Foreword
by Stanley Hauerwas

I am honoured to write in support of Ioannis Bekos' work. I do so, however, as one whose training has been primarily in the philosophical and theological traditions of the West. As one so formed I am, therefore, in a certain way overwhelmed by the resources Bekos has brought to his criticisms of the development of modern bioethics, as well as his constructive account of Christian anthropology. His ability to show the connections, for example, between St John Damascene's understanding of the hypostatic union and how Christians should understand death makes his work unique and important in the field of bioethics.

Reading Bekos reminds me of a seminar I once conducted on the work of Reinhold Niebuhr. A Russian Orthodox priest who was visiting as a Fulbright scholar was in the class. He had told me that he thought Orthodox theology was in good shape but he thought it needed a better social ethic. I responded that I doubted that was the case. My judgement was confirmed in one of the seminar sessions when he asked in reference to Niebuhr's account of freedom of the individual – 'What does this word, "individual" mean?' I tried to explain, referring him to liberal political theory in which 'individual', drawing on mathematical precedent, had simply meant 'a free-standing entity'.

I could see, however, he was having trouble comprehending what I was trying to explain. So, I tried another approach. I said probably the closest word in his tradition to suggest what 'individual' might mean was 'person'. His face lit up and he said, 'Oh, you mean "Trinity"'. I told him that was a perfectly reasonable conclusion given his tradition, but

that is not what 'individual' means in the politics of the West. However, that is precisely what Bekos means by 'individual' which is why he quite rightly argues that his account of what it means to be an individual is a challenge to how that word is used in contemporary bioethics in liberal social orders.

Equally impressive is Bekos' use of the theology of St Symeon to inform and shape our understanding of death. I simply know of no work comparable to Bekos' thick account of death in which our relationship to God is not forgotten. Moreover, his suggestion that in the Orthodox tradition self-knowledge is prioritised to self-preservation is a stunning insight that I look forward to seeing him develop. For I take it he is quite right to suggest that such an understanding of self-knowledge does challenge the fundamental presuppositions of bioethics in the West.

Though Bekos is completely at home in the theology of the Orthodox tradition, his knowledge of philosophical alternatives in the West is impressive. His characterisation and criticism of such an important philosopher as Jonas is testimony to his command of philosophical developments in the West. His constructive use of Levinas, MacIntyre and Manent is equally adept. I was quite taken, moreover, by his use of Foucault to show how the development of bioethics involves power dynamics often unacknowledged.

Finally, Bekos' focus on euthanasia to illustrate his philosophical and theological arguments works well to show the implications of what some might consider his anthropological 'theory'. His understanding of 'voluntary death' in terms of our ultimate destiny to be in union with God will not easily be understood by those advocates of the bioethics Bekos critiques. However, I am sure, like all significant positions, given time his arguments will be rightly appreciated for their power. For when it is all said and done, 'Trinity' is the first and last word we have to say as Christians. We are in Bekos' debt for helping us, even those of us who are 'Westerners', to recover that fundamental truth.

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