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**The vein of gold. In search of
a methodological renewal of dogmatics
based on the reading of Lech Wołowski’s
book entitled “The problematics
of paradox in the thought of Henri
de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar”**

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Abstract

The vein of gold. In search of a methodological renewal of dogmatics based on the reading of Lech Wołowski's book entitled "The problematics of paradox in the thought of Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar"

This study is presented in the form of a research-review article and consists of reflections informed by a reading of Lech Wołowski's monograph "The Problematics of Paradox in the Thought of Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar", while simultaneously drawing from other works by the same researcher. The aim of this article is to present the paradox method as a means to deepen theological research. This method is portrayed as a proposition that can be applied in theological research, much like in other scientific domains. This approach may contribute to addressing the contemporary crisis in dogmatics and serve in formulating responses to current "profound" questions posed by individuals and society.

Keywords: theology, dogmatics, methodology, paradox, cross-disciplinary dialogue

Abstrakt

Żyła złota. W poszukiwaniu metodologicznej odnowy dogmatyki w oparciu o lekturę książki Lecha Wołowskiego pt. „Problematyka paradoksu w myśli Henriego de Lubaca i Hansa Ursa von Balthasara”

Opracowanie ma formę artykułu badawczo-recenzyjnego i zawiera refleksje oparte na lekturze monografii Lecha Wołowskiego pt. „Problematyka paradoksu w myśli Henriego de Lubaca i Hansa Ursa von Balthasara” z równoczesnym odwołaniem do innych tekstów tego badacza. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie metody paradoksu jako sposobu na pogłębienie badań teologicznych. Metoda ta jest pokazana jako propozycja, która może być wykorzystana w badaniach teologicznych, tak jak to ma miejsce w innych dziedzinach nauki. Takie rozwiązanie może przyczynić się do zaradzenia współczesnemu kryzysowi dogmatyki i posłużyć do wypracowania odpowiedzi na aktualne „głębokie” pytania człowieka i społeczeństwa.

Słowa kluczowe: teologia, dogmatyka, metodologia, paradoks, dialog nauk

In my quest to renew the methodology of dogmatics, I stumbled upon a “vein of gold,” which I consider as a theological reflection on paradox and the application of paradox itself to dogmatics, that is, the “method of paradox.” Lech Wołowski captures the essence of paradox with his assertion:

Today’s physics is replete with paradoxes. Do physicists shy away from them? Not in the least! Each discovered paradox becomes another “vein of gold,” leading to the disproving of erroneous theories and beliefs while simultaneously illuminating new avenues for discovery and a deeper understanding of reality. These paradoxes, which physicists constantly confront, impart a valuable lesson—that we should never remain steadfastly attached to a single theory, regardless of its initial efficacy in describing a facet of reality. Sooner or later, a paradox emerges, such as the revelation of an uncharted phenomenon or law, which disrupts the framework of prior findings. This forces a revision, expansion, or deepening of the prevailing theory to accommodate what once appeared as an antithesis within the new, enriched theory.¹

This quote, drawn from a theological work, serves as a thought-provoking challenge to theologians. The author appears to address them directly, urging them to recognize that paradox is a “vein of gold” in the methodological renewal of dogmatics.

The aim of this paper is to introduce the method of paradox as a means to enhance theological research. This arises from a desire to address contemporary reluctance towards dogma and the widespread misconceptions surrounding dogmatic theology, and to explore the answers to two fundamental questions—why and how should we seek a methodological renewal in dogmatics, and what does Wołowski’s proposal entail, and what prospects does it offer for the future of theological research? To tackle these questions, we will embark on a journey through an examination of the crisis within dogmatics and the method of paradox as analyzed and elucidated by Wołowski. It is evident that the core concept for the analyses presented in this paper is “paradox.” Already in the introductory section, let us refine this term. When defining the term more

¹ L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu w myśli Henriego de Lubaca i Hansa Urs von Balthasara*, Kraków 2023, pp. 310–311.

precisely, I follow Wołowski, who positions the paradox problem at the core of his intellectual pursuits. As he articulates in his work:

When we speak of paradox, we refer to the genuine paradoxes encountered by science in its cognitive endeavors. However, we do not delve into purely formal, so-called logical paradoxes, such as various antinomies (e.g., the liar's paradox). Paradox, as we understand it here, diverges from what it is often, and unfortunately, colloquially mistaken for—it is not absurdity, it is not an internal contradiction, nor is it an antinomy. [...] The essence of paradox lies in the apparent contradiction that arises between common beliefs and a profound hidden truth, only unveiled through scientific exploration.²

1. Why pursue the “vein of gold”?

The question of method in scientific research and the acquisition and dissemination of knowledge has commanded profound interest ever since the publication of René Descartes' treatise, *Discours de la méthode* (1637). Subsequently, the various sciences, both traditional and those emerging as offshoots of established disciplines, have solidified their identities and flourished by giving dedicated thought to their research methodologies. It was the identification of their own “veins of gold” that enabled them to yield abundant harvests. Hence, in the realm of theology, we should not sidestep the crucial question—why should we endeavor to unearth this metaphorical “vein of gold”? In other words, why should we actively seek a methodological renewal of dogmatics?

Wołowski presents a case for a genuine program of methodological renewal within dogmatics. This endeavor necessitates a fresh, daring perspective on the overarching issue of scientific inquiry, considering the role that dogmatics currently occupies or, more importantly, should occupy within this context. Elaborating on this notion, Wołowski astutely postulates:

² L. Wołowski, *Od Cantora do Balthasara, czyli słowo o roli paradoksu w naukach ścisłych i w dogmatyce*, in: *Dogmat i metoda. Wprowadzenie do badań interdyscyplinarnych w teologii dogmatycznej*, ed. R. J. Woźniak, Kraków 2021, pp. 416–417. Cf. L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 11–12.

The situation in which theology, including dogmatics, is often relegated, unfortunately, at times with its own complicity, to the periphery or even the “waiting room” of scientific inquiry, is quite evident in today’s scientific landscape, demanding immediate and resolute remedial action.³

Robert J. Woźniak, like Wołowski, hailing from the Kraków circle, has also repeatedly written about the crisis faced by dogmatics and the urgent necessity for its renewal. Woźniak asserts that one of the Church’s foremost missions is to “reclaim dogma” as the focal point of Christian experience and practice. He firmly believes that dogma must be reclaimed because unfortunately it has acquired negative connotations and has become an unwelcome presence in large segments of theology, Church life, not to mention its associations beyond ecclesiastical and theological circles.⁴ The need to contemplate the methodology of theological research is a recurring concern. In the introductory volume of *Catholic Dogmatics* published in 1965, Wincenty Granat included a piece by Stanisław Kamiński, a methodologist and historian of science. Kamiński concluded his discourse on theological methodology with two key points. First, he highlighted the absence of concise textbooks on the methodology of theology (“When you encounter even a very promising title, it fall short in content.”) Second, he identified the most pressing necessity within theology—utilizing the outcomes and tools provided by the methodology of contemporary sciences to explore theological method. He regarded this as a crucial condition for a “modern” and “communicative” treatment of

3 L. Wołowski, *Od Cantora do Balthasara*, p. 415.

4 Cf. R. J. Woźniak, *Dogmatyka w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej. Prolegomena teoretyczno-metodologiczne*, in: *Dogmat i metoda. Wprowadzenie do badań interdyscyplinarnych w teologii dogmatycznej*, ed. R. J. Woźniak, Kraków 2021, p. 17. Drawing from my own experience, I can confirm R. J. Woźniak’s observation. Working in an academic environment, though outside the Church and theology, I have often found myself in a situation where I introduced myself by saying that I am a dogmatic theologian by first education. The verbal reactions to such self-presentation were usually similar. Their meaning could be summarized in the following doubts: “does that mean we cannot conduct scientific research together with you because you already know the answer?”, “...we cannot talk to you because you can only teach”, “...your task in science is to repeat content known for years, not to develop science.”

methodological issues in theology.⁵ The reference to scientific methodology and the pursuit of a “modern” and “communicative” approach to theological methodology gains particular significance. This text was penned during the Second Vatican Council, a time when expectations were high for a more profound and extensive theological ferment than that which followed the Council of Trent.⁶ Kamiński was unafraid of grappling with questions regarding the method of theology, drawing upon the results and tools created by the contemporary methodology. Remarkably, the reflections born in the 1960s continue to hold relevance today.

Returning to the insights of Woźniak, who, several decades after the postulates of Kamiński, echoes the call for similar strides, unafraid of engaging with other sciences: “At present, an exceedingly pressing need is to demonstrate the receptiveness of dogmatic thought to the full spectrum of contemporary knowledge concerning humanity and the world it inhabits.”⁷ Expanding on this notion, Woźniak specifies that the renewal of dogmatics, through its openness to other disciplines and a transformation of its internal dynamics, should not signify a rupture from its traditional heritage. Such a break could threaten its intrinsic identity. Instead, it should entail a revitalization and a broadening of its traditional content into new contexts. This transformative step should lead to the “reintegration of dogmatics” into the discourse of science, culture, and society, thereby restoring its rightful place within the realm of human intellectual discourse.⁸ For Woźniak, it is evident that the present state of dogmatics is both novel and distinct from its origins, which is why he speaks of “reincorporating dogmatics” and “restoring its proper place.” In delving into history, at least before Descartes, there is no element of turning dogmatic research into archaeology or traditionalizing theological thought. The researcher’s focus is not on confining dogmatic research to biblical words and sentences, nor in formulas developed by

5 Cf. S. Kamiński, *Metoda w teologii*, in: *Dogmatyka katolicka. Tom wstępny*, ed. W. Granat, Lublin 1965, p. 162.

6 Cf. W. Granat, *Przedmowa*, in: *Dogmatyka katolicka. Tom wstępny*, ed. W. Granat, Lublin 1965, p. 5.

7 R. J. Woźniak, *Czy możliwa jest niedogmatyczna dogmatyka? Wprowadzenie i zarys nowej perspektywy badawczej*, in: *Dogmat i metoda. Wprowadzenie do badań interdyscyplinarnych w teologii dogmatycznej*, ed. R. J. Woźniak, Kraków 2021, p. 8.

8 Cf. R. J. Woźniak, *Czy możliwa jest niedogmatyczna dogmatyka?*, p. 8.

the early councils, patristic ideas, or scholastic reflections. The mission of dogmatics is to expound and present the truths of faith from a conceptual, content, and historical perspective. It involves a profound comprehension of these truths of faith and reflections on their inner and reciprocal connections (Latin: *nexus mysteriorum*) in a specific context. Therefore, dogmatics not only possesses the appropriate hermeneutical emphases but, precisely as a hermeneutics of texts, can and should engage in a methodological dialogue with other sciences, particularly literature studies and philosophy.⁹ While highlighting these disciplines may seem evident, the scholar, in one of his texts, also mentions sociology, psychology, and political science, the latter providing the tools necessary for a proper understanding of the political context in which dogmas were formulated.¹⁰ Woźniak advocates inviting these sciences to collaborate with theology, a trend not widely endorsed in theological circles. This methodological shift within theology, as he suggests, can yield multiple benefits, both for theology itself and the broader scope of science in comprehending reality. In his words:

The widespread call for interdisciplinarity in scientific methodology demands the consolidation of knowledge, including theology. The challenge is not merely to unite theology and the sciences, but rather to unify theology itself. The various theological disciplines should begin to incorporate their distinct perspectives in the pursuit of a synthesized theological knowledge. Modern physics and cosmology aspire to achieve grand unification. True grand unification, however, must encompass more than just the fusion of the macro- and micro-worlds. It should also entail cooperation between theology and the sciences. This cooperation, in turn, can only be realized if theology, on its part, initiates its own consolidation. This does not imply

⁹ Cf. R. J. Woźniak, *Czy możliwa jest niedogmatyczna dogmatyka?*, pp. 11–12. Regarding the need to understand the truths of faith along with their internal and mutual connections (Latin: *nexus mysteriorum*), cf. R. J. Woźniak, *Przyszłość, teologia, społeczeństwo*, Kraków 2007, p. 110: “Theology today needs to articulate its core significance much more than ever before. The treaty vision, in which individual topics and the realities of faith are treated as separate entities capable of existing and functioning independently, is no longer acceptable due to its hermeneutical inadequacy. [...] Such a theology devoid of meaning has become one of the causes of the problem of the impenetrability of faith and knowledge, faith, and ordinary human existence.”

¹⁰ Cf. R. J. Woźniak, *Dogmatyka w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej*, p. 41.

a rejection of the modern division into disciplines, but rather an opportunity for the rediscovery of the core of reflection and the mutual inclusion of methods.¹¹

Woźniak's argument in favor of methodological partnership between theology and various sciences draws strength from the dutiful mission of theology. According to him, the "reintegration of dogmatics" into the broader scientific, cultural, and social discourse and the restoration of its rightful place in the realm of human thought are prerequisites for any comprehensive evangelization effort, including efforts that encompass concerns for culture. He emphasizes that "it is imperative to attempt to present traditional dogmatic truths from fresh perspectives, allowing the insights of other disciplines to reveal entirely new nuances of meaning that correspond to new contexts (be they scientific or cultural)."¹² The core idea is that changes in methodology should actively serve the practical applications in the life of the Church.¹³

Dogma is the record of life as participation and the experience of that participation" [representing an intimate union with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—CS]. As such, it embodies the miracle of the divine-human relationship and stands as a precious treasure of the Church. Dogmatics must, therefore, find its place within the Church to help individuals navigate their lives towards God in an existential and integral manner. Yet, this can only happen if it undertakes a reevaluation of its nature, purpose, and method.¹⁴

In light of the above, the question "why is it necessary to seek a vein of gold?" can be answered as follows—dogmatics has distanced itself (and/or been distanced) from the world of sciences, and sustaining this trend removes theology from the space of formulating responses to the most

11 R. J. Woźniak, *Dogmatyka w perspektywie interdyscyplinarnej*, p. 48.

12 R. J. Woźniak, *Czy możliwa jest niedogmatyczna dogmatyka?*, pp. 8–9.

13 Cf. R. J. Woźniak, *Praca nad dogmatem. Wybrane aspekty odnowy teologii dogmatycznej*, Kraków 2022, p. 17: "Reclaiming a space for dogma within the Ecclesia is contingent upon our ability to expose the profound existential underpinnings and its practical relevance. This endeavor is unattainable without entering into a dialogue with contemporary knowledge culture. Such a dialogue can potentially be redemptive for culture itself, and it holds immense importance for theology and the faith it serves."

14 Cf. R. J. Woźniak, *Praca nad dogmatem*, p. 345.

significant queries of contemporary individuals and societies, and, ultimately, it denies individuals and societies the opportunity to encounter and learn about God and His love.

2. How should one seek the “vein of gold”?

Now, let’s delve into the methodological pursuit of a “vein of gold” – a way to renew and deepen dogmatic research. First, we should consider Wołowski’s synthetic proposition. He contends that there is a compelling need for a “shift in the paradigm that governs the standards of scientific rigor, transitioning from the classical triad (object, method, purpose) to the modern triad (truth, paradox, mystery).”¹⁵ According to Wołowski, this shift should serve as a catalyst for a substantial reinvigoration in theology and, most significantly, dispelling any reservations about the scientific nature of dogmatics within the methodological landscape of modern sciences.¹⁶ Woźniak also encourages us to reflect on the role of paradox in the methodological renewal of dogmatics. He believes that dogmatics, by drawing on interdisciplinarity in its thinking, is inherently a synthetic science, allowing for the integration of human experience within the perspective of meaning. Consequently, it becomes a point of convergence for the synthesis of two distinct modes of thinking and two corresponding methodologies—the rigorous (empirical) and the humanistic. He explains,

The comprehensive practice of dogmatic theology necessitates not a unification but a reconciliation of thought cultures that have historically been divergent in human intellectual history. Dogmatics, therefore, stands as a potential meeting point between the empirical and formalized approach and the spiritual emerging from humanistic thought.¹⁷

However, this paradox is merely an outgrowth of the fundamental paradox within dogmatics itself: “God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—the paradox of the three persons and one nature originates in the inner life of God, and through the advent of the Son and the Spirit, it firmly

¹⁵ L. Wołowski, *Od Cantora do Balthasara*, p. 416.

¹⁶ Cf. L. Wołowski, *Od Cantora do Balthasara*, p. 416.

¹⁷ R. J. Woźniak, *Praca nad dogmatem*, p. 173.

intertwines with the course of world history.”¹⁸ The exploration of the profound depths of this central paradox remains an ongoing mission for dogmatists. It’s worth recalling that Joseph Ratzinger articulated this paradox through three theses:

Thesis No. 1. The paradox “una essentia tres personae” – one Being in three Persons – is associated with the question of the original meaning of unity and plurality. [...] Thesis No. 2. The paradox “una essentia tres personae” is a function of the concept of person and is to be understood as an intrinsic implication of the concept of person. [...] Thesis No. 3. The paradox “una essentia tres personae” is connected with the problem of absolute and relative and emphasizes the absoluteness of the relative, of that which is in relation.¹⁹

In light of the above, one can infer that in the attempts to answer the question “how should we search for the ‘vein of gold,’ i.e., a methodological way to renew and deepen dogmatic research?” there is guidance, a direction to follow, without apprehension of contradictions or diverse perspectives. This direction encourages us to embrace paradox as a promising method of inquiry. Consequently, it becomes evident that Wołowski’s monograph *The Problematics of Paradox in the Thought of Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar* is already enticing by its very title.

3. Lech Wołowski’s research methodology

The aim of Wołowski’s research, which resulted in the monograph *The Problematics of Paradox in the Thought of Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs*

18 R. J. Woźniak, *Metafizyka i Trójca. Teo-ontologia trynitarna pomiędzy apofatyką i katafatyką*, in: *Metafizyka i teologia. Debata u podstaw*, ed. R. J. Woźniak, Kraków 2008, p. 294. Cf. R. J. Woźniak, *Metafizyka i Trójca*, p. 304: “Ontology, to be useful in Trinitarian theology, should be capable of harmoniously combining both the apophatic and cataphatic dimensions, meaning that, without relinquishing the formulation of ontologically strong statements about the being of God and the world, it should encompass a sense of the inadequacy of its own declarations. The unity of these two moments is radically crucial here. Without their paradoxical and balanced relationship, there is no Christian doctrine of God.”

19 J. Ratzinger, *Introduction to Christianity*, transl. by J. R. Foster, San Francisco 2004, pp. 178–180.

von Balthasar, was to explore the role of paradox in dogmatic reflection, using the works of two of the most prominent theologians of the 20th century, Henri de Lubac (1896–1991) and Hans Urs von Balthasar (1905–1988). Wołowski pursued this objective on two distinct levels. The first level involved a systematic examination of the role of paradox in the dogmatic thoughts of both Lubac and Balthasar. This entailed identifying the specific theological paradoxes that these authors delved into and contemplated. The second level was theological and methodological in nature. It necessitated a meta-reflection on the place of paradox, first in the writings of these two theologians and then in the broader context of dogmatic reflection. To provide a comprehensive picture of his research, it is worth mentioning that Wołowski's work culminated in a precise definition and presentation of the *status quaestionis*.²⁰ Regarding the issue of paradox in Lubac's thought, notable contributions come from two doctoral dissertations. The first is by Nicola Ciola,²¹ and the second by Janet Haggerty.²² Similarly, when considering Balthasar's work on paradox, two noteworthy studies emerge. The first, by Cyrus P. Olsen,²³ and the second authored by Edward T. Oakes.²⁴ In the interest of fairness, it's important to acknowledge that the contributions of both Lubac and Balthasar have been and continue to be subjects of scholarly exploration primarily by theologians and philosophers, leading to numerous academic works in various languages.

4. The structure of Lech Wołowski's monograph

The structure of Wołowski's work, titled *The Problematics of Paradox in the Thought of Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar*, closely aligns

²⁰ Cf. L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 14–17.

²¹ Cf. N. Ciola, *Paradosso e mistero in Henri de Lubac*, Roma 1980.

²² Cf. J. Haggerty, *The centrality of paradox in the work of Henri De Lubac*, PP.J., New York 1987.

²³ Cf. C. P. Olsen, *Remaining in Christ. A Paradox at the Heart of Hans Urs von Balthasar's Theology*, „Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture” 13 (2010) no. 3, pp. 52–76, <https://doi.org/10.1353/log.0.0077>.

²⁴ Cf. E. T. Oakes, “He descended into hell”: *The Depths of God's Self-Emptying Love on Holy Saturday in the Thought of Hans Urs von Balthasar*, in: *Exploring Kenotic Christology. The Self-Emptying of God*, ed. C. P. Evans, Oxford 2006, pp. 218–245.

with the research's intended objectives. The initial two chapters are parallel and focus on the exploration of paradox within the dogmatic reflections of Lubac and Balthasar, respectively. Each of these chapters is further divided into two subsections. In the first subsection, Wołowski discusses the origins of interest in the paradox problem and provides a general characterization of how each of these theologians approached the research topic. The second subsection in both chapters is organized into four paragraphs, each dedicated to the analysis of specific paradoxes. For Lubac, these paradoxes include: "The Theoretical and Practical Paradox of Knowing God,"²⁵ "The Paradox of the Church,"²⁶ "The Paradox of Atheistic Humanism,"²⁷ and "The Paradox of Man."²⁸ Regarding Balthasar, Wołowski distinguishes the following varieties of paradox: "The Paradox of Unity and Multiplicity in God and Creatures,"²⁹ "The Paradox of Freedom in Obedience and Responsibility,"³⁰ "The Trinitarian-Christological Paradox of Hope, Faith, and Love,"³¹ and "The Paradox of the Kenosis of God."³²

The third chapter of the monograph adopts a distinct structure as the author takes on a challenging task. Within this chapter, Wołowski engages in a meta-reflection on the paradox problem. He prudently divides this chapter into three subsections. In the first subsection, he delves into the relationship between paradox, synthesis, and mystery, drawing from Lubac's reflections. The second subsection, grounded in Balthasar's ideas, explores the interplay between paradox, dialectics, and the principle of analogy. The final section focuses on the implications of unraveling paradox as a methodological key in dogmatic reflection. This part of the monograph holds exceptional value. It not only attests to the author's profound passion and research acumen but also to his courage. The content presented therein is thought-provoking and alluring, without leading the readers astray. Wołowski crafts individual

25 Cf. L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 34–57.

26 Cf. L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 58–84.

27 Cf. L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 84–114.

28 Cf. L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 114–158.

29 Cf. L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 175–184.

30 Cf. L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 184–199.

31 Cf. L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 199–224.

32 Cf. L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 224–262.

syntactic constructions that resonate with prudence and sharpness, a particularly valuable combination in the contemplation inherent to the study of dogmatic theology. Particularly in the third chapter, the author emerges as an inquisitive and diligent researcher, always searching and discovering, debating and persuading. Above all, Wołowski emerges as a researcher who proposes a novel methodological approach within systematic theology. He recognizes that he has discovered a “vein of gold” and possesses the capability to extract the most valuable insights from it, which, once processed, can be utilized in a variety of ways.

5. The “vein of gold”. A proposal for the advancement of dogmatic theology methodology

Wołowski’s work has revealed the potential for a pioneering approach in theological research. I am referring to a distinct methodological classification that the author aptly terms the “method of paradox.” In light of this significant contribution to the development of theology, it is imperative to acknowledge the historically overlooked importance of paradox within theological research and literature. Research focused on the philosophies of Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar, as extensively affirmed by Wołowski’s monograph, demonstrates the remarkable sensitivity of these eminent theologians to the concept of paradox. Paradox serves as a central and unifying element that threads through their perspectives. The author’s methodological reflection on the place and role of paradox in theology is profoundly intriguing. What sets it apart is the comprehensive exploration of how the category of paradox relates to synthesis and mystery, as well as dialectics and analogy within the philosophies of both Lubac and Balthasar.³³ With deep conviction, we can assert that Wołowski’s research has provided a solid foundation

³³ On the subject of analogy and paradox cf. L. Wołowski, *Cztery kategorie analogii i ich relacja do zagadnienia paradoksu w myśli Hansa Ursa von Balthasara*, „Polonia Sacra” 26 (2022) no. 4, pp. 47–72, <https://doi.org/10.15633/ppp.26403>. In this work, we read: “The method of analogy employed by Balthasar leads him to the discovery of increasingly deeper layers of reality. Simultaneously, a new method begins to emerge, involving the recognition of paradox and the exploration of the mystery concealed within it. This, in turn, leads to the perception of yet another, even deeper analogy” (p. 55).

in theological research for the development of contemplation, with the path forward guided by the application of the method of paradox.

Wołowski's monograph, for the first time, comprehensively demonstrates that key aspects of the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar and Henri de Lubac should be examined through the lens of the paradox problem. While it was not Wołowski who initially recognized the role of paradox in the scholarly inquiries of these two thinkers, he stands out for juxtaposing their approaches. He did not simply "mix" or "fuse" them together, but instead, he illustrated how they can complement each other, how they can jointly illuminate paths of cognition, and how they can contribute to the development of research methodology.

Considering that these two thinkers are continually being discovered in subsequent theological research, Wołowski's reflection represents a significant step forward in the development of theology and the study of the history of dogma. The method of paradox can encourage the popularization of going beyond the analysis of a single selected paradox in theological research. Paradoxes need each other, just as the Trinitarian and Christological paradoxes do. However, the relationship between these two elements, the dyad of theological paradoxes, should not be the final destination. It appears that such dyads inherently possess a force directed toward something "greater," or at least some form of a triad. For example, consider the dyad of the Trinitarian and Christological paradoxes, which tend toward the ecclesial paradox. The Trinitarian, Christological, and ecclesial paradoxes resonate together throughout Church history and theology. Christ, through His incarnation, word (teaching), and redemption, extends the Trinitarian paradox into the economic order, bringing it into the world and giving rise to the Church. The incarnate Son of God, the One whose presence in the world is elucidated through paradoxes, embodies the revelation of God's love and reveals the paradoxes of both the immanent Trinity and the Church. Therefore, rather than a dyad, a triad of paradoxes is simultaneously unveiled. The strength of the ecclesial paradox lies in the fact that the Church, in the world, extends the order inherent to the immanent Trinity. Consequently, the paradoxes of the economic Trinity shed light on the paradoxes of the immanent Trinity. This illumination also occurs in the opposite direction – the paradoxes of the immanent Trinity

continuously enlighten the paradoxes of the economic Trinity, facilitated through Christological paradoxes. It may not be an exaggeration to assert that the One who is the light of the world, (cf. John 8:12),³⁴ and the One who is theology because He reveals the Father (cf. Matthew 11:27; John 1:18), is also the Light of paradoxes. Christology possesses the capacity to become not just a discourse about the Incarnate Son of God but a method for understanding God and humanity, temporality and eternity, beginning and end, Spirit and matter (cf. Genesis 1:2), freedom³⁵ and obedience,³⁶ justice and mercy,³⁷ and above all, the inner love of the Holy Trinity and the inner love of the human heart.

The precise formulation proposed by Wołowski to define paradox in his research deserves considerable recognition. The accepted definition is as follows: "A paradox is a phenomenon, situation, judgment, or claim originating in reality and expressing a truth that conceals an apparent contradiction, contradicts common opinion, or points to a deeper aspect of reality than previously commonly perceived."³⁸ In this definition, I acknowledge a significant contribution to the advancement of theology due to its considerable research utility. It is likely to prove highly effective when applied in the investigations of many theologians and may continue to reveal its potential over time. Therefore, it is essential to promote this definition in academic studies published in various languages, a commitment I also uphold through this text.

Wołowski employed an unconventional approach in his research. He conducted an analysis and synthesis not only of the content of the works of the two eminent theologians but also delved into the underlying content. I am thinking about the methods employed by Lubac and Balthasar,

34 Cf. J. Salij, *Dogmaty i wolność sumienia*, in: *Dzieła wybrane*, vol. 3: *Nasza wiara*, ed. by J. Salij, Warszawa 2021, p. 81: "The most significant truth does not need to be sought in darkness because it comes to us in the light."

35 Cf. L. Wołowski, *The Paradox of Freedom in the Theodramatic Reflection of Hans Urs von Balthasar against the Background of the Thought of Henri de Lubac and Józef Tischner*, „*Verbum Vitae*” 40 (2022) no. 2, pp. 303–333, <https://doi.org/10.31743/vv.12916>.

36 Cf. L. Wołowski, *Paradoks najwyższej wolności w największym posłuszeństwie według H. U. von Balthasara*, „*Seminare*” 41 (2020) no. 2, pp. 37–47, <https://doi.org/10.21852/sem.2020.2.03>.

37 Cf. L. Wołowski, *The paradox of mercy as the greatest attribute of God*, „*Gregorianum*” 102 (2021) no. 1, pp. 47–63.

38 L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, p. 12.

which, when further refined and specified, were found to be juxtaposable, revealing an unexpected logicity inherent in paradox. This logicity mirrors the Divine Economy that was manifested in the incarnate Son of God, the Logos, who in turn revealed and manifested another paradox—the Trinitarian one. The subsequent paradoxes that Wołowski extracted from the thoughts of Lubac and Balthasar both confirm the Trinitarian and Christological paradoxes and draw strength from them. Thus, it is conceivable that if the method of paradox were more widely applied in theological research, not only would new content and solutions gain clarity that enables understanding, explanation, and description, but something greater could also occur. I refer to the two foundational paradoxes—the Trinitarian and Christological, which, when seen through the lens of numerous other recognized paradoxes, could attain new brilliance and a heightened logicity. This perspective encompasses not only the intellectual satisfaction experienced by theologians focusing on the study of the Trinity but also the life of the Church itself. The Church, while striving to manifest God's love in the world and provide a space for encountering God-Love, needs to be profoundly immersed in awe before the beauty of God. I allude to the type of wonder that captivates, ignites the pursuit of knowledge, and leads to the profound exploration of truth, thereby dissolving the cognitive barriers between faith and reason without diminishing their respective identities.³⁹

To conclude, let us examine atheistic humanism as described by Wołowski. The author, while referencing Lubac's ideas, effectively outlined the origins of modern atheism by analyzing the philosophies of Ludwig Feuerbach, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and August Comte. With the fluency of military lexicon, he adeptly portrayed this triad:

These are like three different fronts of a single program that set itself the ambitious goal of overthrowing and combating everything that was previously built on God or even referred to Him and creating a new absolutely atheistic reality. [...] We will begin our review of these three fronts with the one that reached

³⁹ I discussed the significance of wonder in the theological method before. Cf. C. Smuniewski, "Et stupebant super doctrina ejus" (MK 1:22). On the Role of Wonderment in the Theological Method, „Teologia w Polsce” 14 (2020) no. 2, pp. 49–62.

the farthest east, then stop for a moment at the central German front, followed by a glimpse at the French front stretching west of the Rhine.⁴⁰

Wołowski proceeded to conduct a highly engaging analysis in three segments, ultimately leading to two conclusions: “Summarizing the discussed paradoxes of the three anti-theistic proposals of the 19th and 20th centuries, it is worth noting that the common final paradox of atheistic humanism is revealed here. Namely, no matter how great the efforts to remove the notion of God from both individual and social consciousness are made by anti-theists, all this effort, the more intense and authentic it becomes, the more it confirms the authenticity of His existence. This paradox can be formulated as follows: “it is difficult for anything to be more offensive to people who have devoted their entire lives to fighting a certain ‘object’ than to claim that this ‘object’ does not exist.”⁴¹ As an addendum to this final paradox, another thought amplifying the potency of failure and the internal contradiction of atheistic humanism emerges:

For in the mind of the anti-theists, their program was supposed to be the “final solution” to the question of God. However, as one can see, history—not only in this case, by the way—does not allow such “final solutions.” One can guess why—because God himself does not allow them. [...] Even if these anti-theistic “God-hunters” would finally succeed in the preposterous art of putting Him to death and depositing Him in some tomb, they will unfortunately prove too small to be able to close its lid. Only God could “seal the stone of His tomb.”⁴²

It is worth noting that the power of these statements is heightened by the use of a phrase that evokes unambiguous, profoundly anti-human associations. Mentioning the “final solution” for the God question inevitably brings to mind the “final solution of the Jewish question” (German: *Endlösung der Judenfrage*)—the plan for the extermination of the Chosen People presented at the Wannsee Conference (on January 20, 1942). Reflecting on atheistic humanism in this context, we can readily discern the foundational elements of significant totalitarian ideologies that led

40 L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 93–94.

41 L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, pp. 113–114.

42 L. Wołowski, *Problematyka paradoksu*, p. 114.

to World War II and the subsequent expansion of deadly communism, underscoring the theologians' responsibility to confront contemporary forms of Marxism, neomarxisms, nationalisms, and potentially even pacifisms.⁴³ Perhaps it is theologians willing to collaborate with philosophers, historians, political scientists, and security experts who will be able to find the answer to the question that I pose, drawing on a military-derived lexicon, much like Wołowski – with what weapons should we go to the modern frontlines? Given the power inherent in paradoxes, it is conceivable that the method of paradox could not only serve as a guide to selecting the right tools but may even become a weapon that contributes to the salvation of humanity and humankind.

Conclusion

A “vein of gold” for the methodological renewal of dogmatics is the theological reflection on paradox and the application of paradox to dogmatics – i.e. the method of paradox. Wołowski's research, as evidenced in his monograph *The Problematics of Paradox in the Thought of Henri de Lubac and Hans Urs von Balthasar*, along with the supporting articles addressing paradox in various ways, attests to this concept. Wołowski urges dogmatics to fulfill a scientific role, akin to other disciplines, by acknowledging a paradox identified at a particular stage that compels us to perceive and continually explore the mystery.⁴⁴ However, because it may happen that those who opt for the paradoxical method might face disillusionment, I will cite another statement by Wołowski as an incentive for perseverance. It suggests that after the initial frustration with paradox, there comes a sense of fascination:

The frustrating aspect of paradox is that it appears to contain a mark of apparent inconsistency. The intriguing part is that it hides the depth of a mystery and

43 Cf. A. Fiala, *Religious and Secular Visions of Peace and Pacifism*, „Religions” 13 (2022) no. 11, pp. 1–14; B. Bado, *Directions of Peter Brock's Research on Pacifism. The Security Studies Perspective*, in: *Person, Nation, State: Interdisciplinary research in security studies*, eds. C. Smuniewski, A. Massa, A. Zanini, Warszawa 2021, pp. 147–166; C. Smuniewski, *Church and Pacifism: The Role of Religion in the Face of Security Threats*, „Politeja” (2019) no. 4, pp. 341–357, <https://doi.org/10.12797/Politeja.16.2019.61.19>.

44 L. Wołowski, *Od Cantora do Balthasara*, p. 435.

at the same time unveils a truth that differs from initial perceptions, or more precisely, reveals itself as distinct from what so-called common sense, rooted in everyday, practical experiences, might try to convey.⁴⁵

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45 L. Wołowski, *Od Cantora do Balthasara*, p. 416.

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