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## Credibility as a Moral Virtue?

### Introduction

Credibility is one of the most important features of the human person and at the same time the foundation of social life. It is the bases upon which relationships between individuals, groups, organizations and even states are built. As a result of credibility various sides can be mutually trusting. It plays an important role not only in politics but also in the economy and culture. It is hard to overestimate the importance of credibility in the acquisition and transfer of scientific knowledge. Without credibility in action and as a way of life there would be no moral authority or personal models to imitate. Similarly, credibility in the religious sphere is necessarily validated by the message coming from God. It would seem that it plays the smallest role in the broad understanding of art. But here credibility is also associated with preservation of the rules of rational manufacturing (*recta ratio factibilium*), as in the case of producing medicines. The credibility of the artist as a person is not as important as his/her credibility as an artist, and even more credibility of his/her artifact. It is evident that credibility plays an important role in human life and we know quite well

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how to achieve it in different areas of our life but what is not so evident is what credibility is? The classical approach could allow a better understanding of the meaning and importance of human credibility. But in this tradition, it is not elaborated enough and is not wholly theory either. Therefore, this article is an attempt to outline some aspects of the moral concepts of credibility on the basis of the achievements of three Polish philosophers of the twentieth century: Jacek Woroniecki OP (1878–1949), Feliks Bednarski OP (1911–2006) and Tadeusz Ślipko SJ (1918–2015). Especially helpful here is Ślipko's concept of truthfulness.

### 1. Different Types of the Credibility

The problem of credibility has a very long tradition in philosophy with sources dating back to the ancient Sophists and Socrates. For Aristotle it was already a theoretical question. Later tradition (St. Thomas) stressed the moral and religious aspects of credibility. Currently credibility is the subject of research in many fields. "Credibility has been examined across a number of fields ranging from communication, information, science, psychology, marketing, and the management sciences to interdisciplinary efforts in human-computer interaction (HCI)."<sup>1</sup>

Credibility plays an important role in various aspects of human cognition and action. Therefore, it could be distinguished in its various types. Shawn Tseng and B. J. Fogg proposed four types of credibility in the process of information: presumed, reputed, surface, and experienced.<sup>2</sup> Taking the subject of credibility into account the difference between the credibility of the individual person from the credibility of the various collective entities (family and community – local, national, state or international) and institutions should be distinguished. An important distinction is indicated earlier in the primary credibility of the person in view of the credibility of

<sup>1</sup> S. Y. Rieh, D. R. Danielson, *Credibility: A Multidisciplinary Framework*, "Annual Review of Information Science and Technology" 41 (2007), p. 307.

<sup>2</sup> B. J. Fogg, H. Tseng, *The Elements of Computer Credibility*, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/b34b/4ff58c5c6472b97e8b71aecc4baec1a3d62d.pdf> (11.06.2016).

material intermediaries – documents, photos, articles, certificates, that this person produces. How credibility is directed can be divided into – epistemological credibility – used for cognitive purposes (e.g. the credibility of science), and practical credibility – which is the basis of moral action (ethical credibility), or religion, and the credibility used in production (art). Finally because of the way in which credibility is used it could be treated as an inherent good of the personal life, or as a means to achieve other goals. In each of these areas credibility is related to authority as something that comes from authority or as the basis of authority.

In an analogy Joseph Seifert, who distinguishes the various aspects of the dignity of the person, indicates that four basic sources and forms of credibility can be identified.<sup>3</sup>

1. Natural credibility – derives from the very existence of man who (through this existence) becomes a vehicle of the truth as to who and what he is – a man, a person This understanding of credibility without exception belongs to every person in every phase and form of existence because of the very fact of being a human person. Natural credibility is an expression of an ontological truth, of which man – as an entity – is the vehicle. Credibility is the natural basis for all other forms of credibility of the human person. It cannot be forfeited or gradated, but may be more or less noticeable compared to other forms of credibility or the lack of it. A specific form of this natural and non-obscured (spontaneous) credibility is the face of the child. An example of this dimension of credibility can be Lévinas' concept of a face as an appeal or challenge to another person.

2. Actual credibility of personal life – is the recognition of a man as a conscious and intelligent entity able to make decisions. Such acts actually performed by a man as cognition, love, decision, creative or religious acts can be considered as a reliable testimony of the reality

<sup>3</sup> See J. Seifert, *The Right to Life and The Fourfold Root of Human Dignity*, in: J. De Dios Vial Correa, E. Sgreccia, *The Nature and Dignity of the Human Person as The Foundation of the Right to Life. The Challenges of the Contemporary Cultural Context*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 2003, p. 124–140, [http://www.academia.vita.org/\\_pdf/assemblies/08/the\\_nature\\_and\\_dignity\\_of\\_the\\_human\\_person.pdf](http://www.academia.vita.org/_pdf/assemblies/08/the_nature_and_dignity_of_the_human_person.pdf) (26.02.2016).

of personal life. This credibility, although it is ultimately grounded in natural (ontological) credibility, depends on the actual emergence of personal acts and varies according to the dynamics of engendered acts. Therefore, it is a subject of all restrictions governing human consciousness. At the same time the creative ability of a person to strengthen his/her acts in the form of artifacts can testify about the reliability of the personal life of man even if he no longer exists. Actual credibility of the personal life completes ontological reliability, but cannot replace it. This kind of credibility understanding, above all as self-credibility, could be found in the concept of credulity proposed by Richard Swinburne.<sup>4</sup> Although he uses it mostly in religious context it has to be extended to the whole inner experience: sensations, memories, thoughts, insights which are treated by us as credible testimonies of our personal life.<sup>5</sup>

3. Credibility achieved or moral – obtained by proper actualization of the faculties of a man. This credibility is, more or less, something given and given to realization. It could be achieved by a person only through the prudent use of his/her own truthfulness, which means the agreement of one's speech with one's own thought and the agreement of these attitudes and actions with this speech. It plays a special role in the moral sphere, because it involves not only a thorough knowledge of the reality in some fields of theory, but shapes the basic beliefs, attitudes and

<sup>4</sup> According to a principle of credulity what seems to be true ("what seems to you to be so") is true ("probably is so"), unless there is no reason for doubt and refuse of this conviction (see R. Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, New York 2004, [http://users.ox.ac.uk/~orie0087/pdf\\_files/General%20untechnical%20papers/The%20Existence%20of%20God.pdf](http://users.ox.ac.uk/~orie0087/pdf_files/General%20untechnical%20papers/The%20Existence%20of%20God.pdf) (1.05.2017)). This self-confidence as trust to own inner activities, recognized by consciousness, is completed by the principle of testimony. According to it "what people tell you is probably true – in the absence of counter-evidence" (see R. Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, op. cit.). Swinburne treats both of these principles as the basis of all human rational belief. Such understanding of self-credibility as a basic trust to our intuitions allows us to entertain rational attitude to the reality.

<sup>5</sup> It could suppose that human person has a natural inclination to spontaneous acceptance of testimony of his own inner experiences. That is why Swinburne comes back to the former (see R. Swinburne, *The Existence of God*, New York 1979, 2004<sup>2</sup>) principles of credulity and testimony in his book *Epistemic Justification* in which he developed problem of human belief as the basis of our convictions and acts of deciding (see R. Swinburne, *Epistemic Justification*, New York 2001).

deeds done in life. As a result, the person becomes credible in and of himself and thus – for the others. The way of life becomes a credible mediator of the fact of acquisition of various moral virtues and the actualization of personal faculties inherent in human nature. Therefore, the moral aspect of credibility requires special attention.

4. Given credibility – it is a gift from the community. Therefore, it is usually linked with accolades and the respect of others. Such credibility is different from natural credibility or actual credibility of the personal life of man. It is granted for the special qualities of a person or for her/his role in society. Such credibility is attributed in different professions: policeman, teacher, doctor or judge. This credibility can also be attributed to each person in particular cases, which is to testify in court as a witness. The power of credibility depends on the importance of the institution in public life and the importance of its impact on the credibility of the lives of individuals or society. Therefore giving such credibility usually entails some type of responsibility (e.g. the professional, legal, political) for its violation. For people from whom social credibility is expected support it not only in the extent that is given but also in the moral range (moral credibility).

## 2. From Truthfulness to Credibility

The synonyms of credibility are believability, reliability, plausibility, trustworthiness, believableness, tenability.<sup>6</sup> According to etymology credibility is linked to being worthy of someone beliefs (believability) and trust (trustworthiness). The meaning of the term “credibility” (latin: *credibilis*) clearly shows its connection to faith (*credo*) which, however, one can not reduce to religion alone. The whole personal life of the human entity is marked by faith but in religion it acquires a unique character because it means that the person is targeted to a Transcendent Being. Faith consists in recognizing some truth with the power of the will, not

<sup>6</sup> *Credibility*, <http://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english-thesaurus/credibility> (20.10.2016).

with the obvious power resulting from the direct access to this truth.<sup>7</sup> It is a consequence of the absence of a direct overview of the analyzed reality and mediation truth about this reality through kind of medium. The “claim” of the intermediary having both a more transparent nature (*medium quo* – recorded words or pictures etc.) or less transparent nature (*medium quod* – description or theory) to be recognized as credible is based on its veracity, and so it stems from the relationship according to this mediation with the reality to which it refers. The first medium is the person who has access to the truth, and secondarily what it is that he/she uses for its documentation or transfer.

A characteristic feature of faith is its reliance on the testimony of the mediator.<sup>8</sup> “The judgment of faith is [...] the judgment given on the strength of the testimony about the object, which was not known by itself.”<sup>9</sup> As further underlines Woroniecki, faith in other people’s testimony is conditioned by the human psyche and the social nature of man, who only in terms of relations with others can achieve a full personal development.<sup>10</sup> This development requires, among other things, a comprehensive knowledge, which man can not find alone. But the ability to use the knowledge and experience of others enables and accelerates this

<sup>7</sup> “Faith implies assent of the intellect to that which is believed. Now the intellect assents to a thing in two ways. First, through being moved to assent by its very object, which is known either by itself (as in the case of first principles, which are held by the habit of understanding), or through something else already known (as in the case of conclusions which are held by the habit of science). Secondly the intellect assents to something, not through being sufficiently moved to this assent by its proper object, but through an act of choice, whereby it turns voluntarily to one side rather than to the other: and if this be accompanied by doubt or fear of the opposite side, there will be opinion, while, if there be certainty and no fear of the other side, there will be faith” (*The Summa Theologiae of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 2–2, q.1, a.4, c, online edition 2008, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/> (17.05.2016)).

<sup>8</sup> The problem of testimony was worked out by Swinburne. He claims that “much of the information any individual gains about the world comes not from her own observation, but from the testimony of others—what other people tell us orally or in writing about what they have perceived, experienced, or done (‘I saw John steal the money’) or what they claim to know on good authority to be so (‘Caesar invaded Britain in 55 BC’)” (R. Swinburne, *Epistemic Justification*, op. cit., p. 123). He distinguished two kinds of testimony: “direct testimony” and “indirect testimony.”

<sup>9</sup> J. Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, t. 2, Lublin 2013, p. 69.

<sup>10</sup> See J. Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, op. cit., p. 70.

development. Seen in this way faith is not only an aspect of religious and practical life, but it affects the whole culture, serving science and different types of actions and production.

Credibility defined as being worthy of someone's trust in general or in a particular aspect is closely related to truthfulness. There is no credibility without truthfulness or at least its semblance. Proper understanding of "truthfulness" requires distinguishing between material speech and formal speech. Material speech includes statements „which with the power of the accompanying external circumstances are determined to express thoughts that are strange to the person speaking them, whereas formal speech “[...] means all expressions, with which the power of the accompanying external circumstances are determined to express the thoughts of the speaker.”<sup>11</sup> According to Ślipko truthfulness includes formal speech and relies on the adequacy of that speech to convey “the transferable thought of the speaking person.”<sup>12</sup> Formal speech that lacks agreement with “the transferable thought of the speaker” is a lie.<sup>13</sup>

The main problem in explaining credibility through truthfulness is the scope of the imperative of truthfulness. Aquinas claims that it is possible to compare truthfulness with the virtue of justice. As Bednarski claims for Aquinas: “Justice in the strict sense – is the virtue to render to every man his due according to the law. Legally it is due to every man, not to be abused by speech, oral or written for example by deceiving, insulting or slandering him. There is no positive law requiring people to always speak the truth, in other words, there is no legal warrant to do it. So truthfulness is not justice in the strict sense, nor is it subjective in part or variety, nor is it integral, if someone is not entitled to the right to demand the truth. For example the right a judge has in relation to the witnesses. In this case telling the truth would be an act of justice in the strict sense. Similarly, natural law determines that someone wouldn't be cheating, lying, or consciously telling an untruth because it opposes to the rational

<sup>11</sup> T. Ślipko, *Zarys etyki szczegółowej*, t. 1, Kraków 2005, p. 348.

<sup>12</sup> T. Ślipko, *Zarys etyki szczegółowej*, op. cit., p. 352.

<sup>13</sup> See T. Ślipko, *Zarys etyki szczegółowej*, op. cit., p. 352.

nature of man. The transmission of truth, not falsehood is one of the main functions of man's rational nature. Breaking the truth by lying or even worse by the slander, is a sin against justice in the strict sense."<sup>14</sup>

Although on the whole the truth should be told by a person, and lies should not, at the same time apart from the situation of testifying to the truth there are no grounds for acknowledging that a universal and absolute imperative of telling the truth exists: "However, neither the law of nature nor positive law is required to reveal the truth to all people. On the contrary, the law of nature sometimes requires hiding the truth, e.g. state's secrets for a spy, or errors and vices of some person in conversation with another so as not to commit the sin of detraction. The fact of telling the truth and a lie is still a place for silence or other hiding the truth."<sup>15</sup> On the one hand this concept is the result of treating truthfulness as formal speech which assumes a person cannot be truthful when he/she does not make a judgment (a statement). Any person, when silent, is not being truthful and consequently while silent is not credible, whereas it was said at the beginning that everyone has an unconditional natural credibility. On the other hand this concept stems from how Aquinas treats the virtue of justice and the virtue of truthfulness differently. Bednarski explain: "The subject of truthfulness as a separate virtue is in keeping of the golden mean or hiding the truth in an honest way, depending on what moral integrity requires in cases when neither the law of nature, nor honest human law requires it. Truthfulness in this second sense, being neither a type of justice, nor its uniting part, however, is its potential component, because the task of a truthfulness is to render by words to every man his due although not on the basis of law, but on the basis of honesty. In contrast, truthfulness in the sense of testifying to the truth, when it is required in the strict natural law or in honest human law is a requirement of justice in the strict sense of this word."<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> F. Bednarski, *Objaśnienia tłumacza*, in: Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, t. 20: *Cnoty społeczne pokrewne sprawiedliwości (2-2, q. 101-122)*, przeł. F. W. Bednarski, London 1972, p. 244.

<sup>15</sup> F. Bednarski, *Objaśnienia tłumacza*, op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>16</sup> F. Bednarski, *Objaśnienia tłumacza*, op. cit., p. 244-245.



In order to define credibility through truthfulness, the scope of truthfulness needs to be extended and the relation of truthfulness as a virtue to the virtue of justice needs to be changed. Although the basis for the understanding of truthfulness is the relationship between thought and speech, this concept should also be extended to the relationship of this thought to the attitude and/or action of the person. As when a person who possesses the proper will to tell the truth doesn't tell the truth for an important reason (e.g. keeping a secret). Therefore truthfulness could be a feature of formal speech (the conformity of spoken judgments with the speaker's own thoughts) as well a feature of the attitude or action of the person as long as they preserve conformity with this thought. Such a proposition is an important step towards removing the paradox that "natural law determines that someone won't be cheating, lying, or consciously telling an untruth because it opposes the rational nature of man" and at the same time "there is no positive law requiring people to always speak the truth" because truthfulness is founded "on the basis of honesty."<sup>17</sup>

The fact that truthfulness, with some exceptions, is not subject to the imperative of the law is not a sufficient reason to exclude it from the range of the virtue of justice. It is important taken into account that on the strength of the virtue of justice as a "constant and perpetual will to render to every man his due" (*perpetua et constants voluntas ius suum cuique tribuendi* – Ulpian's), one could receive nothing, precisely because nothing is rightly due to him. Similarly understanding truthfulness treating as a part of the virtue of justice does not have to involve an unconditional order to tell the whole truth to anyone in all circumstances, but it means providing enough of the truth in the range that is due to a person. Regardless, as to whether truthfulness can be considered as a kind of virtue of justice or a virtue related to it, it is worth noting that it is an improvement of the will (right will) to tell everyone the truth recognized by reason. It is obvious that not for everyone and not in all circumstances the truth is always due. Therefore ethicists are point out that the human right to the truth is not unlimited and there is no absolute demand to

<sup>17</sup> F. Bednarski, *Objaśnienia tłumacza*, op. cit., p. 244.

speak it. Ślipko underlines that protecting a secret ranks higher than telling the truth. Protecting of secret or mystery is morally justified in a situation of “inopportune obsessions” (excessive curiosity) or “unjustified verbal aggression” (the use of pressure or violence.)<sup>18</sup> Each of these cases can be understood as an attempt to enter into the unlawful possession (not exercise) of someone’s right to the truth. In this context it is possible to treat truthfulness as a particular case of justice – constant and perpetual will to render to every man the truth that is due to him. This definition implies the need to determine whether a certain truth in general is due to this person, and if it is, to what extent it should be made available to him/her. It is possible that, at the same time, a certain truth is due to one person and is not due to another. Therefore a person who rejects someone’s claim to this truth could and should be willing to transfer it to whom it is due. Such readiness of the will is truthfulness of attitude even if the person does not use formal speech.

### 3. Credibility as Moral Virtue

Truthfulness is a moral virtue, which, like all the moral virtues, requires the preservation of balance (Aristotelian “golden mean”) between deficiency, which is hiding the truth (secrecy) when it should be revealed and the excess associated with the lack of behavior in the same circumstances due to discretion.<sup>19</sup> In terms of activity the golden mean of truthfulness relies on speaking the truth when it is needed, and doing it in the proper way.<sup>20</sup> According to St. Thomas truthfulness, like justice, is a social virtue, recognizable only in relation to another person.<sup>21</sup> Its goal is to improve the man for his own good as the acting subject, but also for the good of others. This as the perfection of the human will to doing good through giving the truth that is owed as opposed to vice in the form

<sup>18</sup> T. Ślipko, *Zarys etyki szczegółowej*, op. cit., p. 361–362.

<sup>19</sup> See F. Bednarski, *Objaśnienia tłumacza*, op. cit., p. 243.

<sup>20</sup> See Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, t. 20: *Cnoty społeczne...*, op. cit., 2–2, q. 109, a. 1, c.

<sup>21</sup> See Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, t. 20: *Cnoty społeczne...*, op. cit., 2–2, q. 109, a. 3, c.

of: lying (telling a falsehood),<sup>22</sup> hypocrisy (presenting oneself falsely),<sup>23</sup> boasting (to elevate oneself more than is necessary)<sup>24</sup> and false modesty (falsely assigning defects or refusing to assign virtues to oneself).<sup>25</sup> What is essentially important for moral evaluation is whether a particular defect is the lack of telling the truth, or the acquisition of improvements in handling something whether it is true or false in order to conform to the truthfulness of others.

St. Thomas Aquinas points out that telling the truth at the wrong time is an abuse (excess) of truthfulness (of how it should be said). He points out that this is a very complex issue, namely that of the proper way of using one's own truthfulness. Even speech that adequately transfers the thought of the speaker and is communicated at the right moment is directed at something more than the expression of the subject. This type of speech (true) addressed to someone else, which may be accepted or rejected, not only because of what it conveys (that is the truth), but also because the person, the circumstances and the manner of its proclamation allow it to be accepted or rejected as true speech. And this is where the problem of credibility arises. Credibility is more than truthfulness. In a subjective sense, it is the culmination of truthfulness, meaning the acquisition of a type of excellence in the use of one's own truthfulness that enables the acceptance of the truth proclaimed. The will to give everyone the truth due to him does not make someone a credible person. Ultimately it is right – appropriate to the knowledge, subject or circumstances – and yet is the responsible use of one's own truthfulness. Thus, reliability can be considered *prudent truthfulness*. Such an understanding of credibility could be one of the types (varieties) of the virtue of prudence, improving the reason assigned to the operation of the will, and therefore to do good. Prudence indicates the means toward the goal of moral action. If the good-goal is to be worthy of the confidence of another persons, and

<sup>22</sup> See Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, t. 20: *Cnoty społeczne...*, op. cit., 2–2, q. 110, a. 1, ad 1.

<sup>23</sup> See Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, t. 20: *Cnoty społeczne...*, op. cit., 2–2, q. 111, a. 1, c.

<sup>24</sup> See Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, t. 20: *Cnoty społeczne...*, op. cit., 2–2, q. 112, a. 1, c.

<sup>25</sup> See Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, t. 20: *Cnoty społeczne...*, op. cit., 2–2, q. 113, a. 1, c.

the only morally legitimate means to achieve this goal is a widely understood truthfulness, then the right means is to rely upon and apply prudence in a given situation. Credibility perfects the human act, which is that the external speech is in accord with the thought of the subject speaking and that it would be possible to be accepted by the recipient.

It is important to distinguish between the subjective side of credibility, which in a broad sense can be identified as an effort to be a truthful person, from the objective-praxeological side, which is focused on convincing another person of one's truthfulness. It is easy to see that being convinced of one's credibility is not necessarily the consequence of the truthfulness of that person, and vice versa – the inner truthfulness does not necessarily lead to its external recognition. The virtue of credibility mainly includes a subjective aspect, of improvement, which makes the acting person a trustworthy authority in some aspect (e.g. scope of science or art) or in general (way of action, way of life). Although it is designated to the one who is the source or mediator of the specific content, its ultimate realization is found in the one who is the recipient. Credibility is relational, and so the extent to which it is manifested subjectively, calls for a proportionate response – acceptance or rejection. Woroniecki stresses that because credibility is concerned with someone else's testimony, that is access to the truth is mediated by a person or a material intermediary (picture, sound, writing), its objective verification requires prudence. To believe as the consent or emphasis of the will on acceptance of the truth of one's testimony leads to two extreme attitudes: credulity or incredulity.<sup>26</sup> As Woroniecki claims, believing in something is conditioned both by subjective and objective factors. Subjectively the acceptance of reliability depends on the way the will is impacted, in which human feelings play an important but deceptive role. "Sometimes feelings may join to the will [...] and so strongly influence the reason that it would give consent or refuse and not look sufficiently at the objective reasons, which it must not lose sight of. We know how willing people are to believe messages, and very often without requiring serious evidence, that

<sup>26</sup> See J. Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, op. cit., p. 72.

answer their desires and flatter this or that weaknesses, and vice versa, how they refuse to believe most important testimonies, when they do not like what they hear and it interferes with their plans and expectations.”<sup>27</sup> Thus, prudence is just as necessary in the pursuit of credibility as it is in understanding. It makes it possible to keep the golden mean between the extremes of credulity and incredulity, but also to neutralize the subjective factors which persuade someone to accept or reject another's testimony without sufficient justification. It is not difficult to see that this aspect of credibility is a virtue because it requires continuous improvement, at least in the process of human development.

In addition to the virtue of credibility in its subjective aspect and the accompanying improvements to verification from the outside, one can talk about the unreliability, which is a lack of adequate improvements to the prudent use of truthfulness or the verification of another person's truthfulness. Whatever this lack may be it is essential for the moral evaluation and credibility of the person. The moral evaluation of the method of obtaining and verifying credibility is less of a fault than that which is totally opposed to credibility which is the vice of trying to obtain credibility by the use of a lie. The latter case should be associated with the vice that is the opposite of prudence, which is cunning or craftiness (*astutia*).<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting that the desire to achieve credibility must not hide the will to do good. Credibility opens the door of reason to the testimony of authority, which requires the acceptance of the human will. Adoption of someone else's testimony is based on the voluntary subordination of reason to the truth, to which it has no cognitive access and which cannot be verified and which demands affirmation in the human understanding of the world or also in action. The possibility of this to

<sup>27</sup> See J. Woroniecki, *Katolicka etyka wychowawcza*, op. cit., p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> “It belongs to craftiness to adopt ways that are not true but counterfeit and apparently true, in order to attain some end either good or evil” (Św. Tomasz z Akwinu, *Suma teologiczna*, t. 20: *Cnoty społeczne...*, op. cit., op. cit., 2–2, q. 55, a. 4, c); see also P. S. Mazur, *Prowidencja ludzka jako podstawa roztropnego formowania zasad życia osobowego i społecznego człowieka. Studium z antropologii filozoficznej na bazie tekstów św. Tomasza i jego współczesnych komentatorów*, Kraków 2009, p. 281–282.

influence a man's constitution results in a constant temptation to abuse credibility, it also makes this abuse a serious moral evil, the more when it is exercised and perfected in action.

## Conclusion

The person is directed to truth, in a sense he is „the agent of truth” (R. Sokolowski).<sup>29</sup> Attaining of truth is for the human person a condition of his fulfilment. Hence credibility is so important. The moral aspect of credibility could be treated as a virtue of practical reason which allows for the prudent treatment of one's own or another persons truthfulness. Such credibility presupposes truthfulness which is truth in formal speech understood as the agreement of speech with the transferable thought of the speaking person and also as agreement of attitudes or acts with this thought. This agreement from the subject needs constant and perpetual readiness of will in order to render to every man the truth due him. In this sense credibility is strongly related to truthfulness which as a moral virtue belongs to or close to the virtue of justice. In understanding the importance of credibility as being conscious of the different areas and ways of archiving credibility is the knowledge of different types of ways of owning and using credibility, in which one is given and the other is given to realization.

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<sup>29</sup> See R. Sokolowski, *Phenomenology of the Human Person*, New York 2008, p. 1.

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## Abstract

### Credibility as a Moral Virtue?

The aim of this article is to discuss the moral aspect credibility of the human person. The author proposes to link credibility with truthfulness, which is a feature of formal speech, when it is in agreement with the “transference of the thought of the speaking person.” Truthfulness is a constant and perpetual readiness of the will to render to every man the truth that is due him. The credibility of the human person is the result of truthfulness, meaning that he is someone who is trustworthy (authority) with access to the truth in any field. Due to the good of the human person, it is necessary not only to be truthful, but also to skillfully use this truthfulness to become credible. Credibility is the virtue of human practical reason that allows the person use his own truthfulness so he can be a trustworthy person. For this reason the author calls it prudent truthfulness.

## Keywords

human person, credibility, truthfulness, virtue, justice, formal speech

## Abstrakt

### Wiarygodność jako cnota moralna?

Celem artykułu jest omówienie moralnego aspektu wiarygodności osoby ludzkiej. Autor proponuje powiązanie wiarygodności z prawdomównością, która jest cechą mowy formalnej, gdy jest zgodna z „przekazywalną myślą mówiącej osoby”. Prawdomówność jest stałą i niezmienną gotowością woli oddania każdemu człowiekowi należnej mu prawdy. Wiarygodność osoby ludzkiej jest wynikiem prawdomówności, oznaczającej, że jest kimś, kto jest wiarygodny (autorytet) w dostępie do prawdy w danej dziedzinie. Ze względu na dobro osoby ludzkiej konieczne jest nie tylko bycie prawdomównym, ale także umiejętne posługiwanie się prawdomównością dla uzyskania wiarygodności. Wiarygodność jest cnotą ludzkiego rozumu praktycznego, który pozwala człowiekowi tak posługiwać się własną prawdomównością, aby mógł być osobą godną zaufania. Z tego powodu autor nazywa wiarygodność roztropną prawdomównością.

### Słowa kluczowe

osoba ludzka, wiarygodność, prawdomówność, cnota, sprawiedliwość, mowa formalna