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LITERATURE

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Strange Warmings and other Close (Althusserian) Encounters: John Wesley's Change of Heart at Aldersgate

Abstract. John Wesley's famous account of his heart being "strangely warmed" is often considered a conversion. However, his change is less about identity as a Christian, and is more about manner of being. Wesley's change is best understood as an affective encounter. It is affective in being about bodily experience and initially pre-rational. However, that affective moment was possible due to previous encounters and intentional designs that prepared the possibilities for affective experiences. It is an encounter, following Louis Althusser's theorization of the term, as a moment of change that might not have happened. Chance is taken seriously with the encounter, and combined with intentional design. Wesley might not have interacted with the Moravian sect in ways that set him up for his affective experience; rhetorical studies can use the encounter and affect to consider probability and chance more, and to think about rhetoric as the design of possible encounters.

Key words: encounter, affect, John Wesley, design, rhetoric, religion

1. Conversions and Non-Conversions

John Wesley's non-conversion happened on May 24, 1738. The Anglican theologian and traveling preacher (1703–91) started a reform movement (with his brother Charles Wesley and cleric George Whitefield) in the Church of England that emphasized small Christian groups to keep Christians holy and accountable in their actions, studies, and beliefs. Wesley had been struggling with his spiritual beliefs and feelings about faith, particularly after a difficult experience doing missionary work in the American colo-

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nies where few in Georgia had followed his teachings. That May evening he attended a Moravian service, having made friends with Moravians on his journey to the Americas and famously admiring their faith and calm during a storm at sea. A particular friend, Peter Böhler, had invited him to services. In his journal entry for that day, Wesley stated:

> In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's Preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death. (*Works*, 1988).

Wesley's encounter with the Moravians, with an experience of God, and with his "strangely warmed" heart created a swerve in the direction of his faith and life. Daniel Burnett (2006) argues that Methodism and Wesley's fame in general would not have been possible without his experience in Aldersgate (36). While Burnett is interested in defining Wesley's experience as a "true conversion to biblical Christianity" (36), he also notes Wesley's own ambiguity in defining his faith before and after that moment. Instead of a conversion as a change in identity based on new thoughts and beliefs, Wesley's experience exemplifies what I am calling a *rhetoric of the encounter*, where chance and affect take center stage in a shift in Wesley's way of being. As a change in his way of being Christian, the experience is less a traditional religious conversion from non-believer to believer as it is typically understood (see Burnett, Green 1990, "How Aldersgate"), and is rather a significant change in style or approach to faith within a religious tradition—a change in a way of being faithful.

While a rhetoric of the encounter is engaged with new material rhetorics and affect theory, it starts with Louis Althusser's theory of the encounter, which takes the notion of chance seriously and considers the possibilities available in a context or environment in a not-strictly-deterministic way. Thinking about rhetoric as an encounter suggests that rhetorical arguments should not be understood as speech or action that directly persuades someone. Too much authority and causal power is given to the speaker and message in that kind of case. Instead, the rhetorician tries to create possible encounters. Moments are set up, spaces designed, words written that carry a hope of others having an encounter moment as Wesley did. John Durham Peters in *Speaking Into the Air* (1999) theorizes communication as a tension between dialog and dissemination. Even though dialog is the culturally preferred term, he argues that dissemination is necessary, primary, and sometimes the better option (see 33–62). In other words, the many possible encounters that could happen from disseminating a message into many different contexts can be as valuable as attempts to move or persuade another through dialog. The results of a chance encounter with a disseminated message are then dependent on the context in which it is received. Designing contexts for powerful experiences to take place in serves as the other key component of rhetorical encounters.

Of course, these encounters are not strictly about linguistic messages and communication, but an important tension remains between the intimacy of experience with some encounters and dialogs and the multiplicity of directions and possibilities with encounters and dissemination. This essay will next theorize the encounter and look at Althusser's approach to that concept, after which it will explore John Wesley's Aldersgate experience through the lens of the encounter as a tension between design and chance.

2. Theorizing Encounters

At this point, an initial definition is in order. A rhetorical encounter is a convergence that has the possibility of change, even fairly lasting change, taking place, but it is only a possibility. The encounter is a way of thinking about chance in rhetoric and thinking more probabilistically. Who or what does the changing in the encounter is variable too. An encounter implies something to deal with or interact with, as in encountering an obstacle. It has s significant element of the unexpected too; encounters happen suddenly and often without planning.

In *Being and Time*, Martin Heidegger (1962) uses "encounter" to describe different ways of coming across items or materials in the world. Famously, people can encounter things as equipment, as independent objects, or as unready for use like a broken tool (95–107, chapters 15–16). His encounter sets up a sense of different ways of approaching things in the world, while Althusser shifts more to a study of the encounter itself and the questions of possibility with what might happen or might fail to happen. This encounter is more like a planet passing by a star. As they collide, or completely miss each other, or exert significant gravitational pull, they help shape a solar system. Like a near collision changes an orbit, an unplanned encounter (even if shaped by one's past history or by laws of physics) can alter relationships and ways of being for many things. Not all is chance though. Design can be used set up a confined set of encounters, not to work not against chance, but to work with chance, improving the odds of a bunch of encounters at once leading to a result. Rhetorically speaking, one can't control the elements, but one can improve the odds. Böhler invited Wesley to a service, one designed following particular practices and much of the theology of Martin Luther, thus improving the chances of encounters that would lead particular directions—even to a warming sensation of God's assurance.

Banu Bargu describes Althusser's theory of the encounter as a way of bringing particular tensions together. Instead of the focus on encountering objects in terms of use or their basic existence in themselves, as with Heidegger, Althusser's encounter centers on the possibilities for change from that moment. Bargu (2012) says, "the encounter triangulates structure, conjuncture, and the event, opening up a new surface of possibilities for political theory and practice alike. As such, the encounter constitutes the link between stability and change, determinacy and contingency, theory and practice" (88). These triangulations do not necessarily have to be about large political structures.

Wesley's stability within the Christian faith and change within that same faith are similarly linked. The structure of designs and plans to reshape people's beliefs combine with conjunctures of unpredictable meetings, which can turn into events—including experiences like Wesley's warming at Aldersgate. Bargu also notes that Althusser's "aleatory materialism," of which the encounter is a central aspect, attempts to provide a materialism that is "nonteleological and not trapped within a logic of necessity" (87). This materialism may not fully escape necessity, but it brings chance and probability into political and (here) rhetorical conversations in new ways.

Similarly, in *Empire*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2001) read Althusser as asserting "the present as empty for the future" (64). This rejection of a traditional sense of necessity that often accompanies materialisms lets chance stand out, but for Hardt and Negri, there is a desire for the manifesto to call for some future, what they call a "materialist teleology" (66). In a less radical manner, this is the role of design: to use the actual conditions and materials and practices to call for a new direction. In Althusser's terms, to create more of a possibility of the encounter.

The encounter when it does take place suggests a contained moment and implies the need for a response, even if the response is simply to move away from the encounter. An encounter can be a struggle or happen with an adversary; the response might need to be one of resistance in some way. Vitally, an encounter can impact one's daily being in the world. One might be walking along a street and encounter an unexpected scene—perhaps a potential crime taking place. Five minutes later and it never would have been encountered, but if it is, the person walking might simply keep moving or might alter the course of his or her day by a response. The thing encountered challenges an approach, in terms of movement as often as in terms of thinking. An encounter happens when the world comes upon you and you upon it, with elements by chance and elements by design, like Wesley attending the Moravian service that particular night in 1738.

Louis Althusser's later writing, after a significant mental breakdown where he strangled his wife, has received less attention than his earlier work on Marx. It is in this later work that Althusser (2006) describes both his "aleatory materialism" and his theory of the encounter. The random or chance-based nature of the encounter intertwines the two concepts. Althusser tells Epicurus' story of falling atoms and the swerve that simply happens, uncaused in any traditional sense, as a sort of parable for his approach. From that beginning, the idea of an encounter occurring or not occurring always remains in play. Althusser explains,

> It will have been noticed that, in this philosophy, there reigns an alternative: the encounter may not take place, just as it may take place. Nothing determines, no principle of decision determines this alternative in advance; is of the order of a game of dice. […] A successful encounter, one that is not brief, but lasts, never guarantees that it will continue to last tomorrow rather than come undone. Just as it might not have taken place, it may *no longer* take place." (174)

The encounter not only is a question of probability, as with games of chance, but it can have extension in time that may or may not end, as with the continued influence of Wesley's warmed heart moment.

Althusser uses Machiavelli and early Italian unification as an example to explain the encounter further, because the swerve that happens, letting atoms run into or encounter each other, is always in specific historical circumstances. Althusser says, "It was necessary *to create the conditions for a swerve*, and thus an encounter, if Italian unity was to 'take hold'. How was this to be done?" (emphasis in original, 171). The notion of change or influence, the rhetorical element, is one of creating conditions. One who can structure an environment in the right way to create the possibility of encounters has done the main job. Althusser follows Machiavelli, who, "using the example of Cesare Borgia, moves on to the idea that unification will be achieved if there emerges some nameless man who has enough luck and *virtú* to establish himself somewhere, in some *nameless* corner of Italy, and, starting out from this atomic point, gradually aggregate the Italians around him in the grand project of founding a national state." (emphasis in original, 172). Luck, the unknown (or nameless), and many encounters coming together all serve as vital elements for significant change here. It is a mix of *virtú* and luck; neither is enough on its own. Althusser's materialist critique of necessity in combination with the offering of chance and encounters lead to probability.

A rhetoric of the encounter knows that there is no certain way to persuade or make change and knows that the rhetor has severely limited power. Chance suggests that results are unpredictable, but the rhetorical job is to change the conditions for chance—to look at an environment and see how the odds might be improved. It is a rhetoric of statistics, of probability. Wesley's encounter was made more likely by previous (chance-based) encounters with Moravians, by Böhler furthering a friendship, by the text of Luther's Preface to Romans (Wesley, *Works,* 249) being read at the encounter, and by the initial invitation to Aldersgate among other elements. The invitation is a particularly noteworthy element here, as it is a direct move to bring someone to a place of possible encounter. An invitation is not enough on its own, but when conditions have been created, such as with a particular religious event and a previously standing positive relationship between people, the invitation can be a way to provoke or catalyze an encounter. This often fails in terms of bringing major change. As Althusser notes, "As a rule, when two people do encounter one another, they merely cross paths at a greater or lesser distance without noticing each other, and the encounter does not even take place" (184). However, as Althusser emphasizes, much larger conditions than individual relationships are certainly main factors too, but the invitation is part of an attempt to improve the odds of a rhetorical encounter.

A key further principle for Althusser's aleatory materialism considers results, not just causes. "Every encounter is aleatory, not only in its origins (nothing ever guarantees an encounter), but also in its effects" (193). The results of the encounter cannot be precisely predicted. The rhetor creating conditions for an encounter may not get the change desired, like atoms striking each other and bouncing off in surprising di-

rections. Rhetoric is traditionally the realm of the contingent, and Althusser attempts to make materialism contingent as well. He argues, "we must think necessity as the becoming-necessary of the encounter of contingencies" (194). No prior necessity exists as a basis for contingency, so one is left with a contingent—or rhetorical—materialism. Rhetoric can then play with materials to change conditions and try to improve possibilities of encounters. There can be a general direction as a goal, like unifying Italy or creating a religious experience, but the specific, refined argument is just one more material shaping possible encounters.

Necessity and laws, whether of history or physical laws (which can change for Althusser) or of persuasion, are all explanations after the fact of an encounter. "What matters about this conception is less the elaboration of laws, hence of an essence, than *the aleatory character of the 'taking-hold' of this encounter, which gives rise to an accomplished fact* whose laws it is possible to state" (emphasis in original, 197). Chance leads to a description of laws, but ultimately these laws are a description of an encounter, or a description of how rhetorical probabilities worked in a given case or set of cases. The convergence of factors occurring by both chance and attempted design are the rhetoric of an encounter, usually understood after a particular experience like Wesley's indicates an encounter of some interest—a collision of elements bouncing off in new directions—has taken place. With the material focus, physical matter and elements in the world along with affective and bodily responses are as important as linguistic arguments. So what are some of the elements of Wesley's particular encounter and his bodily, affective response?

3. Wesley's Encounters

One of the main elements of Wesley's encounter is the Moravians, a Protestant sect from Moravia that spread quickly to Bohemia and Poland. The Moravians originated during the fifteenth century Bohemian Reformation, then were dispersed due to a seventeenth century counter-reformation before re-establishing in what is now Germany in the early eighteenth century. Their pietism served as an important influence on Wesley and others in English revival movements. Moravian missionaries traveled to Georgia to settle there starting in 1722. Some also sailed in October of 1735 on the *Simmonds*, the same ship as John Wesley and his brother Charles. John Wesley interacted regularly with Moravians both on board and in his time in the colonies, which laid groundwork or created conditions for a receptiveness to Moravian services, theology, and experiences back in England. In seeing the Moravians, "Wesley was impressed not only by their faith but also by their humility" when they took on the most undesirable chores on board the ship (Tomkins 2003, 46). Wesley was also struck by their sense of peace. This earlier encounter and connection made the later encounter of "unwillingly" (*Works*, 249) going to the Moravian meeting at Aldersgate possible. The encounter on the ship made the probability of later encounters much higher, and

an earlier exposure that went well made the chance of Wesley responding positively later higher as well.

The sense of a chance element for an encounter shows forth most here, where not taking a particular trip or taking different ships to travel to and from the American colonies (by either Wesley or the Moravians) could have meant the later affective moment at Aldersgate was entirely missed. One could point to particular necessities of ships taken or the relationships on the ships necessarily leading to later moments, but the idea of the encounter resists this emphasis on necessity, making rhetorical work less about responsibility and accurate prediction of results and more about creating contexts and possibilities with hope. More possible encounters under better circumstances is the probabilistic rhetor's goal.

The specifics of the Moravian approach are important. According to historian Colin Podmore (1998), "The Moravians held that God accepts people as they are—as sinners, and that one should not struggle to achieve holiness through one's own efforts […] that is, accept one's sinfulness, simply believe, and await the salvation which is the gift of God's grace and cannot be earned by works or merit" (31). This approach to the world of accepting one's own way of being and waiting for God to do the work contrasted with a more typical attempt to struggle to do right, and particularly contrasted with Wesley's attempts to perfect himself as part of the Holy Club at Oxford and through what one of his biographers describes as "the unhampered practice of holiness" (Tomkins 43). The next move for a Moravian was take membership in a band or one of the "Moravian fellowship groups, introduced in Herrnhut in 1727, usually consist[ing] of between three and eight people" (Podmore 31). These groups were supposed to be characterized by complete openness about members' own souls and critique of others in the group on spiritual matters. Vitally, Wesley "often participated in the full round of Moravian services." He explored, or continually encountered, their way of life, a set of practices structured through their theology. As Podmore explains, Böhler helped form a Moravian band at Oxford when he "responded to an approach, rather than making one himself" (33–34). The Moravian way did not seek to convert as actively as many others; rather, it created a setting for others to join and try out if they expressed interest. It could even be seen as an earlier religious form of a relationship encounter experience with guided time for interacting with others and God.

The Moravians designed a way of living in community to increase the chance of a particular kind of experience of God. All this work by the Moravians is their Althusserian-style creation of conditions for a possible encounter. Wesley, after regular contact with this community, had his non-conversion experience as a particular moment of encounter. He did not make the traditional change to or from a particular religion, but underwent a major shift in his way of experiencing his religious life. Tomkins wonders about Wesley's so-called conversion, asking "[I]f it was a conversion, then to what? Not Christianity per se of course, as he had always believed it, and not from nominal Christianity to the real thing, as few Christians alive in the 1730s could have been less nominal than Wesley. […] It was clearly a powerful spiritual experience and John in-

terpreted it as the gift of faith […] Yet the fact is that this confidence, as we shall see, was very short-lived, which seriously undermines the significance of the experience" (61). As Tomkins notes, it was a change in Wesley, but not the final one. He had more struggles, encounters, and shifts to his approach to faith.

Wesley's encounter was a rhetorical one in its contingency and change in manner of being, one famously described with an affective and physical phrase. The "heart strangely warmed" is not primarily a change in thought, but the physical sensation of a felt experience. In critical affect studies, the notion of affect is frequently used as bodily drives and intensity of felt experience before language or narrative defines those moments. An emotion is a concept with feeling, definition, and meaning accompanying it. (see Edbauer 2005, Gunn 2011, Massumi 2002). Wesley's experience is a moment of bodily intensity and experience which seems to immediately alter him, and which he finds words for in his journal later. The powerful pre-rational and the rational then combine as the moment is written down as a particular experience and later becomes a form of history. As Jenny Edbauer, Eve Sedgwick (2003), and Lynn Worsham (1998) explore separately, affect may be understood as non-rational, but it is usually in relationship with narrative and rationality. The intense felt moment becomes a story and a link in a causal relationship for Wesley.

The affective rhetorical encounter provided a change powerful enough to re-direct Wesley's approach to spiritual life. It may have involved a sense of his own salvation that was not there before, and which Wesley greatly desired. Wesley did not convert in the sense of joining the Moravians, but he helped found the Fetter Lane Society, which functioned in the same way as most Moravian bands and used similar rules about meeting to confess weaknesses to each other and maintain prayer days (see Podmore 39–44). Of course, Wesley had earlier changes in his faith practices that serve as a contrast to his affective encounter at Aldersgate.

In the same diary entry as the one where he describes his heart being warmed, Wesley relates the story of changes in his devotion. This narrative moves from a focus on outward behavior like "*reading the Bible, going to church, and saying my prayers"* (*Works,* 243) to saying that "a contemplative man convinced me still more than I was convinced before, that outward works are nothing, being alone; and […] instructed me how to pursue inward holiness, or a union of the soul with God" (245–46). These shifts serve as precursors to his change in faith in Aldersgate Street, with the two earlier moments presented as being too based on his own efforts and will, rather than on dependence upon God. Wesley uses the language of persuasion through "convinced" to explain his transition from outward behavior to inward devotion. He presents his story as a series of small conversions, which change both his way of thinking and his way of living. As Wesley relates it, the change in thinking drives changes in being. Regarding an early change, he explains that based on reading Thomas a Kempis' *Christian Pattern*, "I began to see that true religion was seated in the heart and that God's law extended to all our thoughts as well as words and actions" (243). The mind starts to change, and despite Wesley's stated disagreements about Kempis "being *too strict*"

(emphasis in original, *Works*, 243), he identifies with the author and "began to alter the whole form of my conversation and to set in earnest upon *a new life*" (emphasis in original, *Works*, 244). Even this new life, while presented as following a change in thinking based on an encounter with a text, also requires a sense of identifying with the author. There is a relational aspect to it—a personal connection of sorts that goes beyond rational analysis of theology, ethics, or the good life.

Identification with another is frequently central to a conversion. Dana Anderson (2007) argues for conversion as a change in the experience of identity and the rhetorical effort to change those around us by sharing about one's own identity (5–6). As with Anderson's examples, Wesley uses his own story to self-constitute an identity. Yet, in Wesley's case, these changes are not quite conversions in the sense of joining a new belief system and group. Wesley remains with his Christian roots but switches his mode of engaging with that identity and belief system. He changes his way of being. If a traditional conversion is a change in identity or being, a change in what one is, Wesley's shift was in style, mode of being, or how he is. But shifting from a "what" question of being to a "how" question of being is not to lessen its importance. In fact, rhetorical encounters that emphasize moments leading to changes in how one lives an identity can ultimately be more important than changes in thinking about what a person takes on as identity. Althusser is vital here for theorizing the openness to change from an encounter that does not move from one necessary identification to another. Althusser makes the encounter itself at least as important as any resulting change, considering rhetoric before getting to doctrine. In Wesley's case, how he approached being a Christian was ultimately of more import than the fact that he was a Christian. With the encounter at Aldersgate, the rational is pushed even further back, and the basis for a change is a physical (and perhaps spiritual) feeling. The convergence of elements bringing that strange warming spurs a significantly new approach to being Christian for Wesley.

A change in way of being is basic to rhetoric for Thomas Rickert (2013), who argues for rhetoric as a manner of being or a way of "dwelling" with the world. He explains,

> Rhetoric accomplishes its work by inducing us to shift, at least potentially, how we dwell or see ourselves dwelling in the world. Rhetoric does not just change subjective state of mind; it transforms our fundamental disposition concerning how we are in the world, how we dwell. I use the term *dwelling* here to mean how people come together to flourish (or try to flourish) in a place. (emphasis in original, xiii)

Wesley's encounter shifted the way he saw himself dwelling in the world. He would come together with people in a new way to attempt to flourish in England. The rhetoric is all the factors around Wesley involved in that shift, which can happen slowly and constantly, but came to a particular moment of rhetorical encounter for Wesley. The various factors struck strongly enough at once to create a noticeable affective expe-

rience, even if the work to dwell in a new way continued long after that moment of encounter.

The power of the warming encounter, one could say its rhetorical force or authority, is in its strangeness. The concept of encounter fits, as it is something out of the ordinary, something that gets in the way and must be dealt with. It is strange and unexpected. At the same time, elements of the context have been thoroughly designed by the Moravians. Design and chance remain in tension for the encounter. In this case, Wesley encounters a particular feeling and experience. As a unique occurrence (for Wesley at least), the causes of the warming held special significance. The warming came with a sense of "assurance" of a very personal salvation (250), and Wesley only focuses on the teaching for the evening after that moment. Wesley does not directly state his views regarding the cause of the warming. Certainly, God is one important cause of the warming according to Wesley, particularly in light of language in Wesley's diary about how "God works in the heart" (*Works,* 250). In Wesley's theology, God is the one who can enact change. The human follower can only prepare for God's work, perhaps improving the chances of change. This theology is analogous to Althusser's indeterminate materialism, where change is not controlled, but perhaps the odds can be improved. Regarding causes, Wesley's diary does not dwell on explaining who, what, or how his heart was warmed; it is accepted as a basic and foundational experience that compels a change with little initial resistance. Wesley's concern with a "disposition of the heart" more than rational assent (Wesley 1951, "Sermon I.i.4"), particularly appearing after his conversion, becomes a central aspect of later Christian conversion narratives (Lawson 1988, 7), particularly those emphasizing a more personal or intimate connection with God.

Moments of change are often understood to involve a choice, but not for Wesley here. He says nothing about an active mental decision at first. The change in being simply happens. Despite the lack of language about a choice being made, Wesley does not relate any undue force or lack of agency on his part. The warming and assurance serve as a form of gift, to which he responds with action. Later, Wesley describes still fighting with temptations, but unlike his previous failures, giving in to temptation, he describes himself as coming out as "always conqueror" over them (*Works* 250). He does not attribute this to a change in his own power, but again to a gift, this time directly noted as from God. The change in Wesley's way of being, then, is not based on a choice or traditional persuasion, but on an encounter with Moravians, with his own experiences, with God. His felt experience of a warmed heart spurs change, but that change has initially undefined and shared agency. While Wesley himself strives against temptation, the new way of being simply is, and the results of conquering temptation involve the co-agency at least of Wesley, God, the strangely warmed heart as its own entity. The experience itself is one of the agents of rhetorical power here.

Theories of New Materialism expand agency in related ways. They "discern emergent, generative powers (or agentic capacities) even within inorganic matter" (Coole and Frost 2010, 9), and here an experience with an organic description serves as

agentic. Similarly, Marilyn Cooper (2011) renews agency as an "emergent property" of "individuals" (421). For Cooper, individual "agency does not arise from conscious mental acts, though consciousness does play a role. Agency instead is based in individuals' lived knowledge that their actions are their own" (421). Agency is an experience in Cooper's description, but Wesley's case also shows an experience as an agent. Agency can be felt by individuals, but it also can be experienced as something external, coming from God, fate, or a strange experience. This muddying of the location of agency lets it move back in the causal chain. If the experience is the agent, the confluence of factors leading to the experience may be seen as agents too—whether from people like Moravians exemplifying a way of life, teaching a particular doctrine, and designing a religious service; or from ship schedules, brain chemistry, the dark of the evening near Aldersagate, and other non-conscious agents.

4. Further Encounters

For rhetorical studies, Althusser's work is a new opening to the idea of encounter, which can be explored further and questions of probability taken in other directions. Charles Sanders Peirce and Sören Kierkegaard serve here as two brief examples of philosophers for whom chance and the encounter can be important concepts, and who might be explored further to complicate Althusser's approach to encounters. Peirce's work on probability and chance, for example, can provide a nice counterpoint to Althusser. Sidney Dobrin and Kyle Jensen's (2017) edited volume using Peirce's theory of abductive thinking as a starting point implicitly includes chance and probability but has limited direct interaction with these issues. Peirce explores what he calls tychism (from the Greek word for chance) and argues that some sort of real indeterminism is at work in the universe. This is particularly central for him in defending the theory of evolution.

Peirce (1892) provides a counterpoint to Althusser in thinking of mind as primary, rather than working from a materialist basis, while still emphasizing the role of chance. Peirce focuses on "absolute chance" and then says, "I have begun by showing that tychism must give birth to an evolutionary cosmology, in which all the regularities of nature and of mind are regarded as products of growth, and to a Schelling-fashioned idealism which holds matter to be mere specialized and partially deadened mind" (533). Despite a different metaphysics, the value of chance for Peirce and Althusser pushes the encounter forward as a useful rhetorical concept, where design, necessity, probability, and even seeming-impossibility meet to create sometimes powerful moments. Those moments might be changes in thought or position in keeping with traditional, argument-oriented rhetoric, or they might be powerful affective moments as with Wesley, and changes in someone's direction in the world. The initial swerve creates more swerves.

To provide another counterpoint or collision, Kierkegaard works with the idea of necessity based on an initial freedom, which serves as an alternate starting point to Althusser's swerve. Kierkegaard ([1844] 1987) says, "The past can be regarded as necessary only if one forgets that it has come into existence, but is that kind of forgetfulness also supposed to be necessary?" (77). Nonetheless, both can work as an attempt to think (in part for Kierkegaard) through a non-deterministic materialism. Chance, or the possibility of events going differently from what actually happened is a common point here for Kierkegaard and Althusser. In a draft version of *Philosophical Fragments*, Kierkegaard writes, "What has happened has happened as it has happened, but could it therefore not have happened otherwise?" (209). The encounter, even for Wesley and Kierkegaard's less materialist experiences and approaches, is a way to work through change and necessity. The encounter is a moment where swerves take place, where things could have happened otherwise. Peters (1999) explains Kierkegaard's rhetoric as concerned with "revealing and concealing," where the familiar is made unfamiliar to create an impression (129). This approach is again about creating an experience, an experience designed rhetorically, but requiring chance for the right moment, the right impact. For Kierkegaard, communication is an encounter with something troubling, with finitude, with paradox. The possibility of change comes in responding to the experience of the encounter.

With a rhetoric of encounter, all materials in the world are possible elements of the encounter. A rhetor can put them into play, trying to create the conditions for different types of encounters or encounters leading to different ways of being or new directions of movement. Because the encounter is unexpected and material, affective and bodily responses are central to its effects. Most importantly, rhetoric becomes the realm of chance and probability, not in the sense that all individual events are random or that no predictions about effects can be made, but to emphasize a changed and limited sense of agency for rhetorical actors. The rhetor must work with hope in creating, producing, or designing conditions that might impact others. The push is to think about an environment, a context, an ethos rather than a singular effect. Effects for Althusser and a rhetoric of encounter, like causes, have enough chance to be unpredictable and uncontrollable.

A theory of rhetorical encounters' engagement with probability means creating many encounters and chances for trying out ways of being, as the Moravians offered Wesley and others. It means not just inviting, but also having a thoughtful set of conditions to invite others to. It means knowing that many encounters will be missed entirely, but taking advantage of the unexpected ones that happen, like on a ship to the Americas. And it means knowing that the rhetorical encounter is not about controlling the experience or response of others and that the encounter is in a chain of further encounters, more atoms bumping into each other. The encounter often leads not to reproduction of a belief or way of being—Wesley did not become a Moravian—but to a new form, or, in this case, a new institution. That encounter helped lead to Wesley's founding of Methodism as a movement within the Church of England. While it did

not become a separate institution until after Wesley's death, Methodism reflected the methodical and rule-based forms of study, meeting, and practice Wesley promoted plus the need for a heartfelt experience of faith in God—an encounter.

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