How to make a life? Well, I am a cook. I am a baker. This is what I have been doing lately during my senior spring semester of college. This has been what's fueling me lately, literally. Coming from the Oregon Extension, cooking everyday, to Stav Cafeteria here at St. Olaf has been very disjointing and affecting my whole. This has led me to realize how important food is for me to have a good life. I’m sure this is the case for others as well…maybe they just don’t know it. So, in this paper (which I am doing for religion class) I will be examining what a “good life” looks like in relation to food. So, loved ones, what you must know is to have a good life, one must have a relationship with food that allows food to fuel you in a holistic way: feeding the complexity of the human: mind, body and soul. Don’t worry, I am getting hungry, too.

This holistic perspective of food has been directly informed by the moral orders that I have come in contact with in my life…what is a moral order you say? Good question: A moral order is a shared understanding of how humans should life a good life. PhilosopherChristian Smith further describes these moral orders as “intersubjectively and institutionally shared social structurings of moral systems…” (Smith, 10).

Further Smith says that these moral orders create beliefs about our natural human desires…psst, this is where food comes in. He calls these second order desires. We have desires about our desires. For example,the feeling of craving for sustenance is a first order desire. I believe I need food right now. The second order desire comes in when you have a feeling, a desire about this first order desire. I believe the hamburger is the right food to fuel me right now. Smith says this desire for the hamburger is guided by this person’s moral orders (Smith).

Alas, a lot of words, now let's return back to me. I have a lot of contradicting moral orders that have resulted in a lot of contradicting ideas about what I want…what I believe. For example: “should I eat this cupcake right now? All of my friends are eating this cupcake? But I am not hungry…But I am not craving sweets. But I do think food is something that should be eaten with others…But I also don’t want to spend money? And that's all this cupcake is doing, satisfying the consumer’s belly.” That's a lot of contradictions! But, loved ones, I am asserting that we need all of these contradicting moral orders to have a full relationship with food. To see all of the ways it has meaning in the world. I will not tell you what these moral orders should be that guide your life. Rather, I will explain to you what moral orders are guiding me in the cupcake example above.

The first moral that I see guiding me is revealed in the questions I leave for myself: “But I am not hungry…But I am not craving sweets.” I see here that I am being led by the belief that my decisions should be made based on how I am feeling. This is often a dominating moral order for me. One way of conceptualizing this moral order is through Smith’s terminology of the *Expressive Romantic* narrative*.* The expressive romantic walks through the world making decisions based on how they can “assert their primitive self,” and “get in touch with their deepest selves.” They are guided by “getting back in touch with how they feel” (Smith, 71).

The second moral order that I see swirling around in my head is a mix of religious doctrines from my interfaith childhood that view food as a way to unite God’s children. In the cupcake example, this moral order comes out via the comment: “But I do think food is something that should be eaten with others.” My moral order is leading me to eat the cupcake because I believe it is an opportunity to unite the diverse human consciousness experiences through a communal embodied action. Which moral order will win?

Finally, the last moral order I will discuss is one that is being undermined in the example above: “But I also don’t want to spend money? And that's all this cupcake is doing, satisfying the consumer’s belly.” This is the consumeristic moral order. I understand this moral order to guide our second order desires to see food as something that needs to always be bought and consumed to make us the humans we are. To make us the humans we are. This often leads to a compulsive consumption of food without feeling…as you might guess this contradicts with my *expressive romantic* moral order that wants me to be led by feeling.

Which moral order will win? Honestly…some days I eat the damn cupcake and some days I don’t. None of these ever truly win, and I don’t want them ever too. Because I like different aspects of each moral order and let these aspects guide me when I am ready for them.

My holistic view of food which begs for a more encompassing view of moral orders is shared by Miroslav Volf and Matthew Croasmun through their idea of the ‘flourishing life.’ In this vision, a good life is made up of three dimensions that are constantly influencing and changing each other. They say: “Each of these features has its own integrity but each is not a leg of some good-life-stool” bearing separately the weight. Instead, each is also tied to the others, both influencing them and being influenced by them” (Volf, et al., 16).

These dimensions are the circumstantial, agential and the affective. The circumstantial is the physical conditions of life, the agential can be understood as the more logistical conditions of life that form character, and the affective is the feeling dimension.

In Volf and Croasmun’s view, on different days I would not eat the cupcake because my life well lived is being led by feelings, while other days I would eat the cupcake because life well lived is being driven by my circumstances, while other days I would anxiety about the cupcake for 10 minutes and then order the cupcake and hate myself because my life being well lived is driven by the agential realm. And because they are so intertwined, I’d likely not be able to detect which “individual” dimension is guiding me.

I mentioned above that the *expressive romantic* narrative, the good life based on how one feels has guided my life. Because of this, I’ve been rather pulled to those who directly contradict this moral order. One such category of these people are the stoics. The Stoics understand the good life to be acquired through character, through virtue. Thus, anything outside of this character is not needed for *eudaimonia,* which is one way of conceptualizing a good life. Philosopher Marha Nussbaum says: “virtue by itself is self-sufficient, sufficient for *eudaimonia…*external goods, all goods other than virtue have no intrinsic value at all ” (Nussbaum, 361).

In the vision of the “flourishing life,” Stoics would say that the affective and agential realm have no bearing on the acquisition of the good life. Stoics would say a good life depending on your relationship with food would not consider eating the cupcake based on the people you are with or what your body desires.

Specifically, on the desires note, Stoics believe that we should not be driven by passion or desires. Nussbaum says : “Our people drive out the passions altogether…” (Nussbaum, 389). Stoics believe this is necessary for living a good life because they claim that the “...emotional motives are unstable and unreliable…” (Nussbaum, 392 ).

Loved ones, you know me. Yes, you know me. You know that I completely disagree with this and consider this to be stemming from the Western tradition that views the body as a sickness. But what I am leaving for you here, is that it is crucial to interrogate your dominating vision of the good life. Play with other theories! On your road to a good life, it is important to have a strong interacting relationship between your dominant moral order and the opposing moral order. This will help you to clarify the moral order that comes from deep inside of you. In regards to my cupcake, it will help you to feel more centered when you make that decision to buy the cupcake or not!

I would give myself a B on this assignment. My creativity, which is shown by deeply analyzing one aspect of human life, demonstrates my critical and applied understanding of the topics we have discussed in class. My remaining questions: What are Volf and Croasmaun thoughts about Cartesian dualism..specifically the valorization of the mind over the body?