

What does *A Clockwork Orange* reveal about the debate surrounding Nature vs Nurture?

Alex De Large' is the main character of *A Clockwork Orange* (ACWO), which is a controversial dystopic novel written by Anthony Burgess in 1963. The novel has many important themes but one which stood out to me first and foremost was that of Nature vs Nurture. Andrew Leary, talks about how Alex had grown up in a turbulent environment, and this is where he gets his relentless need for malice. Whereas critic Edward Tanguay, talks about how Alex had few pleasures growing up, but one of those little pleasures were music, and how he associated it with the 'ultra-violence' that he commits daily. What makes the man? Is it whether one was born with an inner evil? Or is it that they had grown up in an evil environment? It's a question which is up for debate. I personally believe that ACWO reveals to us, the reader, that we are a product of our own environment rather than born with our own devils.

Burgess's overall didactic message is that one, that being Alex, adapts to one's environment and that you yourself are a product of your surroundings, just as much as your surroundings are a product of you. There are many factors to take into account which could all individually be the reasons behind Alex's antisocial behavior. The lack of strict parenting which Alex had overpowered. "Pee and em in their bedroom next door had learnt now not to knock on the wall with complaints of what they called noise. I had taught them." The absence of a strong government. "We are not concerned with motive, with the higher ethics. We are concerned only with cutting down crime." And the lack of peer bonding. These can all be a cause behind his malicious acts. Although some may argue that it is nature which makes him the way he is, that he is just an aggravated adolescent male, it is more than that, if nature is to blame behind his acts, then every hormonally fueled pubescent teenager would be running rampant through the cities and towns of this day and age. It is because his surroundings have changed him into the boy he is in the novel, and he will not change unless a serious act makes him hit the wall. Like in the final chapter in Part 3, "Perhaps was getting too old for that sort of jeezny I had been leading, brothers."

Leary says that it is Alex's domain that makes him such a terror on society, rather than that of nature, it is because of this hostile environment, with its negative and absent government which turns Alex into a creature of malice. Leary quotes from the book as Alex is coming home from a night of debauchery. "I did pass *one young* maichick sprawling and creeching and moaning in the gutter, all cut about lovely, and saw in the lamplight also streaks of blood here and there like signatures." Leary then talks about how he sees Alex's situation. "When a boy grows up in such an unstable environment like this, no one would question why he himself is committing the crimes, but what are the causes behind him doing it?" That is one of many horrific scenes that Alex had grown up to view on a daily basis, and he is now a part of a culture which isn't aggravated or even bothered by seeing this, and who are willing to do nothing, in fear of other street hooligans. I agree with Leary's statement, as it is scenes like this that would shock a society like ours, but Alex's society, which constantly sees this sort of horror daily, keeps calm and carries on.

Tanguay argues his point that it is the music that inspires Alex to his un-provoked acts of violence, and not the environment. How he explains his point, is he tells us Alex's favorite music to listen to that of Beethoven's ninth symphony, he asks. Why can't Beethoven's 9th not bring up images of violence? It's just a matter of association. As Tanguay quotes from the book after turning on his 'lovely Mozart.' "There were vecks and pttisas, both young and starry, lying on the ground screaming for mercy, and I was smecking all over my rot and grinding my boot in their litsos." Although this does depict a disgusting scene, it doesn't enforce the idea that it is music which makes Alex commit his awful crimes. What is flawed in

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Tanguay's thinking is that if Alex is so provoked by music, then it could also be said that someone could be inspired to do the same acts by something as menial as a flower, eg: fighting its way up from a seedling, going through all the dirt and grime to become a fledgling flower, this could be associated with the battle of life, where we need to step on the dirt and grime of society to become that blossoming flower. This is why I think Tanguay is overlooking the importance of the whole environment rather than specifically the influence of music.

After reading both of these critics reviews on the book *ACWO* I think, and can show that it is nurture which makes the man, not nature. Whether a man is born with an inner evil is irrelevant. What makes a man is how they are brought up into the world, not what music he listens to or what he may associate it with, where Alex has grown up into an abusive environment shows us that he himself will become aggressive and abusive towards others which he comes into contact with. We as a people may be born with an inner evil but the devil within won't get a chance to come out if we are raised in a correct manner.

(The student's bibliography and data evaluation chart were completed but are not included with this exemplar.)