, however, in his admiration for a work *about* Dostoevsky by someone who knew him intimately during his last fifteen years. *Dostoevsky: Reminiscences* was written by Anna Dostoevsky, the author’s second wife and his widow. In his review of the book, Burgess tells the poignant story of how Anna and Fyodor initially got together. It involved a classically Dostoevskyian dilemma in which the author had to produce a novel within a month

or else suffer a crippling financial loss:

> Dostoevsky got down to producing his four-week book. It was called *The Gambler*. The only way to get the work done was to dictate it. Stenography was new in those days, but there was a bright girl of twenty, Anna Grigoryevna Snitkina, who had mastered the craft, had wept over *Crime and Punishment*, and was honoured to take the job on. Dostoevsky, forty-five, ugly, diseased, poor, fell in love with her, proposed and was accepted. The rest of her life was devoted to the man and his books — even though nearly forty years remained of it after Dostoevsky's death of a lung haemorrhage. In 1925, seven years after her own death, Leonid Grossman put out an edition of these reminiscences — based on the diary she had kept. (Burgess, Review)

One of the many services of Anna Dostoevsky's book is to provide an account of Fyodor Dostoevsky's musical preferences, set in the context of a rare happy interlude in his life when Fyodor and Anna spent considerable time in Western Europe. As she describes their life abroad: "We left for three months and returned to Russia more than four years later. During this time many joyous events occurred in our lives, and I shall be eternally grateful to God for giving me strength in my decision to go abroad. There a new, happy life began for Fyodor Mikhailovich and me which strengthened our mutual friendship and love and continued up to the day of his death" (Dostoevsky, A. 114). For those familiar with Dostoevsky's many years of profound personal suffering, it is comforting to know that, with Anna, the author enjoyed a fairly long period of happiness very much in contrast to the torturous storylines of his novels and to his own years of grinding poverty and artistic rejection, his emotionally searing mock execution, and his long exile in Siberia.

Some of the happiness abroad for Anna and Fyodor came from their many

opportunities in Germany to enjoy concert music. Anna describes Dostoevsky's preferences in music during their time in Western Europe: "Although he was no connoisseur, Fyodor Mikhailovich was very fond of the musical works of Mozart, Beethoven's *Fidelio*, Mendelssohn-Bartholody's *Wedding March*, and Rossini's *Air du Stabat Mater*, and felt genuine pleasure when he listened to these favorites of his. He did not at all care for the works of Richard Wagner" (Dostoevsky, A. 120). Because Dostoevsky had personally experienced the indignities of prison life, it is not surprising that he was drawn to Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*. As Burgess explains, *Fidelio* "was certainly about letting decent men out of an unjust prison and extolling freedom as a political essence" (Burgess, "The Ninth"). Regarding Gioachino Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Burgess makes Rossini a character in one of his books, *On Mozart: A Paean for Wolfgang*, and has Rossini say, with no false modesty, "God was always a fine intellectual concept, but it's his all too physical son that inspired the loftiest music. My *Stabat Mater*, for instance" (Burgess, *On Mozart* 43). It is worth noting that *Stabat Mater* is based on a thirteenth-century Catholic hymn to Mother Mary suffering over her Son's crucifixion. Because Christian themes usually preoccupied the mind and works of Dostoevsky, it is not surprising that *Stabat Mater* would appeal to him, and most certainly to Burgess as well.

As a side-note, Dostoevsky's distaste for Wagnerian music may plausibly be explained, on the one hand, by Wagner's preoccupations with pagan Nordic and Teutonic myths, and, on the other hand, by Wagner's devotion to Western Christian legends of the Holy Grail — themes and motifs which were unlikely to interest a Russian writer immersed in his own Orthodox and Slavic traditions. The centuries-old clash of civilizations between Germanic and Russian cultures should not be discounted, either. Moreover, from an aesthetic standpoint, Dostoevsky might simply have disagreed with the claim — variously attributed to Mark Twain, Oscar

Wilde, and George Bernard Shaw — that Wagnerian music is better than it sounds. All of these matters, of course, are worthy of further research.

In his review of *Dostoevsky: Reminiscences*, Burgess praises the work for the fresh insights it offers into the life and works of the Russian master. Burgess argues that "Anna Dostoevsky left style to her husband. Her book, whose honest pedestrian flavour Ms Stillman [the translator] seems to have captured very well, tells a plain but moving story and we are glad of it. In commending this biography to all interested in its subject, it is really Anna Grigoryevna's devotion, heroism and sense of responsibility to literature that I commend" (Burgess, Review). Indeed, the memoir fills a major gap in general knowledge of the great novelist. Without Anna Dostoevsky's memoir (and without Burgess's review of it), we would all be the poorer for not knowing that Fyodor Dostoevsky enjoyed Western concert music and that he hummed melodies together with his wife. Burgess shows his appreciation of other revelations in the book about Dostoevsky's relations with his wife and their four children: "He never played the great man with her. One of the pleasures of this book is the image of Dostoevsky childish with the children, sweetmeat-buying, sweetly uxorious" (Burgess, Review). It is indeed comforting to see the domesticity, even the domestication, of a towering literary figure, showing him to be very down-to-earth in his home life, as simple and human as the rest of us.

Burgess, however, also finds in Anna Dostoevsky's *Reminiscences* clear indications of both the suffering and the greatness of her husband. "The life [of Fyodor], despite the consolations of a good marriage, remains a paradigm of the writer's agony — especially the agony of the nineteent [sic] century Russian writer. Acclaim came late. Dostoevsky got a public ovation a year before his death. Tolstoy realised his greatness tardily" (Burgess, Review). Burgess then quotes the words of Tolstoy on learning of Dostoevsky's death: "I never saw this man and had no

direct relationship with him; and yet when he died I suddenly understood that he was the very closest, the very dearest person, the person I needed most . . . I wept, and am still weeping” (Burgess, Review, citing Dostoevsky, A. 414). Burgess, however, credits Anna Dostoevsky with a greater memorial to her husband than Tolstoy’s tears, heartfelt though they may have been: “Anna Dostoevsky did more than weep. She kept her husband’s works alive, laid the foundations of Dostoevsky scholarship, and left a picture of the man himself that we would not willingly be without” (Burgess, Review). Moreover, it is possible to conclude that without the inspiration of *Crime and Punishment*, Burgess might never have conceived the novel *A Clockwork Orange*, the work for which, justly or not, he remains most widely known.

Conclusion and Anticipation

In this first article of our projected two-part series, we have attempted to establish and explain at least some of what we learned about Anthony Burgess from our visit in early 2018 to the International Anthony Burgess Foundation in Manchester, England. In the present article we focused on Burgess’s complex relationship with the works and life of Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky. We attempted to describe the influences of *Crime and Punishment* on *A Clockwork Orange*, along with reflections on the implications of Burgess’s references to Albert Camus’s existential classic, *The Stranger,* which also predates *A Clockwork Orange*. In addition, we tried to account for the ambivalent regard for Dostoevsky that Burgess maintained for decades —acknowledging a fellow novelist’s influence and praising his humanity, while also criticizing his artistic and personal shortcomings. Furthermore, we raised the theme of Burgess’s preoccupations with classical and romantic concert music, in his own life and in relation to Dostoevsky’s musical interests and, by extension, to the musical elements found in *A Clockwork Orange*.

In the second article, to be forthcoming, we consider more widely Anthony Burgess's devotion to concert music, examining, in particular, his interests in such permanent repertoire figures as Mozart, Beethoven, and Wagner, as well as in the unexpected figure of Leonardo da Vinci. Special attention will be given to Burgess's considerable preoccupation with Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. But overall, the aim of the second article will be similar to what we have attempted in the present article: that is, to make use of what we learned at the International Anthony Burgess Foundation, in order to illuminate the musical, religious, and moral influences and preoccupations that shaped Anthony Burgess as a writer, a thinker, and an artist.

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