In class on Thursday, 15 September, we discussed your reactions to the Taylor reading. Below is a summary of your contributions to that discussion.

I. Defending Taylor’s View

- Emphasis on creativity is consistent with an emphasis on purpose as underwriting the meaning of life. One way to understand this idea is in terms of creativity issuing in purposes that are one’s own—that establish one’s life as a life that one makes and not merely a life that one lives.

- Life isn’t automatically meaningful.

- In order to be meaningful, life must involve change. (This is a necessary condition.)

II. Criticizing Taylor’s View

- One can live a meaningful life by taking part in a creative pursuit that one did not come up with.

- The human/animal analogy is weak when it comes to the family. Many regard the raising of a family as very meaningful, which is something we can do even if animals cannot. (Taylor’s Response: But that’s just a subjective take on this activity, and the subjective is not what he takes to establish that life is meaningful.)

- Yeah, but life can be subjectively meaningful, which may not be what Taylor is after, but it isn’t so easily dismissed or ignored.

- Can achievements really be lasting? What counts as lasting? And if not, doesn’t that undermine his view?

- In the case of the slaughterhouse worker, Taylor is committing something like a fallacy by emphasizing the horror of the situation by way of contrast with the
worker’s pleasant and even happy home life. But horror does not imply meaninglessness.

- Creativity is subjective—it requires a subjective act; therefore, meaningfulness is subjective. (*Taylor’s Response:* creativity may in its realization be subjective, but *that* a given act was creative is objective, and it is the latter that is the foundation for judging a life meaningful.)

- It isn’t the case that much human life is meaningless.

**III. Final Questions**

- Can eventual meaninglessness be retroactive? That is, if a life is meaningless in a thousand years, does that make it meaningless now?

- Can’t creativity be expressed in happiness? And if so, doesn’t that make happiness relevant to an assessment of a meaningful life, in opposition to what Taylor says? (*Taylor’s Response:* Yes, but not essentially—happiness in this case would only be relevant to a positive assessment of a meaningful life because it is a product of the creativity of the agent.)