

# Anthropology Limited: Studying Anthropology in the Czech Republic (and England)

---

Nikola Balaš

## Introduction

Cultural and social anthropologists, at least since Geertz, have liked to talk about the necessity of the interdisciplinary exchange of knowledge.<sup>1</sup> According to their view, only when enriched by various disciplines like philosophy, literary criticism, biology, economics, psychology, jurisprudence, archaeology, geography, history and others can anthropology keep pace with the world and the people who inhabit it. This was also the message of the ninth international student conference of the anthropological journal *AntropoWeb*. The conference took place 17 - 18 October 2013 in Plzeň in the Czech Republic and it went under the name *Anthropology Unlimited*. In this article based on my talk at the conference, I argue that – in opposition to the opinion outlined above – the lack of interdisciplinarity is the most minor problem – at least in Czech anthropology. The laments about the lack of interdisciplinarity veil more acute problems that face anthropology in the Czech Republic. Hence the article's name, *Anthropology Limited*.

Many contemporary Czech anthropologists are well aware that Czech anthropology is not in a healthy state. Some of them blame our socialist past that prevents us from creating a real western-style anthropology, which is the only acceptable standard for the discipline (Skalník 2002). Others, like David Scheffel and Josef Kandert, claim the problems of Czech anthropology exist due to unresolved conflicts between provincial ethnology and the modern discipline of anthropology. According to their view, this conflict stretches beyond the forty years of socialism in Czechoslovakia (Scheffel 2007; Scheffel and Kandert 1994). Not completely inimical to the aforementioned voices are those of Marek Jakoubek and Zdeněk Nešpor who like to stress that the development of modern anthropology is pre-

---

1 I am immensely grateful to Liisa Pool, Markéta Šebelová, Rob Flanagan and Diana Vonnák who were kind enough to read various drafts of this article and give me very valuable comments. Responsibility for the article remains mine.

vented by the very fact that anthropology is generally understood either as a science of folklore or as a science of the human body, both of which have deep roots in engrained disciplines of the Czech academe. Thus, to speak about socio-cultural anthropology today would merely be to use a different label for old approaches (Nešpor and Jakoubek 2004; Jakoubek 2012: 323). Whatever the causes are, Czech sociocultural anthropology is consensually thought not to be in a good state and the possibilities for it to thrive are judged to be limited.<sup>2</sup>

All these ideas about the current condition of Czech anthropology are based on historical inquiries. In my article, I share the critique of Czech anthropology but I advance a different kind of argument. I claim that the parochialism of Czech anthropology is also caused by the structure, form and content of contemporary curricula in sociocultural anthropology. I do not contest historical explanations, but at the same time I want to offer a more down to the earth point of view. I am not interested as much in causes, as in demonstrating consequences and corollaries.

In the first part of my article I offer a general description of educational practices at a Czech department of anthropology. In the second part I say a few words about my Erasmus experience in England, which results in a comparison in the third part. In the end, I propose some solutions.

It is important to stress that my point of view is a student's point of view. It is predominantly senior academics who write critical articles about Czech anthropology. However, I feel that their respective positions within the system prevent senior academics from seeing the bigger picture. Not asking students' opinions is the rough equivalent of conducting fieldwork without taking into account the statements of informants. To complete the picture, the student's point of view is also necessary.

Before I develop my argument, I would like to point out that my paper is not a result of systematic research. I base my argument on informal discussions with my classmates, professors, students and friends, as well as on my own experience within two departments of anthropology. The aim of my paper is not analysis, but criticism.

## **A Jack of all Trades**

I have been involved with Czech sociocultural anthropology since 2005, the year I started to study my bachelor degree at a department of anthropology (further referred to as Gotham). While I was a bachelor student, my classmates and I had to take many different courses. We studied the basics of sociology, philoso-

---

2 For a general discussion about socio-cultural anthropology and its relation to the central European tradition of ethnography and ethnology in the post-socialist world, see Hann et al. 2007.

phy, archaeology, biological anthropology and evolutionary theory, political science, linguistics, museology, folklore, history and historical anthropology, qualitative and quantitative methods, and finally, cultural and social anthropology. Beyond the courses that were obligatory for every student, we were able to select additional courses. They included ethnographies of world regions (Africa, Americas, Asia), English language and another foreign language. During our second year, we had to pick a topic for our bachelor thesis. In the third year, we had to hand in our theses, defend them and pass the final exams.

I had to extend my studies from three to four years because of a failed language exam but, as far as I know, prolonging studies is a fairly ubiquitous phenomenon in Czech anthropology. As there are no tuition fees at public universities in the Czech Republic, extending the length of one's study does not entail serious financial difficulty. The same is true in the case of students studying their MA; sometimes they prolong their studies.<sup>3</sup>

I do not find the four years of my bachelor studies ridiculous when I judge it by the amount of courses I had to pass. I glanced at my diploma and found that in order to obtain my degree I had to pass forty-nine courses, write a final thesis and pass final exams. To be eligible to obtain a degree one must, among other things, collect 180 study credits in total, with one course usually worth three or four credits. Forty-nine courses over three years made an average of *sixteen courses per year* and *eight per semester*.

What does a typical course look like at a Czech university? Some of the courses consist solely of lectures, others consist only of seminars, whilst some of them consist of both lectures and seminars. Seminars and lectures are attended weekly or fortnightly in a thirteen-week long semester. During my studies there were a few courses that consisted of neither. In such rare cases, students were supposed to join an educational excursion and write a report.

It is one thing is to attend lectures and seminars, but another thing to pass a course. How can a student pass her course at a Czech university? As far as I know, there are no guidelines concerning the appropriate method of examination; every professor is thus at liberty to choose her own method. Some want students to write essays. Others want students to take written tests, whereas other professors prefer oral exams. Usually two of the above mentioned are necessary (e.g. an essay and an oral exam) and sometimes all three are necessary for a particular course.

---

3 Many of my classmates worked and studied at the same time, so they did not have enough time to graduate in three years. It is also not exceptional for people to study on more than one study programme at a time. I have a friend who studied law and anthropology, another who studied economics and law, and another who studied ethnology and anthropology. Sometimes people study on different programmes at the same university; sometimes they study different programmes at different universities.

The important thing to note is that students spend most of their study time in the classroom. Every lecture and seminar is usually ninety minutes long, during which time students have to follow professors' presentations and take notes. This is the prime source of acquiring knowledge at Czech universities. After every semester follows a six-week long exam period, during which students are supposed to pass their exams. If a student studies from her notes, given that they are detailed and comprehensive enough, there is usually nothing that stands in the way of a successful outcome. Of course, some curricula require the reading of additional books and articles, but readings were only a secondary source of knowledge and additional resources were not important for passing the majority of our exams. A student could usually pass her exams without having read any books or articles.

My bachelor degree gave me some basic ideas about anthropology and it provided me with a general outlook on the humanities. My bachelor thesis allowed me to tackle a particular topic, but my knowledge about anthropology and other fields was mainly achieved by learning by rote and not by learning by reading and discussing matters. I gained a degree in social and cultural anthropology, yet I did not really know what anthropology was. My bachelor's degree was anthropological merely in name. I knew a little about many things and some things about sociocultural anthropology, making me feel like the educational equivalent of a 'jack of all trades.'

## **Master of Anthropology**

I finished my bachelor's degree in 2009 and started my master's degree at the same department in the same year. When I started my master's degree in the autumn of 2009, I was filled with enthusiasm. I was looking forward to getting acquainted with what I considered to be 'real' social and cultural anthropology. I expected that the master's degree would be far more interesting; that there would be a lot more time to discuss anthropology and that my classmates and I would be able to pursue anthropological topics that lay within the scopes of our particular interests. Moreover, in my class there were between twenty and thirty students, far less than there were during my bachelor's studies, so I assumed we would be given an increased amount of care and attention.

It was during the very first semester that I realized that the expectations of deepening my anthropological knowledge would never be fulfilled. Again, there were many different courses covering many different topics with a specific course for every anthropological topic. We had courses in political, applied, historical, biological, current, economic, visual and urban anthropology, courses in the anthropology of religion, family, globalization, development, kinship and multiculturalism, and some other courses as well.

I attended twenty-seven courses within two years – around *fourteen courses per year* and *seven per semester*, as well as having to write my master's thesis and pass final exams. The structure of the curriculum was almost identical to the bachelor's curriculum with only one difference; while bachelor courses covered a variety of topics from the humanities, the master's courses covered a variety of topics within anthropology. I did not have time to focus on and pursue my own anthropological interests, because an array of various courses – some interesting to me, some completely not – constantly diverted me. I had the advantage that I had studied my bachelor degree for four instead of three years. During the extra year, I was allowed to enrol in courses from the master's degree in anthropology. So I had passed several of the twenty-seven courses for the MA in advance. This made my master's degree less tense.

In the spirit of fairness, when compared to the bachelor's degree, where socio-cultural anthropology represented only a part of my curriculum, the majority of courses during my master's degree were indeed on sociocultural anthropology. During my master's, there were also some really engaging and interesting courses that deepened (rather than broadened) my knowledge, but the number of interesting courses did not exceed five. And when one has to work equally for seven courses per semester, because one has to pass every course in order to graduate, one cannot devote too much time to each of the courses anyway.

I talked to my professors about the structure of both curricula. They told me that the bachelor's degree was supposed to be a conversion degree. In other words, students came from different high schools with different educational backgrounds, resulting in a diverse swarm of students with different levels of knowledge and types of skills. I was from a business academy where I did not learn much about the humanities. As universities are open to anyone who has successfully passed a school-leaving exam, they must in the first place provide all students with some basic knowledge. Anthropological courses themselves cannot go too deep, because many of the students coming to study anthropology have only a vague notion about what anthropology is. Because this was also my case, I understood the professors' contention as reasonable.

The master's degree was supposed to be a conversion degree too. There were students with bachelor's degrees coming from different anthropological and non-anthropological departments. And as all the students did not have the same knowledge about anthropology as the students who had previously graduated at the anthropology department in Gotham, my professors told me that they had to start from scratch. That is what I was told. Again.

This time, the reply did not seem reasonable at all. I had been doing anthropology for six years and I was still at the beginning. No surprise that after having graduated from my MA in the spring of 2011, I felt not only like a 'jack of all trades,' but also like a master of none.

## The Mecca of Anthropology

After finishing my master's in anthropology, I decided to further pursue my anthropological career by doing a PhD. At the time, I was enjoying anthropology and related disciplines although my knowledge about anthropology was still limited. Before I started my PhD, I had not read many anthropological works.<sup>4</sup> I wanted to get deeper into the discipline of anthropology. I applied at two departments but I was accepted only in Gotham. Department endogamy, or department inbreeding (Rychlík 2014), as I have heard, is quite unusual abroad but is a commonplace in the Czech Republic.

During the first year of my PhD, I applied for an Erasmus scholarship at a department in England (further referred to as Mecca) for a yearlong stay, for which I was subsequently selected. I was very enthused by the fact that I had been selected, because England is one of the cradles of modern anthropology. I thus spent the second year of my PhD in England.

Before I left for Mecca, I clearly saw the problems that the education in anthropology at my home department offered to its students. Nevertheless, after my Erasmus stay, my opinion was cast in a different light. To paraphrase Lévi-Strauss and Rousseau – by meeting the foreign academic, we understand the academic at home.

In Mecca, I was thrown into an absolutely different system. As a doctoral student at my home university, I was allowed to study courses from the regular MA programme in sociocultural anthropology. In England, it takes only one year to obtain one's MA in anthropology. Regular students in Mecca take seven courses in the whole year (that makes no more than four courses per semester), undertake a month-long fieldwork and write their theses during the summer vacation. The fieldwork can be conducted either in England or abroad. It is also possible to obtain funding for fieldwork in a different continent.

In Mecca, I was expected to read a book or a number of articles for every seminar. For example, during one course (they are called *modules* in Mecca) we had to read a different book for each seminar. At one of the modules, we got acquainted with Malinowski's *Argonauts*, the controversy between Margaret Mead and Derek Freeman, we read *The Interpretation of Cultures* and had to read through the two volumes of *Structural anthropology*. We became familiar with some of the crucial topics and authors of twentieth century anthropology from Malinowski to Latour.

Students in Mecca have enough time to do their readings. Every course is usually two hours long. The first half is devoted to professor's presentation, the oth-

---

4 To demonstrate the point I checked the anthropological literature I used in my master thesis. The only anthropological authors I quoted were Gellner, Douglas, Geertz, Kuper, Malinowski, Lévi-Strauss and Barth.

er half to students' discussions over the literature. Students in Mecca are evaluated on the basis of writing essays and presenting reports. Contrary to the BA students at the same department, MA students never write tests or go to oral exams. There are no final exams either. This means that students have to spend most of their time in libraries reading books and articles, writing their essays and preparing for seminars.

The educational practice I encountered in England was a far cry from Czech practice. The cultural shock I suffered in England made me ponder the nature of the two systems. My task in the following part will be twofold. I want to highlight the differences and point out weaknesses and strengths of both the systems described.

### The Two Systems Compared

There were two interrelated problems in Gotham. The first was that my bachelor and master's curricula were wide in their scopes but, in most cases, lacked depth. The second issue, which follows from the first, was that students had no incentives to read exhaustively. We acquired knowledge from our notes and this was all the knowledge that was important (save for very rare cases) for passing our exams.

A related and most important problem is that anthropology is to a large degree an English-speaking discipline. To take anthropology seriously means that one has to be fluent in English. This presented a serious obstacle for my classmates and me in Gotham. Professors at Czech universities usually complain that students coming to their departments do not have good language competences, but even those who knew English from their previous education had virtually no experience in reading academic texts in English. Anthropology presented a double obstacle – it was in English and, even if we literally understood words and sentences, we did not always understand what they were really about.<sup>5</sup>

I cannot imagine students reading specialised literature without being given some introductory ideas about it, especially if the discipline is in a foreign language. There must be someone who helps students to break the hermeneutic circle and enable them to enter the body of anthropological knowledge. There must be someone who fills the gap of their understanding, shows them the path and blazes the trail; someone, who builds for them the bridge between the terra firma of com-

---

5 Indeed there are books about anthropology in Czech and anthropology books translated to Czech, but the number of anthropological works in Czech is negligible compared to the amount of anthropological books published every year in English. An anthropologist who takes her trade seriously cannot rely solely on anthropology books in Czech. The authors translated to Czech are Malinowski, Mead, R. F. Murphy, Benedict, Lévi-Strauss, Geertz, Balandier, Bateson, Turner, Gellner, Eriksen, Holý, Pospíšil, Graeber, Augé and Bourdieu.

mon sense and the seemingly remote island of anthropology. Otherwise, the result is chaos. To present an example, I cannot imagine reading Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* without being given some prior ideas about it. I bet that if you do not have any ideas about Kant in particular, and about the development of modern philosophy in general, you will not understand the book. And as one American philosopher remarked, you can do philosophy with Kant or against Kant, but never without Kant (cf. Rabinow 1986). And if the example with Kant seems too detached from anthropology, substitute for him Bourdieu and the first *Critique* for *Outline of a Theory of Practice*.

The example with Kant and Bourdieu is an extreme one. There are books in philosophy and anthropology that are easier to read and to understand, and are even accessible for laypeople. However, understanding one book does not make anyone a philosopher or an anthropologist. What is of crucial importance is not books and articles themselves, but the relations among them; and this is the moment where the guidance of professors is necessary. Professors can recommend related texts and suitable secondary sources, provide students with context, explain key concepts and help students to avoid some frequent mistakes that beginners usually fall victim to.

If I said that the Gotham education was deficient in reading, the Mecca education was deficient precisely in guidance related to reading. I seldom recall a moment in which a professor at Mecca corrected a student's opinion in a seminar. It is a sort of paradox because in Mecca, notwithstanding the enormous amount of time students can spend reading, not many professors help students with shaping and guiding their ideas. I do not mean making fools of students or even humiliating them. I mean giving reasons. That does not necessarily mean that the professor's opinion is a sacred cow. It means that there are established ways of understanding with which one has to be acquainted. As the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer humbly recalls his first attempts at philosophy: "Only when I was older I learnt to keep silent." (Gadamer 2011: 406). Compared to Gotham where professors were never tardy in proving students' judgement wrong, there was no one in Mecca to lecture silence.

Some of my classmates in Mecca, who had not studied anthropology before, often complained about the fact that they did not understand the subject matter. They had problems with understanding concepts or paradigms. During lectures and seminars, we were given some crude notions about anthropologists, their lives and their books, but very little about the ideas and paradigms they represented. I remember that during some lessons students got professorial approval after expressing rather naïve or utterly mistaken ideas.

I wondered why it was that the modules were too general and did not go deeper. In one of the discussions with our professors, we were told that as there were students coming from different backgrounds it is necessary to start with the ba-

sics because the MA degree in anthropology in Mecca was supposed to be a conversion degree...

In contradistinction to Mecca, I attended many interesting and helpful seminars and lectures in Gotham. The advantage of education in Gotham is that it offers students better opportunities to understand the subject matter. It is easier for Gotham students to grasp and understand what and why some authors wrote what they did. The major problem is that students in Gotham do not have ample opportunities to utilize their classroom knowledge by pursuing library knowledge. The result was that we were going over the same ground during many different seminars, hearing lots of things all over again. We did not read much and we were unable to synthesize knowledge from books with knowledge from seminars.

The only chance for a student in Mecca to receive critical comments is by receiving assignment feedback. I must say that I received valuable comments on my essays in Mecca. I had the feeling that my professors had read my assignments and their comments made me reflect on what I had written. In this regard Mecca offers a better discipline when it comes to writing. For any future anthropologist writing essays is a necessary skill that is worth constant cultivation.

In Gotham, where writing essays and a final thesis was a necessary condition for everyone to graduate, no one really taught us how to write. We had no courses in academic writing and we seldom received helpful feedback.<sup>6</sup> It was somehow expected that we would know how to write academic texts. It goes without saying that a student at a university has to have skills in writing. I remember that there were professors who were surprised that students did not know how to cite. Some professors even scolded their students for it because the issue of citing is closely related to the issue of plagiarizing, which is a delicate issue at Czech universities. A paradox is that socio-cultural anthropologists should be the first to note that skill in citing is not a natural capacity of *discipulus vulgaris* and ignorance of Harvard style is not due to the absence of a corresponding gene.

In Gotham, students do not receive much disciplinary training when it comes to writing. The discipline in Gotham has always been rather formal. This can be said of attaining knowledge by rote, as well as of writing without receiving feedback. Students pass exams for exams' sake and write essays because writing essays is an inseparable part of higher education. Sadly, the added value is missing. As Petr Jánký observed, this can be said of Czech higher education in general.<sup>7</sup>

---

6 No surprise that a substantial part of the folklore of Czech students is stories about assignments their professors have never read and about funny words and sentences students smuggled into their assignments, which their professors never noticed. A far bigger issue is with so-called shadow scholars (see Dante 2010).

7 Panel discussion organized by Student society Agora from the Faculty of Education that took place on 28 April 2014 at Faculty of Education of the Charles University.

The Mecca education was very narrow in its scope and at the same time the education was solely concerned with anthropology and nothing else. Anthropology students in Mecca could devote a lot of time to readings and were also able to write extensively. Students usually had to write one formative assignment (usually one thousand words) and one summative assignment (usually three thousand words) for every course. The focus on writing makes Mecca superior, because it produces better-trained junior academics. The problem about anthropology in Mecca is that the degree is supposed to be a conversion degree and yet it is only one year long.

I remember that our professors in Mecca encouraged us at one of the first classes, saying that our previous education did not matter. We were told the classical anthropological myth: Leach was originally an engineer, Fortes was a trained psychologist, Geertz had a BA in philosophy and Nadel before his academic career pursued a career in music. It is considered as an advantage that a future anthropologist has a background in a different discipline or enterprise. This myth of interdisciplinarity was supplemented by another implicit assumption: what makes an anthropologist of you is not the books you read or the seminars you attend, but the *fieldwork* you carry out. Your fieldwork is where you get your data from and it is also the anthropological *rite of passage*. Fieldwork, preferably a year long, as the tale of Malinowski goes, is the cornerstone of anthropology. Books are always secondary and supplementary.

I find it good for students in anthropology to undergo a month long compulsory fieldwork (it was not compulsory in Gotham). It is good to gain experience in doing fieldwork, but fieldwork is of no use if it is not based on hypothesis, theory or conjecture, regardless of whether these are well established or experimental. Nonetheless, the kind of education based solely on conducting fieldwork and underestimating literature cannot but yield ill results.<sup>8</sup> It is without doubt encouraging for students coming from different disciplines to hear such words, but at the same time anthropologist should not forget what Lévi-Strauss said about training new anthropologists:

“Throughout the entire training, therefore, the theoretical and practical courses would be complemented by compulsory reading, at the rate of some thousands of pages per year; this reading would be checked by various procedures (written summaries, oral précis, etc.) which we cannot describe in detail here. This implies (a) that every institute or school of anthropology must have a library containing copies, in duplicate or triplicate, of a considerable number of works; (b) that, in present circumstances, the student will have to possess, at the outset, adequate knowledge of at least one of the foreign languages which have been most frequently used in recent years by authors of anthropological works.” (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 370–371)

---

8 For an interesting account of current practice of training new fieldworkers in Poland, see Łukas Kaczmarek and Pavel Ładykowski 2013.

I would dare to say that the majority of anthropologists, regardless of their theoretical allegiance, would agree with Lévi-Strauss.

To conclude, therefore, the advantage of Gotham is classroom knowledge and that Gotham also provides students with a general outlook on the humanities. It is akin to the German idea of *Bildung*. This advantage is at the same time its biggest disadvantage, because there is a multitude of courses. Hence, students have little time to read and few opportunities to master writing. At the same time, the interdisciplinary nature of the Gotham curriculum lacks any depth, particularly regarding the core subject of anthropology. I also had the feeling that the structure of the curriculum compelled students to exchange means for ends. Students were more interested in passing courses rather than in learning something new. Unfortunately, for a professional anthropologist it is not *A's* from tests that matter during his or her professional career. Contrary to Gotham, students in Mecca have more opportunities to read and write. There are fewer courses so that students can focus on their subject matter. They also have a possibility to experience their first fieldwork. On the other hand, it is questionable whether one can become converted to anthropology in one year. Mecca professors could also be more helpful in assisting students' understanding.<sup>9</sup> Even if Mecca is closer to excellence, I am afraid that neither of the two offers an excellent education. I am only afraid about what will happen in the coming years if both curricula in question are not reformed.

### What ought we to do?

I hear from my friends from different Czech universities that the situation at their departments is not that different from the situation I experienced in Gotham.<sup>10</sup> Gotham can thus serve as an example of some of the maladies of Czech anthropological education. If Czech anthropological education wants to improve, it should follow a radical path. The first thing Czech academics have to realize is that written tests and oral exams are rather superfluous for MA students. At the same time, anthropology departments should focus on improving students' hard academic skills – writing, reading and improving their competence in English or some other foreign language. If students are to spend more time writing and reading, departments should lower the number of courses. Students should not take more than four courses per semester. If the teaching faculty feels that students

9 It would be very interesting to track how the Bologna system shaped and crippled different educational systems in different ways (cf. Liessmann 2010).

10 One can compare various anthropology curricula at Czech universities: FF UP in Olomouc ([http://www.ksoc.upol.cz/pro\\_studenty/obor\\_kulturni\\_antropologie/studium.html](http://www.ksoc.upol.cz/pro_studenty/obor_kulturni_antropologie/studium.html)), FF ZČU in Plzeň (<http://www.antropologie.org/cs/studijni-obory>), FF UK in Prague (<http://etnologie.ff.cuni.cz/node/118>) and FHS UK ([http://www.fhs.cuni.cz/antropologie/pro\\_studujici/index.php#uzitecne\\_odkazy](http://www.fhs.cuni.cz/antropologie/pro_studujici/index.php#uzitecne_odkazy)).

ought to know different aspects of social phenomena like economic, cultural, legal, moral, political, aesthetic, religious or many others, one or two compulsory lectures for every student would do enough justice to each of the fields. As Lévi-Strauss said, it is not possible to overwhelm “students with the enormous mass of knowledge which would be necessary in order to do full justice to all these stand-points” (Lévi-Strauss 1963: 369).

It would not be surprising to find that curricula abounding in courses result in higher rates of cheating. As Peter Pabian insists, cheating is to a large degree context-bound (Pabian 2014). It is surprising to find that many professors, with whom I talked in Gotham, judged cheating from a moral standpoint and were unaware of the possibility of cheating being a product of a specific educational context. Coincidentally, professors can be heard to say that many of the students lack intelligence, will to work (or *Sitzfleisch*) and academic skills. Off-record they like to spurn students as lazy and indolent, and not keen enough in reading. Professors sometimes employ the proverb of ‘separating the wheat from the chaff.’ They suppose that students coming to universities can be divided into two groups – silly students and smart students. The purpose of the university, according to many professors, is to separate the two groups. The proverb, as I see it, should be understood in different terms – there are students who, given appropriate disciplinary training, prove to be good academics, and those who, in the same conditions, do not. As I said, there is not much introduction to the discipline and blaming students serves as a good excuse for one’s own inaction and a relinquishing of one’s own responsibility. No one denies that academics face their own problems, especially in times when they are expected to fry fish, as David Graeber aptly put it (Graeber 2013).

The lack of concern and subsequent scolding of students can have grave consequences. It is the students on whom the future of anthropology depends, as the American sociologist George Ritzer put it in a nice way in his article about popularizing sociology. One of the ways to make sociology more attractive to the wider public is to educate students in sociological topics and to teach them to think sociologically (Ritzer 1998: 450). Ritzer is aware of the fact that it is not only the students who become academics who are important for the future of his discipline. It is also the majority of students who never pursue the discipline beyond educational boundaries, but who could also enjoy reading academic books. If current professors do not pay attention to their students, the students will not in exchange pay attention to their professors and their cherished discipline.

In my article, I have attempted to show what anthropological education at a particular university looks like from a students’ point of view. I have also attempted to show a different educational practice at work and highlight some differences between the two systems. I have argued that neither of the systems is perfect and that it would not go amiss if the academics responsible did something to improve

them. It is questionable how much both universities represent their corresponding educational systems and how much they are anomalous. This is a topic, which I would like to leave for a subsequent discussion. However, what I do want to argue is that if we are serious in searching for the causes responsible for the limited nature of Czech anthropology, we cannot get far with historical explanations. The founding fathers of Czech ethnography, as well as the socialistic apparatchiks for whom anthropology was but a bourgeois science, are long dead. In this light, historical explanations and an occasional talk about the necessity of interdisciplinarity look more like way of diverting attention from serious topics.

## REFERENCES

- Dante, Ed. 2010. "The Shadow Scholar: The Man Who Writes Your Students' Papers Tells His Story." *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 12. <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Shadow-Scholar/125329/>.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. 2011. *Pravda a Metoda II: Dodatky. Rejstříky*. Praha: Triáda.
- Graeber, David. 2013. "On the Phenomenon of Bullshit Jobs." *Strike Magazine* (Summer 2013): 10–11. <http://strikemag.org/bullshit-jobs/>.
- Hann et al. 2007. "Anthropology's Multiple Temporalities and Its Future in Central and Eastern Europe: A Debate." *Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology Working Papers 90*. Halle/Saale. [http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/antrosim/docs/Hann\\_et\\_al\\_Anthropology\\_Multiple\\_Temporalities\\_Future\\_Central\\_Eastern\\_Europe\\_A\\_Debate.pdf](http://pendientedemigracion.ucm.es/info/antrosim/docs/Hann_et_al_Anthropology_Multiple_Temporalities_Future_Central_Eastern_Europe_A_Debate.pdf).
- Jakoubek, Marek. 2012. "Doslov: Antropologie v České Republice." In *Etnicita a Nacionalismus: Antropologické Perspektivy*. Praha: Sociologické nakladatelství.
- Kaczmarek, Łukasz, and Paweł Ładykowski. 2013. "Ethnographic Training in Borderland: Students Fieldwork, Serendipities, and Tight Limits of Polish University System." *Cargo. Journal for Cultural/Social Anthropology* 10 (1): 99–118. <http://cargojournal.org/index.php/cargo/article/viewFile/61/68>.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1963. *Structural Anthropology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Liessmann, Konrad Paul. 2010. *Teorie Nevzdělanosti: Omyly Společnosti Vědění*. Praha: Academia.
- Nešpor, Zdeněk R., and Marek Jakoubek. 2004. "Co Je a Není Kulturní/sociální Antropologie." *Český Lid* 91 (1): 53–80. <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/42639301?uid=3737856&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21105571178353>
- Pabian, Petr. 2014. "Why 'cheating' Research Is Wrong: New Departures for the Study of Student Copying in Higher Education." *Higher Education* (September 6). doi:10.1007/s10734-014-9806-1. <http://link.springer.com/10.1007/s10734-014-9806-1>.
- Rabinow, Paul. 1986. "Representations Are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology." In *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, edited by James Clifford and Marcus E. Fisher, 234–261. Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press.

- Ritzer, George. 1998. "Writing to Be Read: Changing the Culture and Reward Structure of American Sociology." *Contemporary Sociology* 27 (5): 446–453. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2654473>.
- Rychlík, Martin. 2014. "Jak Okysličit České Vysoké Školství." *Česká Pozice*, July 11. [http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/jak-okyslicit-ceske-vysoke-skolstvi-dvm-/tema.aspx?c=A140711\\_101838\\_pozice-tema\\_paja](http://ceskapozice.lidovky.cz/jak-okyslicit-ceske-vysoke-skolstvi-dvm-/tema.aspx?c=A140711_101838_pozice-tema_paja).
- Scheffel, David, and Josef Kandert. 1994. "Politics and Culture in Czech Ethnography." *Anthropological Quarterly* 67 (1): 15–23. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&profile=ehost&scope=site&authtype=crawler&jrnl=00035491&AN=9405050426&h=GRxk7GPFHEKNw53Y9Ldx4KLtqt5XSjefSt1wC%2F1nVCAPrvvBUH7dp6BYJcNomB8RzllivDBjH8JrF9a6UEgA%3D%3D&crl=c>.
- Scheffel, David Z. 2007. "Minulost a Budoucnost Antropologie ve Střední a Východní Evropě: Poznámky K Vizi Chrise Hanna." *Sociologický Časopis/Czech Sociological Review* 43 (1): 183–186. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41132487>.
- Skalník, Petr. 2002. "Politika Sociální Antropologie Na České Akademické Scéně Po Roce 1989." *Sociologický Časopis/Czech Sociological Review* XXXVIII (1-2): 101–115. [http://sreview.soc.cas.cz/uploads/a00f23b224f1d6fbb40ff39c2b0d3e650e2431c5\\_126\\_skalnik1-2-02.pdf?origin=publication\\_detail](http://sreview.soc.cas.cz/uploads/a00f23b224f1d6fbb40ff39c2b0d3e650e2431c5_126_skalnik1-2-02.pdf?origin=publication_detail).

**Nikola Balaš**

balas.nikola@gmail.com

Independent researcher