



Voltaire and Rousseau: Details of a Rivalry about Evil and Providence

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Essay

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Voltaire, who always seems to believe in God, really never believed more than the devil, since his pretended God is nothing more than a malicious being who, according to him, has no other pleasure than doing evil.
Rousseau, *Confessions*, Book IX

Judicious admirer of the beast and of the brutality of the savages, you have shouted against science and cultivated the sciences. You have treated authors and philosophers as charlatans; and to show an example, you have been an author.
Voltaire, *Letter to Doctor Jean Jacques Pansophe*

Abstract

Voltaire and Rousseau set themselves a great goal: the happiness of the human being. They worried about what harms him: one will attack despotism, bigotry, intolerance, both of them talk about dogmas; the other will denounce the institutions that pervert and degrade, at the same time that it evidenced the longing for innocence and a not very well understood “golden age” of Humanity, in a century characterized by the thought of origins. One will be more devastating when using the ingenuity of art to ridicule and convince; the other goes more towards himself, to his heart, as a criteria of moral rectitude. However, they cultivated a memorable controversy between them, of which we will refer to: a) the will, freedom, social inequality and democracy; b) the end of a conception of providence and evil; c) the Volterian campaign to discredit Rousseau; d) their mutual deism; e) *Candide* and the mockery of the ideas of Leibniz and Rousseau; f) a theory of misfortune, chance and pessimism (Voltaire) in the face of a regulatory and inactive optimism, although pleasant (Rousseau). The poem that Voltaire dedicates to the Lisbon earthquake (1755), to which Rousseau gave an incisive response, is one of the central reasons for this controversy. In the century of the glorification of reason, Voltaire and Rousseau are the party poopers, but for different reasons. Both became staunch critics of the promise of reason and the trust placed in it. Both fought for tolerance and for a Christianity separate from politics. However, the differences will be numerous and very marked. At the very least, Voltaire’s mettle could not exist without the consideration of his adversaries, “living or abstract”, according to Valéry, while Rousseau’s was marked by a shyness that made him move on various planes made difficult by his relationship with the others, as Starobinski has shown. In the end, we will have to have a debate about a cautious pessimism, supported by facts and history, against an optimism based on hope; that is, between freedom and providence. That is why, instead of continuing to call the 18th century the Enlightenment or the philosophers’ century, we should insist on classifying it as the “chiaroscuro” century, because not everything was, in effect, this absolute trust in the powers of reason, culture, society, laws. Voltaire and Rousseau live in the same century, although their differences marked the transition of an era. Goethe noted that with Voltaire “it will be the old world that ends, while with

Rousseau it is a new world that begins.” There are several incompatibilities: from humor, taste, even inclinations, exaggerated awareness of their forces, to a divided public opinion, condemnatory in the case of Rousseau, supposedly fueled by Voltaire, who was in charge of preparing pamphlets written in a way anonymously against him. One belonging to a wealthy social class, the other, emanated from the fertile soil of poverty and abandonment. If nature had already done something on its part, society will end up placing them in irreconcilable extremes, precisely at a time when the figure of the “celebrity”, different from the glory of the hero and mere bourgeois reputation, was being born.¹

Keywords: Tolerance; Evil; Deism; Providence; Freedom; Good; Optimism; Misery

“Cry at your Madness”

Perhaps they met on the occasion of some Parisian salon. The two died the same year, 1778, and together they are buried in the Pantheon in Paris. They were separated by 18 years. Voltaire could therefore not have read Rousseau’s *Rousseau judge of Jean-Jacques* (1780), nor the *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782). On the other hand, Rousseau attended a performance of *Zaire* (1732), read *Zadig* (1747), although he did not read *Candide* (1759), nor did he read *The Naive* (1767) or the *Man with Forty Shields*. He had the *Philosophical Dictionary* (1764) and read the *Philosophical Letters* (1734), as well as the *Sermon of the Fifty*; what he was most passionate about were Voltairean tragedies and poems. Reading *Alcira or the Americans* (1736), Rousseau confirms his vocation as a writer, considering Voltaire’s style as a model to imitate. The reading of the *Philosophical Letters* will also help to define his interest in philosophical questions. The contact takes place when Voltaire is looking for someone to make arrangements, text, and music for the play *Las fiestas de Ramiro*, as Rousseau tells it in his *Confessions* (1770). The first differences will begin to emerge when Rousseau demonstrates the theoretical and ethical disconnection in the criticism of Western culture and civilization, whose progress will not be equivalent to moral progress, in his famous *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* (1750). It is very likely that Rousseau had in mind, for the elaboration of the work, the *Defense of the mundane or the Apology of luxury* (1738) by Voltaire. In the *Discourse*, Rousseau criticizes the taste for pageantry over honesty, where the artist is part of a market of merits and talents that generates profound inequality.

When Rousseau sends him *On the origin of inequality among men* (1755), Voltaire sends him a letter in which he makes laconic and ironic remarks, such as the one that after having read the work “it makes you want to walk on all fours”. Rousseau’s proposal is that there is more evil created by human errors than by ignorance; perspective that is obviously contrary to the opinion of Voltaire, and that goes not only against his ideas, but also against his social status. Voltaire could not agree with social equality, in addition to the fact that the people, the “scoundrel”, in his words, are incapable of governing themselves, so that inequality is

essential to maintain social order. Voltaire felt a “sincere aristocratic contempt for the vulgar or populace” (Villar, 36). That is why freedom in Voltaire cannot be separated from relief and material well-being. Let us put the beginning of said scathing letter, which has become famous in the contest between the two Enlightenment philosophers:

I have received, sir, your new book against the human race, thank you. You please men, to whom you tell your truths, but you do not correct them. We cannot paint in stronger colors the horrors of human society, to which our ignorance and weakness promise so much consolation. Never had the spirit been used so much in wanting to make us beasts; they make you want to walk on all fours when you read your book. However, since I have lost the habit for more than sixty years, I unfortunately feel that it is impossible for me to resume it, and I leave this natural aspect to those who are more worthy than you or me. I can no longer embark to meet the savages of Canada; firstly because the diseases that have overwhelmed me keep me with the greatest doctor in Europe, and I would not find the same relief with the Missouris, secondly because war has settled in those countries and the examples of our nations have returned to the savages almost as bad as us. I am just being a peaceful savage in my chosen solitude in your country, where you should be.¹

¹ Jean Huber’s famous painting, *Lever de Voltaire*, from 1772, portrays the philosopher getting dressed in the morning in an awkward position, which caused him great annoyance; he is still in his night clothes; he appears raising his right leg while putting on underpants, revealing his bare legs and a barely achieved balance with the extension of his right arm, while a secretary waits for the first masterful words of the great critic of the Enlightenment to write them down on some pages. The shock of being publicly portrayed in such an intimate habit speaks of the way in which the private will begin to enter the public sphere at a time when “gossip” or “rumor” will begin to form part of public opinion. and its political impacts (see Jürgen Habermas, *Historia y crítica de la opinión pública*. Gustavo Gili, Barcelona 1981). Rousseau, as we know, resented such a situation, while he will want to understand it; dismantle the mechanism of “public opinion”, which he will try to do in his different “confessional” texts (See Roberto Sánchez, *Memoria, imaginación y escritura. Rousseau y la invención de sí mismo* Madrid: Editorial Académica Española, 2014).

1 <http://www.site-magister.com/volrous.htm#lettrous>. Site that

The disagreements will come in a cascade. Rousseau sides with those who forbid the existence of theaters in Geneva. For his part, Voltaire is credited with the anonymous pamphlet of 1764, "Citizens' Sentiments", which mentions the probability that Rousseau's grief stems from a venereal disease, and that he has abandoned his five children in an orphanage. In 1766, "A letter from Mr. Voltaire to Mr. Jean Jacques Rousseau" will appear in England, regarding the *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts*, where it is stated: "Judicious admirer of the animality and brutality of savages, you have shouted in against the sciences and you have cultivated the sciences. You have accused authors and philosophers of charlatans, and to set an example you have been an author." In a copy of the *Social Contract* (1762), preserved in the Saint Petersburg library, the following annotations by Voltaire can be read, a strange mixture of conformity, admiration, but at the same time severe, scathing and laconic criticism:

unfortunate - crazy you are, don't you know that the North Americans were exterminated by the war? - What do you know? Have you seen savages make love? - Joke. You are well served to make such predictions! -What a chimera is that golden mean! - very beautiful - Diogenes monkey, how do you condemn yourself! - False, I have had two draft horses that lived 35 years - nonsense - all this is abominable and without knowledge of nature - too cynical and disgusting - chimera - it is confusing and dark - well - all this is not clearly stated - on the contrary, the laws protect the poor against the rich - dull praise of a vile factious, and of an absurd priest that you detest in your heart - what! Will you always contradict yourself? - sophistry - very false - not at all - what style - what nonsense! - what arrogantly written trivia! - what consequence? And my dog does not do what he wants? - here is a devout unbeliever - you start by talking about yourself, and you always talk about yourself, you are not intelligent - and always you - you shamelessly lie - that is good - bold and good - good - excellent idea - bad, very bad - here you argue well - you're right here - too strong - very beautiful - how fatuous - one finds that joke pleasant, I thought it was very good, etc.²

Moreover, Voltaire writes the *Letter to doctor Jean Jacques Pansophe* (1766), where he returns to the charge with all the possible irony to satirize Rousseau's thesis.³ There he insists that he is not an atheist and that he is lying.

reproduces interesting elements of the dispute between the two philosophers, without a title and without a page.

² <http://www.site-magister.com/volrous.htm#lettrous> (My own translation).

³ http://agora.qc.ca/documents/rousseau-une_satire_de_rousseau_la_lettre_au_docteur_jean_jacques_pansophe_par_voltaire, s/n.

He tells that he has become a "judicious admirer of the folly and brutality of savages", and that he has proved that authors and philosophers are charlatans, but above all by setting himself up as an example. He satirizes two of the Genevan's major works, the *Nouvelle Eloise* and the *Emilio*, making a quick synthesis of their content. In the first, pointing out that a pedagogue honestly bribes his disciple by teaching her virtue, so that he wishes with all his heart that she "make him a son": she will become a woman, mother and the most tender friend of a husband who does not love, to die reasoning without wanting to pray for God. Of the second, he will say that impractical pedagogical methods are proposed, accusing Rousseau of being strongly related to revelation, preaching deism. Given this, he offers three lessons: one of good faith, another of sense, "bon sens", and one more of modesty. For the first, he asks him to have confidence in the arts and sciences that he has criticized so much in his *Discourse*; that he recognizes that it is to philosophy that he owes his health: "kneel, ungrateful, and cry before your madness"⁴, he delimits in a few words. Voltaire considers that European culture is the one that has allowed us to stop being slaves to spiritual and temporal tyrants that once ravaged the continent: "life is sweeter, customs more humane, and states calmer." By the second, he asks him not to contradict himself with the concept of virtue that, in any case, supposes the lights, the reflection and the philosophy that, if denying them, will make it impossible, in addition to the fact that the virtues that it supposes in the wild will always be negative in the form of "lack of". Finally, he asks him to be modest, that he recognize that he was not born with "the talent of humility or justice of spirit." And he recommends that he practice good writing, where, according to him, Rousseau has haughtily elevated his texts unnecessarily: "a good writing is what enlightens men and confirms them in good; a bad writing is the one that thickens the cloud that hides the truth; and plunges them into new doubts, and leaves them without principles." The true merits will have to be achieved not by being singular, but reasonable.

While Voltaire considers Rousseau a traitor to philosophy, without answering his letters, Rousseau denounces, in his *Letters written from the mountain*, that Voltaire's *Sermon of the Fifty* is actually his and not Frederick II's, as he had wanted to make it look like. Voltaire will not forgive him for this denunciation and will insist on spreading libels and pamphlets until he reaches the famous *Sentiment of the Citizens* where, as we have pointed out, he reveals the abandonment that Rousseau made of his children, of which, moreover, we find a broad explanation in his letter to Mme. de Francueil, a situation that in turn will motivate him to write his *Confessions*, where he includes the last letter he

⁴ Voltaireat http://agora.qc.ca/documents/rousseau-une_satire_de_rousseau_la_lettre_au_docteur_jean_jacques_pansophe_par_voltaire, s/n

wrote to Voltaire, in which he denounces him for being part of the broad and rude plot that has been orchestrated around him to make him impossible life:

I no longer love you, sir; you have done me the most sensible of evils to me, your disciple and enthusiast. You lost Geneva for the price of the asylum you have received; You have alienated my fellow citizens for the price of the applause that I have also given you; it is you who make it possible for me to stay in my unbearable country; it is you who make me die in a foreign country, deprived of all the comforts of the dying, and thrown for all honor on a road, while all the honors a man can hope for join you in my country. I hate you, well, because you wanted to (...). Of all the feelings with which my heart has been penetrated by you, only admiration remains that cannot be denied to the fine ingenuity and love of your writings. If I can't honor more than your talents in you, it's not my fault. I will never lose respect for them or for the procedures that respect demands.

In any case, Rousseau will be, as a good reader of him, Nietzsche, will sustain later, beyond good and evil, in relation to men. Nothing they can do or don't do to him will disturb him. That will be one of the conditions for the renewed inner peace that he will have to build away from them. At the age at which he writes his *Daydreams*, nothing can affect him or make him change the criteria he adopts at the end of his days, despite how necessary the others have been to him, and the utopias and hopes that he fervently placed in them. It will be too late to change, besides what his contemporaries represent will be next to nothing. He has been more joyous alone than he might have been with them. He knows that with this estrangement, they will never find him again, even if they wanted to return to him. However, like the Nietzschean prophetic tone, there will remain the hope that a new generation of individuals will be able to understand it, overthrowing the erroneous judgments that were erected against him, so that we "see him as he was", as noted in his *Confessions*. Hence, it is the future that ends up interesting him and for which he will speak (he never imagined how fundamental it would be both for Romanticism, German idealism, and for *avant-garde* movements such as Surrealism⁵). It is related of this futurity that he will write his *Dialogues*, in particular *Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques* (1777). Dialogue that, in effect, launches posterity to be read in a continuous communication, without interruptions

5 The one who has referred to the relationship between André Breton and Rousseau, especially *The Origin of Languages* and the *Discourse on the Origin and Inequality Among Men*, was the Mexican writer Octavio Paz, although he maintained the suspicion that he never read Rousseau. See the texts dedicated to the surrealist in *Corriente Alterna* (1967). For the rest, in *El Arco y la lira* (1967), Paz recognizes Rousseau as the founder of modern French poetry, alongside Chateaubriand.

--writing that opens to the endless time of reading--, and that will keep him in tension until the end of his days, as much as when he searched in society for a "just heart" that would take pity on him. It is the hope of posthumous reading that will make his loneliness more bearable, in an encounter with the absent more than with those who were his contemporaries.

The Daydreams of a Lonely Walker begins with these memorable lines: "Here I am, alone on earth, with no brother, neighbor, friend, or company other than myself. The most sociable and most loving of humans has been outlawed by unanimous agreement."⁶ Rousseau literally feels himself to be from another world, strange, alien, without him feeling anything in the slightest proximity, and without finding any resemblance in anyone, much less any feeling of fraternity. He has left this world of humans who have despised, insulted, offended, slandered and misunderstood him, finding an evil that his works do not have and that rather speaks (badly) of them. Evil that derives from the misinterpretation of his works and what he really wanted to say in them. That is why he will have to make the determination again to take care of himself, and once he had done it in his *Confessions*. He is willing to clarify himself and others again. "Only for the rest of my life, and since I only find consolation, hope and peace in myself, I do not have to and do not want to take care of anything other than myself." Studying himself, the great task that he would have exhaustively developed, according to his intentions, in the *Confessions*, but which was insufficient. There is in this an equally absolute pretension of wanting to exhaust, as far as possible, all the possible objections that his texts could imply, although he is well aware of the difficulty of such a task as well as the impossibility of "wanting to say it all". And he places the hope that it is language that replaces what is lost, the absence of what is gone, as well as the presentification of what is to-live, what is to-come, and thanks to the abundance of meanings that the author does not can limit. Rousseau realizes the immensity and inexhaustibility of the written text, even when it can perhaps fully substitute the lack, the lack, the trace, of what has been, that is, even when it faces oblivion and proposes to be a recovery-healing.

At the end of the day, he will have to thank all those who have led him, in one way or another, to this state of solitude and isolation, since they have given him the extraordinary

6 Rousseau, J.J., *Las ensoñaciones de un paseante solitario*, Madrid, Alianza, 1988, p. 27. The smooth translation of this consulted version is hampered by not respecting some punctuation marks and sentence construction of the original, for example: "Me voici donc seul sur la terre, n'ayant plus de frère, de prochain, d'ami, from société que moi-même. Le plus sociable et le plus aimant des humains en a été proscrit. Par un accord unanime ils ont cherché (...)" (Cf. Rousseau, Jean-Jacques (2012-04-25). *Jean-Jacques Rousseau - Oeuvres Complètes* (French Edition) (Kindle Locations 73913-73914). Editions la Bibliothèque Digitale Kindle Edition. It is clear that the Spanish edition has placed the beginning of the second sentence at the end of the first.

opportunity to continue getting to know himself. In one of the many objections that Rousseau makes to the philosophers of his time, is that of not having responded adequately to his doubts but, quite the contrary, all of them ended up tearing down the few certainties he had, “those ardent missionaries of atheism and very imperious dogmatists”. Rousseau could never be able to adopt their “desolated doctrines”, in addition to the fact that what they wrote or thought was not for themselves but for others, when he was looking for a rather personal philosophy for himself, which was going to imply an external reform and material, but also intellectual and moral, not exempt from a labyrinth of difficulties, puns, missteps, objections, deviousness, “darkness”, always attentive to the rules of prudence. A philosophy that will not only increase self-knowledge but, in tune with the times, would require a reform -although not elaborated in the form of a treaty--, in short, a philosophy of action. The rejection of those opinions and judgments that ended up despairing him, or that only served to increase his “misery” was part of his emotional defense system. He was able to evaluate the ideas for the degree of emotional instability they cause, for the uncertainty they generate, and for having to go through moments of reflection and meditation that were only aimed at determining the truth.

The Mechanics of the Masses

Much has been made of how Rousseau concludes that his contemporaries have been plotting against him almost from the start of his celebrity. This will worsen after his return to France, in 1670, after 10 years of exile and after he had published his *Confessions*. In fact, the decree of June 1672, promulgated in Geneva and which prohibits *The Social Contract* and *Emile* for considering them “reckless, scandalous, impious, tending to destroy the Christian religion and all governments”, will be considered by the philosopher as the beginning of “the work of the darkness”, the “mystery of iniquity”, or universal plot, the starting point of the last part of said work, being the theme that will link it to the *Dialogues*. Although he is unable to go to the bottom of the matter, given that he is “lost in the dark and tortuous route of the underground to which they lead”⁷ he leaves the task to the reader to reread the previous chapters and advance to “the first engines of everything”, knowing that he understands where they will arrive. In the absence of a true knowledge of factors and reasons, he will maintain that “everyone has gone mad”: the anticipated madness of the manipulation of the “populace” or low people who lend themselves to it.

To the distances that he will have in relation to the encyclopedists, is added the famous controversy and public

ridicule that Voltaire will make of him, up to the famous affair with Hume. Both the *Daydreams* and the *Dialogues* are a reaction and response to said public condemnation, and to the misunderstanding in which some of his main theses would have fallen. However, Rousseau sought to understand something more around these controversies that announce, for the first time, the importance of public rumor, the role of public opinion and its political importance, that is, the way in which public condemnation acts from unquestioned principles, based on prejudices and affections, in addition to the way in which, in a unanimous way, the judgments against him were raised, that is, and to the symptoms of irrational public manifestations just as the poet Paul Valéry would have pointed out, in a century in which the public will make its appearance, what sociologists will later call “the masses”. Studying his case, Rousseau sought to understand the operation of an anonymous, public, unanimous machinery of condemnation to which it was not possible to attribute any moral or legal responsibility. To Rousseau who, from his perplexities, precedes the studies of mass psychology, as well as what will end up being called the “Kafkaesque”. The great mystery will then consist in understanding “the total alienation of the public towards the cause of the philosophers”⁸, as well as the way in which his growing isolation only fueled this contradictory vision of reality.

An enthusiastic and celebratory writing is maintained in much of the *Confessions*, but to change to a somber tone in the last chapters. Rousseau appeals to the indulgence of his readers, wishing to be better understood even by those to whom he had no need to say anything (“he who understands best is the one who least needs to be told”⁹), trying to vindicate himself. His grief, torment and bewilderment leave no room for doubt in an existence now dominated by darkness: “I lost orientation, my head was spinning, and in the horrible darkness where I have not stopped sinking, I no longer perceive a ray of hope that can lead me, no support or foothold where I can feel safe and resist the despair that drags me.” In fact, the final part of the *Confessions* turns out to be an account of the cruelty with which he was treated, such as when people threw stones at his rooms, and that he had to take refuge with the help of a few friends in inaccessible places, such as on the island of Saint-Pierre where he could rediscover inner peace and get lost, or “transport” from his daydreams and contemplative life with nature: live without worry, in an “eternal pleasure”¹⁰ in this life and not in the other”. He will have to vindicate the leisure of solitude against that of social circles by pointing out that the first is given on the basis, not of necessity, but of freedom and will,

8 Leborgne Erik, “Presentation”, *Dialogues de Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques*, suivis de *Le Lévitte d’Ephraïm*, France, Flammarion, 1999, p. 16.

9 Rousseau JJ, *Dialogues*, p. 66.

10 Rousseau JJ, *Les Confessions*. Livres VII à XII, p. 525.

7 Rousseau JJ, *Les Confessions*. Livres VII to XII, Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1998, p. 453.

where he can dedicate himself to “doing nothing”, to “start hundreds of things and not finish any”, to “come and go as you please”, change the project from time to time, give free rein to curiosity as if, in fact, it were a child, an image that he places in this condition of social freedoms; in short “to laze all day without order and without continuity, and not follow in anything more than the whim of the moment.”¹¹ Rousseau, a reader of Charles Linnaeus (let us remember that he wrote a *Dictionary of Botany* published in 1773, which can still be found in a tourist guide to Switzerland), devotes himself to it with passion, in those days of isolation and idleness: the study of the structure and organization of plants forming groups through a chain of relationships and combinations capable of presenting wonders to an observing spirit.

The *Daydreams* and the *Dialogues of Rousseau* judge by Jean Jacques will also be part of the response he will give to try to correct the negative judgment that had already been formed against him, and prove his innocence. Dialogue of conscience with himself in which he will have to incorporate his detractors, as well as those who he expected to understand him. At the end of the day it will be an impossible dialogue since there will not be an exchange, strictly speaking, but a monologue in an inquisitorial manner. In any case, with these works he tried to clarify some of his fundamental ideas, contributing profoundly to the development of the modern autobiographical genre, although the dominant tone is indeed self-defense. In these works, as well as in much of his correspondence between the years 1770-1776, Rousseau describes, with a dramatic quality abundant in eloquent phrases and with a mixture of pain, anger and feeling, the actions, rumors and false accusations that his “persecutors”, as he came to call them, they did against him, caricaturing him, betraying him, ridiculing his ideas until he made him feel like a “monster”, at all times, distancing him from the understanding of others. In the last book of the *Confessions* he already refers to the existence of a “universal plot” and that his accusers actually formed, in this which has been understood as a persecutory delusion by several of Rousseau’s scholars, a “league” almost criminal. Indignation, fury, delirium combined in a malaise that, however, will have to overcome itself managing to formulate one of the most peaceful states of human existence.

Rousseau never understood the reasons for all this smear campaign to which he was subjected, always hoping that someone would come to his defense; an honest man who could defend him publicly. A whole generation turned towards that antipathy that a few were in charge of promoting. An absurd accusatory system invented by an “infernal spirit” that encompasses public opinion and that Rousseau will believe he can dismantle from the knowledge

of the wrong principle; of opinions and prejudices, which make it possible. “The league is universal without exception, without return, and I am sure to end my days in that horrible prescription without ever penetrating the mystery.” The possibility of dismantling such a principle is given to him by the fact of verifying that all opinion judgments against him are equivalent and that this is not random. He will understand that the rules from which men draw their opinions derive from their passions and prejudices; after all, works of themselves. When he understands that this orchestration of an entire generation came together to make him suffer and give him an uncomfortable life, isolating him, forcing him to “see himself only on earth”, without being able to understand what it was about, Rousseau will see that, in relation to him, his contemporaries are nothing more than “mechanical beings” who only act by impulse and for which, consequently, it will be enough to study their actions using the laws of movement. Mechanics of the masses that are guided solely by the possibility of their passions and by the lack of a judgment based on truth. Passions that translate into impulses that turn out to be the cause of movement as if they were mere objects. Rousseau fails to see in them the inner motivations they might have had for, in the indistinctness of the masses and in their convulsive appearance, only appreciating what moves them. He cannot imagine any passion, any intention that could explain his behavior. He only observes the impulse, the anonymous, depersonalized force that they have become. His action is already beyond his understanding and he can only conclude that “his internal dispositions ceased to be something for me: I see in them nothing more than mute indifferent masses, devoid of all morality in my opinion”.

Candide and Causal Ironies

The differences and distances between Voltaire and Rousseau encompassed metaphysical ideas, morality, the way of understanding religion, even the talent to cultivate the French language, one with precision and rigor, irony and mordacity, the other with passions that border on poetic prose. Voltaire’s short stories or novels cannot be associated, for example, with the *Confessions* or the *Nouvelle Eloise* which, although well written, the latter, in an epistolary manner, delves into the melancholy and other passions of its characters, which will have to be fertilely exploited by German romanticism up to Baudelaire. Voltaire found this work “silly, bourgeois, reckless, annoying”, accustomed to the demands of prose where it runs at the speed of action and seeks to go to the center of situations to ironize them or make them at least credible within the absurd¹², just as

12 Thanks to this mastery achieved in his fictional works, Valéry (1957: 522) thought of Voltaire as a “caricaturist of genius”. His economy in the literal design of puppets, magicians, sages, judges, ladies, make one think, the French poet maintains, of Daumier’s paintings. This style allowed him to

11 Rousseau JJ, *ibid.*, p. 526

it happens with chapters XI and XII of *Cándido*, in which an old woman tells the story of her misfortunes, and where their accumulation is ridiculous, just as it happens with the characters of Gargantua and Pantagruel. Practically, all the misadventures occurred condensed in the span of a life that, at the date on which the story is told, does not end. Making a show of synthesis, speed and precision, Voltaire recounts, in “a few words” the horrors he has experienced: daughter of Dad; at the age of fifteen, in three months “she had already passed poverty and slavery, she had been raped almost every day, she had seen her mother dismembered, suffered hunger, experienced the horrors of war, and was dying of the plague in Algiers”¹³. Series of events that allow her to see herself without fear and rather with a necessary naturalness to lighten the loads of “oneself”:

nothing more foolish than insisting on continually carrying a burden from which we constantly want to get rid of; nothing more laughable than being horrified at ourselves and being attached to ourselves; nothing, in short, more lacking in common sense, than caressing the snake that bites us, until it devours our hearts.¹⁴

Concatenation of events that only enumerative exhaustion stops. Cascade of events that saturate a life, turning it precisely into an uncontrollable flow, removing it from ancillary quietism, encompassing, with its excess, the great plural event of the world. On a small scale, the hectic and uneventful life of a character like this reflects the opening that the new fiction will have to include the reader in adventures that they would otherwise not be able to have. Action that accelerates the meaning of life until it is summed up in a sequence that advances the passing of the years in a sentence; condensation of time, a summary of processes at the speed of a new life that consecrates emotional intensities, rather than dramatic extensions. Prose of speed, literary economy, as we also find it in that shorter sequence in which

expand the domain of opinion, based in the Court house, towards the general public, at a time when it was born. Simple form or style that “goes from logic to comedy, from good sense to pure fantasy”, capable of exploiting all the weaknesses of the opponent, leaving him as a ridiculous being, but capable of creating a large audience. Better yet, it is this public that will speak for the first time in literary works crossed by irony, satire, popular voices and opinions. For this reason, Voltaire places himself, alongside Chateaubriand, Lamartine, Victor Hugo, Zola, Valéry considers, on the path that will make it possible for the intellectual to make a novel career in politics by manipulating facts for souls, just as he had previously manipulated souls by purely literary works.

13 Voltaire, Francois-Marie. *Cándido y otros cuentos*. Madrid: Alianza, 1997, p. 80.

14 Voltaire, F.M, *ibid.*, p. 81. The Spanish translation used omits the fact that these are questions in the original, in addition to adding non-existent phrases: “car y a t-il rien de plus sot que de vouloir porter continuellement un fardeau qu’on veut toujours jeter par terre? d’avoir son être en horreur et de se tenir à son être? in fin de caresser le serpent que nos devore jusqu’à ce qu’il nous ait mangé le coeur? (Voltaire, 2001: s/p).

Cándido and Cocambo go into exile in the New World to try to reach El Dorado. The horses die of fatigue, the provisions run out; they feed on wild fruits until they reach the banks of a river where they find some coconut trees that serve them to use a boat to take them, since “a river always leads to an inhabited place”. All this written with a rigor indebted to a certain taste for geometry established by Descartes.¹⁵

Voltaire ridicules Leibnizian ideas, an element in the discussion about causality, fatality, evil and free will, combining them with the mockery of the possible venereal infection that Rousseau contracted as a young man. In *Candide*, he jokingly recounts how Pangloss has contracted it, which is about to lead to his death. In the curious genealogy that he establishes to explain how he became infected, he alludes to homosexual relations between the contracting parties of the venereal disease, which could not be, on the other hand, more than a hard dart to the positions of the church around the sexuality, as well as the exhibition of the “bedroom secrets” of the aristocracy, which were already beginning to be made public, precisely by literary means, such as the famous epistolary novel, as well as *Julie ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761), *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1796) by an otherwise Rousseau’s disciple, Pierre Choderlos de Laclos. Pangloss receives the infection from Paquette, the baroness’s young chambermaid who lived with them in the old castle from which they will be expelled, who in turn had obtained it from a wise Franciscan, who has it from an old countess, who has received it from a cavalry captain, who owed it to a marquise, who had it from a page, who would have received it from a Jesuit, who in turn had received it “in a direct line” from a companion of Christopher Columbus.¹⁶

This genealogy of events is repeated on several occasions in Voltaire’s work, as a way of parodying the causal relationship that derives, from the painful events, the greater good for each character. What has happened must have been for the general and utmost benefit of the best of all possible worlds, where there is harmony between a prefigured destiny and freedom, although this is limited, fallible, since it is only about the power to act, as Leibniz points out in his *Discourse on Metaphysics*. Action that is guided by self-determination to do good. The only way to strengthen freedom is through reflection: exercises of the soul that make it more vigorous.

Cándido is scandalized by the probable death of his tutor as a result of the infection he has contracted, who answers him, again and completely, with the thesis of established harmony and of the greater good superior to

15 Valery, Paul. “Voltaire”, *Oeuvres*. Francia: Gallimard, vol. I, 1957, p. 520.

16 The consulted Spanish edition of *Cándido* omits the last link of contagion of the disease: it puts a double “etc. etc.”

all the small inferior evils. What has happened to Pangloss has been “indispensable” in the best of all possible worlds; a “necessary ingredient” so that in the end, said ironically, the Europeans would have “chocolate and cochineal” (continuing with the reference to the New World¹⁷). Therefore, the more particular evils there are, the greater the good. Particular evils do the general good. Pangloss will not die, like Cunegunde, Candide’s beloved, but at the end of the novel he will repeat the thesis of the concatenation (which can be infinite) of causes, with unequal effects, but so that he can be where he is, alive and enjoying a present that is thus overdetermined, which cannot be regretted or unsaid, but which was obtained little by little, which constitutes another important thesis of the approach. Indeed, as Leibniz puts it, the problem is the consideration of that infinity that is created while traveling. According to the Deleuzian interpretation of the Leibnizian continuum (“labyrinth of the continuum”), where the question of the “best of all possible worlds” is present, it is not just a moral question -perhaps it never has been-, but of the understanding precisely of the continuum. According to this lucid interpretation, the world is defined by its continuity, which also defines the best of all possible worlds. God brings into existence that world that achieves the maximum of continuity, which Deleuze defines as “the act of a difference insofar as it tends to vanish”; continuity is an “evanescent difference.”

Candide’s ending seems to agree with this, suggesting that not everything was a mockery of Leibniz’s and Pope’s theses. Pangloss, practically resurrected from the venereal disease¹⁸, will recite that sequence of events again, not always keeping the temporal proportion between them, and for which he is where he is. Everything is “rigorously chained in the best of all possible worlds” --Pangloss tells Candido,

because the truth is that if you had not been fired from a beautiful castle for the love of Miss Cunegunda, if you had not been put into the Inquisition, you would not have walked America, or foisted a sword on the baron, or lost the rams of “El dorado”, you would not eat candied azambogos and pistachios here.¹⁹

17 In the entry “America”, from his *Philosophical Dictionary*, Voltaire defends the thesis that just as the origin of the animals typical of that continent is not questioned, it should be ensured that the men who populate it originate from it: “Since there is no get tired of inventing systems regarding how America could be populated, I will not get tired of saying that the one who gave birth to flies in those climates also gave birth to men.” (electronic version at <https://www.e-torrededabel.com/Biblioteca/Voltaire/America-Diccionario-Filosofico.htm> (retrieved on 08-27-2020).

18 Equally alive will appear the one who transmitted it to him, Paquette, with which Voltaire argued that, just as the story of its possible ending was given, something else could have happened that, in another possible world, was not fulfilled according to the strict sequence of causes and effects, and that this world of possibilities can interfere with the real world, something impossible from Leibnizian considerations, although very probable in ours.

19 Voltaire, F.M, *op. cit.*, p. 153. Again, in the Spanish edition consulted,

To which Cándido will respond with the famous final sentence that shows a clear allusion to Leibniz’s *Theodicy*, “we have to cultivate our garden”²⁰, as if the idea of a pre-established destiny was opposed to individual decision-making and care of one’s own. The idea of the garden and the labyrinth, vitally associated with that of infinity, were very frequented by the authors of the Enlightenment. Such is the economy of events that Voltaire ironizes based on Leibniz’s ideas, which are at the same time simplified, a source of ridicule, but which leave the imprint of an obligation for Candide to take more charge of himself and of the decisions he makes.

“Ghosts of a Moment”

Let us now see the differences in relation to his mutual deism. For Rousseau, natural religion represents the essence of the Christian religion; for Voltaire, the supernatural is something that concerns the essence of Christianity. This is nothing without revelation and miracles; otherwise, one would be talking about a deism foreign to Christianity. Voltaire hates the man of feeling that Rousseau represents, since he is scared by unbridled affectivity to the extent that he is the source of many of the ailments he denounces. Voltaire’s God is sensitive to reason, not to the heart. Instead, for his criticism of fanaticism and intolerance, Rousseau turns to inner feeling. The poem on the “Natural Law”, by Voltaire, shows more affinities between both, but not so the one dedicated to the Lisbon earthquake, as will be seen. In the first, Voltaire argues that there is a natural law and universal morality, “uniform at all times and places.” Thus, the “Eternal being who deigns to encourage us, / In all hearts he sown the same seed. / Heaven made virtue; man made the appearance./ He can clothe it with imposture and error./ And he cannot change it: his judge is in his heart”²¹ God is no longer so much in the cosmos as in consciousness; he speaks to man through the morality that we discover within ourselves. “Worship a God, be just and love your country” are the maxims that we find in the poem and of this moral that is heard in the hearts (hence the little difference with

the first sentence in which Cunegunda is mentioned is much stronger in the original, since it includes the expression “having been kicked out of the castle”. “cedrats” is translated by “azambogos”, when it is rather the fruit of the cider.

20 In the Spanish translation, “orchard” is put where “garden” should be, thus losing an important biblical reference and a theme common to many Enlightened Ones, as well as the extraordinary analogy with one of the most important passages of the Leibnizian Theodicy, to which Voltaire is supposed to have agreed. The figure of the garden is opposed to that of the forest and is similar to that of the labyrinth, easily represented by the former.

21 Voltaire FM, “Poema sobre la ley natural” y “Poema sobre el desastre de Lisboa o Examen de este axioma: “Todo está bien”, en Alicia Villar, Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau. Madrid: Alianza, 1995, p. 122.

Rousseau) "If God is not in us, then never existed".²² God has given us his law since he gave us being. That is why we must abandon theological systems since "To rise, let us descend into ourselves."

The way to confront intolerance and, consequently, dogmas and fanaticism is by questioning the "language of God", the "invisible Master". It is necessary to search, through reason, if God has spoken, if the language that has been attributed to him by the "hateful impostors" is true, Voltaire notes. "No doubt he has spoken, but he went to the Universe." It is nature that is "the apostle of that eternal cult": "Good sense receives her and remorse / avengers, / born of conscience, are her defenders, / Her terrible voice is heard everywhere".²³ In the second part of the poem, Voltaire alludes to intelligence, justice and conscience as brakes given that, as soon as he listens to it, he "immediately instructs". Consciousness is what restores balance "in a heart full of desires, enslaved, but born free".²⁴ It is a weapon that nature has placed in our hands to attend to "interest in the love of others".

Beyond language, fashion, opinions, education, in what seems to be a clear reference to Rousseau's ideas, Voltaire maintains the existence of "first impulses whose principle is Divine" and whose power is constant. The poem is published in 1751; what Voltaire does in it is a call to know the nature of instinct that is as enigmatic as nature itself. There is no way for us to compete in laws with the creator: we should not be so daring, nor give orders to the earth as gods, we, who are "ghosts of a moment, whose imperceptible being is a neighbor of nothing".²⁵ Near the end of the poem we read that "The Universe is a Temple where the Eternal resides." It is the voice of Nature that, drowned out, has increased all the misfortunes committed by religious intolerance, the source of "pious rage". At the end it reads: "What is true comes from Heaven, error comes from Earth." There will have to be serenity at the end of the search and the painful, cruel, relentless wandering of life: "I see, without being alarmed, eternity appear, / And I cannot think that a God who gave birth to me, / That a God who poured out so many favors upon my days, / When my days are gone, torment me forever." Not without reason, Rousseau saw flagrant contradictions in the two parts of the Voltairian poem.

"Thinking Atoms in a Lump of Mud"

On November 1st 1755, an earthquake, followed by

a flood and fire, devastates Lisbon. There is talk of 50,000 victims.²⁶ Voltaire, shaken by the indisputable emotion of the event, sees the opportunity to refute the optimistic theses represented by Leibniz, Pope and Wolf, who held that the world had been created by God, organized in such a way that a necessary Evil, in tiny proportion, is compensated by an always much greater Good. Formula that he will caricature at pleasure in his *Candido*. The "everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds" embodies, in his eyes, the terrible danger of fatalism and inaction. The first description of Pangloss (the one who talks about everything in a "loquacious" way, without thinking), *Candide's* tutor, leaves no room for doubt: it is a caricatured image of Rousseau and Leibniz (Pansophe), in such a way that he will insistently maintain that there is no effect without a cause, and that the world they live in is the best of all possible worlds, just as the castle of the monsignor, the baron who has welcomed him, is the most beautiful, and that the madame, his wife, is the best of the possible baronesses. With this, Pangloss demonstrates that things cannot be otherwise since, being for an end, they are for the best end of all. Everything is made for the best: what we eat, use, do, wear. There is therefore no margin of oscillation of creation that allows it to deviate from its ultimate purpose, which will always be the best in that possible world devised by Leibniz.

At some point in *Candide*, Voltaire shipwrecks Pangloss and his disciple precisely in front of Lisbon, just as the earthquake occurs. There he refers to 30,000 deaths. The description is no less intense: "Whirlwinds of flames and ashes covered streets and squares; the houses were demolished, their foundations were shaken, and thirty thousand human beings of all ages and conditions perished under their ruins".²⁷ Pangloss sarcastically wonders "the sufficient reason for this phenomenon." What has happened has had to happen, and in that sense, it has been for the best, since if there is a volcano in Portugal, then what has happened must have happened. The knowledge of the causes of the effects becomes part of a moral consolation. This has been necessary, within the best of all possible worlds, to the extent that it is "impossible for things not to be where they are". Later, heading towards the American El Dorado, *Cándido* maintains that the "new world will be the best of all possible worlds". When the characters arrive at the utopian place, supposedly located in Peru, *Cándido* expresses the idea that it would have been convenient for Pangloss to travel the world to realize that what he considered to be the best of all possible

22 Voltaire FM. *ibid.*, p. 118.

23 Voltaire FM. *ibid.*, p. 121.

24 Voltaire FM. *ibid.*, p. 124.

25 Voltaire FM. *ibid.*, p. 127.

26 As late as 2004, 3,000 human remains were found in a grave, under a cloister of a former convent of the time in Lisbon. The evidence speaks of deaths by crushing, fire, murder and cannibalism (Noragueda, César, "El terremoto de Lisboa de 1755: la catástrofe perfecta", *Hipertext*, Website, 2015, <https://hipertextual.com/2015/12/terremoto-de-lisboa>).

27 Voltaire FM, *Cándido y otros cuentos*, p. 62.

worlds, in reality, was not. so, the idea already expressed that perhaps that better world was in the American “New World” is reaffirmed. Later, when Candide finds Pangloss alive again - he had supposed him dead - he will ask him again if, after everything that happened to him (hanged, stuffed, beaten to death, taken to the galleys), he still considers that he lives in the best of all possible worlds. This one will tell him that, being a philosopher, he will not be able to contradict his “first feeling”, and that it is not convenient for him to go back, so that the pre-established harmony continues to be the “most beautiful thing in the world”, just as they are “the full” and the “subtle matter”.

Voltaire wonders what remains after the earthquake. Can it still be assumed that it is a lesser evil, partial, occurring within the framework of a general good? It was as if the ideas of “providence, divine justice, universal harmony, on which daily serenity rested, also cracked like the ground that was under his feet,” according to Villar. For this reason, this critic points out, “Lisbon became the image of the Last Judgment, and perhaps the court that, in turn, judged the prevailing optimistic rationalism.” Furthermore, in Candide himself, as indicated by a young reader of Voltaire, the providential and superstitious idea about earthquakes, in which both the university and religious authorities will participate, will have to be ironized, when we read that the University of Coimbra has established that “burning a few people alive over a slow fire, and with great ceremony, will result in an infallible secret to prevent earthquakes”. In the midst of the Enlightenment, such actions of excessive cruelty will be common food for the Voltairian anticlerical. Voltaire sends the poem to Rousseau, Diderot and Grimm. Rousseau understood an obvious inconsistency in Voltaire between the Poem on Natural Law and the one dedicated to the Lisbon disaster, the former being considered a catechism of deism, and a plea for tolerance and against any type of fanaticism. Rousseau is surprised by the pessimism that he finds in the second, to the point of plunging him into grief and despair. He responds to the poem with the famous *Letter on providence* (1756), which will not be answered by Voltaire. Ultimately, what is being discussed is the problem of evil.

To Pope’s “All is well”, Voltaire counterposes, in the poem about the earthquake, “There is evil on earth”. A theory of misfortune that is completed with a theory of chance. The doctrine of optimism is nothing more than an error of the spirit: it is denied by both the universe and our feelings. Evil will not have, in the end, a convincing explanation. We are “thinking atoms that suffer in a world, a theater of pride and horror”.²⁸ The poem turns out to be an inquiry into the feeling of precariousness of human existence. Consolations of philosophy to a philosophy of despair: “life is a sentence

to useless suffering.” At the end of it, and following criticism from the Genevan pastors and friends, he will add the last verses where he refers to hope. Either way, he won’t fail to point out that optimism is “a cruel philosophy.”

Evil shows that not everything is ordained for us. Voltaire accepts that “everything is arranged and everything is ordered by Providence” even if it is not ordered “for our present welfare”. And he recognizes that there is good and evil on earth, that “no philosopher has ever been able to explain the origin of moral and physical evil”, and that “there is as much weakness in the lights of man as there is misery in his life”.²⁹ It is the revelation that can untie this “fatal knot”, while the “hope in a development of our being in a new order of things can only console the present misfortunes, and that the goodness of Providence is the only asylum to which man can resort in the darkness of his reason and in the calamities of his weak and mortal nature”.³⁰ Evil is on earth, “everything is at war”, only the secret of that evil is unknown to us: “Does evil come from the author of all good?” Neither answer seems to convince Voltaire. “Nature is mute and in vain asks itself;/ A God is needed who speaks to the human race. / It belongs to Him alone to explain his work, / To console the weak, and to enlighten the wise.”³¹ And of course, especially Leibniz’s proposal is the one that is not the lucky one either: “/ An eternal disorder, a chaos of misfortunes, / Mixes our vain pleasures with real pains”.³²

Voltaire confirms the fragility of the human being in the face of the forces of nature, his capacity for destruction and creation in a reality before which nothing is possible. Thus, nothing can be right when “Nature is the empire of destruction”, and that a “weak compound of nerves and bones/ cannot be insensitive to the shock of the elements”.³³ It would be necessary to go beyond vain optimism and surrender to a greater knowledge of what Nature is, but above all “listening to it”, and listening to ourselves, to realize the false images that we have created, a product of weakness. rather than error, as Rousseau would have supposed. We are “tormented atoms” in the “heap of mud”, although “thinking atoms” who have thrown “our being into infinity” thanks to thought and the scrutinizing gaze of the heavens, without being able to see up close what we are. The pleasure that we manage to get to alleviate our sorrows is temporary, just a shadow that passes fleetingly. Faced with “Everything is fine”, Voltaire, forced by the circumstances that have been discussed, will say rather that “Everything will be fine

29 Voltaire FM, *Cándido y otros cuentos*, p. 157.

30 Voltaire FM, *Cándido y otros cuentos*, p. 157.

31 Voltaire FM, *Cándido y otros cuentos*, p. 163.

32 Voltaire FM, *Cándido y otros cuentos*, p. 163.

33 Voltaire FM *Cándido y otros cuentos*, p. 164.

28 Voltaire FM, *Cándido y otros cuentos*, p. 68.

one day". To unrestrained optimism, moderate hope and "submission": it is the word before Providence ("I do not rise up against Providence"). If in another time he was seen "Singing the seductive laws of sweet pleasures" (the poem *Defense of the mundane or the apology of luxury*, already cited) now, "instructed by old age", sharing the weakness of the "lost humans", Voltaire only knows how to suffer and hope, after having added to the infinite being what it would lack.

The Perfectibility in Evil or the Sweet Pleasure of Existing

In Book IX of the *Confessions*, Rousseau refers to the incident of the poem, and to the Voltairean pessimism, which he wishes to reverse in some way: "Stunned to see that poor man, overwhelmed, as it were, with prosperity and glory, declaim in any way bitterly against the miseries of this life, and always find that everything is wrong, I have elaborated the insane project of bringing him back to himself, and to show him that all is well.³⁴ And he points out a great inconsistency in the promoter of tolerance insofar as he enjoyed all the goods of life, and yet he creates a "horrible and cruel image of all the calamities from which he was exempt", within well-being, generating despair among their peers. Voltaire's expected response to his letter was the *Candide* which he, he confesses, has not read. Three paragraphs barely devoted to the matter in his *Confessions*. Despite the admiration confessed, Rousseau did not want to spend more time on the memory of this bitter event.

Rousseau considers that the optimism that Voltaire criticizes, and that he considers cruel, is the best consolation for precisely all the evils that he describes. "Pope's poem soothes my ills and invites me to patience, yours sours my sorrows, incites me to gossip, and stripping me of everything except broken hope, reduces me to despair".³⁵ Furthermore, he seeks to denounce a strange opposition between what Voltaire tries to prove in the poem, and what he experiences as a reader. He argues that the problem of evil forces Voltaire to alter some of God's perfections by seeking to justify his power at the expense of his goodness. For Rousseau, the distinction between moral and physical evils is clear: the former are dealt with in relation to man and his improvement, while the latter are inevitable: "if considering sensible and impassive matter at the same time is a contradiction, as it seems so to me, then they are inevitable in any system in which man is a part".³⁶ The problem then seems to him not

to know why man is not happy, but to know why he exists. Rousseau argues not that the earthquake has occurred, but the reason why houses are built in such a way that they are easily knocked down, and then it would be necessary to understand the reason why their inhabitants returned, after the first earthquake, to recover their things, just when the second earthquake occurs. Citing what he has learned in *Zadig*, "that an accelerated death is not always a real evil, and that sometimes it can be a relative good", Rousseau understands that "the evils to which nature subjects us are less cruel than the ones we add".³⁷

In spite of everything, Rousseau considers that it is better to be than not to be, as a result of the inventory of evils that happen to us; that, existence is still preferable, so we should not expect any compensation for the evils that happen to us. Despite the "beautiful institutions", said laconically by Rousseau, we have not turned life into something unbearable and therefore prefer "nothing to being" (Leibizian nod). In the skilful calculation between good and evil that philosophers make, Rousseau maintains, they forget the "sweet pleasure of existing". It is, after all, vanity that, by despising death, leads one to slander life. Rousseau supposes that who Voltaire consulted, or considers in his poems, are the rich who fear for their lost riches in the face of calamities, or else people of letters "who are of all kinds of men the most sedentary, the unhealthiest, the most thoughtful and, consequently, the most unfortunate"³⁸. Apart from this, there would be another type of human beings to whom life has brought more joy and happiness to the point of preferring it if they had the opportunity to be reborn. Hence, "if dying is not always an evil, it is very strange that living is".³⁹

Conclusion

Rousseau held that the relative evil that might exist in the world fits into divine goodness for the preservation of good in general. God loves the whole more than one of the parts, although each one of them "multiplies his goodness": "Therefore, he can sacrifice, despite his goodness, or rather precisely for his own goodness, a little of the happiness of individuals for the conservation of the whole".⁴⁰ The evil of an individual contributes to the good in general: "I die, I am devoured by worms, but my brothers and my children will live as I have lived, and so I do for the order of nature and

37 Rousseau JJ, "Carta de J.J. Rousseau a Voltaire (1756)", en Alicia Villar. 1995. Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau, p. 188.

38 Rousseau JJ, "Carta de J.J. Rousseau a Voltaire (1756)", en Alicia Villar. 1995. Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau, p. 189.

39 Rousseau JJ, "Carta de J.J. Rousseau a Voltaire (1756)", en Alicia Villar. 1995. Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau, p. 190.

40 Rousseau JJ, "Carta de J.J. Rousseau a Voltaire (1756)", en Alicia Villar. 1995. Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau, p. 196.

34 Rousseau JJ, *Les Confessions* (Livre VII à XII), p. 236.

35 Villar A. Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau, p. 185.

36 Rousseau JJ, "Carta de J.J. Rousseau a Voltaire (1756)", en Alicia Villar. 1995. Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau, p. 186.

for all men, what Codrus, Curtius, Leonidas, the Decians, the Phileni did voluntarily... and another thousand for a small part of the men".⁴¹ Therefore, Providence only acts universally. Rousseau argues that the problem of Providence has to do precisely with the origin of evil. For this, things must be thought relatively in the physical order, and absolutely in the moral order, so that the

The greatest idea I can get of Providence is that each material being is disposed in the best possible way in relation to the whole, and that each intelligent and sensitive being is in the best possible way in relation to oneself; which in other terms means that for those who feel its existence it must be worth more to exist than not to exist.⁴²

Rule that must be applied to the total duration of each sensible being, and not "to some particular instant of its duration". For this reason, the question of Providence is related to that of the immortality of the soul and the eternity of sorrows, in which he believed, "with happiness", Rousseau. In the end, what Voltaire has done in his poem about Lisbon seems very inhuman to the Genevan: "There is something inhuman in disturbing calm souls, and in inflicting men in vain, when what one wants to teach is not neither good nor useful".⁴³ Neither attacking so much the superstition that disturbs society, nor "respecting too much the religion that sustains it", is the balanced point on which Rousseau will hold.

Between Voltaire and Rousseau, who was the most tolerant in the end? The one he wrote about tolerance or the one who could practice it? Like Voltaire, Rousseau was against the control of faith and that man "dare to control the interior of consciences"; against religions that undermine the peace of the State, and against intolerance. Rousseau asks Voltaire, after having offered a "catechism of man" with the poem, to work on a "catechism of the citizen", that is, in the formulation of a moral code, a kind of "profession of civil faith", "That it contained positively the maxims that each one should admit and negatively the fanatical maxims that should be rejected, not because they are impious, but because they are seditious".⁴⁴ Such a code would be, in truth, the only "religion". Rousseau proposes that Pope's aforementioned thesis to be replaced by something better than the one proposed by Voltaire, where the whole prevails:

41 Rousseau JJ, "Carta de J.J. Rousseau a Voltaire (1756)", en Alicia Villar. 1995. Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau, p. 197.

42 Rousseau JJ, "Carta de J.J. Rousseau a Voltaire (1756)", en Alicia Villar. 1995. Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau, p. 199.

43 Rousseau JJ, "Carta de J.J. Rousseau a Voltaire (1756)", en Alicia Villar. 1995. Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau, p. 201.

44 Rousseau JJ, "Carta de J.J. Rousseau a Voltaire (1756)", en Alicia Villar. 1995. Entorno al mal y la desdicha/Voltaire-Rousseau, p. 203.

"the whole is what is good", or, "everything is good depending on the whole".⁴⁵ Since the understanding is limited in the investigation of the principles and the ultimate causes of everything, of the constitution of the world and of the end that its author has placed, optimism cannot be obtained from the properties of matter, nor "from the mechanics of the universe", but "only by induction of the perfections of God, who presides over everything".

Rousseau was sensitive to the conflict established between truth and fiction, also looking for the latter to be true, and because the former was rather based on error, pettiness, misunderstanding. Lies turned into truths thanks to a mechanical plot orchestrated by his contemporaries who forced him to find himself on the plane of confessional writing to the point of requiring one more fiction of himself, although with proximity to his feelings, emotions, daydreams and imagination. He learned about the difficulty of "wanting to say everything" and of being authentic and true in terms of memory, where memory ended up becoming more and more an accident, where the order is altered and only the sequence of emotions and emotions prevails. the feelings. Wanting to be authentic and communicate a truth about himself, Rousseau accepted the help of the imagination to fill the "gaps" that forgetting created in his memories. Say more and truthfully not about the facts or things, but about the circumstances; perhaps this is the fundamental difference in a work of knowledge that seeks more the conditions in which it occurs than in the mere results, especially when it comes to self-knowledge.

Rousseau admits that if he would have gone against the truth in any way, it would have been in indifferent matters, or because of the embarrassment of having to speak, or because the pleasure of writing so demanded it, and never for a reason of selfish interest to himself, nor with the idea of taking advantage or committing prejudice towards another. Whoever reads his confessional texts will see that they also contain the description of humiliating and even "insane" situations of the author, but that they never reach a painful level of not being able to be said and that there is nothing in them that could not have been said in the past. correspondence with what happened. From all of the above, it follows that the uncertain "profession of truthfulness" that Rousseau assumed had its foundation rather in a feeling of rectitude and fairness, than in the very reality of things. Certainly, he elaborated autobiographical passages with shades of fable, but what he is sure of is that he never lied.

45 Rousseau argues that the addition to Pope's proposition of an article makes it more precise: "au lieu de tout est bien, il vaudroit peut-etre dire, le tout est bien, ou, tout est bien pour le tout." In Villar's edition (197) such an article is missing in the second moment of the expression: "and instead of saying: 'Everything is fine', it would be better to say: 'Everything is fine' or 'everything is in order with everything'".

Lie of the imagination or fiction that is not at odds, moreover, with the truth, but on its side. Always fragmentary truth that the imagination complements in its understanding as something unitary and with final meaning. The only way that Rousseau understood the lie was as a betrayal of the truth: not being told when it is known. And if this could have happened, it was on the occasion of something that he considered banal, without significance and without prejudice to anyone. Assumed in this way, truth is a virtue, or in any case, a metaphysical being from which neither good nor bad results.

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