

## Seeking Freedom: Individualism and Critical Thinking in Blind Chance

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**Abstract:** Blind Chance, a well-known polish movie, discusses people's political choices under the harsh period in history. This research article mainly focuses on protagonist Witek's three alternative lives. By analyzing Witek's choices in various conditions, the author claims that Individualism and critical thinking are the most powerful weapons to help people stick to the heart and fight in the dark era.

### 1. Introduction

The film Blind Chance, directed by Krzysztof Kieślowski, is an excellent carrier of Poland's 1970s era. The film focuses on a protagonist Witek and his three alternative lives, which are determined by one event: the fact of catching or missing the train. He meets various people to guide him towards distinguishing directions, making him enter different political affiliations and generating different occurrences. [1] From my perspective, the film is trying to prove that critical thinking and individualism are the greatest weapons that can bring people freedom under a harsh era. The scenes depicting Witek's rebellion against his father, the protagonist fighting with Adam, and the name sign rejection can all prove the argument.

#### 1.1 Witek's Rebellion

To start with, Witek and his father's scene illustrates the father's rebellious attitude to society. The scene from 0:04:32 to 0:05:55 in the movie *Blind Chance* comes after the film director informing the audience about the protagonist Witek's childhood, dating, and medical school experience. It demonstrates a conversation between Witek and his father. Their conversation is calm and peaceful with the soft piano music in the background; people naturally concentrate on the dialogues simultaneously.

Although Witek's father looks more like a patient and kind man, his words reflect various personalities and make the character image richer and three-dimensional. In one scene, the father says: "I never liked top dogs." People can realize that the father hates to be defined by classes and may feel annoyed about society's unfair treatment. In the father's eyes, his son's action, which makes him feel happy, is to beat the teacher in the school. That makes the audience realize that Witek's father, who is talking peacefully, is more like rebellious. The massive contrast in father's personality can catch people's attention and make the film more appealing. The father always encourages the son to dare to challenge the authority and express his thoughts; that implies that Witek may have his own opinion about communism in the latter film. Plus, they are emphasizing the importance of critical thinking and individualism as well.

The father's non-conformist attitude comes from his experience in 1970s Poland. According to the article "1970-71: Uprising in Poland," strikes happened in society at that period; citizens experienced a hard living conditions with the sudden increase in food prices. Life became tough since most people in the low classes could no longer afford the essential living items. They tried to use their methods to show dissatisfaction; then, the intense conflict occurred between the Poland army and the strike people; thus, thousands of citizens lost their lives due to violent actions. If people only chose to obey the rule in society, their rights will be gradually taken away by the policy-makers from the upper classes step by step. As a result, to rebel is the only way to fight for survival. It is also a signal to inform the people from top classes that everyone needs to be respected;

equality cannot be ignored in society.

There are two light sources in the dark house in this scene: the natural light from the door on the right-hand side and the old TV, which is flashing at the father's back. [2] The lighting makes the father's right face brighter and shows that the man is aged and worn since the shadow emphasizes the wrinkles, sagging skin and white hair. It implies that the old father may melt in the darkness at any time, and later his life does come to an end. As a man who occupies a significant position in Witek's heart, his death makes the son sad. Later, the son deeply remembers the father's education and never loses his critical thinking and desire for freedom when he faces plenty of options in his coming "train-catching" experiences.

## **1.2 Fighting with Adam**

Apart from the father, Witek shows critical thinking in his "first chance" of catching the train. For example, when he views that a man is mistreated by the people around him who are the police in plainclothes, he tells the man to fight back by using the shoes. On the train, Witek seems angrier than the poor man; he cannot endure the inequality in his life even when it is a tiny injustice. In the scene, Witek is standing near the window, encouraging the poor man against the people who hurt him. The lighting comes from the window makes Witek bright and has a "halo" around him. However, the man refuses to fight but goes back to his seat and keeps bearing. He seems does not hear anything from Witek. At the same time, Witek returns to his original position, and the disappeared halo shows his disappointment. As a person who thinks independently, he cannot understand why the poor man willing to accept his unfair treatment. The man's behaviour is so different from what his father teaches him since, in some respect, he creates his dilemma since he does not choose to fight for freedom.

After the train arrives, Witek soon meets a man called Adam. In Adam's office, he keeps telling Witek, "I need to get some kind of support" and "you should be there" to invite him to join the Communist party. In the small and dark office, Witek thinks a lot. He points out that he wants to organize the world reasonably, and one thing that makes him fear is losing freedom, living under someone's control. At that moment, Witek believes that joining the Communist party may make his wish come true and bring more equality to the world. Hence, he soon becomes one of their members.

Nevertheless, his dream quickly breaks since Communists' actions are exposed, and some related men go to jail. Witek's first love is arrested ~~due~~ to her identity as well. He gradually realizes that what he is doing is all about rights and power. There is no way to create a better world at all. Then, Witek has to fight again

In the scene from the middle of the film, Witek rushes into Adam's office, punches him and shouts at him. The camera from a relatively low angle and keeps following the protagonist's action. Two men quickly stop Witek by holding his arms and makes him step away from Adam, but Witek starts to his leg to kick. After the third man enters the office, they together finally end the fighting. Witek's anger silence all the dialogues and background music; he feels regret to join the party. The office seems darker after the protagonist's leaving, and the scene right after it better illustrates Witek's attitude.

When he finds his first love and talks with her in a narrow aisle, the lady suggests marrying the political commissar's daughter. Her words perfectly match the dialogue before: "it all about rights and power," making Witek sad. This time, he does not choose the violent action. He uses his eyes to bid farewell to the beautiful lady he used to love without saying a single word. At this moment, Witek realizes that they are now in different worlds and can no longer stay together. Although the circumstance changes the lady, Witek still listens to his inner feeling and decides to leave for France. His critical thinking keeps telling him to rebel and seek for the real freedom in the difficult circumstances

According to Graeme Gill, the communist party usually strengthen its political power by

overcoming the bureaucratic blockages. [3] In this respect, people can better establish a central authority. In other words, the bureaucracy is never promoted by people in the communist party since it locks the power and the right of decision making for a particular group of people. In the film, what Adam and the first love do totally against the meaning of communism.

They tend to use the benefits that come from the power to have a better life. Witek is a disappointed idealist. He believed in communism, but people in charge proved to be opportunistic. Therefore, make Witek mad. It is not the communist in Witek's heart; thus, it is reasonable for him to leave. Rather than stay and endure the environment he hates, Witek decides to go to France and find his freedom. [4]

The scenes about Adam and the first lover both demonstrate Witek's rebellion and his critical thinking. It shows that his individualism is the weapon to fight with society. Then, Witek experiences his second chance of catching the train and turns into an anti-communist person. He fails to have a good ending again since who belong to the opposition doubt his loyalty. Witek chooses to leave again. Right after that, the third chance suddenly comes, and Witek finally follows his heart and chooses the way he loves.

### **1.3 Name Sign Rejection**

For the third time, Witek gets married to a lady with blond hair. They soon have a baby after developing their relationship. [5] He starts to taste the sweetness of family life. This time, he refuses to join any party. When the medical health school professor asks him for a reason, he tells him that the things the parties are doing are annoying and disgusting. He uses the relaxest way to speak out his opinions directly while having yogurt. The camera keeps moving between the two men, and the professor finally says nothing but ask Witek to wipe his mouth. The interesting scene makes Witek a wayward little boy who believes firmly in his own idea. The audience can understand that he will choose to maintain his naive heart and stay away from the political parties.

Near the end of the movie, there is a scene displaying that people are signing on a piece of name sheet in the medical health school. [6] If they collect enough signatures, dean's son will not be kicked out of school for belonging to the opposition. In the scene, people are gathering together, looking at each other. Part of them choose to sign, but others do not. Later, someone asks Witek to sign his name, but Witek says "no" to him. A black cloth man feels angry and ridicules Witek by saying that he is too afraid to sign there. Witek tells him and all the surrounding people that he does not belong to any political party and will take responsibility for his action. As usual, Witek is never influenced by other people's opinions and actions. He understands what he wants and has the ability to do critical thinking. He is an individual who can choose his life and pick a direction to walk towards freedom.

People are still gathering together, and Witek, in the scene, is leaving. He is approaching the camera and becomes larger and larger on the screen. Without caring about the comments, people are giving to him at the back. He is firm enough to approach freedom and his happy life, which is created by himself. Soon after, the background music covers people's discussion and whisper. People in the Communist party is still debating with the anti-communists; however, it does not concern to Witek. What he has now is a happy family and a life full of freedom.

Finally, the audience can see that Witek is sitting in the kitchen of his house. Without limitation and the unfair treatment given by the political parties, he has a peaceful face since it is his ideal life. The piano music is playing, Witek is throwing and picking the fruits for fun. It creates a massive contrast with the former part of the movie, which is tension and depression. The era is still filled in with hardships, but now Witek finds a peaceful and happy land with freedom by using his way.

## **2. Blind Chance**

The movie *Blind Chance* shows three "chances" for the protagonist Witek to make different choices towards similar things: first time, Witek succeeds in catching the train, meets a Communist, and becomes a member of the Communist party. Secondly, he misses the train and joins the opposition party after becoming community labour. Finally, he falls in love with a lady in his last

chance, steering clear from politics. Although the movie is not a political film, it still reflects the political reality of its time. Its significance lies in the philosophical exploration of chance in human existence and the part people play in shaping our destinies through the ability to make choices. In the 1970s, the uncertain political conditions, conflicts between the classes, and the poor living condition combined, created a harsh era in Poland's history. [7] Therefore, the decisions people make become extremely important since they may influence the rest of their lives. What makes the protagonist Witek so unique and outstanding is that no matter which political identity he chooses, he always listens to his inner feeling and is honest. He follows his father's education, never loses his thinking, and dares to challenge the authority and make a change. Although there are so many restrictions and limitations in the 1970s Poland, Witek is always the person with a fearless and free heart.

*Blind Chance* is considered one of the best movies of the 1970s and an excellent carrier to reproduce the impressive era's political situation. Witek reflects many people in 1970s Poland desire liberty and equality in society. Sometimes people are unable to escape the politically oppressive borders of the parties, but they can choose to maintain their own thoughts rather than melting in the torrent of the times. As the saying goes: A speck of dust from the era can feel like a mountain on the head of an ordinary individual. People are all tiny compared to historical and political forces

; however, it is important for them to keep fighting instead of accepting all the things brought by the period.

*Blind Chance* is translated as “The Song of Opportunities” in many different languages and is shown to the audience from all over the world. During the revolutions in various nations' history, one thing is always unchanged: people need equality and walking towards freedom. When people start to think critically and become individualistic, they can write their “songs of opportunity.”

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, according to the scenes of Witek's rebellion father, the fighting with Adam, and the rejection of signing the letter, the audience can understand that no matter in which era, maintaining neutrality and listening to the inner voice are pretty crucial for people. Critical thinking and individualism are people's best tools to have a clear mind, helping them find freedom. When there is little freedom in the times, people ought to win it for themselves.

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