



April 2022

## Transforming Leviathan: Job, Hobbes, Zvyagintsev and Philosophical Progression

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### Recommended Citation

Goff, Graham C. (2022) "Transforming Leviathan: Job, Hobbes, Zvyagintsev and Philosophical Progression," *Journal of Religion & Film*: Vol. 26: Iss. 1, Article 53.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32873/uno.dc.jrf.26.01.53>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/jrf/vol26/iss1/53>

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# Transforming Leviathan: Job, Hobbes, Zvyagintsev and Philosophical Progression

## Abstract

The allegory of Leviathan, the biblical serpent of the seas, has undergone numerous distinct and even antithetical conceptions since its origin in the book of Job. Most prominently, Leviathan was the namesake of Thomas Hobbes's 1651 political treatise and Andrey Zvyagintsev's 2014 film of the same name, a damning indictment of Russian corruption. These three iterations underscore the societal transition from the recognition of power as being derived from God to the secularization of power in Hobbes's philosophy, to the negation of the legitimacy of divine and secular institutional power, in Zvyagintsev's controversial film. This examination of Leviathan's three unique iterations elucidates the evolution of philosophy and the solution to a world devoid of authority. An autopsy of Leviathan's allegorical beached corpse invites the individual to create and recognize their own authority and purpose, thus fabricating a fourth transformation of Leviathan.

## Keywords

Job, Hobbes, Zvyagintsev, Leviathan, Russian, Orthodoxy

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## Author Notes

Graham C. Goff is a student at Howard Payne University interested in philosophy, political science, and history. He would like to thank Dr. Dave Claborn for his tireless support in both academic and personal matters, as well as Samuel Goff, his favorite editor.

## Introduction

The allegory of Leviathan, the biblical serpent of the seas, has undergone numerous distinct and even antithetical conceptions since its origin in the book of Job. Most prominently, Leviathan was the namesake of Thomas Hobbes's 1651 political treatise and Andrey Zvyagintsev's 2014 film of the same name, a damning indictment of Russian corruption. These three iterations underscore the societal transition from the recognition of power as being derived from God to the secularization of power in Hobbes's philosophy, to the negation of the legitimacy of divine and secular institutional power, in Zvyagintsev's controversial film. This examination of Leviathan's three unique iterations elucidates the evolution of philosophy and the solution to a world devoid of authority. An autopsy of Leviathan's allegorical beached corpse invites the individual to create and recognize their own authority and purpose, thus fabricating a fourth transformation of Leviathan.

In 1651, Thomas Hobbes commissioned Wenceslaus Hollar and Abraham Bosse to create the front-piece for *Leviathan*, his eminent work of political theory.<sup>1</sup> The finished etching is among the most historically significant works of art, as well as a visual summary of Hobbes's political theory.<sup>2</sup> Bosse places the castle by the church, the crown by the mitre, the cannon by the excommunication, weapons of warfare by the symbols of logic, and the battlefield by the religious court, a symbol of the commonwealth's unified strength. Looming above the juxtaposed military

and religious symbols is a massive, crowned figure wielding a sword and crosier, gazing upon his dominion, composed of hundreds of human figures, a metaphor for the power of the social contract, and the reflective power of the state upon those who compose it. Spanning the top of the etching is the quote, *Non est potestas super terram quae comparetur* ("There is no power on earth to be compared to him")<sup>3</sup>, referencing Leviathan, the great serpent of the sea that is so powerful that only God can defeat him.



*Figure 1: Depiction of the sovereign from Leviathan's front-piece*

By using the allegory of Leviathan, Hobbes repurposes a symbol of divine authority as one of earthly governmental power. The reimagination of Leviathan as being a force of humans rather than a supernatural beast of the sea, indomitable by humankind, is a significant development in secular thought, as previous political theory concerned how the ruling class should utilize divine right rather than

addressing the means by which the populace can ensure their own security and prosperity.<sup>4</sup> However, the evolution of Leviathan did not end with Hobbes's 1651 governmental treatise.

Andrey Zvyagintsev's 2014 film *Leviathan* presents the fearsome serpent of the seas as an inert skeleton washed up on the shores of a Russian fishing town. This third rendition of Leviathan embodies Zvyagintsev's presentation of the modern perversion of Hobbes's social contract: a world in which the church and state are melded together for their own benefit rather than the service of the governed.<sup>5</sup>

From biblical tradition to Hobbes to Zvyagintsev, Leviathan undergoes three major transformations. In the bible, Leviathan reflects the might of God by being so powerful that only divine will can destroy it. Hobbes presents Leviathan as a ruler composed of the collective strength of his subjects, reflecting the human ability to create order and strength by means of social contract and governmental institutions. Zvyagintsev presents Leviathan as the brittle skeleton of a beached whale, a symbol of the postmodern recognition of the contemporary perversion of both church and state. Zvyagintsev's depiction of the death of Hobbes's social contract and the biblical symbol of divine power is a damning indictment of church, state, and tradition alike; a pronouncement that offers great insight to the state of modern pessimism applied to all facets of human nature and institutions. Zvyagintsev's Leviathan reflects the failure of both religious and governmental

institutions to create prosperity for their subjects. A better understanding of Leviathan's three distinct transformations provides insight into the nature of power: what it was, what it is, and what it never can be.

### **Leviathan in the Bible**

Leviathan is first addressed in the book of Job, the story of the tribulations of a righteous, blameless man. The book begins with a dialogue between God and Satan, with God presenting Job as an upright man, and Satan questioning the degree of Job's obedience to God.<sup>6</sup> Satan requests permission to destroy Job's prosperity so that the nature of his faith can be determined.<sup>7</sup> God removes his protection from Job and his family, and in rapid succession, raiders kill his oxen and camels, fire from the heavens kills his sheep and servants, a mighty wind kills his children, and his body becomes covered in painful sores that render him unrecognizable.<sup>8</sup>

Three of his friends come to visit him.<sup>9</sup> They instruct him to repent of sin, considering Job's condition to be a result of divine judgment.<sup>10</sup> Job defends his blamelessness and calls upon God to justify his judgement.<sup>11</sup> Job 38-41, the book's climax, describes God descending in a storm cloud, describing the power of his creation, saying,

Canst thou draw out Leviathan with a hook? Or his tongue  
with a cord which thou lettest down?

Canst thou put a hook into his nose? Or bore his jaw through  
with a thorn?

Will he make many supplications unto thee? Will he speak  
soft words unto thee?

Will he make a covenant with thee? Wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?<sup>12</sup>

Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear.

He beholdeth all high things: he is a king over all the children of pride.<sup>13</sup>

Job, overwhelmed by God's anger and the breadth of his creation, seeks repentance for questioning him, admitting his own finitude.<sup>14</sup> God, satisfied, restores his protection of Job and gifts him twice the property he had before, thus concluding the biblical story of Job.<sup>15</sup>

Leviathan appears in Job as a symbol of God's might and justice. At no point in God's rebuttal of Job's accusations of injustice does he reveal that Job's misfortune was a result of a wager with Satan. Instead, God reveals the breath of his creation as its own justification, contrasting his might with Job's vulnerability to deride Job's ability to question or even comprehend his justice, a theme revisited in Psalm 115:3, "But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased."

In his reference to Leviathan, God ridicules Job's anthropocentric perspective of pain and humanity.<sup>16</sup> Whereas prior biblical stories focus on God's relationship with humans, such as his commandment that humans fill and subdue the earth and have domain over every creature in Genesis<sup>17</sup> and his covenants of obedience in Leviticus and Deuteronomy,<sup>18</sup> the book of Job takes a unique perspective on the human relationship to God. In Job, Leviathan, the serpent of the seas, is the pinnacle of God's creation, rather than humans. In "Job, The Mourner",

Moshe Halbertal, professor of Jewish thought and philosophy at Hebrew University,<sup>19</sup> writes,

In contrast with this the Book of Job describes creation in quite different terms. Here, the crown of creation is the terrifying leviathan, not human beings. The leviathan is described in God's speech to Job as follows: "On earth it has no equal, a creature without fear. It surveys everything that is lofty; it is king over all that are proud" (Job 41:33–34) ...God says to Job: not everything in creation happens because of you – I have other, very different matters to be concerned with. God's answer, as many readers have noted, does not address directly the problem of evil; yet, in its denial of humanity's central place in the universe this answer is helpful in at least one respect, in that it challenges the anthropocentric assumption which tends to reinforce the self-centeredness of pain.<sup>20</sup>

God's description of Leviathan's invulnerability, from his armored skin<sup>21</sup> to his heart of stone<sup>22</sup> is contrasted with Job's blistered skin and broken spirit.<sup>23</sup> In his description of Leviathan, God asserts the might of his creation and minimizes the centrality of humankind within it.

Although Leviathan's first biblical reference is in the final chapters of Job, the motif of the unconquerable serpentine monster of the seas recurs elsewhere in near-east religion and mythology. A seven-headed monster appears in the Ugaritic mythology practiced by the Canaanites, a nation adversarial to the Israelites.<sup>24</sup> The biblical appropriation of the Canaanites' monster of chaos, rendering him subservient to God, was an intentional and deliberate symbol of the Israelites' God's divine authority. The book of Psalms even goes so far as to describe Leviathan as domestic in God's presence, saying,



O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is so full of thy riches.

So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

There go the ships: there is that Leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.<sup>25</sup>

By claiming Leviathan, the serpent of Chaos, as his own creation, playful and inert in his presence, incapable of equaling, defeating, or challenging himself, the Israelite God displays both his command over creation and opposed religions.<sup>26</sup>

In the Bible, Leviathan stands as a symbol of divine authority and power. In Job, God uses Leviathan to humble Job and to establish his own impunity from judgement. By referencing Leviathan as the greatest, most fearsome creature of his vast creation in contrast with Job's fragility, God asserts his authority over humankind and rejects any notion of anthropocentrism. In Psalms, God is described as having domesticated Leviathan, the Canaanites' feared beast of chaos, thus appropriating a foreign deity as a mere plaything, establishing not only God's authority over humanity, but other gods as well. It is due to the association of Leviathan with power that Thomas Hobbes used Leviathan as the allegory for his political theory. By using a symbol of divine authority and justice for his proposed commonwealth, Hobbes transforms Leviathan from a symbol of God's power to human power through the social contract.<sup>27</sup>

## Leviathan and Hobbes

*Leviathan or The Matter, Forme and Power of a Commonwealth Ecclesiasticall and Civil*, commonly abbreviated as *Leviathan*, is Thomas Hobbes's proposal of a Christian commonwealth of social contract, governed by an absolute "sovereign".<sup>28</sup> *Leviathan* advocates Christian theocracy,<sup>29</sup> absolute rule by an independent sovereign,<sup>30</sup> and suppression of dissent and delinquency.<sup>31</sup> Hobbes justified such measures by emphasizing the divine right of the sovereign to behave as they saw fit to represent God's will on earth.<sup>32</sup> According to Hobbes, all authority is derived from God; the role of the state is not independent from that of the church- both are to enforce divine law and respect divine authority in equal degree.<sup>33</sup> Whereas in Job, God cites Leviathan as a symbol of his might and authority, Hobbes uses Leviathan as an allegory for the power and obligation of the sovereign to uphold the will of God on earth. God, speaking to Job, spoke of the breadth of his creation and his own infinitude, in order to establish that he was above understanding and reproach. Similarly, Hobbes established the sovereign as being above reproach by the masses, by the nature of their role of fulfilling God's will on earth, writing, <sup>34</sup>

It was not unlawful for Abraham, when any of his subjects should pretend private vision or spirit, or other revelation from God, for the countenancing of any doctrine which Abraham should forbid, or when they followed or adhered to any such pretender, to punish them; and consequently that it is lawful now for the sovereign to punish any man that shall oppose his private spirit against the laws... There ariseth also from the same a third point; that ... none but the sovereign in a Christian Commonwealth, can take notice what is or what is not the word of God.<sup>35</sup>

However, Hobbes established that the sovereign were still beholden to the Christian ideals of love and sincerity that they espoused, writing,

That which taketh away the reputation of sincerity; is the doing or saying of such things, as appear to be signs, that what they require other men to believe, is not believed by themselves; all which doings, or sayings are therefore called scandalous, because they be stumbling blocks, that make men to fall in the way of religion; as injustice, cruelty, profaneness, avarice, and luxury. For who can believe that he that doth ordinarily such actions as proceed from any of these roots, believeth there is any such invisible power to be feared, as he affrighteth other men withal, for lesser faults?<sup>36</sup>

The sovereign are to believe, and, in their actions and words, serve the authority that grants them the role of ruling, Hobbes insists. The sovereign, in order to establish and maintain the reputation of sincerity, must behave justly and generously, without profanity, avarice, or luxury.

The role of the sovereign is one of sacrifice, as they are required to behave with sincerity and love, despite their privileged positions. Preceding his pronouncement of the sovereign's role and obligation, Hobbes establishes the reason for the formation of the commonwealth: namely, humanity's propensity for conflict, writing,

So that in the nature of man, we find three principal causes of quarrel. First, competition; secondly, diffidence; thirdly, glory.

The first maketh men invade for gain; the second, for safety; and the third, for reputation. The first use violence, to make themselves masters of other people's persons, wives, children, and cattle, the second, to defend them; the third for trifles, as a word, a smile, a defferent oration, and any other sign of undervalue, either

direct in their persons, or by reflection in their kindred, their friends, their nation, their profession, or their name.<sup>37</sup>

Such a state of conflict, Hobbes asserts, is the necessary consequence of the absence of governmental or religious authority. A defining characteristic of Hobbes's philosophy is his pessimism regarding human nature.<sup>38</sup> This pessimism informs his desire to establish a commonwealth, for government would be irrelevant as an institution if people were peaceful and cooperative in the state of nature. However, Hobbes proposes that the natural state of humanity is one of conflict and that the commonwealth, more than just a system of government, is a means of curtailing and regulating the destructive nature of humanity. In this famous quote, Hobbes details the societal result of the absence of a common power, writing,

In such condition, there is no place for industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain. And consequently, no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and what is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.<sup>39</sup>

According to Hobbes, the establishment of common power is necessary to preserve all that is good and respectable in humans. Therefore, only coercion can be used to curtail coercion, and only through that control which is consented to by the masses, can humans be truly free.

Although Hobbes's political philosophy, characterized by religious law, is undoubtedly a religious one, at certain points, he diverged from traditional religious doctrine. One such divergence was his theory of justice, in which he determined that justice can be determined only by earthly institution, writing,

To this war of every man, this is also consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law: where no law, no injustice. Force, and fraud, are in war the cardinal virtues. Justice, and injustice are none of the faculties of neither the body nor the mind They are qualities, that relate to men in society, not in solitude. It is consequent to the same condition, that there be no propriety, no dominion, no mine and thine distinct, but only that to be every man's, that he can get; for so long as he can keep it.<sup>40</sup>

Within Hobbes's theory of justice lies one of the primary parallels between *Leviathan* and the biblical story of Job. God, speaking to Job from the storm cloud, established that He was beholden to no ethical code—that He was neither good nor bad—but rather, all powerful, and that good and bad are concepts defined in relation to His might. Similarly, Hobbes establishes that justice cannot be determined in absence of a common power; the sovereign exercise their power as they deem necessary to fulfill their divine obligation, and justice and injustice are concepts defined in relation to the sovereigns' might.

Thomas Hobbes's philosophy in *Leviathan* is best summarized in the quote:

The attaining to this sovereign power is by two ways. One, by natural force: as when a man maketh his children to submit themselves, and their children, to his government, as being able to destroy them if they refuse; or by war subdueth his enemies to his will, giving them their lives on that condition. The other, is when

men agree amongst themselves to submit to some man, or assembly of men, voluntarily, on confidence to be protected by him against all others. This latter may be called a political Commonwealth, or Commonwealth by Institution; and the former, a Commonwealth by acquisition.<sup>41</sup>

Only by fear of death by a commonly agreed upon theocratic authority can a man find peace in himself and among his countrymen, Hobbes asserts.

*Hobbes: The Heretical, Absolutist Liberal*

The philosophy of *Leviathan*, dismissed as tyrannical by many contemporary liberal philosophers and historians, also drew the ire of numerous powerful factions at the time of its publication. Royalists and Anglicans sought to discourage future publication of Hobbes's works, while Presbyterians sought legal censorship of *Leviathan* and prosecution of Hobbes.<sup>42</sup> *Leviathan's* proposed university reforms resulted in Richard Allestree of Oxford Divinity School attacking Hobbes before the king himself, and in 1668, Hobbes was accused of heresy, although the allegation was not legally prosecuted.<sup>43</sup>

Hobbes has since been simultaneously praised as a father of liberalism for his advocacy of individualism and prosperity and decried as an advocate of tyranny due to the radical and paradoxical nature of his work, which advocates strict governmental measures and regulations in order to preserve liberty. As such, Hobbes was criticized by liberals as being too authoritarian and criticized by authoritarians as being too liberal.

J. Judd Owen claims that Hobbes is a forefather of liberalism despite his affinity for governmental absolutism. Hobbes's absolutist streak is indisputable: he argued that absolute liberty is found only in the state of nature, but this absolute liberty necessarily results in civil war and turmoil, thus rendering its benefits inaccessible.<sup>44</sup> The establishment of the commonwealth is in the best interest of the people, as the sovereign would allow sufficient protection to secure the fruits of liberty and satiate the public's appetites. However, Hobbes's proposed liberties were equally radical at the time. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes enumerates several absolute rights, such as the right to individual judgment, the right to theological perspective, and the right to resist violent death at the hands of either fellow subjects or the state.<sup>45</sup> Hobbes continues to state that the individual's greatest liberties are found in "the silence of the law,"<sup>46</sup> meaning that those inclinations that *Leviathan* does not condemn are to be enjoyed as the rights of the masses, saying,

Since all the motion and actions of the citizens have never been circumscribed by law nor can be circumscribed because of their variety, it is necessary that the things that are neither commanded nor prohibited be almost infinite; and each can do them or not at his own discretion.<sup>47</sup>

Conversely, Charles D. Tarlton decries Hobbes as an unabashed authoritarian who vested too much power in the sovereign with utter disregard for fundamental human rights and freedoms.<sup>48</sup> This objection to Hobbes is not unique to Tarlton; such prolific thinkers as Voltaire, George Lawson, Hume,<sup>49</sup> the Earl of Clarendon, and Rousseau denounced Hobbes's philosophy.<sup>50</sup> Voltaire wrote, "he

makes no distinction between kingship and tyranny...with him force is everything,”<sup>51</sup> and Lawson wrote, “Hobbes’s sovereign have a liberty to be unjust and wicked, and that more than any of his subjects, as he hath great power. I leave him to be a subject of such a sovereign, and wish all good men a better.”<sup>52</sup>

The nature of this disagreement serves to clarify the nature of Hobbes’s work. Those who consider Hobbes a liberal posit that he vested authority in the sovereign in the interest of the liberty of the public,<sup>53</sup> while those who charge Hobbes with advocating tyranny argue he vested such authority in the sovereign with disregard for the subjects’ liberty.<sup>54</sup> Irrespective of *Leviathan*’s practical and ethical merits, this ongoing debate clarifies that Hobbes’s treatise is fundamentally concerned with power, authority, and the means by which humans can exercise them legitimately.

Hobbes’s allegorical utilization of Leviathan marks a distinct departure from its prior religion-centric connotation. The transformation of Leviathan from a symbol of God’s might to an allegory for human ability to find order in a common power founded upon divine authority is a formative evolution in political thought. This second transformation of Leviathan, while not a complete departure from its biblical origin, is one that places the realization of God’s authority in the hands of humans, with a simultaneous pessimism regarding the fundamental nature of humanity, and optimism for human ability to synthesize order and prosperity.



However, Leviathan's third allegorical transformation, in the 2014 Russian film of the same name, questions its origins, both biblical and political.

### **Leviathan and Zvyagintsev**

The opening scene of Zvyagintsev's *Leviathan* introduces a Russian coastal fishing town, its harbor filled with the wood and metal skeletons of abandoned fishing boats.<sup>55</sup> The protagonist, Kolya, is embroiled in a bitter legal battle against the town's mayor who wants to seize his house. In response, Kolya calls upon the assistance of Dima, an old military friend and Moscow lawyer. When Kolya is arrested and jailed for yelling at corrupt police officers, Dima and Kolya's wife Lilya begin a love affair. When Kolya discovers their infidelity, he assaults both his wife and Dima.

The mayor, a short, boorish man by the name of Vadim, disconcerted by Kolya's legal council, seeks the advice of his friend, the bishop. The bishop tells him "All power comes from God. Where there's power, there's might," advising him to handle Kolya forcefully in a scene distinctly reminiscent of Hobbes's political theory. The mayor abducts Dima, stages a mock-execution, and tells him to return to Moscow; Dima complies.

Following Dima's departure, Kolya ceases his legal defense and begins to pack his belongings to move, bitterly accepting defeat. During the move, Kolya and Lilya have sex in the cellar, signifying Kolya's forgiveness of Lilya's infidelity,

and Roma, Kolya's son, witnesses their copulation. Afterward, Roma confronts Lilya, his stepmother, accusing her of causing all their suffering. The following morning, in a fit of despair, Lilya commits suicide by jumping off a cliff into the sea.

Upon hearing of Lilya's suicide, Kolya descends into a drunken stupor and confronts a priest, asking why he is afflicted with such loss. The priest quotes Job and instructs Kolya to accept his fate and make peace with God.

Kolya returns to his house and is arrested on charges of murdering his wife. He is sentenced to 15 years in prison for a crime he did not commit, and Roma is orphaned and ultimately adopted by Angela and Pasha, family friends who provided testimony against Kolya.

In the film's final scene, Mayor Vadim's intention with Kolya's property is revealed: a lavish church for his friend, the bishop. The film concludes with the bishop's sermon, in which he instructs the congregation not to act forcefully, but rather, to trust in God.

The film is dark and poetic, depicting modern life in gritty scenes of chain-smoking and binge drinking, and including monologues about the nature of God and creation. No character is innocent of wrongdoing, however uneven the gravity of their transgressions. Kolya mistreats his wife, Roma contributes to his stepmother's suicide, Dima betrays his friend's trust, Lilya betrays her husband, and Mayor Vadim and the bishop exploit their authority for personal gain. In this

respect, Zvyagintsev confirms Hobbes's theory of humanity's nature of perpetual conflict.

The film's pessimistic portrayal of institutions has been demonized by both the Russian government and the Russian Orthodox Church, with archpriest Andrey Tkachev calling *Leviathan* "a depressive film with anti-biblical themes and a suicidal after taste"<sup>56</sup> and the Russian Minister of Culture decrying it as "anti-Russian."<sup>57</sup> The fact that *Leviathan* elicited derision from both church and state is hardly surprising. Mayor Vadim conducts his corrupt dealings beneath a portrait of Vladimir Putin while his friend, the bishop, advocates comically devious measures against Kolya and his family. Kolya's friends use official portraits of former heads of state, including Lenin, Brezhnev, Gorbachev, and Yeltsin, as targets for marksmanship exercises. However, Zvyagintsev's critical depictions of politicians and clergymen is by no means a criticism of the Russian people or the Christian faith. Zvyagintsev is a Christian himself, and in his 2015 interview with *Cineaste Magazine*, he detailed the relationship between his personal faith and his criticisms of the Orthodox Church:

There's a saying: 'The more talented you are, the more will be asked of you.' The church as an organ of power has much more might than the government because any kind of government, any time of civil institutional power, is...to administrate the country, whereas the orthodox church is far more encompassing. They have the power to affect peoples' lives and they are supposed to...be able to tell people...good from wrong. They, as the church, are supposed to have more power over peoples' minds. Coming into such closely bound communication with political power, the church in a certain

way degrades itself to a level that is so much less than what they are supposed to do. In this context, this is my critique of the church and their connection to political power, which should not be happening.<sup>58</sup>

When asked if he believed in God, Zvyagintsev replied

I do, but not in the context of how we are supposed to believe in God. I'm ready to think in that direction. I'm ready to have my natural doubts. But not by way of confession as in the Russian orthodox church.... Nietzsche once said, 'If you want to breathe clean, fresh air, never go to a church.' Another maxim of Nietzsche's was: 'In truth, there was only one Christian and he died on the cross.'<sup>59</sup>

Zvyagintsev's faith is a complex framework built upon a respect for the church's intended socio-ethical and spiritual utility and a series of maxims from the prolific atheist philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche.<sup>60</sup> His faith's complexity is aptly displayed in *Leviathan*, but complexity should not be misconstrued as disbelief. His critiques are against power hungry clergymen and the corrupt politicians they conspire with, rather than the Christian faith or the Russian people.

Zvyagintsev's negative characterization of the contemporary Orthodox Church does not negate the possibility of true faith for his characters. Kolya is most visibly concerned with religious searching, evidenced by his confrontation with the local priest, and his exclamation of "Why? What for, Lord?" reminiscent of Jesus's pronouncement from the cross,<sup>61</sup> a reminder of Kolya's similarity to the biblical Job. Other characters exhibit similar biblical themes and parallels. By sleeping with Lilya, thus betraying Kolya, Dima comes to resemble the biblical Jacob, who stole

his brother's birthright through deception, fleeing in self-preservation.<sup>62</sup> Roma and Lilya's relationship to each other mirrors the biblical story of Ishmael and Hagar. In the story of Ishmael and Hagar, Abraham has an illegitimate child by his servant and banished them from his home when his wife bears their son.<sup>63</sup> Similarly, both Roma and Lilya are banished from their home due to familial strife: Lilya by her own unfaithfulness and Roma by his father's incarceration. Even Mayor Vadim, the film's combative antagonist, seems genuine in his faith despite his misdeeds, constantly consulting the priest in both personal and professional matters. In his meeting with Dima, he asks the lawyer if he is baptized. Dima replies that he does not believe in God. Although Vadim's motive for asking Dima about his faith is vague, it is likely related to Vadim's plot to kill the lawyer. Later in the film, he abducts Dima but spares his life, thus saving his soul from what Vadim assumes to be eternal damnation, an act that is simultaneously depraved and righteous.

Parallels between the characters and their biblical counterparts are as ubiquitous as the orthodox iconography that is so frequently visible in the film's long, meandering shots. The abandoned church building where Roma and his friends go to drink is adorned with ornate biblical paintings, including a depiction of John the Baptist's beheading. The mayor's SUV is adorned by a crucifix hanging from the rearview mirror. The priest's office is adorned with an ornate *ecce homo* bust and statues of St. Vladimir the Baptizer.<sup>64</sup> The mayor and the priest discuss business beneath an icon of the last supper, and even Kolya's friend, Stepanich, has

iconic imagery in his car alongside pictures of naked women.<sup>65</sup> Iconographic ubiquity emphasizes the characters' internalized religious identities and conflicts. In interviews, Zvyagintsev identified the bible and Hobbes as primary sources of inspiration, giving credence to the legitimacy of the parallels between his characters and their biblical counterparts.<sup>66</sup>

Zvyagintsev's film is a postmodern reinterpretation of the story of Job. *Leviathan* is the story of Job living in a Hobbesian state, but in the absence of God. Job is the story of a man whose livelihood is destroyed, who calls upon God, and has his health restored. However, *Leviathan* is the story of a man who loses best friend, wife, and home. He calls upon God but receives no response. Then he is imprisoned and his son is orphaned; the forces of evil and corruption triumph, and Kolya receives neither comfort nor redemption. Even the film's cinematography emphasized the characters' aloneness, which Zvyagintsev explained in an interview:

In the last third of the movie when Nikolay [Kolya, the fisherman] has a conversation with the priest and asks him over and over 'Where is your god?' and they talk about Job and how god came to him and appreciated his righteousness. Then we have the finale with the views and tides, and the metal container beating against the shore, and we're waiting for something to happen, for god to appear, and then we have the credits. There's no grandfather with a beard coming down from the sky to save them.<sup>67</sup>

Zvyagintsev's reinterpretation of Job emphasizes the corruption, isolation, and imperfection of humankind, rather than negating the validity of its biblical

influences. Lilya is an apt personification of Hobbes's assertions of fundamental human isolation, and her suicide is the ultimate manifestation of Zvyagintsev's Hobbesian pessimism regarding human nature. Although Roma blaming her for the family's ill fate was likely a catalyst of her suicide, her sustained isolation during the film is an indisputably significant factor. Lilya stands isolated, subdued, and icy amongst an ensemble of volatile and passionate characters. Her relationship to Roma is contentious at best; in their first on-screen interaction, she criticizes his lack of manners, and he calls her an ape. She tells Kolya that he is responsible for Roma's upbringing and remains aloof and withdrawn for the film's duration. Her isolation is not restricted to familial matters, as she remains subdued with her friends, and even sits alone on her daily bus ride to work.<sup>68</sup> The only notable instance of her attempting to engage in genuine conversation is with Dima in a hotel room. In the previous scene Kolya discovers their affair and assaults both his wife and best friend. In the hotel room, Lilya applies a warm compress to Dima's face as he reclines on the bed and claims responsibility for the regrettable situation, saying, "It's all my fault" to which he replies:

No such thing. Each of us is guilty of our own faults. Everything is everyone's fault. Even if we confess, the law doesn't hold it to be proof of guilt. We're innocent until proven guilty. But who's going to prove anything? And to whom?

She asks if he believes in God, to which he replies, "Why do you all keep asking me about God? I believe in facts. I'm a lawyer, Lilya." She reaches to touch

him, and he recoils, saying, “Don’t. Please. No confessions.” She says, “Because there’s no proof?” Dima replies, “And there won’t be any.” He then asks her to leave with him for Moscow, and she says that she does not understand him. Dima replies, “I don’t understand myself.” She lowers her head onto her chest, but he pushes her off, presumably due to broken ribs.

Her exchange with Dima reveals the degree of Lilya’s isolation—her isolation from her husband, friends, lover, and even from the possibility of divine redemption or reconciliation. That is not to say that her suicide was inevitable, so much as it was the cumulative result of considerable isolation and unavailability, and Roma’s verbal attacks catalyzed her suicide, rather than directly causing it.

The film directly addresses the book of Job in Kolya's dialogue with the priest following his wife's suicide. Kolya meets the priest at the store, as he buys vodka and the priest buys bread for a funeral. It is never overtly established who the funeral was for, but it can be implied that it was related to Lilya’s death. Outside, Kolya taunts the priest, saying, "Well, where is your merciful God almighty?" The priest turns and replies,

Mine is with me. As for you, I wouldn't know. Who do you pray to?  
I haven't seen you in the church. You don't fast, take community, or  
go to confession.

Kolya, between gulps of vodka, says, "If I lit candles and all, would things be different? Would I get my wife back from the dead? And my house? Or is it too late?" The priest, defensive, shifting his sack of bread on his shoulder, retorts, "I



don't know. Our Lord moves in mysterious ways." Kolya replies, "You don't know? Then why do you call me to confession? What do you know then?" And the priest replies with a metaphor, quoting Job 41:

Can you pull in the Leviathan with a fishhook or tie down its tongue with a rope? Will it keep begging you for mercy? Will it speak to you with gentle words? Nothing on earth is its equal. It is king over all that are proud.

Kolya, unsatisfied with the priest's response, replies, "Father Vesely. I am talking to you as a regular person. Why the... riddles? What for?" The priest attempts to explain his metaphor, saying

Have you heard of a man named Job? Like you, he was preoccupied with the meaning of life. 'Why?' He asked. 'Why me of all people?' He worried so much, he became covered with scabs. His wife tried to talk some sense into him, his friends told him not to evoke God's wrath, but he kept kicking up dust and sprinkling ash on his head. Then the Lord relinquished his anger and appeared to him in a hurricane and explained everything to him in pictures.<sup>69</sup>

Kolya prods for a conclusion to the story, and the priest continues, "Job resigned himself to his fate and lived to be 140. Got to see four generations of his family and died old and content." Kolya, unconvinced, asks, "Is that a fairy tale?" The priest responds simply, "No. It's in the bible."

This scene is a modern retelling of Job's inquiries of God, but instead of an upright man begging an answer of the heavens and receiving an answer from the midst of a hurricane, it portrays a broken drunk taunting a priest and receiving a parable. Kolya attempts to resign himself to his fate, but the punishment continues;

he is imprisoned and loses his son and friends. This modern interpretation reduces the original story of Job to, in Kolya's words, a "fairy tale". Kolya, the modern Job, receives no reconciliation nor redemption; no hurricane and no pictures; no answer to the meaning of life. He receives a parable and a prison sentence. Such is the nature of Zvyagintsev's reimagination of the story of Job.

*Zvyagintsev: The Iconoclast*

Zvyagintsev's divergence from Hobbes's philosophy is equally pronounced. He portrays the church as opportunistic and disingenuous, dealing in fairy tales, the state as brutish and exploitative, and the relationship between the two as disastrous for the governed. The mayor and the priest discuss means of seizing others' property under a painting of Christ and the disciples. The mayor abuses his power to build an opulent church for the priest, who then preaches a sermon praising truth, love, humility, and servitude within an ornate cathedral of ill-gotten gains. The film portrays a melding of the church and the state that benefits both institutions, but at the expense of the governed.

In the middle of the sermon, Mayor Vadim whispers to his son, "God sees everything, son." Mayor Vadim sees no irony in this statement because he has no need to do so; there is no accountability for his actions on earth, and Zvyagintsev in his pessimism casts doubt on whether he will be held accountable for his actions in eternity. This prospect turns Hobbes's pronouncement, "The fool hath said in his

heart, there is no such thing as justice"<sup>70</sup> on its head. Rather, Zvyagintsev proposes that it is foolish to believe that justice can exist in a commonwealth with an unaccountable sovereign, a proposition that he explained in an interview, saying, "Thomas Hobbes was fundamentally mistaken to idealize the state."<sup>71</sup>

The ability of the state to rule responsibly is further undermined by the similarity in the actions, temperaments, and inclinations of the government and the governed. In *Corruption as Shared Culpability: Religion, Family, and Society in Andrey Zvyagintsev's Leviathan*, Maria Hristova goes so far as to assert that Vadim and Kolya share numerous similarities despite their conflicted interests. Hristova asserts that cinematic similarities in the opening scene, depicting Kolya's reunion with Dima, and the closing scene, depicting Vadim leaving the inaugural service of his new church, near-identical shots of automobiles crossing the same bridge from right to left, are intended to "suggest that Kolya and the mayor have more in common than meets the eye and that their conflict of interest might be only superficial rather than an expression of a fundamental difference of values."<sup>72</sup> Such parallels, Hristova asserts, are reinforced by both characters' propensity towards alcohol-fueled violent outbursts, the mayor's rare and surprising moments of genuine humanity, and Kolya's questionable morality.<sup>73</sup> She also details the film's moral ambiguity, writing,

Kolya's temper prevents him from being a stereotypical hero figure; but the mayor's glimpses of humanity, such as his seemingly genuine faith, or his affection for his son, also add a layer of

verisimilitude and complexity to what otherwise would be a two-dimensional villain. Such careful nuancing of the main characters negates, to a degree, what should have been a clear moral dividing line between Kolya and the mayor. Corruption in the form of personal failings precludes the existence of entirely positive characters in the film. Furthermore, functioning in a morally compromised landscape of unjust institutions and compromised narratives, no one could retain any kind of moral higher ground. The prevalent corruption depicted in the film on all levels of existence achieves the erasure between “good” and “bad” people and between “positive” and “negative” actions leaving a morally grey state of being that inflicts suffering on everyone, equally.<sup>74</sup>

After Roma catches Lilya and Kolya in the throes of passion, he runs crying along the shore, resting against the bleached skeleton of a beached whale. Roma literally rests among the corpse of a dead Leviathan, a metaphor for the corruption of Hobbes's commonwealth and the associated political theory. Similarly, Roma drinks with his friends around a fire in the ruins of an old church. Just as Roma crying among the skeleton of Leviathan is metaphorical for the death of the commonwealth, the image of teenagers drinking beer and smoking cigarettes around a fire in the ruins of a church, surrounded by faded iconic paintings, is a symbol of the death of the church.



*Figure 2: Roma and the skeleton of a beached whale*



*Figure 3: Roma and his friends drinking in the abandoned church*

Leviathan's third transformation, Zvyagintsev's masterpiece, is a constant stream of iconoclastic imagery; a mayor and a priest plotting injustice beneath an iconic painting; a child weeping upon the skeleton of a Leviathan; teenagers drinking in the shell of an abandoned church; a drunk demanding answers of God and receiving nothing but a prison sentence; a sermon proclaiming the virtues of

truth and love in a church built upon coerced and stolen land. The world of *Leviathan* is ruled by corrupted institutional power; one without a state to protect nor a church to comfort and nurture. These images are Zvyagintsev's proclamation that the modern world is one where the story of Job, while valid, is told by opportunistic profiteers and Hobbes's social contract is as inert as the skeleton of a dead whale. However, Zvyagintsev is neither an atheist, nor an anarchist, and his depictions of corruption and perversion are a call for careful reconstruction rather than radical demolition.

### **In the Shadow of Leviathan's Skeleton: Societal Ramifications**

The societal ramifications of this rejection of both church and state are severe. Zvyagintsev's world is one without earthly institution to replace the divine. The entire film is an exploration of a truly empty world that asks what authority can replace these hollow institutions. As stated in Hobbes's *Leviathan*, in the absence of authority, man's impulse is to create his own.<sup>75</sup> In his works, Friedrich Nietzsche famously explored the death of God and the creation of new authority. His philosophy on God has been abbreviated to the simplistic statement "god is dead," but this summary is a wildly misleading summary of a nuanced, thoughtful consideration of the ramifications of godlessness.<sup>76</sup>

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche theorizes allegorically, telling the story of a madman who in the bright morning hours ran into the marketplace, crying

incessantly, “I seek God!” He is mocked, but he jumps into the midst of the crowd, piercing them with his gaze, and delivers a dramatic monologue:

‘Whither is God’ he cried. ‘I shall tell you. We have killed him- you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea...Whither are we moving now? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there any up or down left? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing.... Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God... God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him. How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives... What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must not we ourselves become gods simply to seem worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever will be born after us—for the sake of this deed he will be part of a higher history than all history hitherto.’<sup>77</sup>

In the aftermath of the realization of God’s death, humanity has attempted to unburden itself of the guilt of killing God; to drown out the sound of God’s gravediggers with white noise. In the modern age, “festivals of atonement” are held weekly in ornate cathedrals, and “sacred games” are played around the ballot box. Since God’s death, humans have paradoxically sought atonement in religion and government, much like those Egyptian youths who under cover of night entered the shuttered temples and embraced dead gods in the preface to *The Gay Science*.<sup>78</sup>

Zvyagintsev’s *Leviathan* was released in 2014, 132 years after Nietzsche’s proclamation of God’s death. For 132 years, humankind has held its festivals of atonement and played its sacred games, attempting to forgive themselves for, and

forget about, the death of God. Zvyagintsev depicts a world that has been, for 132 years, run by self-proclaimed Gods: men who have slain Leviathan. The film portrays life as it is for those who live in absence of the God of Job, or the commonwealth of Hobbes; life as it is for those who are obligated, against their will, to become their own gods, in Nietzschean terms.<sup>79</sup>

This world is a dark one. Vodka and cigarettes are consumed in alarming quantity with absurd frequency: with meals, as celebration, and as consolation in times of despair. Faced with a life in which they must become their own gods and confront the skeletons of Leviathan, both governmental and religious, Zvyagintsev's characters fade into a haze of despondence and escapism.

In an interview, Zvyagintsev emphasized the significance of the church and state's unholy unity and stressed the necessity of transformation, saying,

I am very dismayed by the alliance between the Church (Russian Orthodox Church) and the State. Essentially, it robs the Church of the opportunity to bestow its own ethical evaluations, its own independent moral judgments on what is happening right now. In this way, the Church is forced into a kind of imprisonment, as it were. It becomes a captive, a hostage who is obliged to, at a minimum, keep silent... this instrument of opposition, this system of back and forth feedback, with signals and responses—this has to function! It is imperative! It is imperative that it should work, that this instrument is fully operational, in order to provide a moral assessment. Because if not this, then what, who? Who else can give an ethical assessment?<sup>80</sup>

Zvyagintsev's pessimistic portrayal of a world of hollow institutions, built with the bones of Leviathan's skeleton, stands as a challenge. He challenges the



audience to learn from the failures of his characters and the society they compose. He challenges them to rebuild a cause worth serving in a world of abusive mayors and maligning bishops. He challenges the audience to weep among the brittle bones of Leviathan's skeleton, but then to rise to exhume and resurrect an even greater fourth Leviathan, one that realizes the bible's validity, and both appoints and respects the just rulers of Hobbes's philosophy, disproving his own work's cynicism. Zvyagintsev challenges the audience to further transform Leviathan into a beast truly worthy of fear and respect, legitimate in its authority and honorable in its dominion.

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<sup>1</sup> Jörg Spieker. "Foucault and Hobbes on Politics, Security, and War." 190.

<sup>2</sup> M.M Goldsmith. "Hobbes's Ambiguous Politics." 671. Goldsmith concludes that Hollar drew the original front-piece, and that the face of the commonwealth is that of the young Charles II to whom Hobbes presented an original manuscript of *Leviathan*, providing insight into Hobbes's relationship to the authorities of his time.

<sup>3</sup> John M. Steadman. "Leviathan and Renaissance Etymology." 575-576.

<sup>4</sup> Devin Stauffer. "'Of Religion' in Hobbes's Leviathan." Stauffer's analysis further explores the degree, radicalism, and historical-philosophical significance of Hobbes's secularism.

<sup>5</sup> Louis Menashe. Cinéaste 40. This article provides a concise summary of Zvyaginsev's film, *Leviathan*. It is highly recommended that readers who have not yet watched the film read this review before proceeding to read this article.

<sup>6</sup> Job 1:6-12

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Job 1:12-2:10

<sup>9</sup> Job 2:11-13

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<sup>10</sup> Job 4:7-9

<sup>11</sup> Job 23:1-24:25

<sup>12</sup> Job 41:1-4

<sup>13</sup> Job 41:33-34

<sup>14</sup> Job 42:1-6

<sup>15</sup> Job 42:10-17

<sup>16</sup> For further exploration the book of Job's rejection of anthropocentrism and its context and significance within the greater story of the Old Testament, see Moshe Halbertal. "Job, the Mourner." 45-46.

<sup>17</sup> Gen 1:28

<sup>18</sup> Deut 11; Deut 30:1-10

<sup>19</sup> "Moshe Halbertal." Sapir Journal. Accessed January 3, 2022.  
<https://sapirjournal.org/authors/moshe-halbertal/>.

<sup>20</sup> Moshe Halbertal. "Job, the Mourner." 45.

<sup>21</sup> Job 41:15-17; Job 41:23

<sup>22</sup> Job 41:24

<sup>23</sup> Yosefa Raz. "Reading Pain in the Book of Job." 94. Yosefa further enumerates the narrative parallels between Job's affliction and the description of Leviathan's invulnerability and establishes the relevance of Ugaritic mythology to the story of Job.

<sup>24</sup> Mark S. Smith "Biblical Narrative Between Ugaritic and Akkadian Literature: Part I: Ugarit and the Hebrew Bible: Consideration of Comparative Research." 9-11.

<sup>25</sup> Ps. 104:24-26

<sup>26</sup> Psalms 104:24-26 is often incorrectly interpreted as describing God playing *with* Leviathan, rather than creating Leviathan *to play in* his creation.

<sup>27</sup> Patricia Springborg. "Hobbes's Biblical Beasts: Leviathan and Behemoth." 355. Springborg suggests that just as the bible states that man is made in the image of God, the state is created in the image of those who construct it, thus continuing the cycle of creation.

<sup>28</sup> For a brief summary of Hobbes's philosophy with a particular emphasis on the role of the sovereign, see "Hobbes's Leviathan." The Illustrated Magazine of Art 2, no. 7. 43-44.

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<sup>29</sup> Ronald Beiner. "Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau on Civil Religion." 629. Beiner describes Hobbes's argument for theocracy and reconciles it with Hobbes's controversial status as a secular philosopher.

<sup>30</sup> For clarification on the utility of censorship within Hobbes's commonwealth, see J. Judd Owen. "The Tolerant Leviathan: Hobbes and the Paradox of Liberalism." 136.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Owen presents delinquency and dissent as similar issues, as Hobbes considered dissent to be a form of delinquency that undermines the authority of the commonly consented to sovereign and the social contract itself.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. 96-97. Using the metaphor of a military commander having command of not only the entire army, but of individual units as well, Hobbes justifies the divine right of the sovereign to both interpret and implement biblical law. (I use the pronoun "they" to refer to the sovereign, even though Hobbes did not, as Hobbes believed that the sovereign could be either male or female.)

<sup>33</sup> For clarification on the religious role of the sovereign as divine rulers, interpreters of biblical law, and adherents of biblical law, see Jonathan J. Edwards "Calvin and Hobbes: Trinity, Authority, and Community." 123.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Hobbes. "Leviathan or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill." 291.

<sup>36</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. 97-98. In contrast with his reputation as a cold absolutist, Hobbes details the high moral expectations of the sovereign. He insists that since their authority is derived from the consent and respect of the governed, they must live in such a way that their judgement could not be perceived as hypocritical.

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. 103. Notorious for his dark vision of human nature, in this passage, Hobbes outlines the psychological causes, rather than societal ramifications, of natural conflict, providing a basis for future inquiry on the consequences of conflict.

<sup>38</sup> Eric Schwitzgebel. "Human Nature and Moral Education in Mencius, Xunzi, Hobbes, and Rousseau." 147. Schwitzgebel summarizes Hobbes's perspective on the natural human inclination to conflict and contrasts it with the perspectives of his contemporaries.

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. 104. This passage, one of Hobbes's most prolific quotations, both summarizes his perspective on human nature and his argument for the commonwealth's establishment.

<sup>40</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. 105. Consistent with his proposition that the sovereign be tasked with religious interpretation, Hobbes presents ethics as a human endeavor that can only be judged by earthly institution. In the absence of commonwealth, nothing is unethical, as ethics can be judged only in relation to the commonwealth's laws.

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<sup>41</sup> Thomas Hobbes. "Leviathan or the Matter, Forme, & Power of a Common-Wealth Ecclesiasticall and Civill."106.

<sup>42</sup> Jon Parkin. "Hobbes and the Reception of 'Leviathan.'"293. Argues that *Leviathan's* complexity and length caused an ambiguity that helped to shield Hobbes from criticism.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. 298. Hobbes's criticisms of the university system spawned the reinstatement of anti-atheism legislation that targeted *Leviathan* specifically.

<sup>44</sup> J. Judd Owen. "The Tolerant Leviathan: Hobbes and the Paradox of Liberalism."135.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid. 136. Owen cites *Leviathan* XXI:11;18. Where Hobbes states that the only undeniable, absolute rights are those that supersede all moral conviction, namely the right to self-preservation.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. 186. Hobbes restricts the undeniable rights of subjects to those activities that do not undermine the sovereigns' authority.

<sup>47</sup> J. Judd Owen. "The Tolerant Leviathan."139. This quotation from Hobbes's *De Cive* is consistent with *Leviathan's* principles of fundamental rights.

<sup>48</sup> Charles D. Tarlton. "The Despotical Doctrine of Hobbes, Part I: The Liberalization Of 'Leviathan.'"589. Tarlton documents the criticisms of Hobbes's contemporaries and predecessors.

<sup>49</sup> J. Judd Owen. "The Tolerant Leviathan: Hobbes and the Paradox of Liberalism."131.

<sup>50</sup> Charles D. Tarlton. "The Despotical Doctrine of Hobbes." 589-90.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. 590.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. 589.

<sup>53</sup> For a defense of Hobbes's liberalism, see J. Judd. Owen "The Tolerant Leviathan." 130.

<sup>54</sup> For an analysis of tyrannical themes in Hobbes's works, see Charles D. Tarlton. "The Despotical Doctrine of Hobbes" 587.

<sup>55</sup> Andrey Zvyagintsev. director. *Leviathan*.

<sup>56</sup> Maria Hristova. (2020) "Corruption as Shared Culpability: Religion, Family, and Society in Andrey Zvyagintsev's *Leviathan* (2014)." 33.

<sup>57</sup> Surprisingly, a sizeable portion of the film was directly funded by the Russian Ministry of Culture. Katie Kilkenny. "'Leviathan': An Incisive Take on Russia Even Putin Couldn't Ignore."

<sup>58</sup> Michael Guillén. "Cinema as Spiritual Literature: Andrey Zvyagintsev Discusses *Leviathan*." *Cineaste Magazine*.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Zvyagintsev's references to Nietzsche when explaining his faith help to contextualize my later reference to *The Gay Science*'s assertions on the consequences of the delegitimization of traditional institutions.

<sup>61</sup> Matt. 27:46

<sup>62</sup> Gen. 25:19-27:45

<sup>63</sup> Gen. 16:1-16; 21:8-20

<sup>64</sup> Maria Hristova (2020) "Corruption as Shared Culpability." 17.

<sup>65</sup> Denys Kondyuk. 2016. "Sensing and Longing for God in Andrey Zvyagintsev's *The Return* and *Leviathan*". 9.

<sup>66</sup> Michael Guillén. "Cinema as Spiritual Literature: Andrey Zvyagintsev Discusses Leviathan." Cineaste Magazine.

<sup>67</sup> Jose Solis. Conquering the Leviathan: An Interview with Andrey Zvyagintsev . Other. *Pop Matters*, January 15, 2015.

<sup>68</sup> Maria Hristova. "Corruption as Shared Culpability." 23-25.

<sup>69</sup> The priest's interpretation of Job is flawed at best. In her article, Hristova analyzes the relationship between the priest's misrepresentation of Job and the film's recurring theme of corruption.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Hobbes. *Leviathan*. 119.

<sup>71</sup> Maria Hristova (2020) "Corruption as Shared Culpability." 10.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. 22.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Peter J. Steinberger. "Hobbes, Rousseau and the Modern Conception of the State." 596-597. Steinberger references Hobbes's assertion that in absence of governmental authority, individuals naturally establish hierarchies for sake of security and to wage war on other factions.

<sup>76</sup> For further information on the context of Nietzsche's famous quote and explores the societal ramifications of God's death, see Charles C. Josey. "On the Death of God." 280-282.

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<sup>77</sup> Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, and Walter Kaufmann, trans. *The Portable Nietzsche*. 95-96. Kaufman's selection of Nietzsche's most brilliant and influential works provides a concise and accessible collection of excerpts from *The Gay Science*.

<sup>78</sup> Robert B. Pippin. "Nietzsche and the Melancholy of Modernity." 507. Pippin relays Nietzsche's allegory of Egyptian youths embracing dead religious idols. Nietzsche uses it as an example of what the post-religious society must avoid. Zvyagintsev's *Leviathan* flies in the face of Nietzsche's remorseless iconoclasm, depicting a society in mourning over the disparity between their desire for and their capacity for faith in traditional institutions.

<sup>79</sup> Susan Foale. "Blanchot and Nietzsche on the Death of God." 73. Foale offers textual context for, and a history of the critical response to, Nietzsche's proposition that humankind embrace their own deification in God's absence.

<sup>80</sup> Maria Trakovsky, and Doug Cummings. An Interview With Andrey Zvyagintsev: *Leviathan* and *Loveless*. Other. *Cineaction*, October 2018.

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