

Dr. Dave Mathewson, Hermeneutics, Lecture 7, History of Interpretation – Bacon & Kant

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We have been discussing the influences historically on hermeneutics or biblical interpretation, and in the last session or so we went all the way back to the Old Testament itself to demonstrate that interpretation is not something new with 20th or 21st-century scholars who sit down and interpret the Bible, but interpretation goes all the way back to the Old Testament itself. Even within the Old Testament, we find later writers picking, taking up and interpreting and utilizing earlier text and reasserting them for their audience, and we looked at the New Testament authors who interpret Old Testament text. We also looked at Rabbinic Judaism, and we looked at early church fathers in the patristic era, and very briefly looked at the jump forward to the Reformation, and in all those instances we saw that one of the key features was that interpreters looked at the text as relevant and were attempting to make the text relevant to the modern day readers, not necessarily that we want to repeat all their methods, but at the same time it's important to realize they are looking at God's Word and not treating it as an artifact to simply be exegeted and understood in its historical context, but they are also wrestling with how the Word of God continues to be relevant.

What I want to do in this session is jump forward a little bit further and look at some influences on interpretation that do not necessarily arise from an attempt to interpret biblical text. Some of them do, but it's important to understand, as we've already said, that interpretation does not arise in a vacuum. You don't just sit down and read a text, but when you do so, or read a text in isolation, but when you do so, when you sit down to interpret a biblical text, you do so as part of a long stream of history, a long stream of individuals who have sat down and wrestled with the text, but also you are also influenced by the thinking of many other individuals and many

other movements that influence the way we understand, the way we read, the way that we interpret.

And again, some of those influences that still affect us today, some of those influences are not necessarily aimed at biblical text, nor were they necessarily aimed at interpreting any text or books at all. Some of them were just wrestling with how to understand data, how to understand the meaning of anything. And so what I want to do is look at some key influences, and again, we will just kind of sketch in the broad picture and look at some of the major individuals and the influence that they had, especially during the time known as the Enlightenment, when reason and the ability to think and reason was valued highly as the way to understand something, as the way to interpret something, whether it was scientific data or whether it was text.

The first person that I want to look at briefly is an individual named Francis Bacon, and Bacon, an early scientific thinker, was part of an inductive scientific method movement. Francis Bacon was kind of a product of rationalism, that is the emphasis on the ability of the human mind to think and to reason, and therefore to deduce meaning from the text. Bacon argued for a rigorous, detailed study of the scientific data empirically.

And what that meant is the interpreter is an observer that studies the data and studies the information without letting his or her personal biases or other influences to affect the interpretation and the ability to understand the data. The observer looked at the data and studied it without letting those biases get in the way. And by examining the physical and the historical evidence and the historical facts, the laws that govern those facts would naturally emerge and reveal themselves, if one applies the correct and rigorous method.

And what Bacon did is suggest that we should break with tradition, and instead we should even doubt tradition, and we are able to return to the data itself. And again, by a rigorous method of looking at the facts empirically, then one could understand the laws that govern those facts and the meaning of those facts, and how they fit together. Today, I think we see a similar influence in certain movements within biblical studies that are popular as well as sometimes academic, that emphasize inductive study of the Bible.

So that by a rigorous application of proper methods of interpretation, by rigorously examining the data, one can reveal its true meaning, one can understand its true meaning, the text will reveal its meaning. So again, you find an emphasis on the fact that the interpreter of the Bible is an objective observer, and we look at the data in the text, we simply look at the facts, and empirically observe what is there, and by applying a rigorous method of using human reason and thinking, we can deduce its meaning, and we can determine what the text is saying. And therefore, by doing this, we're enabled to, we're able to distance ourselves from our biases, our predispositions, our past traditions, and things like that, in order to arrive at the true meaning of the text.

And again, a number of hermeneutical texts still talk about an inductive method of interpretation, and again, there are even more popular Bible studies that are labeled inductive Bible study or something like that. And again, the assumption is, I am an objective observer, I am like a dry sponge just waiting to soak up data, and by applying the correct methods of interpretation to the biblical text, then I can derive its true meaning, unencumbered by and uninfluenced by my biases. So Francis Bacon was an important thinker, not so much in indirectly influencing biblical hermeneutics, but as part of this whole approach, an exemplary of this approach, that one could, by applying a rigorous method of interpretation, transcend one's or overcome one's

biases, and understand the data kind of in a pure, empirical, inductive type of method.

The next thinker that I want to introduce you to is an individual named Rene Descartes. And Rene Descartes, from the latter part of the 16th century into about the middle of the 17th century, 1596 to 1650. Descartes, like Bacon, also was a kind of a product of rationalism, and emphasized that knowledge comes from logical reasoning.

That is, that the human mind is able to derive meaning. Descartes said that I am a rational thinking self. Therefore, I can look at the data, I can look out at the material world, and I can understand it logically.

Descartes also operated from the position of doubt. That is, that scientists or philosophers must rid themselves from preconceived notions and preconceived ideas and tradition. They must strip away tradition and set aside their biases and their assumptions, and they must start afresh as they interpret the data.

Now, Bacon and Descartes then operated with the assumption that there's roughly a correlation, or there is a correlation, between knowing and the reality itself. That is, the rational, empirical, scientific method could understand something as it actually is. So there's a correlation between my knowing and my interpreting something, and what it actually is.

So, for example, when I observe this book, when I look at this book, what I observe and see, there is a correspondence between my knowing and my observing, and what is actually there, the actual reality itself. So again, by applying the rigorous scientific method, we can become neutral observers. By applying an inductive approach to data, by approaching understanding with a rational inductive method,

we can approach it in a pure manner, and we can understand something as it actually is.

And again, it's not too hard to see the possible influence on approaches to hermeneutics. When it comes to interpreting the Bible, one then can approach it according to this method, and under this influence, one can approach it as an objective observer, one can approach it in a neutral manner, and also then through a rigorous application of correct methods of interpretation, through a rigorous method of hermeneutics, one then can arrive at an interpretation that actually corresponds to the text of Scripture itself. That is, I can arrive at an interpretation, I can arrive at an understanding, I can arrive at the meaning of the text, which correlates directly with what is actually in the text.

Again, separated from my own biases, my own viewpoint, my own tradition, and my own perspectives. By applying a rigorous method, I can become a neutral observer. Again, sort of like a sponge just waiting to soak up data.

So when it comes to hermeneutics, at least the method and approach of the rationalism exemplified by Bacon and Descartes have been influential in interpretation. So again, if you've heard or you've been taught or you've read that the correct approach to hermeneutics is to divest oneself of your presuppositions and your biases, to approach the text objectively, and by applying the correct methods of interpretation, you can overcome your biases, you can understand the true meaning of the text. Much of that kind of approach stems from this period of time of rationalism, again, exemplified by the approaches of Bacon and Descartes.

And there's much more we could say about the two individuals, but I'm primarily emphasizing the legacy that they've left when it comes to hermeneutics. A couple of other things to say about Descartes as well, as far as the legacy that he's left and the

influence that he's had, even on biblical interpretation, is Descartes also introduced a dualism that's going to become very important later on in hermeneutics and interpretation and theology. And basically, he said, the dualism went like this.

On the one hand, Descartes understood that there is a material world that is mechanistic, it runs by natural laws. On the other hand, it's deterministic. But on the other hand, Descartes held to the freedom and autonomy of the thinker, of the rational thinker.

And what that means is, if I am a rational thinking self, an autonomous thinking self, this raises the question, to what extent is my understanding dependent on my own interpretation of it, or my own perspective and my own viewpoint? To what extent does the human mind determine how I'm going to understand the data itself? So Descartes is already raising that question. And one thing we're going to see, this approach, Immanuel Kant, one of the figures we'll look at in just a moment, Immanuel Kant will develop this even further and start to pave the way for even modern approaches to interpretation that now focus mainly on the reader. That it's the reader who determines meaning, that there is no correct meaning in the text.

But we are so influenced by our understanding, our thinking, our biases, our traditions, our perspectives, that we will no doubt read that into the text. So Descartes has already paved the way for that by his dualism between the mechanistic universe, but the autonomous thinking self, that again raises the question, to what extent then does my mind determine what I see, and my approach determine what I see and perceive in the data? One other figure to emphasize during this period, and there are a number of other individuals that we could look at that perhaps have influenced hermeneutics, one that we'll mention very briefly in a moment is skepticism, the skepticism of David Hume, that one could not know anything. But one individual to emphasize, because we often find statements in even

interpret biblical interpretation or hermeneutics textbooks that reflect this type of thinking, but one individual to just mention very briefly is John Locke, L-O-C-K-E, John Locke, 1632 to 1704.

Locke is one who argued that the mind is a blank tablet and it receives sensations then from the external world. So my mind is a blank slate waiting to simply receive sensations and data from the empirical world in the external world. And once again, I've seen countless hermeneutical textbooks, especially earlier on, that said that the interpreter, much like Bacon said, could come to the text as a purely objective observer, with a blank mind, the mind is a blank slate, just like a sponge, just waiting to soak up data in a purely inductive and purely objective manner.

We will see though that one of the difficulties with Locke's position is, and we'll see this later on in some other interpreters and other hermeneutes, a term used for one who applies or thinks about and writes about hermeneutics, but one of the criticisms is if my mind is a blank slate and if it is simply a blank tablet, how can I understand anything at all? One must have some categories or some perspective from which to view and to understand. But moving beyond Locke, the next important and significant individual, perhaps the most significant of all of this group of persons we are looking at, is an individual named Immanuel Kant. Immanuel Kant, living from 1724 to 1804, basically was responding in some respects to the skepticism of his day.

Again, one of the skeptics he responded to was David Hume, who doubted the certainty of any human knowledge at all. And in response to that, Kant sought to escape this skepticism. And what he did is say, basically, the human mind is the ultimate source of knowing.

In other words, objective reality, though, according to Kant, objective reality could only be known and perceived as it conforms to the knowing structures of the mind.

So therefore, he goes even further than Descartes. Remember, Descartes kind of introduced a dualism between the autonomous thinking self that was able to rationally understand and perceive data.

Now, Kant goes further and says, objective reality, what is out there can only be known because of the categories that already exist in the mind, because of the structures that are already in the mind. In other words, the way things are in and of themselves, the way things are objectively, can never be known. Instead, all my knowing is filtered through the structures of the mind and the categories of understanding in the human mind, such as categories of time that allow us to distinguish time, categories of space, all of these determine how we view the empirical world.

So again, according to Bacon and Descartes, perhaps one could look at an object and how we perceive it and how we understand it, there would be a direct correlation between my understanding and knowing and the nature of the object itself. Now, Kant says that instead, the mind, the structures of the mind determine what I see. So how I perceive and understand this book, I cannot be certain that I understand it objectively, or as it really is, because it's the categories and structures of the thinking and rational mind that determine how I perceive it.

So my understanding of it is filtered through the patterns of understanding, the categories already in the human mind. And again, earlier, according to Bacon, especially in Descartes, the mind could objectively perceive data as it actually was as it objectively was. But now Kant says, no, the mind, the structures of mind determine how I perceive the world and how the world is seen.

The structures of the mind determine how the world is interpreted. There's no direct correlation between my knowing and what is actually out there. I can't be certain that what I know necessarily corresponds objectively to what is out there.

There is also one other important influence of Immanuel Kant. And that is, Immanuel Kant said that there were two poles, perhaps again, taking Descartes thinking a little further, there was a dualism between freedom and causality, or again, the freedom of the thinking mind, and causality, that is the determinism that governed the way the world worked. And for Kant, the pole of freedom included things like faith, and religion, and God.

Whereas the pole of causality, the opposite side of the pole was the scientific world of time and space and history. And according to Kant, neither could influence each other. One did not understand faith and God and religion, according to the methods of scientific inquiry when it comes to the sciences and history and the external world.

So there's this dualism between, again, history and this deterministic world, and then the pole of freedom, which includes God and faith and religion. Actually, we see this influence today in a number of fronts. For example, the notion that faith, my faith and religion is a very personal thing.

My faith in my belief in God is a transcendent and is even independent of the facts. Whereas history and science then are simply the realm of cause and effect, i.e., for most, that would mean no miracles, no divine intervention in history. Again, kept those two poles separate.

One cannot mix scientific fact and historical fact with the realm of religious ideas and God and faith. And again, we see that today when, again, faith and belief in God is something that's personal, something not dependent on facts, something that

cannot be proved. Furthermore, we also see this, I think, we still see the legacy of this type of thinking in both Old Testament and New Testament studies in the dichotomy that you still frequently see between faith and history, especially that characterized the liberalism of the 19th and 20th century.

And even further, the theology and history disjunction. So for example, Old Testament authors are writing what is religious literature, what is theological literature, not what is historical. And so things like God parting the Red Sea so that an entire nation can walk across certainly can't really be true and certainly could not have happened.

But that doesn't matter because the author is interested in theology, not in history. Or the synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, when they are writing theology, they are necessarily not writing history. So you see the ongoing influence in one sense of Kant in this dichotomy between faith and history, or again, in gospel criticism, or in Old Testament criticism, the dichotomy between theology and history.

If the authors are writing theological documents, then certainly they're not interested in historical facts or in writing history. So for Kant, Kant said knowledge then is composed of experience based on sensory impressions from the text, which second then which second are understood through the categories of the mind that enable me to organize the data and to interpret the world. And again, the main point to stress with Kant is, unlike Bacon and Descartes, he suggested that we can never know a thing independently, we can never know a thing as it actually is.

Again, I cannot know this as it actually is. But instead, I can only know it through the grid of my mind, through the structures that are already present in my mind. All meaning and understanding is filtered through this grid.

But it is this grid that enables me to understand. And this is the result of being an autonomous thinking self, an autonomous thinker. So I, the thinking self, determine how I see things.

We know things, how they appear to us, not necessarily how they are objectively and in reality and in and of themselves. Therefore, in one respect, considering it this way, Kant never entirely escaped the skepticism that he was responding to. Because you think about it, if I cannot know something as it really is, if my perception and knowledge of something is independent of the way the thing actually is, if there's no direct correlation between my knowing and the way something is, I can't be certain then that I know something as it actually is.

And so in that respect, Kant did not entirely escape the skepticism that he was responding to. And then also, when it comes to nature, the world, history, scientific knowledge, there can be no supernatural. Again, religion, God, etc.

belong to a different pole, the pole of freedom, whereas science, history, etc. belong to a closed mechanistic universe. And so much like Bacon and Descartes, though, Kant still emphasized the human mind as the primary source of meaning and knowledge.

It's through the autonomous thinking self, the autonomous thinking self is able to know and to understand. Though, again, as we said, with Kant, one can only know be through the grid of the mind, the categories that are already in the mind. And therefore, I can't know something as it really is, but only as I understand and perceive it.

And so the legacy of Immanuel Kant, then, is that the interpreter is the center of meaning. The interpreter, the knowing self, is the center of meaning. And as I already

said, Kant begins to anticipate, Kant, in a sense, anticipates the more modern approaches to hermeneutics that emphasize the reader, reader-centered approaches.

At the very beginning of this course, I think we mentioned that hermeneutics seems to flow through and to center around the three primary components of interpretation. That is the author, the text, and the reader. Author-centered approaches that focus on the author's intention.

Text-centered that focus on the text as the locus, the place of meaning. And reader-centered approaches that focus on the reader as the one who makes sense of text. And so already, Kant is anticipating more post-modern approaches to interpretation and more reader-centered approaches that focus on the reader who makes sense of text.

That is, meaning is in the eye of the beholder. There is no correct, objective meaning in the text that we simply abstract. But instead, the only meaning is what the author, the reader, understands through the categories of the mind, through the presuppositions and biases and viewpoints that we bring to the text.

That will influence the way we understand and interpret the text. That seems to already be anticipated by Immanuel Kant. And then the second legacy, as we've already suggested, is the disjunction between the, first of all, the exclusion of the supernatural when it comes to the sciences, history, etc.

The exclusion of supernatural, the exclusion of divine intervention into the affairs of history, which means, again, no resurrection, no parting of the Red Sea for a whole nation to cross over, no miraculous events. And then furthermore, in relationship to this, the legacy of Kant is the theology-history disjunction. That if older New

Testament authors are writing theology, they are necessarily not concerned with or not writing history.

Part of that thinking goes back to Kant, which drew this, worked with this dualism between what was true of history and science and what was true in the realm of religion and belief in God. In response, I think in response to Kant, when we think about hermeneutics, and then we will summarize the contribution of these individuals that we've looked at, Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, John Locke, and then finally Immanuel Kant. And as I said, there are other persons and other individuals during this time that made equally important contributions to hermeneutics.

Again, not consciously thinking about hermeneutics, but simply because they are dealing with how we understand, how we know, whether it's scientific data or written text, how do we know something? Because of that, these individuals do make important contributions to hermeneutics and hermeneutical theory. But a couple further observations, especially about Kant, but also the other Bacon and Descartes as well, and John Locke, is first of all, particularly Kant has reminded us, I think, that there is no such thing as pure induction. There is no such thing as a purely objective interpreter.

That by a rigorous methodology, a rigorous application of correct techniques can somehow interpret the biblical text in a way that you're simply a blank slate just waiting to soak up information. And that you can be absolutely certain that there's a one-to-one correlation between your interpretation and the object of the text itself. So I think we have to come to grips with, and we'll talk about this more, we have to come to grips with is there's no such thing as a completely objective observer and objective interpreter.

We all come with our own understanding, our own predisposition, our own biases, our own background and tradition, which all influence the way we read a text. Now one of the questions we'll deal with later on in this course is, does that inevitably distort the way we read a biblical text? Is there no hope at all of understanding a biblical text? Are we inevitably doomed to meaning is simply in the eye of the beholder? There's no correct meaning of a text that we can ever hope to get at. We'll talk about that later, but certainly, and we'll see this will become even more prominent in hermeneutical thinking, that there's no such thing as a pure deduction, where I am an objective observer with a blank slate just waiting to soak up or a dry sponge waiting to soak up the data, and that I can perfectly and purely perceive something exactly the way it is.

A second response is, in light of Kant's argument, I think Christians would want to argue that God has created us in his image, Genesis chapter 1. God has created us in his image, and therefore he has implanted the structures and the categories in the human mind that enable us to perceive things the way God has created them. So God is the creator of the universe, and the creator of human beings in his image has placed those structures in those categories that Kant described. Again, we can't come to anything with a blank mind.

If you did, you could never understand anything, but God himself has created the structures and categories and the grid in the human mind that enable us to perceive things the way he has created them. But also, a Christian interpreter would want to admit that we do not do this perfectly and exhaustively because of the fall and because of human sinfulness. Because of human sinfulness, that affects the way we perceive things.

That affects the way we understand things. Now again, that still raises the question, does that mean that we are inevitably doomed to failure? Does that mean we can't

understand anything at all? We'll deal with that later, but as part of the response, I think most interpreters, most Christian interpreters, would suggest and recognize that even if we can't understand something perfectly and exhaustively, that does not prevent us from understanding something adequately and substantially. So, in summary, summarizing the contribution of these individuals is, first of all, the legacy of Kant and Descartes and Bacon and John Locke is to emphasize empiricism and human reason.

That is, again, we are able to objectively interpret something the way it is. We are able to objectively, through using human reason, through applying a rigorous methodology, one is able to understand something. One is able to know something.

According to Bacon and Descartes, there was a correlation between my knowing, basically, and the way something was. Again, according to John Locke, one could approach something with a blank mind, free of all biases, and able to understand something as the way it really was, again, by application of a rigorous method or methodology. This kind of approach is often called common sense realism as well, another term or phrase that you might find.

Second is Immanuel Kant, though, distanced himself slightly in that while he still emphasized rationalism and reason, he emphasized more the autonomous knowing self, the autonomous thinking self, as the center of meaning. He pushed even further and said, therefore, we cannot know something as it really is. Now, again, for Kant, he didn't go as far to say, therefore, we can't know anything at all, or everyone comes up with something completely different, but he simply emphasized that human beings are already equipped with the categories and structures of the mind.

The mind is a grid that filters the data and determines how we put it together and how we understand it. There's the structure already present in the mind, so there's

no direct correlation between my knowing something and the way it really is. Again, there's no direct correlation between my perceiving this and knowing this and how it objectively actually is in reality.

Therefore, from that perspective, Kant did not quite escape the skepticism that he argued against. The third thing then is simply to mention that, therefore, Kant has had an enormous impact on subsequent hermeneutical thinking, both in the division between the thinking self and the object of interpretation. Now, the way is paved for the emphasis on the focus on the thinking self as the center of meaning, again, anticipating later reader-oriented approaches.

But also, the last one, his faith and history disjunction, or his theology history disjunction, that, again, if biblical authors are writing theology, they are inevitably not writing history. So, those individuals as kind of products of the Enlightenment have left us a legacy of emphasizing human reasoning, human rationality, human thinking, as being able to understand and to know something. To move forward just a little bit, not a whole lot in time, but a little bit as far as perspective, is I want to discuss another important individual, that is Friedrich Schleiermacher, who lived from 1768 to 1834, the early part of the 19th century.

Schleiermacher was a German philosopher and theologian and left his impact on theology, on hermeneutics, on biblical studies as well. He's known by some as the father of theology, or the father of hermeneutics. And we will return to Schleiermacher, I'll introduce him here briefly, and talk about his thinking and contribution to hermeneutics.

But we will return to him again when we discuss authorial intent. Schleiermacher is probably the key individual that discussions of authorial intent. Remember, author-centered, tech-centered, and reader-centered approaches to interpretation.

Most go back to Schleiermacher as kind of the father of of author's intent as the main goal of interpretation. Although many would not necessarily agree with or subscribe to how he approached it, and how he explained it, most would still see him as the father of hermeneutics, with his emphasis on author's intention. As I said, although a German philosopher and theologian, he made a contribution to hermeneutics.

And Schleiermacher also wrote during the period of, and as a child of, the Enlightenment era, that emphasized the power of human reasoning, the power of thinking, and the ability of human reason to actually know something. In other words, faith was in reason and science and technology as well. However, interestingly, Schleiermacher reacted to this, to this emphasis on faith and reasoning and science, and suggested that we cannot be limited simply by the rational and by the scientific approaches to knowledge.

But instead, over against merely rational truth and theological dogma of the day, Schleiermacher emphasized creativity and experience and piety in his pursuit of knowledge. In other words, for him, hermeneutics is the application of general rules of understanding developed through close attention to the nature of human thought and language. Now what that meant is for Schleiermacher, for his emphasis on human thought, his emphasis on creativity, his emphasis on spirit experience, he suggested that the main goal of understanding and interpretation was not so much understanding the biblical text, or understanding a text, as much as it was understanding an author, or understanding another person, that is the human author.

So that the gap between the modern interpreter and the author that produced the text could be overcome by hermeneutics. It's hermeneutics that allowed us to

overcome that distance between us and the human author. So the primary task, according to Schleiermacher, the primary task was to reconstruct or reproduce as closely as possible the past act of the author.

In other words, according to Schleiermacher, he said, yes, we look at the things like the grammar of the text, we look at the historical background of the text, we look at the words, but for him, interpretation was primarily psychological. And again, because of some of his philosophical understanding, for him, the main goal was to even go beyond the text, and to understand the author's thought process, to kind of put oneself in the place of the author. Because according to him, we share a commonality with the human author.

And therefore, we are able to place ourselves within the shoes of the author, in the mind of the author, we are able to uncover the author's true intention in writing the biblical text. So because of that, Schleiermacher then begins to emphasize that the correct approach to hermeneutics and to understanding something is not so much to simply observe the text and come up with the correct interpretation, but to move beyond that and psychologically to ask the question about what the off the past act of the author and what the author was intending to do. The legacy then of Frederick Schleiermacher is number one, the emphasis on author's intention.

And we'll see that hermeneutics begin, hermeneutics seems to begin with author centered approaches or approaches that go behind the text and recover the historical background of the text, the author's intention that is begun with Schleiermacher. A number of hermeneutic or a number of biblical interpretation textbooks that I've read, have phrasing similar to this. The main goal of interpretation is to put yourself in the shoes of the author, which is actually close to an exact quote from one hermeneutics textbook that I'm aware of.

So that the text then simply becomes a window for understanding the author, for reconstructing the author's intention. And again, today, today even there still, although we may do it differently than Schleiermacher, still most interpreters, especially evangelical interpreters, would continue to argue that the main goal of interpretation is to uncover the, uncover the author's intention. The main, the meaning of the text is the meaning that the author intended.

And again, we will return to that later when we begin to talk about author, text and reader centered approaches to interpretation. But already Friedrich Schleiermacher has championed the view that the goal of interpretation is to recover the author's intention. One other facet of Schleiermacher's thinking that has influenced hermeneutics is what is often known as the hermeneutical circle.

And Schleiermacher said that when reading a text, one tries to understand the whole by understanding the individual parts. And likewise, by understanding the individual parts, one can understand the entirety, or one can understand the whole. Another way of putting that is, according to Schleiermacher, understanding what comes in stages and not all at once.

As one works through this circle, going back and forth between the whole and the parts, understanding comes in stages. Understanding of the author's intention of a text comes in stages and not all at once. So we have looked at particularly, not all of them, but particularly non-biblical approaches to knowing and understanding that have influenced hermeneutics.

Again, going back to Francis Bacon and his inductive scientific method, Rene Descartes and his rationalism and scientific method, and emphasis on the ability to know something through rational thinking, the autonomous thinking self, John Locke, who suggested we can approach something as a blank slate, as simply observing

things, and the blank slate being filled up by sensory perception and experience with the data. And then to Immanuel Kant, who also emphasized the rational thinking self, the autonomous thinking self, all of these, the children of the of the enlightenment. Yet at the same time, Kant introduces the autonomous thinking self, now with the effect that our knowing of something is filtered through and dependent on the categories and the structures already present in the human mind.

And then Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schleiermacher, who now begins to emphasize, reacting to just human reason and scientific method, now emphasizes experience and piety and creativity. And so that the goal of interpretation, the goal of hermeneutics, is now to recover the author's intention behind the text, psychologically, to understand the author's thought process and the author's thought process and the author's thinking. And all of these, again, still influence the way we approach and the way we think about hermeneutics today.

And again, it's important to understand our approach to hermeneutics is influenced not just by biblical interpreters, but more generally, currents and historical movements and how they have wrestled with how do we know something, how do we understand, how do we perceive the external world, how do we perceive something like a text. All of that has influenced our hermeneutical textbooks and the way we think about biblical interpretation. In the next session, we'll move beyond, we will move beyond these figures as part of the Enlightenment in the 17th, 18th, and 19th century.

And we'll jump forward and start to look at some more recent thinkers in regard to theology and philosophy and hermeneutics and how that affects the way we approach a biblical text. And in the next session, we'll start by examining an individual who is probably one of the most influential, Hans-Gurt Gadamer. So the next session, we'll continue to look at kind of our hermeneutical roots, some of the

influences that have shaped the way we think about biblical interpretation of the Old New Testament today.