

## What is a generalist? Two approaches

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*Abstract.* I contrast two approaches to defining a generalist, as opposed to a specialist: one from the specialist’s point of view and another while starting from a paradigm case of a generalist.

We use the word “specialist” but what about its counterpart “generalist”? What is a generalist? It seems to me that there are at least two ways of approaching definition, which I wish to present.

One approach starts from the specialist’s point of view. To illustrate it, once I introduced an objection to a model of life in the state of nature, when there is no government. I suppose a specialist might say, “It’s an interesting idea but you need to formulate it mathematically and with equilibria,” or something like that! “Then you can make a proper paper out of it. This is generalist work.” For that specialist, judging by the demanding norms of their specialism, a person who has interesting ideas but does not properly work them out so as to meet these norms is a generalist.

Another approach starts with a vision of what a generalist is, often developed with reference to a specific example of a generalist, and then compares you with this vision or this example. “Our generalist R wrote explanations of Einstein, wrote histories, wrote about politics, wrote about idling, wrote about the humanities, and mathematics too. You have hardly done anything in comparison. If you are a generalist, you are the most limited generalist ever!”

**Reference.** Edward, T.R. 2022. A war of all against all? The close up problem. Available at:

<https://philpapers.org/rec/EDWAWO>