

Chapter I

Ray Bradbury and *Fahrenheit 451*

This thesis on Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* explores and analyzes self awakening of the central character, Montag and his quest for true happiness from the perspective of existentialism. *Fahrenheit 451* is a dystopian novel which presents the 24th century American society. In this society, books are outlawed and banned. Montag, a fireman burns illegally owned books and homes of their owners. "It's a fine work. " Monday burn Millay, Wednesday Whitman, Friday Faulkner, burn them to the ashes that's our official slogan". (5) The society is not allowed to read the books and is punished for doing so. Bradbury has created the world where literature is not allowed. Literature is a taboo in his futuristic society. On the other hand, Bradbury is trying to show how bad our world would be without writings and poetry. The protagonist Montag's job is to burn any books or news clippings he sees.

Montag carries out his duty with zeal in the beginning. He is happy in his work destroying the books. "It's a special pleasure to see things eaten, things blackened, and changed".(1) He is happy until he meets Clarisse, a seventeen years old girl whose free thinking, ideals and liberating spirit, love for nature forces him to question his life, ideals and perceived happiness. He discovers his wife, who prefers television and radio to human interaction, has overdosed on sleeping pills. His wife's emptiness also disturbs him. "You took all the pills in your bottle last night," oh, I wouldn't do so. She said surprised. The bottle was empty."(16) The society in *Fahrenheit 451* is technologically advanced where people have no interest in nature, books and relationships; it only focuses on entertainment.

Once Montag has to go to the house owned by an old woman who hides away a library of books. She decides to set fire and burns herself alive with her books. Montag is surprised by seeing the old woman's dedication to her books. Montag realizes, "There must be something in books, things we can't imagine to make a woman stay in a burning house. There must be something there. You do not stay for nothing". (49) Montag realizes books may contain sources for his happiness that he lacks. He starts reading books that he has stolen. He seeks help from Faber, an old English professor to understand the information contained in the books. He starts to realize books are essential and people shouldn't have embraced ignorance.

Thus, the research explores how Montag, a typical fireman who believes what he is taught, who respects the fire captain, changes into a rebellion with intelligence with a new outlook on life. Now he realizes he is not happy and is living in the world where knowledge is lost. He is not satisfied with his life though he thinks since last ten years; he is serving society as a fireman. He is purely an instrument of destruction. Now he struggles to get knowledge and truth of his own life and becomes a rebellion who instead of burning books starts to read the books after becoming awakened. Now he devises a plan to reintroduce books and knowledge they contain in the society by joining the underground network of intellectuals and with the help of Faber.

Ray Bradbury is an American fantasy, horror science fiction, short story and mystery writer. He is one of the most celebrated among the 21st century writers of the speculative fiction and truly classic authors of the 20th and 21st century. He is best known for his dystopian novel *Fahrenheit 451* (1953) and for the science fiction stories gathered together as *Martin Chronicles* (1950) and the *Illustrated Man* (1951), *I Sing the Body Electric* (1969) and *Dandelion wine*(1967).

He has produced volumes of works in many genres such as short essays, social commentary, stage play, poetry etc. Many of his stories have been adapted into theater and received drama awards. He was awarded National Medal of Arts (2004) and Pulitzer Prize (2007). Regarding Bradbury's career and his style Gilbert Highet states that:

Bradbury's style is "A curious mixture of poetry and colloquialism": his subjects "whatever they are, they are not realistic. But they are human": and his relationship to the genre: fantasy and speculative themes in transition, "dreams" turning out true, truth dissolving into dreams, and the adult world "transformed into exciting and sometimes appealing fantasy in the minds of children". Highet even suggest that Bradbury's stories really take place in the world of spirit. (396)

Bradbury did, indeed, begin his literary career by authoring pulp fiction in the Gothic tradition, which is haunted by a past of severe and punishing figures of the imagination and offers a view of life that says, fundamentally, people are doomed to guilt, self-punishment, mourning, and dismal death. (411)

Bradbury was a reader and writer throughout his life. In regard to his education Bradbury said: "Libraries raised me." "I don't believe in colleges and universities. I believe in libraries because most students don't have money. When I graduated from high school, it was during the depression and we had no money. I couldn't go to college. So, I went to library three days a week for ten years." (New York times, A1)

Bradbury seems to suggest life is dependent on knowledge and awareness: if we become idle and complacent we might as well be dead. He is one of the rare individuals whose writing has changed the way people think. His more than five hundred published works, short stories, novels, plays, screen plays, television scripts and verse exemplify the American imagination at its most creative once read, his words are never forgotten.

Sam Weller in *Bradbury Chronicles: The life of Ray Bradbury* says:

A new generation is claiming Ray Bradbury yet again. This time as a legend, an American literary icon who has taken his place “in the pantheon occupied by the ghosts of literature past, Shakespeare, Melville, Dickens, and Poe. Certainly some critics in the literati might scoff at the very notion that Bradbury, a so-called writer of “Science fiction”, is even in the pantheon at all. But these critics have long since missed the rockets ship, they hardly appreciate Ray Bradbury’s metaphors, his musical language, and the most important, the myths he has created. He is much more than simply a science fiction author, as his life story illustrates. (1-2)

Though Bradbury is often described as a science fiction writer, he does not box himself into a particular narrative categorization. Only a small percentage of Bradbury’s work can be classified as science fiction.

Fahrenheit 451 is Bradbury’s science fiction novel which is set in 24th century American society. In this society, because of technological advancement, people have no interest in nature. They do not have meaningful conversation with each other. Bradbury presents a society in which recklessness regimes, people drive

cars at high speed for leisure, and there is no speed limit. People around the country spend all their money on luxury. Ignorance in general is also a widespread phenomenon in Bradbury's future America. In fact, ignorance is actively encouraged. The main focus of the book of course, is that almost all the books had been banned by the government. People don't care about their children or their families, they only care about the phony families on their parlor walls.

Jonathan R. Eller and William F. Toupance states

Bradbury's only book that seems to have had a fairly direct and untroubled genealogy is *Fahrenheit 451*, which he wrote in a blaze of creativity. Although it clearly addressed issues of free speech for its original audience, *Fahrenheit 451* is much more than a book about censorship.

The protagonist Montag, recognizes that he is a fool who does not know about the world around him. In the novel he realizes that he has rediscovered the meaning of the earth, an antidote, to the nihilism created by the simulacrum of carnival. (413)

Self Awakening and Quest for Happiness

An awakening may be defined as a sudden increase in the overall amount of consciousness an individual is experiencing. There can be small awakenings and bigger awakenings. Not only does consciousness have unlimited potential for the amount of awakesness, but it also has an unlimited potential to shift in any way, at any moment. Consciousness can and sometimes does shift from contracted states of fear, anger, or hurt to expanded states of peace and joy in an instant .unfortunately; it can also shift in the other direction.

Firtz Perls describes about three levels of awareness:

“Awareness of the self, awareness of the world, awareness of the intervening fantasy between the self and the world. This intermediate world contains our prejudgments through which we view our experiences of everything beyond us. (4)

Human beings are superior among all the living beings. They are social animal who are aware about their life. They pay attention to their activities as well as they also pay attention to what is happening around the world. This means that they are aware of the world as they are affected by the activities of the world too. Human beings can't remain isolated from other human beings and the world. Their awareness of self and the world lead them towards the happy life.

In regard to awakening David G. Benner opines that:

Awakening and awareness are so vital to the spiritual life. From time to time we may awake for brief moments of intense emotional experience but then we quickly slip back into a tangled dream world of the intermediate zone between genuine awareness of ourselves and genuine awareness of the world. Each moment of awareness is small awakening, and each awakening- no matter how insignificant it might seem-can be a doorway to becoming as an object of awareness, nothing is too small to empower such an awakening, Awareness of anything opens us to the transcendent.(5)

We affirm consciousness by entering fully into the experience of conscious self. To enter fully into it is to broaden it, stretching its limits. This stretching gives rise, however, to a contrary experience, loss of distinct consciousness and identity.

Quest means search or exploration. It is done with a view to achieve something new or to get the knowledge of some field. The word happiness is defined as enjoying, showing, or marked by pleasure, satisfaction, joy or good feeling inside. There are many types of happiness which are expressed in many ways. Happiness is something that we cannot just get. It comes from your soul. Happiness can be changed through many ways in our life.

In the book *Happiness and the Christian Moral Life: an Introduction to Christian Ethics*, Paul J. Wadell presents Christian mode of happy life.

Christianity offers another understanding of happiness. Christianity answers that we will be happy when we are what God wants to be – people of goodness, kindness, mercy and forgiveness; people who come to life is loving and serving others. God desires our happiness and through grace, Christ and the spirit makes it possible. Happiness is the pursuit of lifetime. No matter how much sadness we reap by not knowing where real happiness can be found, we never relinquish the search, because finding joy abides as the most passionate desire of our hearts. (2-3)

Every human beings desire happiness. They search happiness through different means though it is difficult to find happiness. Christianity argues about how best to live in order to know good and happy life. We discover the most satisfying life is morally good life in Christianity. This life is characterized by justice, generosity, faithfulness, courage and compassion. Happiness is possible in Christianity, if God desires it and if we have good virtues. Our own good virtues lead us to the path of happiness.

For Augustine and Aquinas,

Happiness is found in knowing, loving and enjoying God. We are happy when we live consistently and fully who we truly are, children of God called to intimate friendship with God. Happiness is inseparable from goodness. Happiness and goodness are one; therefore, in order to be happy we must become good. In this life we will never be perfectly happy, but we will advance in happiness to the degree that we advance in goodness. (5)

Human beings are children of God. We have intimate relationship with god. If we have good relationship with god, we can get happiness. Happiness and Goodness are two sides of the same coin. If we are good enough, we get happiness. So, goodness and relationship with God provides us happiness. Human beings desire happiness but for getting that happiness they should be good enough according to Christianity.

Regarding happiness Dalai Lama states:

True happiness must be pursued on the mental level as well. If we compare the mental and the physical levels of happiness, we find that the experiences of pain and pleasure that take place mentally are actually more powerful. This suggests that our experiences of pain and pleasure at the level of our thoughts and emotions are more powerful than those felt on physical level. (30)

There are two levels of happiness. The mental and physical level. True happiness is not only the happiness that is pursued on physical level but it is pursued on the mental level as well. The feelings that we felt mentally is more powerful than

what we felt on the physical level. Thus, true happiness is the product of both mental and physical happiness.

At the heart of our quest for happiness is some kind of discontent with life as it is –this is more than a cultural phenomenon; it may be related to human yearning for personal growth. For those who are already enjoying swimming in the stream of life, the question “Am I happy?” may not even arise. But even in best of circumstances, there is always something nagging about whether this is all there is to life and whether something better maybe lying beyond one’s horizon. (International Journal of Existential Psychology and Psychotherapy ,4)

All the human beings have the desire of happiness. They seek the happiness through different ways .some people find happiness in serving mankind whereas some find it in the material comfort. Though perspective of happiness differs from religion to religion, people to people, human beings quest for happiness is their life long process.

Montag is the protagonist of the novel. Montag’s first awakening starts when he meets a seventeen years old girl who is an unusual sort of person in the bookless society. She is outgoing, naturally cheerful, unorthodox and intuitive disturbed. He seems happy at the beginning of the novel .He says, “It was special pleasure to see things eaten to see things blackened and changed.” (1) He is happy until he meets Clarisse McClellan whose free thinking ideals and liberating spirit, love for nature forces him to question life his, his ideals and perceived happiness. Clarisse and Montag have long conversations for many days in which she asks many questions to

him. She asks him if he is happy at his work. If he has ever read any of the books he has burnt. He is disturbed by the questions of Clarisse.

And then Clarisse McClellan said: "Do you mind if I ask? How long have you worked at being a fireman? "Since I was twenty, ten years ago." "Do you ever read any of the books you burn?" He laughed. "That's against the law!"(5)

Montag and other firemen go to an old woman's house to burn the books. He accidentally reads a line in one of her books and hides it away before any of his co-workers could see. The old woman refuses to leave her house and her books choosing instead to light a match and burn herself alive. Montag is surprised by seeing the old woman's dedication to her books. While talking with Mildred, he tells Mildred that "There must be something in books, things we can't imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there. You don't stay for nothing."(49)

Montag becomes physically ill and calls for sick leave. Captain Betty, Montag's fire chief personally visits him and tells the story of how the books lose their value and where fireman fit in. He summarizes his reasons for burning the books, saying that none of the books agree with each other and many are merely subversive lies about the people who actually never lived. "They were given the job, as custodians of peace of mind, the focus of our understandable and rightful dread of being inferior; official censors, judges, and executors. That's you, Montag, and that's me."(56)

After Betty has left, Montag shows Mildred the books that he has hidden in the ventilator of their home. Mildred tries to incinerate the books but Montag subdues her and tell her that two of them are going to read the books to see if they have value. If they do not he promises the books will be burned and they will return to normal. "She

ran forward, seized a book and ran toward the kitchen incinerator. He caught her, shrieking. He held her and she tried to fight away from him, scratching” (63). Montag desires to read the books and he does not want to let Mildred to burn it. Montag desires to know what book really contains after the woman’s dedication towards the book and Montag feels guilty of burning the old woman and he doesn’t want to be a fireman any more. “I suddenly realized I didn’t like them at all, and I didn’t like myself at all anymore. And I thought maybe it would best if the firemen themselves were burnt.”(64)

While talking about stolen books, Mildred argues with Montag that books have no meaning and questions why he drags her into it. Montag blames various television walls and bits of technological distractions for separating Mildred from him distorting her brain. She forgets to tell him about Clarisse that she is hit and killed by the speeding car. Montag states that maybe books of the past have message that can save society from its own destruction. Montag realizes that the books are the tangible representation of somebody’s entire life and work. Books come to symbolize the truth. Montag thinks that books can help him to get rid of his ignorance if he starts reading the books. Montag desires to read books instead of watching television as Mildred. “Maybe the books can get us half out of the cave. They just might stop us from making damn insane mistakes! I don’t hear those idiot bastards in your parlour talking about it. God, Millie, don’t you see? An hour a day, two hours, with these books, and maybe....” (68)

Montag and Mildred spend the afternoon reading the books. The mechanical hound comes to sniff at the door. Montag does not understand what he is reading and decides to find a teacher who will help him. Montag then remembers a man he has

once met in the park, Faber, an English professor. Montag seeks his help though he refuses to help at first because of cowardice nature. Faber teaches Montag about the importance of literature in his attempt to explain human existence. He gives Montag an ear-piece communicator he has made himself so that he can offer guidance throughout his daily activities.

Faber examined Montag's thin, blue-jowled face. "How did you get shaken up? What knocked the torch out of your hands?" "I don't know. We have everything we need to be happy, but we aren't happy. Something is missing. I looked around. The only thing I positively knew was gone was the books I'd burned in ten or twelve years. So I thought books might help." (76)

Montag tries to read the poem "Dover Beach" to his wife's friend when they are visiting his wife. It makes one of the Mildred's friends cry. While the rest of them leave in disgust over how "filthy" the poem is.

Montag's fire chief, Beatty tries to persuade him that books are evil and urges him to return to the unthinking fireman mentality, but Montag refuses. "What traitors' book can be! You think they're backing you up, and they turn on you." (101) Beatty drives Montag to his house where he finds out that Montag and Faber communicate through the seashells. Montag burns Beatty alive along with his house. He flees through the city to Faber's house with another firehouse's mechanical hound and television network helicopters in hot pursuit. When he arrives at Faber's home the old man tells Montag of vagabond books in the countryside. Montag then escapes to a local river, floats downstream and meets a group of older men who to Montag's astonishment have memorized entire books, preserving them orally until the law

against the book is overturned. The war begins. Montag watches helplessly as jet bombers fly overhead and attack the city with nuclear weapons.

The research will be significant for those who want to study the novel, *Fahrenheit 451* from the perspective of existentialism approach. There is existential crisis among the characters of the novel. Paradoxes between life and death can be found in the novel. Montag, the central character of the novel struggles with his existence throughout the novel. He joins the underground network of intellectuals. He witnesses the atomic destruction of his former city and dedicates himself to rebuilding a literature and cultural society.

Clarisse is an unusual sort of person in the bookless society. She was hit by the speeding car and that her family leaves following her death. Mildred Montag is addicted to sleeping pills. She remains indifferent to her husband and fed up with her life. Captain Beatty is killed by Montag with a flamethrower. Once an avid reader, he has come to hate books as a result of life's tragedies and of fact that books contradict and refute each other. An old woman's dedication towards her book is the reason that she burns herself along with her books. Many characters of the novel die. They have problems related to their existence.

Chapter II

Existentialism

The term existentialism has been defined and interpreted in various ways by different philosophers over the history of western critical theory. The word existentialism seems to have roots in the German term *existenz* which means standing out from the mere biological vitality by which all subhuman forms of existence are characterized and circumscribed. Existential philosophy focuses on individual existence. Its concerns are fundamental and immediate to ourselves. It is a philosophy which explores the issues like Who am I? What am I? What life shall I live? How shall I live it? etc. Everything that it has to say, it believes, can be said of significance about the world we inhabit, our feelings, thoughts, knowledge and ethics which stem from the central founding idea.

Looking historically, existentialism is a 20th century philosophical movement chiefly in Europe. It basically assumes that people are extremely free and thus responsible for what they make of themselves. It emphasizes the uniqueness and isolation of the individual experience in a hostile or indifferent universe. It regards human existence as unexplainable, and stresses freedom of choice and responsibility for the consequences of one's act.

Ann Fulton in *Apostles of Sartre: Existentialism in America* defines existentialism as

Existentialism is a philosophical school in as much as its members share particular themes but frequently disagree on specific concepts.

Telling subjects include human consciousness and freedom, situational

ethics, and energetic opposition to any philosophical system building negative human experiences often offer a spring board for philosophical reflections. Individuals in existentialist thought are being harshly dropped into a problematic world where endless difficult choices press upon them. The most critical aspects of existence cannot be universalized through reason and reality reveals itself only in immediate dramatic experience (4).

Existentialism is somewhat unusual philosophical movement among all philosophical movements. It has crossed the boundary between philosophy and literature to greater extent. It is commonly regarded as a pessimistic, destructive philosophy. Existentialists regard human consciousness as radically free but unable to give itself a definable essence. As it denies the traditional way of understanding the world and humanity's place in it, it attempts to articulate a new way of understanding the world and our place therein.

Robert C. Solomon in the book *From Rationalism to Existentialism* states about Kierkegaard's view of human existence as follows.

Kierkegaard speaks of individual existence in a very special sense, a sense in which man is not simply a biological, psychological or socio-animal, but in which a man is human being, an existent which is something for more exciting than the mere existence of a particular organism. This notion of existence is reserved for those who live as individuals, not biologically but individually in their thought and their values. Existence comes only with essence for Kierkegaard; for it is

only by passionately committing or defining oneself that one exist at all. (85)

Existential philosophy is concerned with the kind of existence we have, as opposed to the kind of existence had by rocks, plants, and animals. Many existential philosophers reserve the very word existence for the way in which we exist, using being as the more general term to capture the existence that rocks, plants, animals and humans have in common. Awkward though it sounds in English, according to this usage humans exist but, so far as we know, all other things merely are. This is not to rule out the possibility of discovering another species in the universe that exists as we do, just to say that no such species has yet been found. Existential philosophy is the attempt to articulate the nature of this existence.

Thus, existentialism may be defined as a philosophical theory or approach that emphasizes the existence of the individual person as a free and responsible agent determining their own development through acts of will which holds that a further set of categories, governed by the norm of authenticity, is necessary to grasp human existence. The central doctrine of existentialism is that men are nothing except what they choose to become, their essence consists in what they choose to do, what they choose to know and under what aspect they choose to see the world.

According to Sartre, existentialism is an ethical theory. It is a form of humanism, which means that it takes humanity as the central ethical value. But it is distinguished from other forms of humanism in the way it understands humanity. He argues,

What is valuable is not simply the empirical fact of human existence. Our ethical aims should not be to increase our numbers, lengthen our lives, satisfy our desires and preferences, or improve on our achievements. What distinguishes existentialism – or, more precisely, existential humanism – as an ethical theory is it views that all that is intrinsically valuable is the nature or structure of our existence, the kind of thing we are. The relation between existentialism and existential philosophy therefore justifies the similarity of the two terms: existentialism seeks the flourishing of the human individual, where this is understood as the unfettered realization of our most fundamental nature. (52-3)

Existentialism is different from other philosophies as it is the group of philosophies which holds that the essence of something is determined by its existence. What sets it apart from most philosophies is that it begins with the individual rather than the universal. It gives importance to the existence of human being. The fundamental question related to human in existentialism is Man is not what but who. Human beings are the rational beings and are more concerned with the identity of self, living happy, successful and fruitful life. Human beings struggle throughout their life to live happy life. Existentialism is solely concerned with problems of man's life, insists on the transcendence of man with respect to his real life.

According to Sartre, "Existence Precedes Essence" which means that the actual life of individual is what constitutes what could be called his or her "essence" instead of there being predetermined essence that defines what it to be a human is.

Sartre means there is no predetermined human essence and there is no human nature fixed in advance of human existence. Human beings first of all exist and subsequently make themselves what they are by their actions. He further says,

When we are born we have no essence as human beings. Only the totality of choices we make in life makes us the people who we are. In this sense, we are profoundly free. Thus, human beings through their own consciousness create their own values and determine a meaning of their life. (25)

Man is unique. There is no predetermined essence that defines what it to be human is. Human being is solely responsible for giving his or her life meaning and for living that life passionately though there are many existential obstacles and distractions including boredom, despair, alienation, angst, despair etc. Man is only being who has the intelligence to conceive of an essence. A man can only form the idea of his essence after he exists. When he defines himself, he alone is responsible for the essence that he attributes to himself. He fashions his own image and has no permanent nature. He has only the condition that he creates. Thus, for man existence is prior to essence.

The term was explicitly adopted as a self-description by Jean-Paul Sartre, and through the wide dissemination of the postwar literary and philosophical output of Sartre and his associates—notably Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Albert Camus—existentialism became identified with a cultural movement that flourished in Europe in the 1940s and 1950s.

This movement is devoted to an interpretation of human existence in the world that stresses its concreteness and its problematic character. As a self-conscious movement it is primarily a 20th century phenomenon, embracing Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre, Gabriel Marcel, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, but its characteristics features occurs earlier, especially in the 19th – century thinkers Friedrich Nietzsche and Soren Kierkegaard. Edmund Husserl and W.F. Hegel, though not Existentialists, are major influences, the latter by virtue of reaction against him.

Since existentialism gained currency at the end of the Second World War, the term “existentialism” has mostly been associated with a cultural movement that grew out of the war time intellectual atmosphere of the Left Bank in Paris and spread through fiction and art as much as philosophy. The theoretical and other writings of Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Albert Camus, and Frantz Fanon in the 1940s and 1950s are usually taken as central to this movement, as are the sculptures of Alberto Giacometti, the paintings of Jean Dubuffet, and the plays of Samuel Beckett from this time. Existentialism is frequently viewed, therefore, as an aesthetic movement rooted in certain philosophical thoughts and supplanting surrealism at the centre of European artistic fashion. This is the existentialism of black clothes and jazz clubs, coffee and cigarettes.

Mallikarjun Patil discusses two types of existentialism: theistic existentialism and atheistic existentialism. The first was developed by the 19th century Danish thinker Soren Kierkegaard who- ... believed in the existence and benevolence of a divine power, but he did not believe in the benevolence of the religious practices. He says for a better life, man must pursue “either ‘aesthetic life’ devoting himself to art,

music and drama, or ethical life seeking happiness in family, business and profession". (15)

This kind of thought was later developed by French existentialist thinker Gabriel Marcel and the German existentialist thinker Karl Jaspers. The other branch, atheistic existentialism, was propounded by the 19th century German thinker Friedrich Nietzsche. It was later developed by Jean Paul Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Martin Heidegger, Nicholev Berdyayev, and Nicholas Abbagnana. According to Mallikarjun Patil, these thinkers

...deny the very existence of the two omniscient powers – Soul and the God which have played an important role in human life in the past. The main reason for their disbelief in these powers is that these two can never be proved by reason. They agree that even thinking about the existence and benevolence of these supreme powers is an expensive of hypothesis not worth of further discussion. Hence, they believe that there is only one being, and that is man, a being all in all, and superior to all forms. (16)

Though, there is divisible forces between the two trends, they take off a common ground. All existentialist thinkers uphold man as the complete master of his biological environment and material world. Man's existence is a transition from nothingness to transcendence with the help of his predominant will-power and action. Existentialist thinkers regard man as a unique being, ruled by his passions and driven by his desire for consolation and contentment in the world in which he is placed. Human beings are superior among all the living things.

Thomas Flynn analyses five basic themes of existentialist philosophers. The first is "Existence precedes essence"(11). It means our essence or what we are is the result of our choices or our existence) rather than the reverse. Essence is not destiny; we are what we make ourselves to be. The second theme is "Time is the essence" (11). It means we are fundamentally time-bounded beings, unlike measurable, clock time, and lived time is qualitative, the "not yet", the "already", and the "present" differ among themselves on meaning and value. The third theme of existentialism is humanism. "Existentialism is a person-centered philosophy. Though not anti-science, its focus is on the human individual's pursuit of identity and meaning amidst the social and economic pressures of mass society for superficiality and conformism" (11). In the same way "freedom/responsibility" (11) is another theme of existentialism. Existentialism is a philosophy of freedom. Its basic is the fact that we can stand back from our lives and reflect on what we have been doing. In this sense, we are always more than ourselves. But we are as responsible as we are free. Finally, "Ethical consideration is paramount"(11) in existentialism. Though existentialists understand the ethical, as with "freedom", in his or her own way, the underlying concern is to invite us to examine the authenticity of our personal lives and of our society.

Existentialism is a philosophy that is solely concerned with problems of man's life. Man suffers not because of any external forces but because of his misuse of freedom and responsibility. Man is responsible for what he does in accordance with his flexible nature. Being time bound creature human beings choose the meaning of their life themselves. Human beings determine their destiny themselves although there are different factor that hinders in achieving the destiny of human beings.

Some scholars find existentialist themes and ideas in the works of William Shakespeare, for example, and many Christian theologians have argued for an existentialist understanding of certain passages in the *New Testament*. This trend for admitting thinkers into the existentialist fold regardless of whether they would have described themselves in this way seems to have been started by journalists and critics but very swiftly endorsed by Sartre himself in his lecture "Existentialism Is A Humanism" delivered in October 1945 and subsequently published as a book. According to *The Routledge Companion to Ethics*,

After complaining that this term being used to describe his work was so nebulous as to be meaningless, he went on to contribute to the confusion: he described certain Christian thinkers as existentialists but then claimed that existentialism is a form of atheism, and he enlisted Heidegger as a fellow existentialist only for Heidegger to publicly repudiate the label a couple of years later in his "Letter on Humanism". Camus also refused to be classified as an existentialist, in an interview in 1945, on the grounds that his thought had little if anything in common with Sartre's, though in his case Sartre had not said otherwise and he was concerned to counter only the media image of his work. (2)

Existentialist philosophies deny that the age-old philosophical ambition of articulating a rational systematic account of the world and the human beings inhabiting it is anything but a misguided project. Because of this aversion to systematic thought, existentialist maintains that no one definition can capture the essence of existentialist philosophy. To label a thinker as an existentialist pre

supposes that there is a final definition of existentialism by which that thinker's philosophy can be captured, but these conflicts with anti-systematic claims of existentialist. Thus, rather than try to define existentialism with reference to the concerns and ideas of such a diverse collection of thinkers, a set whose membership is anyway contentious, it seems wiser to follow the lead of Camus and Heidegger and understand the term primarily as "a name for Sartre's philosophy as he expounded it in that lecture and in *Being and Nothingness*, which the lecture seeks to defend. That lecture is, after all, the earliest text in which a leading proponent of this purported movement attempts to define the term". (*Existentialism: The Routledge Companion to Ethics 2*)

Taking this as our model of existentialism, we can understand the works of others, and indeed the later works of Sartre himself, to be more or less existentialist according to the degree to which they fit its contours. Before turning to Sartre's early philosophy, however, we should consider the relation between existentialism so understood and the broader notion of existential philosophy. Drawing this distinction will help us to see quite why such a diverse array of cultural products has been described as existentialist and to see the conceptual connection between the two terms distinguished.

Central themes of existential thought therefore include the reliability of our everyday views of ourselves and other people, the relation between objective facts and subjective experience, the significance of the temporality and mortality of life, the basic nature of relationships between people, and the role of society in the structure of the individual. The urge to consider these issues is not confined to any particular phase or movement in intellectual history, of course, be it wartime Paris or any other.

These are clearly perennial questions arising from the very human condition they ask about.

This list of central themes makes clear; moreover, that existential thought is not another branch on the philosophical tree along with metaphysics, epistemology, aesthetics, ethics, and politics, but rather a lens through which these topics can be viewed. The nature of reality and the limits of knowledge are important, according to this approach to philosophy, only in so far as they enlighten us about the structure of our own existence. The nature and significance of beauty and art cannot be understood without reference to the sort of existence had by those who find pleasure and solace in them. How we should treat one another and organize our societies depends upon the kind of things we all are.

According to *The Routledge Companion to Ethics*,

Existential philosophy encompasses all the classic philosophical problems, therefore, but with the distinctive twist that they should be understood in relation to a single overarching question: what is it to exist as a unique individual person? In asking what it should profit a person to gain the whole world and lose his own soul, Jesus was posing the question at the heart of existential thought, as was Hamlet when he pondered whether to be or not to be, but it is a mistake to categorize Jesus or Shakespeare as existentialists purely on these grounds. (18)

Focusing on the human individual in this way, moreover, has led many existential thinkers to see the social and material worlds as at best dimensions of the individual, at worst a threat to each of us. This explains why art works that focuses on

isolated and lonely figures, such as many of Giacometti's more famous sculptures or the classic movies of the film noir genre have often been described as existentialist: they fit a standard conception of existential thought, a notion often conflated with existentialism.

Paul W. Kutz writes about Kierkegaard's view of existentialism.

According to him, Kierkegaard was a careful observer of human experience, a kind of introspective psychologist who probed into the depths of our being. "... Kierkegaard was not true to human experience as it is actually lived. For there is suffering and anguish, fear and torment, boredom and death. Thus, he helped to expand the domain of awareness of ourselves. Know thyself, he said, following Socrates and emphasizing self- knowledge and self- realization." (480)

The contemporary existentialists, especially, Heidegger and Sartre, go still further into existential psycho analysis of depths of psyche. They find-

"... man, the individual, a single, solitary being, ... all alone in his consciousness. Man is the only being who is aware that he is going to die and who can comprehend his historicity and finitude. Man stares into the abyss of nothingness. And in this light his loneliness takes on full meaning. His feelings of dread and anxiety express a generalized fear, not toward this, that, or any other object, but about the human condition itself. (480)

Philosophy and science, which postulate a universal human nature or which construct systems of general law to explain the human being, frequently end up by leaving out

altogether the existing individual and his concrete experiencing. That is what Kierkegaard maintained and this is what the Existentialists today insist upon,

"... Clarity about the roots of our inner being. Although the individual seems to be vanquished by pessimism in much Existentialist literature, it must be remembered that Kierkegaard's despair had an ultimate optimism; for in the individual might be saved from his debasement by the redeeming grace of religious experience. The answer to my death will help me to transform my life and to live existentially. Man stands between being and nothingness, the finite and infinite, the temporal and eternal. And faith is leap over to the positive state of existing.
(481)

Thus, there is a moral aspect to the emphasis on the individual. The individual stands alone and against the crowd. Kierkegaard (like Marx) thought that modern industrial society had endangered the dignity of human personality. Men are oppressed thwarted and their true selves. One's freedom has its source in self consciousness and is radical and ultimate. Yet the demands of social pressure and external authority compel many to forfeit their individual and self determination. Their existence becomes "inauthentic". Individuals need to reawaken the possibilities for self control. What is needed are uncommon men who will take the first steps towards a renaissance of personal integrity.

For recent Existentialism, the whole point of Kierkegaard's emphasis on the individual is that the individual has the choice to be himself. "Man," according to Sartre, "is condemned at every moment to make man". Man has no determinant essence, unlike the stone or the dog. As a conscious existing being, he is free to

decide his own future and to create his own destiny. For Kierkegaard the stakes are great, but the option for the individual, of course, is the kind of life offered by Christianity, as it is for other religious Existentialists. This is the answer to the problem of human existence. But while Sartre accepts the human problem roughly as defined by Kierkegaard he rejects Kierkegaard's solution; for the religious ideal is dead and offers no real promise to man. Rather man (individually and socially) must build a secular and naturalistic world, and is responsible solely for himself.

There is no values independent of man. Yet both Kierkegaard's and Sartre's alternatives are connected to individual existence and human freedom. For Existentialism, the highest opportunity for an individual is to become whatever he wants to recognize his own potentialities and fulfill the projects he sets for himself can he begin to achieve the highest level of his authentic being. Only then can he become fully existential.

Thus, Most of the characters of the novel are in search of their identity as the characters have identity crisis. Human beings determine the meaning of their life themselves according to existentialism. Though there are many factors that hinders in the smooth running of life, human beings have to struggle with those factors for their existence. Montag struggles with his existence throughout the novel. He changes to a human being from a typical fireman. Clarisse also struggles with her life. She is an outcast member in the society and is killed by the speeding car. Beatty, the fire captain is killed by Montag. On the other hand an old woman dies along with her books. These characters have the existential crisis. So, they died in course of running their life. Montag, the central character, over comes all the existential problems and is happy at last.

Chapter III

Happiness in *Fahrenheit 451*

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury explores a book-banned society where reading and literature is strictly prohibited. The novel is about the futuristic American society which focuses only on entertainment. TV is everyone's drug of choice and independent thinking is basically illegal. Technology in the 24th century is highly advanced. Members of the society focus only on entertainment. We can see effects of technology in alienating individuals from one another. As a result people aren't happy. Guy Montag is the protagonist of the novel. He is a ruthless man who enjoys his life in the beginning. He seems happy in burning illegally owned books and houses of their owners. "It was a special pleasure to see things eaten, to see things blackened and changed" (1). Since last ten years he has been burning the books and is happy. "He showered luxuriously, and then whistling, hands in pockets, walked across the upper floor of fire station" (2).

Once Montag encounters with an unorthodox neighbor girl, Clarisse while returning home from work. She is an unusual short of person in the bookless society. She said, "I am seventeen and I am crazy" (4). She is outgoing, naturally cheerful, unorthodox and intuitive. Later Clarisse asks Montag many questions about his life including why he has chosen to be a fireman. She asks him "'Are you happy?' She said. 'Am I what?' he cried" (7). Clarisse says that Montag is a peculiar person that sometimes she even forgets that he is a fireman and she isn't afraid of him at all. He is surprised. "Why should you be?" "So, many people are. Afraid of fireman, I mean. But you're just a man after all" (4). Montag comes back to his room that he feels empty. He feels his smile slide away, melt over. "'He wasn't happy'. He said the

words to himself. He wore his happiness like a mask” (9). Later Montag finds Mildred has overdosed on sleeping pills and calls for medical attention. Her attachment with television and radio, and indifference with human interaction, emptiness disturbs him. “Montag was cut in half. He felt his chest chopped down and spilt apart” (10). Mildred is recovered. She wants the fourth wall to have installed in her room. Montag says that’s one- third of his yearly pay. Montag asks Beatty what happened to the man whose library they had burned the last week. Beatty replies he has been taken to “Insane asylum” (31). Montag becomes surprised and says, “He wasn’t insane” (31).

Montag looks the first lines of the books of fairy tales in the library before he burns it. Montag bids goodbye to Mildred. He meets Clarisse outside. She asks him many questions about fireman. “How did you pick your work and how did you happen to think to take job you have” (21). Clarisse says that being a fireman doesn’t seem right for him. Montag feels his body divides itself into a hotness and coldness. Clarisse’s remarkable perspective which values the natural world, human communication and the lost art of literature starts a line of self-questioning in Montag which will eventually lead him to abandon his comfortable way of life.

Montag and other firemen have to go to house owned by an old woman who hides away a library of books. “The books lay like the mounds of fishes left to dry” (36). They push aside the old woman to reach to the place where the book is. A book falls into Montag’s head and he hides it in his coat. Betty lights the fire but the woman refuses to go. The woman lights the fire and the house goes up in the flames along with her. Montag hides the book under the pillow. He finds Mildred talk about Television family in her sleep. Montag feels that there is a television wall between

him and his wife. “No matter when he came in, the walls were always talking to Mildred” (41). Montag knows about Clarisse’s death from Mildred. Montag becomes ill and the smell of kerosene makes him vomit. He tells Mildred about burning the books and feels guilty about the woman. He summarizes the incident to Mildred. “We burn a thousand books. We burned a woman” (48).

Montag becomes ill and the smell of kerosene makes him vomit. He asks Mildred if she minds if he gives up the job of fireman for a while. Montag remembers that he has chosen the job of fireman without thinking. “My Grandfather and father were firemen. In my sleep, I ran after them” (49). Montag thinks about the kerosene that he has used in the past ten years, the books he has burned and happens to dislike his profession. He realizes that a man was behind each of the books. “A man had to take a long time to put them down on paper. And I had never even thought that thought before” (50).

Thus, the series of events like Montag’s meeting and talk with Clarisse for a long period of time, Mildred’s suicide attempt, her indifference nature, an old woman’s dedication to her books, a person taken to an insane asylum make him think about his life, his work as a fireman. He wants some changes in life, his work as a fireman. In other words, all these incidents work as a fuel to increase his independent thought. He becomes an awakened person. He thinks that he is not a happy person. “I don’t know what it is. I’m so damned unhappy” (62). And Montag determines to search for the happiness that he lacks in his life.

It is said that *Fahrenheit 451* is a novel of little happiness. Happiness is false. The government delivers to the society frivolous entertainment giving them distractions from the grievances of the society. Society as a whole has been content

with watching television and wasting away their lives. As a fireman, Montag believes that the world is a happier place without books in the beginning as Montag is also a member of the same society that believes books are wicked so much that they are outlawed and they are burned. People are taught ignorance is the key to happiness.

Montag breaks free from the idea that ignorance is the key to happiness. He realizes he is truly unhappy and craves knowledge and learning after becoming self-awakened. He happens to search the happiness that he lacks. There are two types of happiness in the novel: short term happiness and long term happiness. Short term happiness can be bought and long term happiness must be found. Material items give short term happiness but Montag is not in search of the happiness provided by the material items. He is in search of the long term happiness. "I feel fat. I feel like I've been saving up a lot of things, and don't know what. I might even start reading books" (62). Montag wants to search for happiness in books.

Though the society in the novel is taught ignorance is the key to the happiness not knowledge and books, Montag begins reading forbidden books. Montag and Mildred spend the afternoon reading books. "Where do we begin? He opened the book half? Way and peered at it" (65). Mildred doesn't like Montag's idea of reading books. She kicks a book and thinks books aren't real people. Montag hopes that reading will help him understand the mistakes that have led the world into two atomic wars since 1990. "May be the books can get us half out of the cave" (68). Montag wants to read the books for answers and fulfillment in the forbidden realms of history, philosophy and literature in the books that he used to burn. But it was difficult for Montag to understand. "Mildred- poor Montag, it's mud to you, too. But where do you get help, where do you find a teacher this late?"(68).

Montag remembers Faber, an old English professor and asks Faber to teach him. Montag decides to risk giving Betty a substitute book and Faber agrees to see his printer friend. Montag hopes that reading will help him understand the mistakes that have led the world into two atomic wars since 1990 and that have made the rest of the world hate his country for its narcissistic hedonism. Montag wants to read whole Bible very fast. Montag reads out the lines of the "Dover Beach" to Mildred's friend. Mildred burns books one by one but Montag rehides in the backyard. Faber reads out the Bible to Montag. He praises Montag as he is developing independent thought. Faber describes himself as water and Montag as fire. Merging of two will produce wine. Montag hopes to be new self. "He would be Montag plus Faber, fire plus water, and then, one day, after everything had mixed and simmered and worked in silence, there would be neither fire nor water, but wine" (96). Faber provides guidance to Montag through the ear piece communicator. Montag feels he had known Faber lifetime.

He reads out "Dover Beach". His mouth was numb. Montag handles his book to Beatty even without looking at books; Betty throws the books into trashen. Beatty says to Montag books are better to burn than to read. Betty persuades him that books are evil and urges him to return to the unthinking fireman mentality but Montag refuses. Montag risks his own life for finding happiness in the book though firemen aren't allowed to keep books at home or to read the books. Montag then runs away after killing Betty, the fire chief and discovers a society of former professors and people who enjoy reading. These people have memorized books and they set out to revive a society of knowledge and reading. "And someday we'll remember so much that we'll build the biggest goddamn steam- shovel in history and dig the biggest

grave of all time and shove war in and cover it up” (163-164). This quote illustrates how Montag and his new friends are going to reintroduce books and reading into their future society. In the end, the ones who read and surround themselves with real, genuine happiness rather than fake and artificial happiness are the ones who survive. The people who aren't afraid to be "illegal" are the ones who make it.

Existentialism in *Fahrenheit 451*

In Ray Bradbury's, *Fahrenheit 451*, the idea of existentialism can be seen in quite a few ways through alienation. Existentialism is the idea that the existence of one comes living and doing, not just being. It is also a protest against certain features of contemporary life such as God has disappeared; nature is governed by abstract laws. One of the characteristics of existentialism is alienation. The four parts of alienation exemplified in *Fahrenheit 451* are alienation from self, others, God and nature.

Montag is the central character of the novel. He is a firefighter who struggles with his conscience to determine if a society without books is right throughout the novel. Montag thinks since last ten years he is serving the society, as a fireman but he is purely an instrument of destruction. Montag struggles with the knowledge and ignorance. In the beginning of the novel, he is ignorant about his own life also. His ignorance about his life keeps him happy. “Montag grinned the fierce grin of all men signed and driven back by flame” (1). Later when he realizes he is not happy at all. He suffers an identity crisis. He feels his body has divided into two halves. “I feel like I've been saving up a lot of things, and I don't know what” (62).

He doesn't want to be a fireman anymore. "Was I given a choice? My grandfather and father were firemen. In my sleep, I ran after them" (49). Montag has become fireman because of his fore fathers ten years ago. Now, he desires to starts his journey from a fireman to human being. It happens because of Clarissie, a 17 year old girl whom Montag meets on the streets, is not influenced by others; she questions society and is taught by her uncle of a time where things are indifferent. She is told by her uncle of the time when people were guninely happy. "No front prochess. My uncle says there used to be front porches. And people sat there sometimes at night, talking when they wanted to talk, rocking, and not talking when they didn't want to talk" (60). During this time people could read as much as they wanted and hold conversations with other people and go on walks for fun. They were allowed to think for themselves and have a personality. One night, Guy crosses paths with Clarisse, and shares her knowledge of this time with him. She also reveals of a time long ago where fireman put fires out instead of going to start them. "I heard once that a long time ago houses used to burn by accident and they needed fireman to stop the flames" (5).

Clarisse remarks that people don't have any interest in nature. It is as if people are alienated from the nature. "I sometimes think drivers don't know what grass is, or flowers, because they never see them slowly" (6). Because of the technological development, people of society are alienated from the relatives too. Montag's wife Mildred is indifferent to her husband. Montag tries to talk about his unhappiness to Mildred but she isn't receptive. She is occupied with watching television without caring about Montag. "His wife in the television parlor paused long enough from reading her script to glance up" (16). Mildred is addicted to the sleeping pills. She is

deeply unhappy. She is bothered by the fact that her life is empty and filled with hours of mindless television. “Now,” said Mildred, “My ‘family’ is people. They tell me things; I laugh, they laugh! And the colours!” (67).

When Montag returns back from his work, he finds Mildred has overdosed on sleeping pills. The small crystal bottle of sleeping tablets which is filled with thirty capsules is empty. Montag feels as if his body is divided into two halves. The machine pumped all of the blood from the body and replaced it with fresh blood. Montag remarks that “There are billions of us and that’s too many. Strangers come and take your blood” (13). She gets a new life. Her bed is empty at nine in the morning. Montag meets Clarisse again who asks many questions to Montag regarding his work. Clarisse says that being a fireman doesn’t seem right for him as he isn’t like other people. He listens and talks to her but others would walk off and leave her talking. “No one has time any more for anyone else” (21). Clarisse feels that no one has time to listen to other nor they care about others.

Montag asks Clarisse why she doesn’t go to school and is wandering around. Clarisse replies “Oh. They don’t miss me, ‘She said. ‘I ‘am anti-social, they say’ ” (26). Clarisse is viewed as an unusual sort of person in the bookless society because of her interest in nature, cheerfulness, and unorthodox nature and intuitive. She is unpopular among peers and disliked by teachers for asking why instead of how and focusing on nature rather than technology. “‘ Do you notice how people hurt each other now days?’ ‘I am afraid of children of my own age. They kill each other’ ” (27). This happened because of selfish nature of people and their alienation from self as well as with others. In the society, people make little contact with each other. However when they do, they never really go into a deep conversation. They don’t

consider it appropriate to talk about the society or others feelings towards certain things.

Montag says the man whose library firemen have burnt isn't insane but Captain Betty doesn't care about the man. He remarks that "Any man's insane who thinks he can fool the Government and us" (31). According to Betty he isn't allowed to keep books by the government but he has a library of books. So, he is responsible for his deeds himself. Montag tells about an old woman whose house they have burnt to Mildred. "We burned an old woman with her books" (47). Firemen do the duty assigned to them but don't have any respect or gives importance to other human beings feelings. To clarify, they simply burn and burn without second guessing if burning what they're burning is the right thing to do.

Guy Montag loves his job and his wife; at least he thinks he does. With the realization that he does not love his wife or his job comes the destruction of his family and any connections he has to the modern world. "And he remembered thinking then that if she died, he was certain he wouldn't cry" (41). As it would be dying of an unknown, a street faces a newspaper image because there is a wall between him and Mildred. Mildred is always busy in watching television and it is as if the uncles, aunts, cousins, nieces, nephews of television are relatives of her. "No matter when he came in, the walls were talking to Mildred" (42). Technology can isolate someone to the point that completely lose touch how to form a real social relationship.

He isn't satisfied with his life and the job he is doing. After meeting his strongest human connection, Clarisse, Montag become conscious of the fact that he really does not know his wife at all, although he thought he did. "He felt he wanted to cry, but nothing would happen to his eyes or his mouth" (71). He begins to defy

conformity and does exactly the opposite of what the government say he should do, like reading books. Montag reads out the lines of "Dover Beach" to Mildred's friend, Mrs. Bowels and Mrs. Phelps during their social visit. Mrs. Phelps starts crying over how hollow her life is. "Silly words, silly words, silly awful hurting words, why do people want to hurt people" (95). The lines of "Dover Beach" make her cry as she remembers about her past life. Though these women seem happy, they have also hidden the miseries of their life. They brag about eliminating everything bad in their lives and have a cavalier attitude about death, politics, children, and their husbands.

Montag kills captain Beatty with the flame thrower in his house when they two have discussion regarding who will burn Montag's book and house. Mildred has already left the house before the firemen arrived there. "There's Beatty dead, and he was my friend once, and there's Mildred gone, I thought she was my wife, but now I don't know" (120). Montag runs away for his life after killing Beatty. He is being followed by the mechanical hound. He runs very fast away from the house down towards the river. Montag struggles for his existence. He has no one to help him at that time. "Nowhere. There was nowhere to go, no friend to turn to, really. Except Faber" (114). He dresses in Faber's old clothes and shoes. He threw his own clothing into the river and watched it swept away. Montag runs away until at last he comes to a group of philosophers who have memorized the whole book. "You are welcome, Montag. My name's Granger" (134). Granger and Montag talks about books. Granger says that books have to be saved. He talks about his grandfather who is dead. "And when he died, I suddenly realized I wasn't crying for him at all, but for the things he did" (142). Montag is saved as mechanical hound has killed another innocent man.

Alienation from God can be seen when Montag is speaking to Faber on the phone. Montag asks him, "How many copies of the Bible are left in this country. (76)". This shows us that people have no longer desire to think about God and the messages that he has to tell us. They are unable to study his messages due to the burning of all the books. The people of the society don't have time to just relax and read the Bible. The government tries to eliminate all famous books such as the Bible and books on philosophy by burning them. This is not the kind of behavior that is acceptable by others, so no one bothers to do it, even if they did have a copy of the Bible. If the subject is ever brought up, they just try to avoid it. This can be seen when Montag is talking to Mildred after his talk with Faber. He shows her the book and says, "This is the Old and New Testament, and She quickly says, "Don't start that again! (76)". This is an example of how those of the society separate themselves from the subject of the Bible which in turn, ends up alienating themselves from God.

Guy Montag lives in an alternative reality where knowledge is feared and false happiness is forced upon the people. The phoenix is described mythical creature that incinerates itself and is reborn from the ashes this mythical creature represents how people can be reborn as they learn from their prior mistakes. In the novel, after the city was destroyed it gave the citizens a chance for a fresh start. The Phoenix also signifies how society will continue in a cycle to rebuild and then again destroy itself. "And when the war is over, someday, some year, the books can be written again, the people will be called in, one by one, to recite what they know and we will set it up in type until another Dark Age, when we might have to do whole damn thing over again (153). The symbol of the phoenix also represents a rebirth for Montag to begin a new life and preserve the knowledge of books for future generations.

There is existential crisis among the characters of the novel. An existential crisis is a moment at which an individual questions the very foundations of his or her life: whether his or her life has any meaning, purpose or value. This issue of the meaning and purpose of existence is the topic of the philosophical school of existentialism. An existential crisis may result from the sense of being alone and isolated in the world; a new-found grasp or appreciation of one's mortality; believing that one's life has no purpose or external meaning; searching for the meaning of life; awareness of one's freedom and the consequences of accepting or rejecting that freedom; and an extremely pleasurable or hurtful experience that leaves one seeking meaning.

The use of Mildred's suicide and denial of suicide is an incredible way to not only point out the hopelessness of life as currently being lived but the lack of communication in modern day relationships. People have feeling of isolation as they live in the world of indifference. Mildred attempts suicide. She is addicted to sleeping pills. She is indifferent to the oppressive society around her. She is deeply unhappy. She is severely bothered by the fact that her life is empty and filled with hours of mindless television. She spends most of the time watching television without desire to do anything else and is indifferent to husband also. Her life seems futile and she has existential crisis too. "The small crystal bottle of sleeping- tablets which earlier today had been filled with thirty capsules and now lay uncapped and empty in the light of the tiny flare" (10).

Many characters are in search of their meaning of life including Montag. Especially the fact that fireman are mostly unnecessary and that it was the cultural aspects of life that created the job. It points to an existential crisis in modern time that

is the true message behind the book. The denial of reality and lack of reflection about the way we live is the real moral of the book.

Montag's journey is more than an attempt to escape the mindless society he is entrenched in—it is a battle to save his very soul. Each character is an element of Montag himself; together, they form the reflection of a man who can choose from a great number of paths, but must ultimately walk one. It is up to Montag to decide what his future will be—comfortable, yet fatalistic oblivion with Beatty and Mildred, or the vast and existential unknown of Faber, Granger, and Clarisse. In a way, it is a decision that all of us must make, in some form, at some point in our lives. Faber epitomizes perfectly: “Don't ask for guarantees. And don't look to be saved in any one thing, person, machine, or library. Do your own bit of saving, and if you drown, at least die knowing you were headed for shore” (103).

Many characters can loosely fill the role of the liberator; Faber, Granger, and Clarisse all illustrate the role. Clarisse, as previously explained, started Montag on his journey and simply brings to his attention the existence of the light. Granger takes in Montag and polishes his comprehension of the cave he escaped. Faber, most important of all, fills the vital middle ground. It is Faber who guides Montag into the light. At first, Faber is wary of Montag, not in full belief of his sudden enlightenment. Convinced Montag is not about to betray him, Faber explains the decay of society, advocating not the paper and ink but the ideas and "things [they] might forget" stored inside. "There is nothing magical in [books] only in what books say" (82-83). Faber then gives Montag an earpiece, and guides him through the sea of uncertainties that he will encounter after he leaves the presence of the professor. The physical escape of Montag also hinges on Faber, who hides his scent and provides him a route to escape.

It is no leap of faith to conclude that without Faber, Montag would have never arrived in the light outside the cave.

Montag finds no solace in the old life of being a firefighter, an existence he once found pleasurable. Post awakening, he can't even play a simple game of cards with his coworkers. Long time friends have become symbols of society, each forced to be equal to the rest, all unable to grasp the ideas Montag flirts with. His inquiries are simple jokes to them. Why shouldn't they be? Nothing in their lives has sustenance and even less has merit; Montag's words get forced into the same archetype. He looks ridiculous but is in every sense of the metaphor the essence of the escapist. Montag survives and gets new life as anonymous scapegoat is killed by mechanical hound instead of Montag. A carful of children nearly kills Montag as he is crossing the highway for the purpose of pleasure and stimulation. They think it would be "fun" to run over a man innocently trying to walk across a road. "They would have killed me, thought Montag... For no reason at all in the world they would have killed me" (128). The demand of pleasure and stimulation corrupted the society in *Fahrenheit 451*. The quote, "There was nowhere to go, no friend to turn to" (124).is proof that he had no one to turn to, no one he cared for. Montag feels lonely. He feels as if he has no one who takes care of him.

Clarisse McClellan is a beautiful seventeen years old girl who introduces Montag to the world's potential for beauty and meaning with her gentleness and innocent. She teaches Montag to love, and enjoy the nature. She plays an important role in self-awakening of Montag by asking him many questions regarding his happiness, job and his life. She is hit by a car and dies. It could be that in this world a girl like Clarisse cannot exist. She is incompatible with her surroundings. So, she is

not allowed to live. "I am anti-social, they say. I don't mix" (26). For Montag, though she is dead, she exists because she changes his mind whereas someone like Mildred hardly exists at all.

Captain Beatty is Montag's boss and fire chief. He is the most well-read book burner. He has come to hate books as a result of life's tragedies and the fact that books contradict and refute each other. He is killed by Montag in confrontation between them.

An old woman chooses to die along with her burnt books instead of living. This shows her dedication towards the book. "There must be something in books, things we can't imagine, to make a woman stay in a burning house; there must be something there. You don't stay for nothing" (49). Montag thinks that books contain something which enlightens our mind because of old woman's dedication towards her book.

Thus, Most of the characters in the novel have existential obstacles and distractions including despair, angst, absurdity, alienation. They determine meaning of their life and it changes through their own consciousness. There are paradoxes between the living thing and non-living thing in the novel. The Mechanical Hound continues the paradoxical theme of living but not living. Like Mildred and the snake like machine that pumps her stomach, the Hound is simultaneously like and not like a living thing. "The mechanical hound slept but did not sleep, lived but did not live in its gently humming, gently vibrating, softly illuminated kennel back in a dark corner of the firehouse" (21). It is unlike a real dog in that it is made of metal and has eight legs and a needle in its muzzle that extends and administers a lethal dose of

anesthetic. Someone may have purposely set the Hound's sensors to react hostilely to Montag that foreshadows trouble with an enemy in the fire station.

The Hound has no intelligence of its own, but it plays an important part both in the plot of *Fahrenheit 451* and in its symbolic scheme. The Mechanical Hound is a nightmarish robot which "assists" the firemen with their work. Bradbury describes it in terms of its several different terrifying attributes, instead of giving us a complete picture: The Hound has eight legs, with "rubber-padded paws" -- on which it runs incredibly swiftly -- and in its muzzle there is a four-inch-long needle with which it injects its victims with a powerful dose of morphine or procaine, to render the victim unconscious. The Hound contains a sensitive mechanism, like a "nose," which can be programmed to track down the specific acidic composition of a person. It seems that it is used to hunt down and seize, or kill, people suspected of being criminals -- such as those who still have books.

To Montag, it is a figure of terror, which seems to grow more and more "hostile" toward him as he becomes more involved with hoarding books and questioning authority. Eventually, the Hound does come after Montag, who destroys it -- ironically -- with his fire house. But a second Hound is sent to hunt Montag down, serving as a symbol of the society which so relentlessly persecutes and destroys nonconformists. When Montag escapes to the countryside and the Hound destroys an innocent man instead, Montag departs from his former society. Inanimate thing is used to hunt down Montag. It is because of development of science and technology.

Thus, almost all the characters in the novel are in the search of happiness. Though they seem happy, they are not happy in reality as they are living in the world of false happiness. They are in the quest of happiness. This quest is the existential

quest too. Montag realizes that he is not happy. Montag searches for the happiness that he lacks in books that he used to burn. At last he finds happiness after meeting with the "book people" and after he starts reading books. Mildred tries to find happiness by watching television. She becomes happy when the relatives of her parlor walls are happy. Mildred's friend Mrs Philips and Mrs Bowels remain happy by forgetting their past and watching television. Clarissie enjoys the nature. She remains happy by maintaining good relationship with family members and with Montag too. She tastes rain, roams around to enjoy the nature. She is very curious and aware of the world around her. She has time to stop and smell the roses. It is due to Clarissie Montag starts his self-discovery and an attempt to transform his world.

Burning book is a straightforward task that keeps people happy by hiding the world of controversy according to Beatty. He enjoys burning books. He seems happy in his job of book burning being the most learned book burner too. Faber, an English professor finds happiness in helping Montag to know the meaning in the books through the ear-piece communicator, providing guidance to Montag to find the true value and meaning of life. As human beings want to live their life happily without facing any problems, the characters in the novel are also struggling to find happiness and the meaning of their existence.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Reading as a Way to Happiness

Ray Bradbury's novel *Fahrenheit 451* portrays a futuristic American world where books are banned, television is everyone's drug of choice and independent thinking is basically illegal. The society is technologically advanced where people have no interest in books and nature. They only focus on entertainment. Bradbury seems to suggest life is dependent on knowledge and awareness through the novel. It sheds light on how important books really are in the independent processes of thinking among society that create individuality and differentiation among humans. It forms one of the best arguments in favor of books as a keystone to intellectual freedom and illustrates vividly what a world without reading could look like. A great book combines enlightenment with enchantment. It awakens our imagination and enlarges our humanity.

The government of this future forbids its people to read books or take part in any activity which promotes individual thought. The law against reading books is new, and the task of destroying the books falls to the "firemen." One of these firemen is Montag, the main character of the book. Montag and his crew raid homes, burning any books they find before a crowd of onlookers. Regardless of this, happiness is of central importance in this future world. The people of this world only want to be happy. They don't care about anything else, such as politics or the economy. They only want to be happy. Unfortunately, Montag is unhappy with his life for most of

the book. Montag's unhappiness is ironic until his self-awareness turns it tragic. Montag struggles throughout the novel to get happiness.

In *Fahrenheit 451* Montag meets a young girl of the age of 17. She talks to Montag about what people used to do. How they use to live life. This gets Montag thinking about how people used to live and how they live now with their talking walls and peace, with how people are ignorant and don't notice anything outside of their own realm. He then goes home to find his wife Mildred overdosed. This gets Guy thinking what ignorance they've shown letting this lady die and all the other people that have died for this cause. He has finally become aware of his unhappiness after he becomes self awakened. Until this point, he does not realize he is unhappy. He has gone along with his life pretending he is happy when he actually isn't. After this moment, his unhappiness turns from ironic to tragic because he has become aware of his unhappiness, but he doesn't know how to change his life to become happy. The ignorance is that everyone is ignorant of the surrounding world.

At this same time, he perceives he has an unhappy marriage. He finds that his wife has overdosed on sleeping pills. He calls the hospital, but instead of sending a doctor, they send two men in reddish-brown coveralls who bring two machines. They use these machines to pump her stomach and replace her blood. He wishes his wife could somehow change so he would not have an unhappy marriage, but this does not happen. His ironic unhappiness once again turns tragic.

Later on in the book, Montag's employer, Captain Beatty, goes over to Montag's house. He has perceived that Montag is unhappy, so he explains to Montag what they are doing is right. Beatty says that a book is a loaded gun. No ideas in the book are similar Captain Beatty tells him the story of how books lost their value and

where firemen fit in over the course of several decades, people embraced new media, sports and a quickening pace of life. Books were degraded to accommodate a short attention span. The government did not start the censorship; it merely exploited the situation due to minority groups protesting over the controversial, outdated content found in books. The firemen were soon hired to burn the books in the name of public happiness. Beatty's entire speech to Montag describing the history of the firemen is strangely ambivalent, containing tones of irony. Beatty calls books treacherous weapons, yet he uses his own book learning to manipulate Montag mercilessly.

When Beatty talks to Montag about how the world used to be before they start burning books, which also shows ignorance for example books are what people used to read for fun and then motion pictures came out with radio and television and people stopped reading as much and the world began to die down and people became less educated and the people that were educated started taking over. This speech gives Montag serious emotional problems. He doesn't know what to think or how to feel. He has an awful feeling, feels so unhappy, mad but doesn't know why he has this type of feeling. This is when he fully confronts his tragic unhappiness, and he decides he is going to try and change his life so that he can be happy.

He says that he is going to do something big that he also doesn't know. Montag decides to start reading books. He goes to his cache of books he has been stealing, picks one, and starts to read. He does not understand what he is reading, so he goes to see Professor Faber, a retired English professor he had met the year before. Montag and Faber decide to try to overthrow their society by planting books in other firemen's houses and turning in alarms. After seeking out and meeting with Faber, and obtaining the earpiece in which Faber has created, the two are able to keep in constant

contact. That specific earpiece however, is by-no-means the same as the seashell piece in which the rest of Elm City obsesses over. Faber's earpiece broadcasts knowledge and wisdom and free thinking into Montag's ear. This is Bradbury's urging message to obtain our own knowledge. This hint allows us to realize we are whoever we want to be. By choosing a different type of earpiece, much like the seashell, except standing for the exact opposite of the shell, it acts as an elixir to a world that has been shot down and set a flame. Once again, through the obstinate rigor of Faber's earpiece, the wisdom and knowledge that Montag begins to obtain, allows him to ignite the dull wick of society and once again have pride in his job, except this time, his job is to transfer knowledge to other individuals. The message is clear all the way through to the end of the novel.

Guy returns home but he returns with a book, not just any book, he returns with a Bible. It's ironic that it's a Bible because of what it teaches you. In the book, Ray Bradbury uses the Bible as a reference four times to explain a part of the book. He takes off time from work to explore his new found interest. He starts reading and finds out what he has been missing and what the world has. He starts collecting books and hiding them in the wall. He inquires about a guy who used to be a professor in the old time. Faber talks to Guy about books and why they are outlawed. The books were outlawed because it gets people thinking and if people think, then the government wouldn't have total control over the population. This shows the ignorance of the people in the world. Guy then sets out to learn all about books. Faber tells him about other professors, the "book people." When Montag overthrows his captain, who powerfully preaches against knowledge and freethinking, and turns the flame thrower

onto the Captain, rather than on his books. Bradbury creates an existential hero that becomes a leader of his own movement among mind-numbing conformists.

Montag eventually gets in trouble with the law, so he escapes to the country, where he finds a small group of people. This group of people is part of a loose network of individuals who have the same goal in mind as Montag. They plan to overthrow society and bring back books. Montag ends up saving his life because he got out of the city before it was destroyed by a nuclear blast. And it is here at the end of the railway track that Montag finally finds his happiness. He is finally happy. Montag battles himself with the people to whom he thinks he is closet and society in a race against time and a race to preserve knowledge shared in books. Montag has a new purpose in life to preserve books and knowledge they contain.

Thus, in the novel Montag realizes that he is living in the world where knowledge is lost. People abide by rules and restrictions given by the government. He realizes for the first time that books are tangible representation of somebody's entire life and work. Books come to symbolize his truth. Montag begins to dislike his job and start reading the book that he has collected hoping that the true happiness lies in the book. He begins to learn Bible, the poetry, *Dover Beach*. In order to give some knowledge to his wife's friend, he reads out "*Dover Beach*" to them though there is risk for him. Lack of knowledge and finding out the values of books inspires Montag to rebel against the government.

Montag seeks friend and mentors in thinking outcasts of society. people like Clarisse, Faber and Grangers group and looks for answer and fulfillment in the forbidden realms of history, philosophy and literature. When Montag meets that old professor, he starts to realize those books are essential because people shouldn't have

embraced ignorance. So, he goes from conforming with society to rebelling against the said rules. He begins reading books instead of burning them. At the end, he realizes that not having books make people depressed. Montag discovers the book people. He realizes that they must read and think in order to survive. A society that runs on ignorance and pure pleasure can't survive. Dehumanization in the society can be seen as technology makes people less capable of independent thought. The more people are addicted to technology the less they care about other people.

Bradbury has stated that the novel isn't about censorship but a story about how television destroys interest in reading literature which leads to a perception of knowledge as being composed of factoids, partial information devoid of content. Ray Bradbury has created a world where literature isn't allowed. He is trying to show how bad our world would be without writings and poetry.

At last Montag changes from a typical fireman who follows the law to the person who challenges the law. He joins a group of free thinkers who memorizes whole books to protect them for prosperity and hoping for one day when society learns from its mistakes and the wisdom in the books is again welcomed. Montag has a new purpose in life to preserve books and knowledge they contain.

The novel seems to dramatize the predicament of people in absence of books, the means of knowledge and true happiness. Ignorance is the main cause of our misery and anxiety. Reading can provide us the real meaning of our existence and true happiness. It can provide us solace from existential problems. The power gained from reading is priceless as it expands our knowledge and awareness. Reading also stimulates our creative imaginations and can take us back into history and days gone by; it can also give us insight into the now, the future and the unknown. On the other

hand, reading can give our mind a much needed escape from the stresses and worries of everyday life which helps us to remain happy.

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