John Diakakis- The Ionian “Andrei Rublev” by Andrei Tarkovsky Movie Review

Close your eyes and envision a period of suffering, censorship, and propaganda that opposes all forms of art and culture. Enter what lies behind the Iron curtain, One of Soviet era Russia’s most prolific theatrical works. “Andrei Rublev” by Andrei Tarkovsky comes at a time where philosophy, religion, and history are in decline due to the oppressive political regime. Hardship has created some of the most integral figures in the Russian Ethos including poets and philosophers alike. For those unfamiliar to it’s religious history, The Eastern Orthodox church has been the majority faith for a little over 1,000 years in Russia. Eastern Christianity contains a level of exoticism to western Christians and culture, while watching the movie you may realize certain traditions or concepts are foreign. With that being said, the film follows an Orthodox monk by the name of “Andrei Rublev”, a man praised by all those who know him for his spiritual labors and proficiency in painting biblical scenes, known as icons. We are thrown into 15th century Russia, caught between what remains of The Mongol yoke and an emerging Moscow city seeking religious autonomy through liberation and unification. When Andrei is asked to leave his community of monastics to paint a mural in the newly constructed cathedral in Moscow, an expectation of the complete unknown is awaiting our protagonist. The path forward is linear in its events but with every skip of time, comes an event of catastrophe or refining of the soul through misfortune. Its gruesome depiction of both secular and religious experience through the Lense of an individual who has devoted their life to Christ allows for a diverse approach to the human experience. Andrei grapples with Moscow’s pagan sects, the horrors of war, and how his painting has only lead to misery. He has become a spectator in his own life, simply observing, and yet, Not once was the question “Why is this happening?”. Rather a delving into spiritual struggle to grow deeper in the acquisition of humility, for who but God can answer a question as complex as this? Tarkovskys film, does not seek to satisfy logic or intellectualism, It is a love letter to the concept of perseverance and Grace while possessing the inability to explain the “why?”. Without spoiling anything, any rational human would seek revenge or hold a level of hatred for his or her oppressors. In many cases our experiences cause us to grow resentful. Tarkovsky’s character shows us the essence of what faith should be, the bypass of man’s logic to allow for an unconditional love of all things and the creator of them. Andrei, as a creator of art himself, finds solace by the end of his journey, viewing his creation as a curse for most of the film. The struggle to find order in the chaos of life is spread through all 3 hours of this film. As an Eastern Orthodox Christian, I find the portrayal of God being the artist and man being his canvas, is perfectly illustrated through Rublev and the sequences of his life. Tarkovsky was ahead of his time, producing what I believe is the pinnacle of artistic filmmaking.