

# How Human Life Matters in the Universe

## A Reply to David Benatar

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### Abstract

In his book, *The Human Predicament*, David Benatar claims that our individual lives and human life, in general, do not make a difference beyond Earth and, therefore, are meaningless from the vast, cosmic perspective. In this paper, I will explain how what we do matters from the cosmic perspective. I will provide examples of how human beings have transcended our limits, thereby giving human life some meaning from the cosmic perspective. Also, I will argue that human life could become even more meaningful by making some fundamental achievements, such as determining how life originated.

### 1. Introduction

Many philosophers have concluded that our individual lives can be meaningful even if God does not exist and death marks the permanent end of our existence.<sup>1</sup> David Benatar, in his thought-provoking book *The Human Predicament*, acknowledges that one's life can be objectively meaningful from human-based perspectives. However, he contends that our individual lives and human life, in general, are meaningless from the cosmic perspective. "We are insignificant specks in a vast universe that is utterly indifferent to us," Benatar writes.<sup>2</sup> The "cosmic perspective," as Benatar calls it, is also sometimes referred to in the literature as "the point of view of the universe," "the view from nowhere," "the view from everywhere," and *sub specie aeternitatis*.

I will seek to contribute to the literature by explaining how what we do matters from the cosmic perspective. There is a blossoming literature on what gives meaning to one's *individual* life – a topic called "meaning in life." In

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Metz (2013) and Landau (2017).

<sup>2</sup> Benatar (2017), p. 2.

contrast, scant attention has been given to the topic of “meaning of life.”<sup>3</sup> There have been only a few attempts to explain how human life, in general, could be meaningful or significant<sup>4</sup> from a cosmic and nonreligious perspective.<sup>5</sup>

In section two, I will provide an overview of Benatar’s argument that life is meaningless from the cosmic perspective. In section three, I will explain how human life makes a difference beyond Earth and will argue that achievements are an extraordinary type of event that will stand out in cosmic history. In section four, I will point out some deficiencies of Benatar’s analysis. Also, I will provide examples of how human beings have transcended our limits, thereby giving some meaning to human life from the cosmic perspective. In section five, I will argue that human life could become even more meaningful by making some fundamental achievements, such as determining how life on Earth originated. Then, in section six, I will explain how one’s individual life could be meaningful from the cosmic perspective.

## **2. An Overview of Benatar’s Argument**

Benatar begins his argument by asserting that attaining meaning is about “transcending limits.” “A meaningful life is one that transcends one’s own limits and significantly impacts others or serves purposes beyond oneself,” he writes.<sup>6</sup> As do other supporters of “objective naturalism,”<sup>7</sup> including myself, Benatar believes that a person’s life could be meaningful (or meaningless) even if this person believes otherwise. Also, he argues that meaning comes in varying amounts such that a person’s life could be meaningless, somewhat meaningful, or meaningful. He contends that whether one’s life is meaningful can be assessed from different perspectives, including three human-based perspectives and the cosmic perspective.

The human-based perspectives include the viewpoint of an individual, a

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<sup>3</sup> Most of the discussion about “meaning of life” continues to be from a religious perspective. See, for example, Mawson (2016) and Seachris and Goetz (2016).

<sup>4</sup> I will use the words “meaningful” and “significant” interchangeably. The difference in the meaning of these words, if any, is so slight that it is immaterial to this analysis.

<sup>5</sup> See Landau (2011) and Kahane (2014). I will discuss Landau’s view later in this paper. Kahane argues that humanity would be of great cosmic significance if there is no sentient life elsewhere in the universe. For discussion and criticism of this argument, see Benatar (2017), pp. 47-51, and Hughes (2017).

<sup>6</sup> Benatar (2017), p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> For an in-depth discussion of objective naturalism, see Metz (2013), pp. 180-239.

family or community, or all of humanity. From the perspective of an individual, Mary, for example, can make a sufficiently positive impact on the life of another person to give Mary's life meaning. From the perspective of a small group of people, such as a family, one may play an important role in one's family, perhaps as the primary caregiver, thereby giving one's life meaning from this perspective. As the perspective expands from an individual to a small group to all of humanity, it becomes *more difficult* for one's life to be meaningful from that larger perspective. Whereas the lives of many people are meaningful from the narrower perspectives of an individual or a small group of people, very few people have made a difference to all of humanity, Benatar argues. He mentions Albert Einstein, Alan Turing, and the Buddha as examples of individuals whose lives were meaningful from the "perspective of humanity."

The cosmic perspective is the broadest perspective. It encompasses times long before humanity emerged and long after humanity will go extinct. Of course, the universe, as a whole, does not literally have a perspective. However, we can imagine the view that an impartial observer would have if this observer could witness the entire universe unfold over time. Assessing human life from this broad, external viewpoint can help us assess, in an unbiased way, whether what we do matters beyond Earth.<sup>8</sup>

Benatar, of course, is not the first philosopher to claim that human life is meaningless from the cosmic perspective. To give another example, Simon Blackburn writes: "To a witness with the whole of space and time in its view, nothing on a human scale will have meaning (it is hard to imagine how it could be visible at all – there is an awful *lot* of space and time out there)."<sup>9</sup>

As support for his conclusion that human life is meaningless and that it would not have mattered if we had never come into existence, Benatar asserts that human life was not created for a reason and that we do not make a difference beyond Earth.<sup>10</sup> We have some control over Earth, but have very little control over what happens beyond Earth.<sup>11</sup>

James Tartaglia also argues that human life is meaningless, but he thinks this

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<sup>8</sup> I will not attempt to outline a set of necessary and sufficient conditions for the cosmic perspective. When discussing this perspective, philosophers generally mention the vastness of time and space (i.e., temporal and spatial components). Recently, there has been debate about whether this perspective also includes modal and ontological components. See Seachris (2013) and Landau (2014).

<sup>9</sup> Blackburn (2001), p. 79.

<sup>10</sup> Benatar (2017), p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51. Hughes (2017) makes a similar claim.

is just a “neutral fact.”<sup>12</sup> In contrast, Benatar thinks that being cosmically insignificant would be terrible and that people are justified in being concerned that we do not make a difference beyond Earth.<sup>13</sup>

Blackburn’s concern that what we do is invisible is a lesser concern than that life is meaningless because it might be unnecessary for our efforts to be visible for them to make a difference beyond Earth. Nonetheless, I will address both concerns in the next section.

### **3. Making a Difference from the Cosmic Perspective**

Viewing our lives from the vast, cosmic perspective can make us feel tiny, fleeting, and, worse yet, inconsequential. It may seem as if we are stranded on an island, not knowing how we got here and what we should do with our lives. In this mysterious universe in which we find ourselves, we help each other, which is one way we give meaning to our individual lives from human-based perspectives. However, our efforts may seem isolated from, and inconsequential to, the rest of the universe. How, if at all, do our efforts matter beyond Earth?

I concede to Benatar that human life was not created for a reason, such as to fulfill a purpose of nature or a god, and that we have very little control over the rest of the universe. However, we make a difference from the cosmic perspective in another way. By engaging in inherently worthwhile pursuits, such as making moral, intellectual, and artistic achievements, it *adds intrinsic value to the universe* and gives meaning to our individual lives and to human life, in general. One might agree that this can add meaning to one’s individual life, but then wonder how this would add meaning to humanity.

There are two ways of thinking about “humanity.” Humanity can be thought of holistically, as *one*, or, individualistically, as the *many* human beings that make up the whole.<sup>14</sup> If we think of humanity holistically, as I suspect most people do, it becomes difficult to see how humanity could be meaningful because human life was not created for a reason, and the billions of human beings dispersed across Earth do not have an overarching goal(s) that we are cooperatively pursuing. In fact, some people have conflicting goals.

Alternatively, if we think of humanity individualistically, as *many human*

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<sup>12</sup> Tartaglia (2016), p. ix. I reply to Tartaglia in Trisel (2017).

<sup>13</sup> Benatar (2017), pp. 36, 51-62.

<sup>14</sup> For more discussion, see Trisel (2016), pp. 7-12 and (2017), pp. 168-172.

*beings*, it reveals a way that humanity could become meaningful. Although individuals pursue diverse goals, if meaning is something that aggregates across human beings, then by adding meaning to our individual lives, we would thereby also be adding meaning to humanity. Through our individual efforts, we would be giving humanity meaning from the “bottom-up.” A brick wall is constructed from the ground, brick by brick. Similarly, individual human beings are the foundation of humanity. One by one, as more individual lives become meaningful, humanity, in turn, would become more meaningful.

Making achievements is one source of meaning in our lives, as many philosophers have argued.<sup>15</sup> Achievements create a product and result from a structured process, as Gwen Bradford argues.<sup>16</sup> Achievements do not happen by accident. They require thought, planning, skill, and determination. One feature of great achievements is that they are *difficult to make*.<sup>17</sup>

Achievements are intrinsically valuable, meaning that they are valuable “in and of themselves,” and may also be instrumentally valuable in helping other people or non-human animals. Bradford convincingly argues that the overall value of an achievement is determined by: (1) the degree of effort and rationality exercised by the individual(s) who made the achievement and (2) the amount of intrinsic and instrumental value that results from the product of the achievement.<sup>18</sup> For example, washing one’s car, which requires minimal effort and thought, is a far less valuable achievement than the formulation of the theory of relativity by Albert Einstein, which required a high degree of prolonged effort.

Because we are tiny beings on a small planet in this immense universe, Blackburn doubts whether what we do is even visible from the cosmic perspective. Achievements are a type of event that will stand out from this perspective. From human-based perspectives, we take achievements for granted, which occurs because nearly every human being makes at least some minor achievements, and the products from some achievements, such as the airplane and computer, have become assimilated into our everyday lives. However, by expanding our perspective beyond humanity to include the rest of the universe, it reveals that achievements are an *extraordinary type of event* insofar as they are

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Bradford (2015), p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> Bradford (2015), p. 11.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 26-63.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 187-188.

intrinsically valuable, *planned*, and are *only made by rational beings*.

Human beings have made many great achievements, including creating language, music, and the United Nations. When compared to all of the other events in cosmic history, such as the collision of subatomic particles and the implosion of stars, human achievements are a miniscule proportion of all events. Nonetheless, because achievements are an extraordinary type of event, they will stand out from all other events in the universe. It is true, as Blackburn indicates, that there is an “awful *lot* of space and time out there.”<sup>19</sup> Although the universe contains trillions of inanimate, physical objects, such as electrons and stars, *not one of them will ever make an achievement*. Indeed, if Earth is the only planet that harbors intelligent life, then the *only achievements that have occurred in this universe* would be on or near Earth.

#### **4. Transcending Achievements**

As argued, human life has made a difference by adding intrinsic value to the universe, which has given human life some meaning from the cosmic perspective. Because achievements are an extraordinary type of event, they will stand out from all other events in cosmic history. In response, a skeptic might argue that the achievements I mentioned (creating language, music, and the United Nations) do not transcend our limits and, therefore, might not be of great value from the cosmic perspective.

As will be discussed in this section, human beings have also made some achievements that have transcended our limits – what I will refer to as “transcending achievements.” During the last 300 years, through creativity, determination, technological innovation, and scientific experimentation, human beings have made some transcending achievements. As the difficulty of making an achievement increases, the *value that results* from that achievement tends to increase, as discussed earlier. Thus, transcending achievements, which are extremely difficult to make, add substantial value to the universe.

In the 13.772-billion-year history of the universe, modern day humans (*Homo sapiens*) emerged very recently – approximately 200,000 years ago. Consequently, the “perspective of humanity,” as Benatar calls it, is a recent and narrow perspective that extends from 200,000 years ago to the eventual

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<sup>19</sup> Blackburn (2001), p. 79.

extinction of human life.

As you recall, Benatar argues that meaning is about “transcending limits.”<sup>20</sup> However, he does not assess whether humanity has transcended its limits. This is a serious deficiency with his analysis, given that he endorses the transcendence theory of meaning.<sup>21</sup> If meaning is accrued by transcending limits, but Benatar does not assess whether humanity has transcended its limits, then how can Benatar know that human life is meaningless? To be fair, Benatar does give some consideration to whether we make a difference beyond Earth, but he does not consider whether we have transcended our limits.

In what follows, I will provide some examples of how humanity has transcended its limits – limits that are reflected in the narrow “perspective of humanity.” Many of our distant ancestors believed that Earth was created 6,000 years ago. Through the study of geology and astronomy, we now know that Earth existed for more than *4 billion years before modern day humans emerged*. And Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection explains how simpler life-forms evolved, *over millions of years*, into various human species, which evolved into *Homo sapiens*.

Benatar bemoans that we have very little control over other parts of the universe, but it is unclear why he thinks we need this control. He seems to see this as a way of “making a difference” to the rest of the universe. However, without knowing what we would do if we had this control, it is unclear how this would make a difference. Having more control over other parts of the universe has proven to be *unnecessary* for us to explore and learn about the universe. For example, Isaac Newton set forth his famous three laws of motion without traveling to, or controlling, other parts of the universe. Because Newton’s laws of motion apply *throughout the universe*, they exemplify an achievement that transcended the “perspective of humanity.”

The invention of the telescope to explore the universe is another example of a transcending achievement. In 1929, using the telescope, the astronomer Edwin Hubble made the remarkable discovery that distant galaxies are moving away from us rapidly, which suggested that the universe is expanding. In 1990, a telescope named in honor of Hubble – the “Hubble Space Telescope” – was launched into orbit around Earth.

Although we cannot travel to far away planets or back in time, it is

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<sup>20</sup> Benatar (2017), p. 18.

<sup>21</sup> For more discussion of this theory of meaning, see Metz (2013), pp. 28-30.

unnecessary to do this to learn about the universe because light waves, emitted long ago, *travel to us*<sup>22</sup> and these waves reveal some of cosmic history. The Hubble Space Telescope, a sort of time machine, captures these images of the early universe, thereby allowing us to observe what happened billions of years ago. This telescope has led to many important discoveries,<sup>23</sup> including providing data for scientists to develop a more precise estimate of when the universe originated (13.772 billion years ago).

In 1990, with ground-based telescopes, we could visualize distant galaxies, as they were six billion years after the Big Bang. By 2010, after some enhancements to the Hubble Space Telescope, we could look much further back in time and observe distant galaxies 480 million years after the universe originated.<sup>24</sup> As I have sought to demonstrate, through the development and use of technology, human beings have transcended the recent and narrow “perspective of humanity” by an astounding *13 billion years*,<sup>25</sup> thereby giving human life some meaning from the cosmic perspective.

By utilizing telescopes, it has allowed us to transcend our limits and explore that which is *extremely large* – planets, stars, and galaxies. We have also transcended our limits by exploring that which is *extremely small* – subatomic particles. Particle accelerators, such as the Large Hadron Collider, are being used to test theories about the structure and dynamics of the subatomic world and to advance our understanding of how quantum physics relates to the general theory of relativity.

Would an impartial observer, with a view of everything, agree with Benatar that human life is meaningless? I do not think so. By observing that achievements are an extraordinary type of event in the universe, and that human beings have made some transcending achievements that have added substantial value to the universe, an impartial observer would conclude that human life is somewhat meaningful from the cosmic perspective.

A skeptic might reply, as an anonymous referee did, that “Our knowledge of the cosmos is not the same as our mattering from the cosmic perspective.” I am not suggesting that merely possessing knowledge of the cosmos is sufficient to give human life meaning from the cosmic perspective. If that were true, then

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<sup>22</sup> Light travels outward from its source in all directions.

<sup>23</sup> See NASA (2017).

<sup>24</sup> NASA (2011).

<sup>25</sup> This figure was calculated by comparing when *Homo sapiens* emerged (200,000 years ago) to how far back in time we have been able to look with the Hubble Space Telescope (13.29 billion years ago).



humanity would be meaningful if an *extraterrestrial life-form had formulated* the laws of motion and the general theory of relativity and then passed this knowledge on to us. What makes human life somewhat meaningful from the cosmic perspective is that human beings made some extremely difficult to make achievements that transcended the narrow “perspective of humanity” and resulted in highly valuable products.

## **5. Fundamental Achievements**

As discussed in the prior section, human beings have made some transcending achievements, such as estimating when the universe originated. However, we have not yet answered the fundamental questions of how the universe and life on Earth originated. By answering these questions, which I will refer to as “fundamental achievements,” it would add substantial meaning to human life.

There are other achievements that would qualify as fundamental achievements. However, for the sake of brevity, I will focus on the two examples mentioned above. In what follows, I will first provide some background on the searches for how the universe and life originated. Then, I will explain why these particular achievements would add substantial meaning to human life.

Hubble’s observation that the universe is expanding led astrophysicists to hypothesize that all of the matter and energy in the universe were once compacted into an infinitesimally small volume, which erupted and is otherwise known as the “Big Bang.” The Big Bang theory continues to be the leading explanation for how the universe originated. However, in recent years, some scientists have become concerned with some parts of the theory.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, there is more work to be done to determine how the universe originated.

Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection explains how life evolved on Earth, but it does not address the fundamental question of how life on Earth originated. At first glance, this question might not appear to transcend the perspective of what happens on Earth. However, origin-of-life researchers approach this question from the broader cosmic perspective for two reasons. First, in thinking about how life could have originated, and when the necessary conditions would have been in place for this to occur, they take into account

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<sup>26</sup> For further discussion, see Rhook and Zangari (1994).

what astronomers have learned about the age and evolution of the universe and Earth.<sup>27</sup> Second, some scientists have hypothesized that microbial life, or at least the building blocks of life, might have originated beyond Earth and then were later transferred to Earth by meteorites, comets, or interplanetary dust particles.<sup>28</sup>

Other prominent theories for how life on Earth originated include the “prebiotic soup theory,” where organic compounds necessary for the creation of life were generated from the interaction between sunlight and lightning in the early atmosphere. Alternatively, life might have originated in deep-sea hydrothermal systems.<sup>29</sup>

Bradford reflects on the question “what would be the most valuable achievements overall?”<sup>30</sup> She argues that the most valuable achievements will be extremely difficult to make, will involve an excellent exercise of rationality, and will have supremely valuable products. As I will explain, determining how the universe and life on Earth originated meet these criteria.

Because of the vast size and age of the universe, and because things in the universe are continually changing, which can thereby wipe out clues that would help us answer fundamental questions, it would be extremely difficult for human beings, or any other life-form, to determine how the universe and life originated. When something is extremely difficult, this can be demotivating to some people and motivating to others. We should not let this difficulty discourage us. This difficulty is a *large part* of why answering these questions would add substantial meaning to human life (or to an extraterrestrial life-form that answers these questions).

If there is intelligent life on other planets, they might not be interested in learning about topics that human beings pursue from the “perspective of humanity,” such as anthropology. However, they undoubtedly would be interested in the fundamental, existential questions. They would want to know how they and the universe originated. They would also want to know how life on Earth originated because this might provide them with insight regarding how life on their planet originated.<sup>31</sup> Life on different planets might have originated

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<sup>27</sup> For a historical and scientific overview of the question of how life on Earth originated, see Fry (2000).

<sup>28</sup> See Fry (2000), pp. 61-62, 131-134 and Kitadai and Maruyama (2017), pp. 4-5.

<sup>29</sup> Kitadai and Maruyama (2017), pp. 3-4.

<sup>30</sup> Bradford (2015), p. 188.

<sup>31</sup> One of the primary reasons that scientists search for life beyond Earth is because it may provide

from the same or a very similar process. Thus, these questions about our origins are *universal* insofar as all intelligent life-forms will have these questions. If it turns out that life exists only on Earth, and we determine how life on Earth originated, then we would thereby also be explaining how life originated in the universe.

Answering the fundamental questions of how did the universe and life originate would “make a difference” by adding substantial intrinsic value to the universe and satisfying our longstanding desire to know about our origins. Furthermore, if there is intelligent life elsewhere, these achievements would likely be instrumentally valuable to these other life-forms, in terms of satisfying their curiosity or helping them deal with existential anguish – assuming, of course, that they become aware of these achievements.

If we make a fundamental achievement, but no one other than human beings know that this occurred, this might be of little consolation to those individuals who are concerned that human beings make no difference beyond Earth. However, we should distinguish between “making a difference” and having that difference recognized and appreciated. It would be true that we made a difference even if the rest of the universe was unaware that it occurred.

## **6. How One’s Individual Life Can be Meaningful from the Cosmic Perspective**

I will now turn to the question of whether one’s *individual* life can be meaningful from the cosmic perspective. Iddo Landau has responded to this question. He begins by making an important distinction between *perspectives* for viewing our lives and *standards* for judging whether or not our lives are meaningful. He argues that assessing our lives from the cosmic perspective need not render them meaningless, as long as we use reasonable standards for this evaluation.

Some philosophers use a standard of perfection to judge whether life is meaningful. They argue that our individual lives and human life, in general, are ultimately meaningless in the absence of God and personal immortality.<sup>32</sup> In contrast, Landau argues that “one may be taken to have had a meaningful life, if,

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insight into how life on Earth originated. For further discussion, see Davies (2010), p. 205.

<sup>32</sup> Supernaturalist theories of meaning reflect the desire for perfection, as Metz (2013, pp. 132-133, 137-138) has convincingly argued.

for instance, one achieved some deep understanding, happiness, or artistic accomplishment that did not affect anyone else.” This is true, he argues, from an individual perspective *and from the cosmic perspective*.<sup>33</sup>

As support for this argument, he points out that according to some religions, God – who is thought to have a view of everything – may judge an action (such as helping another person) to be meaningful even if that action has only a very limited effect. In response, Benatar suggests that the reason the action with the very limited effect seems meaningful is because Landau is imagining that God is viewing it from a local perspective, not from the broader cosmic perspective.<sup>34</sup> I disagree. It is clear that many Christians believe that God has a view of everything, through the powers of omniscience and omnipresence, and that, from this view, he judges some human actions with very limited effects to be meaningful.

After providing his religious based example, Landau then asserts that an action with a very limited effect can also be meaningful in a Godless universe. However, the scenario in which a small action is meaningful according to Christian teachings is much different from the scenario in which a small action occurs in a Godless universe, as I will explain.

If human life had been created by God to fulfill a purpose, and a person successfully carried out his or her role, we assume that God would judge that this person’s actions were meaningful, *even if God had given this person only a small role*. A small action and effect by a person might help God *fulfill his plan*, thereby “making a difference” and giving this person’s action some meaning from the cosmic perspective. This is the reason why the religious based example provides support for Landau’s argument that a small action can be meaningful from the cosmic perspective.

But if God does not exist, how would a small action by a person make a difference to the rest of the universe *beyond Earth*? For Landau’s argument to be convincing, it must address this crucial question, which I will attempt to do.

A small action by a human being can make a difference beyond Earth by adding intrinsic value to the universe. If that action were never performed, then the universe would have less value than it does. Adding value to the universe is how human beings can make a difference from the cosmic perspective and how

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<sup>33</sup> Landau (2011), pp. 729-730. See also Landau (2017), pp. 93-99. For a response, see Seachris (2013).

<sup>34</sup> Benatar (2017), p. 223, n. 40.

a small action can be meaningful, even when viewed from the cosmic perspective.

Whether an individual's *whole life* will be meaningful from the cosmic perspective will depend on *how much* intrinsic value this person contributes to the universe. If a person makes an artistic accomplishment that does not affect anyone else, this would add some value to the universe, but it seems doubtful that it would be sufficient to make this person's whole life meaningful from the cosmic perspective. In contrast, the development of the theory of relativity by Einstein was a pioneering and influential achievement that transcended the "perspective of humanity" and resulted in a very valuable product. Consequently, Einstein's transcending achievements would have added substantial intrinsic value to the universe, thereby making his life meaningful from the cosmic perspective.

## **7. Conclusion**

Some people are satisfied knowing that their individual lives can be meaningful from human-based perspectives. Other people seek more than this. They want their lives and human life, in general, to matter from the cosmic perspective. As argued in this paper, our efforts matter and not just to each other. They also matter from the cosmic perspective in the following way. By engaging in inherently worthwhile pursuits, it adds intrinsic value to the universe and gives meaning to our individual lives. And, if meaning aggregates across human beings, then the meaning that we give to our individual lives also gives meaning to humanity.

It is my hope that this paper will encourage others to reflect on life's meaning from the cosmic perspective. Although viewing our lives from the cosmic perspective starkly reveals our limitations and can be intimidating, it can also show how some events that we take for granted from human-based perspectives are special and valuable in the universe. For example, it revealed that achievements are an extraordinary type of event.

Human beings have made many achievements, including some transcending achievements. By continuing to transcend our limits, and answering fundamental questions about our origins, it would stand out in cosmic history, add substantial meaning to human life, and be worthy of pride.

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