

CONTENTS

Preface ix

Acknowledgments xvii

1	How to Be Well-Rounded	1
2	Why to Be Well-Rounded	37
3	On Being Bad at Things	82
4	Do Good Lives Make Good Stories?	110
5	The Good Life, the Well-Rounded Way	143
6	Tradeoffs	180
	Conclusion: A Life More Ordinary	218

Works Cited 221

Index 233

1

How to Be Well-Rounded

IN ROBERT Heinlein's novel *Time Enough for Love*, the character Lazarus Long claims:

A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects.¹

This is an ideal to aspire to: people should live well-rounded lives. It's a familiar ideal: parents talk about wanting their children to be well-rounded; universities boast about the well-rounded curricula they offer; people admire polymaths. We want to know how to organize our lives, and we often care about being well-rounded, and yet this ideal has been almost entirely neglected by contemporary philosophers.²

1. Heinlein (1973: 265–6).

2. Two notable exceptions are Hurka (1987 and 2015) and Kauppinen (2009). We'll talk more about their views as we go along.

Let's fix that. The primary job of this book is to show that the well-rounded life is a good one—that for many of us, it's better than the alternatives. That doesn't mean there aren't costs, and we'll talk about those too. Sometimes, we can see that what might have looked like costs vanish when we look more closely. Other times, those costs are real.

While the well-rounded life isn't for everyone, this is a way to organize our lives that all of us should take seriously. Recognizing the value of well-roundedness gives us insight into other elements of the good life. It tells us that we shouldn't be afraid of being mediocre at some things and that we should be wary of the temptation to turn our lives into great stories. Above all, it reminds us of the fascinating variety and complexity of the world, and it encourages us to dig into that diversity.

Maurice and Lon Grady

Meet Maurice, one of the examples we'll come back to over and over again.

Maurice is a stay-at-home father to two small children. Maurice's single most important life project is to make sure that his children grow up healthy, safe, and happy. Maurice is a baseball fan, and it's his dream to someday visit every major-league ballpark. When he and his family go on vacation, they might go an hour or so out of their way to visit a ballpark, but probably not more than that. Maurice meets a friend a couple times a week to play squash at the gym. He used to like to do pottery, even though he wasn't very good at it, but once the kids came along, he and his family couldn't afford it. He hopes that he can pick it back up again when they're

a little older. Occasionally, in the evening, Maurice attends political events and volunteers at voter-registration drives. Maurice also likes to read non-fiction about American history, and he pays special attention to the newspaper's science section whenever it runs an article about advances in biotech.

Maurice can't do all the things on Lazarus Long's list, and his life isn't anything special or complicated or ambitious, but the variety of things he does and cares about adds value to his life in diverse and distinctive ways. Maurice is well-rounded.

On the opposite end of the spectrum, consider another example we'll revisit a lot:

Lon Grady is a hugely successful and famous NFL quarterback whose life is entirely devoted to football.³ Grady works out every morning at precisely 8 am, drinks a protein shake within exactly twenty minutes of finishing his workout, and limits so-called "acidifying" foods to twenty percent of his diet. As part of this diet, Grady claims, he has never eaten a strawberry or drunk a cup of coffee. Grady intends to play football until he's at least forty-five, which would make him the oldest quarterback ever to start in an NFL game. In pursuit of that goal, he spends his beach vacations running plays, wearing his shoulder pads and helmet, assisted by his trainer and delighted tourists. This has led to enormous success—seven Super Bowl championships.

3. Some readers might notice some similarities between Grady and a longtime quarterback for the New England Patriots (see DeCosta-Klipa 2017; Evans 2016; O'Connor 2017; and McKenna 2019), but we'll stick with a fictionalized, hypothetical Grady.

Lon Grady isn't well-rounded—he's what we'll call *one-dimensional*. In between Lon Grady's complete devotion to football and Maurice's well-rounded life, there's a lot of ground to cover.

Maurice and Lon Grady help show us the elements of the well-rounded life: the well-rounded person 1) has multiple pursuits, 2) which are in different domains, 3) which they appreciate the distinctive value of, 4) which have diverse character, and 5) which they balance appropriately. As we'll see, all these criteria come in degrees: you're more well-rounded the more pursuits you have, the more diverse they are, and so on. Very few people are maximally well-rounded, perhaps even fewer are fully one-dimensional,⁴ and most of us are somewhere in the middle.

Multiple Pursuits

The well-rounded person of Lazarus Long's imagination can do a lot of things, from changing a diaper to designing a building. That's a good place to start. When we think about who is or isn't well-rounded, we often have in mind what they do or are interested in—Maurice's kids and pottery and squash game, Lon Grady's football. That leads to the first element of being well-rounded: a well-rounded person has multiple pursuits. We'll get a better understanding of what pursuits we have when we recognize that they break down into a few recognizable types: projects, goals, hobbies, and interests.⁵

4. If you think—as some Grady fans do—that we can find ways in which Grady is minimally well-rounded, that might just point to the rarity of truly one-dimensional people.

5. There are also non-pursuits we spend time on: giving the dog a bath, balancing the checkbook, dusting the knick-knacks, that kind of thing. We'll discuss those later.

Projects

Projects, as we'll think of them, are the long-term activities around which we organize our lives.⁶ They tend to be relatively demanding and time-consuming. They're the main things we care about. For Maurice, that's raising his kids.

Sometimes, philosophers use the term "projects" to denote those activities which give our lives meaning.⁷ Because our focus here is well-being, the projects we'll consider include any which are potentially good for us, not just those which are meaning-making. Projects don't have to be the most meaningful things we do (although they certainly can be)—they're just the major poles around which we organize the rest of our lives.

Even on this more capacious understanding of projects, not all our pursuits fit the bill. Squash isn't something Maurice organizes his days around, but it adds something important to his life, something he doesn't get elsewhere. If we leave out the things that matter to Maurice but that don't count as projects, we're leaving out a whole lot of his life—baseball, pottery, history, politics.

There are even whole stages of our lives where we don't have projects. Some children have projects, no doubt, but lots don't. Some people look forward to retirement precisely because it gives them a chance to putter—to try woodworking, knit for a little while, volunteer every now and then, travel here and there. The things these retired people fill their days with are not, mostly, projects: they like what they're doing, but none of it is truly central. And yet it seems highly possible to evaluate the

6. This definition comes from Levy (2005: 187).

7. See Wolf (2010: 16; 1982: 435–8) and Williams (1981a: 12–13; 1981b: 58) for two canonical uses of this sense of "project." We'll revisit meaning in chapter 6.

well-being of children or of retirees—not only that, but these can be some of the best, most well-rounded times of our lives.

This is an idea we'll come back to a lot (especially in chapter 4). There are good reasons philosophers have focused so much on projects—they are often the pursuits that matter the most for our overall well-being. For almost no one are they the only things that matter. If we look only at the projects someone has, we're likely to get a distorted picture of their well-being. We need to expand our focus to include other kinds of pursuits.

Goals

Lots of projects have goals, at least in the normal, everyday way of understanding what goals are. Your goal for your career might be to become CEO or to invent a hot-dog bun that doesn't get soggy; your goal as a parent might be to see your child grow up into her own person. (Hobbies and casual interests, other pursuits we'll talk about soon, often have goals in this sense too.)

When I talk about goals as a type of pursuit, I have something slightly different in mind. These goals are the things we don't spend our lives pursuing actively, and certainly don't organize our entire lives around, but do want to make sure we do before we die. For Maurice, that's visiting all the major-league ballparks. This isn't something he does only as part of his project of parenting—he has an independent interest in baseball, *and* it's a handy way to bond with his kids. It's just not nearly as important as his central project. Maurice organizes his vacations around his kids' needs, rather than starting with his list of ballparks and then thinking about how his kids fit in. Something that's normally in the background of someone's life can help to make him well-rounded if he gets the chance to work on it every now and then.

Hobbies

Well-rounded people also have hobbies. Like projects (and unlike goals), hobbies are things we do consistently, more or less. Unlike projects (and like goals), hobbies aren't what we organize our lives around. Squash is a hobby for Maurice: he likes it, he's bummed when he can't do it, and he tries to play consistently, but it usually gives way to his central projects. If his daughter is having a bad day, he might skip squash to spend time with her.

The distinction between hobbies and projects doesn't break down neatly along traditional leisure/career lines. Someone with a boring academic job might spend the most hours per week on that job, but if she does so entirely so she can spend her summers rock-climbing in national parks, her job isn't her project—rock-climbing is. Not all our leisure pursuits are mere hobbies.

Interests

Finally, well-rounded people have interests. This is another term with a few different meanings; for our purposes, "interests" are things people are interested in, but which they neither consistently pursue actively nor have particular ambitions about. (For Maurice, that's American history and biotech.) I have a friend who's interested in space. It's not a project; he's not an astronaut. It isn't even a hobby; he doesn't own a telescope. But if he comes across an article about space online, he'll click on it. If he has a free Saturday afternoon, he'd rather go to the planetarium (again) than to the art museum. If our projects are central to how we organize our lives, if our goals are things we want to make sure we do eventually, and if our hobbies are

things we're actively pursuing, our interests are the least central, often the most casual and short-lived, of our pursuits. Interests show us that pursuits don't have to be activities as such. My friend's interest in space doesn't just consist in his active visits to the planetarium; it also includes his passively (but happily) taking in information about space he finds online. Space doesn't require any particular commitment from him, but it adds richness to his life in its own way.

Organizing Our Pursuits

To be well-rounded, you need to have multiple pursuits, but they don't have to break down into any particular combination. We saw that if we only focus on projects, not other kinds of pursuits, we may incorrectly assess well-being; we don't want to make the same mistake here by artificially limiting which kinds of life organization make a person well-rounded. One person might have a really demanding central project but casual interests in a variety of areas. Another might have a central but less demanding project and several hobbies. A child might have a few hobbies and a bunch of goals. Plus, there aren't bright lines distinguishing one type of pursuit from another. A firmly held interest may become a hobby without your really noticing a sudden shift; a hobby you aren't able to commit to right now may lapse into a long-term goal. Good well-rounded lives are organized in many different ways.

Still, well-rounded people's lives tend to break down into predictable patterns. It's impossible for most of us to have more than a very small number of projects, because we can't organize our lives around too many very demanding pursuits at the same time. Contingent facts about human life—constraints on our time, attention, resources, and abilities—mean the well-rounded

person is likely to have to budget carefully. Someone whose life is only composed of casual interests may not live as well as he would have if he'd had more commitment to some of his pursuits.⁸ Thinking about which category each pursuit falls into can help us understand how to organize our lives—what it really matters that we succeed at, for example, or what to sacrifice if we find we've taken on too much. Some of the tradeoffs inherent in different ways a well-rounded person can organize her life will become more apparent as we go along, and we'll revisit these tradeoffs in chapter 6.

In Different Domains

Maurice's main project is his relationship with his kids; he has an athletic hobby, and he's put an artistic hobby on hold; he has a goal connected to baseball; and he has interests in history and science. If all of Maurice's pursuits were in one area—if he had a project of being a garbage collector, a hobby of picking up litter on the beach on the weekends, a goal of breaking the Guinness world record for the largest rubber-band ball, and an interest in reading about the history of recycling—he would be nearly as one-dimensional as if he were singularly focused on collecting garbage. This gives us the second element: you're more well-rounded the more your pursuits fall into different domains.

Start with what I hope is a common-sense, non-exhaustive list of domains: to Maurice's pursuits in relationships, athletics, the arts, history, and science, we can add the religious, the culinary, the political, the community-oriented, and so on. A

8. Later on, we'll see that whether someone balances their pursuits appropriately is part of how well-rounded they are.

person with pursuits in all—or even many—of these domains is well-rounded.

Even though I hope this list of domains is commonsensical, figuring out what this common sense is getting at is tricky. As a first pass, these domains are *about* different things. Sports are about using your body and mind to perform some physical feat, while political pursuits are about coming together with like-minded people to accomplish a civic goal.

To build on this basic idea, we can say that each domain is distinguished by its subject matter: the pursuits that fall within a domain have similar activities, values, and skills. Consider number theory and basketweaving. Their activities are different: for number theory, it's constructing proofs; for basketweaving, it's weaving a basket. Their values are different: an achievement in number theory is proving Goldbach's conjecture; an achievement in basketweaving is producing an unusually beautiful or useful basket. Their skills are different: for number theory, keen insight into numbers and an ability to reason mathematically; for basketweaving, fine motor skills and aesthetic vision.

In contrast, consider two activities in the same domain, basketball and baseball. They share activities: throwing, catching, running. Both exemplify the same values: competition, athleticism, teamwork. Both require the same kinds of skills: physical strength, dexterity, speed. Compare the substantial degree of overlap between these two sports to the almost complete lack of overlap in the subject matters of number theory and basketweaving. A person whose only pursuits are basketball and baseball is at best minimally well-rounded, because his two pursuits have so much in common. As we'll see in chapter 2, he's likely missing out on the goods of well-roundedness: he's failing to engage with the diversity of the world, and his focus only on

athletic activities will make it more difficult for him to befriend people who aren't as interested in sports as he is. A person with pursuits in number theory and basketweaving is using her mind and body in different ways, she's immersing herself in more of what the world has to offer, and she's uncovering different kinds of goods.

Consider an alternative way to specify domains. The philosopher Thomas Hurka's theory of well-roundedness includes just three: physical perfection (health, athletic activity), theoretical perfection (factual knowledge, knowledge of skills, interpersonal understanding), and practical perfection (goal achievement, cooperation with others, friendship).⁹

These three domains are quite broad. Each lumps together pursuits which aren't all that alike. Excellence in number theory is pursued very differently from excellence in basketweaving, yet these would both seem to count as "theoretical perfection" (number theory because it's factual knowledge, basketweaving because it's knowledge of a skill).¹⁰ If Kristen engages in a wide variety of diverse pursuits which all count as theoretical perfection—she knows a great deal about history, math, and art; she can paint, sing, and bake; she is understanding of all kinds of people—she is very well-rounded, and yet Hurka's tripartite division would seem to imply that she's only excellent in one domain.

9. Hurka (1987: 728–9).

10. A pair of psychologists studying the relationship between personality traits and life goals concluded that goal clusters connected to "theoretical, physical well-being, and personal growth value domains" were too internally inconsistent to be analyzed as clusters, vs. more internally consistent goal clusters such as economic or religious goals (Roberts and Robins 2000: 1288). This provides a little empirical backing for the idea that Hurka's taxonomy (or something like it) is too heterogeneous to be helpful.

Hurka does grant that we should “seek variety, not just among different excellences, but among different aspects of one excellence.”¹¹ If domain doesn’t really matter, we can say that Kristen is very well-rounded—but then the tripartite division of perfections doesn’t add much to our understanding of well-roundedness. If domain matters a lot, then Kristen isn’t very well-rounded, and she’d do better to ditch most of her theoretical perfections—she’d be more well-rounded just by painting and playing water polo than she would be with the highly diverse array of pursuits she has now. Either option doesn’t seem especially appealing.

Moreover, some activities that belong to different perfections have more in common with each other than with others in their same bucket of perfection. Friendship (practical perfection) and interpersonal understanding (theoretical perfection) aren’t the same thing, but they’re much more closely linked than interpersonal understanding is with proving Goldbach’s conjecture (both theoretical perfection) or than friendship is with the general category of goal achievement (both practical perfection). Other pursuits crosscut Hurka’s taxonomy:¹² someone who sets a complex goal of proving Goldbach’s conjecture, has a lifelong career in higher math, and finally comes up with a proof has engaged in the practical perfection of goal achievement, but also the theoretical perfection of factual knowledge.

Three domains are too few to capture the variety of pursuits that make a person well-rounded; the subject-matter view of domains does better. That doesn’t mean that it can precisely categorize every single pursuit. I said that the subject matter of

11. Hurka (1987: 735).

12. As he acknowledges (Hurka 1987: 735).

a domain is its activities, values, and skills. Some pursuits are highly similar along one of these dimensions but not the others. Tag requires athletic skill, but it doesn't share basketball's or baseball's value of teamwork. Is tag an athletic activity like baseball? Chess isn't something we traditionally think of as a "sport"—but chess grandmasters can burn as many calories in a two-hour game as professional tennis players do in a one-hour match.¹³ Perhaps chess belongs in the athletic domain rather than the domain of board games; or there's one domain, something like competition, that includes both chess and basketball; or competitive chess belongs in one domain and amateur chess in another.

Each of these three options has its downsides: the first, that baseball and basketball just seem like the same kind of thing, and baseball and chess do not; the second, that a more general domain of "competition" gets us back to the overbroadness we saw was a problem with Hurka's account; the third, that it seems odd for the kind of pursuit chess is to depend on how seriously a person takes the game.

I'd like to say that I have some solution for resolving these issues, one which gives necessary and sufficient conditions which allow us to precisely classify every pursuit. I don't. While I've given a sample of the kinds of domains I have in mind, and while I think those domains fit with common sense about who counts as well-rounded, I don't have a hard-and-fast rule, and I don't think it's possible to come up with one. Trying to put things in too-neat boxes doesn't do justice to the complexity of the world. By concentrating on subject matter—activities, values, and skills—at a common-sense level of granularity, we can

13. That statistic is from the 2019 *All Things Considered* story "The Chess Grandmaster's Diet."

come up with a view which roughly captures the diversity of our pursuits. Hurka's view may offer a definitive taxonomy of perfections, but what it gains in precision is more than offset by the problems that result from sorting pursuits into just three camps. The alternative is less precise—we can't say with certainty where some pursuits fall—but it's truer to life.

We can skirt some of the thornier problems of domains if we concentrate less on coming up with the be-all end-all list and more on how far apart someone's pursuits are. One person might claim that competitive chess and basketball are in the same domain; another might say they're in different domains; both can agree that these pursuits have substantial overlap in values, activities, and skills. Since these pursuits are at least near to each other—in similar domains if not the exact same one—someone whose pursuits include basketball and competitive chess is not as well-rounded (all else being equal) as someone whose pursuits include basketball and taking care of a beloved pet ferret. The less subject matter two pursuits have in common, the more likely they're in different domains, and the more well-rounded the person with both those pursuits is.

The Distinctive Value of Our Pursuits

No matter the domain, not all of our activities are true pursuits. All of us, from Lon Grady on down, do things every day that aren't projects, goals, hobbies, or interests—we water the plants, take out the trash, and do our taxes. If all that matters is how long our to-do lists are, then Lon Grady, who might do fifteen different things in a day but has only one true pursuit, is just about as well-rounded as Maurice, who does fifteen different things in a day but has six distinct pursuits. That doesn't seem right.

If Maurice's squash game counts as a pursuit, but taking out the trash doesn't, what's the difference between the two? It might seem to be a difference in value—squash is worth doing for its own sake, where taking out the trash is purely instrumental. But the fact that something is valuable isn't sufficient to make it a pursuit for the person who does it. Consider the example of Olivia:

Olivia is a high-school senior who desperately wants to get into her top-choice college. She's read that college admissions committees look for well-rounded students, but all she's done for three years is study. She decides to change things. She knows colleges like athletes, so she joins the cross-country team, although she doesn't like to run. She doesn't grow to like it, she's not successful, and she doesn't make friends with her teammates—but she can put it on her application form. Likewise for the literary magazine, the chess club, and the High School Democrats. She does everything begrudgingly, without interest or enthusiasm, and she never grows to appreciate any of these activities; she could just as easily have joined the tennis team, theater club, A/V club, and High School Republicans.

Olivia might look well-rounded, but she's not. Even though someone else might see the literary magazine as a valuable pursuit, for her it's just the high-school equivalent of dusting the knick-knacks—she only does it as a means to further her project of getting into college.¹⁴

14. Callard (2018: 7) distinguishes aspiration from ambition. Aspiration involves a change in a person's values; ambition only seeks to satisfy the values a person already has. Maybe part of Olivia's problem is that she has no interest in letting her new pursuits change her values.

Likewise, Lon Grady only has the project of leading his team to another Super Bowl victory. To carry out this relatively complex pursuit, Grady must complete many intermediate steps, some of which are not particularly alike—weightlifting, eating his weird diet, going to practice, making media appearances. Grady cannot become well-rounded just by making his single project more complicated—making another media appearance or adding a new kind of leg exercise to his weight routine. If we count as a pursuit any activity someone *could* care about, we end up miscounting pursuits. Grady would have two pursuits, weightlifting and football, where we should really see only one. On the face of it, Olivia's activities are more diverse than Lon Grady's, but they are still component parts of a single project, rather than being distinct pursuits.

What makes these valuable activities just chores for Olivia and Lon Grady is that these two fail to appreciate the distinctive value each adds to their lives. Olivia doesn't care that editing the literary magazine could help her develop a keen eye for prose, or that joining the cross-country team could teach her how to push her body to its limits. Her only measure of the value of these activities is how well each contributes to her project of getting into college. This gives us the third element of being well-rounded: only when we appreciate the distinctive value of our pursuits do they count toward how well-rounded we are.¹⁵ While we'll see that this condition is more controversial than the

15. The Olivia case shows us that this applies to only caring about well-roundedness, too. Someone might decide that the only thing he cares about is being as well-rounded as possible and so take up a wide variety of activities, choosing them only for their diversity, not actually appreciating the distinctive value of any of these activities. By aiming directly and only at well-roundedness, without regard for the particular contents of his life, he has ensured that he will wind up living a one-dimensional life.

first two, it fits right in with our understanding of pursuits: they are the things we do because we care about them.

Appreciating the distinctive value of a pursuit doesn't rule out recognizing how it contributes to our other ones. One of the joys of being well-rounded is getting to see how your pursuits interact with and reshape one another. Someone who reads novels as a hobby may find some useful philosophical examples along the way; they might even take up novel-reading partly for this reason. It's only if they read novels just as a way to extract philosophical insights that they fail to appreciate the distinctive value of literature; here, novel-reading is just a step in their pursuit of philosophy.

Our pursuits need not be things we deliberately set out to pursue. Maurice's wife is a macroeconomist; she follows the Fed closely and reads a lot about supply-chain logistics, and she likes to talk to Maurice about what she knows. Maurice finds macroeconomics hard to understand and honestly pretty dry. It's not what he would have chosen to learn about, but because of his wife, he starts to get a handle on the ups and downs of interest rates. If, initially, all that Maurice thinks about when he's listening to his wife talk is whether he's being a good husband, then he's like Olivia—failing to appreciate the distinctive value of macroeconomics. The more they talk, though, the more he comes to recognize the value of these conversations. This might happen without his realizing it, and he might not even find these conversations especially pleasurable—but once he sees them as adding distinctive value to his life, macroeconomics is one of his pursuits. It may never be something he goes out of his way to make time for—but pursuits, especially casual interests, can be taken up patchily and passively.

Appreciating the value of our pursuits doesn't have to mean doing anything especially cognitively taxing. My dog doesn't

spend a lot of time thinking deep thoughts, but she appreciates the value of a trip to the beach. Children appreciate the value of storytime or sliding down a really tall slide—they care about these things. Maurice didn’t affirmatively decide to value macroeconomics and probably can’t pinpoint the date when it came to have value for him. All that’s required for us to appreciate the value of a pursuit is to see it, in and of itself, as making a difference to how our lives are going. Olivia, in contrast, is just going through the motions of pretending to care about her activities. Their interchangeability to her shows that she fails to appreciate their value on their own terms.

Finally, the pursuits that add distinctive value to our lives don’t have to have some kind of objective value. Even hopelessly mundane activities can count as genuine pursuits in the right circumstances. Take shopping for office supplies. There’s this Japanese brand of chalk (the “Rolls-Royce of chalk”) that’s especially prized by mathematicians.¹⁶ I know about this chalk because, a few years ago, a good friend of mine got really into it—reading about it, buying a lot of it, experimenting with how to get it to work the best. I mean, this friend was *really* into this chalk. Thanks to him, I switched brands, and he’s right—it’s much better than standard blackboard chalk. Still, its only value to me is instrumental, in that I wind up with less chalk dust on my shirt at the end of class. *I’m* not more well-rounded in virtue of my exposure to this chalk—for me, buying the good chalk is like doing any other chore.

16. See Devadoss (2015). When the Japanese company which originally made the chalk went out of business, chalk superfans hoarded it, resulting in a robust online secondary market for the chalk. It’s now produced by two companies, one Japanese and one South Korean.

For my friend, though, the experience of the chalk is *itself* valuable.¹⁷ He might recognize that the chalk doesn't have any kind of inherent value, but it has value of its own for him regardless. The chalk is a pursuit for him. This is fully compatible with accepting that the chalk has no non-instrumental value for others; it's not like he's fooled by his interest in the chalk into thinking that people who don't care about it are missing out on something important.¹⁸ I think this is one of the small but really valuable pleasures of life—getting into something, in spite of or because of your recognition that it lacks significant value, and diving as deeply into it as you can. This is as true for bad movies and sports stats as it is for chalk.

Diversity of Character

Diversity of pursuits isn't just about domain. Imagine that Maurice has pursuits in the same domains as he has now, except that all of them are competitive: he and his childhood best friend have a bet about who can get to all the ballparks first, he's aiming to be the best squash player at his gym, and he's participating in a contest to register the most new voters in his city. Maurice engages in different activities when he's registering voters than when he's playing serious squash; it takes different skills to plan a trip to Fenway Park than to master a backhand serve. Maurice values different things about these pursuits, too.

17. It might even be that my friend is *creating* value where none existed before (Wall and Sobel 2021: 2831–7); see also Bruckner (2016) on “quirky desires.”

18. Indeed, we can appreciate the value of pursuits even when they have overall objective disvalue. I love the example of Vjerran Tomic, a French art thief who became captivated by the thought of burgling the Paris Musée d'Art Moderne (and succeeded, and wound up doing jail time for it). For more about Tomic, see Halpern (2019).

He cares about making sure people have the opportunity to vote, not just about making sure he registers more voters than anyone else; he and his friend are racing to visit all the ballparks because they both really love baseball.

And yet, because these pursuits are all competitive, something seems to be missing from Maurice's life. It would be better for him if he occasionally slowed down and didn't try to win at everything he did. An ultra-competitive Maurice is less well-rounded, because competitive squash, tourism, and political activism are all alike in character. Being well-rounded isn't just about what you do but about how you do it. The fourth element of the well-rounded life is that its pursuits are diverse in character. There are many different ways pursuits can be diverse in character; here's a small sample:

The Snobby and the Sophomoric

In his classic treatise *Utilitarianism*, the 19th-century British moral philosopher John Stuart Mill writes that the higher pleasures, those which employ “the higher faculties,” (think, composing an intricate and beautiful sestina) are superior to the lower pleasures, those involving “mere sensation” (think, eating a whole lot of curly fries).¹⁹ Competent judges who have experienced both think that the higher pleasures are superior—when people who know the true value of the higher pleasures pursue the lower pleasures instead, they are doing so “from infirmity of character.”²⁰ But to the extent that Mill really means what he seems to be saying here (and Mill scholars disagree about how to read this passage), he's wrong both descriptively

19. Mill (1867: 14).

20. Mill (1867: 14).

and prescriptively.²¹ People with experience of both kinds of pleasures do not always see themselves as giving in to temptation when they choose the lower pleasures, nor should they. Molecular gastronomy, with its beakers and gases and liquified spheres, can be a delight, even if it takes a PhD in chemistry to fully appreciate it—but a fast-food burger is delightful too. It takes talent to write, perform, produce, or fully appreciate mindless pop music, just as it does to write, perform, produce, or fully appreciate the theological and musical complexity of Handel's *Messiah*.

We can still maintain the distinction between higher and lower pleasures—there might be something particularly good about those pleasures that do engage our intellects. Someone who only ever engages in lower pleasures is missing out. But we can recognize the distinctive achievement present in a really good lower pleasure; someone who is a snob, who always prefers (or claims to prefer) the higher pleasures, is missing out too.²² An aspiring well-rounded person might look for ways to incorporate both kinds of pleasure in her pursuits.

The Active and the Passive

Someone might enjoy going to soccer games, have a season pass to the local symphony, and relax by watching cooking shows on TV. Despite their different domains, these pursuits are all alike: they're all passive, because they all boil down to watching other people do things. Passivity on its own is not inimical to

21. For a fuller discussion of Mill's view of higher and lower pleasures, see Brink (2013: 46–78).

22. See Kieran (2010) for a nice discussion of snobbery; Calhoun points out that snobs make themselves more vulnerable to boredom by being willing to engage with fewer values (2018: 137).

well-roundedness. It can be valuable, because watching other people do something really really well can give us greater appreciation for their mastery of a pursuit.²³ But all passive pursuits are alike in that they require minimal input from the doer, while active pursuits engage our agency in different ways—cooking requires specialized knowledge, playing the violin requires a steady hand, competing on a soccer team requires some degree of physical prowess. If someone only ever watches others do interesting things, that person is not as well-rounded as he could be.

Alone and With Others

Many pursuits require us to cooperate with others—playing music in a band, joining an amateur rugby team, even taking a pottery class. But someone whose pursuits are all social does seem to be missing out on something. Solo activities—running, rock climbing, solitaire, stamp collecting—provide the opportunity for reflection on one's own capacities and achievements. There's a distinctive kind of good in being alone with oneself, developing and appreciating one's own talents. There's a different kind of good in cooperating with other people, learning how to work together and seeing what others do well or badly.

These are just a few aspects of the character of a pursuit. There are others: pursuits could be trivial or important, inherited or self-chosen, lifelong or relatively short-term, spontaneous or carefully planned, and so on. The key is that how you do

23. Passivity, Larmore writes, gives us “an openness to life's surprises which we do well to maintain” (1999: 98). I like a related point Hurka makes: “There are many lives of all-out activity that fail, through lack of balance, to equal the value of lazier lives whose proportion is right” (1987: 734).

your pursuits contributes to determining how well-rounded you are, just as what you do does.

Balanced Appropriately

The fifth element of the well-rounded life is that well-rounded people balance their pursuits appropriately. We can achieve this balance synchronically (an appropriate balance of pursuits at a particular time) and/or diachronically (an appropriate balance across time).

Don't Stretch Yourself Too Thin

Go back to the case of Olivia, the high-school student who desperately wants to get into her top-choice college. Olivia continues to pursue getting into college with the same determination, but she gradually starts to see the distinctive value of cross-country—running is more fun than she thought at first. She still really only cares about getting into college, though, and her teammates realize immediately that they still can't depend on her. If she needs to spend more time studying for the SAT, she'll blow off practice; once, she even quit mid-race because her mother waved what looked like an admission letter at her while cheering her on.

Olivia is more well-rounded than she used to be, but we should be skeptical that she values cross-country appropriately when we recognize that she's willing to give up important races in exchange for trivial gains in her college-application project. Being well-rounded requires budgeting your time and resources so that you can stay in touch with the value you see in each pursuit. It's not bad for your central project to receive more attention than your other pursuits do—being well-rounded

requires us to make choices—but your other pursuits should receive attention commensurate with their value to you. If Olivia can't even commit to finishing a race (a pretty minimal condition on valuing cross-country), her pursuits are out of balance.

It's also possible for us to aim for being well-rounded but overshoot the mark.²⁴ When we take on too much, we run the risk of being stretched too thin. We're limited beings who can only sustain so many projects, goals, hobbies, and interests. It's dangerous for our well-being if we try to take on more than we can handle—more than we can be successful at, *relative to our standards for each pursuit*.²⁵ I could take up backgammon as a hobby, and, as long as I'm enjoying myself, I could be successful relative to my own standards, even if I'm only an amateur player who mostly loses to other amateurs. I'm likely to have different standards of success for my main projects than for my most casual interests. In fact, as we'll see in chapter 3, well-roundedness allows us to appreciate the value of being mediocre at our pursuits. People who try to do too much will fail to give adequate attention to many, even all, of their pursuits and consequently will be less well-rounded than if they'd done fewer things but achieved better balance among them.

These two failures of balance are related but distinct. Olivia might have enough time for both cross-country and college

24. Aristotle tells us that most virtues are means between extremes: the brave person finds the mean between being cowardly and rash; the person with the virtuous level of wit is neither a buffoon nor a boor (2009: 1107b–1108a). Well-roundedness has the same structure; you can overshoot the mark by taking on so much that you become stretched too thin.

25. Someone could (at least theoretically) only be able to handle one pursuit. Such a person might have admirable self-awareness about his own limits, but he isn't well-rounded.

applications, but she's budgeted that time poorly; she can't succeed relative to the standard of enjoying her time on the team if she can't let herself ignore her college applications for even a moment. A person who tries to simultaneously be a pro skier and a famous artist and a devoted parent and a touring musician has simply taken on more than she can handle—there is no way she could budget her time so as to succeed relative to her standards for each of these pursuits.

Commitment and Change

Achieving an appropriate balance of pursuits also means balancing them across time. To live a well-rounded life synchronically is to be well-rounded at a particular moment. Maurice has a well-rounded life right now, but it's easy to imagine that one of these pursuits could come to dominate his life. If his son became very ill, we would expect Maurice to shelve his hobbies in order to take care of him.²⁶ The ebb and flow of our pursuits makes an entirely synchronically well-rounded life unrealistic for most of us.

That means we also need diachronic evaluation of someone's life; we need to know what pursuits a person takes on over time. But diachronic evaluation on its own isn't good enough either. When my brother was young, he went through a series of all-consuming passions—construction, baseball, knights, Army guys. At any particular time, he was living a one-dimensional life. Everything he did was in the service of a single project—it's just that the single project changed as he got older.

Synchronic well-roundedness is attractive, but focusing too much on maintaining a synchronically well-rounded life can get

26. We'll consider the moral dimensions of this kind of choice in chapter 6.

you stuck in a rut. If you aren't willing to give up on a project when it's no longer good for you, or let a casual interest evolve into a more serious hobby, or watch as one of your goals changes shape, then you're less well-rounded than someone who lets her pursuits expand and contract as she grows and changes. Diachronic well-roundedness is attractive, but it's best for us when we retain some appreciation of the pursuits we used to have. Someone who switches pursuits rapidly, as if she's become a completely different person overnight—snowboarding, sculpture, and Spinoza one day and Descartes, drawing, and demolition derby the next—is just a dilettante.²⁷ Genuinely having most pursuits requires us to commit. To know whether someone was as well-rounded as she could be, we have to know whether she maintained genuine commitment to her pursuits over time. Diachronic evaluation fills in what synchronic evaluation alone can't; it gives us insight into whether someone has maintained an appropriate commitment to her various pursuits. Good well-rounded lives generally display commitment to our pursuits in accord with the value each has for us, but they also have space for us to evolve and rebalance our pursuits as our interests and values change over time.

How Well-Rounded Can You Be?

Someone who's maximally well-rounded has as many pursuits as it's possible for a person to have over the course of a single life. These pursuits are as diverse in domain and character as it's possible for them to be: each pursuit in a different domain, each pursued in a different way. She maintains this commitment to

27. I've adapted this point from Raibley, who makes it in the context of a broader argument for holism about well-being (2012: 246).

well-roundedness over the course of her entire life, and she balances these pursuits appropriately, achieving her desired level of success at each.

Not that this is possible for most of us! All of us can handle different things—we all have different temperaments, strengths, and deficiencies. We might find that our pursuits break down into predictable patterns—that we tend to go for pursuits which have a competitive cast, or that most of our pursuits are connected in some way to our family lives. There might be long stretches of our lives in which it's impossible for us to be well-rounded, or we might find it hard to keep from taking on more than we can handle. Maximally well-rounded people are about as unusual as entirely one-dimensional people are. Those of us who are somewhat less than maximally well-rounded should be careful to avoid becoming stretched too thin. Since the absolute maximum of well-roundedness often isn't possible, we can also evaluate maximal well-roundedness relative to an individual: an individual is *personally* maximally well-rounded when he has as diverse a set of pursuits as he can handle, relativized to his circumstances and his physical and psychological capacities.²⁸

These two maximums, the absolute max and the personal max, help us evaluate our lives in distinct ways. Having a sense of how much you, personally, can handle helps you to think about how to structure your life. When you're trying to decide how to revamp your life in the short term, it may do you little good to compare yourself to the maximally well-rounded person. What you need to know is whether you're operating at the

28. I've made a similar argument (Berg 2018) about the demands of morality. Tiberius (2018: 71) distinguishes intersubjective and personal standards of success at a pursuit.

level you're presently capable of—and, if not, on which dimension(s) you're falling short. Perhaps you don't have room for another hobby, but you notice that your internet browsing falls into predictable patterns, and you can at least try to switch up your interests so you're fixating less on politics and finding out more about stock-car racing.

Still, you shouldn't be complacent; you might have room to broaden your capacities by stretching yourself physically or challenging yourself psychologically. Having a yardstick outside yourself might not be all that informative about what you should do in the short term, but it can guide your longer-term choices. Given the benefits of living a well-rounded life, benefits we'll get into in the next chapter, it's prudentially good for many people (that is, it adds to their well-being) not just to be as well-rounded as they can handle right now but also to expand what they're able to handle. Someone who can only succeed at three things relative to his goals may lack the perspective to know he'll never be a great piano player, or the flexibility to balance his amateur kickball league with his family life.²⁹ Developing our characters can help get us closer to the absolute max.

Summing Up

That's what it is to be well-rounded. Before we move on to why it's good to live this way, notice three features of this account of the well-rounded life: it's 1) permissive, 2) partly objective and partly attitude-dependent, and 3) minimal.

29. Perspective and flexibility are examples of what Tiberius calls the reflective virtues (2010: 66–157).

Permissive

Well-roundedness, as I've developed it, is permissive because there is no single set of pursuits, or even domains, a person must have in order to count as well-rounded. A person can be well-rounded without going near sports, or art, or science. If you believe that there are certain domains someone must engage with in order to count as well-rounded, then you won't like how permissive this account is.

Yet being stricter means missing out on the diversity of actual human life. Well-roundedness is easy to spot when we think of famous examples and elevated pursuits: Ben Franklin's interest in politics, science, philosophy, education, chess, and Freemasonry; or Hedy Lamarr's acting career and contributions to the development of radio frequency-hopping technology. It might be harder to spot in people who live more ordinary lives: the meatpacker who works a demanding physical job, spends her evenings getting a beer at her union hall, goes to church on Sundays, and reads Louis L'Amour paperbacks on the weekends. Life isn't organized like a menu where we have to pick one appetizer, one entrée, one dessert. The world has too many good things in it to be able to specify a list of domains well-rounded people's lives must include. The grain of truth in Hurka's specification of three perfections is that many people's lives will in fact contain pursuits from a few key domains; physical prowess and intellectual engagement are signal human achievements that matter to a lot of people. But not everyone: a person can live a very well-rounded life even if he never goes near an athletic competition.

Although well-rounded lives are found all across the socioeconomic spectrum, I don't want to be glib; the resources needed to be well-rounded are spread unevenly, and this raises

issues of distributive justice. Many years ago, Marx argued that capitalism forces people to become one-dimensional, while under socialism,

Society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind, without ever becoming hunter, fisherman, cowherd, or critic.³⁰

You might be skeptical that what's needed to ensure opportunities to be well-rounded is to immanentize the socialist eschaton.³¹ You'll at least agree, I hope, that our current societal arrangements throw up more obstacles to well-roundedness for some people than for others.

This is true of the working poor. Jason Derr, a caregiver for adults with disabilities in Portland, Oregon, was profiled for a series *HuffPost* did on the lives of the working poor. As he tells an interviewer, "I feel like we are unable to participate in humanity, that being alive has a buy-in cost."³² It's true of women, especially mothers, who have enough trouble balancing career and family, let alone the array of pursuits that make someone well-rounded.³³ It's even true of socioeconomically elite men, who are perhaps more liable than any other group to what journalist Derek Thompson calls "workism," the attitude, not always

30. Marx (1932/2000: 185).

31. The catchy slogan "Don't immanentize the eschaton!" (more or less, "Don't try to bring about utopia in the here and now") comes to us from the German-American political philosopher Eric Voegelin (1952: 120), via the conservative commentator William F. Buckley, Jr. and the youth organization Young Americans for Freedom.

32. Schwartz (2017).

33. Slaughter (2012).

(continued...)

INDEX

- active and passive character, 21–22
- activities: active and passive, 21–22; in different domains, 10–12; snobby and sophomoric, 20–21; solo and group, 21–22
- act utilitarianism, 191–192
- agent-centered prerogative, 194
- altruism, 192
- amateurism, 90–91
- American Woodworker*, 62
- appreciation for others' excellence, 92–95
- Aristotelian perfectionism, 152–153, 156
- Artforum*, 64
- As I Lay Dying*, 113
- attitude-dependence in well-rounded life, 32–34, 199–200
- Aurelius, Marcus, 152–153
- badness/being bad at things, 82–85, 109; being good at, 103–109; complexity and, 101; contentment with, 86–90; cross-pollination and, 99–100; fun and, 95–97; and getting good at them later, 85–86; love of our pursuits and, 90–91; narrowly accessible goods and, 99–103; and never getting good at them, 86–97; psychological richness and, 100–101; relationships and, 97–98; renewal and, 98–99; resilience and, 98; success and, 97; value and rarity of excellence and, 92–95; in the well-rounded life, 97–103; widely accessible goods and, 97–99
- balanced pursuits, 23–26
- Besser, Lorraine, 55
- blind spots, 93–94
- Bradley, Ben, 198
- Brod, Max, 204–205, 213
- burnout, 48
- Calhoun, Cheshire, 86–87, 88
- Calvin and Hobbes*, 62
- Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA), 37–38
- capitalism, 30
- central capacities, 155
- character development, 156
- character of pursuits, 19–23
- Christman, John, 122
- Coates, Justin, 181–182
- cohesion, 123–130
- commitment and change, 25–26
- complexity, 78; badness and, 101
- contentment, 86–90, 103
- cross-pollination, 51–55; badness and, 99–100

- Darwin, Charles, 207
David Copperfield, 129
 da Vinci, Leonardo, 69, 152–153
 Derr, Jason, 30
 desire-satisfaction, 146–147
 diachronic evaluation, 26
 dillettantism, 61, 152–153
 distributive justice, 31
 diversity, 74, 75, 78; badness and, 102–103; of pursuits, 184–186
 domains, 9–14
 Dorsey, Dale, 111–112, 140
 Dr. Seuss, 95
- eccentricity, 31–32
 ecumenism, 148–149
 Eiffel, Gustave, 201
 Einstein, Albert, 207
 excellence, value and rarity of, 92–95
 expert blind spot, 93–94
 exploration, 62–66
 external goods, 90–91
- Finnis list, 166
 Fletcher list, 166
 Franklin, Ben, 29, 69
 friction between pursuits, 134–135
 fun, 95–97
 fundamentality theory of meaning, 204–208
- Galway, James, 95
 Gates, Bill, 41–42
 Gauguin, Paul, 170
 Glasgow, Joshua, 212–214
 goals, 6
 good life. *See* well-being
 good stories: cohesion in, 123–130; example of, 110–112; narrative arc in, 117–123; narrative unity in, 114–117; narrativism and, 111–113; thematic consistency in, 130–138
Great British Bake Off, The, 42
 Green, T. H., 188
- Hardman, Michael, 37
 hedonic adaptation, 47
 hedonic treadmill, 47
 hedonism, 145–146
 Heinlein, Robert, 1, 40
High Fidelity, 50
 hobbies, 7
 Hoffmann, Roald, 52–53
HuffPost, 30
 Hume, David, 45
 Humphries, Kris, 79
 Hurka, Thomas, 11–12, 14, 29, 83, 152, 153, 156, 158–159
 Hursthouse, Rosalind, 77, 79
 hybrid theories of meaning, 211–216
- illusory tradeoffs, 189–191
 indirection, 137, 156
 instrumental goods, 38–39
 instrumental value of well-rounded life, 67–69
 interests, 7–8, 126–128
In the Penal Colony, 213
 intrinsic goods, 38–39
 intrinsic value of well-rounded life, 69–76
 intuitionist deontology, 192–193
 intuitive case of well-rounded life, 69–70
- jacks-of-all-trades, 82
 Johns, Jasper, 210

- Kafka, Franz, 204–205, 206, 213
 Kardashian, Kim, 79
 Kauppinen, Antti, 113, 125, 154, 156, 203
 Lamarr, Hedy, 69
 L'Amour, Louis, 29
 Levy, Neil, 200–203
Lincoln in the Bardo, 54
 literature, 113–114
 living a great story. *See* good stories
 love for pursuits, 90–91
 low-impact pursuits, 190
 MacFarquhar, Larissa, 192
 MacIntyre, Alasdair, 114, 116, 139–140
 Mandela, Nelson, 207
 Mantel, Hillary, 58–59
 Marx, Karl, 30
 maximally well-rounded life, 26–28
 meaning, 183–184, 197–199; fundamentality theory of, 204–208; hybrid theories of, 211–216; objective theories of, 200–211; shape of meaningful life and, 208–216; subjective theories of, 199–200; superlative, 200–203
 mediocrity, 82, 90, 104, 105–106
Metamorphosis, The, 205, 213
 Metz, Thaddeus, 205, 207
 Milkovich, John, 31–32
 Mill, John Stuart, 20
 minimal well-rounded life, 34–36
 money, 38–39
 morality, 183, 188–189; illusory tradeoffs and, 189–191; of specific well-rounded lives, 191–195; weight of moral reasons and, 195–197
 moral saints, 43, 195
 multiple pursuits, 4–9
 Murphy list, 166
 narrative arc, 117–123
 narrative unity, 114–117
 narrativism, 111–113; literary terms and, 113–114; moral of the narrativist story and, 138–141; narrative arc and, 118; narrative unity and, 115; narrowing, 128–130; paradox of happiness and, 136; thematic consistency in, 130–138
 narrower narrativism, 128–130
 narrowly accessible good(s), 51–67; badness and, 99–103; complexity, 75, 78, 101; containing multitudes, 59–62; cross-pollination, 51–55, 99–100; diversity, 102–103; exploration, 62–66; psychological richness, 55–59, 100–101
 Nelson, Willie, 91
 Newman, Paul, 79
New York Times, 96
 Nguyen, Thi, 95
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 83
 Nobel Prize winners, 52–54
 non-maximizing perfectionism, 158–159, 177–178
 Nozick, Robert, 208–211
 objective-list theory, 162, 165–169; defense of, 172–176; well-rounded life and, 169–172
 objective theories of meaning, 200–211
 objectivity in well-rounded life, 32–34
 Oishi, Shigehiro, 55
 one-dimensional life, 4
One Hundred Years of Solitude, 113
 organization of pursuits, 8–9, 186–187

- pairwise comparisons of well-rounded life, 70–76
- paradox of happiness, 136
- Parfit list, 166
- party games, 96
- perfectionism, 149, 150–151; Aristotelian, 152–153, 156; non-maximizing, 158–159, 177–178; recognizing value of our pursuits and, 159–161; silver linings, 155–158; star turn, 153–155; well-rounded case against, 151–159
- permissive feature of well-rounded life, 29–32
- philosophy as biography, xv–xvi
- physical perfection, 11
- pleasure, 145–146
- pluralism, x–xi
- Polanski, Roman, 197
- Pollock, Jason, 210
- practical perfection, 11
- projects, 5–6
- psychological richness, 55–59; badness and, 100–101
- pursuits: balanced, 23–26, 127–128; character of, 19–23; different characters and, 187–188; different kinds of, 184–186; distinctive value of, 14–19; friction between, 134–135; love of our, 90–91; low-impact, 190; multiple, 4–9; organization of, 8–9, 186–187; relationships and, 43–45; renewal through, 46–48; resilience and, 45–46; resource-intensive, 189–190; social, 190–191; success at, 41–43; widely accessible goods and, 41–51
- relationships, 43–45, 49, 50, 79, 166–167; badness and, 97–98
- Remains of the Day, The*, 113
- renewal, 46–48; badness and, 98–99
- resilience, 45–46, 49; badness and, 98
- resource-intensive pursuits, 189–190
- Riggle, Nick, 139
- Ross, W. D., 192–193
- Rothko, Mark, 82, 92, 210
- Saunders, George, 53–54
- Scheffler, Samuel, 194
- self-awareness, 187–188
- self-centeredness, 190
- significant and secure value of well-rounded life, 76–80
- silver linings perfectionism, 155–158
- small stuff, xiii
- Smith, Adam, 100
- snobby and sophomoric character, 20–21
- socialism, 30
- social pursuits, 190–191
- socioeconomics of well-rounded life, 29–31
- solo and group activities, 21–22
- star turn perfectionism, 153–155
- Strangers Drowning*, 192
- stupid games, 95–96, 103
- subjective theories of meaning, 199–200
- subject matter, 10, 12–14
- subject-transcending theories, 149, 154
- success, 41–43, 49, 50; badness and, 97
- superlative meaning, 200–203
- synchronic well-roundedness, 25–26, 186–187
- thematic consistency, 130–138
- thematic friction, 134–135
- theoretical perfection, 11
- theory of well-being, 143–144, 157, 179
- Thompson, Derek, 30
- time, meaning across, 203–204

- Time Enough for Love*, 1
- tradeoffs, 180–184, 216–217; ambivalence about, 182–183; illusory, 189–191; meaning and, 183–184, 197–216; morality and, 183, 188–197; ways to be well-rounded and handle, 184–188
- Trial, The*, 205, 213
- Ulysses*, 113, 130
- Untitled (Plum and Dark Brown)*, 82
- utilitarianism, act, 191–192
- Utilitarianism*, 20
- value and rarity of excellence, 92–95
- value-fulfillment theory, 162–165
- value of pursuits, 14–19
- value of well-rounded life, 67–81; instrumental, 67–69; intrinsic, 69–76; significant and secure, 76–80
- value theory, 38–41, 79
- Velleman, David, 113, 118
- virtuous contentment, 86–90, 103
- von Humboldt, Wilhelm, 52, 69
- waste, 125, 127–128
- well-being, 143–144; desire-satisfaction in, 146–147; limits of ecumenism in, 148–149; objective-list theory and, 162, 165–176; perfectionism and, 149, 150–151; pleasure in, 145–146; theory of, 143–144, 157, 179; value-fulfillment theory and, 162–165; well-rounded approach to, 176–178
- well-rounded life, ix, 1–2; as an ideal, 1; badness in, 97–103; balance of pursuits in, 23–26; commitment and change in, 25–26; in different domains, 9–14; empirical research on, xiii–xiv; how things fit together in, xi–xii; inescapable challenges of, 219–220; intuitive case of, 69–70; as living a great story (See good stories); maximally, 26–28; as minimal, 34–36; multiple pursuits in, 4–9; narrowly accessible goods in, 51–67; pairwise comparisons of, 70–76; as partly objective, partly attitude-dependent, 32–34; as permissive, 29–32; pluralism and, x–xi; praise for, 218; small stuff in, xiii; tradeoffs in (See tradeoffs); value of, 67–81, 169–172; well-being and (See well-being); widely accessible goods in, 41–51
- widely accessible good(s), 41–51; badness and, 97–99; caveats on, 48–51; relationships, 43–45, 97–98; renewal, 46–48, 98–99; resilience, 45–46, 98; success, 41–43, 97
- Wiggins, David, 201
- Williams, Bernard, 170
- Wolf, Susan, 43, 195, 211, 212
- Woodward, Joanne, 79
- workism, 30–31
- work-leisure balance, 60