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There is a bitter irony to the fact that to be a philosopher is now considered a radical act. Hegel was right, of course, that philosophers often paint in “gray on gray” their state portraits of the powers of old, thus offering but laudatory econiums to the same-old, same-old. Nevertheless, radical philosophers since Hegel have attempted to turn philosophy toward a future worthy of our aspirations. This task has become much more difficult in recent years. In the name of teaching business as usual, universities across the West have aimed their budgetary knives at the humanities in general and philosophy in particular. In the U.K., the battle over the fate of the philosophy department at Middlesex University earlier this year is but a warm-up to the devastating cuts announced by the Browne review. Tuitions are expected to double or triple at U.K.’s elite universities, while promises of draconian cuts hang like the sword of Damocles for the humanities at all other institutions. In the U.S., the states of New York, California, and Louisiana, among others, have targeted philosophy departments and other programs where radical theory is done. It’s been a bitter pill to swallow, since it was members of many of these departments who decried the rampant capitalism and its resulting crises that have become the principle alibi for this budgetary swordplay. Needless to say, this has happened while business schools, whose professoriat moved back and forth among those institutions that fostered this crisis, are monetarily patted on the back for their continued, dubious efforts.

Let me cite one notable example: the philosophy program at Howard University, which has long been a place where Africana political praxis has met up with philosophical theory. One of the very few historically black colleges and universities with a philosophy major, let alone a well-regarded MA program, Howard University has long been a place where students could unapologetically apply themselves to the history of Africana philosophy, which, in Leonard Harris’s apt phrase, continues to be a “philosophy born of struggle,” as any philosophy worthy of the name must be.

As departments such as these face cuts, a wider pattern has emerged in which for-profit universities have seen their enrollments dramatically increase as poor students are forced from hollowed-out and underfunded community college systems. There’s no need to note the numerous government reports denoting the utter inefficiencies (low graduation rates, ineffective degrees, etc.) of these “private sector” companies living off the dole of government subsidies in the form of student loans, all while their lobbyists and representatives on
boards of trustees push for continued cuts to state universities and community colleges—all in the name of a free market ingenuity ingenious enough to graduate all too few prepared for even the most modest of sub-professional jobs while posting record profits during an economic downturn.

There’s no end to capitalist hubris and those who would tell us its endless lessons about how to teach at a university, including members of California’s board of regents overseeing the largest state university system in the country while heavily invested, literally, in the stocks of private, for-profit colleges. Moreover, at precisely the moment when libertarian capitalism could not more empirically demonstrate its complete anti-realism, anti-tenure provocateurs such as Columbia’s Mark Taylor are given pedestals in the *New York Times* and elsewhere to argue for modeling universities even further on business corporations, and it’s no accident that Taylor targets philosophy departments as too archaic compared to the supposed inter-disciplinary programs and online forms of education that would replace them. We are told to heed these evangelical messages for corporate thinking—as if businesses themselves are run like business anymore, as if oligarchic socialism wasn’t continually redistributing the wealth upstream to those never tiring of forecasting a never-seen rainfall in which this wealth trickles down to the masses, and as if we weren’t wise to the crackpot doctors in economics and business administration and their consistent repetitive prescriptions of the same cure (further deregulation, further cut-backs in social programs) that is the very poison that ails us.

Nevertheless, while these doctors of neoliberalism continue to offer their bitter pills, at just about every institution for higher education a battle is being waged by those simply wishing to hold onto a vision of the university where professors can be something other than corporate trainers indirectly or directly subsidized by the state. For all of these reasons above, the very place where one expects to find “high theory” has instead become the site of political praxis, one where we must endeavor to keep spaces open for thought beyond economism and laissez-faire capitalism.

Readers of this journal have long taken it as their task to engage in the praxis that reinvigorates the academy, though our activism often rightly centers our efforts beyond the walls of our universities and colleges. We offer this volume of the journal as an example of this type of engaged thinking. We are not naive, of course, that our academic institutions are immune to forces of power or ideology, as the above makes clear. Philosophy Departments in the U.S. and the U.K., it’s well known, were often midwifed in the middle of the last century by intelligence agencies such as the CIA, and the American Philosophical Association in the 1940s and 1950s did not acquit itself well in the face of McCarthyism. John McCumber, in his 2001 *Time in the Ditch: American Philosophy and the McCarthy Era*, offered a searing account of the corresponding rise of analytic philosophy and McCarthyism, providing a test case of the co-implication of wider political currents and the activities of
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philosophy departments. The 1950s was an era, he argued, in which philosophy faced threats different in kind from departments of English or History. The lessons he culled remain important today:

[P]hilosophy faced special challenges to its status as a discipline. Attacks on any number of English professors, physicists, or economists could never add up to an attack on English itself, or physics, or economics. All but the most benighted Americans knew that they needed what those disciplines produced. ...But philosophy trained no one to do anything productive and was, in an accusation as old as Thales, useless. ...Hence also the decision of the president of Marietta College, in 1953, to shut down the whole philosophy department—entirely due, he assured a relieved APA, to financial considerations. Philosophy, in fact, was worse than unproductive. It had disciplinary links to subversion. For what was Marxism, basically, but a kind of philosophy? Simply by being the genus of which Marxism was a species, philosophy was intrinsically open to suspicion.¹

More than fifty years later, Marietta’s philosophy department remains closed, folded in with history and political science, and we face today closings at more than one isolated institution, while the practitioners of disaster capitalism, as Naomi Klein describes it, assure us that this is all about “financial considerations.” McCumber’s claim was that philosophy never managed to climb out of the McCarthy-era ditch and for the most part bunkered down in analytic philosophy of the most abstract sort to avoid accusations of radicalism. In his piece for this volume, “Entrenched: A Genealogy of the Analytic-Continental Divide,” Joshua Rayman revisits McCumber’s account of this period, along with those of others, to argue that Continental and pragmatic philosophies did not suffer during this period, though these areas did disappear from America’s elite institutions. Rayman argues, though, that what is needed is not, so to speak, an analysis of the internal reasons within analytic philosophy for its rise in American institutions. Rather, there are broad historical reasons, he argues, for the shift to analytic philosophy, and what is needed, in fact, is an examination of those specific universities that excluded continental philosophers as inexorably subversive. Moreover, he argues, in a manner different from McCumber, that philosophy always acts within a certain power politics, a point that is time and again denied by those who think that thinking itself takes place in some ethereal realm removed from the exigencies of the present. There is no theory without a given praxis involved.

Richard Ganis’s “Caring for Nature in Habermas, Vogel, and Derrida: Reconciling the Speaking and Nonspeaking Worlds at the Cost of ‘Re-enchantment?’” operates precisely at the boundaries of the theoretical and the practical. The point is to conceive an environmental ethics in the wake of critical theories account of recognition, communication, and knowledge formation. He thus begins to construct a theoretical approach that can formally answer to the dignity of speaking subjects while also not remaining silent in the face of unspeakable environmental devastation. In this way, what is “good-for-nature” need not fall to the communicatively conceived “good-for-humanity,” and Ganis argues that the critiques of “nature” found in Steven Vogel and Jacques Derrida provide a means for thinking of nature as something other than an inert state of being external to humans. These are “goods,” he suggests, that are perhaps useless to capitalist traders, but nevertheless point to “re-enchanting” a world torn by reification and alienation.

From there, we turn to a symposium of four articles on Cheyney Ryan’s 2009 *The Chickenhawk Syndrome: War, Sacrifice, and Personal Responsibility*. A moniker for those who are hawkish on all manner of wars, though afraid to have themselves or their families fight in them, the “chickenhawk syndrome,” for Ryan, names a perennial problem for states going to war. He argues that we are undergoing an era of “alienated war” during which there is an ever-greater gulf between those who must suffer under our war regimes and the avoidance of sacrifice by those most likely to support them. Ryan’s book opens vexing questions, not least because this gulf only widened with the end of the military draft that many rightly fought for, but which further removed the American elite from the terrifying effects of war. Anton Anatole, Michael Philip Brown, and Harry van der Linden offer not just eloquent responses to Ryan’s recent work, but powerful meditations on the most pressing political problems of our day—all relating to the conduct of war and the killing of others in the name of those removed from its consequences.

Such work is continued in Jordy Rocheleau’s review of of Jeff McMahon’s *Killing in War*. His review joins five others that make this one of the most provocative and wide-ranging volumes of *RPR* to date. From C.L.R. James to Derrida to Appiah to the indigenous politics of the Zapatistas to David Harvey’s account of crisis capitalism, these reviews speak from what Fred Evans, in a book under discussion here as well, calls the “multivoiced body” of radical politics. To those of a certain bent, these thinkers will no doubt be deemed completely useless. But that’s as it should be at a time when it seems less that philosophy has fallen into the ditch than that this has happened to the whole surrounding landscape. Our engagements, as our writers here demonstrate, cannot be from on high, but must actively inform and be informed by the multiple communities our readership represents. Finally, we have included a call for papers at the end of this issue, and thus ask you to help us continue to contest those who would make the academy further parasitical
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on neoliberal thinking and the disaster capitalism that would have us teach nothing but business as usual.

Peter Gratton

A Note from the Coordinator

With the publication of this issue we are completely back on schedule. It has been an arduous task to publish RPR Volumes 11-13 within one year. A special thanks goes to Richard A. Jones for co-editing all these issues. Anne F. Pomeroy did a wonderful job as a guest co-editor of Volume 12. Peter Gratton went beyond the call of even Kantian duty in managing all the issues and making them print-ready. The present issue marks a new beginning. It is the first issue listing our new executive editorial committee, consisting of Anatole Anton, Melissa Burchard, Peter Gratton (managing & book reviews editor), Richard A. Jones, and Harry van der Linden (coordinator). We also introduce with this issue our largely new editorial board of imaginative and radical scholars from a variety of disciplines. We live in a time in which the status quo, politics as usual, might not be able to prevent a revolt from the past, a return to failed reactionary—and even fascist—policies. We need radical thinking and solutions. The RPR hopes to fill its pages in the coming years with many articles that offer such contributions.

Harry van der Linden