

## Extroversion - Introversion Traits and their Influence on the Humanistic Culture in Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story*

Asst. Prof. Inam Hashim Hadi (PhD)

College of Education for Human Sciences (Ibn-Rushd)/University of Baghdad/  
Iraq

[Inam.hashim@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:Inam.hashim@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq)

Received: 4/7/2022

Accepted: 14/8/2022

Published: 15/3/2023

Doi: <https://doi.org/10.36473/ujhss.v62i1.2006>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

### Abstract

The social, political, and cultural scene of post-world war II America witnessed considerable changes where lack of communication, meaninglessness, solitude, class distinction, and other related issues prevailed, stripping man of his humanity. In the mid-twentieth century, dramatists including Edward Albee, among other writers, tried to revive a new vitalized social ideology to transform the current mode of human's thought whose effect exceeded the limits leading man to segregate himself from others. Albee was resentful of the cultural orientation during his time and he criticized the contemporary social standards in his attempt to sublimate human's life experiences partly as a self-healing process, and partly as his contribution to creating a new wave of humanistic culture. In *The Zoo Story*, he voices human suffering proving that both an introvert (Peter) and an extrovert (Jerry) are victims of the social norms and are struggling with the imposed socio-cultural regulations. However, the type of personality traits proves to be decisive in redirecting the mode of human thought and can help to bring an individual back again to socialites where communication is the core. The aim of this research is to elucidate how human nature may interact with each other and with the varying situations in life to create new perspectives on humanistic culture, or in a broader context, to create a new ideology away from the psychological death of post-world war II modern man.

**Keywords:** extroversion, introversion, humanistic culture, social norms, psychological problems.

## سمات الانبساطية والانطوائية وتأثيرها على الثقافة الإنسانية في مسرحية قصة حديقة الحيوان لإدوارد ألبى

أ.م.د. إنعام هاشم هادي

كلية التربية للعلوم الانسانية (ابن رشد)/جامعة بغداد - العراق

[inam.hashim@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq](mailto:inam.hashim@ircoedu.uobaghdad.edu.iq)

### الملخص

لقد شهدت أمريكا بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية على الصعيد الاجتماعي والسياسي والثقافي تغيرات كبيرة حيث ساد الافتقار إلى التواصل ، انعدام وجود معنى للحياة ، العزلة ، التمييز الطبقي ، وغيرها من القضايا ذات الصلة مما أدى إلى تجريد الإنسان من إنسانيته وتزايد إحساسه بالتوحد لذا حاول المسرحيون في منتصف القرن العشرين ومنهم كان الكاتب إدوارد ألبى ، من بين كتاب آخرين ، إحياء إيديولوجية اجتماعية جديدة لتغيير الفكر البشري السائد الذي تجاوز تأثيره الحدود وقاد الإنسان إلى العزلة. لقد استاء ألبى من التوجه الثقافي خلال عصره وانتقد المعايير الاجتماعية المعاصرة في محاولته لإضفاء صفة التسامي على تجارب حياة الإنسان جزئياً كعملية للشفاء الذاتي وجزئياً كمساهمة منه لخلق موجة جديدة من الثقافة الإنسانية. لقد عبر ألبى في مسرحيته (قصة حديقة الحيوان) عن المعاناة الإنسانية مثبتاً أن كلاً من الانطوائي (بيتر) والمنفتح (جيري) هم ضحايا الأعراف الاجتماعية السائدة وانهم في صراع دائم في خضم الانظمة الاجتماعية والثقافية المفروضة عليهم. ومع ذلك، فإن سمات نوع الشخصية الانطوائي والمنفتح اثبتت دوراً في إعادة توجيه نمط التفكير الانساني للعودة الى الحياة الاجتماعية المبنية على التواصل. الهدف من هذا البحث هو توضيح كيفية تفاعل سمات نوع الشخصية مع بعضها البعض وكذلك مع المواقف المختلفة في الحياة لخلق وجهات نظر جديدة تعزز الثقافة الإنسانية ، أو في سياق أوسع ، لخلق إيديولوجية جديدة لما بعد الحرب العالمية الثانية بعيداً عن الموت النفسي للإنسان في العصر الحديث.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الانبساطية ، الانطوائية ، الثقافة الإنسانية ، الأعراف الاجتماعية ، المشكلات النفسية.

### Introduction

The Post-war world was an uncomfortable era. It was an age of anxiety, loneliness, and a lack of communication. The writers' main concern in the fifties has transported the political scene to question the new social and psychological problems in the new American society in an attempt to create a new humanistic culture. They tried to give answers related to the meaning of life and whether they should submit or refuse to lead an absurdist concept of life. However, an individual should first be aware of his true nature in an attempt to reconcile the conscious and subconscious where such reconciliation leads an individual to live in harmony with society or else s/he would suffer. Hence, "[the] human beings must be aware that individuation is the aim of their lives because through individuation, humans can reach wholeness" (Saddam, 2020, p. 74). Then, the question is what personality trait a person might adopt to be accepted socially and to help retrieve the social values that have been lost due to the effect of World War II? To answer this question, we have to spotlight Carl Gustav Jung's (1875-1961) psychological

theory of personality type which refers to the psychological classification of different types of personality. According to this type theory, there exist two types of people; introverts and extroverts. Jung proposes that consciousness has four main functions; namely sensation, intuition, thinking, and feeling. These functions are oriented by two attitude types: extraversion and introversion which help shape the individual's acquisition of values, beliefs, and expectations. Jung further demonstrates that it is impossible to be purely an extrovert or an introvert. He symbolizes the four main functions to a compass that we might follow to find our true selves (Jung, 1971, p. 509).

### **Extroversion - Introversion and Social Interaction**

Extroversion and introversion are two terms first coined by Jung in the early 1900s. An extrovert is "a person whose personality is characterized by [extroversion](#): a typically gregarious and unreserved person who enjoys and seeks out social interaction" (Merriam-Webster, 2022). Social situations are the extrovert's domain since s/he tends to interact with her/his surroundings. Such an interaction feeds the extrovert's sense of existence and eventually shapes his attitude to life. C. Salmon, in his "Birth Order, Effect on Personality, and Behavior", explains the traits that are attributed to an extrovert as being "talkative, energetic, assertive, and outgoing", he further asserts the extroverts' dominating tendencies who "often take on positions of leadership; ... to offer their opinion and suggestions. They are often quick to approach others" (Cited in Ramachandran, 2012, p. 355). Jung, also emphasizes the extrovert's sense of community that distinguishes her/his psychic life where s/he enjoys a peaceful and disciplined way of living. Thus, the extrovert to Jung

Lives in and through others; all self-communing give him the creeps. Dangers lurk there which are better drowned out by noise. If he should ever have a "complex," he finds refuge in the social Whirl and allows himself to be assured several times a day that everything is in order. (Jung, 1971, par. 974)

Hence, by nature, the extrovert is willingly responding to outer requirements even if these requirements affect him negatively.

However, the extrovert's attitude to life and his relation to the outer world are determined by 'typological predisposition'. The extraverted thinking type is a combination of an individual's actions that are implemented from intellectually considered motives and an inclination toward the outer world. At their best, those who belong to this type are perfect in setting up an order. Yet, the extremists in this type may subdue others to their 'formula' as asserted by Jung who states that

this type may play a very useful role in social life as a reformer or public prosecutor or purifier of conscience, ... But the more rigid the formula, the more he develops into a martinet, a quibbler, and a prig, who would like to force himself and others into one mould. (Cited in Sharp, 1987, p. 456)

Like the extraverted thinking type, the extraverted feeling type is also outwardly and culturally oriented. They are even ready to suppress their personal desires to adjust themselves to their surroundings and to create a friendly and

sociable acceptance. However, rational thinking will be overwhelmed by feeling; though not completely and eventually, there will be an opposition between the conscious feeling and the unconscious state of the subject. According to Van Franz such contradiction might turn inward causing a 'cynical outlook on life' and a hateful sense of loneliness.

At bottom he allows himself to think that he is a nobody, that his life is worthless ... these thoughts dwell in the back of his mind and from time to time, when he is depressed or not well off, ... this negative thing whispers at the back of his head: "You are nothing, everything about you is wrong. (Cited in Sharp, 1987, p. 53)

The Extroverted sensation is the third type of personality where the subject seeks a strong sensuous relation to the surrounding external reality. Nevertheless, the negative side of this trait is that the pursuit of sensation becomes alarming since "there is always the danger that consciousness will be overpowered by the unconscious" (Sharp, 1987, p. 58).

The extroverted intuitive type, unlike the sensational one, is based on the effect of intuition where the individual may have an extraordinary insightful vision to perceive or sense hidden things. Possibilities are always there ready to transform existing scenes for her/him. However, their yearning for such possibilities may bounce against them as they cannot keep their interest to fully implement these possibilities to the end. Thus, extroverted intuition "often bring out the best in others, and can be uncanny matchmakers ... and have an unrivaled capacity for kindling enthusiasm for anything new\_\_ though they themselves may be indifferent to it the next day" (Sharp, 1987, p. 62).

Still, the outer orientation of extroversion is to be countered by an inner orientation that describes a person as being an introvert. Introversion is, thus, motivated by subjective indicators. Jung emphasizes the introvert's dislike for social gatherings and her/his yearning for "a safe harbor, a carefully tended and walled-in garden, closed to the public and hidden from prying eyes. His own company is the best" (Jung, 1971, par. 977). Furthermore, the introvert chooses to live inside his own shell when experiencing complexes in her/his life. S/He tends to sustain a sense of superiority by devaluing others and denying their importance in directing her/his life. Jung asserts the philosophical interpretation of the introvert's conservative attitude stating that his "retreat into himself is not a final renunciation of the world, but a search for quietude, where alone it is possible for him to make his contribution to the life of the community" (Jung, 1971, par. 979).

The typological predisposition that determines the introvert's attitude to life and his relation to the outer world starts with the introverted thinking type. This type is highly influenced by ideas, but unlike the extroverted one, these ideas are subjectively not objectively oriented. He believes only in his logical thinking and in his ability to adjust his ideas basically through contemplation. Thus, "to outsiders he seems prickly, unapproachable, and arrogant, and sometimes soured as a result of his anti-social prejudices" (Jung, 1971, par. 635). The introverted feeling type, on the other hand, asserts the interior image that these people are living within. The

intellectual account is hardly attainable from this type since everything is to be felt, not thought of, which is contrary to introverted thinking. However, Jung restricted this type to women whom he describes as "silent, inaccessible, hard to understand; often they hide behind a childish or banal mask, and their temperament is inclined to melancholy" (Jung, 1971, par. 640). The third introverted type is sensation which is derived from the subjective perception; or the psychic interpretation of the object. There is a psychic difference in interpreting different situations in life. Thus, it might lead to a complete suppression of the object's influence. Jung states that the sensational introvert "perceives the same things as everybody else, only he does not stop at the purely objective influence, but concerns himself with the subjective perception excited by the objective stimulus" (Jung, 1971, par. 647). The introvert's unrelatedness to the outside world, his calmness, and obvious self-control lead others to misjudge her/him sometimes. "Seen from the outside, it looks as though the effect of the object did not penetrate into the subject at all ... the individual appears to be shielding himself directly from all objective influences" (Jung, 1971, par. 651). Nevertheless, this type is very professional in planning and shaping his life depending on unconscious images or symbols hidden in his mind or in his unconscious collectiveness to help him interpret future events intuitively.

The fourth attitude of an introvert is intuition or what some people call; the 'sixth sense'. It is the ability to know something without being able to explain the means that help one reach such an understanding.

Introverted intuition is similar to extraverted intuition; except that it is more of an internal process, and it is more inspired by the unknown and unconscious. Jung says:

The fragmentary and episodic character of their communications makes too great a demand on the understanding and good will of those around them; also, their communications are without the personal warmth that alone carries the power of conviction. On the contrary, these types have very often a harsh, repelling manner, though of this they are quite unaware and did not intend it. (Jung, 1971, par. 664)

However, the people of this personality type are strategic, independent, and conceptual, but they need a sense of aloneness to track and process their thoughts.

After all, taking into consideration the basic characteristic traits of the introverts and extroverts, one should understand that the individual might possess qualities from both types or that s/he might prefer to adopt a different style according to different situations. Nevertheless, "[the] deepest problems of modern life come from the individual's attempt to maintain individuality against potentate powers of society" (Musir, 2018, p.189). Still, Sharp assumes that it is impossible to be totally introverted or extroverted though they affect the way an individual behaves. He states that: "one can never give a description of a type, no matter how complete, that would apply to more than one individual, despite the fact that in some ways it aptly characterizes thousands of others. Conformity is one side of a man, uniqueness is the other" (Sharp, 1987, p. 89).

### ***The Zoo Story: Personality Traits and Humanist Culture***

Edward Albee (1928-2016), the American playwright himself seems to experience both personality traits, extroversion and introversion, with varying degrees due to his living a double life, one under poverty and the other of wealth as an adopted child to a millionaire. Nevertheless, his life was a troubled one, especially his childhood and adolescence. He lacked true affection from his adoptive parents whose main concern was to make perfect their aristocratic family. As is affirmed by Kaibr who states that: "Albee was not adopted by his parents, because they saw him as an orphan who needed care and affection; instead, they only saw him as a commodity that they could polish and show to others when needed" (Kaibr, 2018, p.4). Furthermore, Albee himself affirms the negative effect of his adoptive family when he decided to leave "home at the age of eighteen because of the tense atmosphere which precluded him from acting freely and developing his mind (Rakhees, 2020, p. 4). His adoptive family has failed to provide him with the stimulation, love, and support that a child usually needs to avoid developing negative personality traits. Thus, Albee shows an introverted trait since he sustains a sense of superiority by devaluing his adoptive family and denying their importance in directing his life. He states that "he was forced to break away from home because his family wanted him to become a 'corporate thug' rather than a writer" (Rakhees, 2020, p. 4). As an introvert, Albee has retreated into himself since he believes that his contribution to his community could only be done while alone. The interior image that he is living within; as an introvert, which helped him take the departure decision, was the same image that he is trying to convey to his audience through his characters. He is trying to create a new humanistic culture based on a free desire to make changes. In an interview published in 1965 in *The Atlantic Monthly*, he mentions that he has always thought "it was one of the responsibilities of playwrights to show people how they are and what their time is like in the hope that perhaps they'll change it" (Cited in Bloom, 2005, p. 28). Eventually, he assumes an extroverted attitude to life like the one portrayed by his character Jerry in *The Zoo Story* (1959).

McCarthy also affirms Albee's view as a writer which is "to present the world and the people in it as he sees it and say Do you like it? If you don't like it change it" (McCarthy, 1987, p. 16). Albee, throughout his characters, is trying to sublimate his life experiences partly as a self - healing process, and partly as his contribution to creating a new wave of humanistic culture. In *The Zoo Story*, Albee has chosen two American citizens of different personality traits, namely an extrovert and an introvert, and their role in promoting a new wave of humanistic culture away from the materialistic outlook and the absurd concept of life.

There is Peter whose first appearance gives the impression of an introvert trying to retreat into himself in a search for quietude, he "is seated on the bench stage-right. He is reading a book, cleans his glasses, goes back to reading" (*The Zoo Story*, P.1). He keeps silent enjoying his contemplation and the imaginary world of the books. Peter belongs to the upper middle class and is privileged by the norms of his society. He is having a wife, two daughters, a home, and all the required luxury items of the time. Thus, "he has assimilated into the dominant culture and power

structure of the society while he is unaware of the vanity of the life he is living" as described by Shams (2013, p.2). While Albee's other American citizen is Jerry, the opposite of the other pole. He is the extrovert, the over-talkative who seeks social stimulation to give him a sense of existence and belonging.

However, due to a change in the American social construction after the Second World War and the lack of communication that characterized that era, Jerry's, the extrovert, suffering escalates. The latter starts losing his sense of belonging and even his sense of living. Thus, Jerry is described as "a man in his late thirties, not poorly dressed, but carelessly. What was once a trim and lightly muscled body has gone to go to fat; and while he is no longer handsome, it is evident that he once was"(*The Zoo Story*, p.1). With no wife, family, or even friends, Jerry is the outcast who is victimized by the new unjust social standards which are characterized basically by a lack of communication. His poverty leads him to live in a rooming-house and is obviously quite away from the American mainstream that he is supposed to be part of. However, Jerry seems not to be content with his current life and is initiating a rebellious spirit in his attempt to break through the restrictions imposed on his extroverted attitude to life by the new humanistic culture where socialites have lost their meaning. Obviously, Jerry the extrovert, and Peter the introvert react differently to their societal simulations. Though extroversion has been considered by many as advantageous, solitude is imposed on Jerry. The latter is just like Albee who has experienced social neglect, before and after his adoption that led him to encounter an unbridgeable gap and an unbalanced personality order. Jerry affirms his sense of solitude: " every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really talk; like to get to know somebody, know all about him"( *The Zoo Story*, p.5). His solitude is further emphasized by the significance of the empty picture - frames when he tells Peter "I don't have pictures of anyone to put in them" (*The Zoo Story*, p.8).

Eventually, Jerry is encountering a difficult time coping with others as he wants to do a lot but is prevented by Peter's silence that starts to annoy him. Novelist William S. Burroughs affirms that most introverts annoy others with their silence, "Silence is only frightening to people who are compulsively verbalizing" (cited in Dossey, 2016, p. 152), he said. Jerry's sense of fear increases while approaching Peter's lifestyle which stands as a threat to his own. As an extrovert, Jerry seeks the sensation that Peter seems to neglect or to shield himself directly from, and this act frightened Jerry who is trying his best to shake peter's consciousness and to bring him back to real life; the life of social interaction. Jerry uses the dog as an example of his need for a strong sensuous relation to his surroundings. He needs a start to a self-realization even if the partner is a dog. He tells Peter "I hoped that the dog would understand anything ... it's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS! ... A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people ... SOMETHING" (*The Zoo Story*, p. 16). However, Peter is unable to understand Jerry just like the dog. He tells the latter "I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE. I don't understand you, or your landlady, or the dog" (*The Zoo Story*, p.17).

Still, Peter is not in a better situation than Jerry. He also has lost connection with society and is subdued to the world of imagination due to his work as a publisher. Jerry's extraverted nature might amend Peter's lifestyle and help him reconnect to his surrounding to regain a sense of existence. Thus, Jerry could be a reflection of Peter's hidden side that the new culture imposed upon man in modern life. Jerry's constant allusion to the reason behind his going to the zoo, which itself stands for life, is an indirect reference to the idea of solitude and lack of communication that contradicts with his extraverted nature. Jerry tells Peter "I went to the zoo to find out the way people exist with animals, ... it probably wasn't a fair test, what with everyone separated by bars from everyone else" (*The Zoo Story*, p.20). Peter's occupation of the bench stands for his introverted nature which keeps him away from others. Jerry starts fighting Peter by conquering his bench which stands as a symbol of the latter's identity and conformity to the social standards. It is Jerry's final attempt to reform Peter even if by force. Jerry's sense of being worthless pushes him to attempt possibilities in his desire to transform existing scenes for him. He attempts to teach Peter a lesson by exchanging roles. Jerry is trying to strip Peter of his seclusion as explained by the latter, "I see no reason why I should give up this bench. I sit on this bench almost every Sunday afternoon, in good weather. It's secluded here; there's never anyone sitting here, so I have it all to myself" (*The Zoo Story*, p. 21). Furthermore, this bench sustains Peter's sense of aloneness that helps him track his thoughts as an introvert and as a strategic, independent, and conceptual being. Still, does this bench worth Peter's struggle to keep it? This is the point that Jerry is trying to make overt. Seclusion and lack of communication are not always the core of an individual's life and Peter's anti-social prejudices should come to an end. Nevertheless, Peter's unconscious collectiveness that used to help him interpret future events intuitively, has finally failed him. Scornfully, Jerry attacks Peter telling him, "Stupid! Don't you have any idea, not even the slightest, what other people need?" (*The Zoo Story*, p. 23). Suddenly, Jerry decides further to stimulate Peter by forcing him into a fight: "You fight for your self-respect" (*The Zoo Story*, p. 24). He is calling Peter "miserable bastard" and "*with a rush he charges Peter and impales himself on the knife ... Then he too, screams, and it must be the sound of an infuriated and fatally wounded animal*" (*The Zoo Story*, p. 25). Finally, Jerry sets himself free from his socially imposed cage and forces Peter as well to leave his self-imposed one. The bench, which is a symbol of seclusion, will be departed forever and Peter will reconsider his priorities in life.

To sum up, personality traits; represented by extroversion and introversion, are not fixed but are governed by social and cultural standards that humanity should highly consider in modern life. Cultural adaptation is decisive in shaping human personality since "individuals both influence and be influenced by their hosting environment, individuals, and cultural traits by means of direct daily contact" (Al-Sammarraie, 2022, p.38).



Thus, it is a selective process where an individual adopts one personality trait than the other to help her/him harmonize. Both outer and inner attitudes to life are needed when circumstances permit. Extroversion and introversion represent the compass that will direct our path in life and will affect our self-realization which will eventually lead to the construction of the desired humanistic culture. Being an extrovert is not always a merit, as most people believe. Sometimes an extrovert, like Jerry, faces great hardships in life in his attempt to cope with others and to substitute the artificial values with the real ones and Jerry's death at the end is proof of the change that he desires to make which is truly demanding. Likewise, the introvert, such as Peter, who also pays his price as he has lost his sense of existence due to leading a secluded way of living. He is also in need of a powerful stimulation, a shock like Jerry's horrible suicide, to help him understand and get out of his self-deceiving world. Thus, change is possible and necessary to amend defects in social life, and human nature whether introvert or extrovert is undeniably decisive in shaping any society's humanist culture.

### References:

- Albee, E. (n.d.). *The Zoo Story*. <http://epdf.pub/the-zoo-story.html>. Text
- Al -Sammarraie, M. N. N. (2022). Cultural Adaptation: A Study in Selected Poems of Victor Hernandez Cruz. *Al-Adab Journal*. 142(2), 37-46.
- Bloom, H. (Ed). (2005). *Modern American Drama*. USA: Chelsea House Publishers.
- Dossey, L. (2016). Introverts: A Defense. In *EXPLORE: EXPLORE The Journal of Science and Healing*. 12(3), 151-160. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/296693461>
- Jung, C. G. (1971). *The collected works of C. G. Jung: Vol. 6. Psychological types*, edited by Sir Herbert Read, Michael Fordham, Gerhard Adler, and William McGuire. Princeton University Press.
- Kaibr, K. H., Jingjing, G. (2018). Sense of Loss in Albee's Plays. In *American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol 4(1), 1-6.
- McCarthy, G. (1987). Edward Albee. London: Macmillan.
- -Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). Extroversion. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. Retrieved January 4, 2021, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/extrovert>
- Musir, Z. A. (2018). The Recognition of Misrecognition: Identity Formation in Austen's Northanger Abbey and Dickens' Bleak House. *Al-Ustath Journal for Human and Social Sciences*. 224(1), 179-190.
- Rakhees, A. A., Janoory, L. (2020). The Author's Personality under Freudian Lenses: A Psychoanalytic Analysis of Edward Albee's Psyche in the Light of his Dramatic Works. *AJELP: Asian Journal of English Language & Pedagogy*. 8(2), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.37134/ajelp.vol8.2.1.2020>

- Saddam, W. A. (2020). Destructive Shadow: A Psychoanalytic Study in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*. *Al-Ustath Journal for Human and Social Sciences*. 59(1), 72-78.
- Salmon, C. (2012). "From Birth Order, Effect on Personality, and Behavior". In V.S. Ramachandran (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior (Second ed)*. (PP. 353-359). University of California, San Diego, California. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/topics/psychology/extraversion>
- Shams, P., Pourgiv, F. (2013). Power Struggle in The Zoo Story: A Performance of Subjectivity. In *Fe Dergi (Fe journal)*. 5(1), 1-11. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268224490>
- Sharp, D. (Ed.). (1987). *Personality Types: Jung's Model of Typology*. Canada: Thistle Printing Company Ltd.