The Death Spiral of Contemporary Public Higher Education

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Abstract

The recent funding crisis in Illinois is but one part of a larger national problem, a decades long retreat from the very idea of public higher education. Even as we fight to keep the doors open, the enterprise itself is shifting. As tuition races past state support as a percentage of their operating budgets, public universities increasingly frame their contribution as a return on investment. As the university becomes more vocationalized, we see an attenuation of the arts, humanities, and general education, further exacerbating the credential mindset. This only cements the notion that a college education is a private, consumer good, further sapping public support for higher education. Caught in this negative feedback loop, we are rapidly returning to a system that fully tracks social class into educational, vocational, and existential outcomes. That state universities continue to operate is no guarantee that a truly higher education will be offered to a genuinely inclusive public. It is time to stop hitting the snooze button.

Keywords: *higher education, political-economy, public university, tuition, general education, humanities, public goods*

> ...All I could do then would be to curse myself and say, "why didn't I wake up when the alarm-clock rang?"[1]

Introduction

This fall, for the first time in four years, Illinois' public universities received a full-year budget before the start of the school year. Not only is the 793-day state budget impasse behind us but its instigator, Governor Bruce Rauner, has just been voted out of office. The new budget even includes a modest 2% increase for operations, which will mean that Governor's State University can fix its

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1. Letter from Rabbi Hyman Katz to his mother (Madrid, 11/25/1937) concerning his decision to join the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and fight against Franco. Katz was killed in action 4 months later. See Cary Nelson and Jefferson Hendriks (eds), *Madrid 1937: Letters of Abraham Lincoln Brigade from the Spanish Civil War* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 32.

roofs and Northern Illinois University can replace its boilers.[2] However, we are awakening from the "nightmare of total uncertainty" only to find ourselves in the "new normal" of austerity.[3] Even with this year's increase, funding is down 8.2% relative to pre-Rauner levels, in a system stressed to its limits: Eastern Illinois University was forced to lay off nearly one quarter of its employees; fully one third of the staff was let go at nearly shuttered Chicago State University, Illinois' leading minority-serving public university, where enrollment is still only half what it once was; after spending down its $80 million reserves, Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) was forced to borrow $30 million from its sister school in Edwardsville; such spend-downs led Moody's to downgrade seven Illinois universities, five of them to junk status.[4] In 2016-17 alone, 168,000 low-income students were denied MAP grants.[5] According to "the democratic idea in education," John Dewey wrote, "higher education…is of and for the people, and not for some cultivated classes."[6] On January 1, 2017, the lights were turned off at SIUC's Center for Dewey Studies, the world's central repository of scholarly resources related to the life and work of John Dewey. Relief that the worst may be over must not obscure the damage done.

We also must not let the crisis in Illinois distract us from the bigger picture. The "Illinois problem" is but one part of a larger national story, and these sharper crises tend to mask what is a steady decline of public higher education in the United States over several decades. Even as literal disintegration is staved off by directing overdue monies to the physical plant, the public university is losing its integrity. Public higher education may well continue indefinitely in name but will such universities remain public in substance? And will the education they offer be properly described as "higher?" There is reason to believe that we are living through the gradual abandonment of the very idea that there are public goods of higher education.

In seeking to understand this slower process of decline and disintegration, this essay is a contribution to what we might call "educational axiology." This dusty term, "axiology," offers a useful reminder that the study of value encompasses domains usually treated in isolation, domains such as economics, education, politics, ethics, aesthetics, and religion. The phrase "educational axiology" is meant to stand for three methodological propositions. First, we must refuse the idealization of studying educational aims in abstraction from the mechanics of institutions and the machinations of societies. These spheres of value are interconnected. Second, we must simultaneously resist the impulse to reduce educational questions to political or economic ones. Those who would attend to the material conditions of education must be wary of the tendency to collapse

2. Dawn Rhodes, "Illinois College Leaders Relieved at Quick State Budget Resolution," *Chicago Tribune*, June 2, 2018, https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-met-illinois-universities-budget-reaction-20180601-story.html.

3. These are both quotes from Elaine Maimon, president of Governors State University. For the former, see Sarah Brown, "As Illinois Budget Impasse Ends, So Does a 'Nightmare of Total Uncertainty' for Its Public Colleges," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, July 6, 2017, https://www.chronicle.com/article/As-Illinois-Budget-Impasse/240553. For the latter, see Rhodes, "Illinois College Leaders Relieved at Quick State Budget Resolution."

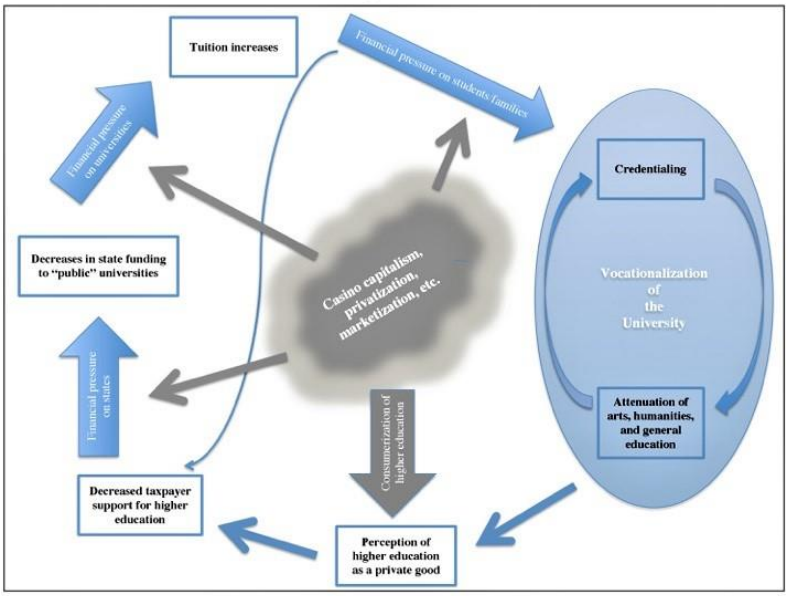
4. Rick Seltzer, "Picking up the Pieces in Illinois," *Inside Higher Ed*, July 10, 2017, https://www.insidehighered.com /news/2017/07/10/illinois-leaders-re-evaluate-higher-education-after-first-state-budget-two-years. Two of the City Colleges of Chicago, Kennedy-King and Daley, have an even higher percentage of students who are neither White nor Asian, but Chicago State University has by far the highest percentage of under-represented minorities among four-year Illinois publics. The next closest to Chicago State (92.4%) is Governor's State University (58.4%). To calculate this, I used the Fall 2014 IPEDS data at http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/Default.aspx.

5. Meredith Kolodner, "Eligible for Financial Aid, Nearly a Million Students Never Get It," *The Hechinger Report*, May 23, 2018, https://hechingerreport.org/eligible-for-financial-aid-almost-one-third-of-students-never-get-it/.

6. John Dewey, "Professorial Freedom" in *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899-1924. Volume 8: 1915, Essays, German Philosophy and Politics, Schools of Tomorrow*, ed. Jo Anne Boydston, The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953, the Electronic Edition (Charlottesville, VA: Intelex Corp., 1996). First published as a letter to the editor in The New York Times, October 22, 1915.

questions of value to questions of justice, questions of justice to questions of distribution, and questions of distribution to questions about markets. The second proposition, then, is that the study of value is enriched by attention to processes of teaching and learning, where we find distinctively educational goods. And for those of us interested in public educational goods, we must reject the central conceit of contemporary economics that value is created by individual preferences, leaving economists safe to ignore ethical and political questions to focus on the causal dynamics of markets. Notably, for all of the differences between Adam Smith and Karl Marx, they shared the view that economics is inseparable from moral and political questions.[7] Third, adding education into the axiological mix not only offers us another distinct if interconnected species of value: it also enriches the questions we ask of valuation across the spheres. The educational axiologist is interested in the lifespan of values, their birth and development, withering and renewal. While the term "axiology" may have fallen out of favor, some of the best contemporary work in moral and political theory adheres to these three methodological principles. Thinkers such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Walzer, and Michael Sandel help us think about value pluralism, the integrity and interdependence of spheres and practices of valuation, and the processes that conflate, corrupt, and counterfeit values.[8]

Figure 1



My own contribution, in what follows, is to offer a model of the interaction of political-economic and educational values resulting in the slow death of US public universities. Contemporary public higher education, I will suggest, is caught in a negative feedback loop (Figure 1) in which: (1) decreases in state funding of higher education put financial pressure on public universities, driving (2) tuition *increases* that put financial pressure on students and families, fueling (3) the vocationalization of the university (a process that contains its own internal negative cycle of credentialization and the attenuation of general education), breeeding (4) skepticism of the very idea of higher education as a public good, and sapping (5) taxpayer support for higher education putting financial pressure on states, leading us back to where we began with decreasing state funding for public universities.

7 . For a recent defense of the continuity between the Smith of *Theory of Moral Sentiments* and *The Wealth of Nations*, see Jack Russell Weinstein, *Adam Smith's Pluralism: Rationality, Education, and Moral Sentiments* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

8. Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 3rd ed., with a new prologue ed. (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, [1981] 2007); Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983); Michael J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012).

Before exploring this cycle in detail, let me offer two caveats. First, because my focus is on the system as a whole, I will have to bracket off many of the intricacies of what Sheila Slaughter and colleagues call "academic capitalism," let alone of capitalism itself.[9] Second, my intent is solely diagnostic. I will offer no grand solutions, though there is always the hope that getting clearer about the nature of the disease might help in the search for a cure. If the patient proves to be terminal, knowing that will allow us to put our energies into seeding the next Black Mountain College or Open University.[10]

The Algebra of Access

What are public universities and why do we need them? Here is an answer that gets right to the point: "If college opportunities are restricted to those in the higher income brackets, the way is open to the creation of and perpetuation of a class society which has no place in the American way of life."[11] This comes not from some leftist manifesto but from a bureaucratic, centrist document: Harry Truman's *Commission on Higher Education*. Indeed, there should be nothing radical about rejecting a system that tracks family wealth into corresponding levels of educational and economic opportunity for the next generation. The question, though, is what we mean by "college opportunities." There are lower-cost options in U.S. higher education, but community colleges and technical schools do not seem to produce the skills and credentials translatable into the social mobility envisioned by the Truman Commission. Better candidates for this job are public research universities which educate one third of US undergraduates, and especially the R1 flagships.[12] Compared with even the most selective privates, universities such as UC Berkeley, Michigan, or the University of Virginia (UVA) represent a real parity of educational opportunity. In theory, as public universities, they distribute these opportunities to the masses.

In practice, this is far from the case. At UVA, annual in-state costs (tuition, fees, and expenses) vary by program from thirty to forty thousand dollars.[13] At the University of Michigan, freshmen and sophomores get a discounted rate of $30,298 per year.[14] The University of California Berkeley estimates $34,502 for students living in the dorms, with an additional $2,830 for students who need health insurance.[15] Out-of-state costs at these institutions range from $64,250 (Berkeley, without health insurance) to a breathtaking $73,180 (for UVA business majors). While it is true that there is no in-state discount at privates such s UVA's regional neighbor, Duke ($75,370), their

9. Sheila Slaughter and Larry L. Leslie, *Academic Capitalism: Politics, Policies, and the Entrepreneurial University* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy: Markets, State, and Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

10. Black Mountain College of North Carolina, 1933-1957, RIP. Here flourished brightly if briefly an intentional community devoted to the arts of freedom, whose profound experiments in fusing Bauhaus modes of aesthetic education with Socratic liberal arts seminars in a Deweyan democratic living/learning community continue to resonate. For a contrast between the conception of general education at Black Mountain College and that embodied in typical breadth requirements, see Chris Higgins, "From the Editor: Undeclared," *Educational Theory* 67, no. 3 (2017).

11. President's Commission on Higher Education, *Higher Education for American Democracy*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper, 1947), 23, quoted in Nancy Folbre, *Saving State U: Fixing Public Higher Education* (New York: The New Press, 2010), 38.

12. Over 40% of US undergraduates attend 4-year public universities. The 157 Public research universities (RI and RII) enroll one third of US undergraduates. In what follows, I focus on R1 Publics (of which there are 81) and especially on elite flagships (37 of the 50 State Flagships are R1).

13. See https://sfs.virginia.edu/cost/18-19. These are UVA's estimated figures for 2018-19. In what follows, unless otherwise stated, I am referring to the sum of tuition, fees, and living expenses for in-state students.

14. See http://finaid.umich.edu/cost-of-attendance/.

15. See https://financialaid.berkeley.edu/cost-attendance.

needs-blind admissions policy creates a sliding scale.[16] Average aid is $50,000 per year for students from families with incomes between $80,000 and $100,000, and Duke is free for students from families with incomes under $60,000.[17] There may be good reasons for attending elite public universities such as UVA, but affordability and access do not seem to be among them.

It is not only Public Ivies such as UVA, Berkeley, and Michigan with skyrocketing costs. The University of Washington, which touts its *Wall Street Journal* ranking as the "#3 best value,"[18] costs $27,638 for in-state students.[19] Even the more affordable flagships are not very affordable: Wyoming ($20,140), Montana ($20,964), Florida ($21,210), Idaho ($21,350), Iowa ($24,464).[20] To determine what it will cost to attend the University of Kansas requires careful exegesis of their 23-page Comprehensive Fee Schedule. After factoring in their per-credit premium, it appears that "Social Welfare" majors will pay $27,675 per year.[21]

Anticipating the sticker shock faced by students and families, state universities resort to shameless spin.[22] On their costs webpage, the University of Illinois hides the word "tuition" in a small, low-contrast font while directing our eyes to a large, bolded headline, "invest with confidence."[23] Indiana ($24,778) adopts a similar strategy, heading their tuition and fees page with "IU Bloomington's costs are just one part of the equation," explaining that they "do a lot to manage costs and keep your return on investment high."[24] "Return on investment" is a hyperlink taking you to a page stating that "95% of IU seniors feel they've acquired job- or work-related knowledge and skills."[25] My favorite may be the University of Maryland "Costs" webpage which is adorned with an algebraic graffito showing how one would solve X^2-4X+4=0 in five steps.[26] This could suggest that the point of the neighboring table is not the $26,796 price tag[27] but rather the mathematical knowledge your $108K bachelors will yield. I prefer another reading: only with moderately advanced mathematics can one understand how such a large figure was ever derived.

In short, the cost of attending today's state universities is exorbitant. Inflation-adjusted tuition across all publics tripled between 1980 and 2011.[28] Between 2009 and 2014, tuition increases in Arizona, Georgia, and Washington topped 70%.[29] Even with these dramatic increases, many publics now charge premiums for professional majors. Iowa charges its Pharmacy majors a

16. See https://financialaid.duke.edu/undergraduate-applicants/cost..

17. See https://admissions.duke.edu/application/aid.

18. See https://admit.washington.edu/costs/.

19. See https://admit.washington.edu/costs/coa/.

20. See http://www.uwyo.edu/sfa/cost-of-attendance/; http://www.umt.edu/finaid/cost-of-attendance/bachelors-deg-COA/default.php; https://www.uidaho.edu/financial-aid/cost-of-attendance; http://www.sfa.ufl.edu/cost/; https://admissions.uiowa.edu/finances/estimated-costs-attendance.

21. See http://affordability.ku.edu/costs for estimates of expenses. I used the high figure for board. And see http://registrar.ku.edu/comprehensive-fee-schedule-2017-18 for the fee schedule. I used the recommended 30-credit-hour load to calculate tuition.

22. Universities are constantly revising their cost and fees pages, and this particular sampling of rhetoric comes from the fall of 2015. Where pages have changed, I cite the page in the Wayback Machine.

23. See https://web.archive.org/web/20150920021512/https://admissions.illinois.edu/Invest/tuition. "'Tuition' is in a yellow, all-caps font, approximately 10-point. 'Invest with confidence' is in a white, all-caps font, approximately 48-point, with 'confidence' bolded."

24. See http://admissions.indiana.edu/cost-financial-aid/tuition-fees.html.

25. See https://web.archive.org/web/20150930123638/http://admissions.indiana.edu:80/cost-financial-aid/roi.html.

26. See https://web.archive.org/web/20151008031116/https://www.admissions.umd.edu/costs/.

27. See https://www.admissions.umd.edu/costs/.

28. Benjamin Ginsberg, "Administrators Ate My Tuition," *Washington Monthly*, Sept./Oct., 2011. See http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/septemberoctober_2011/features/administrators_ate_my_tuition031641.php?page=all.

29. Claudio Sanchez, "How The Cost Of College Went From Affordable To Sky-High," NPR, March 18, 2014. See http://www.npr.org/2014/03/18/290868013/how-the-cost-of-college-went-from-affordable-to-sky-high.

premium; Nursing majors pay more than liberal arts majors at UVA; and, it costs in-state students $36,016 per year to study Engineering at the University of Illinois in Urbana-Champaign.[30] The argument for these variable tuition rates is that these professions pay well but, as we noted, this was precisely the promise of our state universities: that even people of humble means could aspire to such professions and improve their lot. With tuition this high at flagship state universities, we seem to have almost fully reverted to a two-tier system. Poor and working class kids will be routed to community colleges, vo-tech institutes, and online credential mills, and from there into the lower tiers of the job market. Privileged kids will attend elite universities, whether "public" or "private," preparing them for well-paid and well-respected positions calling for creativity and thought, autonomy and leadership.[31] The idea of the public university is that it is not just another track in our stratified system but a kind of a switching yard where the full range of social outcomes are available to the full range of society.[32]

Rising tuition has multiple causes, including the recently discussed problem of administrative bloat.[33] While faculty-to-student ratio has remained constant, there has been a marked growth in the number of administrative and semi-administrative positions and a ballooning of top administrative salaries. In 1976, faculty nearly doubled administrators as a percentage of overall staff

30. See https://admissions.illinois.edu/invest/tuition. Annual in-state costs for students in non-premium majors total $31,012. UIUC not only costs more for out-of-state students ($47,922-$52,926, depending on one's major) but charges a further premium to international students who pay $58,144 per year to study engineering.

31. As the R1 flagships make their bid to join the elite privates, this leaves the "directionals" (Northern, Eastern, etc.), many of which began as normal schools and then became state teachers colleges before becoming state universities, bravely occupying this middle ground, offering true educational experiences (and not mere credentialization) to working class students. It is precisely these institutions that are hit the hardest in the current climate of privatization, anti-unionization, and decreased state support to higher education. I do not mean to deny the obvious fact that there is a range of public options from more to less accessible and affordable. My point is that as accessibility increases the caché of the degree decreases so that it is very difficult to find a point on this spectrum that delivers genuinely higher education (enriching self-understanding, increasing social awareness and civic agency, and giving access to social mobility and meaningful work) to a genuinely broad and diverse segment of the population. And this is the promise of public higher education.

32. Construed in this way, the primary goods of higher education are private (individual educational/economic opportunity) but we have a second-order public interest in distributing these primary goods justly. Later, I will explore the idea of primary public goods in higher education. In response to an earlier version of this argument, Harry Brighouse contested the idea that public universities ever really aimed at even this second-order public good, countering that the rhetoric of opportunity is just window dressing while the actual function of universities, public and private, has always been social closure. Brighouse was referring to a concept in sociology, originally growing out of the work of Max Weber, and developed by Frank Parkin, Randall Collins, and Raymond Murphy. [See, for example, Frank Parkin, "Strategies of Social Closure in Class Formation" in *The Social Analysis of Class Structure*, ed. Frank Parkin (London: Tavistock, 1974; reprint, Abingdon: Routledge, 2001); Randall Collins, *The Credential Society: An Historical Sociology of Education and Stratification* (New York: Academic Press, 1979); and, Raymond Murphy, *Social Closure: The Theory of Monopolization and Exclusion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).] The best work in education, drawing on this tradition, is that of David Labaree. Labaree shows how our paradoxical, twin commitment to access and advantage, to delivering to everyone the private good of relative social mobility, drives the creation of ever more educational strata in the form of intra-institutional tracking, cross-institutional ranking, and credential deflation requiring ever more seat time and degree levels for the same advantage. [See, for example, David F. Labaree, "Consuming the Public School," *Educational Theory* 61, no. 4 (2011): 390-94.] Whereas Labaree sees, in the history of US K-12 education, a general drift from public to private rationales, and from cultural imperatives to market logics, his new work on higher education tells a different story. The "perfect mess" of U.S. higher education evolved from the beginning according to market logics, only much later stumbling into an accidental golden age of public purposiveness driven by roughly three decades of Cold-War-inspired federal funding. [See David F. Labaree, "Learning to Love the Bomb," in *A Perfect Mess: The Unlikely Ascendancy of American Higher Education* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017, 141-158)]. Thus, on Labaree's view, while we should not speak of a new logic of privatization that betrays some public *essence* of state universities, we can still speak of this era, from Reagan on, as one in which we are turning our backs on the idea, as recent and contingent as our embrace of it may have been, that our universities are animated by public goods.

33. For an extended version of the argument offered in Ginsberg's *Washington Monthly* article, see Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All Administrative Faculty and Why It Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

(32.5% to 17%); by 2011, the ratio was almost one-to-one (34.6% faculty; 33.1% administration).[34] Meanwhile, from 2009 to 2012, in the aftermath of the worst recession since the Great Depression, average pay for public university presidents increased 14% to $544,554. The gains were even more obscene at the 25 highest-paying publics where presidential pay increased 34% to an average of $974,006.[35]

Without denying this and other secondary causes of rising tuition, the main culprit appears to be the waning of state funding.[36] Former University of Michigan President James Duderstadt's dark humor sums it up nicely: "we used to be state-supported, then state-assisted, and now we are state-located."[37] From 2008-2012, states cut inflation adjusted, per-pupil (FTE) higher education funding 26.7% on average.[38] Ten states cut per-pupil funding more than 28% between 2008 and 2015. But this is simply an acceleration of a longer national decline, with per pupil funding dropping 30% between 2000 and 2009.[39] According to one recent analysis (excluding Wyoming and North Dakota, which held their support constant) decreases in inflation-adjusted, per-pupil state appropriations to higher education from 1980 to 2011 ranged from 15% in some states to as much as 69% others.[40] Extrapolating each state's rate of decline into the future yields startling results: Alaska and Colorado are on pace to zero out their higher education funding within the next decade, 16 more states would hit zero by 2040, 5 more by 2050, and 23 others reaching their nadir sometime between 2050 and 2100.[41] In 2012, for the first time, tuition surpassed state appropriations as a percentage of the operating budgets of public colleges and universities.[42] Four-year public universities reached this tipping point even sooner, in 2003.[43] At flagship state universities state appropriations now make up between an eighth and a quarter of the overall operating budget. For example: Maryland (25%), Rutgers (21%); North Carolina (20%), Kansas (20%), Wisconsin

34. These numbers are drawn from the National Center for Educational Statistics (1995 Digest of Educational Statistics, Table 314.10) as compiled by Rudy Fichtenbaum and blogged by Martin Kich. See Martin Kich, "A Real Numbers-Cruncher Weighs in on the Campos Article," *The Academe Blog* (http://wp.me/p1KBNi-3fl).

35. Data from "Executive Compensation at Public and Private Colleges" (updated June 8, 2015), Facts and Figures, *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Chronicle.com) as analyzed by Andrew Irwin and Marjorie Wood for the Institute for Policy Studies (see http://www.ips-dc.org/one_percent_universities/ and reported in The New York Times (see http://www.nytimes.com/2014/05/24/opinion/fat-cat-administrators-at-the-top-25.html?ref=topics).

36. Even Labaree, who (see note 31) views federal funding as the key catalyst of US universities finding a public purpose, sees the effects of the 1970s tax revolt on state appropriations as the chief culprit, citing decreases in federal funding as a secondary cause. [See Labaree, *A Perfect Mess*, 150-55.] I discuss the importance of federal funding below, building on the account of Christopher Newfield.

37. Quoted in Folbre, *Saving State U: Fixing Public Higher Education*, 46. This was a favorite remark of Duderstadt's, quoted in various forms. Folbre cites James J. Duderstadt, *The View from the Helm: Leading the American University During an Era of Change* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2007), 145. Here, though, Duderstadt paraphrases his own oft-quoted remark somewhat differently, adding two more stages of the devolution of State U, inserting "state-related" in the progression from state-assisted to state-located, and citing approvingly a colleague's quip that while no longer state-supported, publics are still "state-molested" by "opportunistic state politicians."

38. See http://blog.upswing.io/college-costs-rise-as-state-funding-declines/.

39. See http://www.cbpp.org/topics/state-budget-and-tax; and John Quintero, "The Great Cost Shift," Demos, March 2012, figure 6 (http://www.demos.org/publication/great-cost-shift-how-higher-education-cuts-undermine-future-middle-class).

40. Thomas G. Mortenson, "State Funding: A Race to the Bottom, Budget and Appropriations," American Council on Education, Winter 2012. See http://www.acenet.edu/the-presidency/columns-and-features/Pages/state-funding-a-race-to-the-bottom.aspx.

41. Mortenson, "State Funding." 7 of the 15 states scheduled to zero out by 2050 started their decline later than 1980 and Mortenson adopted these later starting points to calculate his extrapolation.

42. According to the Government Accounting Office, in 2012, 25% of public college revenue came from tuition, 23% from state funds. See http://www.gao.gov/assets/670/667557.pdf.

43. Kich, "A Real Numbers-Cruncher Weighs in on the Campos Article."

(17%), Penn State (14%), Texas (13%).[44] At UVA, state appropriations constitute only 10.6% of the operating budget, compared to 32.9% funded by tuition.[45] At Duderstadt's Michigan, the ratio is similar (9% from state appropriations; 31% from tuition).[46]

It is not to hard to figure out that this pattern of declining state support and soaring tuition puts great stress on students and families. During the same period, 1973-2013, in which inflation-adjusted public college tuition rose 270%, median household income rose a mere 5%.[47] This has exacerbated the class bias in college choices: "among the most highly qualified students (the top testing 25 percent), the kids from the top socioeconomic group go to four-year colleges at almost twice the rate of equally qualified kids from the bottom socioeconomic quartile."[48] And it has led to absurd new levels of indebtedness—with student debt recently surpassing credit card debt as it tops the 1 trillion dollar mark—leading David Blacker to speak of student debt, whose collateral is after all our own unreclaimable knowledge and skills, as a late capitalist form of serfdom.[49] If families are now devoting a much greater share of their resources to college, and students are accruing ever higher levels of debt, how does this shape what students and families expect from higher education and how universities frame themselves?

The Hungry Little Caterpillar

In one of the U.S. Presidential election debates in 2000, the candidates were asked to name their favorite book. Al Gore chose a page turner, if a 19th c. French one, in Stendahl's *The Red and the Black*. George W. Bush countered with *The Hungry Little Caterpillar*. We elected Bush and then reelected him in 2004, offering a vivid addendum to Richard Hofstadter's *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*.[50] Put more positively, Americans think of ourselves as a practical people. We are suspicious of those who read French novels and of majors with no clear practical payoff. Notwithstanding this long familiar practical mindset, there is something new about the extent and forms of vocationalization in contemporary U.S. higher education. After all, there is something quite practical about figuring out who you are, where you are in history, and for what you stand. As Michael Oakeshott puts it, what could be more impractical than sending someone out into the world having never revised, expanded, or even just consciously affirmed the ways of thinking, feeling, and judging they happen to have inherited in their "corner of the earth," graduating "rickety constructions of impulses ready to fall apart in what is called an 'identity crisis'"?[51]

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44. See http://universityrelations.unc.edu/budget/content/FAQ.php; https://www.vc.wisc.edu/documents/Budget-in-Brief.pdf; http://budget.psu.edu/BudgetPresentation/2013-14/default.aspx; http://otcads.umd.edu/bfa/FY14%20Working%20Budget/Web/FY14%20REVENUE%20TOTAL%20OP%20BUDGET.pdf; https://www.utsystem.edu/cont/Reports_Publications/summaries/2016/FY2016BudgetSummaries.pdf; and http://budgetfacts.rutgers.edu/sites/budgetfacts/files/revenue_sources_pie_12_2013.pdf.

45. See http://www.virginia.edu/budget/Docs/2013-14%20Budget%20Summary.All%20Divisions.pdf.

46. See http://www.finance.umich.edu/reports/2013/.

47. See http://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/years-of-cuts-threaten-to-put-college-out-of-reach-for-more-students.

48. Anthony P. Carnavale, "A Real Analysis of Real Education," *Liberal Education*, Fall 2008, p. 57. The fact that college access is so highly determined by SES, even when we control for academic qualifications, is especially troubling given how closely SAT scores track race and class (see Figure 2).

49. Claudio Sanchez, "How The Cost Of College Went From Affordable To Sky-High"; David Blacker, *The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2013), chap. 4.

50. Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (NY: Knopf, 1963).

51. Michael Oakeshott, "A Place of Learning" (1975), in *The Voice of Liberal Learning*, ed. Timothy Fuller (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 24, 28.

Despite our practical temper, or perhaps even because of it, we used to value this existential dimension of higher education. For the past fifty years, the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) has surveyed US freshmen about their family and school backgrounds and about their goals for college and life. In a section on personal values, the freshman are asked to rate the importance of various items such as "becoming an authority in my field," "raising a family," "keeping up to date with political affairs," and "improving my understanding of other... cultures."[52] Given the perennial debate over liberal and vocational aims in higher education, two items on this question are of particular interest: "developing a meaningful philosophy of life" and "becoming very well-off financially." The history of the last half century is encapsulated in the changing responses to these two items. In 1968, 85% of respondents indicated that developing a meaningful philosophy of life was either "very important" or "essential" while fewer than 40% attributed the same importance to becoming very well-off financially. Over the five decades of the survey, we see a complete reversal of these priorities. While the importance of money has grown steadily, with over 82% of incoming freshmen now according it the highest levels of importance, the meaning of life has been wallowing in the low forties since the last year of the Reagan administration.[53]

Having already traced the decline in funding and rise of tuition, this gives a glimpse into another sort of decline. By most accounts, U.S. public higher education was just beginning to realize its democratic potential in the late Sixties and early Seventies. In 1944, the GI Bill brought a decade of fiscal stimulus and a widening of access (in terms of class, if not yet race and gender). The following decade saw a wave of new, increasingly progressive, federal funding and legislation. Federal funding rose from 655 Million in 1956 to 3.5 Billion in 1965.[54] In 1964, the Civil Rights Act was passed, and in 1965, the Higher Education Act extended need-based aid to the general population. Adding to these fiscal and legislative supports was the social stimulus of the feminist, civil rights, and post-colonial movements, and public universities truly began to live up to their democratic mandate. If Christopher Newfield is right, it was precisely public higher education's success in producing a diverse, independently minded middle class—a democratic public—that triggered the neo-liberal reaction of the Eighties and the push toward privatization ever since.[55] For our purposes, it is enough to see that when public universities were flusher, they not only managed more democratic access, but also gave access to a truly higher education, one that foregrounded questions of meaning, going beyond credentialing or even training, to prepare students for meaningful work and lives.

52. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey is run out of UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The results are published annually in *The American Freshman* (See http://www.heri.ucla.edu/tfsPublications.php). In 2014, 153,000 freshmen were surveyed at 342 baccalaureate-granting institutions. Half of the respondents were enrolled in public institutions, half in private; 2/3 at 4-year colleges, 1/3 at universities; Some 5200 of the respondents attended HBCUs. The values question featured a four level scale: "not important," "somewhat important," "very important," and "essential." The data is reported by the number of students who rated an item at either of the two top levels of importance.

53. The highpoint on the meaning item was the first-year it was included, 1967 (85.8%); its lowpoint was 2003 (39.3%). The lowpoint for the money item was 1970 (36.2%); its highpoint was 2014 (82.4%). The two slopes crossed in 1979. From Vietnam through the end of the Reagan administration, we see a 46% decrease in the percentage of freshmen rating the development of a meaningful philosophy of life at least "very important" while the corresponding figure for "becoming very well off financially" increases at a rate of 105%.

54. See https://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/journals/article/index.xml?journalid=72&articleid=523&sectionid=3589.

55. Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008). In a book appearing after I completed this paper, Newfield develops his own account of the negative feedback loop in which US public universities are caught. [Compare Christopher Newfield, *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).]

What I am calling the vocationalization of the university can be seen both as one stage in the vicious cycle of the disintegration of the public university, and itself a vicious cycle of credentialization and the attenuation of general education. The credentializing mindset is fueled by the financial pressures detailed in the last section. Confronted with today's sticker prices, you cannot blame students and families for expecting a "return on investment" and universities have been happy to adopt this language. Berkeley's admissions webpage informs potential applicants that "A Berkeley education earns our graduates an additional $26,333 each year in income over those who did not go to college."[56] This may be true and it may, from Berkeley's perspective, be necessary marketing of an education that will cost around $132,000, but it also reinforces the mildly cynical idea that college is nothing more than pre-professional training. I call this view mild because it suggests at least that college yields a use-value, if a limited one, for its graduates. When we consider that it is not until after college, in one's actual apprenticeship to a practice, that one acquires the majority of the knowledge and skills needed to succeed in one's specific line of work, we confront an even more depressing possibility. College is not about use-values at all, but operates on a crudely circular, exchange-value logic: the highest ranked universities attract the most applicants and thus can be the most selective, this selectivity being the chief factor in their high rankings.[57] The value of the credential is less about acquired knowledge and skills and more about the winnowing that occurs in the college admissions process. On this view, colleges function as deluxe head-hunting firms conducting a national search and elaborate, four-year prescreening (by passing courses the candidates prove that they can meet deadlines and absorb new information).

If students and families view college as credentialing, this impacts the choice of majors. Programs with a clear link to a salaried position will attract the most interest. This leads universities themselves to devote more resources to such majors and to starve the arts and humanities, those fields whose primary rationale was tied to educational aims such as imagination, self-understanding, criticality, and the cultivation of intellectual, existential-ethical, and social-political freedom. According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, only 12,651 students earned bachelors in 2013 with a major in philosophy or religious studies. Compare this with "Parks, recreation, leisure, and fitness studies" (38,993), Homeland security, law enforcement, & firefighting (53,767), or of course Business (366,815).

Or, consider the recent tragicomedy at UVA with the near ouster of President Teresa Sullivan in 2012. Sullivan is no rabid humanist mind you. She is a quantitative demographer by training, whose leadership style has been described as "technocratic."[58] Nonetheless, Sullivan had apparently refused to close the German and Classics Departments. It was this, coupled with her cautious approach to launching Jefferson's University into cyberspace, that convinced the UVA Rector at the time, the real estate Developer Helen Dragas, that Sullivan would never embrace the "strategic dynamism" and "disruptive innovation" touted by her hedge-fund-billionaire consigliere, Peter Kiernan.[59] Kiernan had been introduced to Dragas by his billionaire buddy from Greenwich, UVA mega-donor Paul Tudor Jones. Jones supported Dragas's attempted coup with an OpEd

56. See https://admissions.berkeley.edu/cost-of-attendance.

57. For an analysis of the *prestige market*, see Frank Donoghue, *The Last Professors: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities* (Fordham University Press, 2008), Chapter 5.

58. Andrew Rice, "Anatomy of a Campus Coup," *The New York Times Magazine* (The Education Issue), September 11, 2012: http://nyti.ms/1zYNWi4.

59. For the full text of Kiernan's leaked email describing his role and the importance of "strategic dynamism" see https://www.dailyprogress.com/news/full-text-of-darden-foundation-board-chair-s-email/article_8abcfabc-a59c-5013-a190-a75408f22d8a.html. "Disruptive innovation" is the watchword of Clayton Christensen and his followers, first developed in *The*

that branded Jefferson as the original "change agent," applauded the Board's "bold action," and hoped for a new president who could "chart an innovative path" for UVA in the "world of academia" as it might be in 2032. "Why be good," Jones asked, "when there is outstanding to be had?"[60] In the same year that German and Classics were on the chopping block, UVA was cultivating another $100 million gift from Jones who had already given that much, including $35 million to build the new John Paul Jones Basketball Facility.[61] UVA had already acceded to a request by Jones and his wife, a devotee of Ashtanga Yoga, to launch a Yoga-related center. Though a $15 million gift was secured and the new *Contemplative Sciences Center* was born, the rest of the nine-figure ask was apparently shelved after the backlash suffered by Dragas and the reinstatement of Sullivan.[62]

I have no doubt that Classics is currently undersubscribed. Let us also concede that we academics sometimes fall prey to magical thinking (no matter what I do, the lights will stay on), pork barreling (my specialty is always deserving of more resources) and knee-jerk, counter-dependency (all concerns about the bottom line are Machiavellian moves by "the man"), and that budgets do need to be balanced and everyone needs to pull their weight. But there is a difference between acknowledging the material conditions of learning and reducing universities to retail outfits, constantly updating their "merch" to reflect shifting tastes and trends. To be clear, a fixed curriculum is a bad curriclum since teaching always involves the hermeneutic task of mediating past and present, of bridging formal disciplines and student lifeworlds. Subjects will expand and evolve over time, and some disciplines will die off. Unlike the education retailer, however, a university with integrity must embody an (evolving) answer to the question, what is worth knowing?[63] Which authors and texts, languages and modes, methods and disciplines can best help us to understand, clearly and fully, ourselves and our social and natural worlds? Students do not come to university only to pursue an already chosen field: they also come for guidance about what is worth studying and why.

It may well be that the study of Greek and Latin was overrated for several centuries, but we do not simply drop it now because hotel management or genomic biology is the new black. Certainly, as the young Nietzsche eloquently testified, in the modern research university classics

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Innovator's Dilemma and later extended, in a series of co-authored books, to schooling, health care, and higher education. See Clayton Christensen, *The Innovator's Dilemma: When New Technologies Cause Great Firms to Fail* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press, 1997); Clayton Christensen, Michael B. Hill, and Curtis W. Johnson, *Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns* (New York: McGrawHill, 2008); Clayton Christensen, Jerome H. Grossman, and Jason Hwang, *The Innovator's Prescription: A Disruptive Solution For Health Care* (NY: Mcgraw-Hill, 2008); and Clayton Christensen and Henry J. Eyring, *The Innovative University: Changing The DNA Of Higher Education* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2011). Dragas herself admits to being being influenced by Christensen [see Rice, "Anatomy of a Campus Coup"]. For a nice critique of Christiansen's thesis and especially of the bankrupt worldview for which his work has provided academic cover, see Jill Lepore, "The Disruption Machine: What the gospel of innovation gets wrong," The New Yorker, June 23, 2014: http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/06/23/the-disruption-machine. Lepore exposes Christiansen's "hand-picked" and "murky" cases, "dubious" sources, and "questionable" logic, showing how the proofiness of the Christiansen school only increases as it seeks to spread its Hobbesian moral, "disrupt or be disrupted," from the manufacture of "drygoods" to practices such as medicine, education, and journalism devoted to complex social goods.

60. The *Daily Progress* (*Sunday, June 17). Available online at:* http://www.readthehook.com/oped-paul-tudor-jones-endorsing-sullivans-ouster.

61. Donna St. George, "U-Va.: A donor in the crisis," Washington Post (Education), August 4, 2012. http://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/u-va-a-donor-in-the-crisis/2012/08/04/b9e0e146-ce86-11e1-aa14-708bac2c7ee9_story.html.

62. While German and Classics have 26 faculty between the two departments, the Contemplative Sciences Center boasts 12 Instructors, 11 Teaching Interns, 2 Coordinators, a Web Developer, an in-house Contemplative Sciences Writer, and no fewer than 12 Directors [see http://csc.virginia.edu/about/staff#staffdiv].

63. For an instructive example on this point, see Ginsberg, *The Fall of the Faculty*, p. 85.

can easily devolve into a fussy antiquarianism.[64] Assuming, though, that we have not abandoned the hermeneutic-pedagogical imperative of which I just spoke—that we still turn to Plato, Sappho, and Varro to learn not only about them but also about our own limitations and possibilities—then there is an argument for teaching Classics even when no 18-year-olds are phoning admissions with requests for more Aristotle. As Hutchins memorably remarked:

> These books are the means of understanding our society and ourselves. They contain the great ideas that dominate us without knowing it. There is no comparable repository of our tradition.
>
> To put an end to the spirit of inquiry that has characterized the West it is not necessary to burn the books. All we have to do is to leave them unread for a few generations.[65]

In short, the ideal university is neither out-of-date nor up-to-date, but *untimely*: preserving—as live possibilities, not in aspic—begged questions, forgotten angles of perception, alternative weights and measures, needed stratagems of leading a half-way decent life.

The clear implication of this is that cross-subsidization is crucial to the mission of the university. We don't ask Classics and Chemistry to fight it out in a budgetary cage match because "hot yoga" is hot. Or perhaps we do, in the brave new world of RCM, Responsibility Center Management.[66] Half Dilbert, half Orwell, this phrase dresses up the abandonment of cross-subsidization and the chasing of trends in the garb of common sense. Apologists for RCM say that universities have always been better at decentralizing authority than responsibility, whereas we can reward effort, incentivize innovation, and cultivate fiscal responsibility by insisting that "each tub stand on its own bottom."[67] Harvard, which has used this homely phrase to describe its version of RCM since 1817, recently offered a dramatic illustration of what this common sense approach looks like in practice. To help with their budgetary deficit, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences was forced to sell Massachusetts Hall—the oldest surviving building at Harvard and one that quartered hundreds of Continental Army soldiers during the siege of Boston—to the university's central administration.[68]

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64. Friedrich Nietzsche, "We Classicists" (1874-5), in *Unmodern Observations: Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, trans. William Arrowsmith, ed. William Arrowsmith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

65. Robert M. Hutchins, *The Great Conversation: The Substance of a Liberal Education* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), 2.

66. The phenomenon of decentralized budgeting has spawned different monikers. At Penn, RCM meant "Responsibility Center Management"; at USC it meant "Revenue Center Management." Another pioneer of this budgetary approach, Indiana, called it "Responsibility Center Budgeting" (RCB). It is also sometimes referred to as "Revenue Responsibility Budgeting" (RRB). According to Deering and Lang ("From Practical to Theoretical: Exploring the Bounded Use of Responsibility Center Budgeting and Management in Public University Finance," unpublished ms.), RCM is practiced by between 50 and 60 major universities in North America and in more than half of the North American public universities in the top 50 of the Times Higher Education Supplement league table.

67. See, for example, Jon C. Strauss & John R. Curry, John R., "Responsibility Center Management: Lessons from 25 Years of Decentralized Management" (Report) (Washington, DC., National Association of Colleges and University Business Officers, 2002), v. For a critique, see David L. Kirp, *Shakespeare, Einstein, and the Bottom Line: The Marketing of Higher Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), Chaps. 6-7. Chapter 7 focuses on RCM in the context of UVA and the Privatization of Darden, thus forming a prologue to the Kiernan-Dragas-Sullivan fiasco. Darden, which won its fiscal autonomy in 2003 pays UVA a 10% franchise fee. The McIntyre School of Commerce, UVA's undergraduate business program turned 2nd business school when it added three masters programs, has since followed suit.

68. Zachary M. Seward, "For Sale by Owner: Historic Colonial: FAS sells Massachusetts Hall to central administration for planned office expansion," *Harvard Crimson*, January 22, 2006. http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2006/1/22/for-sale-by-owner-historic-colonial/. Built in 1720, Mass. Hall is second oldest surviving U.S. academic building after William & Mary's Wren Building.

The university, I have been arguing, cannot cater to market forces if it is to maintain its integrity. If a discipline has become moribund or incoherent or has come to seem a trivial part of the experience of an educated person, then we have good reasons to debate its future. However, we should not eliminate programs simply because students have voted with their feet. Indeed, the very positing of such market forces, independent of the universities' own actions, is spurious. After all, the putative market in majors is shaped in part by how universities themselves frame their curriculum. Case in point is the attenuation of the idea of general education. At my own institution, general education is treated not as a substantive value but as a bureaucratic requirement, not as an invitation but as a hurdle: "The General Education (GenEd) requirements describe the core courses all students must take in order to graduate."[69] The student then selects from an arcane grid of courses each of which meets one or more of the eight required categories. In just one of these categories, Social and Behavioral Sciences, there are 185 approved courses. You don't have to be Robert Maynard Hutchins to think that something has gone wrong here. Somewhere the conversation concerning what it means to be an educated person has devolved into a departmental arms race over instructional units. Faced with the difficult task of reaching consensus on how to educate a whole person, the faculty punted, leaving the students to select according to another principle: convenience. Grimm's Fairy Tales is a triple dipper (Advanced Comp; Humanities and the Arts; Western/Comparative Cultures) that meets on Thursdays from 11-12:20: Grimm's it is. Indeed, many students simply opt out of the whole system, meeting the requirement through summer courses at their local community college or online.

Thus, we see both how the increased financial pressure on parents, aided by the university's own adoption of internal and external market logics, drives a small-scale vicious cycle of credentialization and attenuation of the liberal arts and general education. If college is a way to secure a well-paying job, why support the arts and humanities or offer a robust invitation to general education? But as the university becomes little more than a mall of majors, selling career advantage, how can we blame parents for emphasizing the bottom-line or students for *Paying for the Party*?[70]

Even Milton Friedman Admitted as Much

I have shown how decreases in state funding have led to tuition increases, fueling the vocationalization of universities. This result only makes more difficult that with which Americans already struggle, namely to perceive higher education as a public good. Indeed, in recent years, we have even found it hard to maintain support for the project of investing in the education of each other's children. We have come to think of schooling, even at early grades, primarily as a private investment in the future of our own children. For an antidote to this mindset we turn not to Che Guevera but to Milton Friedman who, despite his interest in questioning the idea that institutions that deal with public goods must be government run, freely admitted that education is rife with positive and negative "externalities" or "neighborhood effects."[71] This is economists' jargon for the kinds of goods it makes sense to pursue collectively since their effects cannot be localized to individuals (they are neither "rivalrous" nor "excludable"). When we teach a kindergartener to

69. See https://web.archive.org/web/20150218222514/https://courses.illinois.edu/gened/DEFAULT/DEFAULT.

70. I refer to the recent, chilling ethnography showing how the informal curriculum of the dorms and Greek system at a public flagship works to track student outcomes by social class. See Elizabeth Armstrong and Laura Hamilton, *Paying for the Party: How College Maintains Inequality* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard UP, 2013).

71. Milton Friedman, "The Role of Government in Education" in *Economics and the Public Interest*, ed. R. A. Solo (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1955).

care about others, this educational good will be reaped by all those whom he or she later comes in contact. Similarly, when we fail to educate the young, we all pay for their ignorance. Such educational goods then are non-privative. Nonetheless, let us follow Charles Taylor in distinguishing these "overlapping goods," as he calls them, from those goods which only exist when pursued in common.[72] Are there public educational goods in this strong sense? I have argued elsewhere that there are, noting at least three different varieties of such goods. First, there is the good of preparing students for public life. Second, there is the good of realizing a public in our schools and classrooms (which some but not all see as a necessary condition of preparing students for public life). Third, schools become sites around which a public coheres. The common pursuit of our overlapping private interests can grow into a genuine public engagement in which we expand our sense of what our interests are and form a sense of "we" in the process of working out how to educate our children.

It is not clear that we ever believed in this robust version of the common school project. And as I noted, even the mutual self-interest, externalities argument seems to be rapidly losing traction in this era of increasing privatization. This is especially worrisome given that the younger the student, the more such neighborhood effects are pronounced. It is easier to see why we all benefit by teaching a young child to read. It is harder to see our mutual interest in the teaching of AP Physics to a kid gunning for MIT. It is harder still to make the case that I stand to benefit by helping to defray the costs so that your kid can study Marketing at Michigan State University. If educational externalities are harder to perceive at higher levels of education, when the student appears closer to cashing in on what he or she has learned, then the vocationalization of the contemporary university greatly exacerbates this problem.

With the attenuation of general education and the predominance of a credentializing mindset, the goods of higher education appear entirely rivalrous and privative. We might better see our way to funding collectively higher education as a space where intellectual, moral, aesthetic, and civic dispositions are formed. College as a party-punctuated, professional pathway is a much harder sell. In an era in which the Right has spun taxation as "class warfare" and a lazy way of feeding a spending habit rather than as way to pay for such luxuries as food inspection, roads, and courts, it is very unlikely that state politicians will make any case for raising taxes, let alone one linked to higher education.[73] Add to this fact that families dealing with tuition increases and student loan payments are all the more receptive to such spin (even though that further feeds the cycle leading to even higher tuition).

And so we have come full circle. With higher education vocationalized and viewed primarily as a private investment in future earnings, the ground on which we might argue for greater

72. Charles Taylor, "Cross Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate" in *Philosophical Arguments* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995).

73. In this discussion, I have set to the side the important process of marketization. This is tendency to assume that markets are the best way to distribute goods, based on illusions about their autonomy and efficiency and denial about the fact that logics of distribution and modes of valuation are intertwined. Across an increasingly broad swath of private and social life, we have inserted market logics only to see the distinctive goods we sought to distribute corrupted, turning into market values. On the integrity of spheres of valuation and the danger when one species of good ascends to dominance concentrating the danger of monopolization, see Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*. For a critique of contemporary marketization, see Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*. An analysis of the marketization of higher education would surely deserve a place in a longer treatment of the decline of the public university. Over the last few decades, universities have more and more come to view themselves as competing for market share, leading to the adoption of supply and demand type metrics and a league table mentality. This intensifies the tendency to treat the education one offers as a consumer and thus as a private good.

collective investment crumbles. State appropriations to higher education will continue to decline in such a climate and we are back to where we began.

The cycle I have described is hardly freestanding. In attempting to isolate some of the key gears in the machine that is ratcheting ever tighter around the crucial middle ground that is public higher education, I did not mean to deny the impact of broader social and political-economic forces on the cycle I describe. One obvious accelerant is what has aptly been called "casino capitalism."[74] The financial sector has metastasized to become an absurdly large portion of our economy as a flood of leveraged capital flows into bubble-fueling meta-meta commodities (aided by financial deregulation and regulatory capture) feeding a dangerous gambling habit on Wall Street. Among the casualties of the crash of the housing bubble in 2008 were the states whose pension funds provided some of the initial chips for the gamblers and whose tax bases showed a sharp downturn. While the decline in state support to higher education, as I have shown, long predates the great recession, cuts to state university budgets since 2008 have been more pronounced.

Another important accelerant is the general trend toward marketization in US society, well documented by Michael Sandel and Michael Walzer. Marketization refers to the spread of market mechanisms and the concomitant loss of rival logics of distribution and valuation. Walzer famously defended the thesis that the diversity of human goods depends on maintaining the boundaries between and integrity of separate spheres of valuation, pointing out the danger of compounding ordinary monopolization with dominance of one species of good over others.[75] More recently, Sandel has documented how market logic has penetrated ever deeper into private and public life replacing complex goods with sellable commodities.[76] Marketization relies on faulty assumptions about the autonomy and efficiency of markets and on a denial of the fact that logics of distribution and modes of valuation are intertwined. An analysis of the marketization of higher education would surely deserve a place in a longer treatment of the decline of the public university. Over the last few decades, universities have more and more come to view themselves as competing for market share, leading to the adoption of supply and demand type metrics and a league-table mentality. I maintain that the process of vocationalization is a key factor in framing education as a consumer good, and thus as a private one, but so too is *US News and World Reports*. Long before students and parents encounter the self-descriptions of this or that university, they have been led to view higher education as a fungible commodity.

If the downward spiral of public higher education is not only self-reinforcing but accelerated by general trends in political-economy is there is nothing that can be done? Before addressing this question, it is worth getting clear on what is being asked. In the United States, education is our great source of social hope, our imagined lever of change.[77] This leads to the expectation that writing on education will have a happy ending. And insofar as the change we target is economic, it leads us to imagine education as independent, as shaping rather than shaped by economic forces. My analysis explicitly rejects that premise. It will not do to declare that higher education is a public good or extol once again the virtues of liberal learning. If we want to recover education as an autonomous sphere of valuation (albeit one with semi-permeable membranes as with all spheres),

74. The term was coined by Susan Strange. Another early, important critic of financialization was Hyman Minsky. See Susan Strange, *Casino Capitalism* (Manchester University Press, [1986] 2016); and, Hyman Minsky, *Can "It" Happen Again? Essays in Instability and Finance* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1982).

75. See Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*.

76. See Michael J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy*.

77. On this point, see David Labaree's very helpful, "The Winning Ways of a Losing Strategy: Educationalizing Social Problems in the United States," *Educational Theory* 58, no. 4 (2008), pp. 447-460.

we must join common cause with critics of privatization, marketization, and commodification even while we work to create small-scale spaces in which to demonstrate how higher education might be seen as yielding (existential) use values rather than mere exchange values. To the critic who says that an essay whose only positive recommendation is to combat the corrosive effects of late capitalism is absurd or irrresponsible, we reply that the real sham is adding to the deluge of educational writing that reinforces the mystifying notion that education represents an outside to political-economy, an Archimedean point from which to leverage a happy ending. That said, it cannot hurt to make the case on our own campuses, and wherever we may find a larger platform, that education is more than credentialization, that democracy is incompatible with a system that tracks family background to future life chances, and that "public" means more than bureaucracy and taxes. And it is worth remembering that genuine hope sometimes only emerges when false hope has been cleared away.[78]

78. I recommend David Blacker's provocative and insightful exploration of this question in *The Falling Rate of Learning and the Neoliberal Endgame*.