

1 **Jean-Jacques Rousseau:**
 2 **Principles of Philosophy of Religion According to the**
 3 ***Profession of Faith of the Savoyard Vicar***
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5 *This is one of the results of a theoretical research about the philosophy of*
 6 *Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), Swiss philosopher whose thought*
 7 *about philosophy of religion is found in his pamphlet entitled *Profession of**
 8 *faith of the Savoyard Vicar, inserted in his work entitled *Emily, or On**
 9 *Education. According to that pamphlet, there are principles of philosophy of*
 10 *religion; they are: 1) Principle of divine unknowability and sensibility; 2)*
 11 *Principle of human psychophysical dualism; 3) Principle of true belief; 4)*
 12 *Principle of individual consciousness authority. The aim of this text is to*
 13 *show what Rousseau still might teach us about the relation between*
 14 *philosophy and religion. The need of this research is based on discussion*
 15 *around religious toleration under philosophical perspective, because, in a*
 16 *world where there is religious diversity, there is demand for a dialogue*
 17 *culture among the several beliefs rather than violent practices that intend to*
 18 *impose beliefs by terror. Thus, the way to peace among religions requires*
 19 *an education for religious toleration and an education for religious*
 20 *toleration requires a philosophical approach about the several systems of*
 21 *beliefs.*

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 23 **Keywords:** *Education. Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Philosophy. Religion.*
 24 *Toleration*
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 27 **Introduction: What does Jean-Jacques Rousseau teach about philosophy**
 28 **of religion?**
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30 The reason why Rousseau inserted his pamphlet *Profession of faith of*
 31 *the Savoyard Vicar* into his work entitled *Emily, or On Education* is simple: to
 32 teach to his pupil ideas about the nature of God, religion, belief, morality, and
 33 toleration. Thus, he understands that the appropriated education to his disciple
 34 requires some considerations whose aim is to keep him distant from fanaticism,
 35 ignorance, intolerance, and obscurantism in matter of faith, as well as to avoid
 36 useless philosophical discussions that do not help to understand what necessary
 37 is to conceive and feel about connection among God, His relations to His
 38 creatures, human soul immortality, belief, moral conduct, and religious
 39 toleration. Although Rousseau considers that philosophy is not useful in matter
 40 of religious discussion, there is a philosophical approach concerning his
 41 religious thought, because he shows some principles in order to deal with
 42 philosophy of religion; they are: 1) Principle of divine unknowability and
 43 sensibility: God is unknowable to human reason, but sensible to human heart;
 44 2) Principle of human psychophysical dualism: Human beings are both made
 45 of spirit (immortal soul) and matter (mortal body); 3) Principle of true belief:
 46 True religion is from inside (heart), not from outside (church); that is: true
 47 belief is a matter of conviction, not imposition; 4) Principle of individual

1 consciousness authority: everybody has a consciousness that is maximum
2 authority in matter of faith and moral.

3 *1) Principle of divine unknowability and sensibility: God is unknowable to*
4 *human reason, but sensible to human heart*

5 Who is God to Jean-Jacques Rousseau?

6 God is the Supreme and Absolute Being, the Optimum and Maximum
7 Entity, Author and Ruler of Everything. However, it is impossible to human
8 reason to explain Him because He overcomes all the human cognitive faculties.
9 On the other hand, human heart can feel Him, deeply and strongly. Thus, the
10 proof of the existence of God is given by human sensibility, not by human
11 rationality. It is just what philosophy has to say about God: nobody can know
12 Him, inside their reason, absolutely, but everybody can feel Him, inside their
13 heart, relatively. God is the greatest mystery to human mind; however, one can
14 find Him by feeling Him inside his/her core. By feeling his/her heart, one can
15 conclude that God is also good, fair, and true; however, how to explain the
16 existence of the evil, injustice, and falsehood? The answer is this: human free
17 will. Human beings are not perfect, but perfectible. Thus, they not always
18 know how to employ their faculties to live according to good, justice and truth.
19 They can commit errors or mistakes and they can drive them into pain,
20 suffering and misery. Thus, God is not guilty of human disgrace; the human
21 beings themselves are guilty of their misfortune.

22

23 *2) Principle of human psychophysical dualism: Human beings are both made*
24 *of spirit (immortal soul) and matter (mortal body)*

25 Human beings belong both to materiality and spirituality. Once having a
26 body, they partake of the attributes of the material world; thus, they are
27 palpable, corruptible, ephemeral, mutable like the matter itself. Once having a
28 soul, they partake of the attributes of the spiritual world; thus, they are ethereal,
29 incorruptible, permanent, immutable like the spirit itself. How to explain such a
30 paradoxical being? Because they have bodies, they are subject to matter laws;
31 thus, they need to eat, to drink, to dress up and to take shelter, for example and
32 they not always have all conditions to supply their needs; their passions
33 emerge, and they suffer until they can satisfy them. Because they have souls,
34 they are subject to spirit laws; thus, need eternity, fulness, infinity and
35 permanence, for example and they not always have all conditions to supply
36 their needs, too; their passions also emerge, and they suffer until they can
37 satisfy them. How to solve it? Rousseau appoints that nature has all the
38 answers that mankind needs, because according to him not all our needs are
39 natural or real; thus, human beings must follow nature, because it can indicate
40 what them really need and so they will definitively leave every artificial or
41 imaginary need that only brings more unnecessary suffering.

42 *3) Principle of true belief: True religion is from inside (heart), not from outside*
43 *(church); that is: true belief is a matter of conviction, not imposition*

44 According to Rousseau, there are three kinds of religion:

45

- 1 a) natural religion: there are no temples, no altars, no rites; only consisting
2 of the purely interior cult of the Supreme God and of the eternal duties
3 of moral; it is the pure and simple religion of Gospel, the true theism, or
4 the natural divine right.
5 b) religion of the first nations: it is the national religion, that belongs to
6 only one country; it has its own gods and patrons, as well as its dogmas,
7 rites and external cult prescribed by law.
8 c) roman catholic religion: it is stranger, because, by giving to men two
9 legislations, two bosses and two homelands, it subjects them to
10 contradictory duties, and it prevents from being able to be both a
11 devotee and a citizen at the same time.
12

13 Rousseau declares true only natural religion because it derives from
14 human heart. It is made of personal conviction about God, not externally or
15 violently imposed. There is no church, but sincere faith. However, Rousseau
16 also defends that there is necessary to increase the civil religion, that would be
17 able to lead citizens, regardless of their own beliefs in matter of faith, to live in
18 concord, in harmony, in peace and in tolerance, because it simultaneously
19 allows them to believe or not in anything, as long as their beliefs do not harm
20 the established civil order, as well as it will make them more loyal citizens to
21 the state of which they became members.
22

23 *4) Principle of individual consciousness authority: everybody has a*
24 *consciousness that is maximum authority in matter of faith and moral*

25 Emerging from the core of the human beings, consciousness approves or
26 disapproves of what to believe or what to do. Furthermore, it is their Inner
27 Master, that unfailingly guides them. If mankind is naturally good, then it owes
28 its consciousness. Its primacy is legitimated by being exempt from deceit or
29 error free. It is the arbiter conflicts between somatic inclinations and psychic
30 tendencies. So, there is no reason to hesitate to follow it, because it is intrinsic
31 to human nature, because to go against it means to go against the very essence
32 of humanity. The primacy given by Rousseau to the consciousness, announced
33 by the Savoyard Vicar, by placing it above even the intellect and reason makes
34 him become a critic of the very movement of which he is a part, considering
35 that intellectuality and rationality, so dear to Enlightenment philosophers, have
36 their credibility surely questioned by one of their most expressive
37 representatives. However, it is not a matter of despising them by making an
38 apology for unintelligibility and irrationality; it is about considering them
39 fallible, limited, or deceitful; towards that possibility exists the consciousness
40 that can always be trusted, whether in matters of faith or in matter of morals,
41 above all.
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1 **Conclusion: Education for religious toleration based on philosophy**

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3 The *Allegory of the Savoyard Vicar* is an apology for the conception
4 according to which religion can be thought and practiced without fanaticism,
5 without obscurantism, without superstition, without tyranny and without
6 violence. Education for religious tolerance gives to beliefs freedom of personal
7 conviction. Thus, Rousseau teaches that The Allegory of the Savoyard Vicar is
8 the personification of the mind that balances between skepticism and
9 dogmatism, as well as between empiricism and rationalism. Education for
10 religious toleration requires the break-event point among those extremes
11 because they do not contribute to the cultivation of the personal spirituality,
12 whose core is consciousness. The base of the beliefs is the conviction that
13 everyone brings inside their intimate forum, not coercion, made by authorities,
14 be they secular or religious. The world is made of religious diversity; thus,
15 there is demand for a dialogue culture among the several beliefs rather than
16 violent practices that intend to impose beliefs by terror. The way to peace
17 among religions requires an education for religious toleration and an education
18 for religious toleration requires a philosophical approach about the several
19 systems of beliefs. Those principles of philosophy of religion indicate that
20 Jean-Jacques Rousseau is still an important thinker who can help to discuss
21 about how to speculate and apply education for religious toleration based on
22 philosophy.

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