

THE SIMPLEST SPIRITUAL TEACHING

EVER (BAR NONE)

AND IT'S NOT WHAT YOU THINK...

Eckhart Short

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I've killed myself so many times, I don't exist anymore.
Bill Murray, *Groundhog Day*

Cover picture by Mikkolo

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Introduction

Those who see life in the world as an obstacle to the Dharma fail to see the Dharma in every day actions. They have not discovered yet that there are no every day actions outside of the Dharma.
Dogen

If you were asked: 'What is the best summary of spirituality you know of?' What would your answer be? Is it the Bible's 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself' (Matthew 19:19, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31), Buddha's compassion for all beings, Krishnamurti's 'I don't mind what happens,' or the taoists' 'The way to do is to be'? Maybe the Indian mantras 'Tat tvam asi' ('You are also this') or 'netti netti' ('neither this, nor that')? Some may be partial to the taoist ten plates on the taming of the ox but to understand them you have to know that the ox represents the ego and that it can be tamed. The question remains: How? Plus, those summaries are often not practical in the setting of modern life. What if there was a vivid example that could be applicable easily to most people?

Every now and then one stumbles upon a movie that offers a great insight, often much more accurate and simple than when treated in a book, on a very specific subject. For instance, if you want to know how a sexual revolution starts and ends (there have been many in human history), you need only watch *The Blue Angel*, a 1930 German movie starring Marlene Dietrich. It sums up beautifully this topic. If you want to understand the consequences of the rise of virtual reality, then *SImpOne* (2002, starring Al Pacino) is the right choice (one quote from the main character is actually enough: 'I am the death of real'). What about the dire consequences of an untamed ego? 1956 *Forbidden planet* and its '*monsters from the id.*' (For that last one, I send those interested to the brilliant study bearing the same name, by E Michael Jones.) And if you want to sort out the entangled web of spiritual teachings over the ages (a most confusing field, especially for beginners), then, strangely enough, it is Hollywood that has the best solution to offer, in the form of a 1993 movie by Harold Ramis, written by Danny Rubin, and starring Bill Murray and Andie MacDowell: *Groundhog Day*.

Many people have seen it and remember it as a nice comedy. It is. It is also a lot more. It is the best example of a life lived in the present that is available for every one to see. Spiritual teachers tell how we should live in the now, but it's difficult to apply it to the average's person's life. Unless you personally know a Buddhist monk, reside near a temple or are acquainted with an enlightened, chances are you have unanswered questions as to how living in the present applies to *your* case. That's where the movie comes in. It won't answer all questions, of course, but there is a great insight to be found in it.

As I will show later, the movie is split into different phases that undoubtedly apply – or applied – to almost anyone who has tried to practice mastering the ego / detaching oneself from reality / leaving in the now (terms that will be used interchangeably in the following pages). Once we are past the presentation, there will be questioning, 'unwinding,' trying to find what we are missing – love, depression, redemption, and finally enlightenment.

One of the most important lessons of the movie is this: answers do not matter.

People who read about spirituality or try to live by its teachings are usually full of doubts and questions. Some teachers tell there is karma, others that there isn't. For some there is free will, for others, not so much. Sometimes we have past lives, according to some we don't. It is necessary to have a guru, or it can be an impediment on the path. Which one is it then? Well, the truth is, it doesn't matter because beliefs are not a condition, a prerequisite or an obstacle to disidentify with one's ego. The goal is not to think outside the box: thinking *is* the box.

Part I – Presentation & Questioning

Chapter 1 - Presentation

Phil Connors (Bill Murray) is a bitter and sarcastic weather forecaster who is about to set off for the fourth year in a row on a trip that is clearly beneath him: the annual weather prediction feature of *Groundhog Phil* in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. He leaves, Feb 1st, with his cameraman, Larry, and his new producer, Rita (Andie MacDowell).

In his bed & breakfast, he wakes up at 6:00 am on Feb 2nd. He makes three encounters before getting to the town's square. One on exiting his room, one with the owner of the B&B while having breakfast, one with an old schoolmate of his in the street: Ned Ryerson. On all three occasions he makes use of sarcasm during the conversation. (Also, right before meeting Ned he passes in front of an old homeless man for whom he has no quarter to spare.) On leaving Ned he steps into the gutter, drenching his right foot before getting to Gobbler's Knob where the ceremony takes place. Phil ends his reporting with another sarcasm ('This is one time where television really fails to capture the true excitement of a large squirrel predicting the weather'). After that, the team tries to leave Punxsutawney but is impeded by a blizzard and has to get back to the city.

It is important that Phil's adventure happens in a place where he doesn't want to be. As he says in the movie, he had a perfect day once, in the Virgin Islands. 'Why couldn't I get that day over and over and over?' he ponders. It is easier to start questioning reality when you suffer a lot than when you 'have it easy.' Gautama's life was uneventful until he realized it was all an illusion maintained by his father. On the other hand, Milarepa's life was rough from the moment his father passed away and, along with his mother and sister, he became the slave of his uncle and aunt. Under the impulsion of his mother he looked to acquire magical powers to exact *her* revenge, after which he repented earnestly and became the greatest enlightened Tibet ever had. The stronger the limitation, the more we are likely to look for an outlet or a release (and find it within ourselves).

Also, the environment of a small town is more helpful because you are less likely to make confrontational encounters. There is a reason most enlightened lived (at least at some point in their life) in isolation: it is a lot easier to accept Nature than it is to accept human nature. And the latter is at its furthest from its essence in dense urban settings. For similar reasons most enlightened were simple folks: over thinking is a major obstacle to accepting the world. Studying doesn't help in accepting.

Chapter 2 - Questioning

At 18:23 into the movie, Phil wakes up for the 2nd time on Feb 2nd. He first notices something is wrong when the voices on the radio come out exactly as they did the 'day before.' He then looks out the window and realizes there is no snow left from the supposed blizzard. He has his first encounter of the day, again, as he exits his room and looks suspicious all through it. Same with his 2nd encounter of the day with Mrs Lancaster, owner of the B&B, at breakfast. (He asks her if she has déjà vu and replies that she could check with the kitchen.) He meets again with Ned in town, steps in the gutter with his right foot and get to Town's square. He goes back to his room

right after the ceremony, expectant as to what will happen the following morning. He breaks his pencil as a test and leaves it on his bedside table.

That second day is to some extent what many people with an interest in spirituality have experienced / are experiencing. Questioning is usually the first step, much like Siddharta Gautama gave up his position as a prince to find an answer to the question: 'Is it possible to escape suffering?' His question arose as he discovered an old woman, grief, a dead man, in his mid twenties, all things that so far had been spared to him in his palace. The questions for everybody else arise in a similar fashion: unexpectedly. Someone is living their life just like everybody else and something happens that makes that person question reality. In that the movie differs from real life because Phil begins to understand there is something wrong by reliving the same day. For the rest of us, every day is different so the questioning takes a long time to 'set in.' But reality is one way or another perceived as inadequate or insufficient. Someone will look for something they cannot find in life or in the world and will wonder why that is. It often is an attempt to heal some sort of pain or escape a specific or general suffering (happiness is the fundamental quest of humanity, strangely enough we are the only species to thirst for such immaterial pursuit).

Phil's third Feb 2nd starts at 25:22 into the movie. He first checks his pencil that is just like new. He avoids the usual three encounters (still trips in the gutter though) to get straight to Gobbler's Knob. He skips the ceremony to have a long breakfast at the Tip Top Café where Rita meets him later on. He tells her what is happening to him, but she doesn't believe him, obviously. He goes to a neurosurgeon who finds nothing unusual in his brain, then to a shrink who appears totally incompetent. He ends up in the bowling alley drinking and sharing personal stories with two other clients. After which, since they are too drunk, he decides to drive the car of one of his two new buddies. It's in the car that he moves to phase II of his evolution. Since he has no control over what happens, then he has no reason to care about the consequences of his actions, or so he thinks.

Part II – Excitement

Chapter 3 - Reckless behavior

The end of the third day marks the beginning of Phil's.

At the bowling alley he asks the first serious question:

'What would you do, if you were stuck in one place, and everyday was exactly the same, and nothing that you did mattered?'

'That about sums it up for me.'

As he is in the car, driving his newfound drinking buddies, he asks them:

'What if there were no tomorrow?'

'No tomorrow? That would mean there would be no consequences, there would be no hangovers, we could do whatever we wanted!'

'That's true, we could do whatever we want.'

Phil proceeds to put his theory into practice by ramming into a mailbox, drawing the attention of the police, driving on the railroad tracks – almost getting crushed by a train in the process – and finally crashing the car and being sent to jail.

One could almost draw an uncanny parallel with our society. To a large extent, everybody is currently at one of the many phases Phil goes through himself, some knowing why (because they are looking for something *more*), the vast majority oblivious of the real reason (being drawn to the true self). To a large degree, we have been disenfranchised from our responsibilities and duties due to our ego taking over. We want more and more even if that means others have less and less. There is no regard for consequences towards other people, other species, or the planet as a whole, especially on the long term.

From then on, Phil thinks he is entitled to ingratiate himself in all the little pleasures life has to offer, consequences be damned. As a result, he feels upbeat and lighthearted, not sad and gloomy.

On the 4th day for instance, he ignores the homeless man (why should he care), when he meets Ned in the street he hits him square before even engaging in a conversation. He also avoids the wet patch in the gutter only to enjoy watching another passerby fall into it. He goes to the Tip Top Café where he indulges in one humongous breakfast including all items on the menu, *and* he smokes. His manager, Rita, confronts him and tries to reason with him but he has not a care in the world:

‘I don't worry about anything anymore.’

So, what does he do next? He gathers information on a woman attending the diner with the idea of seducing her the following day. Which is exactly what he does, he finds that woman and has sex with her in the evening.

After that days are not counted any more. On day X, he steals a bag of money from an armored vehicle, buys an expensive car and goes to the movie theatre dressed as a cowboy with another ‘fling,’ herself dressed as a maid.

In the script, he hits rock bottom when he gets tattoos all over his body, wears a leather jacket and has a party in his B&B room, heavy metal blaring, two promiscuous women sitting on his bed with him. He asks himself:

‘There’s got to be more to it than this.’

‘There’s got to be more to it than this.’

This is actually Phil’s beginning of a new awareness. He has tasted what life had to offer, all its little pleasures: food, alcohol, tobacco, sex, utter freedom with no concern as to who gets hurt, etc... ‘What happens next?’ he ponders. As Blake eloquently put: ‘the road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.’

When looking at the world today one might, just might, be tempted to view it as most people being somewhere in this first phase of Phil’s: excitement. Whether it is reckless abandon or hedonism, there is not much place for a higher level of consciousness if you will. One has to indulge in what the world has to offer in order to realize the limitations of our ‘simulation.’ It is never enough, never. That’s why we accumulate, riches, pleasures, and try to become immortal in the process: because only that can get us near what we have lost – everlasting bliss. When one finally accepts that even those cop outs are nowhere near as perfect as previously thought do they develop an interest in spirituality. Phil looks for love first, yes, but a conditional one, not unconditional as the divine’s love really is.

Chapter 4 – Finding love

After realizing that doing whatever the heck he wanted brought him about as much as dry ashes to a hungry man, Phil tries a new ‘perk,’ *love*. He tries to seduce Rita in earnest, starting at 43:30 into the movie, shortly before the middle of it. He meets her once more at the Tip Top Café and asks her about the perfect guy – we will skip the 17 criteria she describes – that is merely one step in the many he will take to try and win her.

We meet them again at the bar of the Pennsylvanian Hotel. It takes him three attempts to get the introduction right, two dinners to understand more about her and so on and so forth. After several weeks or months, following a playful snowball fight with some kids, he manages to get her to his room, only to fail big time by blurting out ‘I love you’ too early for *her* taste (since they only spent a day together from her perspective). She says to him:

‘You’ll never love anyone but yourself.’

‘That’s not true, I don’t even like myself,’ he replies.

(As an aside, loving oneself is one of the more fundamental steps on the way. When the apostles repeat the sentence: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself,’ they assume that people actually love themselves, which is often not the case. So some might have to start from there. That does not entail becoming selfish, vain or imbued with oneself, merely accepting one’s strengths and flaws.)

Rita then slaps him and leaves the room. That moment marks the beginning of Phil’s third phase after questioning and excitement: depression.

The next day (we assume), he tries the same ‘strategy’ to arrange the perfect date but you can see something is off. When they get to the point of the snowball fight with the kids, Phil is overdoing it, like this was not important and not part of his objective. His behavior is not spontaneous or playful, it is calculated and almost scary when you notice Rita’s reaction. As a result, Phil ends up being slapped on eight more occasions and starts exhibiting signs of severe depression.

In short, Phil is trying too hard in that part. He is intent on *making* things happen (conditional love), when spirituality teaches to *let* things happen (unconditional love), then go along with them. *Do nothing and everything will be done*. Which is exactly what Phil will discover in time.

Part III – Depression

Chapter 5 – Bitterness

When sadness kicks in, Phil is seen staying in at the B&B, finding in advance the questions of the day’s jeopardy while drinking whisky straight from the bottle. Another time, he is seen bitter and jaded while filming his reporting on the groundhog’s prediction in Gobbler’s Knob. On another day still, he does not get out of bed.

Maybe there are people out there who have tried battling their ego and felt just like that at times. The ego is relentless, it never fails and it hardly ever wavers. Progress is far from constant and when you make two steps forward, even though you know you are going to make a step backward shortly afterward it never gets easier, or

more easily accepted. (Actually, the four phases described here are, just like any good cycle, repeated on several smaller and smaller scales. For instance, you may progress for a few months and feel down for a few months after that. And then it cycles back up. It is likely each one of those phases will be divided in similar fashion with shorter and dimmer phases. Even though one knows how it works like that it is still awfully frustrating to regress.)

So the temptation is there to give up, much like Phil does. He fails to see a point in what he is experiencing. He gains nothing, loses nothing, changes nothing, so why bother? What he has to learn is that the universe breaks for no one. It is like a grinding machine advancing forward whether you like it or not. If you let yourself be dragged or if you refuse to play along, you *will* be ground, no matter who you are, no matter how long it takes. Pleading and bargaining won't work. Feeling like giving up won't work either. You have to leave the past behind and enjoy the present, making one step at a time without ever stopping to take your breath or look back.

Chapter 6 – Suicide attempts

If one had to live on some high rock on such a narrow ledge that he'd only room to stand, and the ocean, everlasting darkness, everlasting solitude, everlasting tempest around him, if he had to remain standing on a square yard of space all his life, a thousand years, eternity, it were better to live so than to die at once! Only to live, to live and live! Life whatever it may be!
Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (Part II, Chapter 4)

Phil's bout of depression is logically followed by suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts. He's had enough and wants to be done with February 2nd and Punxsutawney.

His first suicide happens when he captures groundhog Phil and drives with him to a quarry before hurrying the car over a cliff and dying either from the fall or in the big explosion that ensues. The following morning he wakes up in his bed at 6:00 am like clockwork.

Not to be discouraged, he proceeds to get electrocuted, get crushed by a truck, jump from a tall building. Later on he will admit to Rita he was also stabbed, shot, poisoned, frozen, hung and burned – 10 deaths in total (that we know of). It is when he realizes that dying does not change anything that his next transition begins.

For those who believe in reincarnation the parallel is interesting. The main difference as always is that Phil is aware that something is going on. For everyone else, each beginning is a fresh start so you have no idea what progress you made in a previous life. Suicide makes no difference either because unfinished business means you *will* have to come back.

Chapter 7 – Slowly getting better

At 1:06:30 into the movie, Phil is seen again at the Tip Top Café, again with Rita. He confesses what is happening to him, that he knows everything about anyone and that he might be *a* god, since he is immortal. He manages to convince Rita to spend the day with him and you see him cheerful for the first time in a long time.

They spend the evening together and Rita reveals how she would be eager to have a thousand lives:

‘I don’t know, Phil, maybe it's not a curse. Just depends on how you look at it.’

The following morning at 6:00 am (1:15:00) Phil wakes up alone but something has changed in him, he is no longer depressed.

Life’s lessons are usually harsher but no less meaningful. The Tibetans tell the story of this monk, Doe Kyentse, who did not behave like a monk at all. He partied, he drank, he had friends who looked like bandits and sometimes acted like some – they hunted animals too. His speech was crude and his manners uncouth. One day he barged into a Buddhist temple with his buddies. A guard threatened him, so he took out his gun and fired a shot to the ceiling. The surprise and shock caused several of the monks to ‘experience’ enlightenment. When they looked up he was already gone. The idea is that judging other’s behavior from one’s perspective is never a good idea. With time, what was seen as detrimental became helpful. On a scale large enough, there is no such thing as good or bad. Some would say the Lord works in mysterious ways.

Part IV – Redemption

Chapter 8 – Improving things around

His first gesture of the day is to give all his money to the homeless man in the corner he had been ignoring thus far. He also brought coffee and pastries to both Larry, his assistant, and Rita. He talked to the event’s MC, Buster, to know where the camera should be set up to get a better view. Phil is trying to make everyone’s job and life better though he has nothing to gain from it (tomorrow he will have to start all over again).

Even after all this time, the sun never says to the Earth, ‘you owe me.’ Look what happens with a love like that, it lights the whole sky.
Hafiz

Phil’s first step towards redemption starts with an expression of unconditional love, which is exactly what the divine within is. He gives not for himself, not because he has anything to gain from it, but because it is...the right thing to do. This is what we are at heart, good. In the script Rita says so herself when asked by Phil:

‘What if none of your actions had consequences?’

‘There would still be an absolute good, regardless of the circumstances.’

They do not develop but it is clear this absolute good is the divine, the basis of everything in the universe.

Yet, doing the right is incredibly hard to express (more and more so) since it is not usually reciprocated in daily life. It is exactly like going against the current (‘It is not a sign of good health to be well adjusted to a sick society,’ Krishnamurti) since it is a lot easier to do nothing or something bad than the opposite.

Chapter 9 – Appreciating the little things

*If you learn to use a perfect afternoon in a perfectly useless manner,
you have learned the meaning of life.*

Phil proceeds with reading poetry, but this time out of genuine interest, not because he is trying to seduce Rita. He also starts learning to play the piano.

His redemption continues. He is seen exiting the room and making his usual first encounter with the man who asks him about Spring. Phil kisses him on the cheeks, recites poetry and departs with gusto, leaving the man behind him feeling elated and confident. He goes to his piano lesson and learns ice sculpting

We see he is only on the path to redemption when he meets Ned Ryerson once more in the street. Instead of welcoming him and starting conversation, he hugs him tight and long, which is enough to scare poor Ned away. The old Phil is still visible underneath the surface you could say. But he has to be steady and never waver until he gets it right ('Realization is a matter of practice,' Buddha).

The final step before enlightenment is for him to accept death. We see him at night stumbling upon the homeless man he is familiar with. The poor man is old and sick. He brings him to the hospital but the man dies there. The following day he takes it upon himself to take care of the old man and make sure he survives. To no avail. Phil has accepted that some people can be helped, but not saved. He has accepted that death must come to us all, which is basically *the* cornerstone of *any* spiritual teaching. Not being afraid does not mean being defiant, it means you are at peace because you already are what you are looking for, you won't become it in the future. You realize the present is all you ever had and ever will have. Any fear stems from that root, so you can tackle them one by one (like spending ten minutes in the dark for six months to quit being afraid of it) or go straight to the source (in which case picturing one's death is both very efficient and effective).

Part V – Enlightenment

*If enlightenment merely required sitting in the lotus position,
all the frogs would be Buddhas.*

Louis Pauwels

Osho said that when it comes to enlightenment, you can go 99% of the way, never 100%. If you go 98% it's like 0%, but you can get to 99%. The remaining 1% belongs to the divine and the divine alone. But you have to live like a Buddha or a Milarepa or a Krishnamurti already, not wait to disidentify with your body to do just that. (Satyam Nadeen will tell you that there is no free will and therefore no going 99% of the way but that's the name of the game, they each have their audience.) Phil's last Feb 2nd is a perfect example of that.

We pick up that last day at Gobbler's Knob with Phil giving his speech in front of the camera, and surrounded by most people present. His presentation is beautiful and truly heartfelt, not sarcastic one bit. Even his assistant thanks him:

'Hey man, you touched me.'

'Thanks, Larry.'

'Thank *you*.'

This sentence, ‘*you touched me,*’ is what living in the present is all about. There is a quality people bring to whatever they are doing without compulsive thinking, a quality that stems straight from the divine itself, that has the ability to move and change people, for the better. It is not what we do that matters, it is how we do it (*‘The way to do is to be’*). In a similar fashion, Ramesh Balsekar ‘woke up’ in the middle of a speech he was giving – without realizing it at first. Afterwards people came to him and told him that his ‘presence’ and the intensity of his words were really different from the previous times, which lead him to wonder why.

Imagine a highway with ten lanes bringing information to you brain at any given time. You cannot close lanes and you cannot open new ones. As a baby those lanes are used to convey sensations. As we develop language and thoughts, the ego starts taking over. As a result, for the average person maybe two lanes will convey sensations while the other eight are used for compulsive thinking. Spiritual discipline is to use those ten lanes to bring sensations to your attention, not thoughts. (You cannot close your mind to reality, *especially* during meditation.) That is why it is important to live in the now, to enjoy the whole gamut of reality, not just a small percentage of it.

What is actually experienced now possesses a lot of powerful things. It is so powerful that we can't face it. Therefore we have to borrow from the past, or invite the future, all the time. And maybe that's why we seek religion, maybe that's why we march in the streets, maybe that's why we complain to the society, maybe that's why we vote for the presidents. It is quite ironical. Very funny indeed...

Chogyam Trungpa

As a result, even Rita shows a genuine interest in Phil. She asks him if he wants a coffee but he blows her off saying he has errands to run. He is being himself, not the person he thinks he should be in order to attract Rita’s attention.

Phil then spends the day making people’s lives better. He saves a boy who falls from a tree ; he changes the flat tire of a car transporting to three old ladies (‘It’s nothing, Mam, I had the tire and the jack.’) ; he walks into a restaurant where Buster is suffocating because of a morsel of meat stuck in his throat ; he quips afterwards with him without being sarcastic ; he offers a young woman a lighter for her cigarette. In the evening Rita looks bummed when she learns that Phil is already at the town’s party (having fun without her). We cut to the huge room where half the town is dancing and Phil is playing the piano. We learn that on top of all he has done during the day, he also helped Debbie and Fred, a young couple, getting married and even bought them a gift, he also fixed an old man’s back (once again he quips with him without being sarcastic), and bought Ned Ryerson the whole lot when it comes to insurance (he probably doesn’t need it but the lesson here is to spread the wealth. There are many people and creatures and the more one has the less the others have, a just equilibrium had to come from within, not imposed by laws and regulations or a sense of ‘justice’).

Phil is bought at a bachelor auction by Rita herself for \$339.88. On the way to the hotel he makes a sculpture of her face in the snow.

1:34:49, we cut to the alarm clock. The same song is playing but the deejays words are different and this time it’s Rita who turns it off.

Phil has stopped making efforts, he has quit trying and just started living with the flow. *Don't do, and everything will be done.* He gave the best of himself to everyone during the day even though he knew it was pointless at some level. What mattered was the present.

In other terms, his last day is lived wholly in the present, and, at the end of it, he has reached enlightenment. But it is not the end, merely the beginning of the rest of his life, a life he will live fully while making the most of it, with no regrets or aspirations, with respect for his fellow human and a lightheartedness that he did not have so far.

1:37:49 'Let's live here.'

Phil is at peace with being in the here and now. (After 10,000 years spent trying according to the script, though it's hard to imagine how he could have kept track of the days passing by. As a comparison, it took 500 lives to Buddha from the moment he showed his first sign of compassion.)

One of the most important feature of this particular enlightenment is this: **answers do not matter.** Phil has no answer about anything. He doesn't know why it happened (the script tells he has been cursed by a jilted ex, the movie is better off leaving that point out), he doesn't know whether God exist or not (which is why many Buddhists will tell you they are atheists, or the taoists will speak of the Tao, the 'way,' which is extremely vague), he has no idea whether reincarnation is a fact or not (in the words of Ramana Maharishi, 'it's not because they are memories that they are *your* memories'), he has no idea whether there is such a thing as karma, or 'powers', or 'rnanubandhana' (karmic links, as explained by Vimalananda for instance), whether we have free will or not ; he had no guru except life itself – no one told him what was the right thing to do, he found the answer in himself, he doesn't need to practice yoga or meditation (but he could), and so on and so forth. Similarly, when Eckhart Tolle 'woke up' he had to read books to understand what had happened to him!

The only thing Phil knows for certain is that you have to be good in order to be happy ('You will not be punished for your anger, you will be punished by your anger,' Buddha), and you don't even have to force it as it will come out naturally. Worrying, attachments, desires, all that has to be left behind, for others to 'enjoy,' because everyone is at a different step in their own evolution.

Conclusion

Believe nothing, no matter where you read it or who has said it, not even if I have said it, unless it agrees with your own reason and your own common sense.

Buddha

In the movie, Phil knows what to do and when, since he is reliving the same day over and over again. In real life, everyday, every life is new, so what is the right choice given a new situation? That will be no help but the answer comes from within, always. It is not about saying yes to everything. There is a selfish 'no' and a selfless 'no.' Saying 'no' to a someone because you don't want to help is the first kind ; saying 'no' because what you are asked is against your beliefs / the law / morals is the second kind. A 'guru' asking for sex and saying this is good for spiritual progress

falls in the latter category. By the same token, accepting the world does not mean you should do nothing. If your neighbor has a tendency to beat his children you are still legally obligated to call the police. You can defend any stance without the idea of winning or losing. Just like in the Bhagavad Gita, if you're put in the middle of a fight, you fight because the situation requires it, not out of anger, hatred or because you want to (which is what Japanese samurai and Chinese martial artists understood early on: your main enemy is your ego, not your human opponent).

It is the author's contention Phil's last in Punxsutawney, which lasts about 12 minutes in the movie, is the most vivid example of a life lived in the present, one clear enough to inspire most people one way or another. By comparison, the Vigyan Bhairav Tantra and its 112 techniques gives specific exercises to be practiced purposefully. *Groundhog Day* gives merely rules that can then be applied any time of the day for any activity, not just during a given time frame or setting. It is much more generic than most teachings. Of course, Phil's encounters are easy ones compared to the conflictual or hateful ones many people face everyday, but they can serve as a canvass. Phil knows who to help and how. In real life, those you have to help are those life throws your way and who, you think, need help, not those you *want* to help. In Milarepa's life, right after he exacted his mother's revenge (killing more than thirty villagers in his village and giving a new definition to the term 'overkill'), he is sheltered by a Buddhist monk who knows exactly what Milarepa did. Still, he protects him from the angry villagers who, otherwise, would have killed him. Had the monk not helped the 'murderer' at that precise moment, the world would have been missing someone who turned out to be an immense teacher.

Life is a tunnel. Enlightenment is not the light at the end of it, rather it is when you stop minding that fact. It is a good thing to look for answers but a terrible mistake to look for the right one, because there isn't one, only those you need at a particular time. Only the ego is looking for answers. The true self *is* the answer.