

Groundhog Day: Psychoanalysis and Christianity¹

Samuel T. Goldberg, M.D.

The movie *Groundhog Day* shows the progression of a narcissistically fixated character from disdainful isolation, through abandonment and despair, finally to profound reengagement with the world of others. This paper describes his personal evolution both in terms of psychoanalysis, and also as a paradigmatic Christian rebirth.

Groundhog Day depicts a TV weatherman, Phil Connors, caught in an inexplicable time-warp. Each morning starts not a new day, but a repetition of the same one, endlessly. He alone recognizes the re-enactments. This necessity and opportunity to view and re-view how he lives moves him from his characteristic disdain, to despair, to hope, and ultimately to profound personality change.

In this sense, Phil undergoes something like a psychoanalysis. There also, the treatment's open-endedness creates for the patient a sense of timelessness. Analysis provides boundless opportunity to explore and study one's life experience and habits, to discover inexhaustibly new facets and articulations behind what may have seemed a plain surface. As does Phil, one finds that the present is infinitely penetrable; the more one looks, the more one sees. In analysis also, one moves inexorably from preoccupation with external events and circumstances towards inner self-observation. Gaining greater distance, one sees the extent to which one has made himself who he is and his life what it is. If there is unhappiness, one can learn, as does Phil, to what extent one's own choices have helped create it. In this regard, analysis involves self-confrontation that can be painful, but increasing personal responsibility. If one can understand and change himself, one can understand and change his life. In self-confrontation, there is opportunity, a new chance.²

While discussing *Groundhog Day* from a psychoanalytic perspective, we cannot in fairness ignore the intentions of the producers and writers of the film. They unmistakably intended to depict Phil's psychological crisis and development in terms of Christianity. At the very center and turning point of the film, Phil dives from a building with his hands and arms extended as if he were impaled on the cross. The very next scene has him wondering if he is a god, if not The God, because of his apparent immortality. Rita alludes to her Catholic education, but Phil performs miracles of prescience, making her believe in him. She chooses to stay with him, to bear witness.

Since both Christianity and psychoanalysis concern themselves with the healing of the human soul, both grappling with the same human experience, and since in Phil we have a single case example, it would be interesting fully to explicate how the two approaches intersect, as well as how they differ. We will not be able to undertake that task here.

Let's note briefly, though, that Christian theology has it that man has a dual nature. We're fashioned from vile dust, yet in the image of God. We are mortal in our bodies, to which we are nailed as to a coffin,³ but we are promised the possibility of eternal life (of

which Phil gets a portion). Christianity says that, insofar as it is accessible to human beings, the essence of God is best expressed in the life of a man. Likewise, the life of each of us supposedly can express the workings of God, if we will only permit it. While there is not time here to expand on these issues, I will blend in allusions to the Gospels as we go.

The film opens and closes, is bracketed, with a view through the clouds towards the sky above, representing not only the genesis of weather, but the heavens, unfathomable infinite. The clouds race by with increasing speed. If any exist, heaven is the place of eternity.

The very first words of the film are, "Someone asked me, if I could be any place in the world, where would I want to be?" From the perspective of heaven, this is a double entendre. As first seen, Phil is not yet "in the world." Only secondarily, by the magic of electronic TV gadgetry, is his image projected onto the Earth. He does not merely describe and predict, but, like an ancient god of the winds, blowing the cold front eastward, he "makes" the weather.⁴ He knows whence comes the wind and whither it goes.⁵ According to this figure, Phil affects the world but is from above, not of the world.⁶

Here we see represented a key aspect of Phil's difficulty, a characterological defense: Phil maintains a grand personal myth of specialness, superiority, and omnipotence. He believes he is uniquely wonderful among his fellow men; any feelings of inferiority are denied, split off and imposed on others. He should be treated as better than they; he should not have to suffer the fools or the fleabags. He should not have to come down from his pedestal, where he worships himself.⁷ In his own estimation, Phil is like a god.

From the perspective of others, however, Phil is a "prima donna,"⁸ a "jerk," a narcissist. As Rita tells him, his defining characteristic is his egocentricity. Focused on himself as a talent expecting special perks, he turns away from others and removes himself. He cannot enjoy others in the present. He hardly notices them, except to scorn them. He is emotionally restricted, angry, and disparaging. He does not let himself experience empathy, longing, disappointment, or concern.

Instead, sarcasm drips from his every utterance. "People are morons" seems to be his motto. He disdains even civilities when others try to be friendly.⁹ He pushes people away and keeps himself from recognizing them or their feelings. In his arrogant confidence that he is special, he believes he needs only himself. He cannot acknowledge any human insufficiency within.

Phil sees no tension or disparity between his real self and his ideal self, but with such a magnificent overestimation of his self-worth, that discrepancy is wide. He is thus all the more vulnerable to disillusionment in himself.

Though he takes himself seriously, his grandiosity is comical. At his moments of greatest self-importance, Phil gets repeatedly deflated.¹⁰ He has come to believe in the illusion of

his heavenly powers and perquisites, but others see what he cannot about himself. As he asks the phone operator, “What about satellites? Is it snowing in space?”, insisting on his celebrity, he is brought down to earth with a snow-shovel zonk on the head. His sense of magical omnipotence is repeatedly punctured.

Note how much Phil resents Phil, the Groundhog. One possible explanation: The creature is a rival, worshipped as he would like to be. While Phil cannot get tomorrow’s forecast right, “The seer of seers, prognosticator of prognosticators” is believed able to predict the coming of an early spring. All normal activity stops, and people dance for joy at the rodent’s arrival. Hogs and groundhogs are spoken of, imitated, and represented everywhere.¹¹ To Phil, however, Groundhog Day is a pagan festival. He calls these people “hypocrites”. He feels they are listening to—worshipping—the wrong weatherman. Like a mirror, the rodent-forecaster sharing even his name reflects the absurdity of his self-adulation.

Why should such a grandiose self-concept, grotesque and dysfunctional as it is, be necessary? Though he doesn’t realize it yet, Phil needs human love and care. He is like a child looking for his parents,¹² feeling alone and lost. As if having suffered earlier loss or disappointment,¹³ he seems to fear that human connection would be too risky or painful. He would not want to envy others their happiness. He does not wish to be vulnerable. Instead, he tolerates separation from others only by denying that they are of any value or importance to him. As if believing that nobody will stay with him, he rejects everyone. He has lost or given up the ability to connect to others.

We note that he is attracted to Rita from the moment that he first sees her, but he turns away, saying, “Not my kind of fun.” In their first evenings at Punxsutawney, he twice declines her invitations to join them for dinner, saying, “I’ll just stay in my room and read some Hustler magazines.” His kind of fun neglects the humanity of others. He can’t let himself be touched.¹⁴ His self-love has become a barrier keeping him from the love of another.

He’s attempted a narcissistic solution, constructing a personal myth, assigning to himself an idealized role. He has hoped thus to be able at least to love himself and thereby to regulate his self-esteem and sense of well-being. We notice however that, on the first morning with the innkeeper, Mrs. Lancaster, he parodies himself as weatherman; his contempt is directed also towards the very self he exalts.

Phil boasts that “a major network is interested in me.” He’s being “called up.” His focus on this glorious future, however, only emphasizes his discontent with the present, by which he already feels oppressed. For Phil, life is tedious, dreary, and dull. Every day stays exactly the same and nothing he does ever matters. He is stuck and cannot progress. Even before the time warp becomes concretely manifest, Phil feels trapped in the present.¹⁵

Something is dreadfully wrong over which he has no control. His fantasy of great power barely compensates for a situation in which he is powerless. As he is later to say to Rita,

“I may be having a problem.” Thus, it is Phil’s neurosis that mysteriously is to be made externally real. He will find himself bound by the twist in time as he is already bound internally by his characterologic fixation.

Blocked from leaving town by the blizzard, Phil asks “What’s happening?” and hears from the policeman, “Nothing’s happening.” He is confronted abruptly with the limits of his power. Upon looking outdoors on the second morning, when there is not to be seen the expected snow, and realizing for the first time that indeed, yesterday’s tape is replaying in a greater sense than merely on the radio, his first words are “What the hell?” Arrested in time, he is confronted with the personal hell of his own making, the cold gray winter of the soul.¹⁶ His being stuck perhaps forever in wintry Punxsutawney reflects his having been already emotionally “frozen,” at an impasse in his development, depressed, at a dead end.

Let’s pause to reflect on this outstanding metaphor of Groundhog Day, that of being *stuck* in time. This day may be the last day.¹⁷ He cannot get out of the present; there may be no tomorrow. There is no sense of the future.¹⁸

Globally speaking, we would consider pathological a state in which a person, like Phil, cannot progress in his life, for example, in his ability to have mature, loving relationships. We know that aspects of one’s personal development can be arrested as an effect of childhood trauma or deprivation, whether subtle or gross.¹⁹

To take one example, if in the development of a young child, the attachment with the mother is tenuous, frequently interrupted with separations and substitutions, or is unempathic or otherwise neglectful, there might result a depressive core.²⁰ One may thus become “fixated” in a repeating attempt to gratify needs and wishes which were denied, or to master what has thwarted him continuously from the beginning. Thus, the “repetition compulsion”: “the insistent (unconscious) tendency to repeat and relive unwanted situations from childhood.”²¹

One may on the one hand contrive unconsciously to repeat over and over again pain, misfortune, and defeat, in broad, repetitive sweeps dominating the entire course of life.²² On the other hand, one may also repeat defensive efforts to counter the trauma, to avoid “painful mental contents that are pressing for recognition.”²³ In reliving the past, one may also be “seeking a solution which will undo the past injury.”²⁴ There is unfinished business. One tries again and again. The repetition can be abolished only by resolution of the original conflict.²⁵

Repetition compulsion is a powerful, sometimes overwhelming tendency of human psychology and behavior. Yet, *Groundhog Day* presents the time-warp as an external fact, inexplicable, a suspension of the relentless flow of time, outside the usual process of nature. This is its artistic achievement, to express as a grand metaphor the external physical realization of an inner spiritual state.²⁶

While everything around Phil stays the same, his sense of self-constancy is nevertheless threatened. He anxiously turns for help, first to Rita, then to the doctors, getting his head examined, to no avail. In the alcoholics, however, he sees his own likeness. As says the flapjack man, being stuck in one place, every day exactly the same, where nothing you do ever matters, “just about sums it up for me.” There being no tomorrow, there are no consequences. You can do whatever you want. Like a rebellious adolescent tired of his parents’ admonitions, he’s not going to live by their rules anymore. He thus attempts first to deal with his plight through disinhibition.

He throws caution to the wind. Once again, the world is his oyster.²⁷ Brazenly, he can kiss “Momma”, Mrs. Lancaster, breaking through the incest barrier. He can slug Ned. He can gorge himself on flapjacks, sweets, and tobacco. He robs the money changers with impunity.²⁸ He doesn’t worry about anything anymore, most especially, the lack of love in his life. We might even suspect that this flight into gluttony and licentiousness unconsciously is designed exactly for this purpose: to avoid painful feelings that he is unloved, empty and unfulfilled. As Rita, however, warns, being wretched, concentric all to himself, he forfeits the renown and care of others. Thus cut off, his life is no life at all. He is doubly dying. His physical death will be not his first.

Unable yet to acknowledge a special attraction for Rita, he diverts himself instead with women who are “easy”, whom he can use disparagingly as play toys. Male bravado, however, cannot alone provide lasting gratification. An endless string of one night stands leaves him bored. His fiancé Nancy doesn’t even remember him. Here is the great irony: Phil, like King Midas, has achieved the ultimate fulfillment of his previous wishes.²⁹ Indeed, he is like a God. Able to predict even when each breeze will blow and when each dog will bark, he truly is the seer of seers, prognosticator of prognosticators, but he can derive no gratification from any of this because he knows all is vanity and emptiness.

While sexually exploiting Nancy, however, Phil catches a glimpse inadvertently through a slip of the tongue of what he more truly needs and seeks: Rita’s love. In Rita, he hopes to refind a happiness that has been lost. The degree of love he till now has maintained for his idealized wishful self-concept is now invested in her.

She possesses the virtues he’s never had. He permits himself to experience longing, the urgent wish to overcome his separateness from her. Where before, he was the prima donna, now she is his Madonna, the Lady for whom he would die. He is convinced that she alone has it in her power to grant or deny “the deepest satisfaction that would make him supremely happy or abysmally dejected.”³⁰ In love, he longs to recapture the blissful state of symbiotic mother and child.³¹

His early pursuit of Rita follows the style of his false self, however. He loves her narcissistically, for his own needs. He learns about her by contrivance. He lies and calculates. He disables the van so that she has to stay in town. Using his immortality for secretive information-gathering, he takes advantage of countless opportunities to piece together the perfect seduction.³² Yet, as he says, this perfect day takes an awful lot of work.

This is a mere imitation of love. He is not yet able to appreciate Rita's inner depths and complexities. When, in his hotel room, he tells Rita he loves her, he is genuinely befuddled at her reply that "You don't even know me." He protests that "This is real. This is love," and is left reeling by her angry denunciation.³³ He'd thought he was "really close," not realizing how far removed he was still.

As becomes painfully clear in the second snowman effort, Phil tries too hard. He doesn't like himself. He doesn't have faith that his natural self could be loveable. He feels he does not deserve her. There is something pathetic at how he strains to win love desperately, but ineffectually. Her repeated rejections and painful slaps mortify and grieve him. He feels irrevocably rejected. Without her continuing interested presence, he cannot maintain adequate self-esteem and inner comfort from painful affects. He sees no hope, but he cannot terminate his suffering. He is cast into despair.

As Kierkegaard wrote in *Sickness Unto Death* (1849),³⁴ "Despair is never ultimately over the external object but always over ourselves... What we cannot bear is being stripped of the external object. We stand denuded and see the intolerable abyss of ourselves." For Phil, this confrontation with himself is excruciating. He concludes that he's "come to the end of me. There's no way out." In killing both himself and Phil the Groundhog, he aims to destroy the once adored but now despised grandiose self, the false God. He literally drives himself to the dead end, and plunges into the chasm. We see the glowing reflection of the hellfire on the faces of Larry and Rita, who gaze down after him, horror stricken.

Phil's self is a torment to him because it reminds him of the seeming fact that he is unlovable. He attempts to kill himself for his perceived shortcomings, his sinfulness, and his unfulfilled yearnings for nurturance and dependency, which he cannot tolerate alone. He feels himself "a loathsome void,"³⁵ absolutely intolerable to himself, yet he cannot get rid of himself. Phil's suicides are in vain. He is resurrected each day.³⁶ "Even the last hope, death, is not available."³⁷

As he said to Rita in the snowball fight, "I will die for you!" He may wish unconsciously to achieve a magical reunion with a loving mother or father who finally will love and appreciate him. The turning point occurs when even Larry, who called him a pervert and enjoyed Phil's affliction,³⁸ now says, "He was a really, really great guy. I really, really liked him, a lot." For his suffering, Phil is forgiven and redeemed.³⁹

He's travelled beyond life, going where no one else can follow.⁴⁰ He has been born anew.⁴¹ Many times, he has "met his maker."⁴² On the one hand, he reflects on his apparent immortality. He gives signs⁴³ of his supernatural status, performing miracles, demonstrating his intimate knowledge of everyone⁴⁴ in the diner, evidently able to tell them all they ever did.⁴⁵ He knows everything that is going to occur. He wants Rita to believe in him⁴⁶ and to stay with him. She offers to be his "witness," i.e., she offers her "loving and concerned accessible presence."⁴⁷ She invests him with her affection. It is she who teaches him that "maybe it's not a curse. It depends on how you look at it."

With his suicides, Phil clearly has been transformed. His omnipotence and grandiosity paradoxically have been tamed. "I've killed myself so many times, I don't even exist anymore," he says. He acknowledges that he is not "the God," and says it's hard to account for his omniscience, because "I'm not that smart." That is, he's only a man. He knows he's a mere jerk, and that only God can make a tree.

Now his confession of his love for Rita resonates authentically. He tells her while she is asleep. That is, unlike his earlier attempts to seduce her, he now seeks no advantage, and his words are innocent of selfish or manipulative purpose. He loves her for being sweet and considerate towards others. She's generous and kind to children and strangers. She has those virtues he has been lacking. He humbly acknowledges that he doesn't deserve someone like her, now without complaint.

"From the first time I saw you, something happened to me," he says. Recall that, then, she also was superimposed on Earth by TV gadgetry. She was like an angel, a messenger of God descended from heaven, with her hands held up to her shoulders, flapping like wings.⁴⁸ He makes two ice-sculptures to honor her, the first of an angel. In her face but more so in her soul, he perceives a divine beauty. Where before he saw but through a glass dimly, now he is amazed, enraptured, and transported. The sight of her has pierced his character armor. Though it remain unconsummated, he is enriched now by his love for Rita. He idealizes her and regards her with extreme tenderness and concern. He tolerates the frustration of his desires, and achieves a sense of duration and durability in their relationship, even as she forgets each day. He has achieved separation, trusting in her constant presence. He has been saved by the love of and his love for a woman.

Now, his long slumbering capacities for broader appreciation are reawakened, and the human world opens up to him as venerable, warm, and offering genuine gratification. As if for the first time, he hears Mozart. He wants eagerly, by studying and playing it himself, to participate in the sublime.⁴⁹ He now experiences concern also for others. He cannot get enough of others, nor give enough. He revels in a banquet of human relatedness. He has life abundantly.⁵⁰ He wants to share their burdens. He tells Larry, "Let me give you a hand with the heavy stuff." He recognizes and identifies with their conditions and suffering. When he says to the old man, "It's hard down there at the bottom," he's not talking about the soup bowl.

He wants to keep everyone with him, to lose nothing of all that he's been given.⁵¹ No one should die. It is as if, for the second chance at life he's been given, he had a debt to repay.

In the elderly homeless man, "Pop", he sees someone totally spent, disconnected, and abandoned. There but for the grace of God might have gone he. When he hears from the nurse that the old man has died, he is deeply moved and troubled.⁵² Rather than feel guilty that he has survived while Pop has not, he makes desperate effort to save him. He wants to be superior to death, to give or preserve life for others. When he fails, he looks

up towards the sky,⁵³ towards God the Father, whom he perhaps has met and with whom he now feels in harmony, as he is living as God would want.

He wears the collar and garb of a religious Father, showing his identification. He now can regulate his self-esteem by approximating to the ideals he has internalized. Recognizing the importance of others, he no longer is out of step with nor turning from those around him. As he tells Rita, “No matter what happens tomorrow, or for the rest of my life, I’m happy now because I love you.” His love for her has grounded him. She helps him down from the stage where he’s performed.

He experiences and expresses to Rita tremendous gratitude, for her permitting him to know her and be known, and for her thus allowing him to discover and heal earlier wounds. He is able to experience bliss that earlier he’d had to renounce. In their love, he’s achieved a sense of uniqueness and personal value that before he’d imitated only through narcissistic constructs that were fantastic and untenable. He feels recognized, understood, and accepted.

When, stepping out into the virgin snow that has finally arrived, Phil exclaims “It’s so beautiful!” he is dazzled and amazed, innocent and guileless in his happiness. He has in the best sense become like a child again.⁵⁴

Samuel T. Goldberg, M.D.
10025 Governor Warfield Parkway #213
Columbia, Maryland 21044

¹ Presented at The Walter’s Art Gallery series, “Psychoanalysts Look at Films” on March 17, 1995, and published in *Projections, The Journal of the Forum for the Psychoanalytic Study of Film*, Vol. IX, No. 3, 1995.

² One sees that his compromise solutions to conflicts have been inevitably imperfect. Rather than condemnation for faults, limitations, and errors, however, one meets in the analyst an attitude of benevolent, patient acceptance: “Let us try to understand more.” Patients often experience this as a kind of forgiveness. There comes a new freedom to assert oneself playfully, to try something new. One goes over the past and present difficulties countless times, not only reexperiencing them, but also imagining what one could have done or could do differently. Just as Phil can try again and again, exhausting the possibilities of one strategy before shifting to another, one can try out creative fantasied actions in analysis without committing to them in reality; there need be no consequences. Thus, the patient ideally gains greater latitude and freedom from internal restrictions. At the same time, he learns better to delay gratification and gains greater capacity for forethought and deliberation.

³ cf: Plato, *Phaedo* 66-67, 81-83; *Phaedrus* 250.

⁴ (As the opening song intones, “I bring the sun; I bring the spring.”)

⁵ The Gospel According to St. John, Ch 2, 8.

⁶ cf: The Gospel According to St. John, Ch 8, line 23.

⁷ (Later, Rita helps him down.)

⁸ A pun: “pre-Madonna”

⁹ His anchorman is “Hairdo.” He would not like to spend one second extra in Punxsutawney with the “hicks”. He treats everyone mockingly. Pretending to feel his pockets for change, he brushes past the elderly homeless man who begs for help. He barks orders at Larry, who he denies makes any creative contribution.

¹⁰ When Phil boasts derisively that “There is a major network interested in me,” Larry adds, “That would be the Home Shopping Network.” Freezing in the blizzard he has declared impossible, he proclaims, “I make the weather!” to the police officer, who tells him, “Pal, you’ve got that moisture on your head.”

¹¹ The radio announcers make hog noises as they proclaim, “It’s Groundhog Day!” as does “porkchops,” squealing when he is grabbed by Phil at the staircase on the first repeat morning. Ned Ryerson’s perseverance, “Am I right or am I right? Right?” is groundhog-like, as is Nancy when she points with both hands downwards, elbows flexed, to indicate she’ll stay right here. Idolatrous graven images abound; Phil crashes his car through one with the drunkards.

Phil points out how Rita looks like a groundhog, and imitates one himself; then he offers blood sausage to Rita, the bloody flesh of pork. Later he will say he had Groundhog for lunch: “It tastes like chicken.” They will eat the flesh and blood of the porcine creature they are to worship and imitate. Likewise, Phil, referring to Ned, speaks of being attacked by a “giant leach.” His blood also will be drunk.

¹² Mrs. Lancaster; the homeless old man, “Pop.”

¹³ Perhaps in the mother and father he needed for safety and comfort.

¹⁴ Ned the bull penetrates these defenses, grabbing, manhandling, and punching Phil. “Don’t tell me you don’t remember me,” he insists, “because I sure as heckfire remember you!”

¹⁵ As he says in the van, climbing the hill or mountain (note the repeating Sonny and Cher song) with Larry and Rita to Punxsutawney, “people are going to see me interviewing a groundhog and think I don’t have a future.”

¹⁶ Rita, on the other hand, is in heaven, as she tells the waitress about the sticky buns.

¹⁷ The Gospel According to John, Ch 6, 39.

¹⁸ For Phil, the past is never left behind. In Freud’s analogy, a person’s present conscious mind is like a modern city constructed on the site of an ancient one, such as is the case with Rome. There, archeologists can discern how the foundations and plan from the past affect the character of the visible present. Artifacts from the past may appear on the surface, seeming anachronisms, out of context, clues to the earlier, lost civilization. When might the grip exerted by the past be too controlling and unhealthy?

¹⁹ And by failure to achieve full resolution of conflictual thoughts, feelings, wishes, and fantasies connected with such memories, even if all this is unconscious.

²⁰ The child’s opportunity to develop the optimally healthy autonomous self may be compromised. The child may feel, for example, that any steps towards autonomy, or self-assertion, or wishes for closeness and love, are dangerous, unacceptable and should be routinely inhibited, because they may risk further rejection, or other punishment by the parent.

²¹ Malev, Milton, “Use of the Repetition Compulsion by the Ego,” *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol. XXXVIII, No. 1, pp. 52-71, 1969.

²² It is as if such a person cannot learn from experience. Freud gives as an example “the lover each of whose love affairs with a woman passes through the same stages and reaches the same (unhappy) conclusion.” Freud, Sigmund, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, SE XVIII, pp. 21-22.

²³ French, Thomas, “Reality and the Unconscious,” *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol VI, 1937, p. 26.

²⁴ Kuble, Lawrence, “A Critical Analysis of the Repetition Compulsion,” *Int. J. PSA*, XX, 1939, pp. 390-402.

²⁵ Between wishes and dangers, which, again, would be largely unconscious, disguised behind the surface conscious content.

²⁶ As we have seen, Phil is a lost soul. In his automatic behavior and attitudes, he has cut himself off from empathic connectedness with others; his life is unwarmed by love. (Note the coldness of the “fake fire” when he is seducing Nancy, and later, Rita.) No one accompanies him on his long journey of eternal repetition; he alone recognizes the reenactments; no one else remembers. Everyone else moves on; he can keep no one with him; he is utterly alone. If he cannot “get out” of his exclusive self-regard, spring may never come.

²⁷ And now he’s more adept. He learns to avoid the icy pothole, and presumably the icy showers (baptism, “that first step”).

²⁸ The coins of the money changers are poured out: cf. The Gospel According to John, Ch 2, line 15.

²⁹ Those superficial, grandiose wishes have defended against the deeper longings which he has felt are too dangerous to acknowledge.

³⁰ Bergmann, Martin S., “The Intrapsychic Function of Falling in Love,” *The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol XLIX, No. 1, p. 70, 1980.

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- ³¹ As in Michaelangelo's "Madonna and Child."
- ³² He asks how to be her "perfect guy," and hears that he must be kind and sensitive, one who prays for world peace, who is too humble to know he's perfect, and who loves his mother. He said, "This is a man we're talking about, isn't it?" That is, he is supposed to imitate not the Groundhog, but to become like Christ. He feels "really close" on this one. "Little by little each morning, he gets closer," cf. his French poem.
- ³³ "I could never love someone like you, Phil, because you could never love anyone but yourself!"
- ³⁴ Kierkegaard, Soren, *The Sickness Unto Death*, Princeton University Press, 1954.
- ³⁵ Kierkegaard, *Ibid*, p. 153.
- ³⁶ Kierkegaard, *Ibid*, p. 151.
- ³⁷ Kierkegaard, *Ibid*, p. 151.
- ³⁸ Saying, "This is going to be good..."
- ³⁹ Or, is it Larry who is redeemed by Phil's suffering?
- ⁴⁰ The Gospel According to John, Ch 8, line 21.
- ⁴¹ The Gospel According to John, Ch 3, 3.
- ⁴² And he seems to have learned something important. The Gospel According to John, Ch 8, 29.
- ⁴³ The Gospel According to John, Ch 2, 23.
- ⁴⁴ The Gospel According to John, Ch 2, 25.
- ⁴⁵ The Gospel According to John, Ch 4, 39.
- ⁴⁶ The Gospel According to John, Ch 6, 29.
- ⁴⁷ Tyson, Robert, "Narcissistic Consequences of Object Loss," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, Vol LII, No. 2, p. 214, 1983.
- ⁴⁸ The Gospel According to John, Ch 1, 51.
- ⁴⁹ He is no longer all-consumed by his love; he has other errands to which he must attend.
- ⁵⁰ The Gospel According to John, Ch 10, 10.
- ⁵¹ The Gospel According to John, Ch 6, 39.
- ⁵² And asks where is he; he needs to see him: The Gospel According to John, Ch 11, 33-34.
- ⁵³ The Gospel According to John, Ch 11, 41.
- ⁵⁴ The Gospel According to John, Ch 3, 3.