

Ken Kesey's book,
One Flew Over the
Cuckoo's Nest vs.
Anthony Burgess', A
Clockwork Orange...

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Human Instincts

As humans, we are biologically conceived with natural human instincts.

Human instincts allow us to survive as hunter-gatherers in a pre-civilized or underdeveloped world. The purpose of human instincts is to protect us against threatening people, places, or things. The basic human instincts include reproduction instincts, fear instincts, and security instincts.

Influenced by the European Industrialization, many underdeveloped countries started establishing economies and trade systems, which allowed humans to move away from "hunter-gatherers," thus changing how our instincts work by evolving from an uncivilized world into a society where survival is more easily obtained. Some problems that might arise from human instincts include rape, violence, and robbery. Rape would be a negative result of the reproduction instinct which manifests through human sexuality. Violence would be a negative result of the fear instinct. For example, if someone is aggressively addressing another individual, the other individual may feel threatened and choose to act upon his fear and strike the aggressively-speaking individual in an attempt to protect himself, even if it was unnecessary. An article titled "Human Nature" written by Harvey W. Zorbaugh expands on anger and rage within human nature, stating, "Human nature would seem to be meaningless apart from a historical and geographic context. Let us take, for example, what a man does when he is angry. In Anglo-Saxon countries, for centuries the rank and file of angry men have settled their differences with their fists...Now rage is a universal original nature trait. All infants, irrespective of time or place, respond to restraint with struggling, screaming, stiffening. Occasional adults never outgrow this

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infantile manner of behaving when angry. We say they have tantrums” (Zorbaugh 1999). Robbery would be a negative result of the security instinct. If an individual feels as though his security, or financial needs, is not being met, he may choose to steal or rob somebody as an attempt to feel secure again.

Upon reading and analyzing Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*, it is apparent that Kesey demonstrates the suppression of human instinct through the dynamics and techniques of the ward while Burgess argues that it is unnatural for humans to only possess good instincts or evil instincts. Kesey demonstrates the suppression of human instincts through the mechanistic dynamics of the ward controlled by authoritative figures through the absence of freedom of expression, individuality, and the right to choose. Burgess argues that it is not human nature to possess only good instincts or only evil instincts and shows that as we grow out of adolescence and enter adulthood, we are more capable of thinking before acting on instincts, while in adolescence we tend to act on our instincts.

In the beginning of Kesey's novel, the protagonist McMurphy first arrives at the ward. When he arrives, most of the patients at the ward have adapted to the suppression and control that the authoritative figures have bestowed upon them. McMurphy enters the ward with a unique charisma that the ward hadn't experienced in a long time, and after attempting to make small conversation, “ He stands there waiting, and when nobody makes a move to say anything to him he commences to laugh...This sounds real. I realize all of

a sudden it's the first laugh I've heard in years. He stands looking at us, rocking back in his boots, and he laughs and laughs and laughs" (Kesey 12). The language used by Kesey in this quote reveals that the ward hasn't experienced genuine laughter in a very long time. When nobody responds to McMurphy's uplifting small talk, his laughter illustrates his easy-going personality, which is the opposite of the ward's mechanical structure that influences the absence of the patient's responses. Chief's reaction to McMurphy's laughter, noticing the authenticity of it, shows that there is no genuine laughter or happiness present on the ward. This quote specifically proves the author's point that authoritative figures suppress human instincts by restricting patients to express their individuality through the creation of an environment where there is no laughter. The value of this evidence is that it gives us a clear illustration of the dynamics of the ward, allowing us to see the magnitude of the lack of freedom for individual expression among the patients. The specific world view that is being articulated is that freedom of expression, individuality, and choice can be completely taken away by authoritative figures.

Medication is mandatory in the ward because it helps the staff members keep control over the patients. Chief explains that he abhors taking his sleeping pills because, " When you take one of these red pills, you don't just go to sleep; you're paralyzed with sleep, and all night long you can't wake, no matter what goes on around you. That's why staff gives me the pills; at the old place I took to waking up at night and catching them performing all kinds of horrible crimes on the patients sleeping around me" (Kesey 85). The

language in this quote reveals the power that the staff has over the patients by showing the absolute lack of choice that Chief has when staff force him to take his medications. Even when Chief refuses the medications, staff forces him to take them, denying his right to choose. Since Chief witnessed crimes committed against his fellow patients, the staff used their authoritative positions to force him to take medication which paralyzed him in order to get away with the crimes that were being committed within the ward. This evidence specifically proves that the authoritative figures have the ability to take away the freedom of choice. Based on the evidence, Kesey argues that the right to choose has been taken away once the patients step onto the ward. The evidence illustrates exactly how much power the authoritative figures have on the ward, thus stripping all power and choice away from the patients. An article titled "Big Mama, Big Papa, and Little Sons in Ken Kesey's 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest'" written by Ruth Sullivan states, "A theme of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's

Nest concerns the nature of individual freedom - political, social, and psychological. It asserts that in the psychological realm, certain kinds of dependence are healthy: the dependence of a child upon good parents; of a patient upon effective nurses and doctors; and of weak adults upon nurturing strong ones. But this dependent condition is healthy only if it fosters eventual independence. Big Nurse destroys because she must control; hence she blocks the autonomy of her patients" (Sullivan 1975). This quote is expanding on Sullivan's perception of Kesey's novel. She believes that Kesey is mainly focusing on how society is attempting to turn humans into mindless

machines. Sullivan sees Nurse Ratched as an authoritative figure who needs to control patients, which is much like society controlling people. This quote amplifies my argument by emphasizing the power that Nurse Ratched has over the patients by taking away their autonomy, or their right to choose. The specific world view being articulated in this evidence is that powerful people suppress basic human instincts, such as security and safety, by taking away the right to choose. This world view impacts us because if we let powerful people suppress our instincts by stealing our right to choose, then we have a minimum chance of a fight to gain it back.

After the patients invited two girls into the ward without the knowledge of staff, the patients and the girls get drunk together, leading Billy Bibbit to lose his virginity to Candy. After Nurse Ratched finds them naked together, she shames Billy and threatens to tell his mother. Nurse Ratched finds Billy and tells McMurphy, “ ‘ He cut his throat,’ she said. She waited, hoping he would say something. He wouldn't look up. ‘ He opened the doctor's desk and found some instruments and cut his throat. The poor miserable, misunderstood boy killed himself. He's there now, in the doctor's chair, with his throat cut’ ” (Kesey 318). The specific language in this quote reveals the severity of suppression of basic human instincts by authoritative figures taking away freedom of expression. The language also reveals more of Ratched's character, blaming his suicide on him being poor, miserable, and misunderstood instead of taking responsibility for her actions minutes before he killed himself. The evidence specifically proves the point that authoritative figures on the ward suppress natural human instincts, in this

case sexual instincts, by prohibiting the freedom to express sexuality and then being shamed for it afterwards. The author argues that it is potentially deadly to suppress natural human instincts to the magnitude that the ward did, especially sexual instincts. The world view that is being articulated in this argument is that suppression of sexual human instincts by authoritative figures is highly unnatural and may have very negative outcomes. The impact that this world view has on us is that it shows what the outcome could possibly be if we let people in power suppress our natural human instincts.

In Burgess's novel, Alex and his friends go out into town at night with the intent to commit acts of violence against people. They are walking through town, "Then we saw one young malchick with his sharp, lubbilubbing under a tree so we stopped and cheered at them, then we bashed into them both with a couple of half-hearted tolchocks, making them cry, and on we went" (Burgess 23). The language used in this quote shows how indifferent Alex and his friends are when they are committing acts of violence against people. The language also implies that the group of boys just beat up these guys, then left as if nothing had taken place. The evidence specifically proves the author's point that young people act on their instincts to destroy and act violently before rationalizing their actions. The author's argument based on the evidence is that adolescents act on their instincts and do not make decisions based on reason, but rather based on impulse. The evidence illustrates how youth do not possess the same decision-making process that adults have and act on their violent instincts as a result. The evidence is

significant because it gives us a depiction of how careless and impulsive adolescents can be. The world view being articulated in this argument is that before adolescents become adults, they tend to act on their natural human instincts to be violent and this affects us because we need to be aware of how adolescents might manifest their actions and to be understanding of their instincts.

After Alex agrees to participate in a behavioral experiment in lieu of jail time he learns that the experiment physically forces him to watch movies which teach him to physically respond to violence with being sick. Dr. Branom replies, " ' What is happening to you now is what should happen to any healthy human organism contemplating the actions of the forces of evil, the workings of the principle of destruction. You are being made sane, you are being made healthy'" (Burgess 121). The language in this quote reveals the unnatural methods which are being used as an attempt to prevent Alex from committing any acts of violence again. The language also implies that they are making him into a human only capable of being good, and conditioned to become extremely sick when put into situations which are considered violent or bad. This specifically proves the author's point that it is not human nature to only possess good human instincts because Alex is being forced to possess good human instincts through extreme conditioning and be triggered to get sick at the thought of violence. This particular piece of evidence illustrates the exact nature of the technique in which Alex was participating in and how he was being made into a human incapable of

possessing evil instincts or only evil instincts and this is important for us to understand because every human possesses both good and evil instincts.

Towards the end of the novel, Alex sees his old friend Pete and starts envisioning himself as a husband and a father. He dreams of having a family and thinks, " Yes yes yes, brothers, my son. And now I felt this bolshy big hollow inside my plot, feeling very surprised too at myself. I knew what was happening, O my brothers. I was like growing up" (Burgess 211). The language in the quote reveals the changes that occur between adolescence and adulthood. Burgess uses Alex as an example of how the process of thinking shifts as we get older. The language also suggests that Alex is feeling something he has never felt before, which is a yearning for love and creation rather than a yearning for destruction. The evidence specifically proves the author's point that adults are more capable of thinking before acting on natural instincts by showing Alex as an adult and his shift in thinking compared to Alex as an adolescent. This evidence is significant because it illustrates a change that has happened to Alex as a result of everything he put himself through as a teenager. The article titled " ' A Clockwork Orange': Awareness Is All" written by John W. Tilton states, " And that is what the eighteen-year-old Alex of the final chapter fails to understand. Alex sincerely attributes his own evil to his youth...and expects only good in the future, in his adult life. He stresses the sincerity of that conviction by ' realistically' recognizing that his son and his son's son will behave in their youth just as he did in his. The truth established by the content of his own story and reinforced by its style and by the very fact that

he writes it all is that the inherent evil of man will manifest itself no matter who he is or how old he is" (Tilton 1977). Although I agree with most of Tilton's article, I do not agree with his view in this specific quote. The article focuses on the importance of the last chapter of the novel, which, as Burgess explains to us in the introduction, was edited out by Norton. This quote goes directly against my argument by stating that age does not have anything to do with the manifestation of evil, when clearly it does. Tilton's argument is wrong because the last chapter specifically illustrates the change that has happened within Alex due to him growing older and further away from youth. Burgess did not write the last chapter to express that evil will continue to manifest itself through Alex, but to give light to Alex's story and hope to the readers that change is possible, and as we grow older we become wiser and more capable to think before we act on evil or violent instincts. The world view being articulated in this argument is that as adolescents, we are more inclined to act upon our instincts but when we become adults we think about our actions before we act upon them

Kesey's world view is that authoritative figures try to suppress natural human instincts by taking away freedom of expression, individuality, and the right to choose while Burgess's world view is that nobody can possess only good instincts or only evil instincts and that adolescents act on instincts without thinking first. If Kesey's world view was the only world view, then people in society wouldn't have any freedom of expression, individuality, or the right to choose and if Burgess's world view was the only one, people would have good and evil instincts and as adults they would be able to make

conscious decisions to act upon these instincts or not. In my opinion, I agree with both Kesey and Burgess's world views because we see authoritative figures all over the world taking away freedom of expression, individuality, and the right to choose, such as Kim-Jong Un, the President of North Korea. He gives limited rights to the people of his country. His people get rations of food, are assigned jobs in which can be considered slave labor, and kills anybody who tries to go against him or the government. On the other hand, we can see Burgess's world view in social environments such as elementary school, middle school, and high school. There are young students who pick on other students, disobey teachers, and engage in fights with other students because they don't think before they act upon their instincts. We can also see how adults think before they act, such as in the work place. If we get irritated with a coworker, we don't just punch them in the face. Instead, we confront our coworker or our supervisor, and if that does not work then we take it up with human resources.