
APPEAL TO FAITH (ARGUMENTUM AD FIDEM) AS AN ELEMENT OF THE CONTEXTUAL SCIENTIFIC SUBSTANTIATION IN PEDAGOGY AND THE ATTRIBUTE OF THE RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW

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Abstract

In the modern humanitarian and pedagogical scientific worldview, the religious and purely scientific format of the knowledge content and methods of its production are either unreasonably opposed or are identified for several significant reasons, but none of the above extreme points of view is logically and substantively sound. This complicates the fruitful development of the pedagogical research methodology and perplexes the very content of Pedagogy. Therefore, the concept of 'faith' is analysed in this article. The article shows the similarities as well as a significant difference of the attributes dogmatically communicated to the believer's mind that are related to the world order and moral behaviour along with conscious pedagogy of trust and humanity. The analysis is underlain by the opposition of the religious faith and a varying degree of confidence of the teacher, who conducts research, in the conclusions and results of his/her own research project or one submitted by someone for reflection, including: a) confidence in the statistical results of the assessment of samples that show the distribution of certain parameters of the educational environment or the student; b) confidence in the correct application of the theoretical confirmation of the conclusion proposed; c) confidence in the opinions of the expert scholars in the field of Pedagogy, Psychology, and Philosophy of education and in the academic traditions of presenting the content of Pedagogy and methods of pedagogical knowledge.

Keywords: concept, contextual substantiation, structure, religious worldview, pedagogy

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1. Introduction

The modern world manifests itself through very diverse contradictions of various depth and scale that are interwoven with each other to various degrees and affect the development of the tangible as well as social and spiritual spheres. The latter includes everything related to the thesis ‘the battle of ideas’ [1, 2], manifested through the problem of the evolution of fundamental concepts and knowledge basics, a plenty of methodological difficulties, where the latter, in particular, are relevant to the topic of determinism and stochasticity of the phenomena of the world and their mechanisms, as well as to the topic of the possibility of synthesis of natural and mathematical and humanitarian knowledge [3, 4]. As before, academic disputes about determinism and randomness (for example, the modern concept of dynamic chaos) are accompanied by polemics of Science and religion and the attempts to find areas of ‘delineation of influence’ of these two spheres, in which an individual reflects the surrounding reality, as well as the areas, in which their conjugated ‘engagement’ is quite appropriate [5].

The polemic of Science and religion is very acute in the social and humanitarian fields of knowledge [6-9]. In this regard, the essence of the problem is limited to the statement, on the one hand, of the need for methodological separation of religious and scientific description of educational reality, and on the other hand, the feasibility of searching ways of productive synthesis of religious and pedagogical ideas in the area of moral education and behaviour. Revealing the duality mentioned, we consider it necessary to note that in recent decades some works have appeared in the field of pedagogical knowledge that demonstrate the possibility and feasibility of ‘scientific and religious synthesis’, revealing a positively valuable educational role of religion both in the historical past and at the current stage. The arguments given that are quite thoroughly proved cannot be ignored. At the same time, methodologists and education philosophers point to the need to search for borderlines of the methodological standpoint that would allow to clearly identify the similarities and differences of religious and purely scientific approaches to studying educational reality, since the attempts to fully identify the last two lead to a number of oddities and inconsistencies. The situation is complicated by the fact that despite the progress in the development of the logical and epistemological structure of modern humanitarian knowledge, pedagogy still often fails to present its findings in an evidence-based format, resorting only to descriptive declarations, and therefore looks like a set of sermons one must blindly believe in. It involuntarily provokes a wrong, in our opinion, point of view that the pedagogical and religious knowledge are identical. These considerations make us think that the topic stated in the title is relevant.

2. Literature review

Today, some domestic and foreign researches contain a wide range of opinions that the pedagogical knowledge pertains to the field of Arts and Humanities ('high art', including, in particular, ways of representation following the pattern of the religious doctrine) and that it cannot be presented in the scientific and theoretical form. Such conclusions are presented in detail in the works of domestic and foreign philosophy, the methodology of science, and pedagogical science researchers [9-13]. However, the analysis of other academic sources confirmed our conclusion that even within the Social studies and Humanities a 'weak epistemological version' should be given some theoretical form [9, 14-17], and today a number of logical and epistemological components in the pedagogical knowledge and the process of its production, that are traditionally identified in the science studies, are manifested in one way or another [18-21]. The need to seek a way to present Pedagogy and educology in a theoretical format, focused on the basics of logic and epistemology, is clearly indicated in the books and articles by A. Kornienko [22], B. Barczynski, R. Kalina [7], B. Mallaband [23]. Many interesting ideas in this area are presented in the works of other authors: attempts to identify methodological regulators of comparative pedagogical research are made in the work of C.A. Anderson [10]; theoretical methodology of innovative activity in education is discussed by S.H. Billig [12]; the interdisciplinary format of pedagogical knowledge and methods of its acquisition is presented by J. Wettersen [21], similar aspects of the general methodological pedagogy field are discussed by T.S. Shirish [13]; the idea of theoretical rationing of Pedagogy as a branch of Humanities is proclaimed by J. Bauer [11]; finally, multifaceted prospects of Philosophy in the educational community and educology are explored by W. Brezinska [9]. Russian authors point to the necessity of understanding the problem of correlation between the objective pedagogical reality and the subject-specific scientific reality by the pedagogic methodologists [24-29]. According to the authors of this article [30], the logical and epistemological field of pedagogical research should be projected onto the context of philosophy and psychology of *understanding*.

Despite the very broadly presented content of the works on the methodological aspect of Pedagogy and educology, many topics are presented in the provisional and generalized format, and the problem of understanding the theoretical (and in particular, logical and epistemological) horizons of pedagogical knowledge and search remains unresolved – this is confirmed by the findings in the works dedicated to methodological and pedagogical reflection: M. Baxter [8], G. Gardiner [14], D. Pritchard [17], D. Lundie [18], H.J. Koskinen [31], whose studies are connected with the idea that in the modern environment critical discourse continues to be relevant in the discussion around building a generalized pedagogical knowledge, which has the right to claim the status of knowledge, which is academically and theoretically verified and can positively and constructively influence the development of educational practice and methods of its research.

Within the framework of the selected perspective of the topic, in the context of the above-mentioned content of the works of philosophers of science, pedagogy methodologists and educology experts, the question arises as to the degree to which the teacher conducting research can be *confident* in the results. We are talking about an analogue of the religious concept of ‘faith’ in scientific pedagogy or Pedagogy tending to the realization of its scientific status. Here we stylistically and semantically transform ‘*faith*’ into the ‘*degree of confidence*’ of the teacher conducting research in the outcomes and conclusions when carrying out a scientific project. For this purpose, we consider it viable to identify the content, which combines the logic and epistemology of pedagogical knowledge and methods of its production - this is the *logical and epistemological code of pedagogy* clicheed above. Among the publications confirming the relevance of the topic of the article, we could mention the scholar dialogue of N. Snaza and H. Letiche [32, 33]. The very title of the article by Letiche [32], proclaiming the scientific pedagogical topic and approach to its exploration, and the response from the opponent [33], indicates unfavourable situation in the construction of a ‘scientific portrait’ of Pedagogy. They are translated into Russian as “puzzling pedagogy” (the first adjective also can be translated using such clichés as “difficult to understand...”, “confusing...”, or “surprising pedagogy”) by H. Letiche, and as “discredited from the scientific point of view...”, “pedagogy full of many coincidences” by N. Snaza. Insufficient identification of Pedagogy’s scientific status is proved also by the content of the works of two polemicists. On the one hand, they emphasize the specificity of the object of pedagogical research, its striking difference from the objects of Natural sciences and the impossibility to build a pedagogical theory on the ‘classical’ (natural and mathematical) model basis; on the other hand, there is an urgent need for theoretical generalization, systematization of a huge array of experimental data, ideas, concepts, theoretical constructions, etc. accumulated from practical education. All this is entirely applicable to the texts of pedagogical research, e.g. “confusing pedagogy, which surprises with a lack of structure in it” [21, p. 10; 33, p. 261] produces similar journalistic-style texts that are full of metaphors and difficult to read.

A number of works by foreign authors can be somewhat conditionally considered as part of the content of addressing the problems of the relevant academic field designated above. In particular, Tomasz Les in [20] notes the specificity of the theory of education developed by the academic pedagogical community. Its difference from the theories of another content profile, focuses on the philosophical and ethical aspects of this theory and points to the intentions normalizing and regulating the construction of the modern theory of education, not offering, however, any certain components of the pedagogical theory structure and the relationship between them. An interesting approach to the construction of the pedagogical theory is proposed by Hanan A. Alexander [15], which is based on the ideas of pedagogy of dialogue, synthesizing critical social philosophy, liberalistic, pragmatic and aesthetic perspectives. In this regard, in the course of a detailed analysis, the synthesis mentioned above shows

eclecticism in relation to the methods of constructing *epistemologically verified educational theory*. Finally, the study of J. Shepperd [19] contains an attempt to focus the format of pedagogical research on the comparison of the phenomena expected and actually achieved in the pedagogical community in the process of implementing the educational innovations designed by the authors, limiting this research to the phenomenological level, which basically refuses the idea of building the *logic of Pedagogy* that we cannot agree with for the reasons noted above.

Though we do not have a substantially complete conclusion about the ways to solve the whole set of the above problems today, we can nevertheless confidently state the relevance of the construction of such academic segment as a logical and epistemological form in Pedagogy. Among the reasonable possibilities of such construction, we can mention empirical, theoretical, and contextual substantiation of outcomes and conclusions outlined and specified in articles [6, 34-37]. In this regard, it is notable that the content of contextual substantiation by Science includes an appeal to tradition (*argumentum ad antiquitatem*), common sense (*judicium*), authority (*verecundiam*) and *faith (fidem)*. The last component is outlined in a very polyphonic way in the above works. In this regard, a lot of discussion topics arise, including the question of how the teacher's research activity, which employs contextual substantiation, is connected with the possibility of appealing to faith in a religious and in a purely scientific way, as well as the question of whether the points of contact between these two perspectives can be found. The latter is transformed into the problem of finding a measure of pedagogical knowledge separation from various aspects of religious worldview – in the first approximation, it is something intermediate between the complete polarity (at the level of incompatibility) to the extremes at the level of mutual transition.

3. Description of the research and its results

The appeal to faith as an integral component of contextual substantiation in humanitarian knowledge (in Pedagogy, in particular) comes into serious conflict with faith in the attribution of religious consciousness, viewed as the opposition to reason. The latter is stated as the cliché “the concrete reality of faith is *above* the abstract truths of contemplation” [38, p. 150], which is further manifested by the statement of unsubstantiated religious faith as an antipode of scientific knowledge. “I believe so that I may understand”, said Anselm of Canterbury and Augustine in the middle ages [38, p. 156]. Tertullian measured the power of faith itself by its incompatibility with rational reason. He understood faith as the only thing that is capable of making an individual believe in something that is not deduced by rational reason and logic: “The Son of God was crucified: I am not ashamed - because it is shameful. The Son of God died: it is immediately credible - because it is silly. He was buried, and rose again: it is certain - because it is impossible.” [38, p. 156]

At the beginning of the XII century, Peter Abelard, philosopher and theologian, attempted to relate reason and faith in a different way: “I understand so that I may believe” [39, p. 651] - this was the thesis proclaiming a different relationship between faith and reason. Today it is obvious that faith is an irremovable phenomenon of spiritual life and an irremovable element of the cognitive process. Apparently, this circumstance led to the inclusion of faith in the content of the contextual substantiation elements of the conclusions of both Social studies and Humanities and Natural sciences. At the same time, many authors admit that the appeal to faith is used when other arguments (theoretical and empirical) are insufficient or completely missing. Despite such a widely represented conventional understanding of the appeal to faith in the scholar community, a scrupulous discussion of various aspects of faith and the identification of differences between various interpretations of this phenomenon are required.

4. Various aspects of ‘faith’

The **first aspect** binds faith with a set of statements (initial assumptions, axiomatic protoforms, etc.) taken by a person for granted. In this perspective, the belief in scientific truths and the capabilities of scientific knowledge in explaining the phenomena of the world and the ways of its positively valuable transformation is most similar – both in the religious and in the scientific segments. According to the ancient philosopher and theologian Origen, there is evidence for the Gospel that can satisfy even the mind schooled in Greek philosophy and dialectics – the ‘divine’ method of proof is in fact very similar to the scientific appeal to faith, convincing for those who share this belief. This similarity between scientific and religious faith, of course, excludes the belief of the person in different ‘miracles’ and the use of superstitions, magical practices, esoteric prophecies, etc. as arguments as an object of research [40, 41].

Closely associated with the first aspect discussed above, **the second aspect** of the similarity between scientific and religious belief is manifested through the fact that faith as the state of mind of one person actively influences the minds and feelings of the other. In the framework of the religious worldview, this influence is inherent in the consciousness and life of believers. In the scientific paradigm, a similar effect is often accompanied by psychological features of the scientific dialog, in which one of the participants psychologically zombifies the other, imposing his own point of view, without having sufficient empirical and theoretical grounds for convincing the opponent in a particular opinion or conclusion.

The **third thesis**, revealing the correlation between religious and scientific faith, appeals to their difference and sounds as follows: the most important scientific discoveries aimed at explaining the mysteries of existence are made by the mind, not by faith. Religion normalizes the world, establishes forms and standards of people’s behaviour in the society and the norms of functioning of their mind on the basis of the commandments establishing these norms by

theses: to create good at least through small things; to forgive; to say ‘I’m sorry’ to someone; judge not, lest ye be judged, and many others. Social studies and Humanities (and, to the full extent, Pedagogy), first, explains the world, reveals causal, conditional, inspirational and other relationships between objects and phenomena, and second, normalizes the world of education, in contrast to religion, on the basis of the search for explanatory mechanisms for educational reality and hypotheses about its positively valuable transformation. In this case, faith includes a wide range of theses that consider the confidence in the possibility of rational scientific knowledge of the world and in the real power of the scientific method, as well as the belief in the result hard-won in the process of methodologically and substantively verified pedagogical search.

All said above is supplemented by the thesis that unsubstantiated faith is largely an antipode of scientific knowledge, which believers often treat with suspicion and dislike. The latter is substantiated by the fact that religious faith comes from the depths of a human soul and is an immanent attribute of a believer, while the rational and theoretical mind is superficial and too ‘restless’. We consider these arguments unconvincing and propose a strong tie between scientific faith and the logical principle of sufficient reason as a difference between religious faith and scientifically designated appeal to faith in the contextual substantiation structure. The appeal to faith is quite common even in the natural and mathematical sciences of the ‘strong epistemological version’; however, the scientific community believes in a particular scientific theory, as a rule, until the empirical and theoretical grounds available to confirm this theory are modified, specified or substituted with other grounds characterized by a higher degree of correlation between theoretical models and the experiment.

5. The concept of ‘faith’ in Social studies and Humanities

Even more complicated is the appeal to faith in the Social studies and Humanities that include Pedagogy. Here it significantly resonates with the appeal to tradition, to common sense, and the appeal to the authority of the teacher conducting research, a psychologist or a well-known education expert. In this case, faith refers to: a) the degree of the researcher’s confidence in the data obtained from surveying a representative sample; b) the degree of correctness of the theoretical substantiation given by someone; c) the degree of confidence in the opinion of a particular authority, the degree of correctness of attributing the authority’s statement (reasoning, conclusion) to the time interval in the history of education analysed by the researcher.

Such an interpretation of the concept of ‘faith’ in Pedagogy leads to quite serious problems. First, the problem of the researcher’s confidence in his/her own empirical data, as well as in the data presented by other researchers, arises from the inevitable limitations of the samples of educational environment objects and the difficult procedure of pedagogical measurements of its parameters and characteristics. Therefore, the analysis of empirical ‘slices’ of the educational space can hardly provide the grounds for drawing a conclusion

about how the pattern revealed on the basis of the sample could manifest itself in the general population and what is the scope of the 'sample' conclusion application. Second, the problem of confidence of the teacher conducting research in his/her own or someone's conclusions and outcomes turns to be ambiguous due to the fact that the theoretical component of pedagogy today is still at the stage of formation, the existing theoretical conclusions of the Pedagogy and related areas of knowledge (Psychology, Sociology, Cultural studies) are formulated very incoherently, and the scope of the pedagogical theories applicability is often undefined by their creators. Therefore, the 'theoretical confidence' of the pedagogical scientific community is much weaker than that of the representatives of Natural sciences.

Third, in terms of confidence in the conclusions, contextual substantiation is particularly problematic. Very often metaphorical statements of psychologists and teachers of the past can be hardly applied to modern theoretical and practical education, and philosophical ideas of thinkers often look abstract and generalized, having quite ambivalent projections in the specific reality of the educational field. For example, the concept of 'experience of previous generations' as a source of the education content is very difficult to manifest in terms of content and completeness of the components identified by researchers. Similarly, the interpretation of empirical data of the educational sphere and their theoretical grounds is ambivalent.

The problem of confidence of the teacher conducting research in contextual substantiations also encompasses numerous 'myths' of the educational theory associated with attributing, for some ideological and social reasons, of some statements and ideas to the authorities of the past that they never expressed in reality, along with the deliberate failure to mention the conclusions that for various reasons are undesired by the society in a particular historical period.

Based on the research conducted, the following theses can be put forward *as a result*:

- a) stylistically similar, 'religious *faith*' and '*faith* as a component of contextual scientific and pedagogical substantiation' are united mainly in the psychological perspective – as a term for the psychological state of someone's confidence in a particular pedagogical knowledge and the ability to translate this confidence to the participants of the scientific dialog;
- b) in the Pedagogy content, the moral guidelines for living and behaviour transmitted to the pupil complement each other for a reasonable combination of scientific and religious forms; however, there is a *substantial difference* between the *education processes* based on the scientific pedagogy of humanism and trust and the education impregnated with religious attributes;
- c) in pedagogical research, orientation towards religious belief as means of cognition is unproductive; the concept of 'faith' implies substantial content cliched as 'confidence of the researcher' as a result of own or someone's scientific activity and the tools used based on awareness of the degree of

- persuasiveness of the given empirical, theoretical and contextual substantiation of conclusions and outcomes;
- d) the mentioned category of ‘confidence’ of the teacher conducting research in the knowledge and method of its production *differs* from religious faith by a priori orientation towards the proof or one of the three substantiations (1) and the pre-supposed possibility of *reducing the degree of such confidence*, if the research reveals some mistakes in the extrapolation of the selected results of the pedagogical reality study, premature generalization, application of theoretical schemes beyond the permissible areas, uncritical reference to the authorities of the past, and passion for ‘myths’ and misconceptions (2).

6. Discussion

The modern stage of Pedagogy development is marked by the return of Christian teachings to its scientific landscape, and this poses the problem of deep understanding of the links between scientific and religious worldviews. As far as Pedagogy is concerned, possible reflexive content in this regard, in particular, may include an understanding of the overlap of the regulatory function of religion and the similar function of Pedagogy. This overlap is associated with the understanding of the regulatory function of religion, interpreted as the development of a system of norms and values that determine religious behaviour and regulate other forms of human life, such as culture, marriage, family, life, etc. The latter somehow falls within the scope of the functions of Pedagogy, which fulfils social order in the field of education and the content of the person’s personal development.

The overlap of scientific pedagogy and religion (in connection with the above-mentioned regulatory function) actualizes the topic of *psychologically careful* pedagogical influence on the student. This encompasses the thesis actively employed by religion that a serious mistake of a person in communicating with his/her relatives is behaviour demonstrating confidence in his/her superiority over the ‘younger’, having more limited life experience and therefore forced to respectfully listen to the lectures of elders and teachers. Religion condemns people who claim to know it all and who give out advice, instructions, and tips whatever came uppermost. Religion criticizes such ‘mentors’ for their overweening conceit providing grounds for giving brilliant strategies and life guidelines to the mentees. Saint Ignatius (Brianchaninov) spoke of such people, “Vanity and conceit like to teach and instruct. They care about the worth of their advice. They do not think that they can inflict an incurable wound on their fellow man with ridiculous advice.” [42]

This religious idea is actively developed by modern pedagogy, which attributes the gift of *feeling* the soul of their pupils to the teacher-mentor as a positive value, indispensable for the ability to help the pupil’s soul. Pedagogy also declares that it is not enough for the teacher (educator) to see shortcomings in the child’s behaviour and education - advice on how to correct these

shortcomings should be as if the pupil gives it to himself. This is because the soul, the psyche of the pupil is very sensitive to extraneous interference and instructions, sharply opposing the teacher and the student; therefore, the shortcomings of the pupil should be corrected as carefully as possible, with respect and kindness. The latter assumes that the teacher evaluates not the entire personality of the guilty pupil, but rather only a specific wrongdoing, and is careful not to use the pupil's action to pin labels indicating severe defects in the pupil's personality. This also implies that the teacher making a particular observation should not back the pupil into a corner with negative comments, but rather should always leave the pupil in the hope of improving, sparing his/her ego, and gently correct the shortcomings of the pupil's personality, relying on its good features.

7. Conclusions

The correct comparison of the concept of 'faith' in the field of religion and pedagogical science helps present the problem in the dialectical unity of categories of *similarity* and *difference*, as opposed to their uncritical opposition, that can be displayed as a set of theses.

The substantive component of scientific pedagogy, in contrast to the methodological one, significantly correlates with the religious pedagogy in terms of the concept of 'faith'. In particular, this is reflected in the substantial similarity of scientific ideas of humane pedagogy with religious commandments regulating moral behaviour and psychologically careful attitude of the teacher-mentor to the pupil.

Unlike in religious faith, which does not presuppose evidence of ideas about the world order and standards of everyday and ritual behaviour, dogmatically translated into the person's consciousness, the concept of 'faith' in the scientific segment is adequately expressed through the cliché of the researcher's 'degree of confidence': a) in empirical statistical data on the basis of samples reflecting different distributions of values characterizing the educational environment and its subjects; b) in the correctness of the theoretical substantiations for the nature of the course and features of educational phenomena; c) in the correctness of contextual references to authorities and appeals to traditions in the educational community and studies. In this context, in contrast to religious faith, the degree of confidence of the teacher conducting research in the knowledge obtained can vary significantly depending on the scientific viability of the three types of reasoning and conclusions.

The problematic format of the research topic in this segment appeals to inconsistency of the substantial foundation of pedagogical knowledge, to the vagueness of the ways of transition from the basics to the consequences, to the difficulty of correct designation of the area of theoretical conclusions applicability, to the multiplicity of empirical and theoretical reasoning interpretations, to the difficulty of correct separation of the teacher conducting

research from the myths and common misconceptions in the scientific and educational community.

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