**RESEARCH AS A WAY OF LIFE**

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**Introduction**

“Your life is your message to the world”.

--Mahatma Gandhi

What makes you better than yesterday? If it is the last day of your life, what will you do to make it as unforgettable existence? This philosophical inquiries are rooted in man’s search for meaning, infinite sense of wonder, need for self-actualization, and insatiable hunger for knowledge and truth. Life is meant to be lived and not to be observed. We are all actors in this arena of life and not just spectators waiting for changes to drive our ways of being. When opportunity knocks at your doorstep, then grab it. If there is no opportunity out there, then create it. As long as we live, we come to the realization that problem are not there to make us suffer, they are there to serve as our stepping stone to build our strong character, unbreakable resilience and insurmountable hope to change for the better.

**VISUALIZATION: THE ONSET OF MY JOURNEY IN RESEARCH**

*“What lies before, beyond and around you is nothing compared to what lies within you***”.**

I was in a research defense room along the second floor of Seminario de San Jose college building, observing the defense of our senior brothers who were defending their 90 pages philosophical thesis individually. I was amazed of how they straightforwardly responded to the questions asked by the formators (priest who assume the role of the panelist). That amazement made me feel the combination of excitement, fear and doubt. I feel excited in a way because I am inspired to the successful defenders of their thesis. Yet I also feel fear and doubt if I could also really do just what they have done. I was only in my pre-college year that time. My whole world really seem to be unsure if I could really make it to graduation in my philosophy course knowing the reality that I am not good enough when it comes to writing and oral presentation of scholastic papers.

But then, after a moment of discernment and prayer, I imagined myself presenting my thesis to the panel of judges in the defense room. I saw myself successful in ways such as: delivering my speech, thesis findings, discussion and answering questions and clarifications of panelists using English as medium of communication; visualizing myself learning the technicalities of English both in oral and written; reading philosophical books and finding difficult words in the dictionary every time; waking up 2 am in the morning to review lessons and make reflections on my classes; taking down notes on essential notions of my professors; developed my thesis proposal in accordance with the format of the philosophical paper; participating inter-collegial quiz bee, journal paper and oral contest and; graduating from the seminary with flying colors. Guess what? All these things manifested in such a way how I saw them through the power of visualization. With God’s grace and guidance, I was not only able to defend my thesis on Ludwig Wittgenstein’s’ concept of Language-Games, I was also given a chance to serve as an adviser in the defense of my classmate, Sem. Custodio, now a Rev. Fr. Custodio Embellado Jr, due to the absence of his adviser, the then Leo Andrew Bonbon, a former professor from University of Santo Thomas Theology Department.

After my graduation in 2011, I decided to take one year regency (to stop from priestly training and formation) and became the Prefect of Discipline, Religion and Physical Education faculty of the Seminario De San Jose High School Deparment. There I became a research consultant of the third year seminarians who were about to write their research proposal and thesis proper to be defended. I also became the consultant of the undergraduate research papers defended in various universities in Puerto Princesa City. With the monetary assistance they gave me, it made me even more curious and eager to explore more the expanse of research writing in many different fields such as criminology, nursing, education, business, engineering and humanities to name a few. I do not look into the technicalities of that particular field but I just look into coherence of thought, format, structure and style of writing. In short, being an editor is one of the source in income I have had aside from teaching in the school. That time I do research not for the sake of passing it as requirement but of helping my friends to pass their research requirements. I enjoyed doing it in such a point that I happened to make scholarly papers for the sake of self-discovery and fulfillment. This is what one of my colleagues and college instructor, Mr. Davatos said that when we do papers and able to publish it, we become immortals through the term we call: Immortality by remembrance.

**The Rise of Empirical Researcher**

In 2013, I applied for teaching in Palawan State University as lecturer in Introduction to Philosophy of the Human Person. There I was also given a task to teach General Psychology, Logic, Ethics, Spanish across colleges such as Engineering, Business and Accountancy, Nursing, Tourism, Environmental Science, Arts and Humanities, students who are taking up the subject pertaining to philosophy. I enjoyed discovering and transferring knowledge for two years of teaching in the university. The realization came to me that I should only transfer the knowledge adapted and being accepted by our generation from the past, but to discover knowledge that are relevant to the changes of this present generation. From that realization, I visualize myself as an international speaker and researcher, talking to millions of people around the globe and share relevant findings in the field of education. This was triggered when I attended one of the leadership conferences in Mandaluyong City.

Much to this wild imagination, I was invited with one of my co-faculty that time, Mr. Ian Anthony Davatos, now a Chairman in the college of Behavioral Sciences under the College of Arts and Humanities. He invited me to a forum of researchers from University of Amsterdam, University of the Philippines, Diliman and Palawan Studies Center. We worked as a team of researchers and ethnographers in the project called Chemical Youth. This project is a joint project of above-mentioned three universities under the umbrella of Medical Anthropology spearheaded by Dr. Prof. Anita Hardon and Michael Tan, the then UP chancellor. We were given a task to interview different workers in the vicinity of Puerto Princesa City. I was assigned that time to interview security guards from different areas such as universities, pawnshops, banks, pension houses and malls. That time I was surprised because all I know this will just be a part of our being instructor in PSU as training mode for research. To my surprise we were given 1, 500 Php per interview and transcription of the interviews. I was able to interview my first 30 informants and was given 45,000 Php for that work. This was followed by 30 informants in VitaPlus Company and 24 informants in abortifacients users in Roxas. I was not expecting that there is more. After collecting our data from the field, we were given a chance to attend an international conference and workshop for qualitative research writing, editing and data analysis using NVIVO software in Buena vista, Bahile near the underground river on the summer of 2014.One night there cost around 11,000 Php and every meal cost around 1,000 Php per plate aside from other food orders. We stayed there for almost four days and four nights. That activity was funded by European Union. During the sessions, we were able to draft our papers for security guards and have it checked and edited by renowned editors from New York as invited by Anita Hardon, our team supervisor in the field. In every paper that we draft, we were given 5, 000 Php and after publications, we were given 15, 000 Php.

With the support of Chemical Youth Project I was given a chance to present my data findings on abortifacients in Ha Long Bay, Vietnam in 2017. This was followed by another International Conference in 100th Year Celebration of Anthropology in the Philippines where I was given a chance to present my qualitative and ethnographic work on security guards’ use of chemicals in Puerto Princesa City. This was an article paper as part of a book published in UP Diliman titled - Modernizing Frontier: Chemical Tranformations of Workers in Palawan.

**Becoming an International Researcher**

Due to the uncertainty on the security of tenure in Palawan State University, I decided to apply to Department of Education in 2016. I was assigned in Roxas National Comprehensive High School and from there, I wrote my first action research as Senior High School Faculty. Based on my observations, learners drastically cheated during examination as if cheating is really a part of their day-to-day academic confrontations in taking examinations even in simple quizzes. So I was triggered to interview 16 informants from Junior and Senior High School learners. After I gained approval from the Principal’s office, I began to analyze the data. It took me almost six months to complete the paper and three months after, I was able published my action research paper titled - *Friends with Benefits*: Causes and Effects of Cheating During Examination in Dubai, United Arab Emirates under International Academic Forum (IAFOR). Now it has 7 citations and can be freely downloaded under Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Google Scholar, Research Gate, and ERIC Journals.

**Echoes from the Boondocks**

Visualization is another way of saying: ***Begin with the end in mind***. In every way possible, I noticed the only way to tap the infinite potential within us is to look to the mechanisms of the world not outside, disguising on the appearances, but on the inside, within us. We are all creators. This is the reality. Whatever the mind can conceptualize, it can be manifested. The idea can be purposefully and substantially translated with passion if it is felt. That is why emotion is otherwise known as energy in motion. If that energy in motion is in alignment with our goal, linking it to action can cause results which could be positive or otherwise. It is found that our mind knows no difference between imagined reality and the reality itself. That is why visualization works if a person believes, feels, acts and consequently get the result he or she desires in any way possible. When I declare to the conference that I will become an international speaker and researcher, I did not think of any places and persons who will make that happen. What I thought was that I was planting the seeds of potentiality (as claimed by St. Augustine as germs of potentialities, *rationes seminales*) waiting for the perfect timing (God’s timing in Christian perspective) to be unravelled and unfolded. These experiences of mine in research is not a product of CHANCE, but a product of VISUALIZATION that I have had in mind which has in direct contact with the universe which sometimes called the power of the law of attraction. Let us be dreamers at the same time actors. Doing our best does not mean we compare ourselves to others and their achievements, but we fulfill what we are capable of under the light of prayer where God’s wisdom is at work with our intelligence. When we do our part, the rest is nature’s business.

In all these, research became my way of life. I do research with or without a supervisor that will applaud my work; I seek to know that which I do not yet known for I believe that education is not only good to open our intellect and accept previous knowledge there is, but most importantly, education is geared towards challenging existing knowledge and thus contributing new horizons and perspectives, improving policies, informing best decisions and ultimately, raising awareness of truth for the benefit of the community in general.

**ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR:**

Leo Andrew Diego is a graduate of AB Philosophy at Seminario De San Jose in Palawan. He is currently enrolled in Master of Arts in Social Science Education at Holy Trinity University. He was an instructor at Palawan State University and is now a Senior High School faculty at Roxas National Comprehensive High School. His research interests are medical anthropology, philosophy of man, and on networking and social media.