

# **Anthropological Knowledge as Universal: A Critical Analysis of *Fahrenheit 451***

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**Abstract.** The current research is a critical study of Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* and has attempted to explain how epistemology has been made conflicting and controversial, leading to the implementation of universal anthropological knowledge. It is the knowledge about human races and their collective interests and benefits. Advancing anthropological knowledge is a need of the day because most of the world's problems are due to books. The researcher explained that universal human knowledge will build trust, tolerance, and acceptance on the part of individuals and scholars from every culture and society around the globe. The perspective of "Ethno-Epistemology" has been used as a theoretical framework to guide and provide context to the study. "Ethno Epistemology" also decentralized the concept of one dominant center in the field of knowledge, i.e., "Western Knowledge". Having a qualitative and epistemological nature, the research used "Close Reading" as a method of data analysis to highlight the hidden meanings and concepts. The study concluded that implementing and considering anthropological knowledge as universal will regain the declining scope of academia, as it is universal.

*Key terms: Anthropological Knowledge, Conflicts, Decentralization, Ethnoepistemology, Intolerance, Manipulation, Universal.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

J.K. Rowling (2017) says, "*If you do not like to read, you have not found the right book.*" Despite appearing simple, this quote is very thought-provoking as it questions the notion of reading. Whenever we talk about books, we expect many productive and philosophical things. With reading comes wisdom and knowledge, but in this quote, the words "*do not like*" and "*right book*" have a profound meaning. Why wouldn't one want to read? If we look at the binary operation's concept of Saussure, it becomes evident that we also have

bad books besides good books. That is why Rowling is saying that there are also bad books. That has contributed considerably to corrupting and making the field of “*Knowledge*” problematic.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the field of knowledge has been made problematic and controversial through the biased, subjective representation of ideologies. The notions of biased representation have diminished people’s interest in reading books, and they are interested in the leisure of technological inventions. This shifting of attitude from books and reading to screens, movies, video games, etc., negatively impacts the dealings of people within and from diverse communities.

The researcher suggests implementing universal anthropological knowledge to address this problem of biased, controversial, and corrupted epistemology. Anthropology is the study of humanity, human behavior, societies, cultures, linguistics, and human development. The concept of holism is at the core of anthropology. Anthropological knowledge is universal knowledge that can be shared and learned equally as it focuses on human races, their lives, problems, and situations, and benefits all.

Fredrik Barth (2002) says, “*a knowledge without knowers,*” rejecting and avoiding boundaries and specifications in the field of knowledge. This knowledge has no specific audience but is productive and progressive for all races across the globe. According to Cabezudo, Carvalho da Silva, Demetriadou-Saltet, Halbartschlager, Christidis, and Mihai (2010), universal knowledge is a perspective on education that results from the reality that modern people live and communicate in a world that is becoming more and more globalized. Given that people nowadays live and communicate in an increasingly globalized society, universal education is a perspective on education that has emerged.

To foster new ways of thinking and acting, education must equip students with the knowledge and abilities to observe and express their perspectives and obligations within interconnected and multicultural groups/communities and to consider and mark the vital relations between collective societal, environmental, administrative, and monetary complications. The point of universal schooling and criticism shifts from an individualistic attitude typically associated with dominance to a relational culture focused on cooperation and universality.

By accepting and implementing universal anthropological knowledge, the world can witness harmony, peace, and progress because universal knowledge spreads awareness regarding humans’ existence, development, needs, and problems. This knowledge can discourage the misrepresentation and exploitation of different races, as it considers the benefits and progress of all human races.

### **1.1. Summary of the Novel**

*Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury, published in 1954, opens in a dystopian American city. A fireman named Guy Montag burns and destroys books. In the context of the novel, firefighters light a fire instead of controlling or stopping it. People do not read books or enjoy nature as much as they love driving fast and watching unnecessary amounts of TV. In the novel, Montag learns that an older woman hides a restricted literature collection in her house. To eventually find them, he snatches them and hides them under an air-conditioning drain.

The woman then shocks him by saying that she would rather be burned alive with her books than give them to the firefighters. This incident made him reflect on what is in the books. He meets an old professor (Faber), who enlightens him that the significance of books lies in the comprehensive information they contain about life. Toward the story's close, Beatty fights Montag and, as a result, tastes death. The story is about conflicting ideas in books and theories and the censorship's attitude towards such books.

### **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

In the modern globalized era, the need for productive education is increasing to address contemporary issues progressively. However, the field of knowledge is controversial due to biased, subjective approaches and ideologies. The basic aims and objectives of epistemology sound very ironic; instead of reforms being brought about, conflicting and controversial theories and concepts bring about destruction in one way or another. The misrepresentation of one group of people or the other, manipulation of facts, and representation of false or one-sided histories have considerably contributed to modern problems. In such a scenario, the implementation of anthropological and universally accepted concepts and Ideologies is needed to spread awareness among the masses regarding a peaceful and progressive coexistence in the global village.

### **1.3. Significance of the Study**

The study is critical because, in the backdrop of Islamophobia, the war on terror, COVID-19, an unstable world order, proxy wars, biased representations of cultures, racism, and many more, many writers are producing literature from their point of view, making things biased and one-sided. This led to different conflicts on the national and international levels. This study is important because it concentrates on anthropological and globally accepted knowledge that works for the development and progress of human beings. This anthropological knowledge will address human-related issues and work to improve their conditions amid the tense and hypocritical era through academia.

### **1.4. Literature Review**

According to Delic (2017), the emergence of techno-science has exposed serious faults in the dominant information and perception systems. Contrarily, the modern era links a new understanding of financial sides, post-democracy, post-politics, and bio-political control over existing and non-representative varieties of the current violence. In the twenty-first century, dominant ideology, the bio-politics of immediate pleasure, spiritual revivalism, and the deterioration of developed education came together with techno-optimism and techno-dictatorship. Adopting a universal epistemological and moral turn toward the facts is crucial for science to recover. Because knowledge has become a biased and hate-producing force, its interest is fading. Besides scientific knowledge, the social aspects of epistemology are also biased and gendered.

Skov (2020) claims that the underrepresentation of women in academic settings is commonly acknowledged to be caused by unconscious or subconscious bias. There were publications on unconscious/implied gender favoritism in the academic circles that are

indexed in Scopus or PsycINFO up to February 2020; more than half, in the period 2018–2020, were published (Skov,2020). Reinterpretations and fabrications of knowledge were prevalent in these articles. The excerpt under discussion demonstrates how discrimination against women limits their capacity and originality to contribute to academia. It should be remembered that when referring to the participation of women or men in various domains of knowledge, “gender” is a neutral term. Further academic research is required regarding unconscious gender discrimination. With today's awareness level, care should be used while examining the data on gender inequalities in academia. Researchers (particularly women) are pushed to leave their careers since they do not expect recognition for their contributions to academia due to the biased culture of academia that is prevalent today. Misrepresentation through academia is not limited to the notion of “gendered,” but also includes several other fields of conflict and destruction. Amid the spike in intolerance and extremism in Pakistan, many scholars aimed their guns toward the course contents designed for elementary and secondary education. Declaring the school textbooks as problematic and controversial, Anis (2012) explains that throughout history, several pieces of evidence have frequently blamed textbooks in schools, particularly those created and published in the public sector, for the growing fanaticism in Pakistan. He cited an article from the Jinnah Institute that reveals that the curriculum is still biased and could be held solely responsible for the religious extremism in Pakistani culture.

These textbooks are referred to in the report as the “*hate curriculum*” (paragraph 2), and it is said that they lack innovation and do not encourage a youth’s creativity. The grave accusation against them is regarding the contents it teaches, which are believed to be discriminatory and unfair, and wholly or partially instill a conservative and subjective attitude in the youngster. Anis (2012) illustrates the causes of East Pakistan’s separation: the education sector in East Pakistan was entirely under Hindu influence. They provoked the students’ anger against the Western Wing through discourses and texts. India, Russia, and the United States all wanted Pakistan to be split up, and they did so. This perspective clarifies that knowledge can cause significant harm if manipulated and distorted in favor of individual interests. The interest of the dominant class is that epistemology is only centered on them, and only they will publish and propagate ideologies.

According to Horsthemke (2017), a recent viewpoint claims that the dominant social group has mainly neglected ethnic or cultural groups because of their distinctive and gendered epistemologies. A corollary to this point of view is that educational research is conducted in an environment that includes simple beliefs regarding the creation of facts and awareness that represent this dominant group's favorites and historical operation. The desire for epistemic diversity becomes problematic when it confounds epistemological pluralism and relativism. Suppose some demands for new, varied, alternative, decolonized, or de-masculinized epistemologies are not addressed. In that case, they might lead to philosophical challenges and disagreements among people, resulting in a lack of interest in academics. Battiste (2000) further elaborates the idea. He says, “*Indigenous scholars are now struggling to define Indigenous humanity*” (p. 13).

To address education, research, and the classic storytelling of terrific devastation, painful struggle, and continued existence, both parties must first develop a shared

understanding of the thought processes that led to this alienation. Indigenous students must be allowed to participate in meaningful debates and interactions and to start critically assessing knowledge and information, in addition to thoughtful debates and discussions. The researcher believes that academia must advance ideas that foster harmony and unite people in their knowledge of reality and ideals. Living in a globalized world, people need to accept and tolerate each other's perspectives and universally address the collective problem of the masses. In the history of civilization, according to Krikwood (2001), humanity ushered in a new era of globalization that brought about a variety of complex global and cross-cultural exchanges. With only one mouse click, the technological revolution connected everything.

Nearly every country is impacted by the dynamics of change sweeping the globe in this new, globalized era. Such cooperative possessions, diverse abilities, and united supremacy have caused many contrasts and conflicts among diverse beliefs and personalities, such as narrow-mindedness and contempt, both socially and culturally. Given the rapid changes and the urgent need for schools to incorporate global knowledge into curricula, Krikwood thinks universal epistemology is essential in the Golden Age. Students are becoming exposed to several issues that call for a focus on universal knowledge. Kirkwood elaborates that these scholars will live in a new world order, necessitating international epistemology (2001). He points out that their regular encounters will take in people from different social, racial, ethnic, and cultural experiences. There will be several of the worst health issues in history, inequalities between more and less developed countries, dreadful conditions of the environment, international immigration, rising population, indigenous nationalism, and the dissolution of the nation (Kirkwood, 2001). A suitable, internationally accepted curriculum is required to enable scholars with many world views to understand and work well in cultural, social, and economic settings, and to enhance the perception of globalization and its importance.

Fresno Pacific faculty (2018) argues that inclusive classroom awareness comprises teaching people locally and globally about different realms and societies, along with their civil rights and responsibilities. In an interconnected world, the capacity to comprehend, value, and interact with students from different beliefs and cultures is progressively essential for both academic and social advancement.

The aim behind universal consciousness is to form global citizens who are welcoming to individuals raised in different nations, societies, and religious situations. It presents a chance for instructors to show students how their daily decisions can affect individuals worldwide. Global consciousness is based on the guiding principle of building a more peaceful and just world. To do this, one must have respect for people with diverse backgrounds and traditions. In pursuing this objective, teachers can have one of the most significant impacts on children.

O'Malley (2018) suggests that higher education has a critical role in resisting the growth of populism and nationalism and solving international concerns, such as scarcity and climate change, by emphasizing collective standards such as human self-respect and the significance of research and education. Human ability will become more critical in university and national competitions. The nations that can fascinate brilliant and vastly trained individuals and provide them with chances to advance their capacities will be the most

prosperous.

However, these same nations will similarly create more welcoming people because, at the national level, a strongly developed teaching system will assist in reducing societal stiffness, encouraging tolerance, and contributing to a better understanding of different nations, faiths, and languages. She further stated that while internationalization encourages individuals to live, study, and make an effort in diverse nations, it has also been used as a negative term for various familiar people accordingly to the issues it presents.

Maybe it is time to return to a perspective founded on respect, tolerance, human dignity, and sharing ideas across cultures and religions. Education, notably higher education, will be crucial in this regard. Higher education has to play a key role in comprehending and resolving issues that influence all countries ethically. Studies and education programs address issues including hunger, poverty, illiteracy, and how to make cities, communities, and society more sustainable. Due to the interrelated nature of these issues, a multidisciplinary approach is required; universities have a shared body of knowledge that we must continue to expand.

The researcher is of the view that scholars and philosophers need to work on the promotion of anthropological knowledge. This knowledge will be centered on the problem of human races as a whole, and it will address the issue of the modern world not on an individual basis but on a collective one. Anthropological knowledge is universal because it focuses on humans' existence, nature, and attitudes. The notion of holism is central to this approach as it will appeal to everyone, everywhere. Therefore, sharing ideologies, perspectives, and problems would be easy to comprehend as it says that knowledge can be shared and learn equally. Hence, we can say that anthropological knowledge is universal and beneficial to all.

### 1.5. Theoretical Framework

The research study is guided by the “ethno-epistemological” concept promoted by Masaharu, Jonardon, and Cliff Goddard (2022). According to this concept (quoted by James Maffie), Ethnoepistemology, a type of “naturalized epistemology”, views all “epistemological” endeavors as wholly “natural” events that should be explained, comprehended, and assessed from a humanity-based and wholly a *posteriori* viewpoint. In this way, it explores the different varieties of human epistemological endeavors, from the everyday person through cognitive experts (such as scientists, **doctors**, clerics, necromancers, and diviners) to the intellectuals who practice epistemology.

“*Ethnoepistemology*” encompasses local and non-local knowledge practices and views Western tradition's knowledge and epistemological concepts as one amongst numerous alternatives, a situational and progressive project of epistemology available to humans. Thus, it seeks to “decenter and provincialize” Western epistemology’s meanings, goals, beliefs, approaches, difficulties, and claims. Most Western epistemologies adhere to what ethnoepistemology sees as a double standard, exempting themselves from the same anthropological examination that Western ethnographers apply to the epistemologies of non-Western civilizations.

Additionally, it rejects the double standard that refers to Western thinkers’ epistemological endeavors as proper epistemology while classifying those of the other theorists as just ethnoepistemologies. “*Ethnoepistemologists*” claim that there is a duality

explicitly and typically stated by the claim that philosophers in other societies pursue exclusively “ethnoepistemology” or “ethnophilosophy.” Thus, whatever others do is relegated to anthropological curiosity, and individuals who engage in it are regarded as inexperienced and unqualified to participate in the Western “genuinely philosophical” discourse.

Ethnoepistemologists find it objectionable when Western philosophers use the terms “ethnophilosophy” and “ethnoepistemology” as it implies that the philosophy of the West is the standard through which all other nations’ ideologies and thoughtful activities are to be measured and comprehended, that it is “philosophy simpliciter” rather than any among several ethnophilosophies. The more widely “*ecumenical and non-ethnocentric*” usage of the word “ethnoepistemology” eludes this limitation by encompassing universal “epistemological” activity, whether Native American, East Asian, African, European, or any other. In this broad view, all “epistemological activities” are “ethnoepistemology”, and all ethnoepistemologies are examples of epistemology. The researcher’s perspective focuses on human-centered knowledge, i.e., anthropological knowledge.

## 2. METHOD

The researcher intended to find any opportunity to approach the term with universal anthropological knowledge in the context of *Fahrenheit 451*. The research question in this article is: “Is there any opportunity for the attainment of universal anthropological knowledge concerning *Fahrenheit-451*?”

Having an epistemological, qualitative nature and a descriptive paradigm, the research used the close reading method as a data analysis tool. Close reading is a process of looking closely and deeply into the text to dig out the hidden concepts, and it allows the researcher to bring the abstract concepts and hidden themes to the surface. According to Pugh and Johnson (2013), the school of close reading flourished in the 1930s and 1940s and is linked to contemporary criticism. Read attentively and examine the text in detail to grasp its nuances. Never skim. Although this instruction may look too simple to be a methodical guide to analyze literature, “close reading” is the basis for all knowledgeable understandings. Close reading, in the view of Klarer (2013), is a significant notion occasionally used interchangeably with “new criticism.” As a result, “new criticism” concentrates research on concepts like re-readings, contradiction, puns, irony, symbolism, or rhetorical figures because these are the smallest, most easily identifiable components of a literary work and have a close relationship to the broader context. It implies thoroughly examining these crucial elements representing a text’s wider structures. According to a close reading of the book, it is anticipated that the elements stated will define the overall literary work’s coherent structure.

## 3. RESULT

### 3.1. Analysis and Interpretation

**3.1.1. “A book is a loaded gun in the house next door. Burn it. Take the shot from the weapon. Breach man’s mind. Who knows who might be the target of the well-read man?”**

**(“Bradbury, 1954: p. 77”)**

These lines are taken from Beatty’s speech: the villain and Chief of Fire Company, paradoxically, a highly educated character and a figure who remains constant in developing his personality during the novel until his demise. After “The Hearth and Salamander,” Captain Beatty discusses these words and explains the reconstructed history to Montag. It is crucial to understand that Beatty’s entire speech is ironic. He protects the breakdown of legitimacy in a zealous, almost sad manner. While still knowledgeable, he is eager to promote societal equality and condemns the practice of textbooks as “weapons” while openly employing them. This is the most significant quote in the book since it drives the plot forward and uses the metaphor “book is a loaded gun” to explain why the book should be burned.

Through Beatty’s voice, the quote is explained. He starts by stating that everyone is presumed equal under the Constitution. Because of books, he disputes the possibility of this presumption. On a deeper level, he asserts that books prevent people from being equal because many academics from diverse fields and areas glorify one group while demonizing the other. By drawing disparities between individuals or groups, for instance, between colonial and postcolonial societies and Muslims and non-Muslims, many are setting the path for hostilities. This is a result of the knowledge that books contain. They would forbid and burn literature to stop disputes and assaults between groups. The metaphor in the passage compares a book and a gun. Yes, that is accurate since books can mislead people and act in opposition to wisdom, harmony, and growing civilization (the main objectives and expected notions of knowledge). No one knows who or which book will shoot them, i.e., which author’s wicked thoughts will target them. Firefighters destroy books because of evil ideas, conflicting theories, and ideologies. This passage clarifies many things about the novel. It explains why firefighters are destroying books rather than saving them. It also serves as the plot’s foundation. This is by far the most important of the book’s significant quotes. The researcher views the burning of books as a disagreeable experience and suggests that in its place, the academe should concentrate on “universal theories” that work smoothly, deprived of fundamentally opposing viewpoints, mutilating the sentiments of one group or another. The patience and open-mindedness of every group have to be taken into account in epistemology, and efforts should be made to use universally recognized theories and ideas to bring people closer together without taking into account personal interests or bias. This is only possible when human-centered knowledge is implemented with a universal understanding of human nature.

**3.1.2. “You must understand that our civilization is so vast that we cannot have our minorities upset and stirred. Ask yourself, what do we want in this country, above all? People want to be happy, isn’t that right? Haven’t you heard it all your life? I want to be happy, people say. Well, aren’t they? Don’t we keep them moving or give them fun?”**  
**(“Bradbury, 1954: p. 78”)**

Beatty delivers a speech to Montag in his apartment regarding ceasing to burn books. This quote is a part of that speech. The phrase and Beatty’s entire statement contrast with one of the book’s themes: the “power of books.” Conflicting views in epistemology upset Beatty, a very well-read and philosophical character, and he is either misled by some authorities or

some books. He argues that our civilization is too vast and sensitive, and wants pleasure. Thus, we should burn and neglect books. Because of this, they genuinely detest and disapprove of anything that causes conflict or jeopardizes the social order. People are drawn to things that make them happy. Beatty emphasizes that everyone wants a happy life by using the words “happy” and “fun” twice in the sentence. The significance of these statements in this text lies in Beatty’s belief that book burning is not a negative idea because it causes people to be unhappy. After all, they do not agree with one another. This argument contends that books can be used as traitors because they divide people. Whatever one group perceives as helpful information and rational insight offends the sensibilities of another in one way or another, which alters people’s perceptions of literature. In the passage: **“Coloured people do not like Little Black Sambo. Burn it. White people do not feel good about Uncle Tom’s Cabin. Burn it” (p. 78)**, Beatty is referring to “Little Black Sambo,” authored by Helen Bannerman (1899). This work received much criticism for its contradictory and hyperbolic portrayal of “black people.” The words “coloured” and “white” are used very clearly to demonstrate “racism” in the sentences above. The argument goes that because of writers’ subjective viewpoints, which will glorify one race above another, books actively encourage racism and fuel racial tensions. Beatty believes that individuals offend each other via academia. Beatty also alludes to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin in this passage (1852). This book is viewed as an offender in the white community. These allusions encourage the burning of books since the firemen believe that reading books leads to disagreements and unhappy lives, and “everyone wants to live a happy life”. The paragraph demonstrates that pleasure does not reside in writings (books) but rather in stuff outside of “books” because they provide readers with conflicting theories and confusion. In a democratic society, the researcher opposes forbidding or burning books because it seems weird and immoral. According to the research, academics can agree upon adopting universal and anthropological conventions for epistemology. Additionally, a more comprehensive elimination of hate, racism, religious extremism, and other issues will result from teaching and offering the same anthropological knowledge everywhere. This implementation of universal knowledge seems to be the last hope.

**3.1.3. “It is not books you need, it is some of the things that once were in books”. (“Bradbury, 1954: p. 107”)**

Faber’s house sets the line where he and Montag talk about censorship and books. These ideas are communicated through Faber’s mouth through the third-person omniscient narrator. Faber is expressing his opinion on a bleak society. Montag wants to find an expression that accurately captures human existence and offers people fulfillment and a solid understanding of reality. The context of the story makes it clear that, in the past, books contained all knowledge, but that, all of a sudden, people began to detest reading and became absorbed in video games, movies, and other forms of pleasurable things.

The quote from Faber, “It is not books you need, it is some of the things that once were in books,” responds to claim of Montag that academia used to serve as a humorous means of expressing human experience, thoughts, conflicts, and a host of other things, but that nowadays it lacks several essential components. “Number one, as I said, is the quality of

information,” Faber summarizes this statement. “Number two: leisure to digest it”. “And number three: the right to carry out actions based on what we learn from the interaction of the first two (p. 110). Faber draws attention to the writing's flaws that need to be fixed. There may be a variety of explanations for why these things are absent from the book. Many books are of low quality because too many authors only care about receiving recognition. As a result, they do not take care of their books' contents and refuse to acknowledge the damage their books may cause. Instead, they simply write down whatever ideas, good or bad, come to them. The researcher's interpretation of “lack of information” in the context of the current study is that some writers spread misinformation and create conflicts rather than provide reliable information. They need to deliver factual evidence to the public so that they can also comprehend it and use it to connect with others. It is necessary to implement practical, helpful, and reachable content. In addition, adopting a standard curriculum and anthropological knowledge that collectively addresses the human races can boost academic interest and the future.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Knowledge has been misused in the context of *Fahrenheit 451*, and the field of epistemology has been made controversial and corrupt. Beatty's character is crucial in that he brainwashes people using conflicting theories inserted into academia. Throughout this study, the researcher finds that most modern problems are not natural but caused by several things, one of which is the field of knowledge. In the modern-day world, academia is controversial and problematic due to the insertion and advancement of biased, subjective understanding and interpretation by some notorious writers. They construct ideologies that are extremist in nature and character. The misrepresentation and manipulation of truths and concepts have caused many modern problems. Their conflicting ideas have significantly declined interest in academia. After analyzing the data using the close reading method, the researchers concluded that to address modern-day issues caused by epistemological conflicts, the world needs to consider anthropological knowledge—the knowledge of human races and their behavior—universal.

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