

## CONTENTS

Introduction	1
1 Why Greatness Is Not Good Enough	13
<i>The Origins of “Good Enough”</i>	17
<i>A Long History of Overcoming Greatness</i>	19
<i>Recalibrating</i>	22
<i>The Two Economies</i>	26
<i>Lost Einstein Myths</i>	30
<i>But, Come On, Aren’t There Good Forms of Greatness?</i>	33
<i>Cold, Broken, But Still Hallelujah</i>	35
<i>A Good-Enough Life for All</i>	38
2 For Our Selves	42
<i>In the Beginning</i>	46
<i>It’s Not Just the Economy, Stupid</i>	48
<i>The Return of Virtue</i>	52
<i>Meritocracy, No. Greatness, Maybe.</i>	62
<i>Virtues beyond Greatness</i>	70
<i>The World As It Already Is</i>	74
<i>Satisfaction Not Guaranteed</i>	78
<i>Philosophies Born of Struggle</i>	86

3	For Our Relationships	95
	<i>Romantic Stories</i>	100
	<i>A Circular Journey</i>	105
	<i>A Theory of Laughter</i>	109
	<i>The Paradoxes of Kindness to Strangers</i>	111
	<i>To Heaven or A-fishing</i>	116
	<i>As Zhuangzi and Huizi Were</i>	118
	<i>We'll See</i>	122
	<i>If This Is Good Enough</i>	124
	<i>A Good-Enough President?</i>	130
4	For Our World	135
	<i>The Path of Pinheads</i>	145
	<i>The Road to Serfdom</i>	152
	<i>The Good-Enough Transformation</i>	161
	<i>Why Philanthropy Is Not the Answer</i>	166
	<i>Some Plans for a Good-Enough World</i>	170
	<i>Limiting the Positional Economy</i>	184
	<i>A Thought Experiment</i>	195
5	For Our Planet	197
	<i>Wired for Whatever</i>	203
	<i>Surviving the Fittest</i>	207
	<i>Evolving to Be Good Enough</i>	213
	<i>The Risk of Great Green Revolutions</i>	216
	<i>More with Less, or More from Less?</i>	221
	<i>Sharing in the Burden and the Bounty</i>	227

CONTENTS vii

<i>A Good-Enough Relation to Nature</i>	231
<i>The Good-Enough Sublime</i>	233
Conclusion	236
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	241
<i>Notes</i>	243
<i>Bibliography</i>	283
<i>Index</i>	311

## Introduction

I used to aspire to greatness. When I was young, greatness meant wealth, and I wanted to find a way to be very rich. My first thought was to become a stockbroker, even though I didn't really know what that meant. Later, when I became obsessed with sports, I decided that my path to wealth should be as a famous athlete. I dreamed about playing basketball professionally, then tennis and baseball, but I never had enough talent for any of these.

Toward the end of high school and into my college years, I started to think of greatness as fame more than wealth. At first, I wanted to be a world-renowned fiction writer who was showered with prizes. Realizing how hard that would be to achieve, and (incorrectly) thinking that an academic life would be stabler, I went to graduate school, where I hoped to become one of those famous professors who was flown around the world to give prestigious lectures. I have come closer to achieving this goal than any of my previous professional plans, but it hasn't made me any more satisfied or happier. I think that's because while all of these different life goals have different values attached to them, they share the same basic aspiration: to become a member of the elite, sitting atop a social pyramid.

Over the last few years, I've come to think that this desire to be at the top is poisonous for ourselves, our relationships, our societies, and our planet—even for the individuals who do make it. And so, as much as I can, I've begun to work against

these aspirations. I'm not saying I don't still find them appealing. Of course I do. I don't know if I'll ever set foot on an airplane without wishing I were sitting in the luxury of first class, or go to an event and not wish I were one of the luminaries on the stage. And of course I am still exercising and writing to the best of my abilities. What I have come to doubt is not the desire to do something well for its own sake, nor even the appeal of winning. Instead, I question the social order that takes our talents and turns them into a desire to win our spot at the top of competitive hierarchies. In fact, as I argue in this book, I have come to think that personal quests for greatness, and, perhaps even more important, the unequal social systems that fuel these quests, are at the heart of much that is wrong in our world.

I'll go into more detail about what precisely is wrong in the course of this book, but to get a rough sense of what I mean, consider a fundamental paradox of our present condition: there is too much, and yet there is not enough. We live amid unprecedented abundance and productive capacity, yet billions go unfed, unclothed, and uncared for. Thus, in a world that has a combined \$399.2 trillion in wealth, more than 3.4 billion people still live on less than \$5.50 a day, while 34.5 million people a year die from a lack of adequate healthcare, and around 9 million more pass away due to hunger.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, machines do more of the necessary work for sustaining life than ever, and yet we have so little leisure time. There are more people alive now than ever, and yet so many of us are alone. We benefit from centuries of wisdom and scientific advances for promoting happiness, and yet we are burdened by anxiety and depression. Indeed, not only is the number of people with depression rising, but so is the average number of years that people report feeling depressed. Anxiety and burnout are also on the rise.<sup>2</sup> We have the capacity to go all over the earth, to the depths of the oceans, and

even into space, and yet those very means of exploration are depleting the sustainability of our home planet. Every year we are taking nearly double what the earth is able to regenerate on a yearly basis.<sup>3</sup>

These trends are all related. When we live in a world where some have too much and many have too little, there is tremendous pressure to either rise to the top or sink to the bottom. And in such a world, we will feel anxious at our prospects, depressed at our situation, alienated from our fellow competitors, and unconcerned with how we damage the environment if doing so feels like the only way to stay alive.

To get beyond the paradoxes caused by the pursuit of greatness, we have to understand where that pursuit itself comes from. I will consider various theories throughout this book—for example, the often-exaggerated claim that we are all hierarchical and competitive by nature—but my basic argument is that “greatness thinking” in fact begins as a meaningful response to the fact that life is imperfect. Accidents, tragedies, and failures befall us all. Greatness responds by saying, “Don’t worry, we can overcome this: though the world as it is may be flawed, humans have the capacity to eventually remove the blemishes of our condition.” To do so, we simply have to encourage the most talented among us—the great ones—to innovate and create and explore. They will push past the limits of our ecosystem and create a flourishing world for the rest of us. To incentivize them to do so, they should be given tremendous wealth and power. And in order to find out who these great ones are, we should have a fiercely competitive society where everyone is trying to prove why they are the greatest. To become great is to feel justified in being spared from suffering some real portion of life’s calamities: because you are improving life for everyone (whether by creating wealth, entertainment, or inventions), all

of your rewards are justified. Seeking that sense of satisfaction and security beyond the flux of life is how I now interpret the origins of my youthful desires for being great that I share with so many other people. Desiring greatness thus makes a lot of sense, but it also creates the anxieties and paradoxes of the world we live in.

Although there is a deep logic in our psyches and societies for the greatness worldview, we are not condemned to it. There is another way of seeing things that is full of potential today and that can bring us out of these frightening paradoxes. I call it “the good-enough life.” I will also refer to it as “a good-enough life for all” and “the good-enough world.” Good enough here does not just mean doing the bare minimum to get by—although I do argue for more leisure and relaxation. But more than this, I use the words to register an entire worldview dedicated to ensuring that all humans have both goodness (including decency, meaning, and dignity) *and* enoughness (including high-quality food, clothing, shelter, and medical care).<sup>4</sup> Further, because humans also have environmental, emotional, and social needs, goodness and enoughness are always linked. Our lives cannot be good if we do not have enough to survive, and we cannot have enough if our lives are not also suffused with the goodness of our relations.

Like greatness, the good-enough worldview begins with a recognition that life is imperfect. Unlike greatness, however, it denies the claim that only a worthy elite can help us improve our conditions. By supporting only the pursuit of greatness, we are not in fact advancing as much as we could because we are suppressing the vital energies and capacities of the bulk of humanity and wasting our time and passion competitively trying to prove that we are among the great few. There are almost always many more talented and qualified people for a job than

the number of available positions. We can stop letting this circumstance lead to depression and unemployment, and shift our focus to working cooperatively, harnessing the abilities of 7.7 billion good-enough human beings. If we all try to be good enough, rather than great, we can individually do less while gaining as much, if not more.<sup>5</sup> Not only will the material quality of life for most humans improve, but so will their happiness and social cohesion.

To create this world for ourselves and future generations, we cannot take more from the earth than it is capable of producing. We don't need to live in perfect harmony with nature, but we also don't need to dominate it. Earth is not endlessly large, nor endlessly regenerating. It has its own limits, its own sense of well-being, its own material needs. What makes it miraculous is not its perfection, but the mere fact that it is good enough to sustain human life. We have to build our good-enough life within these good-enough conditions. The good-enough life is "for all," including, as much as possible, the many species and vegetal lives with which we share this planet, because when we recognize that none of us is so great as to be able to overcome the terrors of this life on our own, when we understand that the kinks in our condition can best be borne through connections to our infinite kindred, then we appreciate that the most meaningful life available is one that recognizes and fosters our essential interdependence.

The final difference between a good-enough worldview and the greatness worldview is that good-enoughness does not claim we will ever fully overcome the limits of our conditions. Life is only ever good enough: even in a wonderfully harmonious society, we would still have mistakes, tragedies, disagreements, betrayals, natural disasters. But in a good-enough world, there would be no great few who are spared the worst because



of their status. We would all work to mitigate the suffering together. In the end, this is universally beneficial, because rather than existing in the anxious fear of either rising to the top or sinking to the bottom, everyone would have more time and leisure to appreciate the ordinary, good-enough pleasures of existence. Life at its best can never be more than good enough, but the way we live now, suffused with anxiety, inequality, and ecological destruction, is not yet good enough for all.

Rather than aspiring to versions of greatness, I now aspire to help create this good-enough life for all. Or, at the very least, I do my best to aspire. Like many people, I still feel the pull of desiring some slice of greatness for myself. As I'll discuss throughout the book, good-enoughness requires both a personal and political transformation. In a greatness-oriented world, trying to be good enough can ironically feel like you are *not* good enough, at least in the competitive terms presented to you. It is hard for any given individual to break out of this system. While I do believe that our personal aspirations matter—systems don't change without accompanying changes in our ideas about how the world should be—I do not think that this is just about finding singular good-enough heroes. It is about all of us working together to imagine, develop, and participate in a world in which we all have decency and sufficiency.

A few years ago, I made my first attempt to express this worldview in a public forum. I wrote a short article that focused on the philosophical and literary origins of the idea of a good-enough life.<sup>6</sup> Readers seemed to appreciate what I had to say, especially those who were tired of the inequalities that funnel so many resources to the few and so little to the many. But they also had a lot of questions. How could the ethical values of seeking a good-enough life translate into a social program? What counts as enough, anyway? If we succeeded in making a

good-enough world, wouldn't that be a "great" accomplishment? Don't we need some people to seek out something more than the good enough in order for the rest of us to benefit? Can't life be great for some and good enough for everyone else? What will happen to motivation and incentives? Was I disputing the fact that some people are just more talented than others? Why the words *great* and *good enough*, anyway? Perhaps the most personal comment came from a fellow writer who asked why I seemed to be working so hard on my writing, even as I told others to slow down and embrace the good-enough life—wasn't I being hypocritical?<sup>7</sup> I realized that though the idea behind the good-enough life was based on a relatively simple set of values, explaining and defending its logic would take more than a short essay. That is why this book sets out to explain just what it means to move past a social order based on greatness and create instead a good-enough life for all.

It is because my concern is so universal that although my perspective in this book is largely formed by the experiences I've had as a (mostly) middle-class, able-bodied, White, cisgender male scholar in the United States, I have done my best to listen to and learn from those with other life stories, and I hope that the claims I make here are useful for people from many different backgrounds. I will often use the pronouns "we" and "you" in my writing in order to engage you, the reader, in what follows. Sometimes I will presume that you agree with me and are part of the "we" trying to make a good-enough world. At other points, I will use "we" in a more general sense for what I believe are broadly held beliefs. And sometimes I will address you as someone who probably doesn't agree with me at all and try to convince you that you should. You might at times, of course, think in response: "Stop saying we/you! I don't think that at all!" Given our diversity as humans, such miscues are

inevitable, but I think it's worth the benefits of a more engaged manner of writing.

The four chapter titles (“For Our Selves,” “For Our Relationships,” “For Our World,” and “For Our Planet”) similarly embody this sense of inclusion. With the title of first chapter (“Why Greatness Is Not Good Enough”), they link together to form an exposition of a key theme of the book: “Why greatness is not good enough for ourselves, for our relationships, for our world, for our planet.” The “for” in each of the chapter titles is also meant in the sense of being a benefit to something. The book is *for* our selves, our relationships, our planet, and our world because it is about creating a richer and more complex way of living than the focus on greatness enables. Through different lenses, each chapter argues that the ideology of greatness—that is, again, of thinking that each of us only has value so long as we are competing to be at the top of some hierarchy—is destructive for all the spheres of our life. *The Good-Enough Life* is an argument for revaluing all that is good, sufficient, and imperfect in us, in each other, in our societies, and in our natural world.

If you share the values of the good-enough life already, perhaps this book will help you articulate them better, see their coherence with each other, and understand their limited compatibility with the greatness worldview. If you share some of the values but still believe that supporting the greatness of the few is the best path to creating good-enoughness for the many, perhaps the book will convince you otherwise, or at least give you a logic against which you can explain your position. And if you don't share any of these values now, perhaps I can convince you by the end of this book that they are worth considering. Perhaps you will even take the time to think with me about what the good-enough life is and how we can achieve it. I want

this book to be part of a larger, continuing conversation (one that started long before my writing this) because a good-enough life for all is a complex, dynamic, and evolving ideal that is most meaningful when we all work toward it together.

The events that surrounded the writing of this book have only made this point about interdependence more fundamental to my analysis. I began writing during one of the most epochal events of our era—the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic—and continued working during a second—the uprising against racism and state violence spurred by the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in May 2020. As many commentators have noted, these events have been like an X-ray of the contemporary world, revealing the truth of our condition for anyone who had not previously seen just how unequal and unjust our societies are.<sup>8</sup> The world built around greatness has left billions of people without adequate income, food, or healthcare, while the fortunes of the world’s wealthiest have grown by billions of dollars. This is not an accidental flaw; it is the direct result of a world built to reward the few at the expense of the many.

The German-Jewish writer Walter Benjamin wrote an essay on the philosophy of history as he was fleeing the Nazis in 1940. One line in his essay has always resonated with me: “The tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the ‘state of emergency’ in which we live is not the exception but the rule.”<sup>9</sup> The upheavals during which I wrote this book will be followed by others throughout our history until we recognize that an unequal social order creates unbearable tensions between those deemed great and those deemed expendable in the pursuit of greatness. The good-enough life offers a vision of a world beyond this state of emergency. It will still have problems, of course. There will still be pandemics, accidents, betrayals. But we can work toward a world in which,

when problems arise, our society—built on care, trust, and decency for all—is able to come together to face them.

Some will undoubtedly respond that my vision of humanity is sentimental. It sounds nice, sure, but it's not how the world works, and it's not possible because humans are hardwired by evolution to competitively pursue hierarchical positions. Moreover, you might be thinking, this vision is a potential blow to progress: Isn't the remarkable revolution of the modern age that it took a species once ruled by warrior strength and created a civic culture open to anyone with the right talent and effort?

While these arguments make some sense, they are not entirely accurate: we have always been defined as much by cooperation as by hierarchical competition, and meritocratic ideals have existed for thousands of years. Nor do they speak well to how we might progress as a species. There is increasing evidence today, for example, that progress is made not by getting the “best and brightest” in the room, but rather by cooperative reflection among diverse, well-informed viewpoints.<sup>10</sup> There is also good evidence to suggest that “collective intelligence” is more fundamental to human progress than individual genius.<sup>11</sup> And even when a singular genius appears, their work always depends on vast networks and institutions that have supported them. We will see later in the book why this is true for everyone from Albert Einstein to LeBron James and Steve Jobs.

To arrive at this better world for all, we don't just need more minds; we need more good minds. So instead of dumping resources (including respect and attention) *on* the few, we should work continually and cooperatively *as* the many. This won't be easy, and it requires good training and good institutions with clear forms of both solidarity and non-oppressive hierarchy. Mistakes will undoubtedly be made. But creating

this good-enough life for all is worth the effort, because, ultimately, this is about our fundamental values, and this is the kind of world toward which our ideals of equality, liberty, and justice have always guided us.

You may rightly wonder if human societies can ever truly create a good-enough life for all. I will try to show not only why we can, but why it is necessary to do so. Ultimately, what is unrealistic is not the hope that we might live in a world that is good-enough for all, but rather the belief that we can keep surviving in our greatness culture, with all the hatred, inequality, and destruction that tear us apart day by day.<sup>12</sup>

I will not, however, insist that I have all the answers on how to create this other world. My point, after all, is that good-enoughness is not about one person's idea of how the world should be—it's about all of us working together. I suggest a baseline goal, not a specific set of contents. This is a democratic offering for all of us to keep thinking together about how to create a more encompassing social value system. This system aims to make a world that is good, that provides enough goodness for all, and yet still appreciates that life is unavoidably filled with accidents and tragedies, and that we have to work within the limits of our natural resources. (Once again: it's only ever good enough.)

It is only fitting, then, to have begun writing this book in circumstances that threaten to overturn everything we think of as normal: this is precisely the kind of situation that leads us to question our greatness-oriented society and to understand what the good-enough world we should be building would look like. Our ongoing crises push on the frailty of our individual powers, showing us that though none of us can survive very well on our own, all of us together can build and thrive. This vision is well captured in thoughts like these from “Jester D,” a

sanitation worker, shared on Twitter one morning in early March 2020, when I began writing during a pandemic:

I can't work from home and my job is an essential city service that must get done. It's a tough job, from getting up pre-dawn to the physical toll it takes on my body to the monotonous nature of the job, at times it's hard to keep on going . . .

Right now though, I am feeling an extra sense of pride and purpose as I do my work. I see the people, my people, of my city, peeking out their windows at me. They're scared, we're scared. Scared but resilient . . .

Us garbagemen are gonna keep collecting the garbage, doctors and nurses are gonna keep doctoring and nursing. It's gonna be ok, we're gonna make it be ok. I love my city. I love my country. I love my planet Earth. Be good to each other and we'll get through this.<sup>13</sup>

Being good to each other and providing enough for each other; not asking too much of each other and not taking too much for ourselves: We do not need more than this for humanity to flourish.

## INDEX

- ableism, 29, 184, 262. *See also* disabilities
- activists, 34, 142–43
- Adam and Eve, 46–48
- Adorno, Theodor, 200–201
- affluence. *See* wealth
- affluent society, 46
- Africa, 141, 214
- African Americans: and the Civil Rights Movement, 34–35; and cooperatives, 178–79; female, 142, 158, 266n79; and innovation, 128–29; and leadership, 92–94; and oppression, 172, 212; and philosophy, 45, 87–91
- Alperovitz, Gar, 178, 181, 228
- Amato, Paul, 103
- Amazon, 30, 180–81, 203
- American Dream, 75–76
- American exceptionalism, 212
- American greatness, 212
- anonymous review, 188–89
- anxiety, 2–4, 6, 41, 47, 61, 74, 84, 96, 200, 237. *See also* burnout
- Appiah, Kwame Anthony, 62–63, 66–70
- Apple, 77
- aristocracy, 53–55, 59–60, 62, 81, 86, 89, 252n39
- Aristophanes, 102
- Aristotle, 27, 52–56, 59–64, 73, 81–83, 86, 263n47
- Art Sanctuary, 24
- aspirations, personal: and cooperation, 6–7, 39, 60, 66–67, 70; and eliteness, 1–2, 23, 25, 42; and human nature, 19; and money, 49–52; questioning of, 2–4, 11, 43; and virtue ethics, 77–78
- Assalāyana Sutta*, 81–82
- Athenian democracy, 189–90
- attention economy, 29
- Auerbach, Erich, 104
- Auschwitz, 124–26, 187
- authoritarianism, 36, 138–39, 151, 161, 172, 228. *See also* fascism
- Azmanova, Albena, 164–65, 249n1
- the backwards law, 79–80
- Baker, Ella, 35, 92–93, 128
- Baldwin, James, 38, 91
- Banks, Nina, 142
- Batson, Daniel, 112–15
- Baumeister, Roy, 18, 95
- belongingness hypothesis, 18, 95
- Benjamin, Walter, 9, 100
- Berlant, Lauren, 247n29
- Berlin, Isaiah, 37
- Berman, Sheri, 171, 175
- Bernstein, Eduard, 175
- best and brightest, 10, 132, 191. *See also* talent
- Bezos, Jeff, 30–31, 33, 181, 220



- the Bible, 46–48, 112–14, 125–26, 187, 201, 246n7, 249n7. *See also* Christianity
- Biden, Joe, 133
- biology, 20, 204–5. *See also* ecology; science
- biosphere integrity, 216–17
- Bittman, Mark, 219, 264n66
- Boehm, Christopher, 20
- Boushey, Heather, 157
- Brahminism, 81–82
- Breakthrough Energy Ventures (BEV), 219–20
- Bregman, Rutger, 203
- Brinkmann, Svend, 246n14
- Brooks, David, 206
- brown, adrienne maree, 34, 92–93, 178
- Brown, Vincent, 128
- Brown, Wendy, 48–49
- Brownlee, Kimberly, 95–96
- Buddha, 81–82, 84. *See also* Gautama, Siddhartha
- Buddhism, 36–37, 45, 78–87, 254n73
- burnout, 2, 34–35, 52, 60, 93, 170. *See also* anxiety; labor
- business, 30–31, 49–50, 80–81, 142, 154, 162–63, 173, 179–82, 219–21. *See also* capitalism; economics; labor
- Calhoun, Ada, 19–20
- capitalism: and authoritarianism, 151–54; and colonialism, 172–73; combating the challenges of, 143–49, 159, 171, 174–79, 183–84, 229–30; and communism, 139; and competition, 158–61, 222; criticisms of, 137–38, 180–83; defenses of, 167–70, 181; and division of labor, 145–46; and the environment, 221–30, 232, 252n49, 261n17, 263n40; and inequality, 36, 136–38, 149, 155–57, 173; and the invisible hand, 21, 146–47, 149–51; and Max Weber, 50–51; and oppression, 140–43; and socialism, 162–63, 172–76; and Western Taoism, 80–81. *See also* business; economics; positional economy
- Carnegie, Andrew, 167, 170
- Cary, Lorene, 24
- Cass, Oren, 65
- castes, 13, 35–36, 81–82, 85
- central planning, 153–54
- charismatitis, 93
- Chavis Jr., Benjamin, 199
- Chetty, Raj, 31
- children, 17–18, 31, 57–59, 97–99, 103, 106–8, 123–24, 156, 194–95
- China, 19, 106–8, 119–20, 151, 219
- chorus, 129–30
- Christianity, 36–37, 79–80. *See also* the Bible
- Chua, Amy, 106–8, 110, 122–23, 192
- Civil Rights Movement, 34–35, 92–93
- Cleveland model, 177, 181
- climate catastrophe. *See* climate change
- climate change, 30, 198–201, 212–13, 216–18, 221–23, 230. *See also* environmental damage; sustainability
- Coates, Ta-Nehisi, 90–91
- codetermination, 177
- cognitive ecology, 205–6
- Cohen, Leonard, 37
- collective intelligence, 10. *See also* cooperation
- college admissions, 64, 191–92
- Collins, Chuck, 24
- Collins, Steven, 85, 254n73
- colonialism, 30, 78, 81, 146, 172, 199. *See also* imperialism
- commodities, 142, 162, 173

- common good, 55, 62, 64–65, 175.  
  *See also* cooperation
- communal life, 21, 127, 142
- communism, 36–37, 138–39, 172
- communist ideal, 36
- community, 23, 45–46, 218
- community arts, 24
- community of equals, 22
- compassion, 87
- competition: argument against, 159–60, 210, 238, 253n60; civil, 238, 253n60; getting past, 32, 39–40; and humanity, 16, 20, 212–14; and inequality, 26, 58–59; and labor, 28–29; and performance, 57–58; sexual, 184, 186; as a solution, 222, 224–26, 230, 251n35; and technology, 222, 224, 230; and virtue ethics, 55–56; zero-sum, 47, 57. *See also* capitalism
- competitive hierarchies, 2–4, 6, 8, 10, 15, 60, 70, 97, 207. *See also* hierarchy; winner-take-all
- Confucius, 47, 117–18
- conservatism, 116, 151–53, 163, 206–7, 257n28. *See also* Republican Party
- consumption, 114, 157, 178, 200, 217, 221–25, 228–29, 232
- contests, open, 193
- contributive justice, 64–66. *See also* distributive justice; justice
- Cooper, Anna Julia, 92
- cooperation: advantages of, 159–60, 178; and business, 144, 177–79, 181; and the economy, 144, 257n28; and evolution, 20, 32; and the good-enough life, 9, 11, 144, 170; and *The Good Place*, 72–73; and greatness thinking, 96–97; and human nature, 207; and innovation, 191; and parenting, 108; and socialism, 175–76; and social movements, 34–35; and social systems, 39–41; as a solution, 5–6, 10, 12, 60, 230–31, 238; theories of, 183, 191, 253n60, 266n80; and virtue ethics, 77–78; as a worldview, 44–45. *See also* common good; inclusion; interdependence
- cooperative systems, 178–79, 182–83
- Corbyn, Jeremy, 177
- corruption, 21, 34, 148, 280n90
- Costa, Mariarosa Dalla, 141
- COVID-19. *See* the pandemic
- Coyne, Jerry, 209
- craving, 84
- creativity, 18, 25, 111–12
- criminal justice system, 212
- cruel optimism, 247n29
- cultural differences, 106–7
- cultural forces, 43
- cynicism, 37, 150
- Darley, John, 112–15
- Darwin, Charles, 207–10, 213
- de Botton, Alain, 101, 121
- decency and sufficiency: and African American philosophy, 45; and cooperation, 6, 39; and the economy, 181, 183, 229; and the environment, 231; and environmental damage, 231; and the good-enough life, 4, 17, 38, 86, 239; and good-enoughness, 15, 33, 41; and the human condition, 40, 206; and inequality, 91, 124; and labor, 144; and motivation, 21–22; and Obama, 130–31; and politics, 14, 234–35; and society, 20, 151, 164, 236; and success, 66, 93, 96; teaching, 108–9
- defect and excess, 53
- degeneration, 211

- degrowth, 221–22, 227–29
- Delany, Martin, 92, 129
- dematerialization, 222–27, 232
- democracy, 93–94, 151, 153, 163, 171–72, 176, 182–84, 189–90. *See also* democratic socialism; social democracy; socialism
- democratic socialism, 174–78, 182–83. *See also* democracy; social democracy; socialism
- Democrats, 35, 49, 177
- depression, 2–3, 5, 103
- Deresiewicz, William, 25
- Deutsch, Morton, 183, 266n80, 272n167
- developmentalism, 172
- de Waal, Frans, 204–5
- dictatorship. *See* authoritarianism
- diminishing returns, 82
- disabilities, 90, 142–43. *See also* ableism
- dissatisfaction. *See* unsatisfactoriness
- distributive justice, 64–66. *See also* contributive justice; justice
- diversity, 7–8, 10, 189, 191, 244n10
- divorce, 22–23, 101, 103
- Doctorow, Cory, 185, 194
- Dorrien, Gary, 175
- Douglass, Fredrick, 255n83
- Douthat, Ross, 257n28
- Du Bois, W.E.B., 29, 87–90, 128
- dukkha*, 82–83
- Earth, 5, 31, 40, 216–17, 232, 234. *See also* the world
- Easter Island, 202–3, 217
- ecological crises. *See* environmental damage
- ecology, 13, 30, 65, 201, 205, 217–18, 228–32, 236. *See also* biology; climate change; environmental damage; science; sustainability
- ecomodernists, 222–23, 228
- Economic Bill of Rights, 176
- economics: and authoritarianism, 153–54; and democracy, 176, 178–83; and the environment, 30–31, 200, 216–17, 219, 222–26, 228, 230; and freedom, 164–65; and friendship, 121; global, 150–52, 159–60; and government, 265n71, 281n100; and inclusion, 142–43; and inequality, 26–29, 55, 64, 67, 70, 132–33, 139–43, 146, 156–58, 161, 171–72, 200, 280n90; and logic, 50–52; and personal aspirations, 42–43, 48, 149; and productivism, 65, 142, 161; progressive, 152–53, 161–63, 168; social, 114–16, 162; and socialism, 39, 163–64, 173–75; top-down, 30–31, 134, 145–47, 180, 238; and value systems, 49, 51, 53–55, 62–64, 74, 77–78, 140, 239. *See also* capitalism; positional economy
- economics imperialism, 48–49
- economy of greatness, 149
- education, 32, 49, 54, 106, 136, 250n22
- effort, 63
- egalitarian coalition, 20, 36
- Einstein, Albert, 10, 30–33, 67
- Eisler, Riane, 178
- elsewhereism, 214–15
- Emancipation, 128
- Emerson, Ralph Waldo, 58
- engaged Buddhism, 87. *See also* Buddhism
- Engels, Friedrich, 168
- enoughness. *See* good-enoughness
- entrepreneurism, 230
- environmental community, 221
- environmental damage, 3, 14, 65, 138, 155, 197–203, 216, 231–32. *See also* climate change; ecology; sustainability

- environmental racism, 199
- equality: and cooperation, 151, 178;  
and democracy, 151, 186; ecological,  
229–31; economic, 222, 237; fight  
for, 90–92; and freedom, 164–65;  
and the good-enough life, 11, 22,  
40; and the human condition, 20,  
207; material, 184; moral, 67, 69; of  
opportunity, 15, 31, 59, 156, 252n40;  
political, 169; and progress, 155–56.  
*See also* inequality
- Equality of Opportunity Project, 31
- essential workers, 12, 75
- ethical system, 44
- ethics, 13–14, 19, 66–67, 87, 105, 166–67.  
*See also* Good Samaritan; morality;  
virtue ethics
- eugenics, 210–11
- Evergreen coops, 177
- evolution, 10, 17, 40, 47, 197, 208–16, 218
- excellence, pursuing, 57, 60, 74, 77–78
- the excellence conspiracy, 215
- excess, 130
- exclusion, 96
- expertise, 61–62, 185, 252n39
- extinction, 198, 217
- failure (coping with), 18, 38–39, 60, 73,  
80, 195
- The Fall, 47–48
- fame: and greatness, 1, 25, 32, 61; laws  
of, 25–26, 69–70. *See also* success
- family, 42
- family, the author's, 23–24, 28–29, 95, 99
- fascism, 151, 154, 175, 211. *See also*  
authoritarianism
- Federici, Silvia, 141
- feminism, 14, 141–43, 146. *See also*  
patriarchy; women
- Ferrell, Will, 110
- film, 102, 104, 110–11
- Financial Times* Editorial Board, 244n8
- Finland, 52
- Floyd, George, 9
- food, 218–19, 264n66
- Ford administration, 48
- founder effects, 213
- Four Noble Truths, 84
- France (politics), 190–91
- Franklin, Benjamin, 50–51, 250n18
- Frase, Peter, 185
- freedom, 139, 152, 155, 164–66, 176,  
258n50
- free speech, 49
- Freud, Sigmund, 109–10, 184, 186, 194
- friendship, 98–99, 101, 115–21, 126, 135.  
*See also* relationships
- Galbraith, John Kenneth, 167
- Garden of Eden, 47–48
- Gates, Bill, 168–70, 219–21, 230, 269n110
- Gates Foundation, 160
- Gautama, Siddhartha, 47, 81–83, 86.  
*See also* Buddha
- GDP, 157
- Genesis, 46–48
- genetic drift, 213
- genius, 10, 14
- geographic isolation, 213
- global debt, 221
- globalization, 24, 89, 150, 173, 270n131
- global warming. *See* climate change
- Goldwater, Barry, 152
- “the good,” 13–14
- good elites, 200
- good-enough individuals, 38–39
- good-enough mother, 17
- good-enoughness: and change, 6, 94,  
229–30; criticisms of, 20; defini-  
tion of, 4–5, 8, 38; and greatness, 8,

- good-enoughness (*continued*)  
14–15, 33–34, 136, 236–37; limitations of, 5, 41, 43, 237; principles of, 143–44. *See also* decency and sufficiency
- good-enough organizer, 35
- good-enough parent, 17, 245n6
- good-enough universalism, 44
- good-enough worldview, 4–8, 16, 19, 24, 33, 45, 130, 229, 237, 256n101
- The Good Place*, 45, 70–74, 78, 105
- Good Samaritan, 112–16, 148. *See also* ethics
- the Gospels, 80, 112, 125, 187
- Gottlieb, Lori, 102–3
- Gould, Stephen Jay, 31, 208
- government: and cooperation, 158–60, 230; and economics, 133–34, 163–64, 174; and freedom, 138–39; intervention, 48–49, 154–55, 172–74; as a solution, 127, 144, 223, 230
- Graeber, David, 165
- gram sabhas*, 190
- Gravity Payments, 179–80
- the great, 13–14
- Great National Debate, France, 190–91
- greatness: definitions of, 1, 13–14, 236; and good-enoughness, 8, 14–15, 22, 33–34, 48, 136, 236–37; ideology of, 8, 35, 40–41; origins of, 47. *See also* perfection; talent
- greatness thinking, 3–4, 96, 140, 227, 229
- greatness worldview, 4–6, 8–9, 14, 16, 30, 62
- Great Recession, 132–33, 173
- Green Revolution, 218–20
- Guerrero, Alexander, 190
- Guiding Hundredth, 89–90
- happiness, 1–2, 5, 45, 88, 147, 150, 179
- Harris, Leonard, 87, 255n83
- Hartman, Saidiya, 128–29
- Hayek, Friedrich, 137, 152–61, 166, 181, 196, 206–7, 265n70–265n71
- heroic figure. *See* leadership
- Hickel, Jason, 221–22, 228
- hierarchy: and circumstance, 68; discussions of, 67–68, 182, 236, 266n79; and evolution, 40, 206–7, 236; of knowing, 120–21; and movements, 36–37; and oppression, 10, 89, 91, 141, 194, 236; positional, 28; social, 25, 39, 45, 93, 96–97, 196, 201, 213, 238; and virtue ethics, 73, 75, 77, 186. *See also* competitive hierarchies
- Hinduism, 78–79
- Hirsch, Fred, 27–29, 55, 63–64, 76, 114–15, 139, 148, 184, 193, 252n40
- Hirschman, A.O., 250n18
- Hobbes, Thomas, 203–4
- Hong, Lu, 191
- hooks, bell (writer), 86–87, 90, 94
- Horkheimer, Max, 200–201
- Huainanzi*, 122–23, 258n38
- Huizi, 119–21
- human development, 18
- human nature, 19, 147–48, 196–97, 203–7, 210, 214–15, 232
- human potential, 15–16, 31, 47, 195, 252n39
- humans and nature, 5, 13, 40, 47–48, 197, 200–203, 222, 227, 231–38
- human worth, 43, 67, 94, 236
- humility, 39, 65–66, 192, 229, 239
- humor, 109–12, 122
- hunter-gatherer, 46–48, 249n8
- idealism, 9–11, 36, 43, 63, 87–88, 245n6
- immigration, 65, 141, 172–73, 211–12

- imperialism, 48, 139, 251n25. *See also*  
colonialism
- income, standardized, 93, 165, 183
- Indigenous, 127, 141, 172, 218
- individualism, 11, 14, 45
- individuals, 38–39, 43
- inequality: causes of, 13, 62; and competition, 15–16, 58–59, 63; defense of, 134, 155–56; economic, 68, 133–34, 139, 148–51, 156–57, 180, 186, 265n70; and politics, 68, 151, 263n47; and resources, 6, 9–10, 15, 64; social, 2–3, 9, 140; spiritual, 149–50. *See also* equality
- inequality of honor, 27, 64
- inequality of property, 27
- innovation, 31–32, 73, 224, 228, 264n66
- institutions, 10, 130, 142, 150, 177, 205
- interdependence, 5–9, 18, 32, 38, 44–45, 135–36, 151, 160, 210, 230–31. *See also* cooperation
- interplanetary development, 30–31
- the invisible hand, 21, 146–47, 149–50
- iPhone, 77
- the iron law of oligarchy, 20, 37
- Ivy League students, 49, 136, 166
- James, LeBron, 10, 74–76
- James, Selma, 141
- Jameson, Fredric, 228
- “Jester D” (@JustMeTurtle), 11–12, 69, 245n13
- Jesus of Nazareth, 36, 116
- jobs. *See* labor
- Jobs, Steve, 10, 77
- jokes. *See* humor
- Jones, Gareth Stedman, 260n10
- justice, 11, 33–34, 63–66, 166, 173. *See also* social justice
- Justice, Donald, 25, 69
- Jylhä, Kirsti M., 201
- Kant, Immanuel, 204, 233
- karma, 85
- Keynes, John Maynard, 152, 154, 172–74, 263n47
- kindness, 16, 46, 66, 94, 115–16, 131
- King Jr., Martin Luther, 33, 35, 93–94, 129, 183, 255n100
- Klein, Ezra, 256n101
- Klein, Naomi, 221, 228
- Knight, Frank, 152
- Koch, David, 170
- Koch brothers, 163
- Kohn, Alfie, 251n35
- Kronman, Anthony, 252n39
- Krugman, Paul, 134
- Kuznets curve, 137
- labor: and bullshit jobs, 164–65; and college students, 49–50; and competition, 28–29, 47, 49–50; and developing countries, 172–73; division of, 145–46, 150–51; and feminism, 141–43, 146; and the Garden of Eden, 46–47; and good-enoughness, 143–45; and inequality, 27–28, 141–44, 157, 179, 219, 270n131; and leisure, 114–15, 164; limitations of, 4–5, 28, 76; and machines, 2, 249n2; and meritocracy, 67; ordinary, 12, 32–34, 38–39, 61, 69, 75; socially necessary, 43–44, 249n2. *See also* burnout; business
- Landemore, Hélène, 190–91
- Lanier, Heather, 123–24
- laughter. *See* humor
- leadership, 34–35, 61–62, 87–88, 92–93, 129–30, 138–39, 236

- Leary, Mark, 18, 95  
Le Guin, Ursula, 185–86, 194  
leisure, 2, 6, 46, 114–15, 164–65  
Leondar-Wright, Betsy, 24  
Levi, Primo, 124–28, 187  
literature, 6, 13, 92, 100–108, 111–12, 116–18, 127, 152–53. *See also* storytelling  
lotteries, 64, 189–93, 195  
lottocracy, 190  
love, 20–21, 37, 39, 49, 94, 97, 99–105, 121, 135, 148. *See also* marriage; relationships  
low-desire life, 19  
low-earth orbit economy, 31  
Luke, Gospel of, 112–14  
Luxemburg, Rosa, 138–39  
  
MacIntyre, Alasdair, 52, 54  
Malhotra, Ravi, 142  
Manson, Mark, 19–20, 44, 79–80  
market fundamentalism, 168  
marriage, 103–5, 128. *See also* love; relationships  
Marx, Karl, 137, 167, 206, 260n10  
Marxism, 36–37, 174–75  
material economy, 55, 57, 179, 238  
material goods, 18  
materialism, 79  
materials. *See* resources  
Matthew, Gospel of, 125–26, 187  
the Matthew effect, 187–89  
maximization, 15  
May, Todd, 105  
Mazzucato, Mariana, 77, 170, 265n71, 266n78, 281n100  
McAfee, Andrew, 222–27, 230, 280n90  
McGhee, Heather, 91, 194, 201  
McKinsey consulting, 133  
meditation, 78–81, 84–85  
Meidner Plan, 177  
meritocracy, 45; criticisms of, 15, 27, 59, 62, 64–70, 252n49; and good-enough for all, 14; ideas about, 255n100; and luck, 62–63, 65–66; and politics, 132  
meritocratic ideals, 10  
Merton, Robert K., 187  
Michels, Robert, 20  
Michener, Jamila, 256n101  
Milo, Daniel, 213–15  
Milton, John, 13  
modern Buddhism, 84, 87. *See also* Buddhism  
modernity, 207, 228  
modernization, 81  
monasteries, 78–79  
Mondragon Corporation, 177, 181  
money. *See* wealth  
Montesquieu, 250n18  
morality, 29–32, 53, 63, 67, 69, 115, 125–26, 160, 258n38. *See also* ethics  
Morreall, John, 109  
Muhammad, Khalil Gibran, 212  
  
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), 87–88  
National Association of Colored Women, 158  
natural condition, 40, 203–4  
natural habitats, 217–18  
natural history, 210  
natural selection, 83, 207–9, 213–14  
nature, 40, 201, 208, 214, 222, 227, 231–36  
Nazism, 151, 211  
neoliberalism, 48, 54, 77, 133, 136–37, 153, 161–63, 168, 174. *See also* capitalism; economics  
New Deal, 172, 174

- New York, 180–81  
nirvana, 84. *See also* Buddhism  
Nixon administration, 48  
Nobel Prizes, 153, 187  
noble savage, 218  
normative horizon, 43, 45, 66, 94, 130  
North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), 151  
Norwegian model (national fund), 178  
Nozick, Robert, 184, 194, 272n167  
nuclear energy, 222  
Nye, Naomi Shibab, 111–12
- Obama, Barack, 130–34, 137, 212  
Offer, Avner, 153  
oligarchy, 20, 37, 173  
opportunity, 14–15, 26, 58–60, 63, 66, 76, 89, 165, 252n40  
Orwell, George, 152, 264n53  
Ovid, 102, 104  
ownership, 175, 177
- the pandemic, 9, 75, 122–24, 140, 159–60, 169, 174, 181, 211, 230  
paradoxes (of modern life), 2–4, 15, 79, 115–16  
paradox of choice, 114  
parenting, 17–18, 35, 97–99, 105–8, 123–24, 135, 245n6. *See also* relationships  
patriarchy, 29, 87, 90. *See also* feminism; women  
Payne, Charles, 35  
perfection (pursuit of), 18, 47–48, 53, 59–60, 74, 98, 109–10, 117. *See also* greatness  
performance, 57–58  
permanent funds, 178  
personal transformation, 6, 19, 66  
philanthropy, 166–70, 268n101  
philosopher-kings, 77  
philosophy. *See specific philosophies*  
Piketty, Thomas, 156–57, 165, 167  
Pinker, Steven, 203  
planetary boundaries, 216  
Plato, 47, 102, 104  
pleasure, 82–85  
pluralist commonwealth, 176, 181  
plural values, 66, 69  
Polanyi, Karl, 151–52, 161–65, 183, 227, 263n47, 264n53  
politicians, 14, 27, 55, 58, 150  
politics: and the COVID vaccine, 160; and democracy, 175, 238; and the economy, 133–34, 151–52, 176; and the environment, 199–200, 216, 228–30, 234–35; and excess, 131; and greatness, 132, 234; and immigration, 173; and labor, 164–65; and lotteries, 190; and reform, 130; and talent, 30–32; and the wealthy, 138–39, 169  
polygamy, 257n15  
population (human), 31  
positional economy, 27, 55, 57, 63, 97, 179, 184–94, 238. *See also* economics  
positional goods, 26–29, 70, 116  
positional power, 28, 192. *See also* power  
poverty, 76, 86, 90, 114, 199, 212–13  
power, 3, 13–14, 26–28, 63, 154, 164, 172–73, 178, 185–86, 190, 210. *See also* positional power  
pressure, 42–43, 60–61, 97, 237  
“Preston model” (UK), 177  
Price, Dan, 179–81  
Princeton Theological Seminary, 112–16  
Princeton University, 49, 136, 166  
privilege, 35, 59–60, 90, 119, 124, 232, 236  
production, 163, 223  
productivism, 142



- progress, 10, 15, 39–41, 149, 155–59, 161, 202–3
- progressivism, 69, 170–73, 206
- progress trap, 202
- psychological wages, 29
- psychology, 57–60, 67–69, 83, 109–10, 112–13, 201
- public funding, 224, 265n71
- public investment, 77
- public services, 174
- the pyramid. *See* competitive hierarchies
- Queens, 180–81
- racism: and Black women in poverty, 128–29; and the economy, 29, 141–43, 184, 261n17; environmental, 199, 218; and greatness, 14, 87–91, 140, 194, 198, 210–12; as a lens, 9; and politics, 132, 172, 211–12
- Rapa Nui, 202–3, 217
- Rawidowicz, Simon, 245n12
- Rawls, John, 195–96. *See also* distributive justice
- Reagan, Ronald, 132, 152, 157, 186
- realism, 10–11, 206, 237, 245n12
- redistribution, 21, 174–75, 182
- refugees, 198
- Reich, Rob, 169
- relationships, 18, 38–39, 94–101, 104–8, 116–17, 123, 234, 257n15. *See also* friendship; love; marriage; parenting
- religion. *See specific religions*
- Republican Party, 211–12. *See also* conservatism
- resources, 6, 9–11, 15, 32, 96, 146, 158, 217, 221–28
- Robbins, Lionel, 154
- Robinson, Cedric, 141
- Rockefeller, John D., 169–70
- romance. *See* love
- Roosevelt, Franklin Delano, 133, 176
- Roosevelt, Theodore, 168
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 47, 203–4, 206
- Russell, Bertrand, 139, 153–54
- Russell, Marta, 142
- Russian Revolution, 138–39
- safe planetary conditions, 216–17
- Sahlins, Marshall, 46
- Sandel, Michael, 52, 54, 62–68, 70, 132, 252n49
- Sanders, Bernie, 31–32, 177, 230
- Schur, Michael, 73
- Schwartz, Barry, 114, 191, 246n14
- science, 2, 32, 40, 56, 78, 187–89, 205–6, 216. *See also* biology; ecology
- Scott, James C., 47
- Seattle, 179–81
- security (personal), 79–80
- self-esteem, 6, 60, 74, 94
- self-help, 19, 44
- self-improvement, 79, 246n12
- self-interest, 21
- selfishness, 19–20, 44, 48, 98–99, 147, 250n18
- sentimentalism, 10–11
- sexism, 184, 194
- sexual competition, 185–86
- sexual repression, 110
- Shalchi, Djaffar, 182
- Sharma, Ruchir, 265n71
- Silicon Valley, 133, 158
- Singer, Peter, 166–68, 170, 181
- skill. *See* talent
- slavery, 128, 141, 146, 258n50
- Smil, Vaclav, 224–26, 228, 262n27
- Smith, Adam, 20–23, 26–29, 36, 47, 51, 145–56, 206–7, 222, 250n18, 263n40

- Smith, Clint, 258n50  
Sobey Art Awards, 273n177  
social cohesion, 5, 14, 280n90  
social democracy, 39, 171–76, 178.  
    *See also* democracy; socialism  
Social Democratic Party, 174  
social disconnection, 280n90  
social dominance orientation, 201  
social esteem, 29, 52, 64, 67, 69–70, 192  
social hierarchy, 39, 196  
social interaction, 178  
socialism, 52, 139, 153–54, 156, 163–65, 171, 181. *See also* democratic socialism; social democracy  
socialist modernists, 227–28  
socializing goods, 193–94  
social justice, 34–35, 81, 164, 224.  
    *See also* justice  
social ladder, 23  
social morality, 29, 115  
social movements, 19, 34–37, 92–93, 141, 191, 199  
social needs, 39  
social networks, 10  
social norms, 46  
social order, 2, 7, 9, 29, 35, 61, 76, 97, 139–40, 161  
social policies, 38  
social program, 6  
social pyramid, 1  
social status. *See* fame  
social systems, 15, 39, 185  
Söderberg, Gabriel, 153  
Soros, George, 168  
Soviet Union, 27, 138–39  
Sowell, Thomas, 206  
Spencer, Herbert, 208  
spheres (of value), 54–57, 75, 77–78  
state of emergency, 9  
Stiglitz, Joseph, 170, 260n4  
storytelling, 100–102, 108, 117–22, 128, 258n50. *See also* literature  
strikes, teacher, 51–52  
students, 49–50  
sublime, 233–35  
suburbia, 22, 24  
success, 39, 45, 60, 65–66, 69, 80.  
    *See also* fame  
suffering, 45, 82–85, 97, 135, 195, 239  
sufficiency and decency. *See* decency and sufficiency  
Sunkara, Bhaskar, 272n163  
Supreme Court justices, 190  
survival of the fittest. *See* evolution  
sustainability, 3, 5, 11, 30, 40, 177, 217, 228, 230. *See also* climate change; ecology; environmental damage  
Sweden, 173, 177  
Swedish Social Democrats, 177  
talent: and competition, 56–61, 63; discussions of, 7, 45, 61, 236, 238; and the economy, 157; and meritocracy, 59; and opportunity, 4–5, 14, 28, 56, 76, 89, 193; and overcoming our condition, 3, 30–31; and reward, 15–16, 26, 29, 32, 60–61, 70, 76, 193, 195, 239; and virtue ethics, 55–58, 74–75. *See also* greatness  
talented tenth, 89  
*Talladega Nights: The Ballad of Ricky Bobby*, 110–11  
Taoism, 79–81, 119–22  
TARP bailout, 163  
taxes, 69, 157–58, 165, 167, 169, 171, 174–75, 191  
teaching, 49–52, 56, 62, 136, 192  
technology, 78, 144, 158, 180, 200, 218–30, 249n2, 264n66

- teleology, 54  
television, 45, 70–74, 78, 105  
Thatcher, Margaret, 152  
theater, 129–30  
Thoreau, Henry David, 47, 117–18  
time, 104  
traditional ecological knowledge, 218  
Treuer, David, 126–28  
trickle-down culture, 30  
Trotsky, Leon, 138  
Trump, Donald, 31–32, 133, 151, 211–12  
Tulalip, 127  
  
unions, 171, 173, 180  
United for a Fair Economy (UFE), 24  
United Nations, 18  
United States: and economics, 52, 137, 157, 163, 176, 178; and education, 51–52; and the environment, 218–19, 224, 226; and exceptionalism, 14, 64; and greatness thinking, 22; and inequality, 76, 140, 142, 157; and meditation, 78; and military interventions, 172–73; and philanthropy, 168–69; and politics, 49, 130–34, 190, 211–12, 230; and racism, 9, 90–91, 194, 199, 211–12, 277n47; and vaccines, 160–61  
universal healthcare, 171  
universal income, 93, 166  
universalism, 44  
University of Chicago, 153  
unsatisfactoriness, 82–83, 85–86  
utopia, 37, 40, 68, 165–66, 237  
  
vaccine, 159–61, 169  
values: and economic rationality, 48–49; and education, 51–52; ethical, 6; fundamental, 11; and the good-  
enough life, 7–8, 11, 15; and greatness, 1, 13, 15, 30; and innovation, 31–32; logical system of, 30; social, 52, 179  
violence, 9  
virtue, 75  
virtue culture, 73  
virtue ethics, 45, 52–62, 73–79, 118, 148, 185–86, 252n39. *See also* ethics  
voice, 64, 238–39  
  
Wallace-Wells, David, 198  
Wall Street, 133  
Walzer, Michael, 52, 54–55, 57, 77, 185  
Warren, Elizabeth, 177  
Watts, Alan, 79–80, 84  
wealth: concentrations of, 26, 65, 69, 75, 138, 146, 157, 161, 164; and desire, 48, 50, 52, 54; and esteem, 23, 43; and family, 59; and greatness, 1, 3, 30–31, 149; and happiness, 45; and incentive, 68–69, 155; and inequality, 2, 9, 24, 63, 67–68, 137, 157–58, 199, 229; and leisure, 114–15; and meritocracy, 14; and politics, 138, 186, 250n18; and positional power, 28; and wisdom, 50–51, 53  
weather events, 217–18  
Weber, Max, 50  
welfare, 171–72, 175  
White, Lynn, 201, 275n11  
whiteness, 29  
White privilege, 90  
winner-take-all, 114–16, 136, 180.  
*See also* competitive hierarchies; zero-sum  
Winnicott, Donald, 17–18, 35, 108, 245n6  
winning, 45, 57

- wisdom, 2, 50–51, 100–102, 108, 119–20, 122, 148, 206
- Wolff, Richard, 163
- women, 34–35, 90, 92, 129, 138, 140–42, 266n79, 270n131. *See also* feminism; patriarchy
- working together. *See* cooperation
- the world, 38, 44, 46, 82, 85–86.  
*See also* Earth
- World Health Organization (WHO), 159–60
- World Meteorological Organization, 198
- World Trade Organization, 24
- World War II, 37, 159
- Wright, Robert, 83–84
- Wright, Ronald, 202
- writing. *See* literature
- xenophobia, 65
- Yellow Vest movement, 191
- yoga, 78–80
- Young, Michael, 15–16, 27, 59, 66, 68
- Zen Buddhism, 79–80
- zero-sum, 57. *See also* winner-take-all
- Zeus, 102
- Zhuangzi, 119–21
- Ziporyn, Brook, 120
- Žižek, Slavoj, 80–81
- zoonotic diseases, 217