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## ON THE CONCEPT OF LYING

Lie and lying are sometimes the subject of inquiry in various sciences: philosophy, logic, logical semiotics, linguistics, psychology or neuroscience. Therefore, it should not come as a great surprise that there is no clear consensus on the definition of lying, and the definitions found in the literature are various. This article is an attempt to formulate an adequate definition of lying. The stimulus for its writing was the article by Professor Bogusław Wolniewicz *O pojęciu kłamstwa i zasadzie prawdomówności [On the Concept of Lying and the Principle of Truthfulness]*, published in the 54th issue of "Philosophical Education." I will try to show that the definition given there is inadequate, and attempts to strictly link the concept of lying with the principle of truthfulness are misguided.

The article consists of three parts. In the first, I make a cursory review of the definition of lying and, on this basis, try to distinguish the criteria that an act must meet in order to be adequately called a lie. The second is devoted to a polemic with Wolniewicz's definition, while in the third I attempt to develop an adequate definition of lying.

**1. Contemporary definitions of lying and deception.** Let's take as a starting point the proposal of Krauss, who defines lying as "an act that is intended to produce in another person a belief or conviction that the deceiver believes to be false" (Vrij 2009: 5). This definition is interesting in that it does not limit lying and deception to verbal behavior, but also includes misleading nonverbal behavior. An example of this type of lying is the behavior of an athlete who, after an unsuccessful performance, catches his foot and flexes his facial muscles, simulating an expression of pain and wanting to justify his failure with an alleged injury. Another example is an individual rightly accused of theft who, when asked if he stole money, spins the head negatively.

Another is an accomplice of a criminal who, when asked which way the fleeing criminal ran, deliberately points his finger in the wrong direction. Still another is a man who, when asked "How are you feeling?" smiles (lifting only the corners of his mouth, without engaging the circular muscles of his eye) and shows an OK gesture, even though he feels terrible. One can also lie using voice parameters, such as tone or intonation. A man who – when talking to his boss on the phone – modulates his voice in such a way that his boss gets the impression that he is severely cold, when in fact nothing is wrong with him, is clearly lying. Such examples could be multiplied, although, it seems, there is no need to do so. The belief that one can lie nonverbally is shared by many researchers, even those who deal with lying from the perspective of language studies. As Antas rightly notes (Antas 2000: 200): "One can - and often does – lie with the body, face, hands, as well as with intonation and other para-linguistic means. We can lie without recourse to verbal means of expression, as they are not really the only tool for us to convey the truth of our convictions to others, and consequently they are not the only tool for falsifying them either." These examples show that any definition of lying that does not take into account deception by non-verbal means is too narrow and therefore inadequate.

Krauss' definition avoids the problems of some definitions that allow nonverbal lying, which become too broad without considering additional conditions. This is because it is easy to propose a definition under which such nonverbal behavior would also fall, such as misrepresentation by inanimate objects (e.g., apparent cues or misleading images) or mimicry in plants and animals, by which some species of organisms resemble others, deceiving potential prey or predators. Krauss' definition excludes such cases as lying because:

– recipients of lies can only be persons (admittedly, this condition taken in isolation still allows mimicry or other phenomena that deceive a person to qualify as lies);

– The misrepresentation must be intentional (of course, it all depends on what we mean by intentionality; if we consider it to be deliberate misrepresentation, we would exclude inanimate entities, as well as plants and animals, or at least most of them, from the set of liars);

– the deceiver recognizes the belief he wants to instill in the recipient as false (this condition seems to effectively eliminate the understanding of cases of plant and animal mimicry as lies).

However, Krauss' definition seems too broad for another reason. For it allows that literary fiction, acting or the art of illusion consist of lies. By creating a fictional world and non-existent characters, the writer aims to create in other people a belief or conviction that he himself often believes to be false. Like the illusionist, who uses other means to do so, or the actor, who wants to convince us that he is someone other than he really is. According to Krauss' definition, all of the aforementioned are lying, and yet people seem to distinguish quite clearly between lies and fiction (literary, film, etc.), acting or illusionist tricks. Therefore, we should not stop with Krauss' proposal and look at other approaches to lying.

Paul Ekman, a well-known psychologist and researcher of nonverbal communication (and also an expert in lie detection), points out situations in which lying and lies should not be discussed (Ekman 2007: 26-30). First, the one who unknowingly conveys false information is not lying. Moreover, the one who makes a truthful statement is lying, as long as he is convinced of its falsity. Secondly, a liar deliberately, intentionally and by choice, misleads. A person who does not tell the truth unintentionally or not by choice, but due to an internal compulsion, is not a liar. "Pathological liars," writes Ekman (Ekman 2007: 27-28), "who know they are not telling the truth, but cannot control their behavior, do not meet the above criterion. Nor does my definition include people who do not even know they are lying – those who are said to be victims of self-deception." This is a controversial restriction, for it seems that one can find rationales for including self-deception and at least some

compulsive lies into the category of lying. Third, a liar is not a person who warns that he intends to tell an untruth, or who yields to the request of the recipient to express an untruth. Often this intention does not have to be expressed explicitly, but is part of a given convention, such as in the case of literary fiction, acting or illusionary tricks. Thus, we can see that Ekman is aware of the problem of distinguishing conventional fiction from falsehood, which we failed to see in Krauss' overly broad definition.

For this reason, Ekman defines lying as "the intentional misleading of another person without warning him of the intention to do so" (Ekman 2007: 40). In doing so, he distinguishes between many forms of lying (Ekman 2007: 40-41):

- concealment, that is, withholding true information;
- falsifying, or passing off falsehoods as truth;
- false attribution, which involves admitting to experiencing a particular emotion while falsely identifying its cause;
- false truthfulness – revealing the truth with such exaggeration or so humorously that the recipient is misled;
- half-truths, i.e., revealing part of the truth aimed at distracting the viewer from what is still being concealed;
- the deception of false inference involving telling the truth in such a way that the recipient infers something different from what was expressed.

Aldert Vrij points out the shortcoming of Ekman's definition, which is too narrow insofar as it captures a lie as a misrepresentation, i.e. an act that succeeded, while many lies constitute only unsuccessful attempts. "In such cases," he writes (Vrij 2009: 6), "the attempt to deceive has failed, but such unsuccessful attempts still qualify as lies. Instead, I prefer to define deception as "an effective or ineffective conscious attempt, without prior notice of one's intention, to produce in others a belief that the author of the communication believes to be untrue." I agree with this allegation. A given communication act – as long as it also meets other criteria for lying – should be called a lie, even if the recipient of the communication was not fooled. In Vrija's definition,

however, I see another problem: it allows as lies situations in which there is no form of communication at all. Let's consider the following example. If I believe in telepathy and, at a given moment, concentrate strongly to telepathically imprint into another person's mind a belief that I believe to be false, of course doing so consciously and without first informing the person of my intention, then, according to Vrija's definition, I am lying, even though no communicative act has actually taken place (assuming that telepathic transmission is impossible and the other person has not then observed my non-verbal reactions). An adequate definition of lying should take this caveat into account.

Let's now take a brief look at some of the definitions present in Polish literature.

Jolanta Antas captures lying from the perspective of semantics and pragmatics of language. It is worth referring to her book *O kłamstwie i kłamaniu* [*On Lie and Lying*] as a reliable and critical review of various definitions of lying. This time, let us refer to the author's proposal contained therein. According to Antas (Antas 2000: 166), "lie (lying) is a complex pragmatic act and, at the same time, a linguistic strategy, the essential feature of which is a state of double consciousness of the speaker, and, consequently, such a kind of semantic processing that can be called 'untruthful communication'; communication based on violation of basic conversational rules and maxims that regulate the principles of natural and reliable communication." Antas' approach has the advantage of analyzing lie not only at the semantic level, but also at the pragmatic level of language. Nonetheless, certain solutions may raise doubts. Without going into a lengthy discussion, let us note the failure to distinguish in the definition some of the essential conditions of lying (present in previous definitions, e.g., not to count as lying the acts about which the recipient has been warned by the sender that the sender will communicate untruth), which, by the way, the author writes about and accepts elsewhere in the book. In addition, let us note that one can violate conversational maxims and be in a state of "double

consciousness"<sup>1</sup>, and at the same time not lie. Imagine the following situation. Together with a loved one, we find ourselves in a dangerous situation. We think that there is only a slim chance of saving a life, but we do not want to deprive the loved one of hope, so we say that everything will be fine. We are undoubtedly communicating something we do not believe (we are in a state of "double consciousness"), violating at least the quality maxim. I am of the opinion that in this case we are not lying, because our statement is about the future, i.e. a state of affairs that has not yet taken place, there is a non-zero, albeit small, probability of success, and our assurance may cause mobilization of forces and trigger the mechanism of "self-fulfilling prophecy."

Finally, let's deal with the proposal of the author of *Filozofia kłamstwa* [*The Philosophy of Lying*]. Chudy presents two definitions of lying (Chudy 2003: 110):

1. Lying is saying things that are false in one's own opinion.
2. Lying is knowingly misleading someone.

Both definitions are inadequate. The first one does not take into account lies made by non-verbal means, while at the same time it qualifies as lies cases that cannot be called lies. Let's say that at the moment I am playing with the utterance of untrue sentences and I am alone, that is, I am not communicating these sentences to anyone – except myself – having simultaneously the firm conviction that they are untrue. According to the first definition, I am lying, although I have neither misled anyone nor even tried to do so. Next, let's imagine that I am sleepwalking and uttering sentences that contradict my beliefs. Again: according to the first definition, I am lying, although, it seems, I can't lie, since I don't knowingly and deliberately mislead anyone. The second definition, on the other hand, contains the fault that Ekman pointed out,

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<sup>1</sup> Let's give the floor to Antas to explain the phrase "double consciousness": "The difference between lying and simple falsifying lies in the effect of the so-called *oratio duplex* (double speech); this is how Adam Weinrich put it, as he thought that this double speech is, from the point of view of linguistics, most characteristic of lying, in the sense that something is uttered, and its opposite is left unspoken (retained in the mind)." (Antas 2000: 166-167).

treating acting, the art of illusion, storytelling, etc. as lies. In other words, the definition seems too broad.

**2. The problematic nature of Wolniewicz's definition.** After this review and analysis of selected definitions of lying, we are much more aware of the pitfalls that lurk for researchers trying to create an adequate definition of lying. Therefore, it is time to look at the proposal of the author of *On the Concept of Lying and the Principle of Truthfulness*.

Boguslaw Wolniewicz starts from the classic definition of a lie as a statement that is inconsistent with the conviction of the utterer. He introduces the abbreviation "to speak untruth" for the phrase "to speak out of accord with one's conviction," and "to speak the truth" for the phrase "to speak out of accord with one's conviction," and formulates the first definition (Wolniewicz 2012: 5):

(D1) lie= (knowingly<sup>2</sup>) tell untruths

Wolniewicz rightly points out that D1 is too wide. However, in doing so, he fails to note that D1 is at the same time too narrow, and he also gives an incorrect – in my opinion – explanation for the fact that D1 is too wide.

Let's start by demonstrating that D1 is too narrow. As we mentioned in the previous section, one can lie not only verbally, i.e. by uttering a sentence, but also non-verbally, by misleading someone through deliberately used non-verbal signals. The definition of D1 – as limited to verbal lies – does not include lies made by means of non-verbal behavior, which makes it too narrow and therefore inadequate. In my opinion, there is no convincing rationale for narrowing the definition of lying to spoken lies only. First of all, one can give a great many examples of lies made by non-verbal means. I have included a few of them in the previous section. Second, it seems that the colloquial understanding of lying includes such cases. Therefore, it would be necessary, while proposing a projective definition instead of a reporting one, to provide arguments supporting the restriction of lying to

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<sup>2</sup>This he [Wolniewicz] assumes implicitly in the paragraph below the definition (Wolniewicz 2012: 5).

some verbal communication behaviors. Unfortunately, Wolniewicz does not do so. I think that such a limitation comes from the characteristic focus of many philosophers, semioticians and logicians, on verbal, propositional communicative acts, to the exclusion of non-verbal communicative acts.

Let us now address the issue of the excessive width of the D1 definition. As Wolniewicz writes: "The classical definition of lying is too broad: we will not always consider telling an untruth as a lie. Someone makes us a gift and asks us how we like it. The gift is missed, but we reply that we like it very much, because we don't want to cause unnecessary annoyance to that person. We have told an untruth, but no reasonable person would consider it a lie, something worthy of condemnation. The definition of D1 is too broad, because something is missing from the content of its definiendum, and that is, an evaluation, and clearly negative one at that. To say "you're lying" to someone is an insult; to say "you're telling an untruth" is a statement or at most a reproach. The absence of evaluation in the definens with its presence in the definiendum makes the D1 definition inadequate: its left side says more than its right side and thus has a narrower scope" (Wolniewicz 2012: 5).

Two observations arise here. First of all, there are many reasonable people, including established lie researchers, who would qualify Wolniewicz's example as a lie. Moreover, it is quite common to use the expression "polite lie" or "social lie", reserved for precisely this type of situations (Antas 2000: 241-278; Ekman 2007: 295<sup>3</sup>; Vrij 2009: 8). In addition, many people do not share the assumption that lying by definition is something worthy of condemnation, but instead adopt a descriptive definition of lying and recognize that there are situations in which one should not lie, and there are situations in which one is allowed or even should resort to lying. Wolniewicz does not think so. "Contrary to linguistic appearances," he writes (Wolniewicz 2012: 6),

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<sup>3</sup> In Ekman's case, the issue is a bit more complicated. Ekman singles out the desire to avoid an awkward social situation as a motive for lying, but at the same time notes that some "trivial courtesy lies" do not fall under his definition of lying, because in certain situations generally known rules of politeness are a form of prejudice against a possible exaggeration or statement that is inconsistent with the utterer's belief (Ekman 2007: 295).

a polite lie is not a lie, just as a pretended joy is not a joy. In view of the D2 definition, the appendage "polite" is not a determinative appendage for the term "lie": it does not isolate part of its scope. It is a modifying appendage, that is, it changes the very meaning of the term and its entire scope – like the king of spades is not a certain variety of kings, but a playing card." I consider this argument to be misplaced, since there is no analogy between the example given and the polite lie. "Spade" in the case of the expression "king" is an obvious modifying adjective, which is easy to show, since the king as a ruler, that is, a certain person, and the king of spades as a playing card belong to different categories. In contrast, lying and politeness lie in the same category of communicative acts that meet certain conditions. In this case, the adjective "polite" singles out from the set of lies those lies motivated by polite considerations, i.e. it constitutes a determining adjective. Of course, Wolniewicz will not agree to this, because he recognizes that a condition expressing negativity should be added to the definition of a lie. The result of this operation is the following definition (Wolniewicz 2012: 5):

(D2) lie = (knowingly) tell an untruth in a situation where the truth should be told

Thus, everything comes down to defining those situations in which the truth should be told. Before we get to that, it is worth noting that Wolniewicz considers D2 to be too narrow, as it does not take into account lies involving "concealment of the truth due"<sup>4</sup>, so he proposes a third definition, although in the following discussion he settles for a tighter definition of D2 (Wolniewicz 2012: 7):

(D3) to lie = not to tell the truth in a situation where it should be told

This definition poses many difficulties. Wolniewicz is aware of one of them: "But doesn't the definition of D2 explain *the obscure per obscurius*, one dark notion with another, even darker one?"

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<sup>4</sup> If this is the case, then D1 is also too narrow for the same reason, which Wolniewicz, however, does not explicitly point out.

The term "lie," after all, has a fairly clear range of applicability, while the phrase "a situation in which the truth must be told" almost contentless in its indefiniteness. Doesn't this make the D2 definition sterile? Probably not, but let's just point out that the D2 definition tightens the D1 definition to adequacy" (Wolniewicz 2012: 7). However, it seems that the not-so-sure assurance ("probably not") here is not enough. Clarity is not restored by the introduction of the principle of truthfulness, which states that one should always tell the truth unless one is in certain situations, which the author calls "ethically abnormal" or counter-narratives of lying<sup>5</sup> (Wolniewicz 2012: 7-8, 10-13, 19-20). So, can we compile a rich enough list of counter-types of lying to be able to distinguish statements that are lies from other statements? Wolniewicz himself rightly points out the necessity of building such a list from the bottom up, and at the same time shows the difficulties involved: "The list of counter-types of lying remains open. It is completed not by general guidelines, but step by step by precedences. These are cases when a situation *si* confronted in all its urgent and confusing concreteness, and it is necessary to decide: is there a counter-type here or not? A positive answer will create a precedent, and this, according to another principle of our normotype – the principle of consistency – requires that all similar cases be resolved in the same way thereafter. To what extent "similar"? This is a new issue, which – when it arises – requires a new resolution, that is, the creation of another precedent. It will refer, however, no longer explicitly to the countertype of lying, but the recognition of two situations *si* and *sj* as "counter-typically similar". Thus, it will be a precedent of the second degree, so to speak. By asking about the permissibility of untruth we enter the territory of concrete axiology, and there it is difficult to have simple answers" (Wolniewicz 2012: 22).

There are at least two difficulties associated with compiling a list of counter-types. First, it is necessary to decide whether one should tell the truth or lie in a particular situation. The author of *O pojęciu kłamstwa* [*On the Concept of Lying and the*

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<sup>5</sup> According to the definition introduced by Wolniewicz, the counter-type of lying is any situation *si* which excludes the reprehensibility of the act and makes the behavior with the characteristic of telling an untruth not a lie (Wolniewicz 2012: 18).

*Principle of Truthfulness*] does not give us a convincing answer. Are moral intuitions or perhaps moral-aesthetic intuitions (Wolniewicz devotes a lot of space to the aesthetics of lying) should be the basis of the resolution, and if so, whose (selected experts, all people or the majority of the population?), and how to recognize accurate intuitions from inaccurate ones (because even experts can be wrong in certain cases)? Assuming that we would find some reliable way of deciding in the case of specific situations, which is not easy to imagine, we still need to have good criteria for the similarity of situations, separating what is relevant in them from what is irrelevant in the context of lying, in order to be able to generalize our assessments of precedents. However, it seems that we do not have such tools. Therefore, contrary to Wolniewicz's assertions, it should be assumed that the expression "lie" is much more definable than the expressions "a situation in which one should tell the truth" and "a situation in which one should not tell the truth." Hence, defining a lie in this way qualifies as an explication of *obscuri per obscurius*.

However, these are not the only difficulties with Wolniewicz's definition. For if we agree that there are situations that more or less allow lying, that is, in other words, the permissibility of lying is gradable (which, in my opinion, it is), then we must recognize that being a lie is also gradable. At least two problems arise here. If being a lie is gradable, then on what basis do we draw the line separating statements that are lies from those that are not? In other words, how to regulate the area of where the name "lie" becomes blurred? This difficulty, related to the lack of definition of the name "lie", refers back to the issues taken up in the preceding paragraph. The second problem seems to be new. Let's note that colloquially, the phrase "greater and lesser lie" is used, but the grading criterion is most often not the moral assessment of the lie in a given situation, but the gravity of the issues involved in the lie (which allows one to consider many lies of politeness as lies of small caliber), or the degree of truthfulness – often an exaggeration or half-truth is considered a lesser lie than an account in which all the elements have been fabricated. One could still defend Wolniewicz's solutions

by arguing that the gravity of the issue is unambiguously reflected in the moral judgment. This is not always the case. Imagine that we are hiding a Jewish family during the war and, in this connection, we are committing lies in order not to deliver both the Jews and our family members to death. The gravity of the situation in which we lie is enormous, which, however, does not determine that the lie is strongly unacceptable. On the contrary, the vast majority of us would consider it perfectly legitimate to lie in this situation.

What is my point? If it is the case that Wolniewicz's proposed criterion for lying is gradable, while lying itself is non-gradable, or gradable but for a different reason, then the adequateness of Wolniewicz's criterion is questionable. I have a strong conviction (and, I think, most of us do) that, depending on the situation, lying is more or less unacceptable or acceptable. On the other hand, despite the use of the expressions "lesser lie", "greater lie", I would like to have a descriptive definition of lying that resolves whether something is or is not a lie, and leaves the possible assessment to further moral reflection. It seems that this is what we should expect from a definition of lying, not a confusion between the level of description and the level of valuation. Let's consider what problems would arise if we distinguished murder from non-murder in Polish criminal law on the basis of whether depriving someone of life was justified or not, rather than on the basis of the applicable criteria. Nowadays, homicide is understood as the deliberate deprivation of someone's life. Thus, non-homicide is an act that did not lead to the deprivation of someone's life, or an act that, although it led to death, was unintentional (one then speaks of causing one's death unintentionally). And although value-loaded expressions (such as "special cruelty" or "special condemnation") are used in the context of further distinctions – such as the distinction of qualified homicide – the definitional basis remains descriptive, as can be seen in the context of so-called privileged homicide. The legal understanding of murder does not refer to value criteria, even though in everyday language the word "murder" has – like the word "lie" – a negative connotation. This is because the introduction of evaluating elements

to the definition would cause additional difficulties, which we discussed earlier, and it would not provide benefits. I prefer to first qualify certain communicative acts as lies, even being aware of the negative connotations associated with the word "lie," and only then formulate moral and aesthetic judgments. This does not make me someone who indulges in lying, because by acting in this way, I can evaluate individual lies even more negatively than Wolniewicz does.

Additionally, I would add that it is not only Wolniewicz who demands – in my opinion, wrongly – the inclusion of value elements into the definition of lying. Chudy, too, realizing the existence of various definitions of lying, makes the assumption that lying must be evaluated as a moral evil. "When adopting a broad definition [of lying]," he writes (Chudy 2003: 109), "problems arise with the effectiveness of ethical evaluation of this act. For example, when any indiscriminate denying of one's own thought is classified as a lie, then also any conventional denying of the truth, sometimes defending us against intrusiveness (of the type: 'He is not at home'), will be judged as a moral evil." On the other hand, if one approves of a narrow definition, when one treats lying restrictively, limiting it to a certain sphere from which, for example, conventional lies or even useful lies are excluded, one can lead to abuses in the form of too wide a margin of arbitrariness for lying acts." I reject this assumption. I recognize that the definition of lying should be purely descriptive, and there is no such connection between the definition of lying and the principle of truthfulness as Wolniewicz postulates. With a broad definition, qualifying certain communicative acts as lies, I am aware of the negative connotations associated with the word "lie," but this does not immediately lead me to unreflectively condemn a given communicative act, but only to be morally cautious about what I define as "lies." Thus – contrary to Chudy – I do not immediately recognize every lie as a moral evil, but I remain morally vigilant (especially when it is me who is about to lie).

**3. Toward an adequate definition of lie and lying.** Let's move to the positive part of the article and formulate a definition of lying. I assume that an adequate definition of lying should:

- refer to the concept of a communicative act or message, so that the concept of lying includes both certain verbal and non-verbal behaviors, and to emphasize the fact that lying is a type of message;

- not to limit lying to specific communicative acts that have had an effect, but to also allow attempts to lie as lying, and at the same time not to include as lying each and every act which intention is to mislead someone (see the example with alleged telepathy cited when analyzing Vrija's definition);

- indicate that the lie is of a conscious, deliberate, intentional nature;

- make it clear that lying is not so much about inconsistency with the absolute truth as it is about inconsistency with the beliefs of the liar, which themselves, after all, need not to be true;

- not to treat fiction (literary, film, etc.), illusionist tricks, acting, etc. as lies;

- distinguish lying as a certain activity from lying as a product of that activity.

For the above reasons, I propose the following definitions of deceiving and lying:

(DO)  $x$  lies to  $y = x$  knowingly and deliberately broadcasts a certain message  $k$ , the recipient of which is  $y$ , which is intended to mislead  $y$ , without first warning  $y$  of the intention to mislead

(DK)  $k$  is a lie =  $k$  is a message (communicative act) sent by a certain  $x$  and received by a certain  $y$ , by which  $x$  consciously and deliberately intends to mislead  $y$ , without first warning  $y$  of the intention to mislead

A few comments: I accept the terms "message" and "communicative act" without definition as primary terms. The liar must be aware of the misrepresentation and have such an intention (i.e., act deliberately, for the sake of such an objective). I leave aside the problems arising from the recognition that consciousness is gradable, and therefore one can be more or less aware of something, because I have in mind a certain threshold of consciousness, which, as you can easily guess, is not easy to precisely define or rationalize. Speaking of forewarning the recipient of the intention to mislead, I am referring to situations in which it is the sender who forewarns of his intention (for example, when someone informs that he will give examples of false statements in a moment) or such intention results from a certain convention that is known to the recipient (for example, in the context of literary fiction, acting or illusionist tricks). This is definitely not a situation in which a third party (let's say some *z*) informs *y* that the latter will be lied to by *x*.

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#### Summary

The article is a polemic against Bogusław Wolniewicz's paper *O pojęciu kłamstwa i zasadzie prawdomówności [On the Concept of Lie and the Principle of Truthfulness]* and an attempt to create the adequate definition of lie. The article consists of three parts. In the first part I consider a few definitions of lie in order to set the major criteria for lie and lying. The second part is a polemic against Wolniewicz's definition of lie. In the last part I suggest my definition, which is, like I think, the adequate definition of lie.

**Key words:** lie, definition of lie, truthfulness principle.