

SOLVING LAST-MINUTE DILEMMAS
Methods of Artistic Research III. Stockholm University of the Arts
Stockholm, Sweden. November 2023

Cd. Juarez, Mexico, July 2023 -Dilema 1

I sit on a plane. The lady who sits next to me on an economy flight seems wealthy. Her shoes, bag, watch, and the delicate golden jewelry she wears speak volumes about her good taste. I am traveling to San Luis Potosi to film my documentary on ceremonial medicines with the Huicholes, one of several native tribes in Mexico. This is my last opportunity. She shares her life story with me, which is truly inspiring. As a retired nurse, she belongs to those who transformed nursing into a professional degree. She also promoted exchange studies between countries. Now, she works in the arts and congratulates me once I tell my story. I am deeply moved and look at this woman with admiration. My visit to Mexico has been anything but successful, and her words encourage me to continue making decisions over my change of profession.

"WE DON'T HEAL IN ISOLATION, BUT IN COMMUNITY."

— S. KELLEY HARRELL, GIFT OF THE DREAMTIME - READER'S COMPANION

"This is my last opportunity," I repeat to myself. My sister's contact had reached out to me the night before, and now, after taking this plane, I'll be on a bus on my way to San Luis, where people are waiting for me. The bus ride is lengthy but gives me time to organize everything I need. My external hard disk isn't working, and I suspect it's due to the sand and rain from last night's filming in the sand dunes during a rehearsal. Luckily, I still have not emptied the cameras. I search on Facebook Marketplace and purchase a new one. The seller agrees to meet me at the main entrance of a supermarket. Once in San Luis, a German man, now married to a Mexican, welcomes me and drives me to the supermarket. I buy all the resources I need for the ceremony, and then we meet the seller for the exchange.

The location chosen for the ceremony is just outside the city. The German man shows me the way to the entrance of the summer house, and I position myself near the fireplace, regretting not having brought another person with me. Now, I must talk to the main Huichol shaman to obtain permission to record the ceremony, but I also need to set up all the equipment. Ensuring everything is prepared before the ceremony begins is my current objective.

The shaman doesn't speak the same language, so he uses his son as a translator. I don't have time to ponder whether he's pretending not to understand Spanish, so I continue to explain that it won't be possible to use the documentary at festivals due to the equipment I'm using: a 360-

degree camera. Once he's certain that I won't make money from it, he grants me permission. I'm now ready to set up the equipment when the question I've been avoiding finally comes from him: **"Are you taking the medicine?"**

Risk assessment

Extract from Start-up permit, Urban Witches, Nicia Fernandez.doc

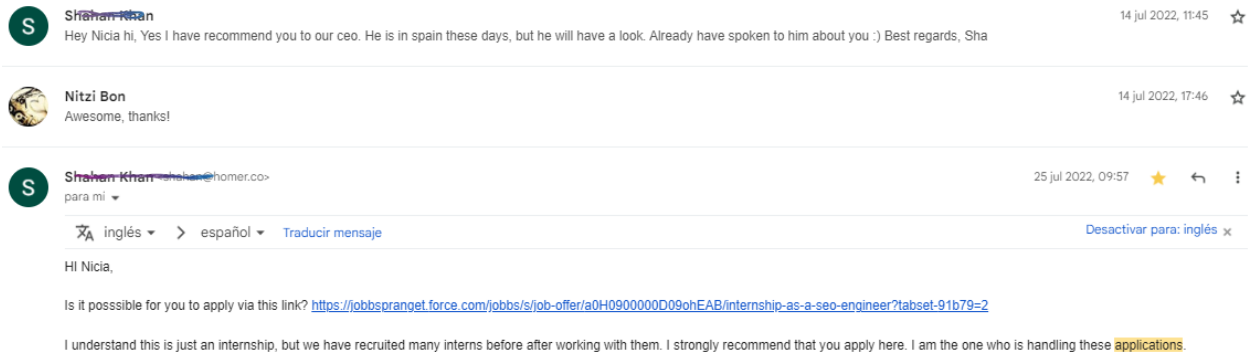
"It is legal for native indigenous the use Peyote for ceremonial and medicinal reasons in Mexico... ...a shaman must be present whenever a ritual is requested in rural or urban areas. The use of peyote during film production needs to be avoided due to the unique psychedelic effects that may occur on everyone in the crew and for school equipment safety reasons..." -Nicia Fernandez, 2023

Stockholm, Sweden, September 2023 -Dilema 2

The film studio at the university is really imposing. Its high ceilings and numerous elevators are distributed all around the ceiling. Everywhere I look, there are enormous sets and green screens, and as I walk through the studio, I find myself thinking how often I would be in this room over the next two years. My heart is beating fast, far more than it typically does, and my nerves are on edge. I, a marketing businesswoman, now found myself surrounded by artists who had dedicated their lives to their craft. It had taken me over a decade, but I had finally made the leap, hoping that my long-time hobby could now transform into a full-time profession.

Though I feel a sense of not belonging in this world, deep down, there is a quiet sense of joy. I am "forced" into this decision, primarily because it had been over a year since I'd last found a job. Superficially, I pretend to feel frustrated about my prolonged unemployment, because I know I must keep my true feelings hidden from my partner, his family, and mine. I already know what they think, that going into arts is a stupid idea.

The school's producer appears now in the studio and declares that it is time to take a tour of the facilities. I join my classmates and explore four out of the five floors of the industrial-like building. It takes a few hours of overwhelming information but now that is over, I pause a moment to catch my breath. As if someone has read my movements, this is the time my phone unexpectedly rings. It's a call from the HR department from a digital company that I had previously turned down due to some unfavorable terms. They are now reaching out, urging me to reconsider the job offer. The HR representative is now confessing that the company's founders have ties to Spotify, and they anticipate significant growth in the coming year. It would provide me with the time to grow together with the company in a high position. They needed my decision by the following day.



My partner, who happens to be friends with the HR manager, is calling me now. He is congratulating me, and happy by the idea of me accepting the job. He points out the possibility of selling our current apartment and purchasing a larger one, for us and our (future) family. My heart sank, the whole point of coming to Sweden was to form a family, **how selfish can I be?**

Aristotle and the pursuit of happiness.

In both dilemmas, a quick answer must be made with all the information I have at the time. To ponder this, I extract myself from both stories and find myself comfortably positioned on my bed, lying on my stomach, with my computer perched in front of me. This is my favorite working posture, one that allows me to concentrate fully and disregard any external distractions. I am looking for Aristotle's philosophies regarding the decision-making process.

Looking into my research, I find various Aristotle-related topics, such as happiness, friendship, and self-love. The more I explore, the more I realize that I've been unconsciously practicing Aristotle's principles throughout my life.

One idea resonates with me profoundly: the concept that the goal in life is to attain happiness. I reflect on my own journey, and it becomes apparent that my overarching aspiration and yearly birthday wishes have consistently revolved around one simple desire—to be happy. This revelation leads me to question how effectively I've been pursuing this goal in my life.

My research guides me from one book to another and from blog posts to deeper insights. It's in the words of Edith Hall's "Aristotle's Way: Ten Ways Ancient Wisdom Can Change Your Life" that I find a revelation. According to her, happiness is synonymous with discovering a purpose that allows you to actualize your potential and improve your behavior to become the best version of yourself. She emphasizes the idea that we are our own moral agents, but we function in an interconnected world where partnerships and relationships with other people hold immense significance.

Extract of my Creator Statement from Urban Witches

"...If keeping our soul healthy is to be connected to our community the same way food and habits keep our mind and body healthy, then we need to be aware of our tendency to live in solitude, especially in urban areas." -Nicia (2023)

Another revelation is that happiness can be planned and built upon habits, and this strikes a chord within me. It takes me back to my primary school days, which I consider some of the happiest moments of my life.

Cd. Juárez, México, September 1994

It's 7:00 am and I am 9 years old. Today it has been the alarm and not my mom who wakes me up. I do my bed and take a shower. By 7:30 am I am ready at the kitchen, and since my father is not there yet it is my turn to prepare milkshakes for us. The recipe is simple, yet I never get tired of it: oats, wheat bran, eggs, a banana along with another fruit, honey, and milk. It's a wholesome start to the day. Following breakfast, I prepare sandwiches for my younger sister and me, although occasionally she takes on this task. I drink my milkshake with haste, gather my backpack, and hop into the car, which my father has thoughtfully preheated. He drives us to school at 7:50 am and picks us up at 2:00 pm. Back at home I am either in charge of setting the table or like, today, I am making lemonade. I eat lunch at 2:30 pm and then do my chores: dusting, cleaning the mirrors, take the trash out, give food to the dogs, do homework and by 4:00 or 5:00 pm I go out to play with my friends. On Wednesdays, my schedule includes a trip to theatre classes from 4:00 to 5:00 pm instead. At 8:00 pm I am back home to eat a light dinner while watching cartoons and maybe a telenovela if my mom doesn't mind, only to prepare to sleep around 10:00 pm.

The family dynamics that worked seamlessly throughout my childhood and youth have evolved as I've grown older. The more capable I've become, the more responsibilities I've assumed, and subsequently, more freedom has been granted to me.

My responsibilities have transitioned according to my age; the family car became mine to drive, the cartoons of my childhood have given way to school projects, and my nightly schedule stretched into the late hours of the evening. As I analyze the years of happiness in my youth, I ponder what has changed over the years.

Revisiting these memories, I come to the realization that the first bubble to burst was related to my career, followed by a rupture in the sphere of work and love. It's a disconcerting realization, and it propels me on a quest for answers.

In my continued exploration of Edith Hall's book, I encounter an example that deeply resonates with me. It tells the story of a tea party featuring eight non-vegan guests, two vegans, and a

perplexed host trying to accommodate everyone's dietary preferences. Aristotle's rules of decision-making come into play in this scenario.

The host consults the caterer and seeks input from the guests, attempting to find the ideal solution. Ultimately, Aristotle's wisdom guides him to serve non-dairy pastries that are universally enjoyed, including by the host himself. The act of the host including his own preferences means that self-indulgence is important, a concept I now understand as the core reason behind the burst bubble in my career. I had always dreamed of becoming an actress or cinematographer, but I found myself pursuing a career in marketing instead, the most creative career in business I could find that could lead me to create TV Commercials. The disconnect between my passion and my profession, despite following the first as hobby, had caused the first bubble of happiness to burst. The journey of self-discovery and reevaluation that lay ahead was daunting, yet necessary.

As I read further into Aristotle's teachings and weigh up my own experiences, I am aware of the changes that have shaped my life. The pursuit of happiness has evolved into a quest for balance, authenticity, and the reconnection with my true self. The road ahead is blurry, but the wisdom of the past serves as a guiding light in my journey towards rediscovering the harmony and joy that once defined my life.

Aristotle in the rational, Heidegger in the irrational.

Aristotle's approach to decision-making is often associated with his ethical philosophy. His ethical framework provides valuable insights for making informed and morally sound decisions but it's not a step-by-step process. Like in the example of the tea party and the sandwich dilemma, in which solution turn out to be non-dairy pastries; here are some key principles:

1. Identify the Ethical Dilemma: two different diets with cost differences.
2. Get all the Information: vegan sandwiches cost double, and it means meat eaters will have less food despite being the majority. Some might take vegan sandwiches despite being meat eaters. Pleasing only meat eaters will make vegans discontent and not included.
3. Seek experts: Consult with the guests, chefs or catering whoever can provide valuable insights and different perspectives on the decision.
4. Evaluate Consequences: Consider the potential consequences of each available option.
5. Examine precedents: Check also previous tea parties and how they work out.
6. Find the Golden Mean: Check everyone's directly affected point of view and find the middle point.

7. Consider Chance: Anything that could be unexpected.
8. Make the Decision: Based on careful deliberation, choose the option that aligns most closely with virtue and leads to the most morally sound outcome: non-dairy pastries.

While Aristotle's ethical framework provides guidance on decision-making, it's essential to adapt these principles to specific situations and apply them in a way that aligns with your own values and circumstances.

Aristotle's "Doctrine of the Mean" suggests that virtuous behavior lies between extremes. In the context of irrational decision-making, this might mean that making decisions driven by extreme emotions, passions, or impulses would be considered irrational because they deviate from the balanced, rational, and virtuous middle ground. The idea of decision making through irrational or very short periods of time can be complemented by the philosophy of Martin Heidegger.

The Heidegger Scholarship suggests that virtuous behavior can be performed immediately and spontaneously because it is integrated into our everyday existence and pre-reflective understanding. It arises from our engagement with the world and our authentic response to ethical challenges. While conscious thought and deliberation can certainly play a role in ethical decision-making, Heidegger's philosophy highlights the idea that virtuous actions are not exclusively products of rational reflection but are deeply embedded in our existence and our intuitive understanding of the world. These five premises can be thought thru life to make faster decisions:

1. Being-in-the-World: Heidegger argues that human beings are not isolated thinkers but are always embedded in the world. Our existence is characterized by our immersion in the world and our engagement with it. In this context, virtuous behavior is not solely a product of intellectual reflection or conscious decision-making but is deeply intertwined with our existence in the world.
2. Everydayness: Heidegger describes the ordinary, everyday activities that constitute much of human existence. In everyday life, people engage in a wide range of activities, including moral actions, without explicit, conscious deliberation. Virtuous behavior can become an integral part of these everyday activities without the need for extensive cognitive analysis.
3. Pre-Reflective Understanding: Heidegger introduces the idea of "pre-reflective understanding." This is a mode of comprehension that operates beneath conscious, deliberative thought. It is a kind of practical, intuitive understanding of the world and how things should be done. Virtuous behavior, when integrated into our being-in-the-world,

can be guided by this pre-reflective understanding. For example, acting compassionately without thinking about the person's moral behaviors.

4. **Authenticity and Ethical Action:** Heidegger's philosophy places a strong emphasis on authenticity." Being virtuous, for Heidegger, is not a matter of conforming to external rules or norms but of realizing one's own potential for ethical action. In this view, virtuous behavior arises authentically from one's individual understanding of what is right and good within a particular context, rather than being the result of external, deliberative processes.
5. **Contextual and Situational Understanding:** Heidegger also underscores the importance of understanding situations and contexts in which action takes place. Virtuous behavior can be contextually situated, arising spontaneously in response to the unique demands of a particular situation. This understanding is not necessarily conscious and deliberate but is part of our engagement with the world.

In both dilemmas, taking a native medicine while filming a documentary and choosing between career or family (study or work), I applied unconsciously for the Heidegger Scholarship. Authenticity and Contextual and situational understanding are the two premises that resonate the most with the decision made at the time. These are analyzed in the next paragraphs.

DECISIONS

- "Are you taking the medicine?" Dilemma 1

Being in THEIR world, in the world of the Huicholes, this ancestral medicine commonly known as peyote or abuelo (grandfather), has no other implications than what it means to drink chamomile for your stomachache or 7-flower teas to sleep. The drink will, at the most, help me to be awake all night, and it will certainly cure any ache my soul has. This is also a pre-reflecting understanding I had to make to engage ethically in their beliefs and ask for permission to film their ceremony. Understanding what it means to native tribes to just be subjects of interest for filmmakers or anthropologists during research without getting anything back was key to knowing how I should approach. I knew in advance how important it is to be on the same page regarding medicine, and that I had come from a long way to this very precise moment.

The picture below is the only proof I have of my ceremonial experience in San Luis Potosi. It's not even suggested from me, but I am happy someone else did. It doesn't show, but I have been sleepless for more than 48 hours. I have taken the medicine. In a situational context that involves a last-minute call for this ceremony, 10-hour trip, no sleep and other small accidents on the way my answer was positive. Yes, I want to film this documentary... No, I can't afford a rejection after all that I have been through this past month. This is after all, my last opportunity before going back to Sweden.

This decision, made in seconds, took me into a spiral of guilt during the production as I was unable to film, due to an unexpected event: my period. The medicine, as usual, made other attendants dance and sing all night. I was simply lying under a cover looking at the grass made of paper and how human shakira-made masks grew from it. Note side, I might use this for the animated part in my documentary.




San Luis Potosi, Mex. This trip is the result of a last-minute decision (taken in less than 24 hours).

-How Selfish I Can Be? Dilemma 2

Nils Claesson, in *The Text that Nobody Reads* describes that the market-driven logic drives people to view themselves and their relationships as commodities. The interest of my partner in me having a job represented an upgrade in our lifestyle. An upgrade that was on risk due to my previous decision: studying a master in documentary film. That meant waiting 2 more years. The risk of losing this opportunity would have made him decide to push me to go through a job that was meant to be full-time first, not an internship. An internship would not fulfill "our" interests as a couple but would have led to buying some time because I was already inside a company, this is the "everydayness" in the business world.

According to Aristotle, a friend (1) wishes and does (real or apparent) good things to a friend for its sake, (2) wishes the friend to exist and live, (3) spends time with his friend, (4) makes the same choices and (5) find the same things pleasant and painful as his friend. Thus, conceived of as treating him as another self. (Julia Annas, 1988)

In the only thing we can't agree upon is that we don't find the same things as pleasant or painful as the other in a way that I have decided to keep my enthusiasm for the master to myself. Being in MY world of moral education in Mexico and the concept of a family led me to reconsider a job I rejected due to unethical changes in its set-up: from a full-time job to suddenly an internship. Choosing my (future) family over my career change. The post below indicates one of my contributions to the company.



App test + Fika

Hil! I'm doing app tests as part of my internship for people who own a HOUSE and have a lot of errands related to it (maintenance, buying/selling, fixing, renovating, expenses, etc).

If you like to help it'll be awesome. The test can be done online or at the office (with Fika) located near the metro Stadium in Ostermalm on Mondays or Tuesdays and last 60 min. If you're interested, please answer the survey so I can contact you.

<input type="checkbox"/> I own a house and will visit the office	22% >	×
<input type="checkbox"/> I own a house and will help online	42% >	×
<input type="checkbox"/> I own an apartment, but have a lot of errands just like in a house	36% >	×

...but this is not how it ended. After all I wouldn't be writing this article for MARIII.

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Note from the author

Following my instinct.

An instinct or a gut, it's an indicator whenever you should or not take a decision. Whenever you feel displeased about something, despite rationally being good, then it's not good for you. The other way around, if something feels good, even if you are nervous, then go ahead and take it. For the first Dilemma I was terrified that something wrong was going to happen. For the second dilemma I always felt good at the university and uneasy at the job. Sometimes you just must listen and know yourself and reconsider your decisions. I am pleased that I have taken the decision to fly to San Luis despite being unable to film as it reaffirms my ability to negotiate with others. I am pleased that I decided not to quit school after accepting the job and instead, joined the Student Association and started collecting apartment points. I knew that I might need them someday.