Post-crash economic society futures: menial work or advanced cage?

Author: Terence Rajivan Edward

Abstract. I wonder whether the actual problem which the post-crash economic society faces, or the core campaigners face, is that they think the University of Manchester should be a suitable university for them, but they can see a future there with only two options: menial work which they feel “better than,” or working on well-defined problems which they are not suited to. I propose a solution to this problem.


I cannot seem to turn the page

Of this novel of coming of age

Who does not notice the post-crash economic society at the University of Manchester school of social sciences, or who did not? Well, if you complain to certain levels of the university, I suppose they would ask, “What would make you happy?” and maybe that is the right way of dealing with the society, rather than paying too much attention to the exact content of the letters they are metaphorically writing.

I personally prefer to deal with what is said but here is a guess at the source of the problem. There are campaigners who would like work at the school but envisage two main kinds of job: jobs which our post-crash campaigners regard as too menial for them, such as compile a bibliography on a certain topic; and jobs which they feel are unsuited to their capacities,
involving solving quite well-defined problems. For example, here is an argument which some people are looking for an objection to (Strathern 1982: 76-77):

(1) If most of the roles in an industrialized Western society do not involve kinship restrictions (e.g. only people from a certain family can apply), then kinship is insignificant in such a society.

(2) Most of the roles in an industrialized Western society do not involve kinship restrictions. Therefore (by modus ponens):

(3) Kinship is insignificant in an industrialized Western society.

There are people who score well at certain stages of the academic process, but working on such a problem seems to them like entering a cage, where most of the skills they use to get ahead don’t appear to help much. Most or all of their instincts are not of much use; having a large network does not clearly help (“None of my friends give me any new solutions”); ordinary rhetorical skills aid little (for example, saying, “Kinship matters” loudly and movingly); and so forth. The conclusion follows, so which of the premises are you getting rid of and why? Mainstream economics is a place of many such cages, hence a symbol of what needs to change for a better future.

Well, what I predict is that if the post-crash economic society don’t like such cages, then each researcher in the school is going to develop a cage and say, “You can join my research project if you enter my cage,” as a deterrent for people they find annoying. Even jobs of communicating to the wider public will involve explicit puzzle-solving. But in an environment of many cages, I can envisage a solution to the problem they are posing of no suitable job. If we take the many members of the campaign, for one such a member there is fortunately one cage
they are suited to (cage 1); and for another there is another cage that this particular member is suited to (cage 2); and so forth. I presume the elders in the background will even be the first to cage themselves. “I can see what is coming and I am not that stupid now.”

Reference