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# Duch's Mediated Beings: The Human Condition and Symbolic Anthropology

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## Abstract

Rooted in symbolic anthropology, Lluís Duch's anthropological framework explores humanity's mediated relationship with culture and reality. This text reflects on Duch's intellectual legacy, emphasizing his key concepts, including *mediation*, *ambiguity*, and *hosting structures*, to illuminate human experiences, such as illness. Drawing from personal accounts and interdisciplinary critiques, the text addresses Duch's contributions and their application in health anthropology, highlighting areas like symbolism and relationality. The text also offers recommendations for dialogue with global anthropologies, ethnographic methods, and the extension of Duch's ideas to gender and non-human symbolic realms.

## Keywords

Medical Anthropology, Lluís Duch, Social Anthropology, Philosophical Anthropology, Mexican Anthropology.

## Lluís Duch, the Catalonian Monk

In this text, I intend to share with readers about philosopher Lluís Duch, in particular his legacy and contributions. Generally, he would often say that he considered what he did as symbolic anthropology. His reflections can be used to approach numerous subjects, as long as they relate to the human condition from an everyday life perspective.

Bech and Quintero (2012) argue that Duch's line of thought situates itself somewhere between the Renaissance and the Illustration, between reason and imagination. They posit that Duch's contributions belong mainly in the field of anthropology of religion. Moreover, they see merit in his use of hermeneutics as a means of interpretation of a person's biography, highlighting subjectivity as a key element in the construction of knowledge. They identify similarities between him and Geertz when in considering how the nervous system depends on public symbolic

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structures to elaborate its own scheme or outline of autonomous activity. Therefore, rituals, myths, and art provide public images of human sentiment that orientate our human experience. Bernardino (2019) goes even further, observing similarities with Malinowski, Lévi-Strauss, Marcel Mauss, Margaret Mead, and even Erving Goffman. As later discussed in the text, perhaps Duch himself might not have felt that way about his work with respect to social anthropology and ethnography in particular.

For Márquez (2019), Duch mainly focused on everyday life from a phenomenological perspective, combining different types of philosophical traditions such as hermeneutics, German anthropology, and even heterodox Marxism. This Marxist thread came from both Henri Lefebvre and Agnes Heller. They both played an important role in how he tackled the quotidian, and how social processes shaped the experience of it in the face of modernity. Among many others, Dilthey, Husserl, and Schütz nurtured this very same quotidian focus. Duch was greatly influenced by the German anthropological philosophy from the likes of Cassirer, Gehlen, or Plessner, taking elements from them to try to establish a general idea of the human condition (Márquez, 2019). Overall, his contribution thrives in an explicit, deep, and systematic theoretical reflection around the mundane and everyday experiences as a fundamental dimension of analysis from both humanities and social sciences; his oeuvre constitutes both an allegation and a testimony against the reification of the modern world (Márquez, 2019, p. 287). Thus, it represents a radical critique of totalitarian systems, be it religious, economic, or political ones. This argumentation comes with some hope to it, because it includes possible escape routes from modernity's traps.

He worked as a professor in different institutions, such as theology institutes in Montserrat, Manresa, and Tarragona, as well as the Autonomous University of Barcelona, the Institute of Humanities in Barcelona, the National Autonomous University of Mexico, and many others. He managed to perform brilliantly as a student of the University of Tübingen, even though there were moments when he was seriously ill. Beyond his rich intellectual endeavors, he led a deeply religious life as a monk in the abbey of Montserrat.

Around six years have passed since his demise. I deemed it a great opportunity to analyze his original approach, mentioning briefly his intellectual upbringing, as well as some of his main ideas and how they matured with time. I aim to draw from books that include interviews with him (Duch *et al.*, 2008; Chillón, 2010; Mèlich, Moreta & Vega 2011), some of his main books published in Spanish, for example *Antropología de la vida cotidiana* (2002), *Antropología de la ciudad* (2015), and books he wrote in collaboration with other authors, such as *Escenarios de la corporeidad* (2005) and *Ambigüedades del amor* (2009). Another important component of these reflections are notes taken in two small courses that he imparted during the springs of 2015 and 2016 in Guadalajara, Mexico. Finally, less formal conversations during that period also nourish the discussion.

## My Personal Account of Lluís Duch

Medical anthropology, a subfield of social anthropology, has seen significant development in Mexico, influenced by figures like Eduardo Menéndez. Although Menéndez rarely conducted ethnographic research, many ethnographies on health in Mexico have drawn from his theories, forming what is now known as critical medical anthropology (CMA). This perspective critiques

biomedicine's hegemony and its dehistoricization of alternative medical systems, stripping them of their systemic, ontological, and epistemological dimensions.

CMA finds a lot of inspiration in Gramsci, among numerous other approaches that take into account structural factors and the influence they have on health in a society hierarchized by class, ethnicity, and gender over the course of history. Currently, CMA is alive and thriving, with way too many exponents to mention here, my favorite ones being women, for example Paola Sesia, Laura Montesi, Lina Berrio, Rosa María Osorio, Graciela Freyermuth, María Módena, and the late Zuanilda Mendoza who may rest in peace. Its subject matter and theoretical and methodological approaches have diversified and serve as a powerful epistemological compound of voices in both the South and Global North. The impact, influence, and general brightness of CMA in Latin America seem very ample to be pinned down in the present text. However, it remains a crucial contextual element for people dealing with medical anthropology in Mexico and Latin America, including myself.

When I first started conducting research, I worked around health-related matters from anthropological and ethnographic perspectives. The types of projects I had the honor of being a part of had a transdisciplinary core nature. This meant that I had to work shoulder to shoulder with people that were not only anthropologists but also nutritionists, social workers, and medical doctors. The anthropologist who I did happen to work with also focused on health but did not really belong to the CMA social and academic circuit, and rather had other academic foundations, from Morin's systems theory to Lluís Duch's philosophy, along with other influences.

On one hand, I was trying to contribute something to the broader picture of the multidisciplinary team that I was working with. To accomplish that, I needed to approach illness as a sociocultural phenomenon, a social drama no less. By doing so, I could epistemologically "hold my ground" as an anthropologist in the midst of a project with a deep biomedical influence, one that nonetheless contemplated the incorporation of other ways of understanding health. On the other hand, my distance toward CMA at that moment of my life and the strong influence it had in Mexico made me think that it was paradoxically becoming a hegemony itself. I felt as if I needed, along with the help of my advisors, to try to develop a different pathway that would take onto the Mexican reality, of course critically and historically, but with a heavier component of philosophical influences. The latter would allow me to construe an idea of illness conceived as an existential drama in which all the individuals involved had great importance and suffered that existential experience to a greater or lesser degree.

Despite the fact that Duch is not really read or quoted in Mexican anthropology, including Mexican medical anthropology, in my case, it has helped me build a theoretical approach to health from an anthropological perspective. Over the years, I got to understand some of his main contributions. Although I would not dare say I can speak about more than 50 books and hundreds of articles that he wrote over his lifetime, with some of them written only in Catalan, I did have the opportunity to understand his oeuvre in Spanish. I also had an opportunity and the privilege to hear him discuss first-hand his ideas about humanity and the world. I could ask him questions up front, along with around 20 other people, on a couple of occasions when he came to Guadalajara. Thanks to the efforts of Ingris Peláez-Ballestas and Javier García de Alba, he shared some of his profound and original wisdom with people studying health sciences.

He would reflect about many things, for example poetry, religion, politics, the city, history, philology, gastronomy, with an endless ability to discuss almost anything in a calm manner. I remember someone asking him during dinner about his thoughts on Catalonian separatism

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and the presence of immigrants in the city of Barcelona. He would very calmly respond, with a certain brittle in his eyes, that medieval city-states should be brought back to life, much like it was during the Renaissance in current Italy. In regard to citizenship, he said that if you lived in a place for more than five years, you should already be considered as its citizen. He did not only mean it in a formal way. For him, having spent these years in a city granted the person a certain feel and an ability to understand the symbolic grammar relations that happened there.

There were moments when he would describe his personal life to us, for example parts of his childhood in San Sebastían with his aunties. Or little loving details about his close relationships with other relatives. Before his later years, and during the periods when his health would allow, he loved rock climbing.

I would find it extremely difficult to try to portray an accurate account of his intellectual history, roots, and upbringing. However, I can mention some interesting details about the many great intellectual minds he had as professors and even friends. The list grows larger if we account for the philosophers, writers, and poets who influenced him in general. There were certain thinkers that he would refer to constantly in both his books and conversations in general. Among some of the distinguished professors, we find names such as Ernst Bloch, Max Scheler, Hans Blumenberg, Mircea Eliade, and even Joseph Ratzinger, though he often criticized the latter for being "too platonian." Besides his many great teachers, Duch would constantly go back to an ample set of authors. Some of them were his teachers and some of them were not, some of them were philosophers and others were poets. From Rainer Maria Rilke to Blaise Pascal, and even Jesus Christ himself. He recognized the influence that Semitic thought had on him, including biblical authors like Paul.

My engagement with Duch's work in a Mexican context came from that: from trying to figure out my own path to grapple onto health as an object of knowledge and a social complex phenomenon that could benefit from pluralism. Philosophy in dialogue with ethnographic data has always been something of my particular interest. Among others, works of Italian anthropologist Ernesto de Martino and obviously Lluís Duch later nurtured this seminal position. Further into this text, I will try to explain how they have impacted my anthropological approach to health. First, I would like to formally introduce Duch's ideas in more detail.

## Mediated Beings: Lluís Duch's Fundamentals

In the following section, I will go deeper into Lluís Duch's thought and his most powerful and important concepts. The core concepts that I will go through include *hosting structures*, *coimplications*, *mediations*, and *ambiguity*. I call these core concepts because the other concepts utilized derive from or correlate with the ones mentioned above. The way Duch's ideas are displayed follow a certain order with the intention of not only making sense but also creating a panoramic of his work for possible readers.

Many of Duch's neologisms incorporate the prefix "co-," reflecting his relational worldview, where understanding emerges through interconnectedness. His compound terms like *spatiotemporality* and *logomythical* underscore this perspective.

*Hosting structures*, central to his theory, can be envisioned as symbolic nodes or niches that provide meaning and orientation in life. They include family, community, religious beliefs, media, and technology, transmitting intergenerational meaning. Duch identifies four formal

hosting structures: *codescendency*, *coresidency*, *cotranscendency*, and *comediation*. Human beings, inherently symbolic, navigate life through *mediations*. This symbolic nature imbues existence with *ambiguity*, positioning humanity between hope and despair. Human nature is neither inherently good nor evil but exists as a potential within symbolic frameworks.

Through the following paragraphs, the reader will encounter Duch's other neologisms, for example *cordial semantics*, *sensory pedagogies*, *implicits*, *foreigner*, *equivocity*, or *univocity*. In one way or another, they are all derivative or correlated with the abovementioned concepts and general ideas; they all belong to a world of concepts that he created to better explain himself and his perception of humanity and symbolism.

Culture plays an important part in his ideas. For him, the human being does not have any possibilities beyond culture itself, it represents the many *mediations* we inherit to experience the world. These inheritances are given to us by our ancestors, for example language, gastronomy, or the many ways in which we care for one another. Duch used the term *coimplication* to describe how the individual and the collective are not juxtaposed realities but rather intertwined ones, complicated between each other as these inheritances take shape and help us *mediate* with reality. These *mediations* prove indispensable and essential for living life. For example, the body undergoes all of these *sensory pedagogies* that are *implicit* in the social groups we belong to. He also used the term *translation* in his own way to further explain his approach to anthropology and culture. For him, people always translate other people and, at the same time, try to translate what they do and say. These acts of translation, which are always forms of interpretation, begin in our bodies, as well as our own cultural and biographical mediations.

Our inescapable condition of always having to translate and be translated denies us the ability to experience reality from an immediate perspective. *Immediacy* is something we cannot access. For people who study or work with health-related manners, this has implications, because we always deal with people who are ill and make a narration of that illness, a representation that is an interpretation in its own way, which we then interpret. It becomes a complex sense-making activity in which we can get lost, but it can also become a quite meaningful journey. The act of narrating was very important for him, and it seems to be something that he learned from Ernst Bloch, a philosopher who devoted a lot of his work to literary narratives. Narration, as an act of interpretation, is defined by *equivocity*; it is open-ended and forever changing.

The figure of the *foreigner* allowed him to further explain this to us. Someone foreign does not have access to the many *mediations* that are taking place where they are present, the many *implicits* of a certain territory; the many meanings that are interpreted but never quite explained in an open manner remain unknown to him or her. To a certain degree, *implicits* are unfathomable, it is hard to grasp them clearly; they are never formulated openly. Body language, for example, serves as an *implicit* that spawns from shared life stories. Having lived so many years in Germany, Duch mentioned that he always felt like a foreigner and never got a full grasp of the *implicits* where he lived for so long. Something rather strange, taking into account his perfect German and his profound knowledge and use of German philosophy and literature.

Another one of his fundamental approaches to the idea of humanity is the fact that "structurally" we are all the same. As human beings, we share the fact of "being." However, biographically speaking, we are all different. There is an adverbial condition to the human being, very much circumstantial in terms of place, time, quantity, etc. He said to us, "It is a Monday, I am here, speaking another language (Castilian and not Catalan)." All of these matters constituted part of his adverbial condition. In consequence, human beings cannot be everywhere; every time, we

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are subject to the circumstances imposed in our *hic et nunc*, or our "here and now." In our particular realities, interactions that condition us occur, just as we condition other people through them.

Therefore, mysticism and poetry held great significance to him; there were types of poetry that spoke about love, such as Rainer Maria Rilke's poems, which he considered to be mystic. To him, mysticism constituted an attempt to access the depths of human existence and grasp immediacy, something impossible but attempted. There is an inescapability of our own grammatical and iconographic resources that are simultaneously individual and collective. Poetry would try to account for that and beyond it.

For Duch, mother tongues and first languages proved crucial to further explain the grammatical order of experience. They allow for an interiorization of what he called cordial semantics. They are the collective meanings, implicit behind general words such as "pen" or "table." *Cordial semantics* connect us to a grammar of the world that surrounds us, an ability to grasp its deeper meaning in both an *effective and affective* manner. We cannot exist without them; thus, there is not such a thing as an extracultural possibility for human beings.

Tackling into these matters represents what Duch called symbolic anthropology. Rather than speaking of symbols, he reflected upon symbolism, that very same mediated relationship human beings have with the world. The way we experience things through mediations demonstrates that we have a symbolic nature, which, in turn, is also an anticipatory nature. Symbols thrive in the *equivocity* of experience. He explained this by recurring to the idea of a father warning his daughter to have good grades, or else she would not be allowed to go on vacation. A living being can only relate symbolically to such a statement; there is an anticipatory expectation of meaning behind such threatening symbolism.

Trying to tackle this from an anthropological perspective requires a particular focus on everyday matters. It is in the everyday scenario that the *ambiguity* of human beings becomes very evident. Before positing the idea of ambiguity, we need to have a common ground of knowledge of what was already mentioned about how experience requires a cordial grammar, the many mediations from which experience is created. On one hand, there exists an underlying assumption that symbols antecede language. On the other hand, it means that human beings are ambiguous and subject to such mediations. This ambiguity also speaks of an ability to either be good and/or evil; human beings cannot be defined beforehand, it requires elements from the above adverbial condition. Human beings are forever unfinished, and never-ending, "always departing and saying goodbye."

Inspired by the work of Francois Dagnonet, Duch would pay particular attention to what he called *spatiotemporality*. Just as he devised a particular relationship between the individual and the collective, space and time are not juxtaposed realities; instead, they are coimplicated, in movement, forever changing. Spatiotemporality forms part of the core of our adverbial nature, defined by the everyday.

As becomes evident, this coimplication idea prevails in much of Duch's intellectual work and understanding of the world. For example, instead of speaking of a *logos* and a *mythos* separately, he conceived a *logomythical* reality for humanity. Duch came up with that word to better approach a human nature that simultaneously relates to both the concept and the image, the sign and the symbol, explication and narration, etc.

*Hosting structures (hs)* are seminal in Duch's work, especially because their formulation allows him to encompass all of what was previously mentioned. They constitute formal mediations that help us articulate information–communication relationships with one another, as well as with

our ancestors or predecessors. Speaking from a sociocultural perspective, they allow people to incorporate in a particular flux of collective symbols and meanings; it is from those frameworks that an experiential relationship is held with the world.

*Codescendency* involves transmissions that pertain to the most intimate level of interaction with one another, at home, with family, and those people who share time and space closely. It is from those transmissions that rules and practices are taught, and it is from them that we navigate meaning-making during contingencies. They represent the private sphere of love and emotions and the trajectories of human sentiments (Duch & Mèlich, 2009, p. 15).

*Coresidency* centers on public life (Duch & Mèlich, 2009, p. 23), it includes what goes on in kindergartens, schools, universities, guilds, unions, and a long list of human relations that take place diversely, simultaneously and usually beyond our homes and residences. It is there whenever we take up public space, it is where we contrast codescendential transmissions from other people, it is a symbolic stream and confluence that also conforms to our experience.

Through the act of conversation, Duch described the idea of *neighborhood* as a middle ground between the privacy of *codescendency* and the public nature of *coresidency*. However, he only mentioned this in an anecdotal manner. He stopped using the term because he felt that it had lost its relevance. Nonetheless, it remains as a provocative reflection to grasp that intermediate arena between the intimacy of home and the outer nature of public life on different levels and scales.

Well beyond what takes place at home with family, or in other public and open spaces with other people, there exists a hosting structure called *cotranscendency* that involves religion. Not as any particular institution but rather the idea of shared symbolisms of all things that surpass us in time and space, the basis from which people make sense of things such as death and beyond. It represents a framework to make meaning of that which escapes our senses, for example *eschatological* meanings.

Duch discussed all of the above structures one way or another, to a smaller or greater extent, before the 1990s. From that moment on, his acquaintances started mentioning to him the need to account for another hosting structure that incorporated the influence media had on people's experience of the world. In this way, Duch came up with *comediation* to account for that realm.

Trust serves as the underlying foundation of all the previously mentioned structures; it is something that all of these hosting structures need to exist. They constitute part of us as human beings because we trust them; they are guarantees that we seldom question and are not often further explained or reasoned. All these hosting structures functioned as a mere division to give it a pedagogical order for Duch to discuss them openly. Therefore, he was therefore thankful for the people who indulged in his ideas because it meant that it made sense to people besides him.

The effectiveness of the transmission coming from the hosting structures can be assessed by the level of chaos of one's existence, and the presence – or not – of a purpose and meaning in one's life. A healthy relationship with reality must remain meaningful, with creative symbolic bonds with reality.

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# The Importance of Hosting Structures During an Illness Experience

It was through Duch's concepts that I articulated a particular idea around illness as not just an individualized biomedical situation regarding the person's health. I considered it rather a sociocultural drama shaped by the quotidian that is collective and involves a social suffering that has to do with how the ill person's relationship with the world stands in conflict. During illness, the person's being in the world becomes jeopardized; the hosting structures function as a key element for the person to reorganize a new meaningful relationship with the world. The problem with illness is a problem with existence, the way a person used to exist as opposed to their present, and the need to reestablish a new horizon of links and bonds with the world. The sense of loss and suffering is generated by a conflict of meaning in the person's world and existence, as well as the relationship with their family, community, and religion in general.

The meaning behind an illness experience will be a collective construction that stems from the hosting structures within a particular sociocultural framework. Critical moments in life are a universal aspect of human existence. These critical moments express institutional and ideological matters that generally carry and move the respective individual and collective experiences involved in illness. Thus, all individual experiences share a relatively common framework of evolution, conflict, and, if possible, resolution. Hosting structures set up the time and ways in which this common framework of evolution operates.

The abovementioned ambiguity in human existence takes the form of lability during illness; a lability that equals vulnerability as well. The Western world usually conceives the world as given, as something already made that is taking place and existing outside and beyond the human being. However, from this perspective, the world and our relationship with it is constructed on an everyday basis. Illness makes it evident in a particular way that creates suffering. Tension forms through the frailty of desires, solidarities, and affirmations needed on a day-to-day basis. Contingencies plague reality from the moment we are brought into this world. Chaos is lurking in the form of unexpected events that escape our planning and wishes. For example, on a family level, hosting structures help us make sense of that as well as particular individual and collective ways in which we navigate chaos.

This has allowed me, as a medical anthropologist, to develop an approach that seems both independent and contributive to a biomedical explanation of a disease. Thanks to Duch's approach, I could try to envision the underlying existential drama behind an illness experience. It also enabled me to tackle the many human responses to illness, all of them collective and involving symbolic resolutions. Understood as a sociocultural drama, illness invariably involves suffering, laughter, pain, sometimes joy; a lot of the many dimensions that comprise human life are present in it. Our meaning of the world remains culturally conditioned, and, therefore, the conflict involved in illness also transverses culturally conditioned meanings. As scandalous as illness may be, the mere scandal behind it is both collective and individual, particular to its own existence, as well as structurally organized in a framework that is compelling and understandable for other human beings. Hosting structures allow human beings to collectively navigate illness, draw from the previous experiences of their ancestors, and come up with new answers and solutions to whatever is put at play during such sociocultural drama. Social relations regulate human presence; since the totality and partiality of it is not only put at play but

put at risk during the unfolding of an illness situation, a new horizon of existence must be contrived by the person and the other persons involved to give way to a new order of being in the world that is socially regulated.

## Possible Ensuing Criticisms

Working over the years with some of Duch's ideas has also inspired a particular stance on them, as well as consequent criticisms in light of his work and the way in which I conduct medical anthropology. Here are some ideas that in my opinion compliment the discussion around Duch, at least from my perspective and the themes I research. First, I believe that this approach has a lot to offer to other anthropologies; in turn, it could benefit from entering into a dialogue with a lot of anthropologies coming from the Global North and South of the American continent. In an almost derivative or connected manner, even though Duch's approach remains deeply philosophical, it could prove very interesting if it engaged in a dialogue with methodological approaches, such as ethnography or general qualitative study methods that implement his ideas in an actual social realm. In terms of his approach to symbolism as part of the human condition, he seems to posit it in an exclusively human matter. The non-human person discussion could further develop some of Duch's ideas around symbolism beyond humanity. Finally, I consider gender as a symbolic domain that could play a more predominant role in his overall approach, particularly in its influence on hosting structures.

American Anthropologies – be it from the Global North or the Global South – could benefit mutually from a profound dialogue with Lluís Duch's overall work. After all, as a philosopher and an intellectual, Duch is not obligated to have done one thing or the other at all. However, I cannot help but wonder how it would have been for me to read Duch's reflection on some of Mexico's historical anthropological figures. The same goes for the United States. This does not only have theoretical or thematic implications; a true methodological underlying structure is at play here. American and Mexican social anthropologies give a lot of value to fieldwork, the act of participant's observation along with interviews, observations, and many other strategies, techniques, and resources that primarily aim to account for reality. Sadly, he had manifested a repulsion for ethnography directly to me; he deemed it a representation of colonialism. He also seemed to abhor the generality of American social studies, demonstrating a particular loathe for the School of Chicago. This seems a bit odd, considering that he would use socio-anthropological thought in his reflections from the likes of Marcel Mauss or Lévy Strauss. Although authors such as Bech and Pulido (2012), as well as Márquez (2019), recognize these socio-anthropological influences, even drawing connections between him and Geertz or Mead, they nonetheless identify Duch as philosophical anthropologist rather than social anthropologist.

Applying his thought to the reality of the fieldwork involved in ethnography is something he did not necessarily envision or desire. However, doing so has led to new paths of interpretations and ways to better link anthropology and philosophy with each other. This can be found, one way or another, in some ethnographic work from the last decades (Peláez-Ballestas *et al.*, 2013; Matamoros-Sanín & Peláez-Ballestas, 2016; Matamoros-Sanín *et al.*, 2019; and Matamoros--Sanín, 2013; 2016).

His idea of symbolism could apply beyond the human condition, at least to some extent. It seems as if he did not account for a sensuous and symbolic capability in other animals. That

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symbolic quality involved in the way we relate to reality also appears in other life forms. We posit that some of the symbolism and ambiguity applies to them as well, because they can be considered non-human persons (Frandsen, 2013; Regad, 2019). Beyond this concept of great implications, it is known that many indigenous groups from America do not make such distinctions either. Donkeys, pigs, octopuses, and other animals could also show signs of what Duch identifies as symbolism. By no means do I intend to suggest that Duch was any kind of speciesist. Nevertheless, I do think that there would be a lot of benefit in establishing some sort of dialogue between his concepts and this vast literature around other living beings as symbolic life forms.

Another last point to be made here focuses on gender. There is not really a thorough discussion about it in Duch's approach. I posit that gender transverses all of the hosting structures. Assuming gender belongs to an analytic category that influences people's cultures, we believe that it transverses all of the hosting structures, taking part with them through the generation of space and time frames that unleash rhythms, ways of the people, and their gender identity, implicating the person's use of the body senses (smell, sight, hearing, and touch) for the moral and sensible identification of the person with themselves and with others (Goffman, 1979). This means that gender impacts the person's being in the world; we think that a person's being in the world is endowed by gender. Duch does tackle gender relations but insufficiently. First, he only accounts for Judeo-Christian notions of the masculine and the feminine; even then he sees gender as one of many ways of being in the world (Duch & Mèlich, 2009) that do not really oppose each other but only remain inscribed in humanity in the most profound manner. Although it seems right to understand both the masculine and feminine as differentiated historical forms, he could have reflected upon gender identities that go beyond the Judeo-Christian feminine and masculine domain. Furthermore, the concept does not really link to his overall ideas; it is as if he mentions gender but does not really connect it with his approach thoroughly.

Like many of the possible criticisms that one could make from a decolonial standpoint, his reflections seem to come from and target a white adult male audience, most probably from Europe or perhaps North America, in some comfortable version of urban modernity. This is perhaps an exaggeration because no matter the possible diversity of readers from different parts of the globe, they can still gain a lot from diving into Duch's work. In fact, it holds value on its own among many other authors and philosophers. However, we must not forget other social frameworks, such as numerous cultures that coexist in America and whose ontologies and epistemologies transcend central European modernity.

## Final Thoughts

This text aimed to provide a general overview of Duch's contribution to philosophy and anthropology. To do this, I tried to summarize some of what I consider key concepts in his work. Moreover, I attempted to show how his contributions have benefited me as a Mexican anthropologist. Finally, I tried to balance this by exercising a moderate and respectful critique in a propositive manner.

I would like to conclude this text by honoring his memory and the many lives he must have touched directly or indirectly through his books and teachings. Indeed, he was a true erudite, which manifests not only in his books and abundant footnotes but also through the experiences

of people who got to converse with him. I also consider it important to talk about him in English because, in this way, more people can discover him. In this text, I approached his legacy mainly through his works written in Castellan, and, therefore, I excluded an immense part of his work in Catalan. Furthermore, it is also worth mentioning that by no means do I claim any expertise on his work, but perhaps he has made a more recognized impact in communication sciences and urbanization studies. This text does not discuss this contribution.

While his thought remains very Western-like, he nonetheless operates differently than other contemporary authors in vogue, for instance Agamben, Mignolo, Dussel, Canclini, Bauman, Žižek, Badiou, Lins Ribeiro, Byung-Chul Han, and others; just like them, he seemed to have an opinion about everything, or at least his ideas had that applicability and capability to possibly explain the world.

Finally, I would like to thank Doctor Ingris Peláez-Ballestas, who introduced me to Duch's books. In Spanish, they are edited by Taurus, an editorial that can be quite expensive, especially for public university students such as myself. Doctor Peláez was kind enough to let me into her personal library, and never limited me as to what books I could borrow. Also, thanks to her, I had an opportunity to take part in Duch's classes when he visited Guadalajara. Perhaps someday I will write about her work as well.

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