

Matthew Hisrich
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Two Journeys to Mastered Irony:
Aspects of the Heroic and Ironic in Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer

I. Introduction –

“When Faust says at the end of his life of seeking knowledge ‘I see that we can know nothing,’ then that is a conclusion, a result,” comments 20th century German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his work *Discipleship*. “It is something entirely different than when a student repeats this statement in the first semester to justify his laziness. Used as a conclusion, the sentence is true; as a presupposition, it is self-deception.”¹ Here, Bonhoeffer emphasizes the importance of the journey. This is a crucial framework of understanding if one wishes to make sense of the evolution of Bonhoeffer’s thinking over the course of his short life.

Given the significance of this concept, it is important to note that Bonhoeffer first came across it in his readings of 19th century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard. This is especially noteworthy when one considers that Kierkegaard in many ways served as an intellectual partner and spiritual mentor accompanying Bonhoeffer on his journey. Kierkegaard, it seems, had traveled along similar roads himself.

In fact, Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard appear to be kindred souls who shared a great deal in common despite the physical and temporal space that stood between them. Both of these figures, for instance, came from well-heeled backgrounds but rejected the paths that had led to their family’s fortune,

choosing theological studies instead. Both were steeped in Lutheranism and saw in Luther a challenge to the conventional morality. Both wrote during eras of political and social upheaval. And both traveled on journeys that took them from heroic to ironic understandings of themselves, the world around them, and their relationship to God.

II. Irony and heroism

“[I]rony originates in the perception of an incongruity between what is and what ought to be,” states Morris Niedenthal. “It involves a conflict between pretense and reality.”² Given this as a starting point, it is easy to see both Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard as exhibiting ironic qualities throughout their careers. What truly distinguishes an ironic stance, though, involves what one does after the perception of incongruity occurs. Perhaps more than anything, this forms the core of the transformation both figures undergo.

If one perceives an incongruity and assumes personal responsibility for its immediate correction, the response is one of heroism. “[T]he heroic tends toward overstatement,” according to Niedenthal. “It can be the exaltation of hero figures. Or as applied to listeners, people are implored to be courageous, to stand up and be counted, to get involved, to do their duties, to put their lives on the line, to become heroes of the faith.”³

Because a heroic outlook is a type of idealism, it can only affirm that which is most noble. According to Niedenthal, heroism “only affirms human strength.” Conversely, it is inclined to ignore or attack what appears as human weakness.

"Heroic criticism," he explains, "cuts at our failure to become what we should be."⁴

If, on the other hand, one is a bit more circumspect about one's own abilities and authority, the response is likely to be more ironic. Unlike heroic overstatement, the ironic tends toward understatement.⁵ Further, in a religious context the focus is often less on human action than divine grace. "Irony calls attention to and celebrates that amazing grace of God," says Niedenthal, "which exposes religious pretension and which utilizes sinners in the advancement and fulfillment of his purpose."⁶

Because an ironic outlook is less idealistic, it has the ability to affirm "human beings in the concrete actuality of each: a mixture of weakness and strength, cowardice and courage, sin and faith." Its critiques, therefore, focus less on where we fall short of some ideal and more on where we fall short of our own potential. As Niedenthal puts the matter, "...ironic criticism cuts so deeply not because it shows up our failure to achieve heroic stature but because it goes straight to our denial of ourselves as human beings."⁷

III. Kierkegaard as hero

"It is safe to say that Kierkegaard was preoccupied with irony and its relation to the moral life," states Brad Frazier.⁸ His view of irony, though, was hardly static. Indeed, his first major work on the subject, *The Concept of Irony*, was in large part a refutation of the viewpoint expressed by Niedenthal above. Irony is harmful to oneself and others. By the time he wrote *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, however, his disposition was far more amenable to an

ironic stance – properly understood. But first he would have to travel first through the heroic.

“Pure ironists,” explains Frazier, “fundamentally want to be free from the obligations, restrictions, and long-term commitments that accompany taking seriously one’s given place in a complex social order.”⁹ Thus, for Kierkegaard, “pure irony is a radical and thoroughgoing stance of critical disengagement from human society.”¹⁰

Kierkegaard’s primary objection to the ironic was its link to what he felt was an ultimately unfulfilling and responsibility-shirking aesthetic worldview. As Niedenthal observed, the ironic component is one of recognizing the incongruities of life, and therefore its vanity. The result of this perspective can be the pursuit of pleasurable diversion from perceived pointlessness. As Richard John Neuhaus comments, “The aesthetic life is one of pleasure, of sophisticated humanism, of a refusal to make life-determining decisions that might set limits on all that seems possible.”¹¹

But the absence of limits comes with a cost. “[S]ince from the standpoint of pure irony ‘everything becomes nothing,’ says Frazier, “such persons become alienated because actuality ‘loses its validity’ for them.”¹² The ironic result, from Kierkegaard’s perspective, is a life that differs little from the unexamined lives of the masses. Because both allow others to set limits for them, they essentially allow fate to dictate their paths.

What ironists fail to realize is that true freedom lies within the acceptance of one’s responsibilities. “[W]hen one commits oneself to responsible community with other persons in this way,” explains Frazier, “one experiences a kind of

freedom within the boundaries set by this commitment that cannot be realized outside of these boundaries.”¹³ From early on, therefore, Kierkegaard sought clarity “about *what I am to do...* of seeing what the Deity really wants me to do...of finding *the idea for which I am willing to live and die*” (emphasis original).¹⁴

He found such an idea in his understanding of Christianity. And, according to Niedenthal’s framework, language such as this reveals an outlook colored almost entirely by the heroic. This is confirmed repeatedly in his writing.

“Christian love is, according to Kierkegaard, ‘an offense to worldliness,’ says Philip Quinn. “Yet Christianity offers people a choice, he thinks, and ‘terrifyingly compels them to choose: either to be offended or to accept Christianity.’”¹⁵ Further, this offense is not one way. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard states that “Christianity cannot keep anything other than what it promised at the beginning: the world’s ingratitude, opposition, and derision, and continually to a higher degree the more earnest a Christian one becomes.”¹⁶ Put more bluntly, “To be a Christian is to suffer.”¹⁷

“He welcomed the derision of those surrounding him,” suggests Neuhaus, “recognizing in them the same crowd that surrounded the cross of his contemporary, Jesus Christ.”¹⁸ Indeed, for Kierkegaard one becomes Christian through the imitation of Christ – “it means being an imitator,” says Kirmmse, “not in the far-off sense of imitating someone long gone but in the contemporaneous sense.”¹⁹ And, it will be important to remember for Bonhoeffer, “‘Imitator’ = ‘Efterfølger,’ literally ‘follower after.’”²⁰

But for Kierkegaard, few measured up to this standard. “He was convinced that almost everyone—maybe everyone except Jesus Christ and a few spiritual ‘virtuos’ who have honestly followed Jesus—had settled for something less than the truth,” argues Neuhaus. “Christendom assumes that Christ is far in the past, having laid the foundation for the wonderful thing that has historically resulted, Christendom,” he continues. “But Christ is not in the distant past, protests Kierkegaard. He confronts us now, and a decision must be made.”²¹

IV. Kierkegaard as ironist

Given the strident tone of such pronouncements, it is hard to conceive of Kierkegaard ever coming to terms with irony. “But Kierkegaard doesn’t abandon irony altogether,” notes Elijah Dann, “as evidenced in his description of ‘mastered irony.’”²² According to Frazier, this concept “is a key interpretive concept that illuminates many philosophical themes in Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous works, perhaps even Kierkegaard’s very use of pseudonyms; and, moreover, Kierkegaard commends mastered irony to his readers.”²³

So, what exactly is “mastered irony”? Well, it involves being ironic “in a less comprehensive way” than the pure ironist Kierkegaard rejected above.²⁴ This distinction came about as he began to shift his opinion regarding Socrates. While earlier viewing him as the first pure ironist, he grew to understand him more “as an exemplary subjective thinker who effectively employs irony as an incognito for his ethical passion.”²⁵ The individual who has mastered irony, in other words, “maintains an eye for what is crooked, wrong, and vain in existence”

– but takes from that desire for change rather than an excuse to dismiss existence.²⁶

Such a stance results not surprisingly in a less hostile attitude toward the ironic, and a subsequent reduction in heroic views. If irony can be controlled, it can be put to good use. Before this, says Andrew Cross, Kierkegaard could only recognize “one side of irony: its negating, depreciating aspect.” In contrast, in the ironist of *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*:

reflexive self-understanding – the seeing of oneself as subject to, and falling short of, the same standards by which the others are judged and found laughable – is made compatible with the feeling of transcendence. This ironist is free to laugh without the bitterness shared by the defeated aesthete and the ironist of *The Concept of Irony* – at himself.²⁷

Unlike either the hero or the pure ironist, “one views oneself objectively, while committing to God steadfastly.”²⁸ As Dann expresses it, “When the moral agent has self-realization, guarding against the temptation to show-boat her ethical virtue, she instead, among other things, is better able to hold to her moral ideals and convictions by not publicly announcing them.”²⁹ Or, in Kierkegaard’s own words, “Philosophizing should not be directed toward ‘fantastical beings’ but existing individuals,”³⁰ and to do so “Satire must be employed, God-fearing satire.”³¹

Thus, far from maintaining his initial hostility toward irony, Kierkegaard eventually reached a point in his life where he could shed both the disengagement of pure irony and the naiveté of heroism. Instead of these, he pointed toward a more full understanding of irony and its appropriate uses. “Kierkegaard,” suggests Stephen Prickett, “went further than any of his contemporaries in seeing irony not merely as present within our narratives of the

world, but actually as characteristic of them, and, indeed, *essential* to them” (emphasis original).³²

V. Bonhoeffer as hero

As mentioned above, Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard traveled through similar territory. In fact, in many ways Bonhoeffer proved his own comments regarding Faust at the beginning of this paper.³³ On the one hand, he had access to and incorporated great insights from Kierkegaard’s work into his own. “Bonhoeffer had even listed Kierkegaard in the line of ‘genuine Christian thinking’ that went from Paul, Augustine, and Luther to Kierkegaard and Barth,” comment Jeffrey Kelly and John Godsey in their introduction to *Discipleship*.³⁴

Indeed, even his choice of title reflects this relationship. “Bonhoeffer’s use of ‘discipleship,’ ‘following Christ’ (*Nachfolge*), was heavily influenced by Kierkegaard’s extensive use of *Efterfølgensen* (following-after).”³⁵ But, on the other hand, despite being able to see Kierkegaard’s journey of faith in its entirety, Bonhoeffer would not declare that he had arrived at the same conclusions from the beginning. Rather, he would end up following along instead with Kierkegaard’s journey from hero to ironist.

The heroic is most evident in *Discipleship*. Here, Bonhoeffer jumps off from Kierkegaard’s call to “follow after” Christ and his comment that “the guarantee of distinction between theater and Church is ‘discipleship’”³⁶ to craft a treatise “against the type of Christ *as* culture and... for the type of Christ *against* culture” (emphasis original).³⁷ “There is no cheap grace here,” contends Scott Holland, “and little tolerance for the plurality and ambiguity of human nature beyond the revelation of God in Jesus Christ.”³⁸

Bonhoeffer's comments in *Discipleship* thus echo many of Kierkegaard's. "The good news will be propagated by suffering," he says, for instance. "That is the plan of God and the will of Jesus." And, "The break with the world is absolute. It requires and causes our *death*" (emphasis original). "It is not important for you what others might do, but what you will do. Do what is good, fearlessly, unreservedly, and unconditionally."³⁹ This is heroic through and through. There is no cheap grace – and no irony, either.

In his book *Dialogic Confession: Bonhoeffer's Rhetoric of Responsibility*, Ronald Arnett highlights this heroic aspect of Bonhoeffer. "Bonhoeffer's story embraces the importance of responsibility and service, unlike common religious life within the German churches at that time," he explains. Further, what we are to take from this story is not the ironic guidance offered by Biblical figures such as Jonah. "Bonhoeffer's story offers us a model unlike that of Jonah" – a model of the heroic.⁴⁰

This heroic stance emphasized the individual. He says, for example, that "Each is called alone. Each must follow alone." Later in the text he picks up the theme again when he states that "followers of Jesus are always completely alone, single individuals who can act and make decisions finally only by themselves." As with Kierkegaard, for those that do make the correct decision, the reward is bleak indeed. "Christ honors only a few of his followers with being in the most intimate community with his suffering, that is, with martyrdom," Bonhoeffer asserts. "It is here that the life of the disciple is most profoundly identical with the likeness of Jesus Christ's form of death."⁴¹ This is what it means to follow after.

VI. Bonhoeffer as ironist

To come from this position to one of irony would require a transformation. That was achieved in Bonhoeffer's case through encounter with the other. "[T]here is little disagreement that there was an aesthetic turn in his life and work," states Holland. "One can discern a movement in Bonhoeffer's religious and intellectual formation from the mimesis of discipleship to a more innovative poetics of obligation. In this worldly holiness Jesus truly becomes 'the man for others.'"⁴²

Language of the heroic comes to be not only less evident in Bonhoeffer's later work, but even rejected outright. "To talk of going down fighting like heroes in the face of certain defeat is not really heroic at all, but merely a refusal to face the future. The ultimate question for a responsible man to ask is not how he is to extricate himself heroically from the affair, but how the coming generation is to live," writes Bonhoeffer in *Letters and Papers from Prison*. He even goes so far as to call attention to the movement he made since writing *Discipleship* when he says that, "I thought I could acquire faith by trying to live a holy life, or something like it. I suppose I wrote *The Cost of Discipleship* as the end of that path. Today I can see the dangers of that book, though I still stand by what I wrote."⁴³

In his unfinished work *Ethics*, Bonhoeffer makes the break with the heroic even more explicit. "It is part of the great naivete or, more accurately, folly of ethicists...to start from the fictional assumption that human beings at every moment of their lives have to make an ultimate, infinite choice." Instead, unlike such ethical heroes, "The new human beings live in the world like anyone else.

They often differ very little from other people.” The heroic, Bonhoeffer concludes, is a false path:

All super-humanity, all efforts to outgrow one’s nature as human, all struggle to be heroic or a demigod, all fall away from a person here, because they are untrue. The real human being is the object neither of contempt nor of deification, but the object of the love of God. The manifold riches of God’s creation are not violated here by a false uniformity, by forcing people to submit to an ideal, a type, or a particular image of the human.⁴⁴

Arnett makes note of this shift away from the heroic and toward mastered irony. “Bonhoeffer points to dialectic in his religious communication,” he says. This is so because “we meet uncertainty with ground under our feet – examined and questioned ground – ground assumed with Kierkegaard’s understanding of *Fear and Trembling*.⁴⁵

This dialectic between the ultimate (God) and penultimate (human existence) allowed for freedom in responsibility – the very freedom Kierkegaard spoke of in contrast to the negative freedom of the pure ironist. “For Bonhoeffer,” states Neuhaus, “the cost of discipleship was attended by a Christian liberty that frees a person to engage the aesthetic, as well as one’s responsibilities in Church, marriage and family, culture and government.”⁴⁶

VII. Context for critique

“[T]he events which culminated in 1848-49 served the same purpose in Kierkegaard’s thinking as the interwar period did in Bonhoeffer’s,” argues Kirrmse. “They symbolized ‘the world’s coming of age,’ and they gave the signal for a radical reinterpretation both of Christianity and ‘the world.’”⁴⁷ Given the importance of historical context in shaping the thought of both figures, it is worth offering some additional background and noting similarities.

In the case of Kierkegaard, he wrote in a period of dramatic social change. In 1847, constitutional government replaced the absolute monarchy of Denmark after a series of mass demonstrations and meetings. The year 1849 would see the introduction of full-fledged democracy.⁴⁸ “The state turned upside down and came to stand on its head,’ is Kierkegaard’s graphic description of the somersault in which the priorities that for generations had been seen as something close to eternal verities were overturned in the course of a few years,” comments biographer Joakim Garff.⁴⁹ “[I]t was precisely during the revolution – which, of course, was pretty much the epitome of the multitude and the mass,” he continues, “that Kierkegaard saw the category of *that single individual* confirmed and validated” (emphasis original).⁵⁰

Similar rumblings were being felt in the religious life of the people, and Kierkegaard was certainly a part of those. But during his lifetime the state church remained the dominant force in this arena. As mentioned above, he protested vehemently the idea of a *Kulturprotestantismus* that suggested “Of course we are all good Christians because we are all good Danes.”⁵¹

Being a good Christian (or even a Christian at all) might mean answering a call to something more than what is required by society. Simply because one assumes responsibilities within society does not mean one merely falls in line. “I might define myself in opposition to my society as someone who is not and will not be what others expect me to be,” explains Frazier. “This stance can be consistent with taking my actuality as a task.”⁵² Sylvia Walsh makes a similar point when she says that “we are not totally free, as the romanticists think, to make ourselves into anything we wish. Instead we must become, as it were,

'accomplices' of God, lending assistance in a synergistic fashion to perfecting the 'seeds,' or potentialities implanted in us by the creator."⁵³

Bonhoeffer certainly took this view. Responsibility allowed freedom, to be sure, but it was a freedom to act in Christ and to accomplish God's work in the world. To say that he wrote in a period of social upheaval would be an understatement. Working in Germany under the Nazi regime brought a sense of urgency to everything with which he confronted and dealt. Kierkegaard proved a helpful guide in his efforts.

"A hundred years later in Germany the corruption and consequent weakness of *Kulturprotestantismus* were exposed under the terror of National Socialism," notes Neuhaus.⁵⁴ Bonhoeffer sought to challenge what he felt was the misunderstanding of Luther that led to this distortion and enculturation of Christianity. "In his retrieval of Luther, Bonhoeffer found an unexpected ally in the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard," suggest Kelly and Godsey. "[H]e believed that Kierkegaard alone of nineteenth century thinkers had correctly perceived the true dialectic of faith and obedience in Luther's interpretation of the Gospel."⁵⁵

As Neuhaus remarks, "Both Kierkegaard and Bonhoeffer railed against the smooth synthesis of Christ and culture, contending for the courage of personal decision and a costly form of discipleship." Bonhoeffer would stake a great deal on his theological mentor. "It was Bonhoeffer's hope that Kierkegaard's polemic against the Danish state-established Lutheranism of the nineteenth century would help stir up the also predominantly Lutheran German Protestant Church."⁵⁶

As for his personal background, “Bonhoeffer was the son of a liberal, humanistic, yet aristocratic German home,” notes Holland, and he “became an earnest churchman.” But, as indicated earlier, Bonhoeffer did not end his journey with polemic. The “aesthetic turn” he made in his later works “opened him to a faith that was polyphonic and multi-dimensional.”⁵⁷ As Kirmme explains, “Bonhoeffer, like Kierkegaard, proceeded from the ‘suffering God’ to a position of radical ‘secularity.’”⁵⁸

Indeed, he would even reach a point more or less beyond good and evil in his decision to participate in an assassination plot against Hitler – a plot that would eventually lead to his own execution. According to Holland, “He insisted that he accepted this responsibility as a man, not as a saint, a priest, a righteous individual, or even a churchman. He accepted it in face of historical ambiguity and infinite mystery. He acted in a faith beyond ethical correctness or dogmatic certitude.”⁵⁹ As with Kierkegaard, he came to believe that under the right circumstances “God can effect a teleological suspension of his justice to renew his relationship with an individual.”⁶⁰

Bonhoeffer thus came to a place where he felt comfortable engaging the world through Christ not as an object to be overcome but as worthwhile in and of itself. Thus, increasingly he viewed the appeal of monastic withdrawal practiced in the wartime seminary at Finkenwald where he taught for a time as problematic. Such a “futile attempt to escape from the world takes seriously neither God’s No, which applies to the whole world including the monastery,” he says, “nor, on the other hand, God’s Yes, in which God reconciles the world with himself.”⁶¹

Arnett brings up this shift in understanding in his work. “Bonhoeffer’s initial lack of interest in political life and an aristocratic sense of responsibility provided unique, fertile soil for a faith commitment that is in the world, but not totally driven by the actions of the world,” he suggests. “He engaged historicity without being at the mercy of the immediate moment; he brought a faith perspective to the immediate moment.”⁶²

VIII. The hero in the ironist

It would be misleading, though, to present these figures as entirely champions of the ironic. To be sure, they both came to see themselves in more contextualized terms, to speak a bit more indirectly and to hold their beliefs a bit more lightly – but to say they completely shed the heroism of their youth is an oversimplification of these two complex thinkers.

Kierkegaard, for instance, never fully lost either his contempt for those he felt did not live up to his standards of Christian faith and practice, or his interest in sacrifice and martyrdom as the signal of true Christianity. His critique of Christendom reached a crescendo with the publication of his paper, *The Moment*, in the final years of his life. As Garff notes about this effort, “Kierkegaard simplified his criticisms in order to amplify their impact, he exaggerated, at times wildly; he agitated more than argued; and he could be genuinely vulgar.”⁶³ Such writing provides an indication of the hold the heroic still had on Kierkegaard.

This hold went beyond his public professions, as well. Garff states that “he gradually wrote himself more and more into the role of martyr.”⁶⁴ According to Neuhaus, “Kierkegaard yearned to be a martyr.”⁶⁵ This comes through clearly

in a journal entry from 1848 – two years after the release of *Concluding*

Unscientific Postscript:

In order to recover eternity, blood will once again be required, but blood of another sort, not the blood of thousands of slaughtered victims, no, the more costly blood, that of the individuals – that of the martyrs, those mighty dead who can do what no living person, who has people cut down by the thousands, can do; who can do what those mighty dead themselves were unable to do when they were alive but were able to do only when dead: compel a raging mob into obedience, precisely because this raging mob has been permitted, in disobedience, to put the martyr to death.⁶⁶

Further, Bonhoeffer similarly maintained a place for the heroic within his outlook. Certainly, his actions with the resistance reveal as much. It does not seem like too great a stretch to suggest that any attempt at “transgressing normative Christian morality” involves a certain degree of heroism.⁶⁷ Christians since Bonhoeffer have continued to wrestle with a transgression on the level of attempted assassination.

But Bonhoeffer never lost his sense of the “real seriousness” involved in answering the call of Christ, even if he toned down his rhetoric.⁶⁸ Indeed, the call he answered did in fact “lead to death.”⁶⁹ “Kierkegaard was convinced that an honest following of ‘Christ the contemporary’ necessarily entailed suffering and aspired toward the ultimate sharing in his suffering which is martyrdom,” observes Neuhaus. Bonhoeffer, though, “actually was a martyr.”⁷⁰

IX. Conclusion

Is it possible, then, to reconcile the irony and heroism of these two figures? In many ways, they each seem to possess a blend of both characteristics. But by the end of their lives, both lived fully into Niedenthal’s

definition of ironic criticism as addressing “our denial of ourselves as human beings.”

Kierkegaard, for instance, wrote that “It is really the God-relationship that makes a human being a human being,” and said that “the immorality of our age is perhaps not lust and pleasure and sensuality, but rather a pantheistic, debauched contempt for individual human beings.”⁷¹ Along the same lines, Bonhoeffer encouraged readers of *Ethics* with his statement “Ecce homo – behold, what a human being!”⁷² Indeed, it is this devotion to humanity that forms the crux of Bonhoeffer’s transformation. “Bonhoeffer came to understand that to love the neighbor is to accept some responsibility for the neighbor’s history.”⁷³

The reconciliation between heroism and irony for these two is likely to be found through the mastery of irony they accomplished through the course of their lives. Both figures fit Niedenthal’s definition of irony because what he seems to describe is more mastered than pure irony.

Ultimately, both heroism and pure irony are false paths. Both Bonhoeffer and Kierkegaard came to believe that a stance that carries with it both the critique of irony as well as the responsibility of heroism is one that lives up to the demands of Christianity. “Even though one must warn against irony as against a seducer,” concludes Kierkegaard, “so must one also commend it as a guide.”⁷⁴

¹ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Discipleship*, Geoffrey B. Kelly and John D. Godsey, eds. and Barbara Green and Reinhard Krauss, trans. Volume 4 of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr., general ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 51.

² Niedenthal, Morris J. “The Irony and Grammar of the Gospel,” in Steimle, Edmund A., Morris J. Niedenthal and Charles L. Rice, eds., *Preaching the Story* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1980), 142.

³ *Ibid.* 143-144.

⁴ *Ibid.* 146.

⁵ *Ibid.* 143-144.

⁶ *Ibid.* 146.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Frazier, Brad. "Kierkegaard on the Problems of Pure Irony," *Journal of Religious Ethics*, Volume 32, Number 3, Winter 2004, 417.

⁹ *Ibid.* 421.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 419.

¹¹ Neuhaus, Richard John. "Kierkegaard for Grownups," *First Things*, October 2004. Available at: http://www.firstthings.com/article.php3?id_article=387. Accessed 24 September 2007.

¹² Frazier. 419.

¹³ *Ibid.* 425.

¹⁴ Garff, Joakim. *Søren Kierkegaard: A Biography*, translated by Bruce H. Kirmmse (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004), quoting Kierkegaard, 58.

¹⁵ Quinn, Philip L. "Kierkegaard's Christian ethics," in Alistair Hannay and Gordon D. Marino, eds. *The Cambridge Companion to Kierkegaard* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 362.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Quoting Kierkegaard, 362.

¹⁷ Garff. Quoting Kierkegaard, 713.

¹⁸ Neuhaus.

¹⁹ Kirmmse, Bruce H. *Kierkegaard in Golden Age Denmark* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 385.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 516, chapter 24, note 4.

²¹ Neuhaus.

²² Dann, G. Elijah. Review of Brad Frazier, *Rorty and Kierkegaard on Irony and Moral Commitment: Philosophical and Theological Connections*, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 12 November 2007. Available at: <http://ndpr.nd.edu/review.cfm?id=11644>. Accessed 3 December 2007.

²³ Frazier. 417.

²⁴ *Ibid.* 420.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 418, note 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 420.

²⁷ Cross, Andrew. "Neither either nor or: The perils of reflexive irony," in Hannay and Marino, 151.

²⁸ Miller, Mark C. "The Hipness Unto Death: Soren Kierkegaard and David Letterman-Ironic Apologists to Generation X," *Mars Hill Review*, Winter/Spring 1997, Issue 7: 38-52. Available at: <http://www.leaderu.com/marshall/mhr07/kierk1.html>. Accessed 3 December 2007.

²⁹ Dann.

³⁰ Kierkegaard, Søren. *Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments*, Volume I, edited and translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H Hong (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 121.

³¹ Garff. 468, quoting Kierkegaard from an 1851 journal entry.

³² Prickett, Stephen. *Narrative, Religion and Science: Fundamentalism versus Irony, 1700-1999* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 258.

³³ It is worth noting that he developed this concept based on his reading of Kierkegaard, who uses a similar story to illustrate the same basic point. See Bonhoeffer. 51, note 30.

³⁴ Kelly and Godsey. "Editor's Introduction to the English Edition," in Bonhoeffer, *Discipleship*, 10.

³⁵ Bonhoeffer. *Discipleship*, 39, note 3.

³⁶ *Ibid.* 92-3, note 2, quoting Kierkegaard.

³⁷ Neuhaus.

³⁸ Holland, Scott. "First We Take Manhattan, Then We Take Berlin: Bonhoeffer's New York," *Cross Currents*, Fall 2000, 372.

³⁹ Bonhoeffer. *Discipleship*, 194, 208 and 241, respectively.

⁴⁰ Arnett, Ronald C. *Dialogic Confession: Bonhoeffer's Rhetoric of Responsibility* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 37 and 41, respectively.

⁴¹ Bonhoeffer. *Discipleship*, 92, 135 and 285-86, respectively.

⁴² Holland. 377.

⁴³ Bonhoeffer. *Letters and Papers from Prison: The Enlarged Edition*, ed. by Eberhard Bethge (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1997), 369 and 7, respectively.

⁴⁴ - . *Ethics*, Clifford J. Green, ed. and Reinhard Krauss, Charles C. West and Douglas W. Stott, trans. Volume 6 of the Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works, Wayne Whitson Floyd, Jr., general ed. (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2005), 365, 95 and 94, respectively.

⁴⁵ Arnett. 107.

⁴⁶ Neuhaus.

⁴⁷ Kirmmse. 516, chapter 24, note 3.

⁴⁸ Garff. 494 and 486

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 486.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 497.

⁵¹ Neuhaus.

⁵² Frazier. 429.

⁵³ Walsh, Sylvia. *Living Poetically: Kierkegaard's Existential Aesthetics*. Quoted in Frazier, 440.

⁵⁴ Neuhaus.

⁵⁵ Kelly and Godsey. 10.

⁵⁶ Bonhoeffer. *Discipleship*, 301, Editors' Afterword to the German Edition.

⁵⁷ Holland. 369 and 370-371, respectively.

⁵⁸ Kirmmse. 516, chapter 24, note 3.

⁵⁹ Holland. 377, and 378-379, respectively.

⁶⁰ Green, Ronald M. "Developing' *Fear and Trembling*," in Hannay and Marino, 275. It is because of this suspension that Green sees *Fear and Trembling* offering a message of hope – a message especially relevant to understanding Bonhoeffer's decision.

⁶¹ Bonhoeffer. *Ethics*, 291.

⁶² Arnett. 138.

⁶³ Garff. 760.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.* 497.

⁶⁵ Neuhaus.

⁶⁶ Garff. 500.

⁶⁷ Holland. 378-379.

⁶⁸ Bonhoeffer. *Ethics*, 153-154.

⁶⁹ - . *Discipleship*, 87. "Whenever Christ calls us, his call leads us to death."

⁷⁰ Neuhaus.

⁷¹ Kierkegaard. 244 and 355, respectively.

⁷² Bonhoeffer. *Ethics*, 82.

⁷³ Holland. 378-379.

⁷⁴ Lippitt, John. *Humour and Irony in Kierkegaard's Thought* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 149. Quoting Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony*.