

THE INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Simon Marginson, University of Oxford

Melbourne CSHE conference on 'The
purposes of Australian higher education'
24 March 2023



Introduction:
precarity, multiplicity

Intrinsic and
extrinsic purposes

Biesta's three
functions

What holds higher
education together?

Qualification and
subjectification

Conclusions

Arts clocktower, University of Melbourne



IDEAS THAT WILL BE DISCUSSED

1. Higher education is less stable than it looks;
2. There's no single value proposition (except in ideology). Higher education is multiple and heterogeneous;
3. Higher education has intrinsic and extrinsic purposes, and Biesta's (2009) three functions of education;
4. Higher education is socially central not so much because it produces employable human capital, but because the intrinsic core of education/research has become attached to the main extrinsic purpose of the sector. This is the formation and distribution of social status;
5. Higher education is effective in allocating social status, half good at social inclusion and bad at social equalisation;
6. Intrinsic education and knowledge are out of whack with extrinsic employability and industry innovation





I. TODAY'S HIGHER EDUCATION IS
LESS STABLE THAN IT LOOKS

LONG HISTORY OF DIFFERENT KINDS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- China's Imperial academies, training scholars in statecraft, began in Western Zhou (1046-771 BCE)
- The great scholarly monasteries of Northern India
- Library and Mouseion at Alexandria, 270 BCE
- The golden age of Islamic scholarship, 7th-13th CE
- Medieval European universities, Bologna 1088 CE
- Von Humboldt's teaching/research university in Berlin 1809 CE, followed by the comprehensive US science university that has spread everywhere

University of Al-Qarawiyyin (Fez, Morocco) founded 859 CE



EVERY KIND OF HIGHER
EDUCATION HAS HAD
TWO CORE PURPOSES,
WHICH HAVE CONTINUED
INTO THE PRESENT

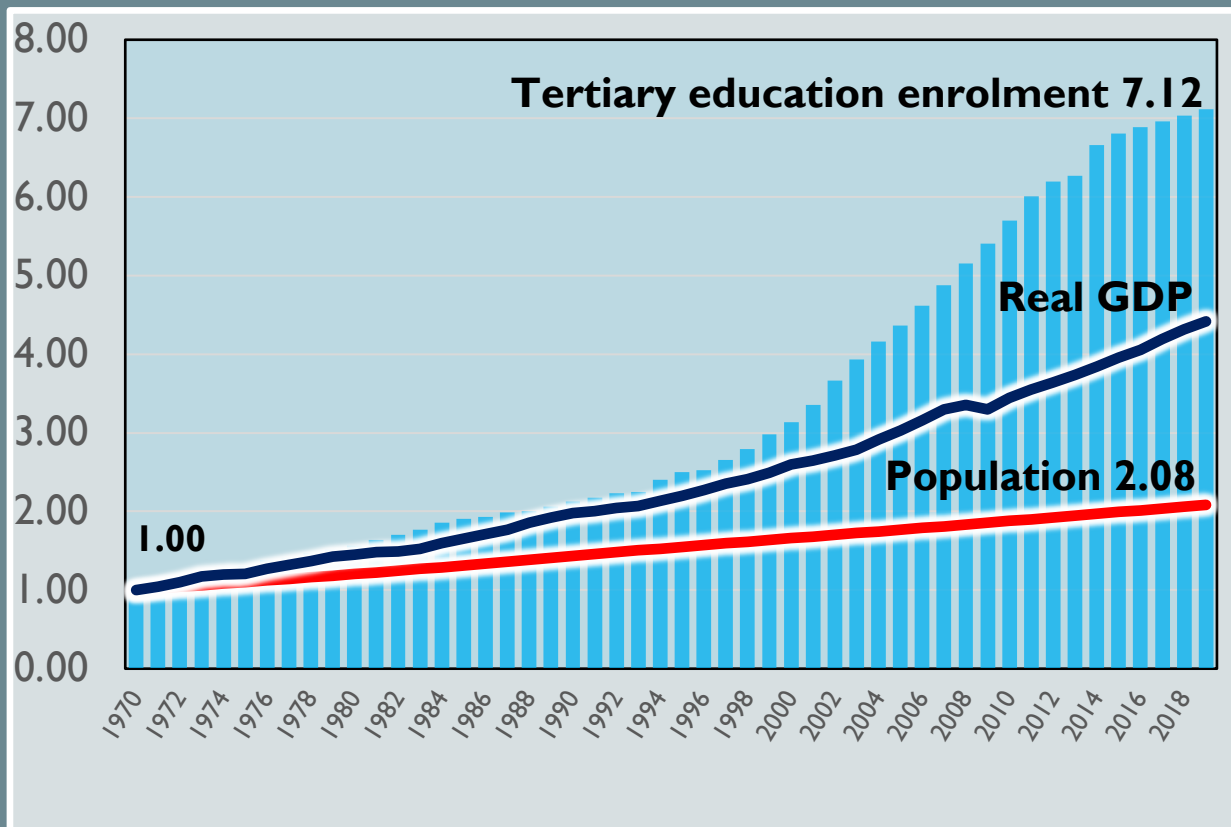
- The educational formation of students
- The reproduction (and also often the creation) of knowledge through scholarship and inquiry

University of Cambridge, UK



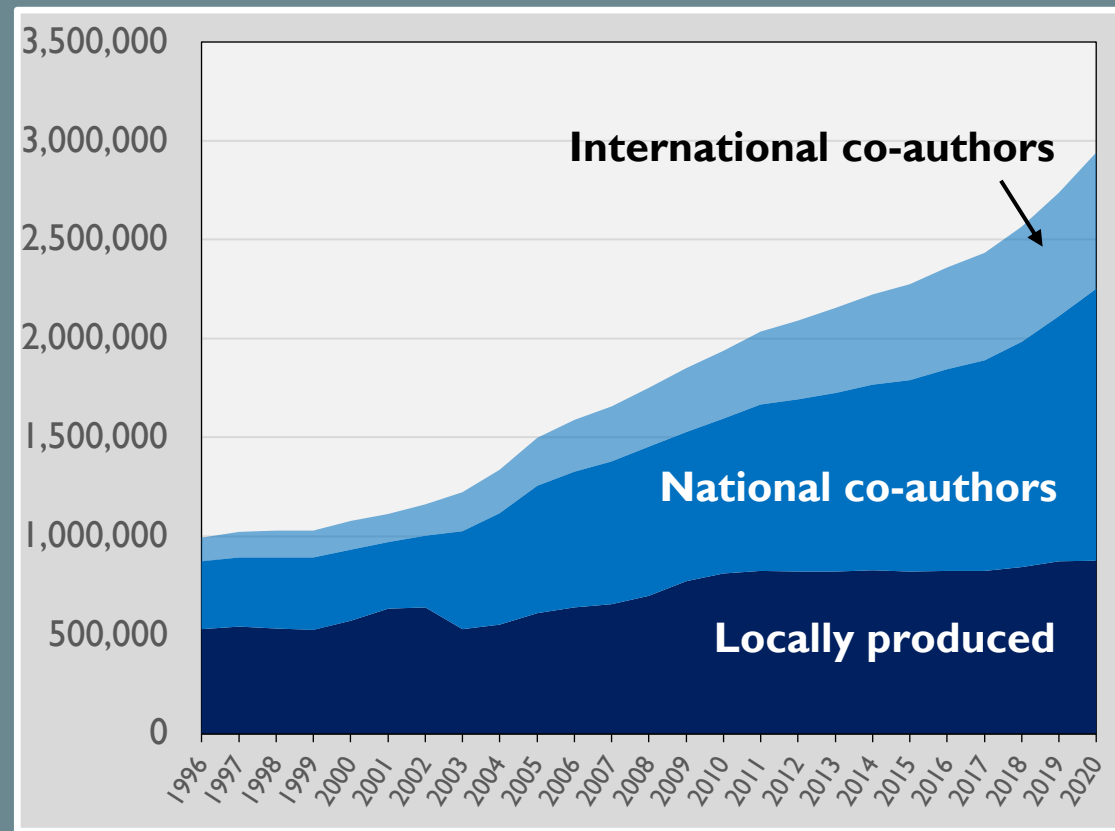
THE EUROPEAN-AMERICAN SCIENCE UNIVERSITY, WITH THESE TWO PURPOSES, HAS SPREAD ACROSS THE WORLD

WORLD TERTIARY PARTICIPATION RATE NOW OVER 40%: Growth of tertiary students worldwide since 1970



UNESCO and World Bank data

OVER 65 NATIONS HAVE SCIENCE SYSTEM: science papers have grown by 5.2% p.a. since 2020



US Science Board data, derived from Scopus

ALL THE PREVIOUS FORMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION WERE SUPPRESSED OR LOST SUPPORT

- Vikramshila, Nalanda and other Indian monasteries were brutally suppressed with everything lost
- Scholars in Alexandria were driven into exile and the library defunded
- Cosmopolitan medieval Islamic scholarship and the scholar-officials in China have given way to more Westernised universities

The end of Nalanda, 1193 CE



AND GERMANY
HOUSED THE
WORLD'S LEADING
SCIENCE
UNIVERSITIES
BEFORE 1933



Students collecting 'Un-German'
books and papers for burning, 1933



CONSIDER KARAZIN KHARKIV NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, UKRAINE



Before March 2022 Karazin
Kharkiv was Ukraine's second
ranked university



A lush, dense tropical rainforest scene. The foreground and midground are filled with various types of green foliage, including large palm fronds and broad-leafed plants. Several thick, dark tree trunks are visible, some with moss or vines growing on them. The background is a bright, sunlit canopy of trees, creating a sense of depth and a vibrant green atmosphere. The overall lighting is natural, with sunlight filtering through the leaves.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION IS *ESSENTIALLY*
COMPLEX AND HETEROGENEOUS

THIS WAS CLARK KERR'S POINT ABOUT THE 'MULTIVERSITY' IN 1962

- Multiple historical origins and layers
- Multiple fields of knowledge, none of them reducible to another
- Multiple institutions, and agencies
- Multiple social groups and interests
- Multiple connections and stakeholders
- Multiple social, economic, political, cultural and educational outcomes
- Multiple objectives, norms and values

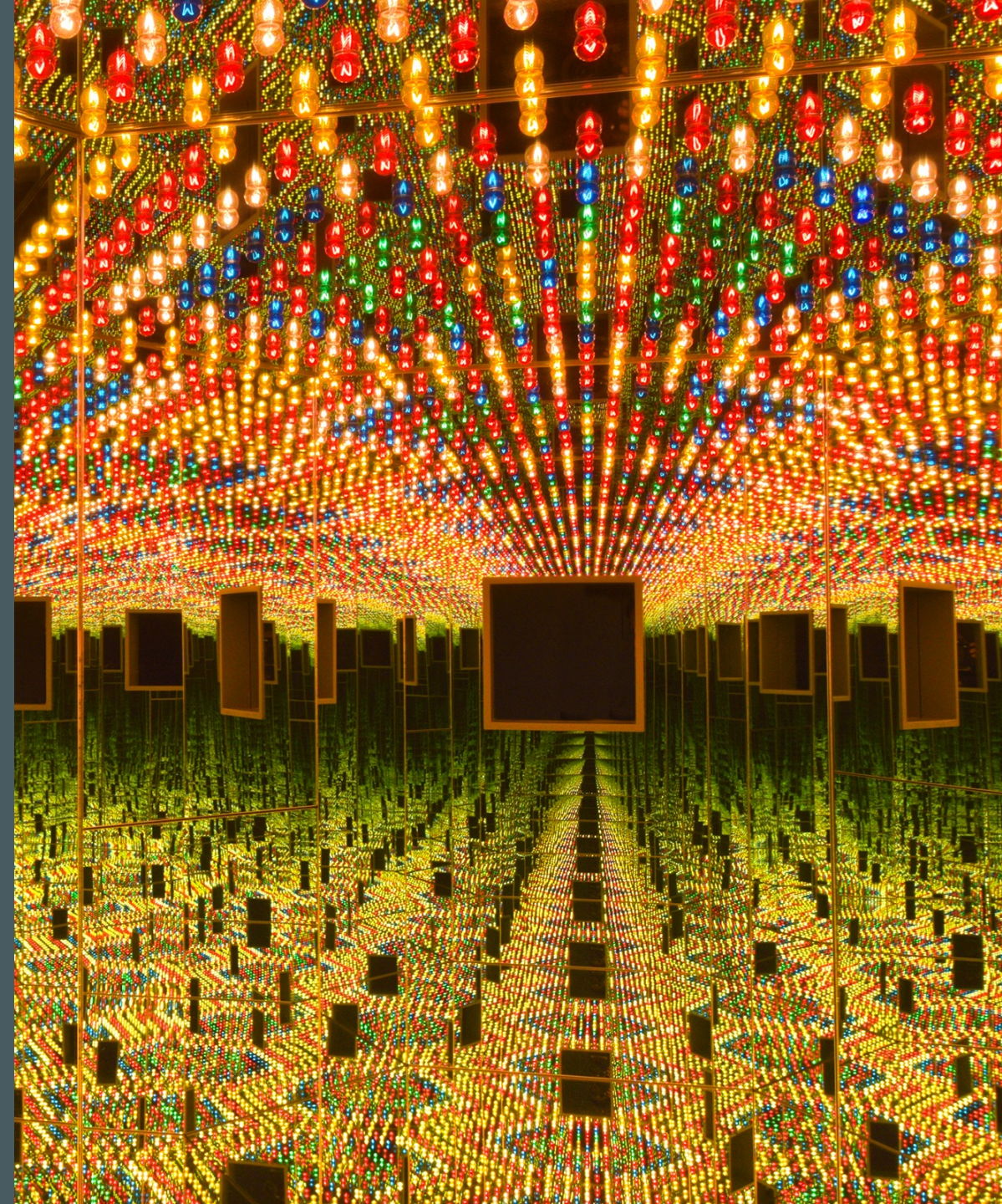


**Clark Kerr, University of California President and
author of *The uses of the university* (1962)**

IF WE ADOPT A REALIST
PERSPECTIVE, NO SINGLE
VALUE PROPOSITION CAN
CAPTURE THIS COMPLEXITY

Reducing the multiple outcomes of higher education to a single purpose or single measure of value blocks from view most of what's actually there

A single value proposition (e.g. graduate salaries as the 'master' measure of value for individuals) can only be *ideological*



3. GRASPING THE COMPLEXITY: TWO KINDS OF PURPOSE AND THREE FUNCTIONS



INNER AND OUTER PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION

- The **intrinsic purposes** are the classical inner core of higher education, where value is judged on academic grounds
 - education of students
 - transmission, creation, dissemination of knowledge
- The **extrinsic purposes** are the external social roles of higher education, carried out in partnership with other social agents, who share judgments about value
 - this includes the allocation of social **status** via higher education, and the preparation of students in **work**, the professions and occupations

Rene Magritte, *The human condition*, 1935



Magritte

BIESTA'S (2009) THREE FUNCTIONS OF EDUCATION

Biesta, G. (2009). Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability*, 21: 33–46. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11092-008-9064-9>

- **Qualification:** providing the knowledge, skills understanding, dispositions and judgements that enable students/graduates to 'do something'
- **Socialisation:** 'The many ways in which, through education, we become members of and part of particular social, cultural and political "orders"'
- **Subjectification:** The 'individuating' effects of education, whereby students become autonomous and self-realising subjects



THE TWO PURPOSES AND THREE FUNCTIONS TOGETHER

Biesta (2009) function (understood as student learning)	Intrinsic purposes: (a) teaching and learning; and (b) knowledge creation, transmission and dissemination	Extrinsic purposes: Shared by higher education and social partners, e.g. law curriculum and certification; applied research
Qualification: learning to do things	SECONDARY The intrinsic core is foundational to extrinsic qualification	PRIMARY Qualification is largely realised in relations with social partners
Socialisation: ordering students in terms of external norms and values	PRIMARY Teaching, knowledges contribute to socialisation	SECONDARY Relations with social partners also contribute to socialisation
Subjectification: becoming an autonomous self-realising person	PRIMARY Subjectification in knowledge-intensive learning and sociability	MINOR Social partners want regulated not self-determining autonomy

THE TWO PURPOSES AND THREE FUNCTIONS (2)

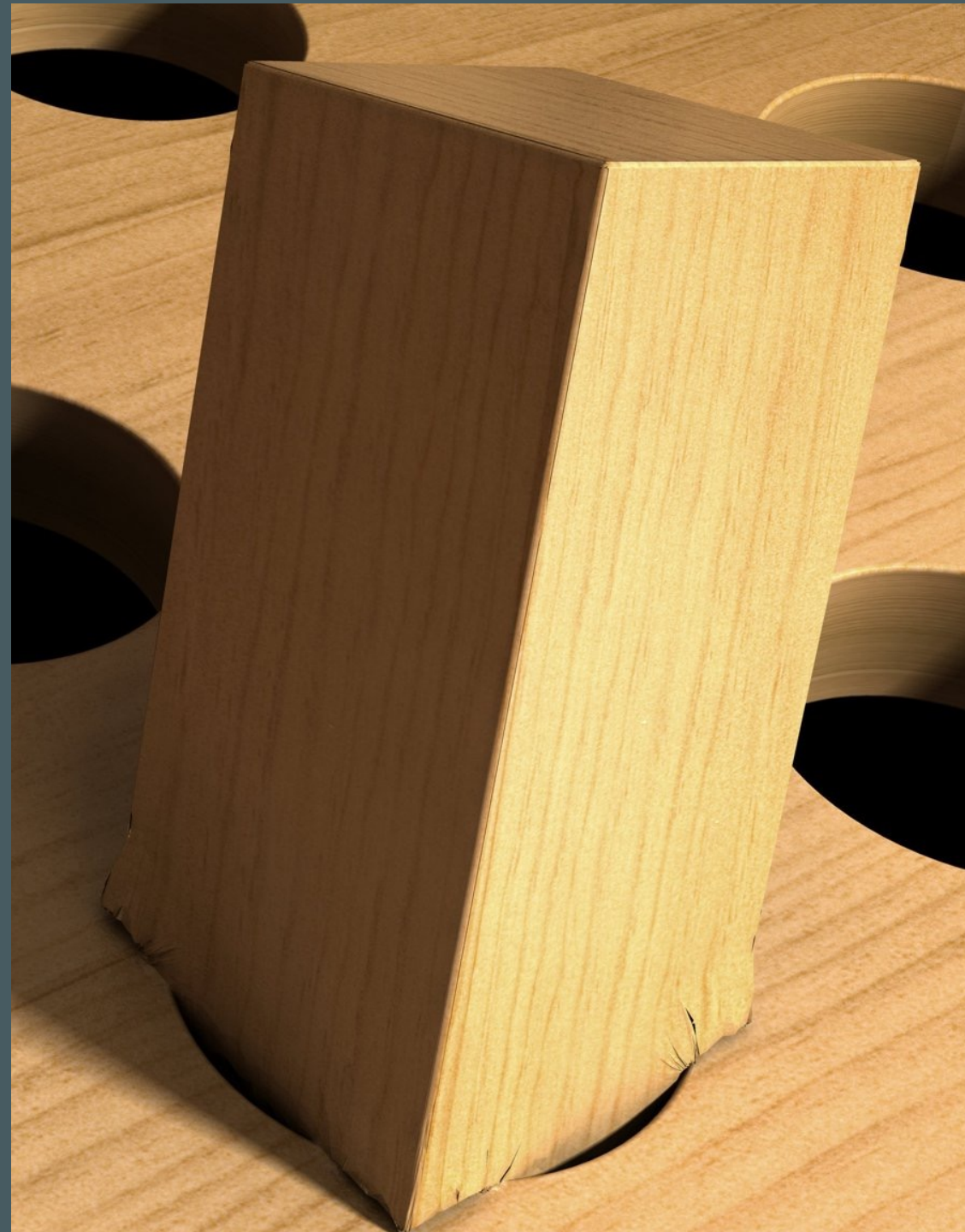
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WHEN *CULTURAL* PROCESSES
ARE REMADE AS *ECONOMIC*
TRAINING, SUBJECTIFICATION
AND SOCIALISATION BECOME
MARGINALISED

When policy defines the purposes of higher education in terms of economic value, this pushes the intrinsic educational activities to conform – creating a square pegs in round holes situation - and hiding from view the non-economic functions of higher education.



SUBJECTIFICATION AS STUDENT SELF-FORMATION OFFERS MORE TO STUDENTS

Higher education enables people to transform themselves through the never-ending work of the self on the self. Higher education as intrinsic self-formation offers students much more than higher education as extrinsic consumption

Marginson, S. (2023). Higher education as student self-formation. In S. Marginson, B. Cantwell, D. Platonova and A. Smolentseva, *Assessing the contributions of higher education*. Edward Elgar. Open Access at: <https://www.elgaronline.com/edcollbook-oo/book/9781035307173/9781035307173.xml>



**‘Life isn’t about finding yourself. Life is about creating yourself, and creating things’
– Bob Dylan, Nobel Prize for literature 2016**

4. CLARK KERR'S QUESTION WAS 'WHAT
HOLDS THE MULTIVERSITY TOGETHER?'



HIGHER EDUCATION HAS SURVIVED AND EXPANDED THROUGH THE 935 YEAR HISTORY OF THE EURO- AMERICAN UNIVERSITY BECAUSE ...

- It produces graduates who become employable human capital for the knowledge economy?
- Its research generates innovations in industry which lift global economic competitiveness?
- It creates a more equal society?
- None of the above??



THE UNIVERSITY - WHICH FORMED PEOPLE THROUGH IMMERSION IN KNOWLEDGE -

- developed the extrinsic function of producing and allocating social opportunity and status,
- and of sorting and differentiating populations,
- and hence became the common and increasingly universal focus of aspirations

Cantwell, B., Marginson S. & Smolentseva, A. (eds.).(2018). *High participation systems of higher education*. Oxford: Oxford University Press



THE UNIVERSAL DESIRE FOR SOCIAL BETTERMENT THROUGH STATUS AND MATERIAL IMPROVEMENT

- Desires for higher education have universalised though average graduate earnings have fallen
- Individual status is *the* driver. Students and families *want* higher education to augment earnings, but they *know* it will lift individual status above those not in higher education



'The desire of bettering our condition ... comes with us from the womb and never leaves us till we go into the grave'

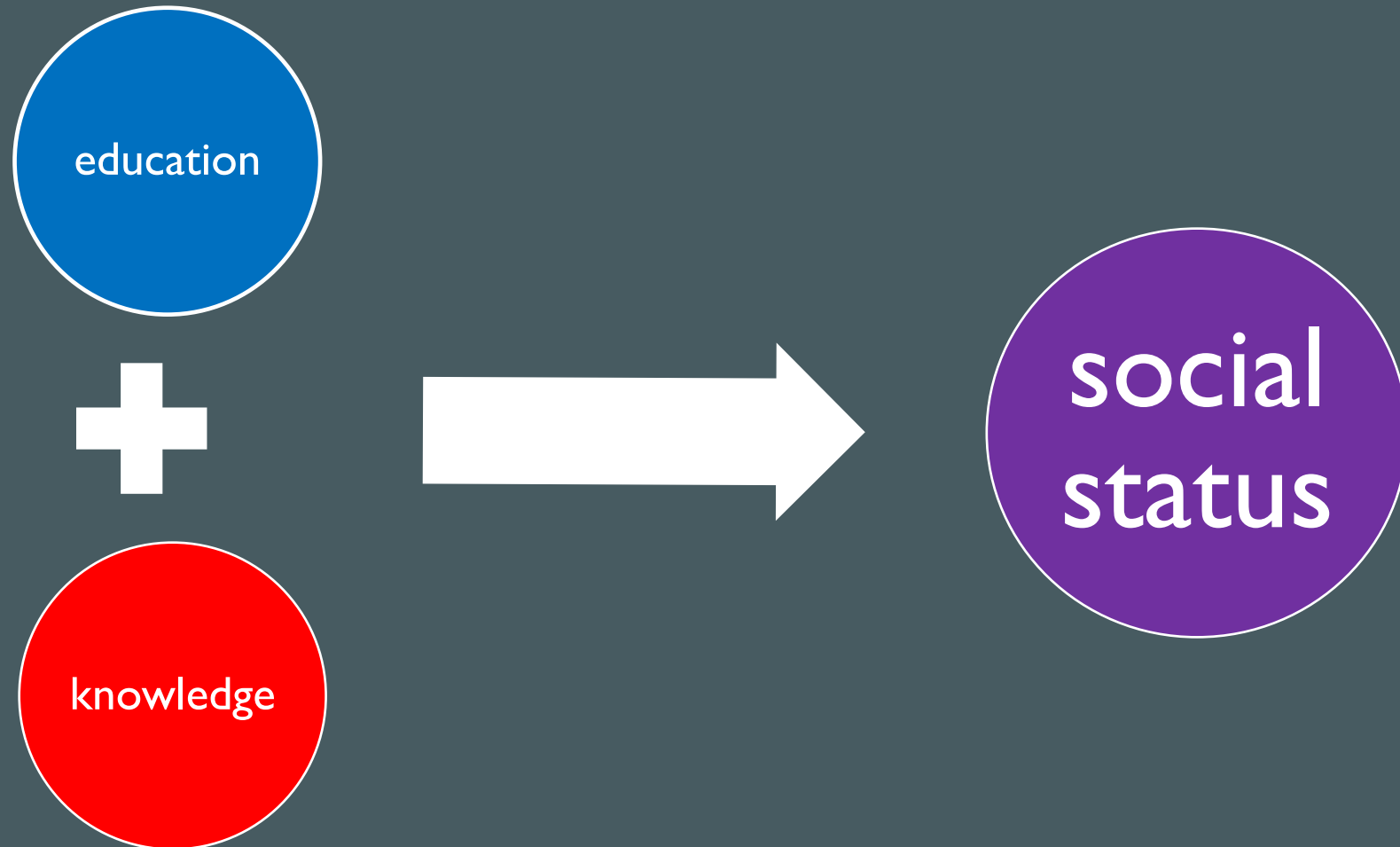
~ Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776/ 1979), p. 441

THE ANSWER TO CLARK KERR'S QUESTION IS 'STATUS HOLDS THE MULTIVERSITY TOGETHER'

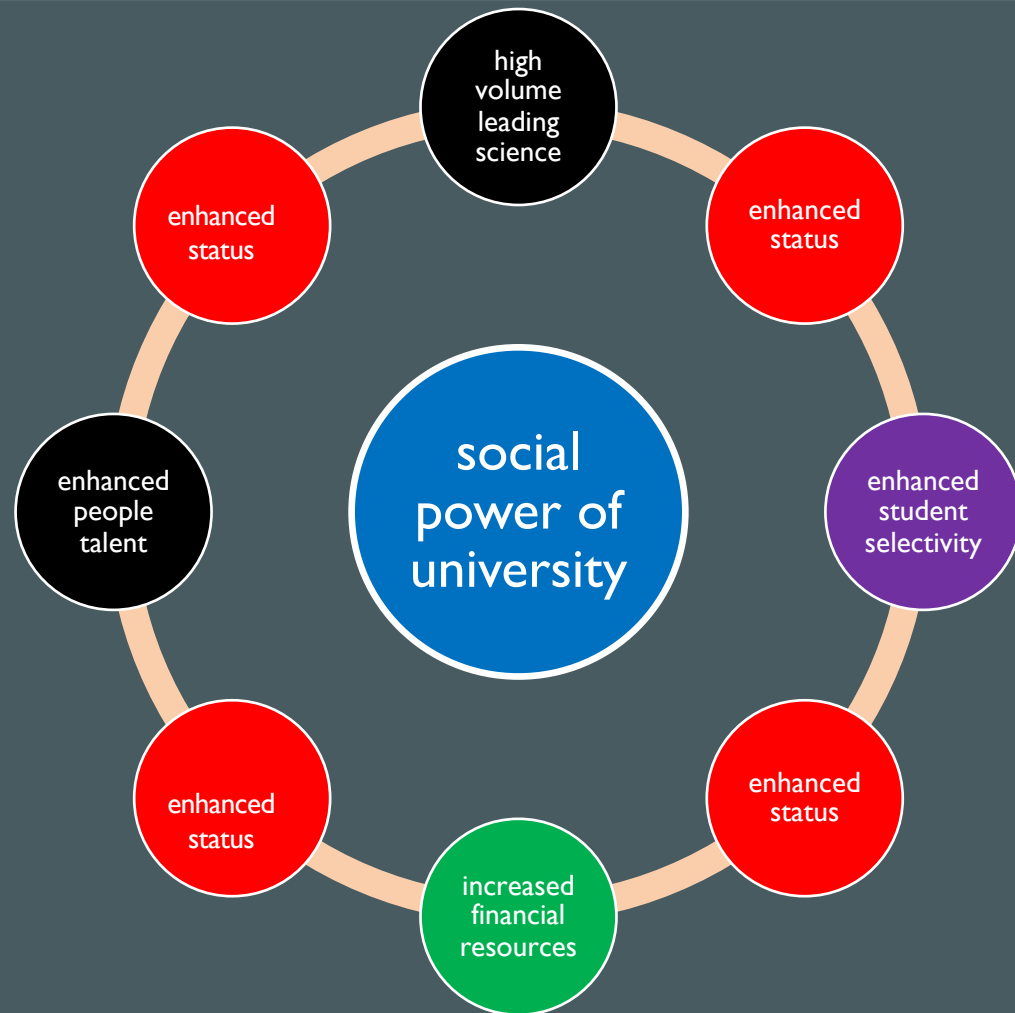
- Higher education's role in producing and distributing individual status is joined to cultural formation within teaching/research institutions
- The universities that engineer and calibrate individual status, on a differentiating basis, pursue a second form of status – institutional status
- There is also an exchange of status between institutions and students. Status is ubiquitous!



IN SHORT, HIGHER EDUCATION IS, MOST BASICALLY
EDUCATION + KNOWLEDGE + SOCIAL STATUS



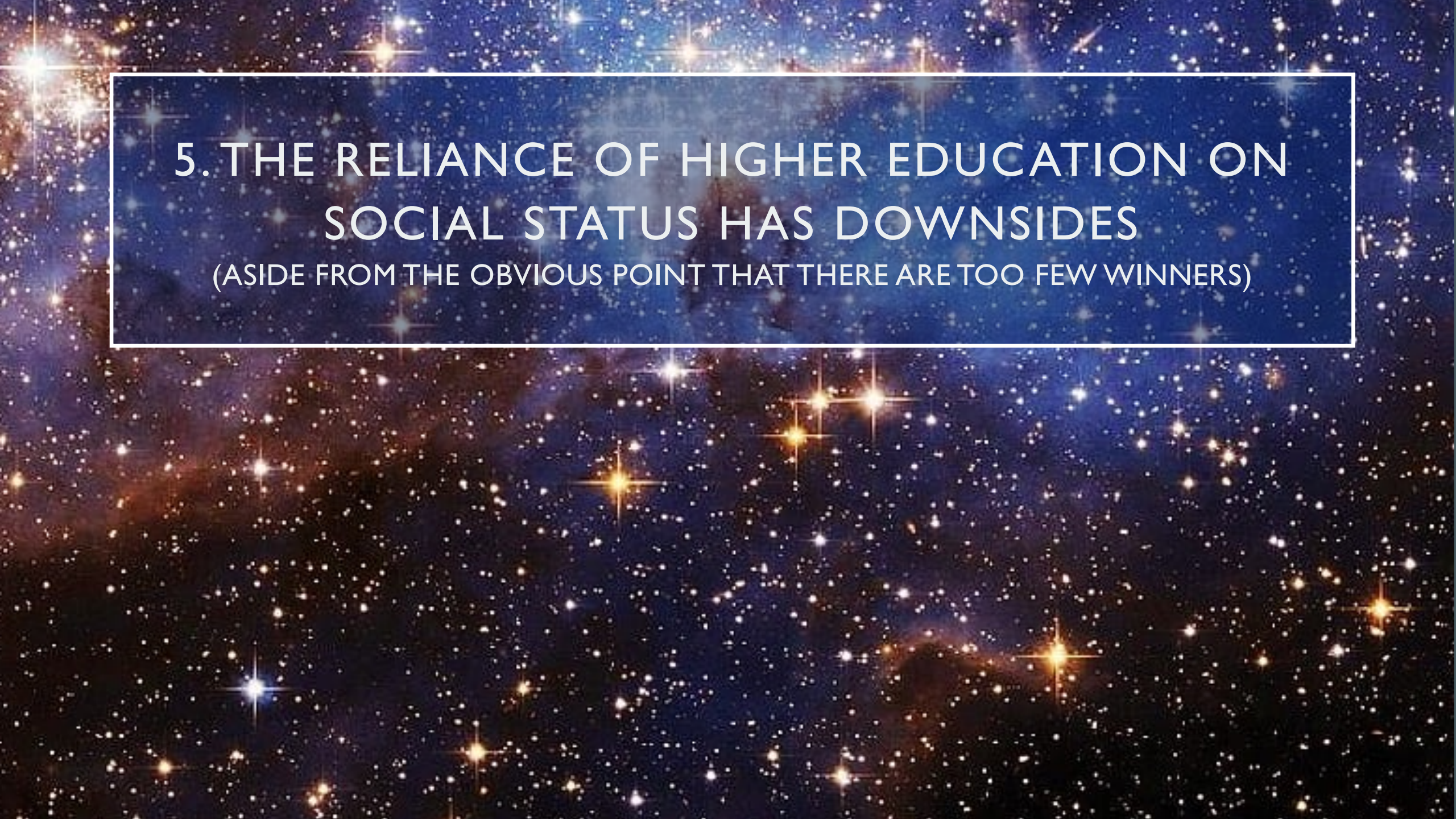
THE SOCIAL POWER OF THE TOP UNIVERSITIES = STATUS + RESOURCES + TALENT + KNOWLEDGE (SCIENCE)



Sever Hall, Harvard

HIGHER EDUCATION
IS NOW CENTRAL TO
MANY SOCIETIES
ACROSS THE WORLD
BUT THERE ARE TWO
PROBLEMS
EACH COULD BRING
IT UNDONE



The background is a deep blue and black night sky filled with numerous stars of varying colors, including white, yellow, and orange. Some stars have prominent diffraction spikes. A white rectangular box is centered in the upper half of the image, containing the text.

5. THE RELIANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION ON
SOCIAL STATUS HAS DOWNSIDES
(ASIDE FROM THE OBVIOUS POINT THAT THERE ARE TOO FEW WINNERS)

HIGHER EDUCATION IS BETTER AT SOCIAL DIFFERENTIATION THAN SOCIAL EQUITY

- Higher education is good at creating and allocating social status via cultural formation in knowledge
- BUT it is less good at social inclusion
- And poor at social equalisation
- **These factors undermine higher education's social and political base**

Marginson, S. (2018). Equity. In B. Cantwell, S. Marginson and A. Smolentseva (eds.), *High participation systems of higher education* (pp. 151-184). Oxford: Oxford University Press





6. THERE IS A POOR FIT BETWEEN

1. INTRINSIC KNOWLEDGE AND EXTRINSIC INNOVATION
2. INTRINSIC EDUCATION AND EXTRINSIC EMPLOYABILITY

UNACKNOWLEDGED 'LEAKAGE' IN NATIONAL R&D SYSTEMS

- Science is a single global pool, R&D policy is nation-bound
- Discoveries by national science are often taken up first by foreign firms
- National industry often sources its innovations from foreign science in the pool, not national science

Marginson, S. (2022). What drives global science? The four competing narratives. *Studies in Higher Education*, 47 (8), pp. 1566-1584.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2021.1942822>



THE GROWING DISSONANCE BETWEEN

- the intrinsic educational function of higher education in culturally preparing students as autonomous persons, via immersion in disciplinary knowledges, and
- the extrinsic policy expectation that higher education creates employable graduates who augment productivity and growth



HIGHER EDUCATION AND WORK: DIFFERENT WORLDS

- Many students want personal development, *and* immersion in disciplinary knowledge, *and* they want to be employable. Multiple purposes.
- While higher education and work co-exist in the lives of many, these intrinsic and extrinsic domains are *heterogeneous*. Agentic positioning, objectives, values, knowledges and skills, and the required behaviours, are all very different

Marginson, S. (2019). Limitations of human capital theory. *Studies in Higher Education*, 44 (2), pp. 287-301. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2017.1359823>





A wedge of Swiss cheese with several holes and a piece of white chalk are positioned on a black background. The cheese is on the left, and the chalk is on the right. A white rectangular box is centered over the image, containing the text "CHALK AND CHEESE" in white, bold, uppercase letters.

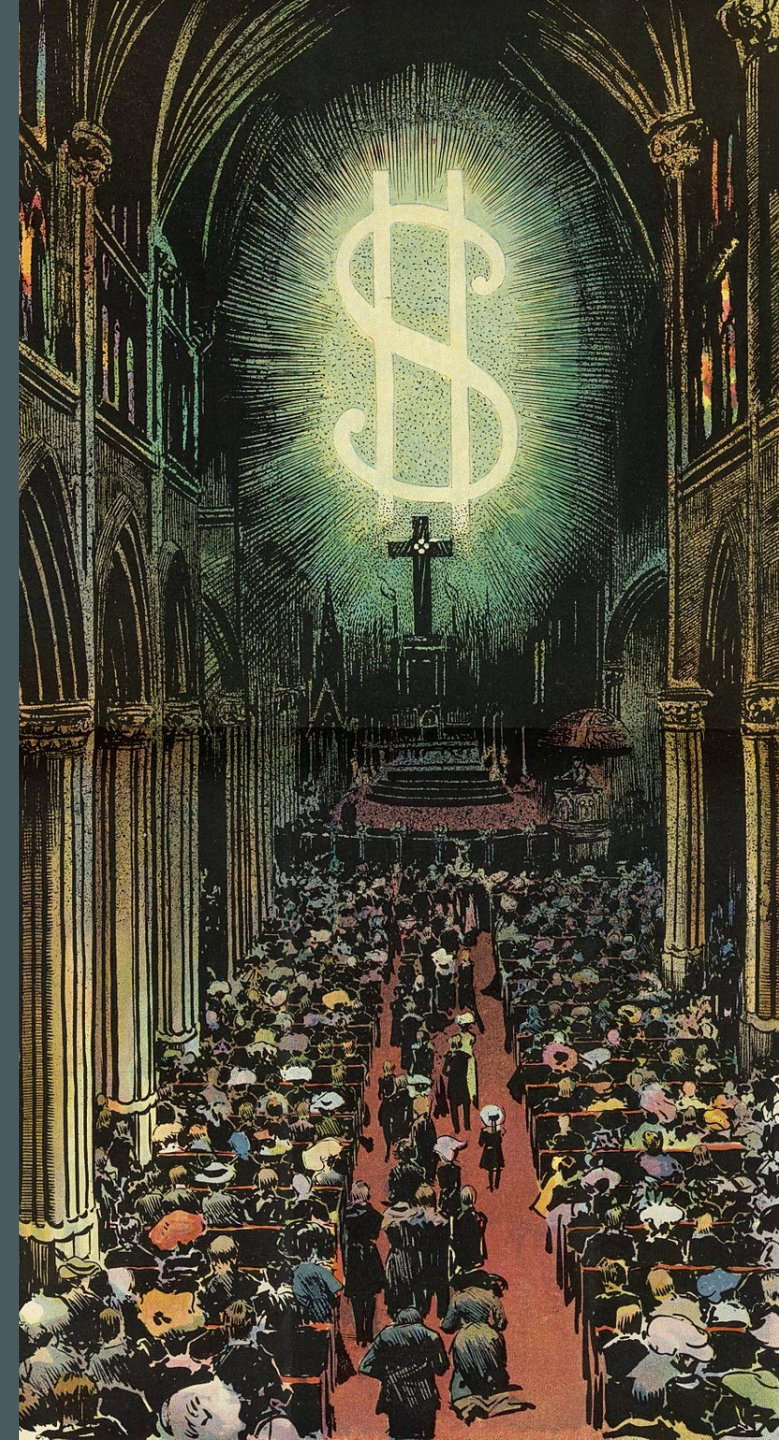
CHALK AND CHEESE

A piece of yellow paper and a white chalk stick are positioned on a black background. The yellow paper is on the left, and the white chalk stick is on the right. A white rectangular border frames the text in the center.

THE **INTRINSIC** PURPOSES OF HIGHER EDUCATION
IN CLASSROOM LEARNING AND KNOWLEDGE
ARE DIFFERENT *IN KIND* TO THE **EXTRINSIC**
PURPOSE OF PRODUCING EMPLOYABLE GRADUATES

POLICY NOW WANTS TO INSTALL THE EXTRINSIC HUMAN CAPITAL IMAGINARY *INSIDE THE EDUCATIONAL PURPOSE*

- In policy and public debate – and in research on higher education – ‘employability’ is the new universal, the goal of every higher education programme. Yet learning in higher education is immersion in knowledge, not work, and higher education cannot create jobs for graduates
- In UK the TEF judges the quality of the intrinsic education function in terms of graduate salaries. ‘Low value courses’ are vulnerable to enrolment reductions
- In Australia the government wants ‘job ready graduates’



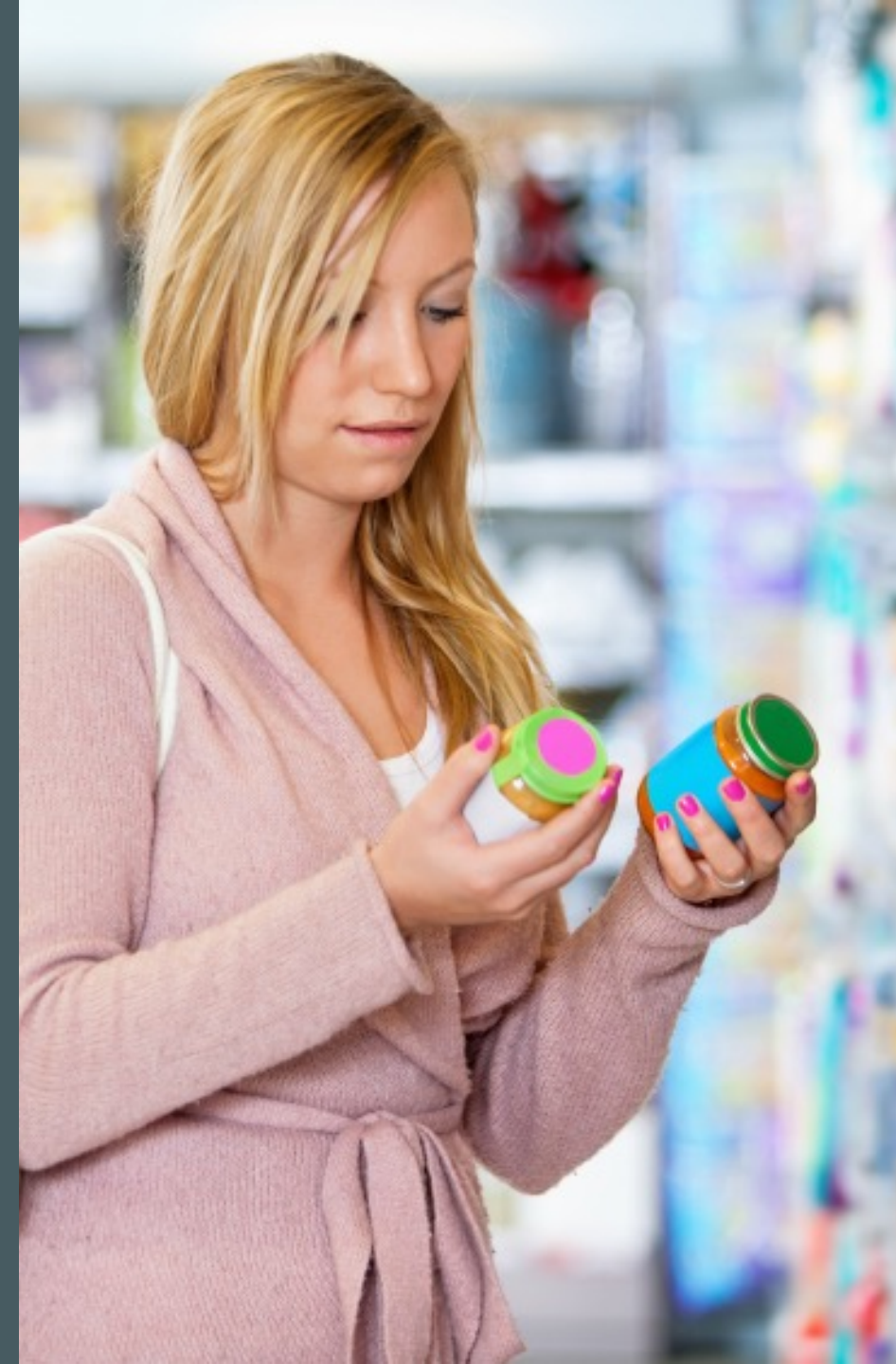


CONCLUSIONS

AI generated image *Castles of a new world*
<https://creator.nightcafe.studio/creation/drElbVWKSLOrVCSmIGdyi>

ECONOMIC POLICY DOES NOT LIKE MULTIPLICITY. THIS HAS LED TO EDUCATION/ WORK DISSONANCE

- Policy positioning of employability as the universal measure of value – so that educational/ cultural/personal formation through learning scarcely exists – has perverse effects.
- Instead of students as self-forming autonomous learners aiming for the highest level of personal achievement, they are reduced to satisfied or unsatisfied consumers. Bizarrely, surveys of student experience model self-formation through learning



GOVERNMENT AND HIGHER EDUCATION ARE TALKING AT CROSS PURPOSES

- If government set out to design higher education focused on employable graduates it would not use cultural formation, academic knowledge and the teaching/research nexus! But trying to push the existing system in that direction is never going to work
- Higher education is now responsible for economic outcomes it cannot control
- Trust will become increasingly poisoned



WHAT WILL BE THE PURPOSES OF THE SECTOR IN FUTURE?

- The core intrinsic purposes of higher education are education and knowledge/research
- The primacy of extrinsic employability, measured by labour market outcomes, blocks student self-formation from view and creates unachievable expectations. Will higher education sustain its purposes, or will it focus solely on employability, or employability plus status and stratification?
- Education as self-formation is potentially more attractive to students than narrow vocationalism

