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Groundhog Day and Existentialism

1. How and why was Phil trapped?

On February 2, Phil was sent to report the annual Groundhog Day festival in Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania. Getting tired of what he thought a nonsense festival, he unwillingly gave the report and could not wait to get out of town as soon as possible. However, a blizzard caused all the roads out of town to be blocked. So Phil had to spend other night at Punxsutawney. However, when he woke up in the morning, he found out that it was February 2 all over again, and this unexplainable situation happened repeatedly in the next day and days after. Thus, that was how he was trapped in the seemingly endless time loop of Groundhog Day.

Arguably, the reason why Phil was trapped is to make him grow spiritually. As you can see that from all of Phil's actions to break free from the endless time loop, the only one that was successful was when he saw the positive side of the situation, acted decently towards everyone, and used his knowledge of the daily incident to help other people.

2. Is Groundhog Day a religious movie? Explain your answer.

Yes. The movie promotes the theme of the spiritual growth of the protagonist and implies that a person is rewarded for doing good deeds. At first, Phil was an arrogant and selfish man. But after he had to face a series of thoughts and emotions caused by the situations occurred in the time loop of the Groundhog Day, he was gradually changed. At one point, he was able to accept the situation. Rather than trying bad alternatives like suicide to break free from the time loop like he had done several times before, he finally embraced the positive side of the situation. Although

he could not escape, he could try to get on as good as possible by acting decently towards everyone, and using his knowledge of what would happen to help other people. Finally, when he managed to enhance his human characters, he woke up and found that it was at last February 3.

3. How would you characterize the phases that Phil goes through? What does he learn as a result of his experience?

Firstly, the life before he was trapped should be characterized as the unexamined life. Secondly, the life when he was recently trapped the Groundhog should be characterized as existentialist crisis. Groundhog Day time loop caused him to lose faith of meaning of life. All of his earlier beliefs were proven to be wrong. He was extremely confused and even thought that he was insane. Thirdly, he realized that in this endless loop of Groundhog Day, the meaning of life was somehow impossible to find. Thus he entered the phases of Nihilism. Finally, he entered the phases which he had to make a choice of what to do with his life.

As a result of his experience, Phil learned that running away by committing coward actions including suicide was not the solution of the problem. Rather, he should accept the absurdity of life and try the best to live on, and embraced the possibility of good things in the situation.

4. How was Phil Journey related to Existentialism?

As mentioned in the former question, Phil Journey in the Groundhog Day can be categorized into the steps towards existentialism. In addition, there were several main themes of existentialism in Phil Journey in the Groundhog Day. For instance, when Phil first known that he was trapped in the Groundhog Day, he felt the sense of alienation because everybody seemed to have no clue about the repetition he was facing. Also, Phil faced anxiety when he realized that the Groundhog Day seemed to

happen endlessly without any way out. Then he felt forlornness when he realized no one was able to help with his absurd existence. Later when he was able to accept the absurdity of life and get on with it, he embraced the concept of responsibility, individuality, and engagement.

5. What would you do if you were trapped in a “Groundhog Day”?

If I were trapped in a Groundhog Day, I would initially try to calm down and accept what happened. Then I would consider meditating and learning the precepts of Buddhism because if I had to live endlessly, I would rather live a tranquil life. While meditating, the focus would be only on the situation in the present time, regardless of other things including the endless time loop I was trapped in. Thus, it could help alleviate the miserable feeling and enable me to accept the situation and live a peaceful life.

6. What does your answer to the previous question say about your beliefs about the meaning of life?

The answer in the previous question says that I believe in the Buddhist precepts about meaning of life. Though life is full of uncertainty and absurdity, I can do my best by focusing on the present time and remain conscious. As a result, I can live a fairly peaceful life.