



# Jean-Jacques Rousseau: education for religious tolerance

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**ABSTRACT.** Theoretical research on Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), whose aim is to demonstrate that his ideas are fruitful in the reflection on education for religious tolerance. The justification of this investigation is supported by the fact that religions have strongly influenced the way of thinking, feeling and acting of large portions of humanity throughout its history; although not necessarily its purpose, religions inevitably become excuses for some of their adherents to develop intolerant positions towards those who do not share their beliefs. In *Emily or On Education* (Rousseau, 2004), there is a pamphlet ('Profession of faith of the Savoyard vicar'); in it, one discusses difficulties raised by conceptions about divinity and some of its correlates; in view of the indissolubility of these problems, there remains the practice of tolerance, and it is up to individuals to respect each other as regards what each one on religion; the Savoyard vicar is the allegory by which Rousseau expresses his ideas about tolerance in religious matters. Here is the question in order to be answered: What propositions made by the Savoyard vicar allow to support education for tolerance in matters of beliefs, on which religions are based? It was verified that the education based on that profession of faith propitiates the religious tolerance, since it confers to each human being the freedom of the internal conviction in relation to beliefs to be adhered, instead of the external imposition; the Savoy vicar is the personification of the point of balance between such extremes, which, whether by lack or by excess, do not contribute to the cultivation of personal spirituality, whose core must be conscience. What underlies beliefs is the conviction that each individual carries within his inner forum, not his coercion, made by secular or religious authorities.

**Keywords:** education; Jean-Jacques Rousseau; religion; tolerance.

## Jean-Jacques Rousseau: educação para a tolerância religiosa

**RESUMO.** Pesquisa teórica sobre Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), cujo objetivo é demonstrar que suas ideias revelam-se profícuas no tocante à reflexão acerca da educação para a tolerância religiosa. A justificativa desta investigação sustenta-se pelo fato das religiões terem influenciado fortemente a maneira de pensar, de sentir e de agir de grandes parcelas da humanidade ao longo da sua história; embora não sendo, necessariamente, o seu propósito, inevitavelmente, as religiões acabam tornando-se pretextos para que alguns dos seus adeptos desenvolvam posturas intolerantes em relação a quem não partilha do seu conjunto de crenças. Em *Emílio ou Da Educação* (Rousseau, 2004), há um opúsculo ('Profissão de fé do vigário Saboiano'); nele, discorre-se sobre dificuldades levantadas por concepções acerca da divindade e de alguns de seus correlatos; perante a indissolubilidade desses problemas, resta a prática da tolerância, cabendo aos indivíduos respeitarem-se mutuamente no que se refere ao que cada um no tocante à religião; o vigário Saboiano constitui a alegoria pela qual Rousseau exprime suas ideias acerca da tolerância em matéria religiosa. Eis a questão a ser respondida: Que proposições feitas pelo vigário Saboiano permitem apoiar a educação para a tolerância em questões de crenças, nas quais se fundamentam as religiões? Verificou-se que a educação baseada nessa profissão de fé propicia a tolerância religiosa, haja vista que confere a cada ser humano a liberdade da convicção interna quanto às crenças a serem aderidas, ao invés da imposição externa; o vigário Saboiano é a personificação do ponto de equilíbrio entre tais extremos, os quais, seja por falta, seja por excesso, não contribuem para o cultivo da espiritualidade pessoal, cujo âmago deve ser a consciência. Aquilo que alicerça as crenças é a convicção que cada indivíduo delas carrega em seu foro íntimo, não sua coerção feita por autoridades laicas ou religiosas.

**Palavras-chave:** educação; Jean-Jacques Rousseau; religião; tolerância.

## Jean-Jacques Rousseau: educación para la tolerancia religiosa

**RESUMEN.** Investigación teórica sobre Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), cuyo objetivo es demostrar que sus ideas resultan fructíferas en la reflexión sobre la educación para la tolerancia religiosa. Suya justificación es que las religiones han influido fuertemente en la forma de pensar, sentir y actuar de grandes partes de la humanidad

a lo largo de su historia; si bien no necesariamente su propósito, las religiones inevitablemente se convierten en pretextos para que algunos de sus seguidores desarrollen actitudes intolerantes hacia aquellos que no comparten sus creencias. En *Emilio o De La Educación* (Rousseau, 2004), hay un folleto ('Profesión de fe del vicario de Saboya'); que discute las dificultades planteadas por las concepciones sobre la divinidad y algunos de sus correlatos; Frente a la indisolubilidad de estos problemas, la práctica de la tolerancia permanece y corresponde a los individuos respetarse unos a otros con respecto a la religión; el vicario de Saboya es la alegoría con la que Rousseau expresa sus ideas sobre la tolerancia en asuntos religiosos. La pregunta que debe responderse: ¿Qué proposiciones formuladas por el vicario de Saboya apoyan la educación para la tolerancia en cuestiones de creencias en las que se basan las religiones? Se ha encontrado que la educación basada en esta profesión de fe fomenta la tolerancia religiosa, ya que otorga a cada ser humano la libertad de convicción interna en cuanto a las creencias a las que se debe adherir, en lugar de la imposición externa; el vicario de Saboya es la encarnación del equilibrio entre tales extremos, que, ya sea por falta o por exceso, no contribuye al cultivo de la espiritualidad personal, cuyo núcleo debe ser la conciencia. Lo que subyace a las creencias es la convicción de que cada individuo lleva dentro de ellos, no su coerción por parte de autoridades laicas o religiosas.

**Palabras clave:** educación; Jean-Jacques Rousseau; religión; tolerancia.

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## Introduction

The ideas conceived by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Swiss philosopher of the enlightened modern age, show themselves profitable to the reflection concerning the question about education to religious toleration, according to demonstrating his tract entitled 'Profession of faith of Savoyard Vicar', inserted into the Book IV of his greatest work concerning pedagogical theme, *Emilio* or *On Education*, published, for the first time, in 1762. According to Dent:

His pretext to including 'The profession of faith' into this point of the book is to necessity of showing to Emily ideas of religion and of explaining the kind of belief and religious obedience which would be appropriated to his education, according to appropriated requirements to cultivation and to preservation of innate nature. Rousseau had been considering those questions independently of the rest of Emily, and this work would have difficultly been affected, except on the specific religious dimension that 'The profession of faith' grants to it, whether it would have been published separately (such as subsequently it was) (Dent, 1996, author's italics).

As justification of this investigation, one shows that religions have been strongly influenced the way of thinking, feeling and acting of great parts of humankind along his history; it is undeniable that the word of religious leaders have forged thoughts, sentiments and actions, as much into they who accepted them or obey them as into they who refuse them or disobey them.

Although not being, necessarily, their purpose, unavoidable, religions finish becoming themselves pretexts to some of their members can develop intolerant postures in relation to them who do not share their whole of beliefs; for that reason, the resource to the thought of the Geneva author shows itself profitable to combat religious fanaticism to which one may be inclined.

Thus, the question in order to be answered in this text is made like this: What are the propositions done by the Savoyard Vicar that allow supporting education to toleration on matter of beliefs, on which religions base themselves? Before that question, here is the aim of this text: to demonstrate that the ideas of Jean-Jacques Rousseau show themselves profitable concerning to reflection about education to religious toleration.

Since one expressing the question and the aim of this article, its situation on the state of the art of the research finds itself in the debate around relations between education and religion; that discussion, by its turn, considers them as part of culture and, like ones, they are also considered by it as members of the symbolic universe made by mankind. One presupposing that: "[...] the religion and the education are ways of thinking that complete each other and order inside the culture a way of being and standing in the world" (Ferreira & Noronha, 2017, p. 80), the Savoyard Vicar symbolizes the reflection done concerning the intersection between educational imaginary and religious imaginary; that affirmation is the foundation of the dialogue of this research with the academic production that belongs to it.

## The Savoyard Vicar allegory

The question, initially, susceptible of being established, is this: Is the Savoyard Vicar an allegory? In order to answer it, there must be defined, previously, what that word means. According to Durozoi and

Roussel (1993, p. 19): "Term that means at the same time a kind of lecture and a category of works". According to that definition, whether one considers that Rousseau makes use of the Savoyard Vicar as a way of interpretation (kind of lecture) of the religion, as well as an icon of his religious standard (category of works), then, it is an allegory, because it is exactly what it represents in the extent of his thought.

By using fictions in order to express convictions, the Savoyard Vicar is, especially, the allegory through which Rousseau explains his ideas concerning tolerance on matter of belief. The clergyman conceived by the Geneva philosopher is introduced by him as a simple man of faith, but also of reason; not a man of letters, clever at improved discursive techniques, characteristic of academic environments; nor a man of arms, who turns to strength in order to make to triumph his purposes; neither military, neither orator, he is indifferent much as the strategy as rhetoric; so, the clergyman under question is just someone who proposes himself to tract about what he thinks and feels inside himself. Here is how he introduces himself:

My son, do not wait from me neither wise discourses neither deep reasonings; I am not a great philosopher and I little worry about being it. However, sometimes, I have good sense and I always love truth. I do not want to argue with you, not even to try to persuade you; it is enough to explain to you what I think inside the simplicity of my heart. Consult yours during my discourse; it is all that I ask you. If I were wrong, it is in good faith; it is enough that my error could not be imputed over me as a crime; even I could deceive you in the same way, little evil would have in it. If I will think well, reason is common between us and we have the same interest in listen to it; why would not you think like me? (Rousseau, 2004, p. 372-373).

After his introduction, as a reasonable and truth lover clergyman, although he is not a professional philosopher, just disposed to discourse without persuading, as well as inclined to propose, not impose, the narration of his humble origins follows. Born from poor commoner parents, however, he was destined to the Roman Catholic Priesthood, more for a matter of convenience than for vocation. Passing by the inherent studies to his priest training, philosophical and theological breeding, requirement to the exercise of the clerical office, he was ordered priest. By accepting the doctrine defended by the ecclesiastical institution, to whose hierarchy he had enrolled, he perceived soon, by doing it, that he had compromised to deny his human nature, something that he could not accomplish:

I was born poor and countryman, destined for condition to cultivate land. However, they understood that it would be better I learn to get my bread with the profession of priest and they got the ways of making me to study. Surely, neither my parents neither me do not mind very much about knowing what it was good, true and useful on it, but so what it was needed to know in order to be ordered. I learnt what they wanted that I would learn, I said what they wanted that I would say, I assumed the compromises that they wanted and I was ordered priest. However, I did not delay to perceive that, by compromising to not being a man, I had promised more than I could accomplish (Rousseau, 2004, p. 373).

Unmarried, the new priest conceived the matrimony as the holiest natural institution, although he was deprived of it, due to the votes done by occasion of his ordination, which he did not want to break. Paradoxically, it was the cause of his ruin, because, by following the rules to which one swears to obey, it is not, consequently, guarantees of getting rid of misfortune:

That decision was just what ruined me. My respect for someone else's bed left uncovered my faults. It was needed to repair the scandal; arrested, forbidden, expelled, I was much more the victim of my scruples than my incontinency and I could understand, due to censures that accompany my disgrace, that not rarely it is needed to aggravate the error for escaping of punishment (Rousseau, 2004, p. 374).

By falling into disgrace, the puzzled clergyman found himself immersed into incredulity, betrayed by his own convictions. Dragged by vortex of doubt, flogged by whip of uncertainty and shaken by tremor of restlessness, his ideas perished in heat of confusion, while his spirit wallowed more and more into obscurity. Nevertheless, his love for truth stayed; contradictions of his misfortune were not strong enough in order to make him give up looking for it, although it dodged him: "I thought to myself: I love truth, I look for it but I cannot recognize it; show me it and I will stay linked to it; why does it shy away from the solicitude of a heart made for worshipping it?" (Rousseau, 2004, p. 375). In his yearning to looking for knowledge of truth, the priest comes across two obstacles, to know: academic philosophical skepticism and ecclesiastical theological dogmatism.

Academic philosophical skepticism é cause of restlessness, because human spirit does not peremptorily settle for doubt, which, however, it is temporally acceptable. Thus, his aspiration for truth will be only supplied by own truth. Doubt belongs to kingdom of obscurity and confusion, considering that it can drive

to mistake, error, falsehood or illusion. Only truth will bring clarity and distinction, in which human mind will be satisfied, as, thus, it will stay safe in relation to what is or not, as well as in relation to what must be done or avoided. Therefore, being a skeptic, under that perspective, means inexistence or unhappiness:

How can one be a skeptical in system and good faith? I am not able to comprehend it. On the other hand, those philosophers do not exist, or then they are the unhappiest of men. Doubt about things that matter to us to know it is too a violent state for human spirit; it does not resist for much time in that state; it ends up deciding one way or another and it prefers to deceive itself not to believe anything (Rousseau, 2004, p. 375).

Ecclesiastical theological dogmatism is cause of absurdity, for, beyond forbidding doubt, it forces to believe what is rationally contradicted. Dogma, in resolving the act of doubting, turns itself into the factor by which one practices thinking in an authoritarian way, obliterating divergence, indispensable to movement of reasoning. Therefore, it is useless to one who proposes himself to investigate, freely and logically, without the yoke of authority that is averse or strange, reason why only rest to reflexive mind to give it up, considering that, by ending the questioning up, dogmatism paralyzes reflection, without which it is impossible to reason independently:

What duplicates my embarrassment was that, being born in a Church that decides everything, which does not allow doubt, if I refuse just a point, I would refuse all the rest, and the impossibility of admitting so many absurd decisions it also separated from what were not it. When they tell me believe everything, they prevented me from believing something and I did already know when I would stop (Rousseau, 2004, p. 375).

After waiving to academic philosophical skepticism, which doubts everything, as well as ecclesiastical theological dogmatism, which submits everything to authority, the Savoyard Vicar shows that there is need of neither being a skeptical neither a dogmatic. Against skepticism, he proposes that it is possible to restrict thoughts to what is the most important at the time, to coexist with ignorance over what does not mind to know and to worry about only when doubt refers to what is imperative: "The first fruit that I got from those reflections was to learn to limit my researches to what did mind to me immediately, to satisfy myself with a deep ignorance about everything else and only to worry until doubt about things that did mind me to know" (Rousseau, 2004, p. 376-377). Against dogmatism, he proposes that only authority to be recognized is consciousness, individual internal fire, which everyone brings with oneself, which guides his thoughts, his feelings and his actions; although infallible not being, at least, it is more trustworthy than external opinions, susceptible to be even longer from truth, so expensive to the clergyman:

I understood that, far from setting me free from my useless doubts, philosophers would just do to multiply those that tormented me and they would not solve anything. So, I took another guide and I said with my buttons: let's consult internal light, it would disturb me less than them disturb me, or, at least, my error will be mine and I will pervert myself less by following my own illusions than giving myself to her lies (Rousseau, 2004, p. 377).

By explaining reasons for his aversion to being, on the one hand, a skeptical and, on the other hand, a dogmatic, the Savoyard Vicar, however, combines elements of skepticism and dogmatism inside his thought, to know: doubt and authority. Doubt is admitted when thing is indifferent, because, due to it, everyone perceives what is true at his core, without any obliterations. His philosophical principle is love for truth and his methodological rule consists of facility and simplicity of propositions, without any argumentative embellishments or sophistications:

Bringing, so, inside myself love for truth as unique philosophy and as unique method an easy and simple rule that sets me free from vain subtlety of arguments, I return with that rule the exam of knowledge that interests me, deciding to admit as evident everything, inside sincerity of my heart, I cannot refuse my consent, as true everything seems me to have a necessary link with the first and to leave all other knowledge in uncertainty, without neither refusing them neither admitting them, and without disturbing me for clarifying them when they do not drive me to anything useful to practice (Rousseau, 2004, p. 378).

Marooned both skepticism and dogmatism, with their respective philosophical and theological controversies, the Savoyard Vicar started explanation of his principle and method. Since explained, it rests to him apply them; the clergyman perceives that, by doing it, henceforth, he must start with self-knowledge, because, just from himself, it will be possible to verify what is knowable or not, as well as resources will come up, which one will make use of in order to that enterprise and the grade of credibility to be assigned to them: "I must, then, to come back the look to me firstly, in order to know the instrument which I want to make use of and to know how far I can trust in its use" (Rousseau, 2004, p. 378).

Self-knowledge starts with perception of matter, in view of cognitive process founds on sensibility, which is faculty of sensations, which are external sensorial affections, thanks to which they are perceived, being exercised functions of sensible organs, physic things or material objects. Perception of self-existence depends on external sensorial perception; nevertheless, through it, it is not possible to infer whether self-existence is something that depends or not on what is perceptible. Thus, the Savoyard Vicar breaks rationalist conception, according to which self-existence does not depend on what one sensorially perceives, as well as he does not adhere empiricist conception, which grants to everyone reduces oneself to the whole of one's perceptions, accumulated lifetime along:

I exist and I have senses by which I am affected. Here is my first truth that affects me and which I am forced to agree with. Will I will an own feeling of my existence, or do I just feel it by my sensations? Here is my first doubt, which is to me, at time, impossible to solve. Because being continuously affected by sensations, or immediately, or by memory, how can I know if feeling of 'self' is something out of those same sensations and if can it be independent of them? (Rousseau, 2004, p. 378-379, author's italics).

Empiricism, with materialist tendency, and rationalism, with idealist tendency, according to position assumed by the Savoyard Vicar, are not enough to solve self-existence problem, because one polarizes in subjectivity of cognizant, while other centers in objectivity of knowable. Contrary to empiricist materialism, this is allegation: "Thus, not only I exist, but other beings exist, to know, objects of my sensations and even that those objects were just ideas, continues being truth that those ideas are not me" (Rousseau, 2004, p. 379). Contrary to rationalist idealism, this is allegation: "Well, everything I feel out of me and acts over my senses I name matter and every portions of matter that I conceive together with individual beings I name bodies" (Rousseau, 2004, p. 379).

By showing the Savoyard Vicar allegory, the imaginary clergyman, averse to both skepticism and dogmatism, not, however, less reluctant to both rationalism and empiricism, one verifies that his author explains, thus, his conceptions concerning what he judges necessary and useful to know in terms of religion. The 'Profession of faith of the Savoyard Vicar' is not randomly inserted into IV Book of *Emily or On Education*, considering that:

The teaching of religion happens only now because Emily is able to understand that the mysteries - constitutive of religion - are fundamentally incomprehensible. What is the use of talking about mystery when you are unable to distinguish them from the facts? This confusion is responsible for an empty education, of repetition of words that are not echoes of the heart or expression of rationally acceptable thoughts (Streck, 2008, p. 43).

Departing from matter, it rises to the spirit; from physical discussion, we move on to metaphysical debate. Thus, going over the realm of matter and movement, the elder of Savoy concludes that mechanistic materialism, a consequence of skepticism and empiricism, is insufficient to explain the principles and laws by which both are governed, which are claimed by dogmatism and rationalism. In response, he explains that the universe is not reduced to its physical-motor dimension, since such a reduction would leave the question of the first cause unanswered; that is if there are bodies and laws that regulate them, then what would be their primary reason? The discussion of this question goes through the discussion about the origin of the universe itself.

When it comes to the question according to which the universe would start or not, Rousseau, via Savoyard Vicar, recognizes that this question is not easy to answer; perhaps it is something impossible to be solved, given the limitation of the human intellect; however, it is possible to feel the existence of the Author, Creator, Governor or Cosmic Lawgiver, who is God. Humanly unknowable, God is, nevertheless, humanly sensitive, that is: God, although incomprehensible to the human being in its entirety, in contrast, allows himself to be felt in human intimacy, being, equally, sensorially perceptible, through what created: "I perceive God everywhere in his works; I feel it in me, I see it everywhere around me; but as soon as I want to contemplate him in himself, as soon as I want to look for where he is, what he is, what his substance is, he escapes me and my disturbed spirit perceives nothing more" (Rousseau, 2004, p. 390).

If such is the human condition before the divine nature, then the most advanced and profound theological speculations are frustrated, because such metaphysical explanations about God are reduced to conceptions that are beyond the rationality of which man is capable. As Salinas Fortes points out:

Contrary to the claims of metaphysics, there is no way to penetrate further into the deeper nature of this first reality. However, there is also no reason to worry about this, since such deepening adds nothing to our conduct in life. What is important to retain from these first truths is the idea of the universe as an intelligent 'order', as a vast chain of beings that are interconnected and where each one occupies a very precise place, which best fits with the impenetrable designs, of intelligent goodwill, creator of the whole (Salinas Fortes, 1989, p. 36, author's italics).

In the cognitive process exposed by the Savoyard Vicar, the man first needed to know himself. In doing so, he had to perceive the world in order to establish relationships between himself and his elements; then, it rose to its principles and laws; then he felt, although without understanding, its author, God, creator of both matter and spirit, which is also providential, since it governs his work. Realizing that man is not only constituted of body, but of soul, he concluded that he belongs to both the physical world and the psychic world, that is: "Man is not a simple being; it is composed of two substances" (Rousseau, 2005, p. 48). Due to the observation of the faculties at his disposal, man found his privileged place in the cosmic order. His calculating reason, his searching intelligence and his free will, by way of example, in comparison with other beings, put him in an advantageous position. For this reason, Savoyard Vicar concludes:

It is true, therefore, that man is the king of the land he inhabits, because not only does he tame all animals, not only does he have the elements for his industry, but also only he on earth knows how to dispose of them, and still appropriates them, by contemplation, of the very stars that he cannot approach (Rousseau, 2004, p. 391).

As the son of his time, Rousseau shares the humanist conception, according to which man is the apex of nature, the heart of the cosmos. Even though his situation is unique in the universe, man, no matter how powerful the organs he has in his body and as keen as the faculties his soul is provided with, he cannot prove it, as long as he can think and feel, their own psychic immortality, not knowing, therefore, if they will survive their somatic perishing. For the Savoyard Vicar, eternal life is only presumable, since such a question is beyond human cognitive abilities. As aporetic as the problem of human psychic immortality may be, it is not unreasonable to believe it; the reason for this is that, considering the aspiration of human nature to perpetuate its own existence, its psychic immortality, in the face of its somatic degeneration, is consolatory, in addition to being in accordance with the universal order, of which the clergyman is convinced:

Nevertheless, what is this life? Is the soul immortal by its nature? My limited understanding conceives nothing without limits; everything they call infinite escapes me. What can I deny or affirm? What reasoning can I make about what I cannot conceive of? I believe that the soul survives the body long enough to maintain order; who knows if it is enough to last forever? However, I conceive how the body wears out and is destroyed by the division of parts, but I cannot conceive of such a destruction of the thinking being and, not imagining how he can die, I assume that he does not die. Since this presumption comforts me and there is nothing foolish about it, why would I fear giving myself over to it? (Rousseau, 2004, p. 400).

The discussion about man's psychic immortality also has an eschatological character, since it refers to what will happen to his death. Faced with the relentless moment in which the separation between the soul and the body will simply be inevitable, man wonders about his own future. Such inquiry, in turn, is related to what each man has done or avoided during his earthly life, according to the principles and laws established by God, which will imply punishment or reward; the one for the wicked or the bad, who transgressed them, the one for the good or the righteous, who obeyed them. Such doctrines are part of the Judeo-Christian-Islamic religious tradition, of which Rousseau was aware and which was already present in the Europe of his time. Nevertheless, he raises the difficulty of the coexistence between the idea of eternal condemnation and the idea of justice and the mercy of God, since men become perverse only by virtue of their vices, fed, in turn, by ephemeral needs and for crazy desires, which, in eternity, would no longer have reason to persist; therefore, when its causes were suppressed, why would its effects remain?

Where our perishable needs end, where our foolish desires cease, our passions and our crimes must also cease. What perversity are pure spirits susceptible to? Not needing anything, why would they be bad? If, deprived of our gross senses, all their happiness lies in the contemplation of beings; they can only want good; and who can stop being bad can be miserable forever? This is what I tend to believe, without making an effort to decide on it. O Be merciful and good! Whatever your decrees may be, I adore them; if you punish the wicked, I nullify my weak reason before your justice. However, if the regrets of those unfortunate ones should be extinguished with time, if their ills must end and if the same peace awaits us all one day, I praise you. Isn't it bad my brother? How many times have I tried to look like him! Freed from his misery, let him also lose the evil that accompanies it; be happy like me; far from provoking jealousy, your happiness will only increase mine (Rousseau, 2004, p. 402).

The reflection undertaken by Savoyard Vicar, around the ultimate destiny of human nature, brought with it both the question of morality and the question of happiness; this being the ultimate end to which man aspires, its attainment does not occur without that, on which, equally, it depends not to reach it. Asking himself about the foundation of morality, here is the answer: conscience; emerging from the core of the human being, it approves or disapproves its conduct; moreover, it is your inner master, to guide you infallibly; if man is naturally good, then he owes it to his conscience; its primacy is legitimated by being free from deception or free from error; it is the arbiter of conflicts between somatic inclinations and psychic tendencies; thus, there is no reason to hesitate to follow it, as it is intrinsic to human nature; to contradict it means to contradict the very essence of humanity:

It is enough to consult me about what I want to do; everything I feel is good is fine, everything I feel is bad is bad. The best of all casuists is conscience, and only when we haggle with it do we resort to the subtleties of reasoning. The first of all precautions is that of oneself; however, how often does the inner voice tell us that by doing what is good for us at the expense of others we do evil! We believe that we follow the impulse of nature and resist it; in listening to what it says to our senses, we despise what it says to our hearts; the active being obeys, the passive being commands. Consciousness is the voice of the soul; passions are the voice of the body. Is it surprising that many times these two languages often contradict each other? So, which one should we listen to? Too often reason deceives us, we have even won the right to refuse it, but conscience never deceives us. She is man's true guide; it is for the soul just as instinct is for the body: whoever follows it obeys nature and is not afraid of getting lost (Rousseau, 2004, p. 404-405).

The primacy conferred by Rousseau on conscience, announced by the Savoyard vicar, by placing it above even intellect and reason, makes him become a critic of the very movement of which he is a part, given that intellectuality and rationality, so dear to Enlightenment philosophers, has its credibility questioned by one of its most expressive representatives. However, it is not a question of despising them, making an apology for unintelligibility and irrationality; it is a question of considering them fallible, limited or deceptive; faced with such a possibility, there is awareness, which can always be trusted; this is the hope to which the Genevan philosopher points out:

Consciousness! Consciousness! Divine instinct, immortal and heavenly voice; safe guide to an ignorant and limited being, but intelligent and free; infallible judge of good and evil, which makes man like God, it is you who make the excellence of his nature and the morality of his actions; without you I feel nothing in me that elevates me above animals, except the sad privilege of losing myself from mistakes in errors with the help of an understanding without a rule and a reason without principle (Rousseau, 2004, p. 411- 412).

Dogma and morals are the two constituent parts of religions, according to Rousseau. Dogmas, in turn, are classified into theoretical (metaphysical); and practical (ethical); the former refer to the purely speculative dimension of religion, that is: its first causes or principles; the second, to its ethical dimension, that is to the foundations of what guides human action, namely, morality. As can be seen in this passage, taken from the first of his 'Letters written from the mountain':

In religion, I distinguish two parts, in addition to the form of worship, which is nothing more than a ceremonial. These two are dogma and morality. I further divide dogmas into two parts, namely, that which, establishing the principles of our duties, serves as the basis for morals and that which, purely restricted to faith, contains only speculative dogmas (Rousseau, 2006, p. 156).

The dogmatic-moral criterion, by which Rousseau defines religions, also allows him to classify them, according to logic and ethics; thus, logically, religions are classified as: true, false or doubtful; ethically, religions are classified as good, bad or indifferent. The following quote corroborates this statement: "From this division, which seems to me to be accurate, results from opinions about religion, on the one hand, in true, false or doubtful and, on the other, in good, bad or indifferent" (Rousseau, 2006, p. 156).

According to what has been exposed so far, the education conceived by Rousseau does not ignore the importance of spirituality or religiosity, because: "Religion is useful and even necessary to peoples" (Rousseau, 2006, p. 157). However, he finds that there are religions, as they were thought and practiced in his time, which proved to be inadequate to his model of man and society. By establishing the principles from which he aims to educate his imaginary disciple, he demonstrates that it is unnecessary to banish beliefs, as long as they are not harmful to his human and social project; it is only necessary to redirect them, so that they do not become causes of harm to both individuals and societies, among which, undoubtedly, there is intolerance.

Education for religious tolerance, obtained from the 'Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar', is summarized in three main articles of faith, namely:

- A) God as the driving will of the macrocosm (universe) and mesocosm (nature): "This is my first principle. I believe, therefore, that a will moves the universe and still nature. This is my first dogma or my first article of faith" (Rousseau, 2004, p. 384);
- B) God as a legislative intelligence and driving will in the physical world: "If moved matter indicates a will, matter moved according to certain laws indicates an intelligence: this is my second article of faith" (Rousseau, 2004, p. 386).
- C) Human freedom caused by his soul: "Man, therefore, is free in his actions and, as such, animated by his immaterial substance: this is my third article of faith" (Rousseau, 2004, p. 396).

## Final considerations

Considering the objective for which this theoretical research was carried out, its scope is verified, as it has been demonstrated, throughout this text, that the ideas of the Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau proved to be fruitful with regard to reflection on education for religious tolerance, given that the allegory of the Savoyard Vicar is an apology for the conception according to which religion can be thought and practiced without fanaticism, without obscurantism, without superstition, without tyranny and without violence.

As for the question surrounding this investigation, it is alleged that the propositions made by the Savoyard Vicar, which support the education for tolerance in matters of beliefs, on which religions are based, are summarized as follows:

- 1) God is the author (creator) and the cosmic (universal) governor (legislator); his will moves everything and his intelligence directs everything; his works are both physical or material as well as psychic or spiritual; intangible to the senses; unknowable to intellect or incomprehensible to reason in its entirety; nevertheless, sensitive to the human heart;
- 2) Man is made up of two substances, namely: matter (body) and spirit (soul); his body is certainly corruptible, like everything that is material; his soul, however, is plausibly incorruptible, as everything spiritual is supposed to be; the body is sensorially perceptible, through its parts; the soul, intellectually, through its faculties;
- 3) Man is naturally free, because he is endowed with conscience; thanks to it, it is placed above other beings, thus approaching God; conscience confers morality to the human being, since it gives him the knowledge of the good to be done and the evil to be avoided; without it, man would have no rules for his intellect, nor principles for his reason; conscience is man's infallible inner master, which he can always trust without hesitation, in order to achieve the happiness to which he aspires.

Education for tolerance in religious matters, based on the 'Profession of faith of the Savoyard vicar', gives beliefs the freedom of personal conviction, which is why both skepticism, whose tendency is irreligion, and dogmatism, whose exclusion is excluded, inclination is intolerance; both are more disruptive and help cultivate spirituality or individual religiosity; one, for lack of faith; another, due to excessive faith. Empiricism and rationalism, in turn, are also extreme, as the former tends to materialism; the second, idealism; the former reduces reality to the concrete; this, to the abstract.

The allegory of the Savoyard vicar is the personification of the mind that balances between skepticism and dogmatism, as well as between empiricism and rationalism: this is what education for religious tolerance requires, the balance point between such extremes, which, whether due to lack or excess, do not contribute to the cultivation of personal spirituality, whose core must be conscience. Religiosity, under such perspective, becomes subjectively based, not objectively, because what underlies the beliefs is the conviction that each individual of them carries in their intimate forum, not their coercion, made by authorities, whether secular or religious. If respect for beliefs is necessary, then, this is due to the respect for the freedom of the people who hold them, since there is no authority over them, who belong to the realm of supposition, not to that of certainty.

In relation to the state of the art of the research, it is stated that the considerations about the educational and religious imaginary, synthesized in the discourse of the "Profession of faith of the Savoyard Vicar", add to the contributions that underpin both speculative and pragmatically education for the



religious tolerance, because, although they are the result of reflections made in the 18th century, they carry modern values, given that the upsurge of fundamentalism both in the West and in the East has drawn attention to the importance of the debate about religion in general and, in particular, training for peaceful coexistence between different sets of beliefs.

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### NOTE:

The authors were responsible for the design, analysis, and interpretation of the data; critical writing and review of the content of the manuscript; and for the approval of the final version