


Contributions of Maffesoli's sensitive rationality to the foundations of territorial and community practices at the health care/social support interface

Contribuições da racionalidade sensível de Maffesoli aos fundamentos das práticas territoriais e comunitárias na interface saúde/assistência social

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Abstract

Michel Maffesoli is known worldwide as a thinker of postmodernity, of tribalism as a new form of sociality and sensitive reason, within an emerging epistemic or paradigmatic change. Despite not reflecting on care practices, by bringing a sociological reading that highlights the domestic, localism and tribalism, and referencing health from the perspective of personal and social potency, this essay argues that the force-ideas extracted from his thought can contribute to the epistemological, ethical-political and theoretical-methodological foundations of the actions of professionals who work at the health care/social support interface and who act in the space-time of everyday life in a given territory. By presenting a logos that validates a sensitive reason and that takes the places of daily life as space-time of connections and development of potentialities, an ecosophical ethos of respect for people, nature and the diversity of forms and ways of life, his thought can also outline places of personal and collective dwelling, which can become scenarios of interdisciplinary and interprofessional care practices (praxis) in tune with a sensitive rationality, guided by and for the potentiation of life. **Keywords:** Vitalism; Territory; Everyday Life; Health; Social Support.

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Resumo

Michel Maffesoli é mundialmente conhecido como pensador da pós-modernidade, do tribalismo como uma nova forma de socialidade e da razão sensível, no contexto do que caracteriza como uma mudança epistêmica ou paradigmática emergente. Apesar de não refletir sobre o tema das práticas assistenciais, ao trazer uma leitura sociológica que destaca o doméstico, o localismo e o tribalismo, e fazer referências à saúde pela perspectiva da potência pessoal e social, neste ensaio argumenta-se que as ideias-força extraídas de seu pensamento podem oferecer contribuições aos fundamentos epistemológicos, ético-políticos e teórico-metodológicos das ações de profissionais que trabalham na interface saúde/assistência social e que atuam no espaço-tempo da vida cotidiana em um dado território. Pois, ao apresentar um *logos* que valida uma razão afetiva e que toma os locais de vida cotidiana como espaço-tempo de vinculações e desenvolvimento de potencialidades, um *ethos ecosófico* de respeito às pessoas, à natureza e à diversidade das formas e modos de vida, seu pensamento pode ainda oferecer um quadro dos lugares de habitar pessoal e do conviver coletivamente, que podem vir a ser cenários de práticas assistenciais interdisciplinares e interprofissionais (*praxis*) afinadas a uma racionalidade sensível, orientada *pela e para* a potencialização da vida.

Palavras-chave: Vitalismo; Território; Vida cotidiana; Saúde; Assistência Social.

Introduction

Michel Maffesoli, a scholar of everyday life and the imaginary, is known worldwide as a thinker of post-modernity, tribalism and sensitive reason, in the context of what he characterizes as an emerging epistemic or paradigmatic shift. His work questions modernity in its main characteristics: rationalism, individualism, utilitarianism, progress, and work/consumption. In epistemological terms, it is opposed to the “ideology of control of nature,” correlated to the “ideology of progress” for which the humans are master of themselves, and the Universe and nature are mere objects to be explored (Maffesoli, 2005, p. 122). Furthermore, his sociological thinking is not built following explanatory social models based on the social contract, on planning for the future, on work and economic production, and on the structure and vertical and hierarchical organization of established power, but on the notions of tribal pact, nomadism, presenteeism, everyday hedonism, localism, grassroots solidarity, and instituting collective potency.

Although Maffesoli does not address the issue of care practices, when bringing a sociological reading that highlights the domestic, localism and tribalism, making references to health from the perspective of personal and collective potency, in our reflection of a theoretical-conceptual nature, developed as part of a Post-Doctoral program at the Department of Philosophy at the University of São Paulo - USP, in the area of Philosophy of Life and Health Sciences, we argue that the key ideas extracted from his thinking can contribute to the complex and multifaceted field of epistemological, ethical-political and theoretical-methodological foundations of professions that focus on the space-time of everyday life in a given territory, such as social support, psychology, occupational therapy, nursing and others that have development of potential and the strengthening of personal, family and community bonds as objectives of their actions - considering also that public policies, health care and social support services and systems are organized based on the notions of socio-family and territory matrix, understood as a space of life and experience with their own political, economic, ecological, and

cultural characteristics (Pereira; Barcellos, 2006; Nascimento; Melazzo, 2013).

The starting point is the understanding that it is possible to insert Maffesolian epistemological position in the opposition to the hegemony of modern valuations of control of nature (Lacey, 2008; Lacey; Mariconda, 2014), going towards well-being, human flourishing and life, according to a flexible, plural and committed rationality that incorporates the “vital value” as the basis of an ethics in which “life (in general and that of other non-human living beings) has a value in itself” (Ramos, 2020, p. 724), according as he adopts an attitude of respect for nature and bets on the dignity of every living thing (Maffesoli, 2007a, p.170). We also argue that Maffesoli’s perspective, in the course of his intellectual production, by presenting a *logos* that validates the affective reason and knowledge that values the space-time of everyday life, an *ecosophical ethos* of respect for people, nature and the diversity of forms and ways of life, can offer a picture of places of personal and collective dwelling, which can become scenarios of interdisciplinary and interprofessional care practices (*praxis*) tuned to a sensitive rationality, guided by and for the potentiation of life.

Sensible reason: towards an epistemological ratiovitalism

In epistemological terms, Maffesoli claims to align with the anarchist or libertarian tradition (Barros; Maffesoli, 2013b, p. 18), from which “anything goes,” that is, everything takes on importance as an element of sociological analysis. Following Feyerabend’s thinking, he believes that there is nothing to eliminate in what invites to be seen and lived (Maffesoli, 1998, p. 84). Interested in common, everyday life, in the empirically lived, he understands that only the synergy between reason and senses is capable of apprehending the complexity and polysemy of its object. Sensible reason, he clarifies, is complete reason enriched with the experience of all the senses and the sense of all (Maffesoli, 2010a, p. 85). In view of the specificity of its object, and in view of the questioning about the possibility of understanding the dynamics of societal life - and, if so, in what way -, he believes

that a new “Discourse on the Method” is necessary, which criticizes the abstract reason and its *libido dominandi*, and which manages to capture the experience lived in everyday life and the common sense that is its expression: a procedure that is able to turn to things and approaches the mundane, without wanting to dominate it.

Thus, contrary to modern ideas, Maffesoli questions the “ideology of control” associated with the logic of domination of nature and the social, the progressive brutality and the damage to nature caused by it (Maffesoli, 2007a, p. 190), basis of an episteme related to the disenchantment of the world and grounded on the idea of full availability of nature to manipulation and unlimited exploitation by man (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 207).

Therefore, in contrast to developmentalism, he proposes involvementism: respect for nature, contemplation and harmonization with its forces, which “[...] makes us go from a **progressivism** (which was vigorous, which gave good results but which becomes a little unhealthy) to a **progressivity** that reinvests in ‘archaisms’: people, territory, nature, feelings, moods... that we thought that had been left behind.” (Maffesoli, 2010a, p. 62, emphasis added).

Reconciled with life, an “organic thinking” emerges that follows the disposition of people and things in their vital movements of organization, associated with an open, broad, flexible, inventive rationality - modest in its capabilities and respectful of what is approached - that assumes its precariousness and submission to the moment, and which considers correspondences, analogies and synchronicities, in order to capture the forces that animate a given phenomenon, as an expression of the **fundamental destination of life** (Maffesoli, 1998, p. 60). Accordingly, an investigation procedure arises; *erotic*, because it love the world in its entirety (*amor mundi*), capable of recognizing the passionate logic, the potent vitalism that moves the social body in depth (Maffesoli, 2005, p. 11).

Through the conception of “social form,” taken from Simmel, Maffesoli intends to indicate, in philosophical and epistemological terms, the prevalence of appearance, of what is shown directly to the senses, and which can say something from the background that animates it. Hence the substitution

he makes of the notion of representation with that of **presentation** (Maffesoli, 1998, p. 19-20). Also, following Weber, he clarifies that considering all phenomena as they are, without discriminating any of them, is characteristic of a phenomenological or comprehensive sociology “Thus, the task that falls to us is to return to this lived or closer life, to this empiricism; so that to resume the expression of phenomenology, ‘to the thing itself’” (Maffesoli, 1998, p. 46). It also means the identification of the mythical and historical figures that move the communities, present in the collective imagination and dream and that manifest themselves concretely in everyday life (Maffesoli, 2007a, p. 156).

Indeed, seeking to grasp the foundation of being-together in society - not the mechanical social, but the organic societal, which stimulates and **makes** society -, Maffesoli resorts to the Nietzsche-Bergson-Simmel triad, passing through Weber, Jung and Heidegger, but also by Durand and Foucault, just to name a few (Maffesoli, 2011a; Barros, 2013a, p. 323-325), and clarifies that whatever authors he affiliates with, the common denominator is the link they establish between vitalism and community. Starting from the interrelationship between person, society, nature and cosmos, he presupposes the existence of an immanent, anonymous and impersonal force or power, orgasm, which permeates everything and animates societal life, giving it a form that expresses itself as a sociological phenomenon observable in the course of everyday life: “[...] the ‘invisible collective force,’ which Bakunin spoke of, and which sometimes moves life in society in an irresistible way” (Maffesoli, 1995, p.70, emphasis added).

Therefore, against a purely intellectualist, abstract attitude, Maffesoli proposes a proxemics attitude and the establishment of a trajectory relationship, of interaction between subject and object. An attitude that approaches the phenomenon, the concretely lived, aiming to highlight the complexity and vitality of the *world-there*: this world as it is valued by people, in their spaces and relationships, only captured by the way it reveals itself to us daily. From this point of view, his “epistemological rationalism” translates into a rationality that incorporates the sensitive, affective, and imaginal dimension, associated with

a formalist approach to social life, from which the researcher establishes an approximate, intuitive and loving relationship with their object of study, thus managing to better observe it in its contours, images, figures and styles, apprehending it in its own vivacity (Maffesoli, 1998, p. 81-88). To this end, the researcher validates the lived experience, the common sense (*koine aisthesis*) or popular wisdom (*phronesis*) associated with it, as an important epistemological vector for expressing the art of living, the singular and concrete aspect of everyday life (Maffesoli, 1998).

Form of post-modernity: tribalism and ecological sensitivity

Maffesoli defines post-modernity as a time of synergistic action between the archaic and the technological, in which there is coexistence of the real and the virtual, the material and the spiritual, the sacred and the profane, the natural and the technical. As an example, the Internet phenomenon in the contemporary world, people’s relationships with information and communication technologies in everyday life (technological experiences), show such ambiguity. Paradoxically, at the same time that new technologies operate a virtualization of the space-time of everyday life and the increase of relationships mediated by technological devices, in addition to the immersion, not always healthy, in the emotional environment of networks, they make it possible, according to their uses - as evidenced in Certeau (2014, p. 45-53) through tactics in the “arts of making” - to rescue the imaginary, the dreamlike and the playful in everyday activities, a necessary triad for the re-enchantment of the world (Maffesoli, 2018). Therefore, he predicts that the playful appropriation of technology, the synesthetic experience it promotes and the composition of a “digital common” will also be the characteristics of this *événement-avènement* that post-modernity is.

In this period in which a new time is conceived, complex because characterized by paradoxes and ambiguities, Maffesoli notes the phenomena of wanderings or nomadism, resulting from the saturation of the modern notion of identity - linked to gender, profession, and political affiliation - and

a movement of transit from individualism to tribal identification (Maffesoli, 2007b). According to this form of sociality, being-together with the other in a given environment (lived space) is what allows each one to update their potential as a person, plural and in becoming, never completed. There emerges, therefore, a kind of mass subjectivity or wider self in which everyone participates; so that the individual experience (*Erlebnis*) is, after all, always contributing to a collective experience (*Erfahrung*) (Maffesoli, 2007a, p. 157). Thus, the relationship with the collective establishes the dilemma of individuality - autonomous and independent -, since it is in tribal participation, with its specific codes and ethics, that subjectivity finds its fullness: “the person, in its plural aspect, only acquires meaning in the community context” (Maffesoli, 2007a, p. 133).

Protagonists of post-modernity, tribes as social groups of belonging inaugurate new ways of living and being together, based on identifications, multiple and even temporary, expressed in attitudes that incorporate the adventure and risks that are inherent to it, even the episodic release of repressed violent instincts. The conflictual balance between the (musical, sports, sexual, religious, etc.) tribes, which ranges from greater openness to approximations and exchanges (relationism) to hermetic closure (fanaticism), express the “difference game” of societal dynamics (Maffesoli, 2010a, p.38-39). Hence the sociological importance of recognizing tribal and community heterogeneities and differences and their orchestration in a social melody composed, at times, of disharmonious chords, but which nevertheless show the societal attraction-repulsion movements and that, somehow, need to find a certain adjustment, in order not to slip into dogmatism, hatred, and intolerance (Maffesoli, 1995, p. 154-155).

Following post-modernism, despite the objections that may be addressed to it, including cultural relativism, refusal of historical metanarratives and valuation of common knowledge to the detriment of scientific truths (Maia, 2013, p. 18-19), for Maffesoli, the changes already noted in this transition in the style of sociality are: contestation of the idea of normality and hegemonic ways of life, refusal of dogmatism, and staunch ideological adhesions through the assumption of the impermanence

of values and points of view. There are also the understanding that the other is not an obstacle to reaching one’s potential but the condition of its possibility, and that nature is no longer equivalent to the place of barbarism but is in a partnership relationship, promoting existential attitudes of reconciling with the earth, of being “at home” in the world, signaling a reinvestment in immanentism, in the “experience of life on earth,” and for a romantic ecological sensitivity that emerges or is reborn: “a mix of communion (with nature and with others), of shared experience and of collective and somewhat gregarious emotions. A natural experience, engendering an undeniable social experience” (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 204-205).

Understanding that **the place constitutes the link between people** and that a community is rooted in it, one sees in the dawn of post-modernity the emergence of a community ideal, of valuing the (real and symbolic) territory and the growth of the number of social solidarity actions, such as expressions of generosity, mutual help, and diverse humanitarian actions (Maffesoli, 2006, p. 276). Giving a greater importance to the environment or place, another relationship with the inhabited space-time is seen among the tribes, based on an ecological sensitivity, such as the wisdom of returning to the land (localism) and **being together alive** (Maffesoli, 2011b, p. 77) that revives and animates a set of things - nature, environment, fauna, flora, landscape - that modernity was inclined to consider as inert objects, controllable and exploitable at will (Maffesoli, 2011b, p. 155). Sensitivity added to a different relationship with others, more horizontal, affective, empathic, respecting the diversity of ways of feeling and thinking and different ways of everyday life.

From this diffuse desire to reconnect with nature and the search for common experiences (co-experience), an ethics of aesthetics emerges, arising from the sharing (albeit virtual) of objects, images and tastes, and from the collective passion and emotion (collective *pathos*) that follows. Added to this *ethos* that makes sociality, which is supported by the community ideal and tribal coexistence, a naturalistic ethics is associated, in which another relationship is established with the elements (earth, fire, water and air), not of exploitation, but

of “companionship,” which we can count on and should not be abused (Maffesoli, 2003, p.158). From this aspect, ethics also comes to be understood not as a set of abstract principles or values inscribed in a given moral, but as a way of **being in the world**, in a concrete situation and in function of a biotope, a geographical area of variable dimensions, which offers hospitality to the living being that inhabits it and serves as a scenario and condition of possibility of biocenosis (*bios*, life and *koinos*, community) (Maffesoli, 2010a, p. 106).

Archetypal transfiguration of post-modernity: from Prometheus to Dionysus

Maffesoli notes currently - not without a good dose of optimism (Gonçalves, 2004) - a saturation of Promethean or Faustian ideology, given its harmful effects of a planetary order on fauna and flora and on relationships between people due to stimulus to hierarchy, productivism, and competition, and the consequent breakdown of cooperation and friendship relations. Thus, in contrast to the hegemony of *Homo sapiens* rationalism and *Homo faber* activism - and its archetypal image Prometheus -, the figure of post-modernity is Dionysus, an ambivalent and tragic, nocturnal and dubious god, who represents a myriad of aspects of *Homo* beyond those valued by modernity: *eroticus*, *ludens*, *festivus*, *aestheticus*, *demens*, *religiosus*, *mitologicus*, *poeticus*... Dimensions of the human linked to sensitivity, imagination, creation, playfulness, ecstasy, and hedonic pleasure.

Dionysus expresses life as a moving, dynamic and polysemic order, that is, the “vital anarchy,” his spontaneity and creativity, according to which the multiple elements that compose organicity are adjusted, although not in a rigid way (Maffesoli, 2011a, p. 64). He refers to orgiasm, the original force or potency, of a global and cosmic character, so that we integrate ourselves into the whole through it. As a factor of sociality, it unites everything: “the individual microcosm and the social body correspond to each other and are linked to everything that surrounds them” (Maffesoli, 2005, p. 52). That is, orgiasm is the creative force (like Bergson’s *élan vital*, Nietzsche’s will to power) that runs through

the individual body, the social body and the cosmos at the same time, vitalizing the collective and giving daily life dynamism, different textures, colors, rhythms, and modulations. Therefore, it translates an impersonal force that, in an underground way, comes from very far away (archaic), and that is well expressed in what is observed today (Maffesoli, 2007a, p. 120).

With the return of the tragic in post-modernity, Dionysus is opposed to Apollo - the Uranian god of light and pure reason, conscience and self-mastery (Maffesoli, 2005, p. 52). He is the eternal child (*puer aeternus*), always in becoming (Maffesoli, 2007a, p.162). He is the god of masks and mysteries of life and death, of the acceptance of *humus* in the human, and of life in its entirety (*amor fati*). He refers to festive joy, to the pleasure of the senses and to the enjoyment of the present (*carpe diem*) and the moment lived with intensity (eternal instant) (Maffesoli, 2010a, p. 24). He is still an underground, chthonic god, archetype of ecological sensitivity, of the return to the land, to the territory, to its fruits and pleasures (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 83). As an autochthonous god, he is associated with Gaia or Mother Earth, with the goddesses of agrarian cults, home (*domus*) and fertility (Maffesoli, 2005, p. 60-61).

Indeed, according to the Maffesolian ecosophical perspective, Gaia is the plane of immanence from which everything that lives takes root and draws its vitality, guaranteeing its expansion and growth: the dynamic rooting. Land here understood in its material and symbolic sense, local and ancestral origin, to derivate and provide. Following Jung/Durand, Maffesoli understands that, as a “semantic basin,” it is in it that the figures around which a community draws its strength are immersed, a process that he names the **invagination of sense**, and from that it mirrors, shapes itself - in the sense of creating form -, is organized and regenerated (Maffesoli, 2010a; 2017).

Thus, in opposition to the vertical line that is the meaning of domination, we have for post-modernity the image of the spiral, which refers to plant growth and flowering, to organic movement without pre-determined purpose (*télos*), to the appearance of things and to the time that folds upon itself, whose aesthetic form is associated with the baroque:

“ear style’, we said, is so true that the labyrinth, the curve, the shell and the fold are synonymous with a profound superficiality that allows us to understand the heart of life” (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 199).

The baroque crystallizes the general into the particular, pays attention to detail and the tiny - seen as the world in condensation. It values form and everyday objects and brings common life to the aesthetic experience, in addition to accentuating paganism (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 96-98). It is characterized by the game of light and dark (chiaroscuro) and by the fusion of elements in which each one of them is only worth in

relation to the set that allows it to be, and that somehow elevates it (Maffesoli, 2003, p. 102); like the mythical and erotic dimension in Rubens (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 183), the original background obscurity in Caravaggio (Maffesoli, 2007a, p. 170), and the expression of everyday banality in Velázquez (Pais, 1993).

Yet, not only being an artistic style, the baroque is also the cultural environment of a time and a specific sensibility that, in Maffesoli’s view, can serve as a methodological lever to understand the present, and one can even speak of post-modern *barocchus* (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 164-165).

Figure 1 – “Bacchanalia” by Peter Paul Rubens (1615)



Source: Rubens (1615)

As an emblematic image, Dionysus also represents the ectopsychic force and the multiple “folds of the soul” - which Descartes tried to iron -, the pleat of the self, which folds and unfolds to infinity, as evidenced by Deleuze through the

concept of *pli* (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 273). Or even the unconscious, with its contents and shadows, with its monsters and ghosts, typical of the nocturnal regime and that also populate the social imaginary and the collective dream (Maffesoli, 2005, p. 41-42). Maffesoli

recalls that **baroque** means “irregular, asymmetrical pearl” and that the metaphor of the “fold” seeks to denote, at the same time, a multiplicity of elements and what is folded in many ways, such as the organic that is structurally composed. Such an expression of the living and also of the social is the expression of a powerful vitalism waiting to be translated (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 178-179).

Finally, Dionysus also refers to the living, original, potential force that confronts the grip of power: it is power giving way to potency (Maffesoli, 2011b, p. 113). When order is established by the ghost of the One, by monovalence, by the rejection of the contradictory, as an archetypal figure, it reappears as a turbulent instinct that breaks with order, which instills social transgression, sometimes explosively and violently (Maffesoli, 2005, p. 85). The eruption of disorder evokes the polydimensional and the plurality of values, restoring the dynamic balance compromised by the supremacy of a particular value. Such Dionysian outbursts can even mean broader societal upheavals, confronting the established powers, with the consequent creation of a new form of social body (Maffesoli; Porto, 2020).

For this reason, Maffesoli notes as perceptible characteristics of this paradigmatic transition from Prometheus to Dionysus the revolts and rebellions not co-opted by party-political structures, the countless movements demanding cultural, ethnic, sexual, religious and political differences; the appreciation of the domestic, the territory and localisms, greater ecological sensitivity and a return to ancestral traditions; as well as the use of natural medicines, popular knowledge or common wisdom in care practices (Maffesoli, 2005, p. 5).

Personal and collective vitality: the awakening of orgiastic potency

In Maffesoli, the form and figure of post-modernity show, above all, another relationship, more sensitive and ecological, with others and with nature in general, creating an ethical-aesthetic sociality, given that the sensitive is real, potential, and “makes” society (Maffesoli, p. 2010b, p. 75). In other words, collective sensitivity (collective *pathos*) is, in a way, the “water table” of all social

life and which, at times, transforms into the political element (Maffesoli, p. 2010b, p. 72). Moreover, the analogy it establishes between the individual body and the powerful social body, because in conflictual harmony and in dynamic, polysemic, ordering and creative balance, underlies an expanded conception of health, as a potency of life, both personal and collective, which involves biological aspects, as an inherent capacity of every living thing to create new vital orders, as well as existential, cultural, political, ecological and cosmic ones.

It is worth noting that, from the Maffesolian perspective, the “individual,” undivided or atomized, is understood as a plural person (*persona*), who can assume different masks given the plurality of “Selves” that can be assumed in the theatricality and in the game of everyday relationships. In the multiple masks, unlike being a close-off person, autonomous and self-sufficient, this individual is open to the collective, fulfilling themselves in all their potentialities in the processes of fusion with others, a prerogative of the **being-in-a-group**. This means to say that the person is fulfilled in the relationship with an Other (otherness) and that ends up composing their existential plot. Accepting the challenge of dealing with otherness, despite the possible conflicts due to the clash of different values, is to expand their own existential horizons. In other words, the person is plural, open to the Other and interdependent, developing their potential in different ways of **being-together**, in the relationship with nature and with others in the fabric of the social body.

It follows that the maintenance of personal health - which we could call, in Nietzschean terms, great vitalist health - presupposes the rupture of the identity crystallization through the acceptance of multiple “Selves,” masks and possible points of view to be assumed by the same person in the course of their life (nomadism); and the resulting openness and availability (empathy) to the Other (otherness), inside and outside oneself. It also demands from the person the art of balance, albeit provisional, achieved through the ability to dance (Maffesoli, 2011b, p. 137) and play with reality, in order to dismantle its most harmful aspects (Maffesoli, 2007a, p. 70). As a tactic of personal resistance

to the denial of life, it is necessary to find ways to celebrate it as it is (*amor fati*), so that the will-to-live must be permanently invented in daily living to deal with the sadness experienced in everyday life (Maffesoli, 2003, p. 9).

Figure 2 —“Bacchino Malato” by Caravaggio (1593)



Source: Caravaggio (1593)

From this point of view, making life a work of art is betting on the qualitative dimension of existence, adopting an attitude of contemplation and joy with the small things lived in the present, taking life as a “succession of nows” lived in serene urgency, balance, harmony and appreciation of the world (Maffesoli, 2003, p. 46). From this perspective, having great health also presupposes being able to deal with the times of life, the timing (*Cronos*) and the opportune moment (*Kairós*), so that an instant of full existence can offer meaning to all existence: “Ethics of the moment, I said, which obstinately intends to live ‘in spite of everything,’ this existence hampered by vicissitudes, but which continues to be attractive, despite or because of it” (Maffesoli, 2003, p. 41). Thus, art is not reduced to the work of artists,

exhibited in galleries and museums, but becomes an existential fact, and above all, an attitude towards life itself (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 12).

However, it is important to emphasize that, in dialogue with Foucault, Maffesoli understands that the aestheticization of existence is always a social, intersubjective and even transsubjective practice, which involves not only first taking care of oneself, and then taking care of others, but **take care of each other**. Putting oneself in a relationship is, therefore, the condition of possibility of **making life a collective work of art**, understood as the creation of one’s self, carried out in the midst of social relations and concretized in everyday activities (eating, walking, dressing, travel, talk, etc.). From this perspective, concrete everyday life is considered a “work of art” for its tiny practices and everyday situations, created and recreated by people together, on a daily basis. Therefore, to aestheticize oneself is to place oneself in a situation of openness (*apêritê*) towards the Others, seeking the pleasure of being together, in the different domains of social life, in their aesthetic, natural, cultural, emotional and rhythmic environments, and in the different places in which life unfolds.

Like the personal body, the social body is not a set of isolated individuals, but an interrelated and interdependent web, which is held together by an internal harmony, even if conflictual, by a sympathetic agreement between its multiple elements, which is maintained united by organic solidarity. Harmony in the musical sense of orchestration of chords and variations from the same theme to compose an original sound arrangement, a societal intonation, at the same time rhythmic, melodic and emotional: just as the cosmos has its music, the social body has its own intonation, modulation, rhythm, and pulsation. It is not by chance that Maffesoli uses mosaic, kaleidoscope and patchwork images to express the diversity and composite, dynamic and multicolored aspect of social life, and the symphony orchestra to express the plurality of values in conflictual harmony of distinct elements that appear in it: “The social body is a living metabolism. And, as such, it has variation, specific rhythms, multiple accentuations” (Maffesoli, 2007a, p. 105).

Furthermore, vitalism postulates that there is a creativity that serves as a substrate for social formations. Collective potency creates “works of art” in their different social forms (ways of life, cultural manifestations, etc.). In other words, there is a close relationship between potency and creativity; the societal recreates itself by itself, expressing the intrinsic power that constitutes it (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 22-24). In a similar way to the personal body, the social, collective body remains potent, healthy, insofar as it manages to deal with its internal differences, accepting its diversity and managing its conflicts and contradictions, and establishing dialogic and tolerant relationships with other social bodies, evaluatively and politically diverse. Also, episodically, rising up in order to resist the instituted moral-evaluative, political-totalitarian and economic-technocratic unidimensionality that oppresses it, thus avoiding its depotentiation or illness (Maffesoli; Porto, 2020).

Besides, in the same way that the personal body seeks to harmonize with nature, assuming an attitude of humility and belonging, integrating itself with it in order to compose forces and revitalize itself, the social body, refusing the posture of devastation to the environment, will also find in this negotiated relationship its collective health or potency.

Everyday life scenarios: a *locus* for professional *praxis*

According to Maffesoli, everyday life is a subtle, complex network, in which each element, object, subject, anodyne situations, important events, thoughts, relationships, actions, etc., are apprehensible as long as they are connected to the whole and make sense within and for the global (Maffesoli, 1995, p. 65). It takes place inside a house (*domus*) and in a given territory, at the same time static and dynamic, soil in which a community is rooted, a cut of the common space-time (*oikos*) and receptacle of a collective destiny (Maffesoli, 2003, p. 188). Therefore, people and their communities have their own characteristics and latent potential and, as they reside in a specific territory, are immersed in a collective imagination and feed on a generational

and transgenerational cultural legacy that they inherit both consciously and unconsciously.

Let us remember that the territory for Maffesoli is a biotope and that the term “house” has symbolic importance because, in its main sense, it refers to both familial and common shelter, where one can be safe and protected from natural and also social adversities: “*Domus* in Latin and *oikos* in Greek had this meaning. It is possible that this echoes, even today, in the collective unconscious. It is what gives strength and vigor to the ecological shock” (Maffesoli, 2010a, p. 104). Territoriality shows that I live in a certain place, sharing a biotope and an imaginal, immaterial and symbolic atmosphere or aura with others. Furthermore, it denotes the need for solidarity and protection that characterizes every social body (Maffesoli, 2004, p. 23).

It is important to highlight that for Maffesoli the “logic of the domestic,” that is, the importance of ecology, the neighborhood, familiarity and everyday life does not mean the narrowing of the individual in the private sphere. The return to the territory, to nature and to local traditions and memory does not mean a closing or a conservative setback, but a strategy for strengthening grassroots organic solidarity and awakening collective community potency. The chthonic dimension of space is a vector of sociality and enables the encounter with others and points to the dimension of the common, since everyone is linked to a specific shared territory, from which the community will extract its strength and guarantee its maintenance (Maffesoli, 2010b, pp. 83-88). It is in the territory - the origin of concrete everyday things - that bonds are formed, based on the common possession of ingrained values: language, customs, cuisine, social attitudes, etc. (Maffesoli, 2004, p. 22-23).

Indeed, the territory has a symbolic charge, related to the place and its nostalgia; odors and flavors structure the individual and groups (Maffesoli, 2003, p. 54). At the same time natural and cultural, as a space-time inhabited by a community, it has an imaginary construction, a genius (*genius loci*), oral and written memories, legends and local poetics: “This is what makes the spatial static be animated and animate, *stricto sensu*, it is given life and it vivifies” (Maffesoli, 1995, p. 116). As a

soil that makes community bonds, the territory is still a potential base for societal transfigurations, understanding that it is where all creative and instituting creative actions are born.

As a place of everyday life, the house (*domus*) is a space for exercising imagination and creativity and also for conviviality, and it is the pivot around which sociality will be articulated (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 90). Taken as a dwelling or personal residence, it is in the space-time of the house that we carry out the tasks in the day-to-day routine and build part of our affective and family history. Strengthened by time, inhabiting it is built through the uses and affective investments in objects and the relationships we establish with those who live with us and with whom we most allow entering this existential space. First, it is also in the domestic sphere that the societal is woven, in the established, spontaneous and everyday relationships, but potentially creating affective bonds and new sensitivities in relation to one's own body (*esthesia*), to others (intersubjectivity) and to nature (ecological sensitivity).

The house is, therefore, a field of relational, synesthetic and kinesthetic experiences, with people, animals, plants and other natural elements, and with technical and technological objects, imbued with meanings and affections. It is the known environment that contains the objects we keep, not always for utility, but for the memories, reminiscences and affections associated with them; it is also a place for routine habits and daily rites, for the return of the same (relaxing *déjà-vu*) and also for the creation of ways of being in the world, so that having guaranteed and safeguarded this space of attachments, of doings and of memories is essential to our flourishing as a person.

Indeed, as a space-time of living/inhabiting, the house provides relationships and interactions with others who are familiar to it and with the objects that compose this concrete and affective, emotional environment. There, even the banal objects of everyday life are mediators and condition for the possibility of coexistence and fusion with the Other: "the object connects me, its mundane side encourages fusion with mother nature and its various social modulations, but, at the same time, it is a 'bridge' with others, it is the condition of

possibility of all coexistence with others" (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 249). They have the creative aspect of the baroque, in addition to their use and exchange value, they have an aura, a coagulating force, they are creators of communities, and have a participation in the aesthetic dimension of existence (Maffesoli, 2010b, p. 252-253).

From this point of view, everyday life can also be characterized by engendering "soft resistances," which occur in silence, translated by the resignification of objects, in appropriations (affective, playful, etc.) beyond their pre-programmed usefulness or purpose, for the rescue of ancestral memory, the preservation of ways of life, rites and forms of communication and languages, often outside the hegemonic principles. Because it is the stage of popular wisdom that resorts to a series of tactics and little stratagems - such as that of Odysseus in Polyphemus' cave and Penelope with her endless weaving - in order to escape the various social impositions, making life more bearable (Maffesoli, 2011b, p. 94). Thus, despite the apparent routine and domestic monotony, the house is also the scene of dreams and small interstitial utopias and freedoms, which operate far from the panoptic view of powers, and it is still a place of archetypal updating of doings, occupations and crafts (planting and harvesting, cooking and eating, spinning and weaving, etc.).

Endowed with a material and immaterial structure (imaginary, cultural and symbolic), the house (*domus*) is the space-time for the construction of life stories, small narratives and everyday lyricism, and also for the construction of meanings for the existence. It is also the place of daily habits and rites, expression of personal, family, and sociocultural memory. But everyday life takes place from the door inwards and also outwards - in the image of the door and the bridge brought by Simmel and rescued by Maffesoli, denoting the opening and exit of the house to the common space of the city. The house, as an inhabited space-time, opens up to the territory, as a natural and built environment, of collective rites and memories, a place (*locus*) where relations of proximity, neighborhood and sharing are established, and also where games of power and local conflicts take place.

Figure 3 – “Old woman cooking eggs” by Velázquez (1618)



Source: Velázquez (1618)

The common territory is the living space surrounding the house and which, in an extensible way, is incorporated into the space of the city, understood as an architectural and cultural space, more or less integrated into the natural environment, and of popular transit, in its flows and rhythms, and which serves as an opportunity for wanderings, drifts and random encounters in the theatricality of everyday life (Maffesoli, 2010a p.42; 2010b, p.237). As an emotionally lived space, it is possible to “vibrate in tune” with the city, participate in its rhythms, but also allow oneself to slow down, stop, wander and awaken the senses, in addition to the modern dynamic, accelerated, activist and productivism rhythm of pre-defined walking paths. As a “labyrinth

of the lived,” with its corners and curves, it can also be a field of potentiating and salutary experiences, composing the concrete and symbolic territory of the people and groups that circulate in it and mark their presence (Maffesoli, 2004, p. 59- 61).

Territorial and community work, in its specificity, brings the professional closer to the space-time of the daily life of the people, groups and collectives served, to their homes and common spaces, demanding the perception that each territory, despite the powerlessness experienced and the connection ruptures, can also be the *locus* of affective relationships and solidarity among its members. This represents not only a technical challenge of how to produce health and sociality,

but also an ethical-aesthetic and political one, at the same time that it involves contact with people in their diversity, with family dynamics in their different arrangements, with specific environmental, cultural, institutional and economic issues, and also with power games specific to each community.

With the personal and collective space-time as the scenario of their practices, following the sensible Maffesolian rationality, the theoretical-methodological contours of a praxis based on a proxemics attitude is brought to the professional, in the welcoming approach and without previous judgments of people, families and assisted groups and their places of daily life, aiming at carrying out follow-up practices and facilitating **being-together** with nature, with family, friends, and the community. That is, by adopting it, those who work in a given territory will respect the diversity of social groups and their ways of life, always situated in relation to specific cultural, social and ecological contexts; seeking to apprehend the personal and family meaning of their places to live, to capture the imaginal, mythical and symbolic collective atmosphere, to identify the potential of people and communities and the ways in which they seek vitality, maintenance of health and bonds, in order to increase them. Also consider that it is in the community space-time that the social body is dreamed of, imagined and recreated, and it is therefore necessary to understand the game of powers of a territory and the polysemy of values that can be orchestrated, even if in conflictual harmony, for the benefit of the group and of the shared space-time.

Final Considerations

From an excerpt of his works and ideas-force and focusing, above all, on the contributions of his thought to the epistemological, ethical-political and theoretical-methodological foundations of care practices in the health care/social support interface, it is noted that Maffesoli shows the need for a sensible rationality for the apprehension of everyday life in the complexity and vitality of the societal relational web; and that the form and figure of post-modernity can offer it a more powerful and healthy image. Considering Maffesolian point of view, when carrying out their protection and care

practices, the professional should have in mind that the house is a place of existential imagination and creativity, since it is there that we develop the art of living in everyday life, the wiles of *savoir-vivre*, breaths, resistances and interstitial freedoms, and that the territory is fertile and shared space-time, creator and transfiguring, because it is in it that everyday life unfolds; where the primary affective is consolidated and the other strata of sociability are erected, where bonds are strengthened or frayed, where knots are signed and undone, in short, where the threads that make up the societal fabric are broken or intertwined. Furthermore, acting in the places of everyday life, close to and within the places of inhabiting and living collectively with other human and non-human living beings, with nature and its elements, the professional will imbue themselves with an *ethos* of ecosophical orientation, including in its practices (*praxis*) in addition to considering the ecological impact of their actions, the objective of well-being and better living in the common house (*oikos*).

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Authors' Contribution

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