We have been discussing the influences historically on hermeneutics of biblical interpretation and 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 twentieth or twenty-first 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 up and interpreting and utilizing earlier texts and reasserting them for their audience. We looked at the New Testament authors who interpret Old Testament texts. We also looked at Rabbinic Judaism and we looked at early church fathers in the Patristic era and very briefly jumped forward to the Reformation. 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 were not treating it as an artifact to simply be exegeted and understood in its historical context but they were 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 texts. 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 the text or read a text in isolation. But when you do sit down to interpret a biblical text you do so as part of a long string of history and a long string of individuals who have sat down and wrestled with the text. But, 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, and the way we interpret. Again, some of those influences that still affect us today 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. So what I want to do is look at some key influences. We will just kind of sketch in the broad picture and look at some of the major individuals and the influences 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.

**Francis Bacon**

The first person that I want to look at briefly is an individual named Francis Bacon (1561-1626). Bacon, an early scientific thinker, was part of an inductive scientific movement. Francis Bacon was 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 comparatively. What that meant was the interpreter is an observer that studies the data and studies the information without letting his or her personal biases or other influences 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. 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 the rigorous method. What Bacon did is suggest that we should break with tradition and instead we should doubt tradition and return to the data itself and again by a rigorous method of look 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, popular as well as sometimes in the academy that emphasizes 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. Once we 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 that data in the text by simply looking at the facts and empirically observing what is there and by applying the rigorous methods of using human reason thinking we can deduce its meaning and we can determine what the text is actually saying. Therefore, by doing this we are 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. Again, a number of hermeneutical texts will talk about an inductive method of interpretation and again there are even more popular Bible studies that are labeled “inductive Bible studies” or something like that. 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 it’s true meaning unencumbered by and uninfluenced by my biases.

So Francis Bacon was an important thinker, not so much in directly influencing biblical hermeneutics but as part of this whole approach. An exemplar of this approach is that one could by applying a rigorous method of interpretation transcend or overcome one’s biases and understand the data, by an empirical/inductive type of method.

**Rene Descartes**

The next thinker that I want to introduce you too is an individual named Rene Descartes. Rene Descartes is from the later part of the sixteenth century into about the middle of the seventeenth century, 1596-1650. Descartes, like Bacon was also a product of rationalism and emphasized that knowledge comes from logical reasoning. That is, 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 things 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 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 is 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.

It’s not too hard to see the possible influence on approaches to hermeneutics. When it comes to interpreting the Bible one can then 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, the 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 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 Decartes have been influential in interpretation. So 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. It is exemplified by the approaches of Bacon and Descartes. And there is 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.

There are 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 on biblical interpretation is. Descartes also introduced a dualism that’s going to become very important later on in hermeneutics, interpretation, and theology. 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. It’s deterministic, but on the other hand, Descartes held to the freedom and autonomy of the thinker, of the rational thinker. What that means is, if I am a rational thinking self, an autonomist thinking self this raises the question to what extent is my understanding dependent on my own interpretation of it or my own perspective, or 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. One thing we’re going to see from this approach, in 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 modern approaches to interpretation that now focus mainly on the reader. They maintain it’s the reader who determines meaning. There is no correct meaning in the text itself. But we’re so influenced by our understanding, our thinking, our biases, our traditions, and 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 and the autonomist thinking self. That again raises the question to what extent then does my mind determine what I see and my approach determines what I see and perceive in the data.
David Hume and John Locke

One other figure to emphasize during this period, and there are a number of other individuals we could look at that perhaps who have influenced hermeneutics, one that we’ll mention very briefly is skepticism. The skepticism of David Hume, that one could not know anything. We often find statements in even biblical interpretation or hermeneutics textbooks that reflect this type of thinking.

One individual to mention very briefly is John Locke. John Locke, 1632-1704. Locke is one that 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 to receive sensations and data from the empirical world and the external world. And once again I’ve seen countless hermeneutical textbooks especially earlier on that said the interpreter, much like Bacon said, could come to the text as a purely objective observer with a blank mind, the mind that is a blank slate or 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 hermeneuts, which is a term used for one who applies or thinks about or 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.

Immanuel Kant

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 1724-1804 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. In response to that Kant sought to escape the skepticism and what he did is say basically the human
mind is the ultimate source of knowing. In other words, objective reality according to Kant, 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 introduced a dualism between the autonomist thinking self that was able to rationally understand or 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 know 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 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. Earlier, according to Bacon especially and Descartes, the mind could objectively perceive data as it actually was, as it objectively was. But now Kant says that the mind, the structures of the mind, can determine how I perceive the world. How the world is seen the structures of the mind determine how the world is interpreted. There is 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. For Kant the pole of freedom included things like faith, and religion, and God. Whereas with the pole of causality, the opposite side of the pole, there was the scientific world of time, space, and history. According to Kant neither could influence each other. That one did not understand faith, God, and religion according to the methods of scientific inquiry when it comes to the sciences, history, and the external world. So, there’s this dualism between history, this deterministic world and the pole of freedom, which includes God, faith, and religion. Actually, we see this influence today in a number of fronts, for example, the notion that faith by faith or religion is a very personal thing. My faith and my belief in God is transcendent and is even independent of the facts, whereas history and science then are simply the realm of cause and effect. For most that would mean no miracles, no divine intervention in history. Again, Kant kept those two poles separate. One could not mix scientific fact and historical fact with the realm of religious ideas, God, and faith. Again we see that today when faith and belief in God is something’s that’s personal, something not dependent on facts, and 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 and the dichotomy that you still frequently see between faith and history. That especially characterized the liberalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that even further that the theology and history disjunction. So, for example, Old Testament authors are writing what is religious literature, what is theological literature, and not what is historical. So things like God parting the Red Sea so that an entire nation could 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 a 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 their not interested in historical facts or in writing history. So for Kant, knowledge then is composed of experience based on sensory impressions and texts which second then are understood through the categories of the mind that enable me to organize the data and interpret the world.

Again, the main point to stress with Kant, 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 the mind. All meaning and understanding is filtered through this grid. But it is this grid that enables me to understand. This is the result of being an autonomist thinking self, an autonomist thinker. So, I, the thinking self, determine how I see things. We know how they appear to us not necessarily how they are objectively and in reality in and of themselves.

Therefore, in one respect, considering it this way, Kant never entirely escaped the skepticism that he was responding to. Because 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 actually is, I can’t be certain then that I know something as it actually is. So in that respect Kant did not entirely escape the skepticism that he was responding to. Then also when it comes to nature, the world, history, scientific knowledge there can be no supernatural. Again, religion, God, et cetera belong to a different pole, the pole of freedom. Whereas science, history, et cetera, belong to a closed mechanistic universe.

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 autonomist thinking self. The autonomist thinking self is able to know and understand. Though again as we said, with Kant one can only know through the grid of the mind, via categories that are already in the mind. Therefore, I can’t know something as it really is but only as I
understand and perceive it. 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. I already said, Kant begins to anticipate, the more modern approaches to hermeneutics that emphasize reader center approaches.

**Author, Text and Reader**

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 approach is the focus on the author’s intention. Text-centered focus is on the text as the locus the place of meaning. The reader-centered approach is the focus on the reader as the one who makes the text have sense. So, already, Kant is anticipating more post-modern approaches to interpretation and more reader-centered approaches that focus on the reader as the one who makes sense of the text. That is, meaning is in the eye of the beholder. There is no correct objective meaning in the text that we simply extract. But instead the only meaning is what the reader understands through the categories of the mind, through presuppositions, 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.

Then the second legacy as we already suggested is the disjunction between first of all, the exclusion of the supernatural when it comes to the sciences, history, et cetera. The exclusion of the supernatural, the exclusion of divine intervention into the affairs of history means again no resurrection, no parting of the Red Sea for a whole nation to cross over and no other miraculous events.

Then furthermore, in relationship to this, the legacy of Kant is the theology-history disjunction. That if New Testament authors are writing theology then they are necessarily not concerned with writing history. Part of that thinking goes back to Kant which drew
this, worked with this, dualism between what was true history and science and what was true in the realm of the religion, belief, and God.

**Response and Observations about Bacon, Descartes, Locke and Kant**

In response, to Kant when we think about hermeneutics, and then we’ll summarize the contribution of these individuals that we’ve looked at, Francis Bacon, Rene Descartes, John Locke, and then finally Immanuel Kant. 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 scientific data or written text, how do know something. Because of that these individuals do make important contributions to hermeneutics and hermeneutical theory there are a couple further observations especially about Kant but also about the others, Bacon, and Descartes as well, and John Locke. First of all, particularly Kant, has reminded us, I think, that there’s no such thing as pure induction. There’s 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 so that you can be absolutely certain that there’s a one to one correlation between your interpretation and the meaning of the text itself. So I think we have to come to grips with, and we’ll talk about this more. What we have to come to grips with is there’s no such thing as a completely objective observer, an objective interpreter. We all come with our own understanding, our own predispositions, our own biases, our own backgrounds and traditions, which all influence the way we read the text.

Now one of the questions we’ll deal with later on in this course is, does that inevitably distort the way we read the biblical text. Is there no hope at all of understanding the biblical text? Are we inevitably doomed to meaning being simply in the eye of the beholder? There’s no correct meaning of the 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, a dry sponge waiting to soak up the data or 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 one. 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 and he has placed those structures and those categories that Kant described, again, we can’t come to anything with a blank mind. If you did you could not 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, as a Christian interpreter we would want to admit that we do not do this perfectly and exhaustively because of the fall and 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 due to failure? Does that mean we cannot understand anything at all? We’ll deal with that later but as part of the response I think 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, Descartes, Bacon and John Locke is to emphasize empiricism and human reason. 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 the way it really was by the application of a rigorous method or methodology. This kind of approach is often called “common sense realism” as well. It is another term or phrase that you might find.

A second is Immanuel Kant distanced himself slightly in that while he still emphasized rationalism and reason, he emphasized more the autonomist knowing self, the autonomist 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 as to say therefore we cannot 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 structure already present in the mind. So, there’s no direct correlation between my knowing something and the way it really is. Again, there is 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 and that now the way is paved for the emphasis on the focus on the thinking self as the center of meaning. His thought anticipated later reader oriented approaches.

But also the last one is 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 the human reasoning, human rationality, human thinking as being able to understand and to know something.
Friedrich Schleiermacher

To move forward just a little bit, not a whole lot in time, but a little bit as far as perspective. I want to discuss another important individual and that is Friedrich Schleiermacher who lived from 1768-1834, the early part of the nineteenth 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. We will return to Schleiermacher, I’ll introduce him here briefly and talk about his thinking and contributions to hermeneuts. But we will return to him again when we discuss authorial intent. Schleiermacher is probably the key individual that discusses authorial intent. Remember author centered, text centered, and reader centered approaches to interpretation. Most go back to Schleiermacher as kind of a father 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. 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, science, and technology as well. However, interestingly, Schleiermacher reacted to this emphasis, this emphasis on faith and reasoning in science. He suggested that we cannot be limited simply rational and by the scientific approaches to knowledge. But instead, over against merely rational truth and theological dogma of the day, Schleiermacher emphasized creativity, 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 experience, he suggested that the main goal
of understanding and interpretation was not so much understanding the biblical text or understanding the text as much as it was understanding an author, or understanding another person, that is, the human author. So 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 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 of the text, but for him interpretation was primarily psychological. 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 community with the human author. Therefore, we are able to lace ourselves within the shoes of the author, or 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 the past of the act of the author and what the author was intending to do.

The legacy then of Friedrich Schleiermacher is: number one, the emphasis on author’s intention and we’ll see that hermeneutics begins 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, begin 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 the text then simply becomes a window for understanding the author through reconstructing the author’s intention. Today even, there’s 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 author’s intention. The meaning of the text is the meaning that the author intended. 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. Schleiermacher said that when reading a text one tries to understand the whole by understanding the individual parts. Likewise by understanding the individual parts one could understand the entirety or one could understand the whole. Another way of putting that is, according to Schleiermacher, understanding would come in stages, not all at once, as one works through the circle going back and forth between the whole and the parts. Understanding comes in stages, understanding the author’s intention context comes in stages, and not all at once.

Summary

So we have looked at particularly, not all of them, but particularly non-biblical approaches to knowing and understandings that have influenced hermeneutics in 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 autonomist thinking self. John Locke, who suggested we can approach something as a blank slate, that simply observing things and the blank slate being filled up by sensory perception and experience with the data.

Then it was Immanuel Kant who emphasized the rational thinking self, the autonomist thinking self, all of these the children of enlightenment. Yet at the same time Kant introduces the autonomist 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.
Then Friedrich Schleiermacher, who now begins to emphasize reacting to just human reason and scientific method now emphasizes experience, piety, and creativity. So that the goal of interpretation, the goal of hermeneutics, is now to recover the author’s intention behind the text, and to psychologically understand the author’s thought process and the author’s thinking.

All of these, again, still influence the way we approach and the way we think about hermeneutics today. 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 and 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 sessions we’ll move beyond these figures as part of the Enlightenment in the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries and we’ll jump forward and start to look at some more recent thinkers in regard to theology, philosophy and hermeneutics and how that affects the way we approach a biblical text. In the next session we’ll start by examining an individual whose probably one of the most influential, Hans-Georg Gadamer. So next session we’ll continue to look at, kind of, our hermeneutical roots and some of the influences that have shaped the way we think about biblical interpretation of the Old and New Testament today.

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