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SARTREAN LOOK IN *THE ZOO STORY* AND *A DELICATE BALANCE*

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Özet

Hayvanat Bahçesi ve Hassas Denge Oyunlarında Sarter'ın Bakış Teorisi

Edward Albee'nin karakterleri varoluşlarına dair hissettikleri belirsizlikten dolayı kendilerine ve çevrelerindekilere benliklerini kanıtlama zorunluluğu hissederler; bu amaç doğrultusunda kişi ona bakmak, onu dinlemek ve de tepki vermek için "Ötekine" ihtiyaç duymaktadır. Bu makale, Sartre'ın "bakış" teorisi göz önüne alınarak Albee'nin Hayvanat Bahçesi oyunundaki Jerry ve Hassas Denge oyunundaki Agnes adlı karakterler üzerinde duracaktır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Bakış, Varoluş, Belirsizlik, Öteki, Sartre, Albee.*

Abstract

Edward Albee's characters feel a compulsion to prove their existence both to themselves and to the people around them as they feel uncertainties about their identities. To achieve this, they need "the Other" to look at, to listen to and to react to them. This paper will analyse two characters of Albee; Jerry in The Zoo Story and Agnes in A Delicate Balance, in terms of their requirement of Sartrean look to assert their existence.

Keywords: *The Look, Existence, Uncertainty, Tthe Other, Sartre, Albee.*

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Existentialism developed in the twentieth century as an attempt to find meaning for the existence of the human being in the modern world. The movement flourished in France with the contributions of such writers as Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, who were influenced by Martin Heidegger, and it was shaped particularly after the great wars when the human being suddenly found himself in a frightening and illogical universe, which was, indeed, absurd. For many people previously held beliefs and values collapsed along with hope and optimism as to them the twentieth century ceased to carry any meaning (Barrett, 1958:25-32). Accordingly, existentialism was mainly concerned with the place of the individual in such a chaotic universe as well as "the themes of life, anxiety, death, the conflict between the false and genuine self and the experience of the death of God" (Barrett, 1958:8).

As a leading figure of the movement, Sartre dealt with existential themes in his novels like *Nausea* (1938) and he published several essays and books on his philosophies. *Being and Nothingness* (1943) is the book in which Sartre concentrates on the existential self and its relationship with other people, which plays a significant role in determining the existence of the one. In fact, what Sartre explains about the confrontation between the self and the Other is the further explanation of Hegel's ideas on the relationship of the self with the others. Sartre starts his argument that one cannot know himself as the Other knows one and one cannot know the Other as he knows himself (Schroeder, 1984:88). Like Hegel and Heidegger, Sartre thinks that there exists a relationship between the Other and oneself in terms of existence; however, unlike them, Sartre believes that this relationship is "asymmetrical". He is convinced that one achieves to know oneself from the awareness of "a particular mode of others: others as subject". The self emanates from the Others, which defines the character for the one. The essential point in encountering with the Other is the "experience of the self" as seen by the Other. Thus, as the character is formed by the Other, it is dependent on the Other. The Other's subjectivity comes out of one's own objectivity and the Other's objectivity remains so long as one keeps one's own subjectivity. According to Sartre, the ultimate "asymmetry" that determines one's relation to others requires a kind of conflict, which means each step to others is to gain "the control of the dimension of oneself" that is created by the others (Schroeder, 1984:9). Though the relationship between the self and the Other to control each other was argued in Hegel's works, Sartre differs from him in terms of the outcome of the relationship. Unlike Hegel, Sartre thinks this relationship is futile as there cannot be any

recognition of a dominant side; thus, all human relationships fail (Cox, 2006:42).

As Sartre believes that the relationship between the self and the Other is not reciprocal, he further explains how the individual manipulates the Other in his *Being and Nothingness*. He claims that the human being is subjected to the "Look of the Other" which is a threat to the self since the Other might try to objectify the individual so as to establish his own subjectivity. The world of the self is haunted by the Other's values over which the individual has no control. Sartre asserts that the presence of "the Look of the Other" is "a limit of my freedom … it is given to me as a burden which I have to carry without ever being able to turn back to know it, without even being able to realize its weight" (Sartre, 1989:262). Furthermore, the being of the self is determined by "the Look of the Other" who tries to objectify people around him while trying to escape from his own state as a "being-in-itself". In other words, he has to nullify the existence of the other to assert his own identity. Sartre (1989:262) elucidates that "the Other has to make my being-for-him *be* in so far as he has to be his being." The subjectivity and the freedom of the Other depends on the loss of the integrity of the self. The human being who is observed by the Other is left to be a "defenceless being for a freedom which is not" his freedom. He continues: "While I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me […] Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others" (Sartre, 1989:364). In this aspect, the self can regard himself as the "slave" of the Other and his Look, both of which can result in fear, shame and pride of the self as a reaction against the enslaving look (Sartre, 1989:267-68). In order not to be objectified and lose the subjectivity, the self is involved in a never-ending competition in which he tries to prove his existence to himself and to the people around him. To do this, he has to control the Other and the Other's freedom.

As the twentieth century was marked by philosophical and social changes shattering the established values, it was almost impossible for any writer at the time not to be influenced by the ongoing events. Therefore, the theatre of Absurd was born with an attempt to find meaning for the existence of the humankind. The term itself comes from the "philosophical use of the word 'absurd'" by such existentialist thinkers as Sartre, Camus, Karl Jaspers and Gabriel Marcel, meaning "without logic, nonsense" (Esslin, 1965:9). The themes of existentialism are also depicted in the Theatre of Absurd, such as the loneliness of the human being in the universe, lack of communication, loss of certain values and the conflict between the self and the others. Esslin

(1965:9) explains that the plays "express a sense of shock at the loss of any clear and well-defined systems of beliefs and values".

Albee was one of these writers of the Theatre of Absurd in America as he was also preoccupied with the dark side of the human being who was alienated from his environment and even from himself. He focused on the human nature and his struggle to live in a meaningless world as well as "the Existentialist's dilemma of human life and the Absurdist's perception of insignificance" (Singh, 1987:5). His plays "attack the ideals of progress, the sentimental ideals of family life and togetherness" (Kolin, 1986:63). Like Pinter in Britain, he demonstrates the corruption of certain values like those in friendship, love and family, and similar to most of the Absurd playwrights, he shows the lack of communication as language becomes "a barrier rather than an aid to communicate" (Esslin, 1965:19-21). However, there are some differences between him and the European Absurdists. Unlike Beckett or Ionesco, he is not totally "touched by the sense of living in an absurd world". On the contrary, he prefers "to confront" this world. Albee thinks that "dignity" and "martyrdom" are possible in life as opposed to the other playwrights. Furthermore, for the European counterparts, absurdity is "the metaphysical reality", whereas for him, the world is meaningless on grounds that the moral, religious, political and social systems which the human being built to "illusion" himself collapsed. So, in his plays, he emphasises this collapse making a social criticism (Singh, 1987:21).

In addition to the effects of the Theatre of Absurdist, Sartre was also a significant influence on Albee, who confirmed this in an interview: "I just assume naturally that I've read Sartre […] I saw the plays when they were first done. Obviously it must have influenced me" (Kolin, 1988:143). Like Sartre, he was convinced that the aim of drama is "to help modern man discern the ultimate significance of human life" (Singh, 1987:2). Moreover, for both of them, the solitude can be "the confirmation of freedom" and "the absurdity lies not in man's situation but rather in the ridiculous prospects of his surrendering freedom". Therefore, both believed that it was crucial first to understand the hollowness of the universe to achieve freedom and get responsibility (Singh, 1987:10). Particularly, his later plays deal with the existential dilemma of the human being and his quest for meaning along with Sartre's views about the struggle of the individual against the Other in order to prove his existence with an aim of manipulating the Other.

To begin with, in *the The Zoo Story*, Albee's first play, Jerry requires the Other to look at, to listen and to react in order to ascertain his own existence to himself and to the people around him. The play deals with the

difficulties of communication and the problem of alienation through the characters, Jerry and Peter. As the title suggests, the play depicts the world as a zoo where each individual is separated from each other by bars. However, Jerry, who is in his late thirties, understands the "plight and seeks to remedy it on a personal level"; in other words, that is "the plight" of the generation who suffers from isolation and lack of communication, which causes anxiety for the individuals concerning their identities (Sykes, 1973:448). As Jerry himself is not sure of himself and his identity, he feels obliged to make the Other confirm his existence so as to bring some relief to himself as a being.

Jerry is a lonely figure, which plunges him into a vacuum in his life due to the fact that he has no one, not even a friend or family, to affirm his identity. From his account, it is made clear that he was left by his mother when he was ten years old, and then looked after by his aunt until she died. What he has about his past and his family is only two empty picture frames, which are the epitome of his loneliness. When Peter tries to build empathy with Jerry over the issue, Jerry replies: "But that was a long ago, and I have no feeling about any of it that I care to admit to myself" (Albee, 1959:395). Moreover, his present lonely life does not seem to be different from his past loneliness as he lives on his own in a "rooming house" in which there are all kinds of people. He explains:

> I live in a four-story brown store rooming house on the upper West Side between Columbus Avenue and Central Park West. I live on the top floor … It's a laughably small room and one of my walls is made of beaverboard … separates my room from another laughably small room. (Albee, 1959:395)

Though a great many people live in the same block, Jerry does not have any relationship with them. He continues to tell Peter:

> There is a Puerto Rican family in one of them, a husband, a wife and some kids; I don't know how many. These people entertain a lot. And in the other front room, there's somebody living there, but I don't know who it is. I've never seen who it is. Never. Never ever.
>
> (Albee, 1959:393)

Accordingly, Jerry's link to the others is confined only to his observations. There is no one in his life to assert his existence; thus, Jerry has uncertainties about his own existence and he needs other people to assure that he exists and has an identity. To achieve this goal, he goes to the

Central Park after having been to the zoo. He is determined to form a connection with someone, who turns out to be Peter by chance as he is reading his newspaper in the park on a Sunday afternoon. Jerry feels compelled to verify his existence first through his attempts at having a conversation with Peter asking him personal questions, then establishing a physical contact and at last provoking Peter to kill him.

Peter, an ordinary man in his early forties, does not at first react to Jerry's tendency to have conversation. Jerry, on the other hand, is determined to have a talk with Peter; thus, he starts to tell Peter about his zoo experience, which does not seem to appeal to Peter much:

> Jerry: I've been to the zoo. [*Peter doesn't notice*] I said I've been to the zoo. MISTER, I'VE
>
> BEEN TO THE ZOO!
>
> Peter: Hm? … What? … I'm sorry, were you talking to me?
>
> (Albee, 1959:389)

Peter's indifference drives Jerry to become more aggressive as he cannot draw Peter's attention. Therefore, he feels obliged to find something else to deepen the conversation by asking questions to Peter: "I'll tell you about it [the zoo] soon. Do you mind if I ask you questions?" (Albee, 1959:390) In order to prove his existence, Jerry has to draw the attention of Peter; thus, he will achieve his subjectivity. However, while doing this, he is careful not to be objectified by the Other. He can do this only if he keeps being the subject position according to Sartre's views. Hence, on the one hand, Jerry tries to get the reaction of Peter; on the other hand, he tries to eliminate Peter's subjectivity by asking questions and controlling the conversation in order not to lose his own subjectivity. He says: "But every once in a while I like to talk to somebody, really *talk*; like to get to know somebody, know all about him" (Albee, 1959:390). Hence, Jerry commencing the talk dominates it through asking questions about Peter's private life, such as what he does for a living or where he lives (Albee, 1959:391).

The second strategy Jerry uses to get the "look" of Peter is through making him listen to what Jerry has told. First, he gives Peter an account of his background; where he lives and what he possesses:

> Jerry: [G]ood old Mom and good old Pop are dead … you know? … I'm broken up about it, too. I mean really. BUT. … [G]ood old Mom walked out on good old Pop when I was ten and a half years old; she embarked on an adulterous turn of our southern states.
>
> (Albee, 1959:394)

What Jerry primarily aims is to capture Peter with his speech and stories; in other words, Jerry manipulates the conversation by talking about himself and forcing Peter to listen to him. By recounting his own life and objectifying Peter in a state of listening, Jerry seems to get confirmation about his existence from Peter.

The moment Jerry feels that Peter is dominating him through his comments on his life, Jerry gets enraged on grounds that he does not want his subjectivity to be taken away. When he talks about his relationship to a Greek boy, he states:

> Jerry: [A] Greek boy, whose birthday was the same as mine, except he was a year older. I think
>
> I was very much in love … maybe just with sex … And now; oh, do I love the little bodies; really, I love them. For about an hour.
>
> Peter: Well, it seems perfectly simple to me.
>
> Jerry: [*angry*] Look! Are you going to tell me to get married and have parakeets? (Albee, 1959:396)

What Jerry wants from Peter is to make him just listen, rather than make comments. Indeed, Jerry gets defensive once he feels the threat of the Other. He does not want to be judged by the other; on the contrary, he requires Peter just to be silent while he is talking so that Jerry can feel comfortable about who he is and why he exists.

Another long speech Jerry makes is about his landlady's dog. Zimbardo (1962:13) elucidates that "Jerry applies the knowledge he has gained from his contact with the dog in trying to establish contact with Peter". He has learnt the inability of people's communication through his experience with the dog, and he expects Peter to comprehend this as well. Jerry says to him: "What I am going to tell you has something to do with how sometimes it's necessary to go a long distance out of the way in order to come back a short distance correctly" (Albee, 1959:399). Jerry thinks that it is essential to teach

what he has learned from his experience with the dog to another person. First, he starts telling Peter how different this dog is from the other "indifferent" ones as it "snarls" or "sniffs" at Jerry. One day, he gives some hamburgers to the dog to divert its attention to elsewhere; nonetheless, when the interest of the dog in Jerry dies out, Jerry feels "offended": "I expected some reaction from him", exclaims Jerry. (Albee, 1959:401) The indifference of the dog maddens him to such an extent that he has decided to kill it by poisoning. He says: "So, I decided to kill the dog. [*Peter raises a hand in protest*.] Oh, don't be so alarmed, Peter; I didn't succeed. The day I tried to kill the dog I bought only one hamburger and what I thought was a murderous potion of rat poison" (Albee, 1959:401). Nonetheless, the failure of Jerry's attempt at killing the dog has taught him more significant things about his existence, which he explains to Peter in his speech. After the incidence, achieving a Sartrean look of the dog, he did not want it to die:

> Jerry: I looked at him; he looked at me. I think … I think we stayed a long time that way … I looked more into his face than he looked into mine … Now, here is what I had wanted to happen: I loved the dog now, and I wanted him to love me. I had tried to love, and I had tried to kill, and both had been unsuccessful by themselves … I expected dog to understand anything. (Albee, 1959:401)

Hence, the dog and his efforts of killing it have taught Jerry that this could be an opportunity to demonstrate his existence. He has commenced to ascertain his identity through forming a kind of contact with the dog; then expanded this action to establish a contact with human beings. He expresses his views to Peter: "It's just that if you can't deal with people, you have to make a start somewhere. WITH ANIMALS! [*Much faster now, and like a conspirator*] Don't you see? A person has to have some way of dealing with SOMETHING. If not with people … if not with people … SOMETHING" (Albee, 1959:401). He expects Peter to give a reaction for what he has told, or at least show a sign that he has understood Jerry.

Realising Peter could not perceive what he has told him, Jerry decides to set up a connection via physical violence such as tickling and punching him so that Peter could confirm Jerry's existence this time:

> Peter: I really should get home; you see…
>
> Jerry: [*tickles Peter's ribs with his fingers*] Oh, come on.
>
> Peter: [*he's very ticklish; as Jerry continues to tickle him his voice becomes falsetto*] No, I ….

Ohh. Don't do that. Stop, stop. Ohh … no, no. (Albee, 1959:407)

It is the fear of losing the Other to listen to him that impels Jerry to find irritating ways to draw Peter's attention; thus, after tickling, Jerry starts to be harsher towards Peter by punching:

Jerry: [*Punches Peter on the arm, hard*] *Move over*!

Peter: [*very annoyed*] I can't move over any more, and stop hitting me. What's the matter with you? (Albee, 1959:409)

In fact, Jerry's mad behaviour is directed at Peter to attract his attention more. By doing so, Jerry tries to provoke Peter and get his reaction. If Peter fights for the bench, there will be a real conflict between them, which will suggest the existential conflict Sartre explains in his *Being and Nothingness*. As the existence of the human being with the others is shaped by the struggle and conflict to control each other, Jerry will reach his goal by getting into an existential conflict with the Other, which will show him that he exists. Therefore, the last step he has taken is to force Peter to fight for his bench.

Peter: What's the matter with you?

Jerry: I'm crazy, you bastard.

…

Listen to me, Peter. I want this bench.

Peter: [*flustered*] But … whatever for? … I sit on this bench for almost every Sunday afternoon,

in good weather… So I have it all to myself. (Albee, 1959:409)

The more Peter owns up the bench, the more provocative Jerry becomes continuing the argument about the bench just to make Peter to fight for it:

Jerry: Fight for it, then. Defend yourself; defend your bench.

Peter: You've *pushed* me to it. Get up and fight.

Jerry: Like a man?

> Peter: [*still angry*] Yes, like a man, if you insist on mocking me even further.
>
> Jerry: I'll have to give you credit for one thing: you are vegetable.
>
> Peter: THAT'S ENOUGH (Albee, 1959:412).

To fulfil his goal, Jerry forces Peter to kill him, which will, for Jerry, prove that he will objectify Peter from his subjectivity through his own commands. So, Jerry throws a knife in front of Peter, who grabs it to defend himself, yet Jerry impales himself on the knife. Jerry: "So be it![*With a rush he charges Peter and impales himself on the knife. Tableau: For just one moment, complete silence, Jerry impaled on the knife at the end of Peter's still firm arm. Then Peter screams, pulls away, leaving the knife in Jerry. Jerry is motionless, on point*] (Albee, 1959:413).

Finally, Jerry attains his existential aim becoming a subject through establishing a contact with someone confirming his existence. By compelling Peter to kill him, Jerry not only achieves a human contact and the Sartrean look, but is freed from his existential suffering as well. Thus, he thanks Peter for providing him all of these: "Thank you, Peter. I mean that now; thank you very much … Oh, Peter, I was so afraid I'd drive you away …You don't know how afraid I was you'd go away and leave me" (Albee, 1959:414). Hence, ironically the death of Jerry marks the confirmation of his existence. Moreover, his death also justifies what Sartre claims about the futile relationship of the human being in that by killing Jerry, Peter ends the chance of a reciprocal relationship with him.

As to *A Delicate Balance*, one of the characters Albee depicts is Agnes who requires the Sartrean look of other people to look at, to listen to and to react to her, all of which will confirm her existence. The play is about a family whose "delicate balance" is disturbed by the visit of their friends, Harry and Edna. Szeliski (1970:130) claims that the play is "the best expression of the peculiar loneliness of our time … standing out in an age which desperately parades sensation and exhibition in the guise of drama." Albee deals with six characters who yearn for love, warmth and a sense of belonging; however, all of them face with hollowness and existential nothingness. Agnes and Tobias have been married for almost thirty-seven years, yet they are alienated from each other, particularly after the death of their son, Teddy. Though they live in the same house, they are like strangers to each other. Edna and Harry experience some sort of nothingness in their lives, which they cannot explain and compels them to come to Agnes and

Tobias's house. As for Julia, the daughter of Agnes and Tobias, she faces despair in her marriage, like her parents, and ends up in their home in depression. So the play focuses on the failures in the relationships between the members of a family. It "centres on people's pretence that their empty relationships with others are really meaningful" (Skyes, 1973:450). Albee demonstrates the lack of communication and alienation in the family regardless of the fact that the members are convinced that they have a blissful life.

Concerning the Sartrean look, Agnes tries to prove her existence through assuming and asserting various roles to manipulate people and through dramatising her situation to draw the attention of the people around her.

Agnes has an identity crisis although she pretends to be sure of herself. Her husband is alienated from her, she has lost her son and she suspects that her own sister has betrayed her with Tobias; thus, Agnes's life is full of emptiness. She tries to find refuge against this by adopting the role of patronising. Throughout the play, she tells the other people in the house that she has many responsibilities as a "wife, mother and a sister":

> Agnes: If they *knew* what it was like …to be a wife; a mother; a lover; a homemaker; a nurse; a hostess, an agitator, a pacifier; a truth teller, a deceiver…
>
> Julia: [saws away at an invisible violin; sings] Danda- de; da-da-da. (Albee, 1966:35)

While Agnes tries to verify her roles to the people around her, the others take the stance of indifference towards Agnes. Since she has uncertainties about her identity, she expects the others to confirm it with the aim of making life more tolerable for her.

In search of confirmation, Agnes imposes her authority on the other members of the family by pretending to be the one in charge to control everything in the family. When Claire wants to drink, Agnes gets furious shouting at her: "I WILL NOT TOLERATE IT!! I WILL NOT HAVE YOU!" (21) Agnes cannot bear people ignoring her demands; in fact, she expects all the members to accept her authority:

> Claire: If we are to live here, on Tobias's charity, then we are subjected to the will of his wife.

> If we were asked, at our father's dying …
>
> Agnes: [final] Those are the grand rules. (Albee, 1966:22)

Besides, Agnes believes that she has the responsibility of holding the family together and preserving the "delicate balance":

> Agnes: I shall … keep this family in shape. I shall maintain it; hold it.
>
> Julia: [*a sneer*] But you won't attempt the impossible.
>
> Agnes: [*a smile*] I shall keep it in shape. If I am a drill sergeant … so be it … I think we can at least keep the table.
>
> Julia: [*sarcastic salute, not rising though*] Yes, sir. (Albee, 1966:48)

However, the more Agnes practises her authority on the others, the more the rest of the family ignore her. While she expects to be obeyed, the others just mock at her or simply not listen. Her efforts of being recognised by the Other turns out to be a meaningless attempt. She says: "[some irritation toward both of them] There *is* a balance to be maintained, after all, though the rest of you teeter, unconcerned or uncaring, *assuming* you're on level ground … by divine right, I gather, though that is hardly so" (Albee, 1966:48).

Pero (2006:180) suggests that though Agnes complains sometimes that it is a great responsibility, by "sheer repetition, she loses her sense of identity". Her pretensions of authority are revealed once she requires Tobias to solve Julia's problem:

> Tobias: Well, I'd like to talk to Doug.
>
> Agnes: I wish you would! If you had talked to Tom, or Charlie, yes! Even Charlie. (Albee, 1966:23)

So, Agnes's establishing her power on the others is weakened by her own request of help. As no one listens to her or reacts to her, her authority fails.

Another strategy Agnes uses to prove her existence and attain reaction is through dramatising her situation. The play begins and ends with Agnes's assumptions that she will become mad one day. Anita Maria Stenz states that Agnes is "not literally threatened with insanity and doesn't want to go mad, rather she's attracting attention to her unhappiness" (qtd. in Pero, 2006:175).

While she is speculating that one day she will lose her sanity, Tobias does not show the exact reaction she has expected; instead, he just undermines what she has said:

> Agnes: What I find most astonishing – aside from that belief of mine, [*crosses D.L. to sofa*]
>
> which never ceases to surprise me by the very fact of its surprising lack of unpleasantness, the belief that I might very easily- as they say- lose my mind one day, not that I suspect I am about to, or am even … nearby…
>
> Tobias: [*He speaks somewhat the same way*] There is no saner woman on earth, Agnes.
>
> …
>
> We will all go mad before you. The anisette. (Albee, 1966:7)

As Tobias is not moved by her speculations, she dramatises the situation more and more:

> Agnes: It is supposed to be healthy- the speculation, or the assumption, I suppose, that if it occurs to you that you might be, then you are not; but I've never been much comforted by it; it follows, to my mind, that since I speculate I might, some day, [Tobias opens a new cognac bottle] or early evening I think more likely- some autumn dusk- go quite mad, then I very well might. [Bright laugh] Some autumn dusk… [Tobias at his desk, looks up from all those awful bills, and sees his Agnes, mad as a hatter, chewing the ribbons on her dress.] (Albee, 1966:8)

Moreover, Agnes tries another strategy to get a reaction from Tobias; that is, she demonstrates the rest of the family in a pitiful way. She tells Tobias: "You have hope, only, of growing even older than you are in the company of your steady wife, your alcoholic sister-in-law and occasional visits … from our melancholy Julia" (Albee, 1966:12). Nevertheless, this exaggeration does not touch Tobias, which makes Agnes feel like an unimportant being; thus, causing her insecurity and anxiety for her existence. Since none of the members of the family is moved by her complaints and self-pitying remarks, at the end of the play, Agnes turns back to her speculations about her possible insanity in the future.

Therefore, Agnes cannot achieve what Jerry is able to in *the The Zoo Story*. As nobody has reacted to her, Agnes cannot fulfil her existential aim;

that is, to attain to be the subject in the Other's eye. She remains in her object position owing to the indifferent attitudes of the people around her.

In conclusion, as Sartre explained in his *Being and Nothingness*, the self needs the Other to attain his subjectivity, yet to achieve this, he has to get into a constant struggle with the Other with an attempt of objectifying him. Further elucidating the views of Hegel on the relationship of the self with the others, Sartre concluded that it is impossible to reach a Hegelian recognition in the relationships of the individuals. Thus, all the encounters of the self end in failure trying to be dominant in the relationship. Albee, being influenced by Sartre and his views on the relationship between the self and the Other, dramatised the struggle of the humankind in the meaningless universe to assert his existence through attracting the look of the Other, which is manifested in looking at, listening or reacting to the individual. In *the The Zoo Story*, though Jerry is able to fulfil his aim of directing the look of Peter at him at the end of the play after a great many efforts of talking, touching and provoking, his death marks the impossibility of a reciprocal relationship. On the other hand, in *A Delicate Balance*, Agnes cannot even be as successful as Jerry on grounds that her attempts at drawing the attention of the others through imposing her rules, roles and pitying herself do not move the people around her; thus, she is left into her existential anguish being a Sartrean object.

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