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# Restoration Versus Retribution: Justice in Krzysztof Kieslowski's Dekalog

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# **Restoration Versus Retribution: Justice in Krzysztof Kieslowski's Dekalog**

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### **Abstract**

The topics of law and justice constantly manifest in Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski's films. His 1988 television series, Dekalog, proves no exception. The ten-film series uses each segment to focus on one of the Ten Commandments, one of the most well-known, early legal texts. While primarily dealing with the violations of these rules, the films also examine the consequences of such infringements and how wrongs may most effectively be amended. Through his portrayal of righting the violated commandment, Kieslowski reveals his interpretations of justice. Justice, however, never takes on an absolute definition in this series, as the director acknowledges the many different approaches to amending wrongs. Ultimately, Kieslowski depicts the concepts of restorative justice as being most effective in creating harmony after an offense. Restorative justice does not seek to punish the offender, but instead attempts to create a dialogue between the victim and the offender. In doing so, the offender can realize any wrongs and make amends, becoming a valuable member of society. Furthermore, the legal system is encouraged to understand the background of the offender so as to address the circumstances that could promote crime. Retributive justice provides the foil to this theory, with emphasis being placed on proportionate punishment, in the hopes of deterring future crime. For Kieslowski, understanding and emotional connections prove far more important than punishment. The more optimistic films in the series show the success of restorative justice, while the bleaker ones depict selfish quests for revenge. Analysis of Dekalog I, Dekalog V, Dekalog VII, Dekalog VIII, and Dekalog X reveals Kieslowski's vision of the moral benefits of restorative justice in handling violations of law over the selfish, shortsighted motivations behind retributive justice.

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## Introduction

The themes of law frequently appear in the films of Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski. Some of his earliest documentary films focused on the swift crackdown of Polish protestors during the martial law period of the early 1980s. Kieslowski claims, “I was keen to set up my camera in the courts where sentences were being delivered and hoped to film the faces of both accusers and accused. Getting permission for such a project was difficult, and was eventually granted as late as August 1982” (Mitchell, ed., 220). The legal system and especially lawyer and judge characters frequently appear in the films spanning the rest of his career. From No End (1985) to White (1994) and Red (1994), Kieslowski seems to have an interest in the legal realm.

As such, the law takes a vital role in his landmark Dekalog series, first shown on Polish television in 1988. The films, co-written by Kieslowski’s lawyer friend, Krzysztof Piesiewicz, focus on the Ten Commandments and their application to modern society. The series is split into ten separate, hour-long films, with each film corresponding to a different commandment. The films mostly center on lives of individuals in a Warsaw apartment complex, with each segment examining a different resident. The main characters of each part are usually faced with a moral dilemma relating to the commandment, creating a disturbance in their lives, which must be remedied. Often, another individual brings about this disturbance, causing a tension between the opposing characters. Kieslowski mainly focuses on the interactions between individuals and the connections people have to one another. The characters’ conversations with one another often bring about the return to balance in their lives. Here lies the key to the importance of legal themes in his films. On the most basic level, the laws of society are in part meant to govern relationships between individuals, dictating what behavior is acceptable and what behavior is damaging. Courts act as the mediation between individuals when an offense has occurred, with

the intent of restoring balance. In this sense, each film in Dekalog acts as a court proceeding, with an offense taking place, followed by a mediation and finally a resolve. This resolve acts as justice delegation would in the court scenario. By the end of the films, the central characters have either received satisfaction or become disillusioned in their failure to acquire justice. The discrepancies stem from Kieslowski's examination of different theories of justice in each film.

Justice carries the popular connotation of fairness and maintenance of some societal balance. The Ten Commandments act as a proponent of this mindset, having been established initially with the concept of "let the punishment fit the crime." In William Ian Miller's Eye for an Eye, the author indicates the popular conceptions of justice as being related to the retributive theory, arguing, "That *just* and *even* should share such significant overlap bears eerie witness to how deeply embedded, in English speakers at least, is the notion of justice as getting even" (Miller, 11). Retribution serves only the wronged party, ensuring satisfaction for them. The offender must face some type of punishment in order to fulfill the debt owed to the victim. Ultimately, the goal is that individuals will fear the consequences of breaking a law and will thus abstain from crime. Kieslowski takes this theory to task, however, advocating instead a form of justice more closely related to the relatively recent restorative theory. This theory agrees that justice is about fairness, but questions for who it is fair. Ruth Ann Strickland's book on restorative justice defines the concept:

[Restorative] justice requires the parties with a stake in a particular crime—the victims, the offenders, and communities—to work together to repair the harm of crime and prevent future harm.... The process places emphasis on restoring the emotional and material losses of victims, providing forums for dialogue among stakeholders, and

sponsoring negotiations and problem solving in the community. The aim is to promote greater community safety and more harmonious relationships (Strickland, 1-2).

The idea of communication and interaction remains key to this process. The victim is heard, but so are the offender and community. In addressing all parties, the legal system can better understand the causes for crime in society and possible solutions. The benefits of justice are more widely dispersed than with retributive justice, in which only the victim truly receives satisfaction. The offender, rather than be punished, plays a significant role in the ultimate just outcome of a case. The process attempts to reform the criminal, preventing future crimes. The victim and offender are encouraged to engage in open discussion, with the hopes of a mutual understanding being reached. Kieslowski's emphasis on dialogue in his films creates a perfect compatibility with the steps of restorative justice. He never fully condemns his characters, with even the "villains" possessing a great deal of humanity. In Dekalog, the supposed violations of the commandments prove to be far more complex than one might expect, with the motivations of the offenders obscuring the boundaries between right and wrong.

An examination of five of the films especially shows Kieslowski's attraction to restorative justice: Dekalog I, Dekalog V, Dekalog VII, Dekalog VIII and Dekalog X. While certainly the other five films in the series could be analyzed, these films more overtly deal with the violation of their corresponding commandments, placing justice at the core of the themes. Dekalog I, Dekalog X and Dekalog VIII represent the successes of restorative justice with communication reinstating a sense of balance to the characters' lives. Dekalog VII and Dekalog V, on the other hand, reveal the failures of justice when sought in a retributive manner. Furthermore, Dekalog I and Dekalog X can be examined together as the process of reforming the offenders, while Dekalog VII and Dekalog VIII represent more of the victims' point of view and

how their pursuits of justice vary greatly, with incredibly different results. Dekalog V stands on its own as a literal critique of the legal system and its intent to punish offenders. The contrasts between Kieslowski's depictions of restorative and retributive justice reveal his fondness for the restorative theory's processes and objectives, especially in promoting communication and harmony.

## **Chapter One: Catharsis as Restoration in Dekalog I & Dekalog X**

The two films which bookend the series perhaps best exemplify their correlating commandments. Thus, Kieslowski represents the violations of these rules in a more apparent manner than most of the other parts of the project. Yet in following the director's unwillingness to condemn his characters, Krzysztof from Dekalog I and Jerzy and Artur from Dekalog X are all given opportunities at finding redemption by the end of the films. In this redemption lies the source of justice for both parts. In the analysis of Dekalog I and Dekalog X, Kieslowski reveals his definition of justice most clearly. The main qualities that bring about equity are catharsis and understanding. Justice, rather than acting as an unbiased, emotionless equilibrium, instead proves most effective in these films when it aims to create emotional connections. Thus the successful execution of the commandments manifests in a restorative form of justice and not a retributive one. As such, Kieslowski's goal in developing these characters is not to punish them or have them endure mental anguish as a consequence of their actions. Instead, this pain acts as merely a stepping-stone in connecting or reconnecting them with a greater ideal.

This chapter works to reveal the transformation of offenders. This is a good place to start in an examination of justice, as popular notions of the theme usually question what must be done with the "criminal." In this sense, justice takes two diverging paths: punishment and transformation. Punishment stems from a utilitarian approach to justice. Matt Matravers describes this theory as "an account of the rules, of what considerations determine whether those rules should have a threat of sanctions attached to them, and of when the use of those sanctions is morally permitted...in which first the good is identified and then the basic moral command is to do that which will maximize that good..." (Matravers, 8). His interpretation of utilitarian justice shows the concept to be a very straightforward theory. The law exists with clear boundaries and

violation of these boundaries result in a proportionate consequence. For Kieslowski and restorative justice, the problem of maximizing the good through punishment is that it only maximizes the good for certain parties. While certainly the victim deserves satisfaction, the offenders receive no opportunity to make amends by their genuine will. They serve their punishment at the command of the state. Therefore, the offenders will most likely resist taking responsibility for their actions, out of fear of admitting they deserve punishment. The restorative theory suggests that “Whether found guilty at trial or admitting guilt through a plea bargain, the label of ‘legal guilt’ will follow offenders wherever they go. The stigma that accompanies legal guilt is the rationale for not admitting guilt and not taking responsibility for the harm inflicted on society and victims” (Strickland, 22). In this case, punishment fails the victim, as the offender will never truly be remorseful for their actions, except out of self-pity. Since restorative justice seeks to transform the offender, however, by encouraging a genuine regret, the “criminal” has a chance at redemption and rejoining society. This requires the individual to discard any selfish notions and connect with the greater society. In casting aside the self, the offender better understands how his or her actions disrupt the common good. For both Dekalog I and Dekalog X, Kieslowski portrays characters who neglect the sense of the greater and eventually redeem themselves through understanding the consequences of their actions, thus being redeemed.

Dekalog I tells the story of a father, Krzysztof, and his young son, Pawel. The son is a curious child who enjoys asking his father for mathematical problems, which he solves using one of their many computers. Pawel is greatly interested in the computer, drawn to its ability to answer questions. However, he also begins to ask a series of questions regarding life and death. One morning, Pawel finds the frozen remains of a dog outside of his apartment complex. This prompts a conversation between him and his father over what death is, as the young boy begins

to question the meaning of life. Krzysztof answers in very scientific terms referring to the physical aspects, such as ceased blood flow. Furthermore, the father claims that memories are all that remain once a person has died. Pawel seems unsatisfied with his father's explanations and turns to his aunt, Irena, with similar questions. A religious woman, Irena talks to Pawel about the soul and faith, grounding her beliefs in far more abstract concepts than Krzysztof. When Pawel shows his aunt his father's computers, she seems slightly disturbed by the boy's awe of the machines and reliance on their functions. The father and son have developed computer programs to control the water and locks in the house as well as one to seek to unravel what Pawel's mother, who is presumably living in a distant country, is doing at the moment.

Kieslowski also shows one of Krzysztof's lectures, in which the latter discusses the ability of computers to transcend problems of communication and people's growing reliance on machines. Later that night, Pawel tells his father that he wants to go ice-skating in the morning on the pond by their apartment. The father and son spend that night going over calculations on the computer to see if the ice will be safe. After the computer's findings show the ice will be strong enough, Krzysztof himself tests the thickness, walking out onto the lake. The next day, as Krzysztof works in the apartment, he hears sirens of a fire engine heading for the lake and begins to wonder where Pawel could be, never accepting that he might have fallen through the ice. As his search for Pawel begins to seem increasingly bleak, Krzysztof, along with a swarm of residents, waits by the lake that night as the rescue workers retrieve the body from the water. Only after Pawel is pulled out does he fully realize his son is dead. Later, a devastated Krzysztof returns to the apartment, staring at the computer for some answer. It strangely replies in English that it is "ready." He then goes to the nearby church, which is under construction. He approaches the makeshift altar and overturns it, spilling candle wax over the Madonna icon. The film ends on a

shot of him on his knees, reaching into a bowl of holy water. He pulls out a frozen block, touching his forehead with it.

Dekalog I provides a difficult example of justice, especially in trying to argue the overall positive outcome. On the surface, Krzysztof appears to be the victim of a wrathful God, furious at his reliance on technology and reason over faith, prompting him to take his son, in an unforeseeable accident. Yet this proves especially problematic, since throughout the film, Krzysztof shows a genuine love and care for his son, going so far as to test the ice he believed was safe to skate on. If Kieslowski truly wanted to show the clear violation of “worshipping” another god, then the death of the son would seem a typical Old Testament-style justice, in which the sinner must simply pay for his or her crimes. Yet this contrasts the humanist nature of Dekalog and simplifies the complex motivations of characters. In a 1985 interview, Kieslowski claimed that in Dekalog I, “the father might well not be punished because he doesn’t believe in God but because he’s too rational. There’s a conflict there between the rational and the spiritual that’s very topical” (Ciment, 231). This comment, however, seems to be in contrast to one found in Kieslowski on Kieslowski, in which he claims, “when I think of God, it’s more often the God of the Old Testament rather than the New. The God of the Old Testament is a demanding, cruel God...[who] leaves us a lot of freedom and responsibility, observes how we use it and then rewards or punishes, and there’s no appeal or forgiveness” (Stok, 149). With these two interpretations, Kieslowski establishes the ways in which Dekalog I can be read in terms of crime and punishment. For the purposes of restorative justice, the former comment provides a more appropriate context. The Old Testament vision of God proves too rigid for interpreting the ambiguous nature of Dekalog. Rather, we can view Krzysztof’s negation of the unknown and

the unpredictable as his true fault, with his gradual understanding of these elements acting as justice in the film.

In order to understand the final evaluation of justice in Dekalog I, Krzysztof's "crime" must first be analyzed in the context of negating the unknown and not as a literal interpretation of the First Commandment. A professor, Krzysztof clearly structures his life around logic and reason, relying on computers to provide the answers to difficult, logic-based questions. Pawel, on the other hand, seems to be developing an uncharacteristically existential view of life, at such a young age. The most poignant scene of the philosophical differences between father and son comes from the breakfast conversation after the child discovers a dead dog outside of the apartment complex. When posed with the question of what is death by Pawel, Krzysztof responds with the very basic explanation, "The heart stops pumping blood...it doesn't reach the brain, movement ceases, everything stops. It's the end." His explanation ignores other possibilities, such as water filling the lungs as in drowning or more gruesome causes of death like murder. He even limits his list of causes of death to "Heart failure, cancer, accidents, old age." With the exception of accidents, these are conditions unlikely to strike Pawel, giving him a sense of security. Krzysztof's explanation may seem appropriate considering his son's age, but he, however, does not use euphemisms either to describe the complex questions posed. Instead, the diction remains highly rational, giving a very basic definition of death. This exchange acts as the first sign of Krzysztof's forsaking of the unpredictable and the unknowable. He assigns a simple meaning to the extremely complex issue of death, neglecting any philosophical or spiritual interpretations. This reinforces Kieslowski's assertion that Krzysztof's tragic fault stems from his unflinching rationality and belief that everything can be measured and defined.

With this approach towards Krzysztof's errors, the analysis of justice as more than mere punishment can be discussed. The scenes immediately following Pawel's body being pulled from the water begin the restorative transformation of Krzysztof. Lisa Di Bartolomeo's article "No Other God: Blue and Green in Krzysztof Kieslowski's Dekalog I" aids the cinematic interpretations of these final moments. She argues that a dichotomy exists through which "opposing faiths come to be represented cinematographically in Dekalog I as, among other things, the opposing lighting colors of blue (true God) and green (false god)" (Di Bartolomeo, 50). For the purposes of this analysis, however, blue will represent the mysterious unknown and a sense of a greater force, while green represents certainty and the self. To clarify the definition of blue's representation, we can turn to Charles Ford and Robert Hammond's Polish Film: a Twentieth Century History, in which they claim, "In most if not all of the episodes of Decalogue, we find an element of the unforeseen, something which changes the category of a problem and changes destinies" (Ford, 179). This description, in keeping with Kieslowski's skeptical agnosticism, does not specifically name God as being at work, but suggests some type of force, which demands acknowledgment and respect.

Immediately following the removal of Pawel's body from the lake, Kieslowski cuts back to the apartment with a close-up of Krzysztof's face. He holds the camera on him, forcing the viewer to witness the shattered man. The pouring sweat and blank stare are intensified by the length of the take and uncomfortably close positioning of the camera. To make the scene especially unnatural, the green light from the computer shines on half of his face. The eerie and inorganic qualities of the shot reflect the mental turmoil of Krzysztof. Furthermore, the use of the close-up creates a claustrophobic effect, highlighting the sense that the character is now alone. The camera then pans around his head and zooms out slightly to reveal the computer

whose calculations had lead Krzysztof to believe the ice was safe. This shot suggests that the character's reliance on technology has left him isolated, believing all of the world could be explained with such a device. His refusal to accept the metaphysical realm separated him from a connecting spiritual curiosity, which Kieslowski seems to argue, remains crucial to human nature. As he approaches the computer, the strange green lighting intensifies, as does the look of confusion on Krzysztof's face. He seems to be hoping for answers, but is left only with the puzzling words, written in English, "I am ready." The viewer can assume, that this rational man, for the first time in quite a while, remains baffled and without an explanation. The security of his pragmatic mindset no longer holds firm, leading him to seek out the unknown, perhaps for some alternative answers. Kieslowski then cuts to the church, a stark contrast to the apartment, which provides a dark atmosphere, dominated by black and blue, and which is a far more open space. This becomes Krzysztof's courtroom in which he must face the unexplainable. He cautiously approaches the altar, though at least with a more collected and purposeful look in his eyes.

Thus begins Krzysztof's cathartic, restorative transition, acknowledging the power of that which is beyond his rational knowledge. He must learn to accept that he cannot always predict and interpret the world. The scene reflects a practical technique in restorative justice known as "victim offender reconciliation." According to political scientist, Ruth Ann Strickland, this process aims at three goals: "to identify the injustice, to set things right, and to examine a future course of action" (Strickland, 10). On the first point, Krzysztof already began his process of identifying his misdeeds in the apartment, recognizing the shallow and limited existence offered by the world of order, technology and prideful rationality. Also, his decision to turn to the church reveals his understanding of a need to seek out an alternative.

The second point manifests in a far more complex manner. The ability to “set things right” in the film refers to coming to an acceptance of the unpredictable aspects of the world, whether they be God, a type of force or merely chance. Kieslowski depicts the first step of acceptance in Krzysztof’s desecration of the altar. While this may seem paradoxical, the director explains, “In an act of rebellion, we come to recognize that someone who did not seem to us to exist, in fact does exist. Rebellion is a manifestation of the faith that one denies...clearly he [the protagonist] is rebelling against God” (Baugh, 158). The act of rebellion is in itself a recognition of the entity against which one is rebelling. Kieslowski suggests that while Krzysztof maybe expressing anger and irreverence towards the church, his efforts to undertake this action reveal a suppressed faith or acknowledgment of the metaphysical world he tried to ignore. Through this intense, emotional release, Krzysztof unveils his frustration with the spiritual world, rather than a complete rejection of it. His emotional constraints break down and he seems to receive a response from the unknown. As the candles fall due his desecration, wax drips upon the image of the Madonna’s face, giving her the illusion of tears, as if she too is grieving. This reflects part of the victim-offender reconciliation in which “Victims get an opportunity to meet with offenders and to explain their injuries and losses. Offenders, in turn, have a chance to express remorse and explain their actions” (Strickland, 10). In creating this shot, Kieslowski undermines the notion that Pawel was taken in revenge for Krzysztof’s idolatry. He indicates, instead, the tragedy universally acknowledged in the death of a child. Thus Krzysztof realizes the consequences of his ignorance of the unpredictable. Pawel’s death resulted from chance and not a conscious effort to punish Krzysztof. This unfortunate chance, however, proved the only way to return him to recognizing the uncertainty of life.

The final aspect of Strickland's restorative justice appears in Krzysztof's "baptism," a symbol of his turning away from the limits of technology and reason and towards the infinite possibilities of spirituality. In the scene, once again Kieslowski presents very dark mise-en-scène, with an obscured outline of Krzysztof's figure kneeling amidst a completely black background. The ice, however, he lifts to his forehead, remains very bright, strongly reflecting the candlelight. While Krzysztof is still consumed by a now healthy sense of uncertainty, as represented by the darkness, the ice represents a hope for Krzysztof to dedicate more of his thoughts to examining the metaphysical. Kieslowski refers to this in his famous quote, "But maybe it is worth investigating the unknown, if only because the very feeling of not knowing is a painful one" (Mitchell, 223). He suggests through the baptism that Krzysztof will take on this desire of humanity and pay mind to that which he cannot calculate but must intuit.

Dekalog X examines "Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's goods." The film opens with two brothers reuniting for the funeral of their estranged father. Artur is a rock star, whose loud and angry songs humorously focus on violating every commandment, while Jerzy, the older one, has a regular, bourgeois life with a steady job, a wife, and a son. After the funeral, the brothers attend to their father's apartment, wondering what to do with his immense stamp collection. The father had dedicated his whole life to stamp-collecting, much to the brothers' annoyance. When they learn of the high value of the collection, they begin to take a greater interest in the objects, trying to expand a rare, incomplete series. They also fear for the safety of the stamps and spend money on improving the security of their father's apartment, buying window bars, alarms and a dog. The two come in contact with a crooked pawnshop owner who tells the brothers that he can obtain the final stamp in their rare, incomplete series if they agree to have blood tests. He later reveals that he does not want money for the stamp, but instead a kidney for his ill daughter. The

test results show that Jerzy is a perfect match. After some debate, he agrees to undergo surgery. During the procedure, an unseen person robs the apartment, breaking through the bars and calming the dog, who was previously shown to be aggressive towards any stranger. The thief takes the entire collection, though the brothers receive their rare stamp. Each begins to suspect the other of being behind the robbery, separately reporting their accusations to the police. By the end, both return to the apartment, confessing their mutual betrayals. Each has bought a new series of stamps from the post office. They laugh and once again bond over their purchases.

Switching from the tragic to the comic, Dekalog X seems an unlikely companion piece to Dekalog I. Their corresponding commandments even seem to occupy completely different sides of the spectrum, with the first film focusing on a spiritual question. The last film, on the other hand, examines the complete opposite concept with material greed. Jerzy and Artur's betrayal of one another seems trivial in comparison to Krzysztof's loss. In the Fright of Real Tears, Slavoj Zizek, however, argues that a strong correlation between the two films exists, claiming, "Decalogue 10 renders this [the First] Commandment in the guise of its opposite, of the unconditional 'passionate attachment' to the trivial activity of collecting stamps.... The underlying premise of Decalogue 10 is thus the Hegelian infinite judgment in which the highest and lowest coincide: revering God = collecting stamps" (Zizek, 111). This quote reveals the film series coming full circle and thus reflecting on similar themes. As Krzysztof deals with the consequences of abandoning spiritual meaning in his life, the brothers of Dekalog X face the consequences of abandoning family and revering rare commodities. Though dealt with in a lighter tone, Jerzy and Artur must proceed through the similar cathartic experience in order for justice to manifest.

Initially, the death of the father seems promising for the brothers, with a close relationship rekindling and an interest in their father's stamps helping them to understand his somewhat absent presence in their childhood. Once the stamps replace their regular lives, however, they violate their freedom as human beings and even more importantly sacrifice their relationships. Artur gives up his band and spends most of his money in order to protect the collection. Jerzy suddenly begins to ignore his family spending more time in his father's small apartment instead of his own home. Most importantly, Kieslowski has Jerzy be the kidney donor in exchange for more, rare stamps. While Artur has less to lose than his brother, by mere chance, only Jerzy is qualified to donate the kidney, and does so despite the inherent risks of such an operation. In order to depict the absurdity of this process, Kieslowski uses montage during the detailed operation sequence, juxtaposing it with the scene of the apartment theft. Two images that are contrasted are the pan of bloody rags the doctors keep filling and the thief's examination of the stamps. Jerzy believes he can replace a vital part of himself with these objects. He has lowered himself to the point of wanting to risk death for a hollow, material need.

The second aspect of their violations arises from their betrayal of one another, two scenes with each brother accusing the other of being the thief. In Christopher Garbowski's analysis of the film, he, discussing these accusations, contends, "The beautiful relationship that had been re-established could not last such a blow. This was the ultimate damage done by the trespassers [*sic*]" (Garbowski, 90). Over the course of the film, the stamps became the defining factor of the brothers' new relationship, dissolving without this aspect. Both scenes use the same cinematic techniques, in order to reveal that neither is right in their assertions. In each part, the camera remains close on the brother's face, highlighting the uncomfortable expressions. Also, this suggests the selfish nature of their actions, as all of the focus lies simply on them. This closely

reflects the close-up of Krzysztof in Dekalog I, as Kieslowski forces the viewer to witness the character in an uncertain state of mind. In the shot-reverse-shot exchange between either of the brothers and the detective to whom they are confessing, the viewer begins to notice the nervous and unsure tone of Jerzy and Artur against the collected demeanor of the detective. He listens with patience, while both brothers stumble over their words, swaying their heads around, with Jerzy usually covering his mouth with his hands. To the detective and the viewer, these characteristics act as signals of a deepening madness into which the brothers have entered. Each brother intuits the foolishness of their paranoia, but they still feel the need to divulge these false facts. The loss of the stamps appears to have left a void in their lives, which they must learn to refill with a meaningful feature.

Their reformation comes about with the rather absurd scene in which both brothers witness the pawnshop owner, the young street seller and the neighbor all talking and walking the same types of dogs Artur bought for the apartment. The set-up at first seems to be an easy explanation to the crime. However, Kieslowski makes the scene purposefully ridiculous. He aims to reveal the brothers' discovery of their own paranoia rather than answer the questions to a mystery. The bizarreness, in fact, better reflects a paranoid notion, than actuality. Nonetheless, the vision remains crucial for the brothers to expel their suspicions of each other and identify their unjust accusations. The sequence ends with Artur biting his lip and nodding his head. While this could be possibly argued as him merely recognizing the true culprits, Kieslowski decides not to include a scene of him confronting the thieves or once again informing the police. Instead, Artur seems to be acknowledging his own wrongful acts.

Unlike with Dekalog I, in which Krzysztof must, in a sense, answer to himself for his actions, the brothers must reconcile with each other, each taking the victim and the offender role.

The initial shots of the apartment for the final scene resemble an interrogation room. Kieslowski uses a high angle shot of Artur hunched over a desk. A single lamp lights his face. The events that proceed act as the restorative justice technique of “reintegrative shaming.” Strickland describes this as “apology-forgiveness ceremonies as part of victim-offender mediation or reconciliation.... Through reintegrative shaming, offenders have an opportunity to earn their way back into communities” (Strickland, 13). Dekalog X represents this model in that both brothers must confront each other with the truth of their actions, with the ultimate goal of reestablishing their relationship. Their abrupt, mutual confessions resemble George Orwell’s 1984, in which Winston and Julia betray each other by the compelling force of an unjust government: “‘I betrayed you,’ she said baldly. ‘I betrayed you,’ he said” (Orwell, 294). Similarly, the drive of greed and paranoia drove the brothers towards betrayal, leaving them to only plainly admit their wrongs. Unlike their confessions to the detective, Jerzy and Artur maintain their composure, stating, “I said it was you” with a conviction and certainty. They manage to admit their own crimes with a greater ease than confessing a suspected crime. This suggests a greater theme of justice as being absolute truth. While the false suspicions remained half-hearted and emotionally unstable, these admissions of guilt hold strong, connecting the brothers. Though the treachery against a family member carries a great stigma for both characters, the revelation of truth remains necessary in order to rebuild their shattered foundations.

While the hope for future and emotional connection is displayed in a spiritual manner, Kieslowski again uses absurdity and humor to reveal reconciliation. As the brothers both pull out the same stamps they purchased, Kieslowski cuts to a medium shot of them, heads tilted down and touching. They break into laughter, a relief from the tension established by the mutual confessions. Garbowski examines this scene by arguing, “Repentance is an important first step,

yet the brothers go further. In the end they transcend their possessions with one of God's greatest gifts to people: laughter. Both brothers finally laugh at their former obsession and this opened the way to cleansing their spirits" (Garbowski 90). The framing chosen by Kieslowski and choice of laughter over dialogue reunites the brothers on a joyous, emotional level. The humor, which slowly dissipated over the course of the film, suddenly returns as a reflection on the absurd selfishness into which they descended. The brothers receive justice in that they once again remember the positive reasons for taking interest in their father's collection: a reunification of an estranged family. For these reasons, the fact that they both bought the same stamps should not be read as a warning that they are doomed towards the same road as their father. Joseph Kickasola reflects on this aspect, claiming that the director and screenwriter refuse "to turn this film into a materialist or antimaterialist tract. Rather, they probe the complexities of moral life, attempting to decipher the mysteries of the moral ideal and the multivalence of any particular existential situation" (Kickasola, 240). For Kieslowski, the return to something greater than the self remains most important. If the new collection of stamps proves the best means of reconciliation for the brothers, than he does not condemn the action as long as they maintain this connection and do not once again slip into selfishness. Therefore, by the end of the film, the relationship is restored and the wrongs of their coveting become righted.

Dekalog I and Dekalog X provide perhaps the best examples of the series in answering the questions of what constitutes justice. Punishment, though existent in each film, remains far less important than the reformation of the characters, an action that must be initiated by them. Their wrongdoing originates from a stronger sense of self and ignorance of the world around them. Krzysztof believes he can perceive and predict all, placing himself in a position of control. Kieslowski undermines this notion by having a freak accident completely catch him off guard.

Thus, he reconnects with the world through an acceptance of that which he cannot control. Jerzy and Artur begin to ignore their regular lives and relationships for the desire of an object. In order to combat this, Kieslowski has the characters recognize the importance of human connection. All three must directly recognize their faults and atone in front of those they wronged, providing emotional retribution and reformation for all parties involved in the crime. Ultimately, Kieslowski portrays crime as complete selfishness, dealt with in a tongue-in-cheek manner at the end of Dekalog X in Artur's song on the necessity of violating each commandment: "Because all around you is within you/everything belongs to you!" To oppose this, justice comes to represent reconnecting to anything greater than the self. This manifests as a sense of spirituality in the first film and as strengthened relationships to other people in the last. In both cases, the individual cooperates and connects with something or someone outside of the self. For true justice to exist, both parties must benefit and reach a true understanding of each other.

## **Chapter Two: The Boundary between Restoration & Revenge in Dekalog VII & Dekalog VIII**

If the films examined in Chapter One represent the transformation of the “perpetrators,” in Dekalog VII and Dekalog VIII, Kieslowski evaluates justice from the victims’ point of view. Rather than depict a character violating the film’s central commandment, Kieslowski uses these two sections to focus on the search for justice by the characters. Here, again, the concept of restorative justice and victim-offender interaction remains key to providing satisfaction. However, Dekalog VII, like Dekalog V, which will be discussed later, reveals the paradoxical nature of redemption, with the lines between victim and perpetrator blurring. Dekalog VIII, on the other hand, provides a perfect example of Kieslowski’s desire for justice built around communication and understanding. In this film, the victim’s search for retribution causes a transformation in her perception towards her alleged offender. While the films of Chapter One evaluated the means of transforming the offenders, the films of this chapter are more about an individual versus another individual, examining both the victim and offender’s point of view. As such, the issues of restorative justice certainly play a major role but the concepts surrounding the retributive theory also need to be examined more thoroughly for its shortcomings in satisfying the victims.

To understand the concepts of victim satisfaction and offender reformation in restorative justice, one can turn to the idea of the victim-offender panel. In this mediated practice, the victims meet in person with the offender and explain the consequences of the crime. The goal of the panel “is to reduce repeat offenses by exposing the offenders to the harmful effects of their behavior. Hopefully, offenders will see first-hand the suffering wrought by their actions and will take responsibility for their conduct instead of blaming someone else or attributing the harm to

bad luck” (Strickland, 41). The prevention of future crime stems from one’s awareness of his or her actions. The offender understands the effect their crime has had and accepts that they are responsible. The hope is that in having put already one person or family through such trauma, the offender will never want to engage in any similar action again. As for the victim, Strickland offers an example of the success of mediation in creating mutual understanding. In her anecdote, a woman was shot and left for dead, but after meeting with her potential killer, a young man, she came to personally care for him (Strickland, 47). This example shows that if the victim does not remain intent on revenge, the possibilities for emotional connections can be very real. By establishing this connection, the offender can make a genuine offer of amends to the victim. In turn, the victim, seeing the offender as a human being and not a manifestation of a crime, will seek minimal restitution for damages, thus aiding the process of offender-transformation. In order for restorative justice to occur, both of these components must be met to some extent. This is the case in Dekalog VIII, but neither is truly met in Dekalog VII.

Dekalog VII follows Majka, a young university student, who attempts to reclaim what is rightfully hers in Kieslowski’s exploration of “Thou shall not steal.” Six years before the events of the film, Majka had a scandalous relationship with her teacher Wojtek, eventually leading to pregnancy and the birth of her daughter Ania. Majka’s overbearing mother, Ewa, the school headmistress covered up the scandal, forcing Wojtek to leave the school and keep silent, while deciding to raise Ania as her own daughter, having Majka act as the child’s sister. Majka and Ewa have a very strained relationship, with the mother showing no emotion towards her daughter, though caring greatly for Ania. Meanwhile, Majka’s father, Stefan, keeps to his work, remaining under Ewa’s strong influence. Having been expelled from school, Majka decides to leave Poland for Canada, taking Ania with her. She snatches her child during a play, which Ewa

also attends. Majka reveals to Ania, soon afterwards, their true relationship, and heads to Wojtek's house outside of Warsaw, where he now works as a maker of teddy bears. Majka desperately attempts to have Ania refer to her as mother but the child playfully resists, finding Majka's actions to be foolish. Wojtek, finding the plan to flee far too rash, tries to convince his former lover to return to Warsaw. Majka, however, leaves Wojtek's home, taking shelter at the train station. Before the first morning train, however, Ewa and Stefan find Ania and Majka. Ania is delighted to be reunited with her "mother." Heartbroken and ashamed, Majka boards a train, leaving the rest of her family on the platform. Ania chases after the train, before stopping at the end of the platform, completely confused.

The central issue of Dekalog VII manifests itself in Majka's statement, "Can you steal something that is yours?" a question which will prove far more complicated than Majka may believe. The initial interactions between her and Ewa place the viewer on the side of the former, viewing her mother as cruel almost to the point of being sadistic. In an early scene, Majka rushes to Ania's crib in the apartment, attempting to calm the young girl's cries of terror. After her failed efforts to comfort the child, the camera cuts to a close-up of a defeated Majka, looking down at Ania. Then, an out-of-focus figure emerges from the background, approaching Majka. Its hand grips her shoulder and forcefully pushes her out of the frame. The camera remains with this hand as it clutches the bars of the pen surrounding Ania, eventually revealing the figure to be Ewa. Thus, right at the outset of the film, Kieslowski provides us with an insight into Majka and Ewa's relationship. The choice to film only the mother's hand represents her controlling role. Hands act as an important symbol as they signify physical contact between people. The contact can either be benevolent, as exemplified by Ewa's gentle embracing of Ania, or it can indicate tension and control, as is the case with the mother's cruel grip and rough handling of Majka.

Thus, this quick scene immediately places the viewer on the side of Majka. Ewa's vindictive behavior towards her is not even redeemed by her more caring treatment of Ania. In fact, Ewa's comforting of the young girl comes off as spiteful, as she exclaims to Majka, "You don't know how to comfort her." She appears to be shamelessly flaunting her abilities as a mother in front of her visibly distraught real daughter. Therefore, when Majka reveals to Ania that she is actually her mother, following Ania's "abduction," we initially feel that some wrong has been righted. Majka, the true mother, has exposed years of lies by the manipulative and callous Ewa and regained the child, who was rightfully hers. A basic view of justice might thus suggest that the victim has received her retribution. However, Kieslowski refuses to simplify this issue, examining the effects of this reprisal for all parties involved. For the rest of the film, the line between victim and perpetrator blurs, with Ewa and Majka drawing both sympathy and disapproval from the viewer at varying moments. Furthermore, justice gives way to revenge, as Majka's plan reveals an irrational, selfish motive.

While initially Majka's reclaiming of Ania may appear to act as restorative justice in that Ania is restored as Majka's daughter, her actions ultimately serve as a punishment against Ewa, following the concepts of retributive justice. In Majka's opinion, Ewa alone remains at fault for the complicated situation, having initially stolen her child. This logic relates back to the biblical origins of the seventh commandment, as argued in Calum M. Carmichael's Law and Narrative in the Bible. The author suggests that the theft of fruit by Adam and Eve from God "was the first example of a wrongful taking, acquiring possession of what was known to belong to another" (Carmichael, 332). This reading of the commandment indicates a very straightforward view of possession and theft. By this analysis, a rigid definition of stealing emerges, with any knowing act of acquiring someone's belongings constituting a violation of the commandment. Majka

seems to hold tight to this approach, as exhibited in her assertion, “So I haven’t stolen, that’s a fact,” when answering her own question about the logic behind stealing what is yours. Despite Ewa’s attachment to Ania and Ania’s refusal to acknowledge Majka as her mother, Majka resists the pleas of Wojtek and her parents to return the child. Her actions follow a “zero-sum” form of justice, “in which any benefit by one side must be at the cost of the other side (win/lose)” (Trang, 199). Majka’s regaining of Ania as a daughter must inevitably come at the cost of Ewa losing a “daughter.” Therefore, this film exhibits punishment and loss as forms of false justice, over agreements that satisfy both parties. Throughout the latter half of the film, Majka contacts Ewa by payphone, listing her demands to give Ania permission to leave the country with her real mother and gradually revealing her hatred of the current situation in the family. For the last phone call, Ewa has established a compromise in which Ania would be “mine and yours [Majka’s],” and then belong completely to Majka upon her death, a compromise her daughter bluntly declines. Instead Majka insists that Ewa agree to allow them to leave, or she will never see them again. She gives her mother five seconds to agree to the conditions, but she rushes through her count, hanging up the phone as she reaches “five.” Her abrupt end to the conversation indicates that whether Ewa agreed or not did not really matter. Majka remained intent on keeping Ania to herself and had no desire to ever see Ewa again. She wishes to punish her mother, threatening to deprive her of both her real daughter and adopted daughter for the rest of her life. In doing so Majka takes on a similar sadistic role that her mother exhibited earlier in the film. Kieslowski thus causes the viewer to question whether Majka possesses the maturity to raise Ania, or even the desire to do so. The viewer begins to wonder if revenge is more important than restoring the proper order.

Majka's actions might have been more easily forgiven had the theft concerned an object, but the involvement of a child calls into question what remains best for the child. In keeping with a recurring theme from Dekalog, the welfare of a child always remains most important. Even if Ewa committed the first wrong in taking Ania from Majka, the events of the film question whether Majka's actions will truly be best for everyone. In bringing Ania and Ewa's concerns into the delegation of justice, Kieslowski goes beyond Majka's individual quest for retribution, taking on a somewhat utilitarian approach. Matt Matravers suggests in his book Justice and Punishment, "A straightforwardly utilitarian theory holds that an act is right only if its consequences are as good as or better than those that would have resulted from any alternative action (including doing nothing)" (Matravers, 12). In order to apply this to the film, the consequences of Majka's actions must be applied to the three main characters affected: Majka, Ewa and Ania.

While certainly the arrangement seen at the beginning of the film left Majka miserable and needing to escape from her mother, her later actions do nothing to restore a balance in the family's relationships. The strained relationship between Majka and Ewa intensifies, but now with Majka taking on the role of the controlling, cruel manipulator. Kieslowski reveals this through the telephone conversations discussing Ania's future. Two conversations occur between Majka and Ewa. The daughter, while finally revealing her true feelings towards her mother, also begins to resemble a kidnapper, setting ultimatums for Ewa in terms of deciding what will become of Ania and having her call off any police. The filming of these conversations also gives insight into the drastic role-reversals taking place. Kieslowski films Majka in a dimly lit lobby. The camera usually captures only half of her face, with the exposed half remaining partly hidden by shadows. Even when her head faces the camera, half of her face remains in partial darkness.

Bolstered by her kidnapper-like diction and tone of voice, these images suggest a somewhat sinister turn for Majka. Her demands to free herself and Ania from her mother begin to appear less about starting a fresh life with her reclaimed daughter and more about a personal rebellion against the years of neglect and domination by Ewa's unpleasant personality. The change in posture and depiction of Ewa between the two phone calls also reveals the damaging effects the loss of Ania has on her. In the initial call, before Ewa is aware of Majka's intentions, she stands when speaking, with the camera filming her from a low angle. This suggests her confidence and domineering personality. She expects that Majka will immediately return home with Ania. However, as Majka continually holds her ground, by the second call, the viewer notices a dramatic shift in her character. She is now filmed seated, with the camera at eye level. She desperately fidgets with a cigarette and rocks back and forth as she tries to make a compromise for sharing Ania. Just before Majka's countdown, Kieslowski cuts to a close-up of Ewa's face, allowing the viewer to see that she has become emotionally distraught, with tears welling in her eyes and the phone tightly pressed to her ear. This transformation reveals the emotional toll felt by Ewa. Initially, she acted as a deplorable character, standing in the way of Majka ever achieving justice for the wrongs committed against her. Kieslowski now, however, provokes the viewer to sympathize with her, as her realization that she might lose Ania becomes an increasingly painful thought to bear. The camera angles at which she is filmed further indicate the change, as the low angle shots suggest confidence and power, while the eye level ones bring Ewa to a more approachable level. Kieslowski shows Ewa in a moment of extreme vulnerability during the second call. This transformation shows the "zero-sum" justice brought on by Majka. For Ewa, no good can come from losing the girl she has raised as her own daughter, as a genuine attachment exists.

The issue of Ania's well-being, however, remains most important in determining whether Majka's behavior is justified or not. In addressing this issue, the concept of utilitarian justice again comes into play. One has to question whether Ania would have a better life remaining as Ewa's daughter or suddenly becoming Majka's child. This is not a question of whether Ania would have been better off with Majka in the first place. Wojtek suggests the best path for Ania to Majka, claiming, "She needs a normal home...her toys, her bed, her milk...understand?" Indeed, the stability and comforts of the child outweigh Majka's rights to Ania as a mother to Kieslowski. He solidifies this point through Majka's failed efforts to comfort Ania during her nightmares and the inability to get the child to call her "mother." The demands for recognition as mother become increasingly desperate for Majka, as she breaks into tears in Wojtek's house, tightly clenching the child to her chest. Despite Majka's pleas, Ania still only recognizes her as a sister. Though Majka may biologically be Ania's mother, Ewa still holds the place in the child's mind as the one who raised and nurtured her. As such, the utilitarian idea does not apply to this film, with only Majka standing to truly benefit from reclaiming Ania. If Majka had successfully escaped with Ania, one still questions how well she would have raised her daughter. Thus, Kieslowski implies a certain selfishness in Majka, since her actions demoralize Ewa and threaten to destabilize Ania's life. Even for Majka herself, she has not gained any true justice over the course of the film. Some of the film's last shots consist of Majka, on a train, with her face pressed against a window. Kieslowski uses these shots to highlight the permanent separation of Majka from her family. While she initially set out to have Ania all to herself, she has now lost her daughter forever, remaining alone. In this Kieslowski suggests the failure of retributive justice. The personal motives involved can only lead to isolation, as depicted by Majka's solitary final scene.

Kieslowski examines the commandment of “Thou shall not bear false witness” in Dekalog VIII. The film opens with the life of Zofia, an elderly ethics professor. At her university, she is visited by Elzbieta, a young Polish-American who has translated her works into English. Elzbieta audits Zofia’s class in the afternoon. The students begin a discussion on the ethical issues of saving one life over another, in regards to saving a child versus an adult. The discussion alludes to Dekalog II in which a woman pregnant by an affair asks a doctor to tell her whether her seriously ill husband, who is not the father, will recover. Should he recover, she will have an abortion but if not, she will keep the child. Zofia asserts that the child’s life remains most important. Elzbieta retorts by posing a situation from World War II. In her scenario, a young Jewish girl seeks refuge with a Polish Catholic family. Another couple has promised to give her a false christening certificate, passing her off as a Christian child. The couple, however, suddenly refuses to lie about the child’s christening, turning her out just as curfew begins. The girl turns out to be Elzbieta, while Zofia is revealed to be the wife. The two women spend the evening together, returning to the place of the past events. Elzbieta hides in the old apartment complex, prompting a desperate search by Zofia, who is mocked by the tenants. They are eventually reunited and proceed to Zofia’s apartment, where, after much discussion, they begin to understand one another. Zofia reveals her participation in the Polish resistance. The family who was going to adopt Elzbieta, she claims, was accused of being Nazi collaborators, thus threatening their entire movement. However, this claim later proved false, destroying the life of the man who was trying to save the young girl. Zofia takes Elzbieta to meet him, now a Warsaw tailor, at his shop. However, he refuses to speak about any events during the war. A disappointed Elzbieta returns to Zofia. The two women are now reconciled friends.

Dekalog VIII also focuses on the individual, in this case Elzbieta, as she pursues justice against the one who has wronged her. Like Dekalog VII, this film shows only the actions in amending a “crime,” but not the crime itself. Furthermore, the film similarly contains a question from the victim, which sums up her quest for justice: “We research, analyze and describe... but can we resolve unfairness?” For this particular segment, about forty years have passed between the offense and Elzbieta confronting Zofia. The difficulty in this film stems from the fact that Elzbieta survived the war and found a new family to hide her. Zofia never caused her any physical harm or loss, but instead inflicted a great deal of emotional anxiety. This anxiety grew to the point where Elzbieta felt the need to confront Zofia, if only to seek answers, the only compensation the perpetrator can provide in this case. Therefore, the justice process of Dekalog VIII takes on two parts. Firstly, Zofia must come to understand the mental anguish caused by her turning away the child, and, secondly, Elzbieta must receive an acceptable explanation of Zofia’s motives. By satisfying both of these elements by the end of the film, Kieslowski helps both women to make sense of a horrible and confusing situation, kindling a deep friendship.

The first step in Elzbieta’s justice process occurs when they revisit the apartment where Zofia turned her away in 1943. Following the class lecture where both identities are revealed, Zofia takes Elzbieta to the building during the night, but waits in her car, repulsed by the sight of the place. The younger woman, after exploring the grounds briefly, hides in the shadows, waiting for Zofia to look for her. The plan works as the elderly woman reluctantly enters the complex in search of her friend. The lighting is extremely dark, clouding the scene in a sense of mystery as well as danger. The apartment becomes a very disturbing and unwelcoming place, even though it was once Zofia’s home. Kieslowski underscores this feeling of unfamiliarity through the camera movement as well, which tracks with most of Zofia’s steps and pans with her

head-jerks, giving the viewer the same frantic, searching feeling which the character is experiencing. In this moment, Zofia feels abandoned, just as Elzbieta was forty years earlier. The former resident then encounters the new tenants, hoping they might have seen Elzbieta. She receives no help, however, with one man even calling her a “nut case.” The scene becomes humiliating for Zofia, echoing Elzbieta’s later claims that she originally never wanted to see the apartment because “it’s humiliating.” Zofia eventually makes her way back to the car to find Elzbieta seated inside of it. Upon entering the car, she claims, “Lord...I was looking for you.” At that moment, a light, presumably from another car, suddenly illuminates Zofia’s face. This signifies the newly realized understanding of Elzbieta’s situation in 1943. Despite Zofia’s reasons for turning away the child, she now understands the consequences of her actions. This reflects a concept of restorative justice in which the offenders must cooperate with the victims in understanding the consequences of their wrongs. Strickland argues, “Before any restorative justice process can begin, offenders must take responsibility for their offenses and admit guilt” (Strickland, 21). Restorative justice requires dialogue between victim and offender. This interaction fails if the offender should maintain a sense of innocence or refusal to be held accountable for his or her actions. Kieslowski ensures Zofia will hold herself responsible by forcing her to experience emotions similar to those Elzbieta felt, especially abandonment. With the two women now in an understanding of the offense, the second step can begin.

The next scene shifts from Zofia’s apartment of the past to the one of the present. Here, Zofia can give her reasons for turning Elzbieta away not as an excuse, but rather for her right to know as a victim. This returns to the practice of face-to-face victim-offender panels. In Martin Wright’s Justice for Victims and Offenders, he notes that individuals will mainly want to confront their perpetrators “to know why he did it” or to a lesser extent “to let him ‘see the effect

the crime had on you [the victim]" (Wright 84). These reasons validate the idea that restorative justice requires a two-way understanding. Therefore, since Zofia has come to understand the effect her actions had on Elzbieta, she must now complete the cycle in allowing Elzbieta to understand her own motivations. Kieslowski decides to open this scene in Zofia's apartment with Elzbieta straightening a crooked picture on the wall, only to have it revert to its unbalanced position after she turns away from it. Kieslowski showed Zofia going through the same process with the painting at the beginning of the film. The picture suggests a lack of balance in Zofia's life, caused by her persistent guilt over Elzbieta. Ever since abandoning her at that crucial moment, Zofia has not been able to fully forgive herself, which resulted in a void in her life. The action then moves to Zofia's dining room, where she finally divulges the information Elzbieta has waited forty years to learn. Zofia delivers the reasoning in a blunt manner. She recounts her involvement with the Polish Resistance and her inaccurate suspicions that the potential adopting family for Elzbieta was involved with the Gestapo. The justice begins as Zofia, after providing this information, moves towards the seated Elzbieta, resting her hands on her shoulders. Both women lower their heads as Zofia begins an admission of her wrongful behavior and the lack of justification in her motivations. The film cuts to a close-up of her lowered head, suggesting penitence, as she begins to state, "I left you alone. I sent you to an almost certain death. And I was aware of what I was doing. You are right. No ideal, nothing, is more important than the life of a child." At this, Elzbieta reaches for Zofia's hand. Having released all of her inner guilt and come to realize the anguish she caused Elzbieta, Zofia has redeemed herself in Elzbieta's eyes. The women now share a deep emotional connection, with mutual understanding of each other's mental pain. The scene then cuts to both women seated next to each other in a crowded frame, further suggesting this newfound closeness. Finally, returning to the crooked painting,

Kieslowski shows this object once more the morning after the women connect with each other. Zofia straightens the frame as had been done twice before in the film. This time, however, the painting stays balanced, an indication of returned normalcy in Zofia's life. Purged of her guilt towards Elzbieta, Zofia can now feel relieved knowing that she has earned her victim's forgiveness.

While certainly Elzbieta's pursuit of justice remains the key concentration of the film, the tailor wrongly accused by Zofia also receives retribution to an extent. Following the war, Zofia claims to only have seen him once. She explains to Elzbieta "I said: 'I'm sorry.' It's all I could say. But it's not enough." Her false witness towards the tailor proved so damaging that it ruined his reputation even after the war. While she feels that apologizing was all she could do, by bringing Elzbieta to see him at the shop, Zofia offers him a sense of closure, though she herself does not go into the shop to speak to him. She delivers to him the girl whose fate has remained unknown to him for the past forty years. He may refuse to speak to Elzbieta about anything besides making a new set of clothes, but, at least, he can now know that the little girl he tried to save has in fact survived. The scene may appear to be a wasted effort by Elzbieta as all of her attempts to speak about the war either are not acknowledged or refused by the tailor. In an especially moving scene, the tailor flips through his out-dated clothing magazines, trying to persuade her into buying a new coat, when Elzbieta replies, "I want to thank you for offering to save me." He immediately asks her instead if she has material to make new clothes. He refuses to acknowledge any references to the war due to his past betrayal. As his efforts to save a life were met with accusations of treachery and near execution, one cannot fully blame him for holding such a misanthropic view. Never overtly expressing this misanthropy, Kieslowski suggests it in the tailor's seclusion, dedication to work, and refusal to even discuss the war with

Elzbieta, one of the few people who appreciates and understands his efforts. The tailor refuses any emotional connections that Zofia and Elzbieta share. After leaving the shop, Elzbieta and Zofia again display their new friendship. They exchange smiles and clasp each other's hands as if they have been good friends for many years. The tailor views this with some curiosity through the barred window of his shop. In the Cinema of Krzysztof Kieslowski, Marek Haltof suggests "The window bars physically and symbolically separate him from the two women" (Haltof, 101). Haltof's interpretation gives the final scene a somewhat tragic twist, implying that the tailor will always remain isolated or "barred" from others. However, the cut between the tailor looking at the women, the women embracing, and then back to the tailor's pensive gaze could also reveal a realization by the man. He seems almost shocked at first to see Zofia and Elzbieta sharing such genuine affection, as Elzbieta has every reason to distrust her. Nonetheless, the women have worked through their difficult past, moving on to a much more optimistic future. Kieslowski ends the film on the tailor's gaze, highlighting the character's intrigue into the women's new relationship. This further suggests that he too should make efforts to reconnect with those who reached out to him. This does not propose a mere "forgive-and-forget" scenario, but rather a constructive conversation in which all emotions are exposed, similar to what Zofia and Elzbieta experienced. In this sense, Kieslowski's ending bears an optimistic tone, with justice being served for Elzbieta and the potential for the tailor to seek out his own justice being established.

In these two films on individual pursuits of justice, Kieslowski provides two extremes. Dekalog VII ends in disaster, one of the more tragically pessimistic endings in the series. Ania and Ewa are reunited while Majka boards the train, journeying to the next phase of her life alone. Dekalog VIII, on the other hand, acts as one of the most optimistic segments, with emotional connections and forgiveness being brought about almost too perfectly. Majka's flaws stem from

entering into the justice process with righteous intentions but she becomes lost in a selfish quest for revenge. By the end, Majka's relationship with Ewa has not changed, as Ewa still admits no wrongdoing on her part. Both women still feel entitled to Ania, without any true regard for the child. Dekalog VIII, on the other hand, remains possibly the most dialogue-driven film of the series. Kieslowski makes use of this dialogue by making it the foundation for Elzbieta and Zofia's new relationship. One of the few moments without excessive dialogue occurs in the visit to the old apartment complex, with the emphasis shifting from discussion to experience. Zofia experiences the same emotional distress Elzbieta felt in 1943. Overall, justice succeeds due to the balance between recognition of past wrongs and the effect they have on the victim. Perhaps more than any other film in the series, Dekalog VIII reveals the necessity for reaching out to others in order to maintain happiness in one's life. In the beginning of the film, Zofia is a lonely individual dedicated to her daily routine and Elzbieta seems to be solely consumed by making Zofia pay for her past. By the end, however, they provide comfort and happiness for each other, with both of their revealed perceptions of the past easing any lingering guilt or grudges.

### **Chapter Three: The Choice of Revenge over Justice by the Legal System in Dekalog V**

Dekalog V marks an abrupt change in tone, subject, and style from the rest of the series. Fitting the commandment, “Thou shall not kill,” the film takes a much more gritty and blunt approach, which in turn affects the presentation of justice, or, more appropriately for this segment, the lack thereof. Unlike the previously discussed films, Dekalog V examines justice in a literal sense, portraying the Polish legal system. However, Kieslowski does not confine his film to a critique of his nation’s judicial branch, which at the time was still dealing with the legacy of martial law and draconian Communist punishments. Rather, he attacks the more general notion of “eye for an eye” or “let the punishment fit the crime” in regards to justice. This utilitarian form basically aims to restore order to society by focusing heavily on the punishment of the criminal. Specifically, Dekalog V portrays the use of capital punishment as a means to bring about justice. Kieslowski takes this method to task, presenting it at times as sheer vengeance or else an empty solution to a complex crime. The lawmakers in the film appear more intent on merely doing away with the perpetrator, thus avoiding the social and personal issues involved in understanding crime. As with Dekalog VII, the commandment of Dekalog V applies just as much, if not more, to those who appear to be seeking retribution. With this paradox, the legal system provides no real form of justice in the film, as it provides only a cold, emotionless eradication of the perpetrator.

While the films of Chapter Two exemplify the retributive mode of justice, in which an individual seeks compensation against another individual, Dekalog V, though following a somewhat similar path, is better described as talionic, or retaliatory. The retributive mode, while still not favored by Kieslowski, mostly aims to right a wrong and give the individual peace of mind. Talionic justice, on the other hand, focuses almost exclusively on punishment, under the

guise of restoring order. In Eye for an Eye, William Ian Miller explains “that the talionic legislation [is] an innovation in Hammurabi’s code and later adopted by the ancient Israelite codes” (Miller, 22). This lawmaking stems from very old-fashioned methods of maintaining order in society. The principles of it predate the relatively recent innovations of restorative justice by millennia. The Book of Exodus defines the most well-known form of talionic justice: “But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life/eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot/burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise” (Ex. 21:23-25). Fittingly, God delivers the Ten Commandments to Moses in this same book. The concepts laid out in Exodus provide the most basic view of justice. In this light, justice is merely punishment that reflects the original crime. The cathartic interactions of restorative justice between the victim and offender are completely absent in this process. Satisfaction supposedly comes from the knowledge that the offender suffered in a manner similar to the victim. For Kieslowski, this proves to be insufficient in truly creating justice, as the offender is denied any chance of redemption.

Dekalog V begins by following three separate characters, who remain initially unknown to each other. For nearly the first twenty minutes, their lives are inter-cut. The first character introduced is Piotr, a young, idealistic lawyer who is taking the interview portion of his bar examination. The interviewers for the exam question his views on law and justice, though only his answers are presented to the viewer. The next character, Waldemar, a cabdriver, living in the series’ central apartment complex, goes about his day, taking pleasure in the misery of others. Kieslowski presents him as a very seedy person, trying to look up a young girl’s skirt or honking his horn at a person walking a dog. He refuses rides to people throughout the beginning, until finally picking up Jacek. Jacek is a young man aimlessly roaming the streets of Warsaw. His

behavior also remains very suspicious to the viewer. At times, he can be cruel, evidenced by his pushing of a man into a urinal and throwing a rock off an overpass onto a car. Yet he also possesses a mysterious sense of compassion. He carries around a damaged photo of a little girl's first communion. Later, Kieslowski reveals this to be his sister who tragically died young at the hands of one of Jacek's friends drunkenly driving a tractor. When Waldemar picks Jacek up in his cab, the young man directs him down an isolated road on the outskirts of Warsaw. Once there, he brutally strangles him from the back seat and then beats the man, in a detailed and graphic scene. He finally bashes Waldemar's head with a stone by a river, where he leaves the dead body.

Kieslowski suddenly cuts to a courtroom, where the judges are exiting. Jacek, represented by Piotr, has stood trial for the murder and has been sentenced to death, though the actual arrest, trial and sentencing are never shown. Piotr visits the condemned man before his execution and learns of his past regarding his sister. Finally, the moment of execution arrives. Jacek's hanging closely reflects the events of his crime. The film ends with Piotr alone in his car, somewhere in the woods, shouting, "I abhor it!"

Dekalog V begins with an off-screen monologue, delivered by Piotr, attacking the notion of talionic justice. The film opens with the line, "The law should not imitate nature, the law should improve nature." In this statement, Piotr establishes himself as a progressive lawyer, looking to constantly better the world through law. For him, the law is not completely set in stone, nor does it stem from some natural order. Rather, it can change in order to better "improve" nature. His reference to law and nature alludes to Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, a major influence on the modern state system in the Europe and America, in which the philosopher argues how the state, as the creator of the law, improves the "state of nature." Hobbes suggests

that governments draw their authority from the obedience of the people, who have authorized the leader to use whatever means necessary to suppress man's natural, individualist drive (Norrie, 18). Therefore, punishment supposedly keeps the members of society from pursuing their selfish, dangerous actions. Yet in allowing the government free reign, he allows leaders to pursue their own agenda, not focusing as much on the victims or society. Thus in response to crime, the tendency would be to punish disobedience, rather than address the circumstances of the action. In this sense, Hobbes' justice system does not improve the state of nature, but mirrors it, the unhindered freedom of action transferring from the individual to the state. In reference to capital punishment, the issue at the heart of Dekalog V, Hobbes argues, "the right, which the commonwealth hath to put a man to death for crimes...remains from the first right of nature, which every man hath to preserve himself" (Norrie, 17). For him, the right to punish by death still stems from a "primitive," individualistic right. The state adopts this right, justifying its own use of killing, while condemning those who do the same. Hobbes follows the logic that a killing would be justified in order to save oneself. This entire philosophy goes against what Piotr expressed in his opening line. Hobbes' commonwealth still reflects the state of nature, doing nothing to improve it. Merely this system transfers who bears the right to act freely, dictating arbitrary rules. Piotr concludes his monologue with the words which will establish the moral dilemma for the rest of the film: "Punishment means revenge. In particular when it aims to harm but it does not prevent crime. For whom does the law avenge? In the name of the innocent? Do the innocent make the rules?" For Piotr, punishment will almost never equal justice. He implies that it inevitably will harm and never truly prevent crime, since the fact that a crime occurs proves that punishment was an ineffective deterrent. Furthermore, this "revenge" fails to serve the greater society, instead merely satisfying the state in eliminating dissent. Again, this deviates

from restorative justice as the concept of the greater, in this case the immediate society, is not involved in the transformative process. In the talionic system, “justice” occurs merely between two parties, with only the needs of the accuser being satisfied.

After this monologue and until Jacek’s murder of Waldemar, Piotr continues to provide the philosophy against talionic justice and for restorative justice. Kieslowski validates his ideas by interweaving them with the lives of the two other characters, especially Jacek. At one moment Kieslowski films Piotr directly against a black backdrop speaking about the purpose of law. He then cuts to a close-up of Jacek’s face in a Warsaw square. Piotr’s voice continues over this shot of the young man, with him saying, “What appeals to me most [about being a lawyer] is that I can meet and come to understand people I’d never otherwise meet.” The initial shot of Piotr is clear, with natural coloring, while Jacek is filmed with a dirty, yellow tint. Kieslowski suggests that each character lives in a very separate world. The images of the former are filmed in a straightforward manner, with natural colors, while Jacek’s world seems filthy and corrupted, evidenced by the yellow tint of those scenes. Only through Jacek’s later crime could Piotr be given the opportunity to meet him and eventually come to understand him. Piotr’s reasons for pursuing a law career go beyond merely serving justice. He genuinely wishes to connect more with other people, especially those whom society seems to condemn. Kieslowski’s portrayals of Jacek in the first half of the film are rarely sympathetic. When speaking to others, he is abrupt, rude, and cold. His sliding of a rock onto traffic below and pushing a man into a urinal repels the viewer. Yet Piotr does not base his perceptions of Jacek on his wrongdoings. As seen in the pre-execution meeting between the two men later in the film, the lawyer sees an emotional side of the criminal, as Jacek recounts his guilt over his favorite sibling’s death. The idea of “understanding” the accused remains most important for Piotr. This manifests later in the film

when Jacek explains to Piotr, “They’re all against me.” Piotr responds, “Against what you’ve done,” only to have Jacek counter, “It’s the same thing.” To the state, Jacek is inseparable from and defined by his crime. His background and circumstances have no bearing on the case, as justice is supposedly blind. The state breaks down the issue as Jacek has broken the law and must now be punished in a fitting manner. For Piotr and within the context of restorative justice, the motivations and life of the victim remain vital in any case. By understanding the criminal, one can better view how to properly handle and possibly reform him or her. Furthermore, through this method, one can critique the failures of society in preventing such a crime.

Piotr continues with the idea of crime deterrence in his examination, noting both a legislative and moral failure in the world. He argues, “Since the days of Cain, no punishment has proved to be an adequate deterrent.” Continuing his montage editing, Kieslowski cuts to Jacek sitting in a café, looking out onto the street. The film then cuts to a militia officer patrolling across from the café. He takes a few steps, before turning and looking into the camera. Kieslowski returns to Jacek also looking up, before turning his head down, suggesting eye contact between the two men. The presence of this officer represents the ineffective presence of punishment. Especially for post-martial law, Communist Poland, a militia officer would symbolize the firm hand of the state, a manifestation of punishment. The eye contact indicates that Jacek is aware of this power. Yet the officer has no influence on him, as he will continue with the murder of Waldemar, despite the high potential for heavy punishment, proving Piotr’s postulation. To further reveal the ineffectiveness of the police, Kieslowski includes a scene shortly after the eye contact in which another militia officer pulls up in a van. The two men briefly shake hands, and then drive off together, leaving the shot across the street now empty. This acts as a criticism of deterrence by fear. The only practical way for these militiamen to

prevent a crime would be through constant surveillance. However, this is an obvious impossibility. In this same café, Jacek continues to cut a piece of rope, which he will use to strangle Waldemar. Authority and fear of punishment fail in even making Jacek reconsider his crime. This, thus, attacks the very purpose of talionic justice. Ultimately, the only way this method can work in Kieslowski's world is through fear of punishment. The militia's presence supposedly instills this fear of the law, but as indicated in this scene, their presence becomes useless when an individual, such as Jacek, ignores them. The authority and order created through possibility of punishment is rendered meaningless.

Kieslowski also makes reference to the failures of society's "moral" deterrents, such as the Fifth Commandment. In order to represent this, the director uses a character who can be referred to as "the Man." He appears in nearly every film in the series, often as a random resident of Warsaw. He never speaks, but usually stares pensively at the main characters, who either acknowledge him or ignore him. He has been thought to be an angel or according to Kickasola, Theophanes, an appearance of or reference to God (Kickasola, 164-166). Regardless of who he is, the Man almost always appears at critical moral moments of the film, especially when the commandment in question is being addressed or violated. In Dekalog V, Kieslowski inserts him just moments before Jacek murders Waldemar, working as a street surveyor. As Waldemar's cab stops right in front of the Man, the mysterious character turns his head looking directly at Jacek, seated in the back. The Man slowly shakes his head a little bit from side to side with a desperate look on his face. Kieslowski cuts to Jacek, clearly unnerved by this action. He leans back in his seat and lifts his body, placing his face in the shadows at the top of the frame. As the car drives away, the Man continues to stare at it, with the same foreboding expression. His brief gesture again attempts to deter Jacek from the murder he will soon commit. The Man

has more of an effect on the young man than the militia, as evidenced by Jacek's discomfort upon making eye contact. He tries to hide his face to escape the piercing gaze of the Man. Tragically, he has no influence over Jacek either. If the Man is a representation of the spiritual or moral nature of the film, we can see somewhat of a criticism of the Ten Commandments as well. Despite the widespread knowledge that one "shall not kill," this crime still exists, a notion which can be shared with the nine other Commandments. Kieslowski seems to beg the question, if this idea of not killing is so clear, with obvious reasons for its existence, why then do people still kill? The moral law also fails to always deter, making it hollow as well. Jacek murders Waldemar, fully aware that he is causing tremendous harm, breaking one of society's most basic laws, and almost certainly facing grave consequences. All of this validates Piotr's assertions that society has lacked successful deterrents of crime. Rather, Kieslowski has shown that society implements half-hearted efforts to create fear of crime and promote empty, moral phrases that have become ineffectual slogans. The examination of the eventual punishment below will further reveal society eliminating criminals rather than dealing with crime.

Analysis of both Jacek's murder and his execution exposes Kieslowski's disdain for talionic justice. He depicts it as a mere mimicking of the original crime, devoid of any ethical meaning. Kieslowski in no way attempts to soften the murder of Waldemar or make Jacek's actions even slightly justified. He spares no details in the gruesome killing, often having the camera focus mostly on Waldemar as he suffers. Kieslowski often holds on Waldemar's face while Jacek strangles him. The director seems to want the viewer to be extremely discomforted by the realism of this scene. He includes no music to indicate tension, instead relying on the actual sounds of the moment to make the scene disturbingly vivid. Though mostly focusing on Waldemar, Kieslowski includes quick shots of Jacek tying the rope around the headrest of the

driver seat in a complicated manner. Eventually, he exits the car and proceeds to the driver side door where he repeatedly beats Waldemar's head with a rod of some sort. After finishing the beating, Kieslowski cuts to the supposedly dead face of Waldemar. His head is covered in blood and his mouth is agape, but his eyes remain wide open, staring at Jacek. The young man cannot bear the sight, so he rushes to the trunk, grabbing a blanket. He covers Waldemar's face quickly and tightly.

Before diving into the similarities between the murder and the execution, one must note the decision to cut from the murder to the trial being adjourned. Kieslowski never shows the justice process, instead deciding to skip to justice allegedly being carried out. In the first shot, the judges rise to leave the courtroom. Kieslowski does not indicate whether they are leaving for a temporary recess or to perhaps deliberate. However, the camera pans to the well of the courtroom, where Piotr and Jacek are seated together. Jacek suddenly asks, "Does that mean it's the end?" Kieslowski briefly cuts to Jacek's family and then to a medium shot of the convict and his attorney. Piotr answers, confounded, "The end," before his client is led out of the court. We now realize that the arguments of the trial are over and Jacek has been found guilty. By neglecting the trial, Kieslowski undermines the court system, suggesting that Jacek would inevitably be found guilty. To the director, these courts only see that the law has been broken and therefore the guilty need to be fittingly punished. Unlike Dekalog I, VIII, or X where the wrongdoers are given their chance to redeem themselves, Jacek is never given this opportunity. The other three films rely heavily on the emotional connections between the victim and perpetrator. In Dekalog V, the courtroom would make the ideal setting for Jacek to recognize the evils of his actions and redeem his character for the audience as well as society. This, however, is not in the interest of the court. After the case, Piotr visits one of the judges to ask why he lost.

The judge remarks that the young attorney gave a speech that “was the best against capital punishment...[but] the verdict was inevitable.” This strikes a major blow to Piotr as his whole profession revolves around preventing his clients from facing such punishments. To learn that his defense made no difference reveals the nature of the talionic legal system. Punishment must be carried out, regardless of compelling circumstances.

Returning to the execution, this scene proves just as brutally realistic as the murder, using the same discomforting quality. Kieslowski depicts the meticulous steps taken by the executioner that morning of the event. In a series of long takes, we see him prepare for the hanging. His examination of the noose carries echoes of Jacek preparing his cord from the first half of the film. Just as the criminal fashioned the rope into his weapon, the executioner carefully prepares his device. He positions the knot of the noose to his satisfaction, and then greases the crank to insure the rope can move up and down smoothly. Finally Jacek is brought to the execution room. Before being brought to the noose, Jacek begins to struggle against the many police officers holding him. He begs and cries, resisting with all of his might against them. In this moment, he is not a cold-blooded killer apathetically accepting his sentence. He is a terrified, young man, still unable to come to terms with his sentence. The blindfolding of Jacek parallels the blanket over Waldemar’s head. As the murderer could not stand the sight of his victim’s dead glare, the executioners avoid the brutal reality of their actions by covering their victim’s face. When the execution finally occurs, Kieslowski makes it abrupt and fast. Like Waldemar’s murder, he does not include any music, nor is there a countdown to heighten tension. He merely wants us to witness the execution as it is, without any cinematic distortions. We watch Jacek briefly struggle as the hatch opens, his legs and arms twitching. Then all movement stops. Kieslowski forces the viewer to watch his death in one take, without any cuts

or stylized shots to undermine the realism of this violence. Kickasola notes this, commenting, “This is not gratuitous violence, nor is it in the least bit titillating. Rather, the details all reflect the dishonor of the moment, the horrifying messiness of killing, and the casual way in which it is culturally processed.... There is no thrill factor here, just emptiness” (Kickasola, 210). The author commends Kieslowski for handling the execution in an appropriate manner, a rare trait for most films. Kieslowski does not want to keep the viewer in suspense over the death, presenting it as is. The execution becomes much more real to the viewer, seeing it presented with only the most bare of cinematic techniques. As Kickasola mentions, nothing seems just or honorable about this killing. Kieslowski gives no indication of satisfaction or restored order in the killing of Jacek. Instead, we see yet another gruesome killing.

For all of the criticism throughout the film of talionic justice, Kieslowski includes one scene in which we glimpse restorative justice at work. This occurs when Piotr visits Jacek on the day of his execution. The two sit in the cell and Piotr listens to his client. During this scene, we learn Jacek’s age (20), his family history, his guilt over his sister’s death, and his views that the court was automatically against him. Perhaps most importantly, Jacek remembers a specific moment after the trial. In this moment, Piotr saw his client being taken away in a police van. Though looking down from a high window, he called out Jacek’s name. In the cell, he explains the impact this small moment had on him: “When you called out to me, tears came into my eyes. I didn’t listen in the court...not much...not until you called me.” Jacek seems to have known that the trial would ultimately be aimed at punishing him. His detachment from it indicates that the judges and opposing attorneys made no attempt to engage with him, treating the case as a clear matter pertaining only to legal codes. Piotr was the only one who attempted to reach out to him, even if by only calling his name. Piotr acts as one of the few people involved in the case

who treats Jacek as a person and not a manifestation of a crime. This, in essence, provides a necessary base for Kieslowski's restorative justice. The criminal must be separated, at least to an extent, from his crime in order to help him redeem himself. Jacek never gets the chance to fully atone for his crime, but, at least in this scene, the viewer understands his tragic past better, empathizing with him.

Dekalog V perhaps represents the most tragic failure of justice in the series. The talionic system attempts to deal with criminals in a fair way, but in this film, we see that fairness does not necessarily mean justice. Kieslowski complicates the issue by making Jacek's crime extremely disturbing and unsympathetic. The initial reaction from viewers might even be that he deserves to be punished. The equally disturbing depiction of the punishment, however, forces us to reassess the value of this retaliation. He makes us ask whether this is truly justice at all and which characters are in violation of the Fifth Commandment. Kieslowski does not necessarily suggest that the state is more guilty than Jacek, but he does remain firmly against this perpetuation of death under the talionic system. This punishment does nothing to prevent crime and we do not necessarily believe that any order has been restored by the end. Kieslowski creates this feeling with his very melodramatic ending of Piotr screaming, "I abhor it!" Not only have we witnessed two killings, but, now, Kieslowski ends with a life being shattered. All of his idealism has lost out to the firmly established laws of the state. His future remains unclear, but the viewer can almost be sure that Piotr will be more cautious in his optimism towards the state. However, his moment of fury could also indicate a greater desire to change the system in his future work. Nonetheless, the film opens with progressive morals and ends with stark disillusionment, an overall tragic progression.

## Conclusion

The depictions of restorative justice in Dekalog may appear idealistic, especially in the thought that people can change through communication. However, Kieslowski actually shows the complex nature of crime, refusing to portray it in a black-and-white manner. The offenders are never as bad as one may think and those seeking justice are not always moral in their search. In Dekalog, crime remains a very complicated matter, requiring a more in-depth solution. This goes against the apparent simplicity of the Ten Commandments in which the violations are clearly expressed to the society. With such a transparent definition of the law, the appropriate punishment also seems obvious. Kieslowski, however, never makes this the case in his films. The violations of laws may not immediately warrant condemnation, as in Dekalog VIII. Furthermore, the carrying out of “justice” may be no better than the original offense, such as seen in Dekalog VII and Dekalog X. Due to these complicated ways of interpreting law and justice, communication becomes the key factor in mediation, bringing to light all issues involved with a certain offense.

Ultimately, true justice stems from an emotional connection between the victim and offender, with personal desires for satisfaction being put aside. In this sense, true crimes might be seen as those involving selfish motivations. With Dekalog I, Krzysztof starts off arrogant about his knowledge and ability to “control” the world. By the end, he returns to a long suppressed spirituality, acknowledging forces beyond his comprehension. Dekalog VIII shifts from Elzbieta’s personal quest for justice to a true friendship developing between victim and offender. The mistakes of the past are recognized, allowing both women to move ahead in their lives. In Dekalog X, the brothers fall into a deplorable material greed, losing a sense of loyalty to each other. They eventually see the selfishness in their behavior, rekindling their relationship

over a common interest. Majka in Dekalog VII, however, turns her mission to reclaim Ania into a form of punishment for Ewa. She revels in the knowledge that she is torturing her mother for the years of deceit. Similarly, the punishers in Dekalog V act to coldly “eliminate” a burden to their society. The true issues of crime are never acknowledged in his swift execution. The differences in the depictions of restorative and retributive justice highlight the need for awareness by both parties in the process. The offenders must be made fully aware of the harm in their actions so as to understand the consequences of their crime. The victims must be aware of the motivations of the offenders. In this process, Kieslowski reveals a system based on mutual respect between individuals and a desire to improve society.

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