



From explore to inhabit: postmodern ecosophic sensibility

Da explorar ao habitar: a sensibilidade ecosófica pós-moderna

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Abstract

Articulating the thoughts of Pope Francis, W.G. Sebald and Michel Maffesoli regarding the seventh commitment of the Global Compact on Education, which concerns care for the Common Home, this article aims, from a literary-philosophical perspective, to problematize the relationship between civilization and nature, both as critical resistance to the idea of progress as the only possible path for human history, as well as indicating the elements for a different ethics, which highlight a new paradigm of understanding the environment and the relationships that are established within it. Postmodernity, in contrast to modernity, which with its emphasis on technical progress and the domination of nature, generated ecological and social crises, proposes a return to the sensitive, the imaginary and the symbolic as essential forms of knowledge and

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experience. This return to the sensible implies an appreciation of traditions, myths and rituals, which (re)connect individuals to a broader community and to nature.

Keywords: *Global Compact on Education. Common House. Ecosophy. Postmodernity.*

Resumo

Articulando os pensamentos do Papa Francisco, de W. G. Sebald e de Michel Maffesoli acerca do sétimo compromisso do Pacto Educativo Global, que diz respeito ao cuidado com a Casa Comum, este artigo tem por objetivo, desde uma perspectiva literário-filosófica, problematizar a relação entre civilização e natureza, tanto como resistência crítica à ideia de progresso como único caminho possível para a história humana, bem como indicando os elementos para uma ética outra, que evidenciam um novo paradigma de compreensão do environment e das Relações que nele se estabelecem. A pós-modernidade, em contraponto à modernidade, que com sua ênfase no progresso técnico e na dominação da natureza, gerou crises ecológicas e sociais, propõe um retorno ao sensível, ao imaginário e ao simbólico como formas essenciais de conhecimento e experiência. Este retorno ao sensível implica uma valorização das tradições, dos mitos e dos rituais que (re)conectam os indivíduos a uma comunidade mais ampla e à natureza.

Palabras-chave: *Pacto Educativo Global. Casa Comum. Ecosofia. Pós-modernidade.*

Introduction

In the address that Pope Francis gives on the occasion of the Meeting promoted by the Congregation for Catholic Education in October 2020 – *Global Compact on Education: together to look beyond* – there is one aspect that should draw attention. He denounces the impoverishment of educational practices, the result of “superficial approaches to education and the many short-cuts associated with utility, (standardized) test results, functionality and bureaucracy, which confuse education with instruction and end up atomizing our cultures. (2023, p. 14). This reality in the educational field consequently leads to the impoverishment of human experience, which, restricted to the logic of the market, considers everything around it as a commodity, quickly doomed to obsolescence. The critical sense, the ability to read reality sharply and the willingness to build a cosmivision that integrates the person with nature – characteristics typical of the richness of educational processes – are often replaced by instructive and pasteurized views of the world and by models that value the technical apparatus to the “imagination, attentiveness, dialogue and mutual understanding” (2023, p. 13).

It is interesting to note that in relation to the seven commitments of the Educational Compact – and this quantity goes back to the biblical symbolism of completeness – perhaps not by chance, the first concerns placing the person at the center of the educational act, while the seventh, caring for and cultivating the Common Home. Therefore, following the Pope’s appeal, there is a need for an urgent reconfiguration of the relationship between civilization and nature, which will require, in the present and in the future, “[...] more sober lifestyle marked by the use of renewable energy sources and respect for the natural and human environment, in accordance with the principles of subsidiarity, solidarity and a circular economy” (2023, p. 16). However, for this to be achieved, “neither simplistic solutions nor wishful thinking will do” (2023, p. 12). According to him, “This calls for a pluralistic and multifaceted process in which all of us can work to provide meaningful responses, in which diversity and methods are harmonized in the pursuit of the common good. The ability to create harmony: that is what is needed today” (2023, p. 15).

It must be considered that the polyhedral vision proposed by Pope Francis represents, above all, a multifaceted and inclusive approach to understanding reality and solving complex problems. Criticizing “determinisms and fanaticisms” (FRANCISCO, 2023, p. 12), this way of seeing the world recognizes that reality cannot be fully understood from a single point of view, but must be analyzed taking into account different dimensions, contexts and experiences. Applying a polyhedral vision, especially in social, economic and environmental issues, where challenges are interconnected, means articulating different cultures, opinions and knowledge, promoting dialogue and collaboration between groups and individuals, instead of seeking uniformity or homogeneity. It is, then, about developing a new episteme, which is based on the dimension of care.

Environmental degradation is not only an ecological crisis, but also a moral one, where environmental justice and social justice are intrinsically linked¹. Therefore, crossed by the ethical

¹ We refer to the research of two Brazilian intellectuals who address this correlation between environmental justice and social justice. One of them is the work carried out by economist and professor at the Institute of Urban and Regional Research and Planning at UFRJ, Henri Acseleard. His introductory book to these issues is: *What is environmental justice*, published by Garamond, in 2009. He also organized the publication *Neoextractivism and authoritarianism: affinities and convergences*, by the same Garamond, in 2022. In addition to these publications, the author collaborates with the website (<https://conflitosambientais.org/>) where the complex ramifications of these themes are addressed. Our other Brazilian interlocutor is the geographer Carlos Walter Porto Gonçalves. Some of his works related to the theme are: *The (mis)paths of the environment*, by publisher Contexto, in 1989; *The environmental challenge*, by Editora Record, in 2004; *The globalization of nature and the nature of globalization*, by the publisher Civilização Brasileira, in 2006.

dimension, one of the fundamental characteristics of this new episteme is the density to respond to the complexity of today's social and environmental problems, recognizing the interdependence between human beings and nature and proposing a sustainable coexistence that contrasts with the centuries of unbridled exploitation of natural resources. Caring for our common home requires, then, a radical transformation in the way of being and inhabiting the world, starting, who knows, as indicated by Walter Benjamin: pulling the emergency brake (2012, p. 271). The angel of history, driven into the future by the wind of progress, observes, horrified, the ruins and disasters accumulated along the way. The "educational catastrophe" (2023, p. 12), alluded to by Pope Francis, seems inseparable from the imminent environmental catastrophe.

Political and economic theories that often seem coherent in their formulations and strategies, turn out to be insufficient or even harmful when confronted with people's living conditions. Social injustices, poverty, environmental degradation impose an urgency that no theory can ignore. This is what the Pope criticizes for growth models that do not take into account the limitations of natural resources and social needs. Sustainable development depends on economic policies and strategies that are based on the planet's finite resources and the needs of populations. Ignoring these realities in favor of conceptions of unlimited growth or a self-regulating market could lead to even greater disasters than those currently witnessed. Every economic project must be continually adjusted to reflect real world conditions. In the encyclical *Laudato Si* he states:

The majority of people living on our planet profess to be believers. This should spur religions to "dialogue among themselves for the sake of protecting nature, defending the poor, and building networks of respect and fraternity. Dialogue among the various sciences is likewise needed, since each can tend to become enclosed in its own language, while specialization leads to a certain isolation and the absolutization of its own field of knowledge. This prevents us from confronting environmental problems effectively. An open and respectful dialogue is also needed between the various ecological movements, among which ideological conflicts are not infrequently encountered. The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that we all look to the common good, embarking on a path of dialogue which demands patience, self-discipline and generosity, always keeping in mind that "realities are greater than ideas (Pope Francis, 2015, p. 159-160).

In view of the appeals of Pope Francis, who recognizes education as an "act of hope, one that calls for cooperation in turning a barren and paralyzing indifference into another way of thinking that recognizes our interdependence." (2023, p. 12), is that this article is located. Its objective, from a literary-philosophical perspective, is to problematize the relationship between civilization and nature, on the one hand, establishing critical resistance to the idea of progress as the only possible path for human history and, on the other, indicating the elements for one ethics another, which highlights a new paradigm of understanding the world and the relationships that are established in it. To this end, two theoretical movements will be carried out.

The first, based on the prose of W.G. Sebald, intends to point to the dangers of an excessively calculating and rational society, where dehumanization and alienation unfold policies that disregard human suffering and the devastation of nature, as a result of projects industrial and agricultural industries that prioritize productivity and efficiency, ignoring the ecological and spiritual consequences.

The second, from the thought of Michel Maffesoli, points to the idea of ecosophy as a complex and rich vision that seeks to transcend the limits of modern rationalism, proposing a new way of understanding the relationship between human beings and nature. By emphasizing, among other aspects, the sensitive, the symbolic, reenchantment, communion, the French thinker invites a revaluation

of the forgotten dimensions of existence, promoting an ecological ethics that recognizes the interdependence and sacredness of all forms of life. This approach, deeply rooted in an aesthetic and community vision, proposes a radical transformation in the way we perceive and relate to the world.

Under the sign of Saturn: civilization and nature in Sebaldian prose

Every year the rivers bear thousands of tons of mercury, cadmium and lead, and mountains of fertilizer and pesticides, out into the North Sea. A substantial proportion of the heavy metals and other toxic substances sink into the waters of the Dogger Bank, where a third of the fish are now born with strange deformities and excrescences. Time and again, off the coast, rafts of poisonous algae are sighted covering many square miles and reaching thirty feet into the deep, in which the creatures of the sea die in shoals. In some of the rarer varieties of plaice, crucian or bream, the females, in a bizarre mutation, are increasingly developing male sexual organs and the ritual patterns of courtship are now no more than a dance of death, the exact opposite of the notion of the wondrous increase and perpetuation of life with which we grew up. It was not without reason that the herring was always a popular didactic model in primary school, the principal emblem, as it were, of the indestructibility of Nature (Sebald, 1999, p. 67-68).

In the third part of *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald uses the story of predatory herring fishing as a metaphor to analyze the complex and destructive impact of civilization on nature. The dramatic decline of herring populations due to overfishing exemplifies humanity's rampant exploitation of natural resources, which turns abundance into scarcity and life into death, and serves as a microcosm of the human predatory attitude, with its technical, pragmatic and calculating apparatus, in relation to the environment.

As a characteristic of his prose, he does not limit himself to highlighting the ecological consequences of this behavior, but also draws a disturbing parallel with human genocides, when telling the story of German Major George Wyndham Le Strange, illustrated with a photo of the horrible scene of a pile of human corpses near the concentration camp in Bergen Belsen (Sebald, 1999, p. 78). What it seems to provoke the reader to reflect on, as it encourages a comparison between the two scenes, is whether the same logic of domination and extermination applied to nature – which was also illustrated a few pages earlier with a postcard from the fish market of Lowestoft with countless millions of dead herrings (Sebald, 1999, p. 69) – is nothing more than thinking that history is an endless repetition of catastrophe and erasure.

In the complex intertwining of memories, destruction and survival present in his works, nature acts as a backdrop, a silent and eternal observer of the scars left by human civilization. The natural landscape, with its perennial indifference and capacity for regeneration, contrasts with the ephemeral human constructions and their frequent collapses. Sebald's approach reveals a deep melancholy, reflecting on the fragility of civilization in the face of the inexorable forces of nature. He seems to suggest that while civilization strives to leave a lasting mark, it is nature that ultimately possesses the true capacity for permanence and transformation. Sebald's writings often capture this duality, showing how nature, with its beauty and cruelty, serves both as a silent testament to human failings and as a constant reminder of the persistence of life beyond the ruins of civilization.

Nature, in this way, is not limited to being merely a passive scenario, but becomes an active character that dialogues with human history, offering a perspective that transcends the temporality and finiteness of individual and collective existence. Thus, it is not uncommon in his narratives for his characters, unique and eccentric, almost always hikers, to observe nature not only as a witness to history, but also as an embodiment of it, absorbing the traces of war, excessive progress and individual dramas. The vegetation that grows over the ruins and the fields that cover ancient battle sites are

powerful symbols of this paradoxical coexistence, where civilizational destruction and natural resilience are inextricably interlaced.

The apparent load of melancholy – and why not say a certain pessimism – contained in Sebald's literary project, has as its starting point the principle that for him, imagination takes precedence over reality. Therefore, his dense, elegant and subtle prose needs to be read from its own aesthetic universe. Inside his fiction, the world acquires harsher and more concentrated characteristics, which seem impossible to operate in real life. The indecipherability of facts then offers reality a good dose of unavoidable tragedy. As Coetzee points out “[...] although part of his widespread sadness is due to the destruction of habitat in the name of progress, he is not conservative in the sense of desiring a return to a golden age in which humanity would have inhabited the land of a good and natural way. On the contrary, it subjects the concepts of home and the place one inhabits to continuous skeptical scrutiny” (2007, p. 191).

It is interesting to note how in Sebald's books such elements touch the threshold between the aesthetic and the ethical. In the first case, as André Bueno (2017) argues, Sebald's prose is dense, but delicate. The indirect approach to extremely serious issues avoids a type of banal aestheticization, youthful avant-gardeism or falsification in the treatment of difficult problems. In the second case, his literary project is deeply ethical. The psychological consequences present in many of its characters due to experiences such as expulsion, displacement and forced migration – several of them victims of Nazi persecution – intersect with the project of a globalized and industrialized world, which in the name of unbridled profit, has as consequences, the exploitation, pillaging and destruction of nature, traditional cultures and the ties that connect people to their places of origin.

But the Sebaldian style reveals a powerful instrument of resistance to instrumental reason and its monumentalist pretensions. The sensitive particular, which captures the detail loaded with meaning, acts as a system of mediations; as a sharp criticism of the promises of the modern world and its large scales, which lead to aberrations. The emancipation, freedom, happiness, the rational and fair organization of social life promised by Enlightenment reason has been exhausted and enlightenment itself becomes a myth, placing technical and scientific advances at the service of power, exploitation and wars. Wood recalls (2010, p. 469) that the narrator of *The Rings of Saturn* often states that the world is shrinking, that nothing is as it used to be, as there are fewer herring in the sea, all the elms that used to sway in the forests of England and gardens have died, victims of the terrible Dutch elm disease, all the country houses Sebald visits in East Anglia were once prosperous and are now extinct or have become popular museums.

Disapproval on a monumental scale also takes the shape of an explicit and sharp criticism of economic and political systems and their excesses. Two literary examples illustrate this stance. The first is, again, in the third part of *The Rings of Saturn* when Sebald compares the art of fishing – even though “today it is almost impossible to catch anything fishing from the beach” (1999, p. 67) – that a community of fishermen insists on doing with few instruments, – small pocket knife, thermos bottle and small transistor radio – with predatory fishing that continues on the high seas “though even there the catches are growing smaller, quite apart from the fact that the fish that are landed are often useless for anything but fish-meal” (1999, p. 67).

The second example is contained in Austerlitz, one of his most celebrated works. The protagonist's research interest is exactly the architectural style of the bourgeois era, which reveals that Sebald, an attentive reader of Benjamin, grasps from him the idea of 19th century monumentalism as a symptom of the triumphant spirit of capitalism. It will be in one of the first scenes, in the context of the dialogue inside the Antwerp station, between Austerlitz and his anonymous interlocutor about the

enormous Breendonk fort, built on the eve of the First World War and which, “within a few months, it proved completely useless for the defense of the city and the country” (Sebald, 2001, p. 48), that Austerlitz will establish the exciting contrast between large-scale and small-scale representations, remembering that the first is doomed to turn into rubble and the second, in turn, with its simplicity is what establishes a true connection with nature and the variety of beauties it offers.

[...] show us how, unlike birds, for instance, who keep building the same nest over thousands of years, we tend to forge ahead with our projects far beyond any reasonable bounds. Someone, he added, ought to draw up a catalogue of types of buildings listed in order of size, and it would be immediately obvious that domestic buildings of less than normal size—the little cottage in the fields, the hermitage, the lockkeeper’s lodge, the pavilion for viewing the landscape, the children’s bothy in the garden—are those that offer us at least a semblance of peace, whereas no one in his right mind could truthfully say that he liked a vast edifice such as the Palace of Justice on the old Gallows Hill in Brussels. At the most we gaze at it in wonder, a kind of wonder which in itself is a form of dawning horror, for somehow, we know by instinct that outsize buildings cast the shadow of their own destruction before them and are designed from the first with an eye to their later existence as ruins (Sebald, 2001, p. 49).

Sebald criticizes the large scales that invariably portend terror. As Bueno (2017, p. 70) recalls, his work takes a firm stance against nationalism, localism, racism, colonialism, delusions of power and the obsession with order and organization — elements that, through his systematic methodologies, have led and continue to lead to massacres and the devastation of nature. Therefore, in the best Benjaminian style, Sebaldian prose never aligns itself with the power or perspective of the victors, those who triumph and perpetuate their domination. On the contrary, Sebald weaves his narratives with a sensitivity that captures the transience of landscapes and the passage of time, highlighting how nature and human history are inseparably interlaced. His attentive and contemplative look reveals the beauty and melancholy present in the coexistence of these two worlds, inviting the reader to reflect on the impermanence of civilization amidst the eternity of nature.

The configuration of another ethics: from ecology to ecosophy

Man is neither angel nor brute, and the unfortunate thing is that he who would act the angel acts the brute.

(*Thoughts*, Sec. VI, af. 358).

Nature is sovereign and generous. Following its slow and continuous rhythm, it endures civilizational outrages and is capable of rebuilding itself without grudges against humanity despite carrying our marks upon it. Reference is made to Hindu wisdom which states that the tree does not deny its shade, not even to the woodcutter. This is what makes Sebald aware of his criticisms of modern systems. Sometimes we are more integrated with nature, sometimes we are more distant. It is precisely this perception that nature and culture constitute a conflicting harmony that is at play in contemporary times. This system has been unbalanced and what comes into play is a catastrophic script or, as Pope Francis reminds us in his encyclical *Laudato Si*, nature is in labor pains. May these pains justify the dawn of something truly extraordinary – a possibility for what we are calling ethics another.

We are fed up with the countless national and international reports, carried out by government bodies, NGOs, associations, universities, institutes and research centers on the environment, which present us with an x-ray of the climate problems we face and the dizzying rise in global temperatures

with their inexorable consequences. From this research – which is extremely important for drawing up action plans – numerous international meetings such as the COPs (the United Nations Conference on Climate Change, which, in 2030, will complete its 30th edition) are derived to discuss what the participating countries what the UN can do to reduce the speed² of this unbridled 'locomotive' that we insist on calling – considering all the ambiguity that this word has taken on nowadays – “progress”. As the poet Victor Hugo said, the wisdom of a civilization is only discovered when, faced with an abyss, one realizes that taking one step forward is taking two steps back. Or, as the French philosopher Blaise Pascal stated, “Man's nature is not always to advance; it has its advances and retreats.” (*Thoughts*, Sec. VI, af. 354). Therefore, we do not lack scientific and empirical evidence; they are placed in front of us. Ecology and scientists have done and are doing their part. But even so, it seems that humanity is rushing towards this abyss that we can already see. This tells us many things about the moment we are living in – and we will explore some of them below –, but it is clear that a “revolution” in the ways of being, thinking and acting in relation to our Common Home will not only involve the awareness that we need to change. This mutation in our ways of being in the world will be triggered by the return to an ecosophical sensitivity and which, according to sociologist Michel Maffesoli, is already noticeable in post-modernity. But, in moments like this, as Maffesoli said, we need to find the most appropriate words possible to express the power of what is being born or is about to emerge (Maffesoli, 1996).

For three long centuries, reason was the instrument for cutting reality³. Modernity established it as a phallic symbol of power and dominance over the real⁴. A passage that consolidated the ideology of rationalism or, if we prefer, in other words, the court over which nothing can escape the scrutiny of reason. Truth in science can only emerge after a long and careful process of criticism, review and rational reconstruction of the evidence. What guarantees the veracity of the conclusion is the method and not necessarily the content. Strange relationship between form and matter that separates thought from the world. Therefore, it is possible to reach indubitable truths, as René Descartes said and did, without even leaving your room. But, according to Maffesoli, this is a time when the totalitarian violence of concepts and formulas subsumed and reduced the concrete world to theories.

After this long period of rationalism that was exacerbated at different levels and areas, talking about a new sensitivity in postmodernity is not simple. To use a metaphor, it is as if we had been frozen for a long period and now, with the melting of this ice crust, we begin to move our limbs slowly with profound difficulties. Indeed, when we observe the strategies and maneuvers that capitalism has developed operating intensely to promote consumerism, we are stunned by the course in which existence is heading. But, for discerning observers, what can be perceived as a background frequency to the scandals of the capitalist world, is precisely a new perception (sensitivity) of the subject towards the space in which he lives. It is not just a reified relationship with nature, but a review of the subject's relationships with himself, with the Other and even, why not, bringing this author closer to Pope

² As we saw previously, the term used by Walter Benjamin is “emergency brake”. Michael Löwy carried out essays on the topic addressing the thoughts of the philosopher Walter Benjamin and published them under the title *The revolution is the emergency brake: essays on Walter Benjamin*.

³ “Separate the light from the darkness. Dichotomize nature and culture. Oppose the body and the mind, the material and the spiritual. There are countless manifestations of the “ontological cut” that culminates in modernity. Cut: cause and effect of a fragmented world that profoundly marked the modern episteme.” (Maffesoli, 2021, p. 41).

⁴ “We can add something that is far from irrelevant: the fight against the naturalism characteristic of “this world” is the work of a masculine principle that, in the long run, declared war on the feminine principle, on the soul of the Earth, in short, on the mother Earth. Let us remember, in this aspect, the significant expressions that describe the power of sovereign reason. In Greek, *logos spermatikos*; in Latin, *ratio seminalis*. It is the masculine power that generates, which, therefore, is at the origin of all things.” (Maffesoli, 2021, p. 40).

Francis' premises on the PEG, with the sphere of the transcendent. A resignification that sometimes involves some abnegation of values and ideals typical of modernity. But, according to Maffesoli, these postmodern (mis)paths can only be perceived by those who are willing to listen to the sound of the grass growing. A somewhat complex exercise in a world of changing and transitional sounds⁵.

Therefore, in this way, a different ethic of living and being in the world is configured which, according to the republic of good feelings⁶, clinging to its moralistic chants, denounces a civilizational crisis, barbarism, involution, which they identify as a kind of decadence of the founding values of society. Which, in turn, according to Maffesoli, has nothing more to do than simply presenting us with the saturation of one paradigm as a result of the emergence of another. Instead of talking about a crisis of values, we can see certain values in crisis. Each society has its time and with it its own set of rules, implicit conduct and explicit ways of life. As Maffesoli stated, "the end of a world does not mean the end of *the world*" (Maffesoli; Fischer, 2016, p. 23). The transition from modernity to postmodernity led to the saturation and the slippage of different logics. One of them was precisely that from rationalism to emotionalism.

Before concluding hastily, as modern minds do when they criticize the return of emotionalism in postmodernity as a vector of moral decadence, it is interesting to realize that capitalism understood very well the return of this social frequency and began to project its experiences into the dimension of 'seduction'. We are rightly talking about the era of seduction capitalism⁷. This indicates that from the mere functionality and usefulness that were designed for consumer items, they now integrate a determining aesthetic element – whether through their presentation, the texture that is pleasant to the touch, the vibrant colors, the increasingly ergonomic formats, the odors specific to each brand, right down to the box that surrounds them. Everything implies rescuing desire; this desire to participate in something magical, even if only momentarily.

For Maffesoli, this points to the saturation and passage from an era dominated by planning and homogenizing rationalism to another moment marked by the strong presence of emotionalism and pluralism. This is precisely what characterizes postmodern tribes – this union of people voluntarily based on shared emotion (Maffesoli, 1996). Return of a Dionysian spirit in the social tissue to the detriment of the abnegation of Apollonian imperialism (Maffesoli, 1985). As Pope Francis prefers to say, "Life is the art of encounter" (FT, n. 215). It is no longer about the formalism and rigorism of social contracts within the scope of everyday experiences, but about emotional pacts that are woven *ad momentum*, originating what Maffesoli will remember from "deontologies", that is, these small ethics that are indebted to the space-time relationship of the tribes (Maffesoli, 2018).

Therefore, the canons began to become outdated and ethical plurality came into force. Echoing Maffesoli's thoughts, perhaps this is what the pontiff points to when he states, as we remember above, that the contemporary world we share is polyhedral (FT, n. 215) and multifaceted. It is for this and other reasons that, as Maffesoli (2021, p. 20) states: "it is necessary to put things into perspective."

⁵ According to Maffesoli (2021, p. 73): "When an important paradigm shift occurs, as we are obsessed with the speeches given by the erudite doxa – that of established thought –, it is not easy to identify what is being born. (...) It's not easy knowing how to hear the grass growing."

⁶ Here we mention the book of the same name by Michel Maffesoli, in which he brings a fierce criticism to what he calls "little churches of thought" (2009), spaces of established thought that are content with repeating modern chants and closing off, or canceling, all and any possibility of other readings about the world. A thought, as he himself states, "totally disconnected from reality" (2009, p. 9).

⁷ This is one of the dimensions that French philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky addresses in his work *The society of seduction: democracy and narcissism in liberal hypermodernity*. As he said in an interview with La Vanguardia newspaper, "Seduction has become the engine of the world". You can check out the full interview on the Instituto Humanitas website, via the link: <https://www.ihu.unisinos.br/categorias/604485-a-seducao-se-tomou-o-motor-do-mundo-entrevista-com-gilles-lipovetsky>.

Perspectivism that allows us to think that what is taking place in contemporary times is, according to Maffesoli (2021, p. 13), “a profound societal and anthropological transformation” that is reintroducing certain pre-modern values. From the split to reconnection; from object to integration; from exploring to inhabiting. These are some of the dimensions relating to postmodern ecosophical sensitivity that are ongoing and that reintroduce nature, Mother Earth, no longer as inert, inanimate and passable matter, but as Gaia, that is, a living organism that directly reacts to our ways of life. In this sense, as Maffesoli (2021, p. 45) states: “The organic reversibility between man and nature does not consist in having an “ambient world”, as having it leads to possession and domination. But, in fact, it consists of being in an environment, an integral part of something that surpasses us and of which we are members.”

Ecosophic wisdom also makes us recognize that, according to Maffesoli, when the animality that constitutes us is not recognized, established, it can unfold into bestiality⁸. This is what we saw, according to the author, in the genocide projects of the 20th century. In this sense, by bringing us closer to the Common Home, by remembering the humus that integrates us and of which we are part, it serves as a valve to alleviate postmodern tensions. Therefore, ecosophy, “unlike a somewhat abstract ideology, is nothing more than a way of experiencing the savageness of the world – and, therefore, of protecting oneself from it. Human wisdom of ritualization that, by experiencing the ambivalence of nature, eliminates its most harmful aspects.” (Maffesoli, 2021, p. 64). Interlacing of an ethical relationship of Being that transcends the self and reaches the Other.

And after this period of rationalist, materialist and progressive ideosophies, postmodernity restored value to valueless things; it is sensitizing reason or, as Maffesoli (2005) proposes, constituting a sensitive reason - another way of recognizing what Blaise Pascal had already realized almost four centuries ago: that “The heart has its reasons, which reason does not know” (*Thoughts*, Sec. IV, af. 277).

From this ascending sensitivity that unfolds in all areas of social life and that finds its bases in the archetypal figure of Dionysus (Maffesoli, 1985), a process emerges that the author has analyzed as a re-enchantment of the world, a kind of remagification not only of social relations, but of reality in its entirety, of the human in its entirety. Postmodernity has called this holism, that is, a:

Wisdom to inhabit it. Which means that the human being does not feel different from the material thing or even superior to it. He does not see himself simply as a being of conscience or reason. But he sees himself as a participant in the “thing”. Mystical participation and magical participation that, in traditional societies, were the cause and effect of respect for the mineral, plant and animal environment (Maffesoli, 2021, p. 98).

Ailton Krenak, Davi Kopenawa, Daniel Munduruku, Eliane Potiguara, Kaká Werá, Déborah Danowski, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Rachel Carson, Bruce Albert, Philippe Descola, Timothy Ingold, are some of the authors who, currently, experiment – whether from a point of view from a theoretical point of view or from their autochthonous experiences from which their traditions derive – , demonstrating that there is life in nature. We are talking about ways of re-animating nature, that is, in the etymological sense of the term, returning the *anima* to the motherland, that which was taken away from it by the exacerbated technocracies that we know. Give him back what was always his, but denied and made invisible for centuries. Therefore, it is about giving new meaning to the way we relate to our common home. As the indigenous Ailton Krenak (2019, 2020) has repeatedly said, we need to understand that Mother Earth is a living organism; in nature there is relationship, there is interaction. We are not

⁸ “It is the acceptance of the animal within the human. They are their reciprocal inscriptions in a given territory.” (Maffesoli, 2021, p. 79).

dealing with something inert or lifeless. And, as Maffesoli (2021, p. 116) states: “the refusal of the relationship between space and sociality means the unconscious permanence of the Manichaean stance, for which the “flesh” is, and always has been, cursed”. Re-enchantment of the world that necessarily involves recognizing that there are shadow areas in the daily presentation of what has always been there, life.

Opening⁹

Interestingly, we reach the final part of the work, but with the realization that there is still a lot to be done. Connections and correlations to be established. Every conclusion is a form of dialectic that always seeks synthesis. And in the last four or five centuries, this was precisely the operating form of Western culture: the unbridled search to nullify, or minimize, plurality, diversity, nuances and hues, recognizing as valid only one way of seeing the problem and your solution. The dialectical method is not cumulative in the synthesis it generates, but nullifying by discarding the ‘antithesis’. That was the modern way of applying the logic of *tertium non datur*, given by Aristotle¹⁰. But, as Maffesoli reminds us, it takes an open mind to accept that it is not possible to save the furniture if the house is on fire. Civilizing destruction and natural resilience are interlaced in history, as Sebald points out. Hopes and fears inhabit the same imaginary. In postmodernity, it is not a game of all or nothing, but of open perspectives.

As Francisco and Maffesoli remember, reality overlaps with ideas; the Common Home has demanded this. And assuming this premise, which we can call ‘realistic’, it is possible to perceive the richness that social relations manifest in contemporary times. Transition from the *principium individuationis* to the *principium relationis* (Maffesoli, 1997, p. 268), which manifests the beginning of the relativization of the ‘I’ to the return of the sphere of ‘we’. From a political point of view, perhaps this justifies postmodern populisms both in Politics and in social networks and other forms of digital ‘popularity’; from an ecosophical point of view, this manifests the constant reversibility “that tends to establish itself between the individual and his environment; this must be understood as a natural environment, but also as a social environment” (Maffesoli, 1997, p. 265).

Reversibility, integration, holism, integrity, naturalism, integral humanism...all ways of being in the world that come to constitute the atmosphere of the moment we live in. A kind of post-modern pedagogy that sees the relationship with the Common Home as a form of sacredness¹¹, of reconnection with a lost link in human nature due to the dominating force of rationalism. For this reason, one of the interesting axes to talk about postmodernity is precisely this process of re-education that is taking place – whether we are aware of it or not –, but very different from what was the educational-imposing project of modernity. While the latter outlined the important elements and knowledge for the formation of a citizen, the former takes up what was left along the way, that is, all the sensitivity that

⁹ Just as he ended his book *The transfiguration of the political: the tribalization of the world*, with the item “opening”, Maffesoli’s thought inspires us to try to think under another logic more consistent with the context of postmodern issues. Basically, to escape the modern *ratio* that seeks a logical and necessary conclusion based on the arguments presented, it is necessary to close by highlighting the opening of new questions.

¹⁰ “Overcoming Aristotelian logic, ambiguity teaches us that the “third party is right there”. In worldly polysemy and in a contradictory way, we are at the same time this and that (Maffesoli, 1985, p. 71).

¹¹ Check out the work that Maffesoli did in his work *La nostalgie du sacré*, rescuing the different nuances of the sacral in post-modernity.

is born with and develops in the environment in which it finds itself. This may be the unusual and unexpected vector, for a culture with a rationalist tradition, that could postpone *the fall of the sky*¹².

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¹² Reference to the homonymous work by the indigenous Davi Kopenawa, published by Companhia das Letras, in 2015.

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