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**ABOUT THE DEEP MEANING OF “DEKALOG”
BY POLISH FILM DIRECTOR KRZYSZTOF KIEŚŁOWSKI**

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“Dekalog” also known as “Dekalog: the Ten Commandments” of the film director Krzysztof Kieślowski was released on Polish television in 1989-1990. The script of this drama series of ten films was written by Krzysztof Kieślowski himself and his co-writer Krzysztof Piesiewicz. The heroes of the serial live in 1980s Warsaw. Each film explores characters facing one or several moral and ethical dilemmas. “Dekalog” is considered one of the best dramatic works ever done for television. This article analyses the deeper meaning of this movie drama. What are the main themes of the ten movies cycle: politic, moral, love, freedom, criticism of Polish society, or maybe another special subject of the director’s thoughts? The analysis of “Dekalog” is carried out in comparison with other works of the director and considering the beginning collapse of the communist system in the late 1980s which influenced on his creative activity.

Keywords: Krzysztof Kieślowski, Poland, Ten Commandments, 1980s, freedom, communism, Jesus, Dekalog, Martin Luther, Krzysztof Piesiewicz, God, Polish Ministry of Culture, Ursynów district, Ingmar Bergman.

**О ГЛУБОКОМ СМЫСЛЕ «ДЕКАЛОГА»
ПОЛЬСКОГО РЕЖИССЕРА КШИШТОФА КЕСЬЛЁВСКОГО**

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«Декалог», также известный как «Декалог: Десять заповедей», режиссера Кшиштофа Кесьлёвского был показан по польскому телевидению в 1989-1990 гг. Сценарий этого десятисерийного сериала-драмы был написан самим Кшиштофом Кесьлёвским и его соавтором Кшиштофом Песевичем. Герои сериала живут в Варшаве 1980-х годов. В каждой серии показаны персонажи, сталкивающиеся с одной или несколькими моральными и этическими дилеммами. «Декалог» считается одной из лучших драматических картин,

когда-либо снятых для телевидения. В статье анализируется глубокий смысл этой кинодрамы. Каковы основные темы десяти фильмов цикла: политика, мораль, любовь, свобода, критика польского общества или, может быть, другой особый предмет размышлений режиссера? Анализ «Декалога» проводится в сравнении с другими работами режиссера и с учетом влияния на его творчество начинавшегося распада коммунистической системы в конце 1980 гг.

Ключевые слова: Кшиштоф Кесьлёвский, Польша, Десять заповедей, 1980-е, свобода, коммунизм, Иисус, Декалог, Мартин Лютер, Кшиштоф Песевич, Бог, Министерство культуры Польши, район Урсынов, Ингмар Бергман.

Polish film maker Krzysztof Kieślowski

Krzysztof Kieślowski was born in 1941 in Warsaw and died in the same place in 1996. He graduated from the internationally renowned film school in Lodz in 1969. Until 1979 he made socially oriented documentaries and fiction, mostly for Polish TV. The Polish director was a representative of the film art of “moral disobedience”, an internationally remarkable current in Polish film in the 1970s and 1980s. Kieślowski was inspired by Czechoslovak New Wave filmmakers, for instance Jiri Menzel (1938-2020), Milos Forman (1932-2018) and Vera Chytilova (1929-2014); Italian neorealism, for instance Roberto Rossellini (1906-1977), Federico Fellini (1920-1993) and Vittorio de Sica (1901-1974) and British New Wave, for instance Ken Loach (b. 1936), Lindsay Anderson (1923-1994) and Tony Richardson (1928-1991) [14, p. 65].

Krzysztof Kieślowski got his international breakthrough with the movies *Amator* from 1979, but first seriously cemented his status as one of the period's most significant European instructors with *Krótki film o zabijaniu* from 1988. The latter film was included in a shorter version in the film work *Dekalog* as *Dekalog 5*. This film and the further work on the film work *Dekalog* constituted a continuation of his earliest work, insofar as this is considered a showdown with the amoral principles of the Polish social structure. But at the same time, it is a clear break, both when it

comes to the environment and problems. The dramatic environment was now almost of a purely ethical nature, it is a matter of social sterilization rather than social realism, and any form of political or society-oriented engagement has disappeared. [9, p. 90].

In the 1980s Krzysztof Kieślowski's outward expression of reality has ceased interest. Politics and communist ideology had disappointed him so much that the instructor eventually regarded politics as a deeply immoral occupation. He had stopped believing in the meaning of reacting to society. Both politics and the social system had begun to bore him. In contrast, the interest in the individual appeared with undiminished strength to Kieślowski in the 1980s. In addition to calling himself a realist, non-moralist and pessimist by nature, but overall, with the worldview that man is good by nature, Krzysztof Kieślowski does not attach predicates to himself. Predicates, on the other hand, do not lack it from other sides. In connection with the film work *Dekalog*, designations as a great humanist, illusion-free existentialist, ironic agnostic, sceptic, non-preacher and non-moralizing were repeated to categorize the Polish filmmaker [9, p. 76].

When watching Krzysztof Kieślowski's films, and here especially the film work *Dekalog*, the cinemagoer understands why some of the predicates are attached to the director, but for two reasons, no assessment should be given here and no analysis be made. The first reason is that one must respect that Kieślowski does not acknowledge any philosophical or religious designation. Everything suggests that it does not interest him, or it has very little significance for his filmmaking, from which or in which his thoughts on human life originate. The second reason is that regardless of Kieślowski's motives, incentives and intentions, *Dekalog* is an unfolding and preaching of the concept of love for your neighbour in a Christian sense. Thus, his position is not uninteresting, but irrelevant [8, p. 12].

As far as film art is concerned, in addition to the great superlatives, it is mostly designations such as minimalist, controversial, daring, aesthetic and sharp observer that appear in descriptions and reviews of the work. The genre determination is also fixed. It is to be perceived as a chamber play, a condensed drama with few people in a

defined locality with special emphasis on the psychological intensity and intended for intimate scenes [8, p. 12].

In addition to the above-mentioned film currents and directors Krzysztof Kieślowski acknowledged to a greater or lesser degree, kinship with and influence of the directors Ingmar Bergman (1918-2007), Andrei Tarkovsky (1932-1986), Luis Bunuel (1900-1983), Eric Rohmer (1920-1990) and Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980) and the two authors Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616).

Krzysztof Kieślowski and *Dekalog*

That Krzysztof Kieślowski was at all inspired by the ten commandments to make *Dekalog* is due, according to his own statement, to a coincidence: his good friend and co-author Krzysztof Piesiewicz (b. 1945) gave him the idea, and an ever more intrusive feeling that modern people did not know, what they lived for gave him the definitive inspiration. Kieślowski elaborated on it as follows: “Decalogue is an attempt to narrate ten stories about ten or twenty individuals who – caught in a struggle precisely because of these and not other circumstances which are fictions, but which could occur in every life – suddenly realise that they’re going round and round in circles, that they are not achieving what they want” [15, p. 145].

Kieślowski thus says that he does not make *Dekalog* for religious reasons or to moralize, but to remind that there is an old order that is constantly forgotten in modern society. Instead, at a time when values are in decline, and in a world with an enormous emotional void he wanted to return to the basic principles of how we should live our normal lives.

In *Dekalog* Krzysztof Kieślowski does not regard the *Ten Commandments* as religious norms, but as norms of basic human conditions, norms that are closely and precisely connected with human whole life. As can be seen from the ten TV movies, he does not regard the Ten Commandments as indisputable laws that must be obeyed at all costs, but he believes that a complete absence of rules of living leads to arbitrariness and chaos, and that people must therefore have some norms of good and evil to find their way in life. This path must be in accordance with the natural

instincts and biology, and this is where Krzysztof Kieślowski feels that the Ten Commandments come into the picture [16, p. 55].

The similarity with Martin Luther's understanding of the Ten Commandments is striking. Kieślowski, too, seems in his own way to think that something along the lines of the affection for your neighbour is roughly equivalent to a natural drive / law inherent in man, of which the Ten Commandments are an apt illustration. When the Polish film director does not use the Ten Commandments as a list of facts and maintains that love consistently takes precedence over any of the commandments, this really corresponds closely to Martin Luther's main ideas.

Furthermore, one can conclude that the films are not religious in any orthodox way. They are partly about religion, but not the kind of religion shared by people who believe that the Ten Commandments came directly from God to Moses. But they must be considered in the more philosophically abstract way that springs from the fact that all types and forms of religions believe in the things that the Ten Commandments stand for. They cover all parts of life, the ten movies, just as they seem to determine our existence. In fact, we never follow them, even though most of us agree that we should. Therefore, they describe an interesting contradiction in life that we strive to do the right thing, yet man cannot keep some or all the commandments.

With this Kieślowski is completely in line with the medieval form of theology and Martin Luther later during the Reformation. Martin Luther argued, among other things, that no philosophy or ideology has ever seriously questioned the relevance of the Ten Commandments. That Kieślowski understands himself as being at odds with what Church and Christianity are does not, as mentioned, necessarily mean that this is consistently the case. The 10-hour TV series is about the need to make moral choices. That loneliness, which plays a major and perhaps all-important role in the films, is the contradiction and denial of love, which can therefore only remedy loneliness, that the pervasive loneliness is related to the violent shake-up of values and hierarchies in the portrayed society of the 1980s. And that even though traditional values are still crucial on a deeper, unrecognized level.

That egoism has become a more dominant attitude than pity and cohesion consciousness and is the deeper cause of loneliness is also an important message in Kieślowski's film work. That human responsibility is always very broad and cannot be limited to a single person. And that the relationship between people leads to evil, even though both parties have the best intentions is both messages in the film work. The greatest sin of the protagonists of *Dekalog* is the sin of omission, simply not showing other people's attention.

Dekalog

The following analysis and interpretation of the film work derives its justification in that Krzysztof Kieślowski himself sets interpreters of *Dekalog* completely free, and in that he emphasizes that nothing in the films (lines, scenography, lighting, symbolism, etc.) is random [2, p. 163].

The progression of the film work is immensely significant. But just as important is the theme of *The Silent Man*. The very first scene in *Dekalog 1* is precisely the silent man who, during the cold, the twilight, and the desolation, sits by a small fire by the lake shore. The slow zooming in on the man is also important. One immediately associates with Genesis (1:2-4) and the Gospel of John (1:4-5): the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not get over it. It then looks more like a thought when the work's first lines then fall into the scene, where father and son count their elbow bends ... 11, 12, 13 ... and son Pavel expresses that he is getting tired. At first glance, an everyday scene, but there seems to be more behind the conversion the viewer enters the count at 11 – the number that comes after 10. It is played on the number theme, that which is above the Ten Commandments. It is difficult to get over the Ten Commandments and if you try, you cannot stay for quite a long time, which does not prevent one from striving for it. But the good father loves his son (God and man) regardless of his ability. You can go to him before, during and after his failed attempts to perform everything himself. Therefore, Pavel's clear cry also comes to stand as typological for man's cry to God: "Father!" [1].

The three scenes are, so to speak, the whole framework of the work, namely 1) a sign of the presence of God, 2) a sign of human dependence on God, and 3) a sign

of the true neighbourly relationship. One could call it charity unfolded in its constituents: God, God – Man and Man – Man. The progression from tragedy to comedy, which Krzysztof Kieślowski himself highlights as a component of the understanding of the film work, could illustrate the course of salvation history: from death to life, from sin to forgiveness, from sorrow and darkness to joy and light. The heavy and dark start that is characteristic of *Dekalog 1* is replaced by the liberating laughter and joy that dominate in *Dekalog 10* [5, p. 100].

But who is he or what is he the Silent Man? Krzysztof Kieślowski expresses himself in a somewhat vague way. The viewer has seen his face somewhere before, and that maybe in this film work or maybe in another film work. Maybe everyone has seen this face before somewhere [5, p. 98].

In the last scene of *Dekalog 10* the main character Jurek places his three stamps next to the character Arthur, and they turn out to be identical. A picture of the brothers standing straight, they share destiny. And the fate of both is in the hands of the other; moreover, they have both confessed the mutual suspicion. They become in a now aware of the context: their stamps, their lives, everything is a series. This is also the film work's last line. Then the two people laugh, which is warm and liberating and reflects the director's hopes for the future of humanity. He appears in many of the series' episodes, but not in *Dekalog 7* and *Dekalog 10*. At least not visible, ascertainable, to us, the viewers, but one must ask if he is not there anyway?

Most reviewers come up with a guess as to the identity of the Silent Man. He can represent the witness, the fate, the case, the conscience, the viewer (you and me), a kind of angel, etc. Some unambiguous answer to whom he is hardly possible to give. And that especially after the Polish film director has left the interpretation completely open. But whatever else he is, he'll be a character, but a sign of what? Probably God's presence in the work, or also God's various figures or functions as creator, witness, determinant of destiny and conscience etc. [12, s. 125].

The role of the Silent Men in the different episodes is different. Sometimes you get the feeling that his gaze changes a person's continuation, other times that it does not. Sometimes there is even a significant eye contact between the man and one or

more of the main characters. Other times, only the man looks at the main characters, whereas they do not care about him. One thing is for sure though. It is always as if he sees through the characters, sees something that the viewer cannot see. He does not physically intervene in their lives, but it is like the Silent Man trying to understand and seize them. He does not say a word, but his gaze is always telling, even when we do not understand what it says. His significance as a sign or destiny is almost consistently supplemented by external signs: the fire in *Dekalog 1*, the weather meter rod and the ladder in *Dekalog 5* etc. He is equipped with aids or means of transport, it can support and move man.

However, the role of the Silent Man is crucial to understanding Krzysztof Kieślowski's message in the film work *Dekalog*. And three broad, yet delimiting conclusions form: 1) an interpretation of the Silent Man that excludes metaphysical elements must be considered to be completely inadequate; 2) an exclusive interpretation of role is and will hardly be complete (a bit like the meaning of life) and 3) the role of the Silent Man in Decalogue is extremely fundamental and can hardly be overestimated. In addition, his very appearance and lack of appearance in two episodes (*Dekalog 7* and *Dekalog 10*) contributes to the fact that it must not only be considered reasonable but for the sole right to view and consider the ten episodes as an inseparable whole.

The driving force behind the films and the characters' actions seems to be not just a longing for, but a fundamental belief in and a hope for something better. It is as if optimism still prevails over the prevailing pessimism. There is apparently always a bright spot in the pictures, no matter how dark they are. However, people do not always reach a better life than the one they already have, but they never lose faith in or hope for a better life. It may be far-fetched or even an over-interpretation to describe the better life or state as the Kingdom of God, but it is clear in several places in the film that even though both characters and films are realistic and have an eye for the relativity of reality, it is always ideal who just create their lives [16, p. 33].

The same can be seen from another angle: the universality and we are all equal before God thought, which is one of the main elements of the film. It is expressed in

several ways. The staging of *Dekalog* in a very large residential complex on the outskirts of Warsaw will mean that all the people, and the viewers with them, share terms and identification for the viewer is therefore very noticeable. An example of this can be found in *Dekalog 8*, where the main character Elizabeth refers to the place as an interesting property, to which the person Sofia replicates that the property is like any other. In all properties, yes in all apartments, there are people. This is further emphasized by the fact that it is not the external social conditions that characterize the life and livelihood of the persons. Incidentally, the persons are in relation to Polish living conditions in the 1980s astonishingly affluent [12, s. 124].

It is simply deliberate on the part of Krzysztof Kieślowski, it is all about the existential, where everyone stands equal. The films are about and concern everyone. Furthermore, the viewers meet many of the main characters in a film and as supporting characters in another, just as in several of the episodes small side stories are intertwined which are repeated in other episodes. All of this emphasizes the point of the film work, namely that every human being has a unique life that is worth dealing with, i.e. make movies about and watch and listen to. In other words, every human being we meet by chance is unique and remarkable, and everyone's lives are woven into the lives of others. This means that any life, our own with, no matter how trivial we experience it is deeply meaningful an ideal that must be said to be fundamental to Christianity [16, p. 45].

However, there has always been a discussion among reviewers of *Dekalog*, which also downplays the religious aspect in the ten episodes. However, the previous analysis does not prevent the reviewers from also being right, who believe that *Dekalog* is doing away with a lot of religiosity. Understood in the sense that Kieślowski rejects unambiguous answers or solutions, be it rigid political, philosophical, or religious dogmas, to existential problems. From that angle, the Decalogue is a polemic against a rigid conception of the law, the earthly as the divine. In Kieślowski's universe as well as in Christianity, the ambiguous truth about human life comes closer than the unambiguous. The complexity of life and the impossibility of the Ten Commandments as existential absolutes are clear from the

film work. Clarified by the fact that none of the episodes is exclusively about a specially selected of the Ten Commandments. The persons, on the other hand, are confronted in infinity with several commandments, sometimes so that the observance of one is conditioned by a breach of another, other times so that one hardly cares about it.

The use of symbols and symbolic language is strong and ubiquitous in the film work *Dekalog*. It is therefore essential to deal thoroughly with some essential leitmotifs and guiding symbols. The symbol of the Silent Man has already been mentioned and analysed above. Other symbols are the loneliness of man, film effects like light, dark, colours, night, day etc., the father, the mother (the milk), telephones, computers and the cross. Kieślowski's symbolic language never seems contrived, flat or overloaded, as little as the highly significant and charged remarks. These are everyday objects and words, things we know and are surrounded by. Identification is the keyword. Things and words almost always appear where it is expected and common, and the interconnection is not unusual for the superficial consideration. When the viewer sees *Dekalog* as a whole, every little detail is added like a piece in a multidimensional puzzle. However, it is up to us, the viewers, to find and assemble all the pieces [11, s. 100].

Man's loneliness and its struggle to break it, people's desperate and difficult struggle to reach each other, get close to each other, is an important leitmotif in the *Dekalog*. Close-ups of hands play a big role in almost every episode. Hands that stretch and grab for other hands, they reach each other and do not reach each other, twist, release or fail. In *Dekalog 7* the main character Anya grabs the hand of her father Wojtek. He tries to get free without disturbing the child, a Kieślowski picture of the situation and of its impossibility. Wojtek wants no responsibility for her, but does not want something bad for her either. This loneliness is also symbolized and used in the use of means of communication. In *Dekalog 9* it appears in scenes between the main character Roman and his wife Hanka. He does not dare approach Hanka, but secretly tries to reach her by tapping her conversations on the house's

other phone. *Dekalog 9* could be called a short story about the telephone, the ideal instrument for all who never meet and never understand each other [11, s. 150].

Light, darkness, seasons, day, night and colours and not least the camera set are effects that are used extensively with symbolic charge. They are never random. Sometimes it is banal: depression and grief are symbolically expressed in the dark and at night joy and redemption by light and day. It is important to be clear if you want to understand the instructor's communication of the message correctly. *Dekalog 5* is unique in that respect, as the episode is filmed with an indefinable dark-yellow colouring that gets sorted and sorted out towards the edges. When the protagonist Jacek turns his head before the episode's murder, the intensity shifts sideways, so there are constant black tests where he looks forward. The light gives *Dekalog 5* an unreal, but also an intrusive gleam. It seems real but is sick at the same time and creates an environment that almost in itself explains both murders.

In *Dekalog 3*, the symbolism is also special. The few light sources at the main character Janush's home are replaced by the lights of the big city and Christmas night reflective and intensity varying light. The day with its grey beginning clarity is the cosmos that replaces chaos and is both the condition of and the image of the cessation of the inner chaos of persons. In *Dekalog 2* is the chance that the protagonist Andrzej survives his illness minimal or almost ruled out. Suddenly, however, he stands briskly in the doorway of the chief physician's office in a lighting and pictorial composition that gives associations to Lazarus "resurrection of Jesus" resurrection. In the world of reality and reality it is an improbability, almost miraculous healing, but in the world of film and faith, there is room for a resurrection. Supported by Andrzej's reply to the chief doctor "I have come back from the other side". This line more than suggests that the Polish film director opens the possibility of operating in *Dekalog* series with a God or other higher divine being a God who acts and creates across the doubt and rationality of the superior and ours [4, p. 63].

Motives and Communist Poland in 1980s

Dekalog is TV-series that offers a pessimistic picture of harsh world in which moral choices must be made against the pressure of politics and economics. The

series was shot in 1980s communist Poland. The 1980s were also the decade in which the trade union movement *Solidarność* (Polish trade union) played a larger and larger role in the Polish society. In other words, criticism of the communist system was not unknown in Poland, as Krzysztof Kieślowski and scriptwriter Krzysztof Piesiewicz recorded the ten TV-episodes. Furthermore, the plot takes place in a typical Warsaw communist housing district Ursynów. The ugliness and greyness of the dehumanized urban setting dominates the filming landscape, together with close-ups of the people who endure these harsh conditions a typical way of a critical way of understanding the communist societies from a dissident way [6, p. 107].

The way the Polish filmmaker made entomological observations of desperate and unhappy characters inhabiting this communist unfriendly place give not only *Dekalog* a feeling of a kind of documentary film, but also a typical dissident movie. However, neither Krzysztof Piesiewicz nor Krzysztof Kieślowski mentions this motif as the main motif or a side motif during the 10-hour materials. Krzysztof Piesiewicz formulates it as follows: “We wanted to go beyond Polish iconography to get rid of that unbearable polonocentrism: the constant weeping, the paraded pain and the centre of the universe” [3, s. 25]. And he goes on furthermore *Dekalog* “was in part inspired by a Gothic altarpiece in the National Museum in Warsaw displaying the Ten Commandments in ten different scenes. In the altarpiece, the scenes are placed symmetrically. One might detect a similar symmetry in *Dekalog* series when you consider the fact that after the first five episodes the style and tempo are somewhat different there is also a framework of violence in the first and fifth episode which mark that part of the series” [7, p. 14].

In addition, dissident films were normally not recorded in concrete housing estates complexes like Usynów in the 1980s in Poland or elsewhere. *Dekalog* was one of the first series in Poland to be shot in residential areas that are the symbol of communist Poland and especially before the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. So even though this filming place after all is a symbol of a development in undeveloped country, typical symbols of the communal way of life, it comes as no surprise that this was not the message in *Dekalog* [6, p. 109].

Dekalog is also an exceptional challenge to Polish Catholicism. To be quite sure, the message could be a polemic with false, superficial religiosity. Furthermore, it could be a provocation directed against a certain religious infantilism, against treating religion as an escape from responsibility for one's own life or for the lives of others. Even though scriptwriter Krzysztof Piesiewicz admits that *Dekalog* is a manifesto of provocations, it was clear between scriptwriter and film maker that they wanted a TV-series with focus on a real human being in real circumstances, situations and conflicts. A completely detachment from that general way of describing the world: either as the political world and the human being nor the political person and the world [9, p. 78].

Krzysztof Kieślowski formulates it as follows: "The films should be influenced by the individual Commandments to the same degree that the Commandments influence our daily lives. We are aware that no philosophy or ideology had ever challenged the fundamental tenets of the Commandments during their several thousand years of existence, yet they are nevertheless transgressed on a routine basis" [10, p. XIV].

It is important that the biblical Commandments are not illustrated, interpreted or explained, but rather, referred to in ten kinds of episodes, each with two or three leading protagonists. Dwarfed by an oppressive political system but much more haunted by different moral dilemmas. However, it is also a very fact that the serious, dark, almost depressing tone of the majorities of the TV-episodes is very dominating in the making of the movies. East European sinisterness is a term, the author Tim Pulleine has invented. A description of an East-Central European malady that was dominating the movies of Eastern European films in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Especially in movies from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Soviet Union and Bulgaria [9, p. 79].

Tim Pulleine considers Krzysztof Kieślowski's perception of the world in *Dekalog* as saturated with this East European sinisterness. A sinisterness you also will find in the Swedish film maker Ingmar Bergman's (1918-2007) movies. In an interview from 1995 Ingmar Bergman highlights *Dekalog* as one of the five

contemporary movies that he most benefited from. Especially that the open structure of *Dekalog* invites the viewer to interpret the actions of Kieślowski's protagonists to follow their moral struggles, fascinated Ingmar Bergman [13, p. 132].

Conclusion

The questions are as follows: is *Dekalog* a description of communist Poland in the 1980, a religious description of the Polish society through the Ten Commandments or a general description of life? The answer is not unambiguous. There is no doubt that *Dekalog* unfolds a message of love, a message to get out of the loneliness that modern man finds himself in. It is in one way or another theme of all films. Krzysztof Kieślowski also likes to admit it. Just as he himself downplays the socially critical motif in the film. One must also keep in mind that the series should pass the censorship test in the Polish Ministry of Culture. The Polish Communist Party (PRL) also should have allowed the display of the TV-series in the winter 1988-1989 in Polish state television, maybe one of the most obvious answers of why Krzysztof Kieślowski chose to make the interpretation of *Dekalog* open.

Dekalog is not only an exploration of religious or metaphysical issues but nonetheless a description or more precisely an analysis of the mental condition of Polish society before the fall of the Berlin Wall. *Solidarność* and the general political climate in Poland during the last ten years of communist rule in the big Eastern European country contributes to the final shape of the TV-series. The long-lasting economic, political and moral crisis, gloomy prospects for the Polish future and the resulting mass emigration of Poles in the 1980s are deliberately subdued in Krzysztof Kieślowski's brilliant film work. Kieślowski attempts to depict individuals in difficult situations, especially moral difficult situations that instead of explicitly political issues and situations from numerous Polish and international movies. The goal of the Polish film maker is not a dissident film; therefore, he intentionally ignores certain everyday aspects of life that dominated the Polish society in the late 1980s. For instance, images of day-by-day hardship, food rationing and daily queues in front of shops and certain social rituals. The idea for *Dekalog* TV-series based on the Ten Commandments originated around 1982 and 1983.

On the other hand, love in *Dekalog* is defined as that which alone can remedy evil, loneliness, selfishness, meaninglessness, value relativity. Precisely because the films are based on the idea of good and evil, they not only highlight love as an opportunity but as a requirement, almost as an eleventh commandment. All films proclaim, directly, charity as that which constitutes a true human life in interaction with other human lives. The Christological aspect is toned down by both director and scriptwriter, yet it seems to be a supporting foundation in the TV series. Krzysztof Kieślowski cannot deny his Polish Christian foundation in the individual episodes. It is also crucial that *Dekalog* somewhat in the style of Martin Luther proclaims the love of a commandment that demands fulfilment, but at the same time knows that fulfilment is not possible. The bid thus puts all und indictment and subsequent judgment. We are all guilty because we do not keep the commandments of love and love to your neighbour. *Dekalog* understands the Ten Commandments as meaningful and sensible norms of good and evil consistent with the natural instincts, as norms of basic human conditions. However, they are not indisputable laws, not existential absolutes. In the TV series the enigmatic, relative and piecemeal are first exposed, then the clear absolute and perfect is proclaimed or explained. Faith, hope and love prevail, but the greatest of them is love.

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