When I proposed my sabbatical project last year, I was thinking I would spend the term focused on the problem of moral luck and that I would certainly write an article on that topic and possibly another in the area of virtue epistemology. The problem of moral luck had been on my mind for some time, but because of deadline pressure in connection with my book Rethinking Virtue Ethics, I was not able to get anything substantial done as part of that project. As I was reading the literature on moral luck, I came across some work done by psychologists bearing on the problem. I soon discovered an area of psychology that was new to me, a movement called positive psychology, which began about ten years ago. What is distinctive about this movement is its focus on human flourishing; much of psychology since Freud has focused on human pathology. Since my work in virtue ethics also builds on the concept of human flourishing, I thought it important to see what this new movement in psychology had to offer for my research. I spent a good portion of my time this spring reading the relevant literature in positive psychology. My reading led me to think that I should write a book on virtue ethics that is much more accessible to a general audience. R1 This book would be titled something like “Aristotelian Insights: How to Live Well.” Each chapter would take up some pivotal concept in Aristotle’s ethical theory and then attempt to show how these points are relevant by making use of some of the findings of the positive psychologists. I am not aware of any book that does this sort of thing and I suspect that with the interest in positive psychology, there might be a significant readership for such a book. I have a considerable portion of two chapters for this book written now, and I plan to include some material on moral luck from an article I discuss in the next paragraph. I have sketched an introduction as well. These items are attached.

I wrote the article on moral luck that I had initially proposed in my sabbatical proposal; I expect to send this article to journals soon. This paper presents and evaluates a skeptical challenge based on moral luck. A key the claim in this argument, that what we accomplish or fail to accomplish depends on luck, masks an ambiguity in the way one type of luck—causal luck—is understood. If we understand causal luck in a strong sense, then the skeptical argument based on luck is not significantly different from more common determinist challenges to morality. If we construe causal luck in a weaker sense, the skeptical challenge based on luck offers a fresher argument, but one that is still vulnerable. Since the idea that human beings can make at least some free choices is intuitively plausible, a moral theory based on this idea that can still accommodate a significant role for luck presents a plausible alternative to the skeptical argument. An Aristotelian virtue theory can grant that luck plays a significant role in our moral lives but also that we have significant control over the type of person we want to become by choosing certain types of actions. Our character is formed from the actions we choose. So acknowledging that moral luck plays a significant role in our lives does not imply that morality is empty or incoherent. A cogent determinist argument would be needed for that.