My research in the past several years has been focused on the conception, planning, and completion of a book, *The Theory and Practice of Life: Isocrates and the Philosophers* (Harvard University Press, Hellenic Studies series, September 2012). This book puts the intellectual history of the fourth century BC in a new light by understanding the professional, literary, political, and theoretical links between the schools of Plato and Aristotle and the school of Isocrates. The received scholarly opinion has been that Plato and Aristotle hostilely dismissed Isocrates as a lightweight rhetorician, but I argue that their engagement with his ideas and principles was more serious and consequential. I show how the practical wisdom tradition represented by Isocrates forced its way into Plato’s thinking (especially in the *Phaedrus*) and had an even deeper influence on Aristotle’s practical philosophy (both in his celebrated *Nicomachean Ethics* and in his fragmentary and provisionally reconstructed *Protrepticus*).

The first half of my book, by broadening the discussion and the points of reference beyond the traditional philosophical canon, offers a new context within which to understand the background, orientation, and contemporary resonances of well-known works of philosophical literature that have been interpreted and argued over for thousands of years. Readers who attend to my arguments will no longer be able to see Aristotle’s and Plato’s position-takings in the same way. For example, when Aristotle illuminates his ethical theory by reference to the practical arts (his well-known “craft analogy” comparing and contrasting the operation of practical wisdom in ethics to the skilled practice of the arts and crafts), this is no appeal to homespun common sense, but is emblematic of how much Aristotle depends on the methodological reflections of rhetoric and other empirical arts. Likewise, when Plato constructs the possibility of a truly philosophical rhetoric on the model of “Hippocratic” medicine, this does not show how far rhetoric was from satisfying the Platonic standard for philosophical rhetoric, but rather reveals an uncomfortable consciousness of the relevance, prestige, and power of existing rhetorical theory as we can discover it in Isocrates’ works.

These first chapters (Chapter 2 on Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* and Chapter 3 on Plato’s *Phaedrus*) are crucial for defining the book’s interest, scope, and results. It is because the book raises new possibilities and questions about these major works that readers will have the motivation to follow me into the difficult and fragmentary historical evidence for the life and concerns of the fourth-century schools’ adherents. Nothing corresponding to these chapters existed in my 2003 dissertation, which did not yet discuss the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the *Phaedrus*, or even the biographical genre or Isocrates’ *Philip* (topics now treated at length in the later chapters of my book). Having shown the theoretical affinities between the texts of Isocrates, Plato, and Aristotle, I continue in the second part of the book to construct a perspective from which we may understand these links, through a study of the historical evidence, not only for the careers of Isocrates and his major contemporaries, but extending into the generation of Isocrates’ students. Among its other contributions, this story of a wider and previously invisible scholastic milieu sheds some light on the “missing years,” so poorly attested in many genres of literature, that connect the literary and intellectual culture of Classical Athens to the period of

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1 My book helps set the stage for D. S. Hutchinson and M. R. Johnson’s forthcoming new edition of Aristotle’s *Protrepticus* (a dialogue exhorting young people to the study of philosophy) that will differ from earlier reconstructions and give new meanings to its Isocratean dimension. Readers of this part of my Chapter 2 will be better able to appreciate how and why, before a wider audience that certainly would have included Isocrateans, Aristotle balanced the practical and metaphysical claims of philosophy.
Hellenistic authors and schools. This scene of fourth-century scholastic competition has not previously been seen clearly because the evidence for its participants, whose work has traditionally been divided along generic lines and is often known only in fragments, has never been completely assembled in a single scholarly account, as I have now done. I contribute some entirely new pieces of evidence to the puzzle as well. More fundamentally, my book decisively demonstrates that there really were “Isocrateans” and “Isocrateanism” after Isocrates’ death; this has not really been understood before as an intellectual phenomenon. The tendency until now has been to see the ancient evidence for an Isocratean school as merely reflecting stylistic influence; for example, the standard modern work on the historian Theopompus denies his Isocratean connections altogether, something I think will be impossible for a reader of my book to accept.

The book manuscript is complete and will be committed to the production process as of November 1, 2011 (the absolute deadline for my revisions—I will receive proofs on June 1, 2012, and the book will be printed in September 2012). While I still plan to make some relatively minor changes to Chapter 6 before this deadline (stylistic refinements and taking stock of others’ recent work), I have already addressed all the issues raised in the reader’s extremely positive report on the complete manuscript. My work in progress has attracted significant scholarly interest recently, which points the way to future collaborations and projects. For example, I have been approached by a papyrologist to help make sense of an unusual unpublished Greek text that may have more meaning against the milieu I have explored in the book, which may lead to a coauthored publication; I have received a suggestion to contribute on protreptic elements to a survey of approaches to the *Nicomachean Ethics*; and I have had discussions with scholars of Hellenistic literature about the implications of my work for the terms in which the legacy of fourth-century literary and intellectual life was received in the period and works they study.

The perspective achieved by my book puts me in a good place to pursue further important work in the history of philosophy, a field in which I am preparing several further publications. My discussion in Chapter 3 of how Plato engaged seriously with the importance of rhetoric is only the beginning of a wider discussion of Plato’s pervasive and lifelong recognition and consideration of the irrational element, such as social and political emotions, in the good life for human beings. This counterweight to Platonic rationalism is too little appreciated, and my graduate school advisor, Anthony A. Long, has encouraged me to prepare for publication my discussion of this strand in a dissertation chapter on Plato’s *Crito* and *Euthyphro* (which is not included in any form in the book). Having finished my first book, I now intend to do justice to this question in a book-length study that can trace the play of this element in Plato’s thinking through such works as *Gorgias, Euthydemus, Symposium, Republic*, and *Laws*.

While I have a distinctive perspective from which to offer readings of ancient philosophical texts, I should emphasize that my bridging of the worlds of rhetoric and philosophy in *The Theory and Practice of Life* has equally laid the foundation for scholarly work that traces the rapidly developing theoretical concerns of the Classical period outside of the narrowly construed confines of philosophy. The bold title of my book recognizes that philosophical debates drew from, and contributed to, wider methodological reflections on every department of life. My book already makes original connections between philosophical-rhetorical discourse and such theoretical disciplines as medicine and musical
harmonics. Both of these technical fields, like practical philosophy, synthesized the competing claims of reason and experience in order to understand the phenomena of the world and lay down trustworthy principles for performance and intervention. (These connections could also serve as the basis of interdisciplinary teaching initiatives at Union.) With the help of a Humanities Development Fund grant, I have guided Schaffer Library to acquire the best collection on Hippocratic medicine in the Connect-NY consortium, and I have used these materials to initiate myself into the complex but fascinating field of ancient medical theory and practice. It is not by accident that the HUP reader of my book manuscript twice remarks on how “TW’s work meshes well with the work of Schiefsky on the Hippocratic treatises Regimen and VM.” In Summer 2011, my summer research student2 helped me prepare an anthology of Hippocratic texts in the original and in translation that will be suitable for both research and teaching.

This kind of analogical thinking has also involved me in projects that shed light on literary texts and historical phenomena that are not “theoretical” in any obvious way. My 2007 publication, “Hierophantic Performances,” demonstrates this well, for it studies the importance of educational traditions and training in a social context far removed from the rhetoric school of Isocrates. In this article, I show how sacred officials connected to the Eleusinian Mysteries and related Greek cults drew on sources of authority outside their technical position as civic officials in order to make dramatic political interventions, establishing peace between warring factions through an appeal to the principles of concord that united initiates into the mysteries of the goddesses Demeter and Kore. Religious decrees preserved in inscriptions and other sources give us a framework for seeing how the cult lore that informed these interventions was taught and transmitted. This strongly qualifies a general view that the Greek priestly offices and clans offered very limited roles without their own doctrinal traditions. The reader is encouraged to think of the key cultural concept of paideia (“education”) as applying in a new area. In the background of these concerns is my study of sociological theory; I have written a paper “The Pythagorean Comma: A Commentary on Weber’s ‘Introduction’ to The Economic Ethics of the World Religions,” which I may develop for publication, and I have translated several works of Pierre Bourdieu and his school through my collaboration with Loïc Wacquant.

My work in progress seeks to understand the roots of philosophical culture (and even doctrines) in such traditional milieus. For example, I have become convinced that several kinds of philosophical explanation familiar in a technical and fully developed form in Aristotle—even logic—can be seen in new ways if studied against the background of earlier nonphilosophical literature. Thus I am at work on a “prehistory of teleology,” in which I argue that the complete story of the principles of teleological explanation has been missed by beginning with Plato (or in rare cases the Presocratic philosophers), when in fact the use of organic analogies in tragic, epic, and lyric poetry has already

2 The student’s main topic was the action/speech antithesis in Greek commemorative speeches and especially in Thucydides’ history, a subject I will pursue with him in a senior honors thesis. Because historical explanation is rich in connections with other kinds of scientific explanation, these kinds of questions cannot be fully appreciated without the background of ancient medicine. I developed some thoughts on these issues in my 2006 conference paper on “Herodotean Didactics in Thucydides” (on the insufficiency of human nature in crisis situations, which is specifically analogous to medical therapeutics), and it has also motivated my ongoing collaborations with Computer Science students and colleagues, which I am hopeful will result in powerful new tools to explore the echoes and textual similarities that exist between such superficially distant groups of texts as medical treatises and histories.
established some of the categories that will remain recognizable in Aristotle’s thinking. This is part of my wider project to historicize the study of Greek philosophy in a more radical sense: philosophical categories of thinking can, of course, be brilliant and show true originality, but they always take shape within a wider cultural context that dictates aspects of their formation, their application, and their reception.

As I look forward, my current trajectory as a scholar is decisively shaped by the specificity of the unique perspective I have achieved in my book, which is leading me to further investigations of Plato and intellectual culture in the schools and arts. At the same time, many of my basic research questions lead me beyond these particular areas, as I constantly strive to employ a flexible and versatile working approach that is open to links that span the standard subject divisions. This is the spirit that has led me to show in my book how the intellectual debates of the fourth century were even echoed in the jokes of the Middle Comic stage. It is the spirit that leads me into a wide variety of unfamiliar texts, whether medical treatises or legal inscriptions, believing that they have too seldom been studied through a nonspecialist’s eyes, which can see surprising connections and build up new big-picture contexts for understanding them. It is also seen in the conclusion of my book, where I use my immersion in fourth-century BC Isocrateanism to make some original suggestions about the concerns that animated Machiavelli and Castiglione in sixteenth-century Italy. When, as a teacher, I introduce students to subjects as far afield as Medieval Latin literature, it is in the belief that I can share with them an open-ended passion for scholarly inquiry, in which the answers that really shift our perspective on familiar and urgent questions are often found in surprisingly remote sources. If Medieval Latin literature has something to tell me as a scholar of Classical Greek intellectual culture, then it will also have much to tell the students about their world—which is not as far removed from it in time.

My successful record of grant applications is an indication of the kind of support I will keep working to attract for my research at Union College. In the 2009-2010 year, I enjoyed a fellowship at the Center for Hellenic Studies, perhaps the most significant research opportunity there is for a junior scholar in my field. (The Rome Prize, for which I was an alternate the same year, could be compared to it.) In addition to the $27,000 stipend (paid to Union to defray the expense of my salary) plus ten months of housing and lunches at the Washington, D.C., facility, this allowed me access to world-class research resources. An extremely significant result was the opportunity to represent Union College, and establish the importance of my work here, to a truly global group of scholars (from seven countries and major research universities in the U.S. and abroad—I was the proud exception as a liberal arts college professor). The subtle and unexpected connections that emerged between the work of the dozen CHS fellows will lead us to many new directions and collaborations in the future. It was a joy to return to the CHS for its 2011 Research Symposium, which included both the faculty research fellows and undergraduates competitively selected from throughout the country, with a student (Rachel Hogue ’11) whose work provoked excitement among several colleagues about the next generation of digital Classics collaborations. The 2009 summer stipend from the NEH also suggests that my ongoing work can be appreciated outside of my discipline, and my work at Union on Digital Humanities shows how, in the future, I expect to balance such pure humanities research awards with interdisciplinary initiatives of direct benefit to the whole Union learning community.