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"Darwin and the Meaning in Life"

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It has often been thought, and has recently been argued, that one of the most profound impacts of Darwin's theory of evolution is the threat that it poses to the very possibility of living a meaningful, and therefore worthwhile, life. Three attempts to ground the possibility of a meaningful life are considered. The first two are compatible with an exclusively Darwinian worldview. One is based on the belief that Darwinian evolution is, in some sense, progressive; the other is based on the belief that the natural world is a thing of value and hence, that our lives are lived in the presence of value. The third is based on a belief in providence, and holds that we must transcend the exclusively Darwinian worldview if we are to find meaning. All three are, for different reasons, rejected. The conclusion reached is that, contrary to what has often been thought and recently argued, the impact of Darwin's theory is precisely to liberate us to lead the most meaningful of lives.

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