

***For the hope of anything outside ourselves being our master:  
Shoot the bastard!***

Or,

**If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill him!**

Really,

*The only meaning in our lives is what we each bring to them.*



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## INTRODUCTION

This paper is so important there will be some feedback from folks who have never responded to my previous papers – and maybe for good cause, but even the youngest of my readers will see and understand this paper is unadulteratedly leading the claim “*This is no shit.*”<sup>1</sup>

## REFERENCE

Sheldon B. Kopp. (1972). *If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!* Ben Lomond, CA: Science Books. This book is on my Web site as number 043.

## PUNCHLINE

Suddenly it was time. They wheeled me through the swinging double doors into the operating theater. I understood what was to follow. I recognized the anesthesiologist as he approached the table. And then it happened. Just as he placed the mask over my face, all at once I knew. The bad trip was to begin again. Again it would be a time of terror. I suddenly understood that though I knew how to get to the hospital, understood the procedures I was to undergo, recognized everyone on the staff, and even felt close to my Chinese surgeon, all of this would change nothing. The knowing would not help. I would awaken again psychotic, bewildered, terrified, and in the horror of pain, with my future hanging in uncertain balance (p. 165).

## TRUNCATED ESCHATOLOGICAL LAUNDRY LIST

1. This is it.
2. We are already dying, and we will be dead for a long time.
3. You can't have anything unless you let go of it.
4. You only get to keep what you give away.
5. Each of us is ultimately alone.
6. Love is not enough, but it sure helps.
7. We have only ourselves, and one another. That may not be much, but that's all there is.
8. How strange, that so often, it all seems worth it.
9. You are free to do whatever you like. You need only face the consequences.
10. Learn to forgive yourself, again, and again and again and again and again...(pp. 165-166).

## THE TREK

“And a journey may be a flight, rather than a search.”

“Search we must. Each man must set out to cross his bridge.”

“And remember, too, you can stay at home, safe in the familiar illusion of certainty” (p. 6).

*This is it...no shit.*

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<sup>1</sup> Full refund will be given on any claim that this paper is not meaningful for the times and for our lives.

## BACKGROUND BOOKS

Depending on which discipline you are taking, studying, or reading, the List of Books for the course, semester(s), and discipline, are of course in the syllabus or, more pedagogically, the same list will show up across some disciplines.

During my first enrollment at North Texas State University back in 1977, I found a table of three teachers who were selling the idea of taking a “Great Books Course” taught by a professor from English, History, and Philosophy noting it was for three hours each – or nine hours - and over two semesters. The list of books was 15 a semester.

The term “Great Books” is as close to being what most would academically call them as “Classic Books” or books that have held up over the ages to be worthy, authentic, enduring, or maybe just must read. For sure there are more than one lists of Great Books. If you searched, say St. John’s College and their Great Books list, you would see a start with Aeschylus, Archimedes, Aristophanes, and as a senior end up with Nietzsche, Goethe, and James – just for examples. Note: There are a lot of good lists out there.

Below is a picture of the Great Books in my library and shows:

From *Gilgamesh to Shakespeare* and then, From *Cervantes to Sartre* - about 50 books on each shelf. Some books are by the same author. This list is not only from the “Great Books” from NTSU in 1977 but from one or two Great Books lists – like St. Johns.

My list of Great Books is titled “Most Favorite 100 Books” and has incorporated eight books from the “Great Books” list. This list is published and is in the first folder on my Web site [www.gheart.net](http://www.gheart.net)



## The quaintness of Great Books

This has nothing to do with the authenticity of, or the requirement, to have Great Books referenced in the success of other books but sometimes, when one of your favorite authors shows up in your reading, it adds to the old-fashioned or charming quaintness of the book.

For example I just finished “The Myth of the Machine”<sup>2</sup> by Lewis Mumford and casually counted eight authors cited in his book.

For drill here are a few more examples showing “How many great books are cited in this book?”

Philosophy of Religion<sup>3</sup> – 33 books.

If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!<sup>4</sup> – 10 books.

Beyond Order: 12 More Rules for Life<sup>5</sup> – 8 books.

Man’s search for himself<sup>6</sup> – 15 books.

For what it is worth, using the same list of Great Books<sup>7</sup> from Adler’s list, my Web site list has 51 out of 137. Course, this and 50 cents will get you a cup of cheap coffee, but it gives me/us an idea of how much these old books keep showing up.

Speaking of my list of books, see the picture below of these 100 books on their shelf in my library. The order is not the same as the list but is shown for display – this was fun to put together. (Should have the second list/shelve of 100 but maybe sometime...)



If we discuss a list or a guide to something like intelligent reading of Great Books, then the list from Adler will work just fine. Have three professors from three different disciplines that the lists may be ‘comparable.’ Then if we take those three disciplines separately and query its 100 books the three would be different.

When we look at the footnotes or bibliographies in the books we read, we can see where the author is coming from and it helps determine the authenticity, how old-fashioned, or quaint the bio is.

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<sup>2</sup> Lewis Mumford. (1970). *The myth of the machine: The pentagon of power*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.

<sup>3</sup> John Hick (Ed.). (1970). *Classical and contemporary readings in the philosophy of religion*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

<sup>4</sup> Sheldon Kopp. (1972). *If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!: The pilgrimage of psychotherapy patients*. Ben Lomond, CA: Science and Behavior Books.

<sup>5</sup> Jordan Peterson. (2021). *Beyond order: 12 more rules for life*. New York, NY: Penguin.

<sup>6</sup> Rollo May. (1953). *Man’s search for himself*. New York, NY: A Delta Book.

<sup>7</sup> Mortimer Adler & Charles Van Doren (1972). *How to read a book*. New York, NY: A Touchstone Book.

## The title to this paper – and the books referenced

Less eye catching for titles of this paper would be something along the line of “Man’s Search for Himself” or “12 Rules for Life” – there are more, but the one’s I have picked, in my opinion, are more robust for what needs to be said. (This is still “No Shit” time.)

Of course, Kopp’s book is the one I want to model and use some of his examples to help us figure out how to live our lives and at the same time look back on the literature to support a worthy position. We realize Kopp is “...sufficiently skillful at this psychotherapeutic judo...” (p. 2).

The selected three authors and books from Kopp are:

Dante’s “Inferno,”  
Cervantes’ “Don Quixote,” and  
*The Epic of Gilgamesh.*

**Dante Alighieri’s “The Inferno”** is, as noted on the cover of his book “Dante’s immortal drama of a journey through hell.” The god-awful creature on the cover sheet for this paper is from the cover of Dante’s book, again by John Ciardi (a notable writer and poet).



“At Easter time, in the Year of Our Lord 1300, the Florentine poet Dante Alighieri descended into the Inferno of Hell...some insist the Dante represents Mankind...and that ‘Hell is the death which must precede rebirth’” (Kopp, p. 74).

“In Canto III, THE VESTIBULE OF HELL, *The Opportunists* (those souls who in life were neither for good nor evil but only for themselves)...As they sinned so are they punished” (Ciardi, p. 41).

“Arriving at the Gates of Hell Dante reads an inscription cut deeply into stone (Kopp, p. 75):

**ABANDON ALL HOPE YE WHO ENTER HERE**

“This descent into the pit of his own soul is the journey of every pilgrim...The ways in which we live, the experience of our own sinful souls, still is itself our only Hell” (Kopp, p.75).

“Once having come to the very center of Evil, having faced every sin and seen its consequences, only now can Dante hope to purify his soul. Only by facing life as it is, can he find salvation” (Kopp, p. 78).

*So, does the last line resonate with your experience in life? Where have you seen this ‘inscription’?*



## Cervantes "Don Quixote"



Kopp has a chapter in his book titled "Tale of a Mad Knight." "I prefer the madness of Don Quixote to the sanity of most other men...he set out astride a tired hack of a horse whom he assigned the weighty name of Rocinante..."

"Don Quixote's Quest, the personal pilgrimage of his mad life, was to live in 'the world as it is traversed by man as he ought to be.' If this be the wine of madness, then I say: 'Come fill my cup'" (p. 66).

"Perhaps the most famous of their escapades is what is now commonly referred to as quixotic fighting with windmills. Arriving on a great plain, the adventures see thirty or forty windmills which Don Quixote mistakes for 'lawless giants.' Sancho cannot convince him that their turning wings are not mighty arms. Don Quixote charges to do battle with these giants, is unseated by the turning of the giant's arm and ends up badly battered, on the ground, with broken lance" (p. 69).

"At the end of a series of colorfully zany misadventures, Don Quixote also achieved sanity. On his deathbed he had to endure the moralistic admonishment of his deadly same housekeeper: 'Stay at home, attend to your affairs, go often to confession, be charitable to the poor.' Such is the lesson of same virtue, 'but a man may have to go through hell to learn it.' and so, safe from any further threat of madness, Don Quixote died 'having gained his reason and lost his reasons for living'" (p. 72).



The first time studying Don Quixote was during my second year at OSU in HUM 214 with Dr. White. My notes reflect Don's subjectiveness with what he thought with his mind, while Sancho objectiveness had to with what his senses revealed.

"The world is not what we think it is...Our sense impression is not what we think it is."

Below is a paper I wrote under the influence of Don Quixote from Part One, his Second Sally, "Adventure of the Windmills." Biscuit and I were driving to Enid in Garfield County to meet Jim and then go to Kenny Mike's big birthday party.

Kinda funny how things keep coming up both in life and history – and In reading Great Books.

### **Northbound - Just Past the Cimarron**

While north bound on I-35 north of Oklahoma City, it was early afternoon with about half coverage of puffy cumulus clouds with a temperature of about 93 degrees. Not bad for the middle of September and the traffic was behaving, so me and ole Biscuit were enjoying the scenery. Was going from Logan County into the southwester edge of Payne and started down the hill to cross the bridge over the Cimarron River thinking of Edna Ferber and the time when I used to come up this direction in the late 50's before turning east to Oklahoma A&M. The Cimarron red looked very much like the Red 'red' I had crossed a couple of hours before.

Actually, I don't remember a prettier Oklahoma.

The natural grass, rolling hills, abundant green cedar trees everywhere, was as close to being in the native plains as one could get – there was even a lack of bill boards, cell towers, crossing high lines, and even few pumping stations.

And I thought about the Indians – way back there late in the 1700s and early 1800s with the Wichitas, Caddos, Apaches, and the Quapaws...wouldn't it be nice to kinda drift back and see what they saw? Just that six or seven mile jag. As pretty as it gets in Oklahoma – and we do have a lot of these jags we could hold up with the bucolic beauty of our state.

Up farther north getting ready to turn west toward Enid I saw them. The wind turbines. These are the big mutthers like the ones in the Arbuckle Mountains on I-35. These large (huge) three bladed wind turbines look like they are here to stay.

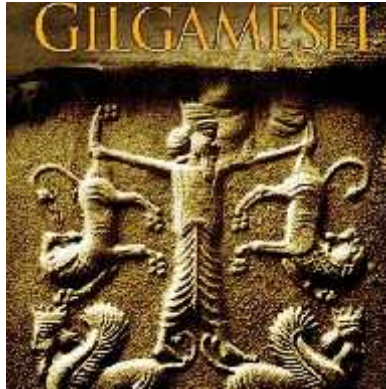
And then I thought. Wonder what a warrior scout 200 years ago would do, coming up on one of these wind mills? Can you imagine a young buck maybe Osage, Pawnee, Kiowa, or Comanche topping the hill and then seeing in the distance this monster with slowing turning white blades?

I can see him. Reining in his pony, leaning forward with hand over his eyebrows, wide eyes looking. And then say sub-vocally to himself "Whiskey, Tango, Foxtrot."

Although this expression is probably a Potawatomi or Pushmataha dialectical slang, I can see him reaching for his bow and arrow and start plotting his attack.

Gary Heartsill

Sun 9/24/2017



My next hero comes out of ancient Mesopotamia near the city of Uruk on the Euphrates River. It was in the time of ca. 2600 B.C. The story is about the adventures of Gilgamesh and Enkidu and at a deeper level is a consideration for the meaning of life in Gilgamesh's search for his immortality. Enkidu is the created brother of Gilgamesh and the word means "kid-in-u." "Each man has his Enkidu, his other half, his hidden self" (Kopp, p. 24). Gilgamesh and Enkidu fight the giant of the forest "Huwawa" and the great bull of heaven. Enkidu dies and Gilgamesh fully realizes his other half. Gilgamesh then realizes someday he too will die.

Now begins his trek. The event in Gilgamesh's life causes the search for his meaning of life. He goes to the mountain of Mashu to find out the secret of immortality. He meets a barmaid called Siduri at a resting place who tries to help him see the hopelessness of his venture saying:

Gilgamesh, where are you hurrying to?  
You will never find that life for which you are looking.  
When the gods created man they allotted to him death,  
but life they retained in their own keeping.  
As for you Gilgamesh, fill your belly with good things;  
day and night, night and day, dance and be merry, feast and rejoice.  
Let your clothes be fresh, bathe yourself in water,  
cherish the little child that holds your hand,  
and make your wife happy in your embrace;  
for this too is the lot of man.

But Gilgamesh is stubborn and he sets out to cross the Sea of Death to an island no man has ever reached to meet Utnapishtim. After sailing for a month he arrives and begins his tale and his wish to live forever. "But Utnapishtim points out that nothing lasts forever" (p. 28). He asks:

There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand forever.  
Do we seal a contract to hold for all time?  
Do brothers divide an inheritance to keep forever?  
Does the river raise and carry the flood forever?  
...From the days of old there is no permanence.



Gilgamesh finally sits down and weeps. He sees that all his efforts to live forever have gotten him nowhere. "It is useless to seek immortality. He must face the fact of his own death, as all men must. He turns his steps toward home, toward Uruk, where he must make what he can of the rest of his life" (p. 29).

"Like that of all other pilgrims, Gilgamesh's quest is related to a search for the meaning of life" (p. 29). "But we can see in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, men have always tried to maintain illusions to protect themselves from living with the anguish of their unimportant momentary existence and their helplessness to change the absurdity of their needless suffering" (p. 30).

## EPILOGUE

Kopp says in his book *If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him!* This admonition points up that no meaning that comes from outside ourselves is real. The Buddhahood of each of us has already been obtained. We need only recognize it. Philosophy, religion, patriotism, all are empty idols. The only meaning in our lives is what we each bring to them. Killing the Buddha on the road means destroying the hope that anything outside of ourselves can be our master" (p. 140).

Everything is just what it seems to be. This is it!  
There are no hidden meanings.  
Before he is enlightened, a man gets up each  
morning to spend the day tending his fields,  
returns home to eat his supper,  
goes to bed, makes love to his woman, and falls asleep.  
But once he has attained enlightenment,  
then a man gets up each morning to spend the day  
tending his fields, returns home to eat his supper,  
goes to bed, makes love to his woman, and falls asleep (p. 139).



Sheldon B. Kopp

[This is it...no shit.]