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## **The Hermeneutic Conception in the Perspective of Friedrich Schleiermacher**

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### **Abstract**

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834) was a German theologian and idealist philosopher. He helped found the University of Berlin with Wilhelm von Humboldt between 1798 and 1810 and taught there until his death. Despite his influence, he did not gain the recognition he deserved in the standard histories of philosophy. His primary focus on theology limited his publication of philosophical works, although he taught philosophy in all its branches and delivered refined lectures on Greek philosophy, the history of philosophy, ethics, aesthetics, hermeneutics, political philosophy, and the philosophy of education. Schleiermacher is considered the founder of general hermeneutics and the father of modern theological and religious studies. He also produced the principal German translation of Plato.

**Keywords:** hermeneutics; understanding; interpretation; theology; linguistic interpretation; psychological interpretation.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Hermeneutics has another history that is tied to modern times and to a German thinker shaped by an analytical spirit rooted in deep religious conviction. He was also influenced by the Romantic movement, which sought to grasp the pulse of emotion in words rather than in the objects they denote. This figure is Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768–1834), who is seen as the true founder of modern hermeneutic thought. He established the first interpretive principles that guide the interpreter toward a full union with the text and toward restoring its almost original unity. Until 1819, he did not believe in the existence of “hermeneutics as an art of understanding.” What existed were only specialized hermeneutic practices.

This paper seeks to clarify the method of understanding proposed by the German Romantic hermeneutic tradition. That tradition introduced a qualitative shift in the study of the human sciences. It aimed to grant the human sciences a status equal to that of the natural sciences, with the same precision and objectivity in their results. This raises key questions: What epistemological alternative did Schleiermacher offer for the human sciences? And what method leads us toward a sound understanding of these sciences?

## **2. Interpretation of Texts**

The emergence of hermeneutics as an independent field began with the effort to highlight a general problem related to interpretation whenever it engages with diverse texts. Identifying this central issue is the achievement of Friedrich Schleiermacher. Before him, the field was dominated by classical philologists, especially specialists in ancient Greek and Latin texts, as well as interpreters of the Old and New Testaments (Ricoeur, 2003).

Friedrich Ernst Daniel Schleiermacher, a religious thinker of the Romantic era, had an open intellectual spirit and a free approach to thought. His works *Speeches on Religion* (1799) and *The Christian Faith* (1822) renewed the interpretation of Christian ethics. His student Karl Barth, a reformist theologian and founder of neo-orthodoxy, also wrote about Schleiermacher's attempt to rationalize and reform Christianity. Schleiermacher's philosophy unfolds through dialectics and ethics. Its significance lies in its role as the beginning of "philosophical interpretation." To grasp his thought, one must read Dilthey, who edited and published Schleiermacher's early writings (Bouzeid, 2008). *Understanding and the Text: A Study of the Hermeneutic Method in Schleiermacher and Dilthey*, (2008).

Before Schleiermacher, philologists worked in the tradition of Greek scholarship, and biblical interpreters focused on the sacred texts of the Old and New Testaments. This situation led him to call for a shift from specialized hermeneutics tied to religious texts toward a general hermeneutics grounded in the very processes of understanding, which he saw as intimately connected to human existence (Benkrad, 2012).

Schleiermacher did not leave behind a complete book on the subject. What appeared after his death was a collection of dispersed ideas compiled by his students and later published under the title *Hermeneutics*. His ties to religion and art shaped his interpretive approach. His program moves in two directions: one marked by Romanticism in its call for a living relation with creative processes, and another marked by critique in its attempt to establish interpretive rules valid for all forms of understanding. In his view, hermeneutics must be an independent method grounded in explicit principles.

## **3. General Hermeneutics**

During his Halle period (1804–1805), Schleiermacher developed his philosophical ethics and formulated the idea of "general hermeneutics." This period also saw the articulation of his dialectical thought, as seen in the *Sketch of Ethics* (1806) and *Dialectics* (1811), both influenced by Plato. In these works he states that understanding occurs through language and takes two primary forms: grammatical interpretation and technical interpretation (Bouzeid, 2008, p. 82).

## **4. Grammatical Interpretation**

Every discourse arises from a shared linguistic and cultural context linking the author and the intended audience. Grammar functions as a mediator between interpretation and dialectics. The core of the interpretive task is a technical reading of the discourse. This requires attention not only to language

as a system but also to the individual who constructs the discourse, for the part gives shape to the whole. Human beings speak through language, and their speech expresses both life and consciousness. For this reason, Schleiermacher sometimes refers to this approach as linguistic interpretation and considers it an objective mode of interpretation (Bouzeid, 2008, p. 82).

### **3. Grammatical Hermeneutics**

Every discourse originates within a collective linguistic atmosphere shared by the author and the original audience. In other words, it relies on the cultural characteristics that produced the discourse. “Grammar” serves as an intermediary between interpretation and dialectics. The essence of interpretation calls for a technical reading of discourse—not merely from the perspective of language as a system but through the individual who constructs the discourse, the part that constitutes the whole. The human being is the speaker; their speech is both language and life. Here, the relationship between consciousness and language becomes evident. For this reason, it is sometimes called linguistic interpretation and is considered an objective form of hermeneutics (Bouzeid, *Understanding and Text: A Study in the Hermeneutic Method of Schleiermacher and Dilthey*, 2008, p. 82).

### **4. Psychological (Technical) Hermeneutics**

This approach can be considered a technical project or a specialized methodology. It concerns the subjectivity of the speaker. Once language is “forgotten,” speech becomes a tool serving subjectivity. This type of interpretation is viewed positively because it expresses the act of thought that produces the discourse. In Schleiermacher’s texts, this second form of interpretation, which carries both technical and rhetorical elements based on comparison, predominates. In his draft of *Ethics*, Schleiermacher notes that the essence of individuality examines both technical and psychological interpretation distinctly. Both approaches focus on the individual speaker, yet they aim to identify the “seed” of discourse within a general temporal context (Bouzeid, 2008, p. 82).

The German thinker Schleiermacher represents the classical position in hermeneutics. He is credited with transferring the term from theological usage to a “science” or “art” of understanding and analyzing texts. Schleiermacher did not publish an official book on hermeneutics; what remains are his handwritten lectures to students, which reflect hermeneutic considerations and constant reflection on reading mechanisms. He is regarded as the first, and possibly the greatest, modern hermeneutician (Jaspers, 2007).

Schleiermacher ultimately separated hermeneutics from serving any specific discipline, establishing it as an independent science foundational to the process of understanding and interpretation (Zaid, 1996). He delivered lectures on interpretation between 1805 and 1833. Some of his key principles are as follows:

**A.** Interpretation is a theory for understanding linguistic communication. It differs from commentary, application, or translation.

**B.** Hermeneutic philosophy is a broad and comprehensive branch of knowledge, covering diverse fields such as the Bible, law, literature, oral and written narratives, modern and ancient texts, and works in both native and foreign languages.

**C.** Interpreting sacred texts, such as the Torah, does not necessarily require special skills like divine inspiration (Schleiermacher, 2017, p. 14).

**D.** Interpretation is generally a challenging task. Misunderstandings are natural rather than agreement; thus, careful attention must be given to ensure understanding at every point. It is crucial to distinguish clearly between the meaning of a text or discourse and its truth. Assuming that a text must be true often leads to significant misinterpretation (Schleiermacher, 2017).

First, the need for interpretation arises from individual-level distinctions, which lead to linguistic problems. Words available as references for precise meaning are relatively few and contextually variable. Psychological interpretation can help by providing additional evidence to construct meaning (Schleiermacher, 2017, p. 15).

Second, psychological interpretation requires returning to the speaker to clarify ambiguities in language within specific contexts. Third, understanding linguistic acts requires not only knowing the meaning but also the illocutionary force of the speech act (Schleiermacher, 2017, p. 15).

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is based on the idea that a text is a linguistic medium conveying the author's thought to the reader. Linguistically, it refers to language as a whole; psychologically, it reflects the author's individual thought. Schleiermacher views the relationship between these aspects as dialectical. As time passes, texts become increasingly obscure, bringing readers closer to misunderstanding than understanding (Zaid, 1996, p. 20).

Therefore, a "science" or "art" is necessary to guard against misunderstanding and facilitate understanding. Schleiermacher's rules of understanding rely on both linguistic and psychological aspects of the text. The interpreter must access meaning by considering how language shapes expression and how the author adapts linguistic resources.

Every text thus has two dimensions: an objective dimension, pointing to language, which enables understanding, and a subjective dimension, reflecting the author's thought in their particular use of language. Both dimensions reflect the author's experience, which the reader seeks to reconstruct to understand the author. The reader may begin with either dimension, as each leads to understanding the other.

Starting with the linguistic dimension involves objective historical reconstruction, which examines how the text operates within language. It also includes predictive objective reconstruction, determining how the text develops the language itself. Starting with the subjective dimension involves self-historical reconstruction, viewing the text as a product of the author's mind, and predictive reconstruction, which assesses how writing affects the author's internal thought (Zaid, 1996, pp. 12–22).

These objective and subjective dimensions, with their historical and predictive subtypes, form the foundational rules and framework of Schleiermacher's interpretive art. Without them, misunderstanding is unavoidable. The task of hermeneutics is to understand the text as the author did, or even better. Schleiermacher emphasizes that while linguistic analysis is the natural starting point, full understanding requires engaging both dimensions in a hermeneutic circle (Zaid, 1996, p. 22).

In his later thought, Schleiermacher increasingly separates language and thought. Linguistic interpretation addresses meaning based on objective laws, while psychological interpretation focuses on subjective and individual aspects (Mustafa, 2003, p. 70).

To understand the parts of a text, one must first grasp the whole, and vice versa. Linguistic interpretation, with historical and predictive aspects, operates in a circular process, relying on full knowledge of language and text characteristics. The same applies to subjective psychological interpretation.

The hermeneutic circle illustrates that understanding a text is complex. The interpreter may start anywhere but must adjust understanding according to insights gained from detailed engagement with the text. Hermeneutics provides general rules to prevent misunderstanding. Yet Schleiermacher acknowledges that interpretation is never complete; no interpreter can exhaust the potential meanings of a text. The goal is to achieve the fullest possible understanding (Zaid, 1996, pp. 22–23).

Despite Schleiermacher's formalization of hermeneutics as an independent art, his classical orientation is evident in his effort to establish rules for understanding and interpretation. He emphasizes avoiding "initial misunderstanding" by encouraging the interpreter to transcend personal and historical perspective to achieve objective, historical understanding. The interpreter must strive to align themselves with the author, reconstructing the author's experience through the text. Although complete equivalence is impossible, Schleiermacher considers it essential for correct understanding.

A romantic tone overlays his classicism, viewing the text as the author's expression of the self. The interpreter must possess predictive insight alongside linguistic knowledge to uncover the multiple dimensions of the text. Through this predictive capacity, the reader approaches the author's mind so closely that they temporarily inhabit it, effectively becoming the author themselves (Zaid, 1996, p. 23).

Despite everything, Schleiermacher paved the way for those who came after him, especially Dilthey and Gadamer. Dilthey began from where Schleiermacher concluded, namely the search for a "correct" interpretation and understanding in the field of the humanities, whereas Gadamer started from the problem of fundamental misunderstanding, which Schleiermacher sought to avoid in his hermeneutics. In this sense, Schleiermacher is considered the father of modern hermeneutics (Zaid, 1996, p. 23).

On this basis, the subject of hermeneutics is not limited to religious texts alone; it should encompass all forms of creative texts, including visual texts. This is because "creativity depends on the existence of the art of understanding." Since creativity is nothing other than the external expression of thought, hermeneutics is essentially the art of thinking and thus inherently philosophical. Based on this

connection between the moment of creation and the experience of reception, Schleiermacher formulated a set of general principles and theoretical rules that the hermeneutician must follow when engaging with texts. These rules aim to revitalize texts within a finite temporal framework to determine their semantic purposes (Zaid, 1996, pp. 85–86).

Initially, Schleiermacher classified all human activities across all dimensions into three types. The first type is utilitarian, usually associated with meeting daily life requirements. It emerges from shared experience, and the situations it describes have fixed meanings and goals understood by all. This activity is mechanical and devoid of spiritual enjoyment. The second type involves intellectual reflection, requiring understanding based on experience and observation. This domain is typically associated with the natural sciences. The third type is spiritual in nature. It addresses specific individual needs, usually linked to pleasure, and requires evaluation through emotional and aesthetic sensibilities. This category corresponds to the arts in all their manifestations and alone constitutes the proper object of understanding and interpretation.

Artistic meanings are inherently ambiguous and obscure, arising from the pleasure it produces. This stems from both the nature of artistic work and the tools it employs. Art is distinguished not by thought but by the possible metaphorical uses of language and other expressive materials. Artistic meanings are not immediately given in the text, unlike utilitarian activity, where the communicative situation is bare and easily understood. Artistic meaning requires interpretation rather than explanation (Zaid, 1996, pp. 86–87).

This inclination reflects the environment in which Schleiermacher lived. He spent his life seeking absolute serenity, which he believed could only be granted by the “inner space”—that remote center of intuition considered the sole path to boundless and limitless tranquility. For him, religious experience was primarily personal, achieved not through direct encounter with God but through inner intuition. Romanticism, with its emphasis on the creative spirit, likely played a major role in shaping this intuitive worldview. Through this lens, all textual boundaries dissolve, and there remains a single hermeneutics, with no distinction between what is sacred and what is created by worldly minds (Zaid, 1996, p. 88).

Faith did not prevent him from being part of the transformations of his time. As a Romantic, he was engaged in the cultural consciousness unleashed by figures like Novalis, Schelling, and Schlegel, leaders of German Romanticism. Many of his ideas were inspired by this movement, including the concept of “reconstruction,” which underpins his hermeneutics. Schelling had already emphasized the impossibility of understanding a work of art without reconstructing its structure (Zaid, 1996, p. 88).

This task defines the essence of all criticism. Schleiermacher adopted it to delineate the scope of hermeneutics. Interpretation excavates a solid memory to reconstruct its surroundings. This perspective governs his understanding of texts and the revelation of their secrets. The aim of interpretation is “to free religious intuition from the grave of literal meaning, where it lies imprisoned in the embrace of ecclesiastical and anthropological rigidity.” The revival of meaning strengthens faith, and for Schleiermacher, there is no separation between religious experience—approaching

mysticism—and artistic experience, which reconnects the mind with pure sensation, returning the emotions to their origin (Zaid, 1996, p. 88).

In addition to these intellectual influences, Schleiermacher's personality played a key role. His openness of mind and spirit enabled him to view hermeneutics as an optimal intermediary between humanity and its collective heritage. Religious texts occupy only a narrow space within his hermeneutics. His early engagement was primarily with Platonic Greek thought, through which he learned to appreciate the aesthetic dimension of human experience. Rejecting institutional mediation was a first step toward erasing the divide between God as the ultimate infinite ideal and the self, which perceives the world internally rather than through institutional structures (Zaid, 1996, p. 88).

Thus, the message of religious and other texts serves only as a cover for deeper meaning, accessible through a comprehensive reconstruction of the civilizational spirit they express. In his view, interpretation becomes an act of creation, generating a new meaning that encompasses and may surpass the original. This allows the interpreter to “speak” to the text as its author would, aligning closely with the original reader without temporal or cultural distance (Benkraad, 2012, p. 89).

The hermeneutician does not merely seek meaning but embodies the text's horizon, both revealed and concealed. Creation moves from inside to outside, reflecting the author's process. Interpretation is the reverse: it moves from outside to inside, constrained by its own conditions. The hermeneutician does not approach the text externally but engages it fully to elicit all its secrets. Moreover, the interpreter must “understand the discourse as the author did” and even better, since the author's knowledge is never complete. The interpreter explores what the author may not have fully realized, uncovering meaning that exists in the text as a hidden secret prior to and independent of the reader, whose task is to discern it (Benkraad, 2012, pp. 90–91).

In other words, what the author does spontaneously, without full awareness of its intentions, is reconstructed by the interpreter based on the functioning of language and the context of both text and author. This is crucial: hermeneutics can only develop rules from a positive framework rooted in historical, intuitive, situational, and subjective reconstruction. Historical objectivity identifies how the discourse is situated within the totality of language and thought, while historical subjectivity examines how it enters the mind of the receiver. Linking these dimensions enables recovery of what the author failed to communicate. Understanding a text cannot be reduced to simple linguistic exercises; it involves engaging with language as a living act. Language is central in all hermeneutics, from Schleiermacher, Gadamer, and Ricoeur to later deconstructionists and semiotic hermeneutics, as emphasized by Pierce, the founder of interpretive semiotics. On this basis, interpretation (*ta'wil*) is a process through which the hermeneutic engages with regions imperceptible to the naked eye in order to grasp what Schleiermacher calls the “inner form”—akin to a magical nucleus that defines the emergence of creativity. In other words, it moves from the surface represented by textual manifestation to the hidden intent, where the intoxicating essence of originality resides, known only to the author. The hermeneut, in the act of interpretation, operates under the premise that “direct engagement with interpretation” requires adopting both the objective and subjective stance of the author. Objectivity entails understanding the language employed, while subjectivity requires knowledge of the author's inner and outer life. Both dimensions are realized only through the

interpretive process. This relationship is similar to that of a word within a sentence: a word derives its meaning only from its placement within the sentence, and the sentence itself is ultimately a structured accumulation of words (Benkrad, 2012, p. 94).

Accordingly, interpretation is valid only if its material is entirely drawn from the comprehensive context—the author’s context and the value system that guides them. Outside this context, the text remains closed to the interpreter. Put differently, interpretation represents a renewal, necessitating continuous updating of meanings through the interaction of two minds, two stages, and two cultures. This, evidently, is the spirit governing all hermeneutics, where meaning is determined solely through context—that is, through the whole. It also references the horizon that regulates possible relations between the whole and its parts, a principle Gadamer terms “prejudgment” (Benkrad, 2012, pp. 94–95).

Based on these general principles, which illuminate the nature, techniques, and necessities of interpretation, Schleiermacher developed a central concept he considered the key to recovering the original meaning of any text: “reconstruction.” This concept refers to the possibility of restoring the historical conditions in which the text was produced in all their dimensions—reviving the text so that its meanings can be accessed. In other words, the author is unable to fully encompass every detail of their work. Within the general intent shaping the text’s meaning (Benkrad, 2012, p. 102), there are elements that may mislead, confuse, or distort. The goal of interpretation is to understand these discrepancies between the author’s intent and the text’s intent, thereby resolving misunderstanding and restoring the text’s original coherence and integrity. Interpretation becomes necessary when misunderstanding is regarded as the starting point of knowledge, a gateway to comprehension as the initial cell in the formation of the artistic work (Benkrad, 2012, pp. 103–120).

Reconstruction is not merely the reverse of original creation. In the author’s creative spontaneity, their work is not fully guided by conscious intent. The interpreter’s task is to elucidate what remains obscure. Since interpretation begins with the completed work, encompassing all the issues the author intended to express, the interpreter may come to grasp the work intellectually even better than the author. Reconstruction can also involve reorganizing the text according to purposes other than those directly expressed by the text. Ultimately, interpretation is the exploration of invisible relationships revealed through the text’s direct manifestation (Benkrad, 2012, p. 103).

Within this framework, the aim of interpretation, in the hermeneutic vision articulated by Schleiermacher, is to access the original significance of an artistic work by reconstructing the conditions in which it was produced—understanding it within its original horizon, independent of the interpreter’s intentions or goals. This can only be achieved by situating the text within its original cultural context. Outside this context, the text is mute and cannot respond to the interpreter’s questions. The cultural context alone enables the text to speak and provide precise guidance, without implying that the interpreter creates a new text. Nevertheless, the text revealed through interpretation serves as an essential conduit for clarifying meaning and achieving understanding (Benkrad, 2012, pp. 103–104).



As Schleiermacher notes, the task of hermeneutics is continuously evolving. Interpretations encourage the pursuit of new insights and the initiation of fresh dialogues. Even when one thinks they have reached a peak, a higher one emerges, hidden behind the temporary sense of achievement. The ultimate summit of hermeneutics is forever lost in the clouds (Jaspers, 2007, p. 120).

Hermeneutics initially focused on textual interpretation, relying on linguistic expertise to clarify ambiguities characteristic of manuscripts and texts in ancient times. The hermeneut or translator draws on linguistic knowledge to render the obscure comprehensible, replacing difficult words with accessible ones suited to the reader's linguistic competence (Sharafi, 2007). Among these processes are the elucidation of literal meaning (*le sens littéral*) and, concomitantly, the search for figurative meaning (*le sens allégorique*). Here, grammatical interpretation intersects with metaphorical interpretation to clarify and resolve textual ambiguity across historical layers (Sharafi, 2007).

Schleiermacher expanded hermeneutics further by recognizing the close connection between hermeneutics and foreign language acquisition, understanding that comprehension of foreign words depends on it. He also argued that we engage in hermeneutics even in our interactions with others. Consequently, the scope of hermeneutics widened to encompass both speaker and listener, as this dynamic mitigates total misunderstanding and facilitates dialogue. Hermeneutics thus extends beyond written texts to the analysis of spoken discourse (Sharafi, 2007, p. 25).

In exploring the foundations of interpretive art, Schleiermacher identifies misunderstanding (*la mécompréhension*) as central. Interpretation, he argues, is the art of avoiding misunderstanding. True understanding of the author requires returning to the origin of their thought. Gadamer regards Schleiermacher's contribution as psychological hermeneutics, a process in which one immerses oneself in the author's entire framework, apprehending the "inner origin" of the creative act. Understanding, then, is the re-production of the original act of creation (Al-Rafi'i, 2014).

Schleiermacher's decisive innovation in hermeneutics lies in moving from textual exegesis to the "process of understanding" itself, establishing the rules and principles that enable proper interpretation. He prioritizes misunderstanding, arguing that encountering ambiguity, obscurity, or partial comprehension in aged texts necessitates a systematic hermeneutic science or art. This opposes traditional hermeneutics' claim that "everything can be understood" and replaces it with the principle that "nothing is understood" initially, giving interpretation a continuous and dynamic dimension (Sharafi, 2007, pp. 25–26).

Thus, Schleiermacher liberated hermeneutics from dependency on other disciplines, elevating it to a science dedicated to understanding, developing a general theory of interpretation and comprehension. His methodology begins with the creative process, closely linked to the author's inner and outer life. The text, as a creative product, manifests this life. Hermeneutic practice focuses on grasping the text at its origin and its emergence from the author's lived experience. In this way, Schleiermacher extends traditional hermeneutics, which had limited itself to textual meaning without considering the author's holistic experience.

Schleiermacher emphasizes the centrality of language in understanding texts. Literary works employ language in unique ways, and comprehension requires engagement with this linguistic usage. The author's psychology, thought, and experience converge in their distinct use of language, which can only be understood as a manifestation of thought. Interpretation thus involves examining discourse as part of the totality of language through grammatical and linguistic hermeneutics (Sharafi, 2007, pp. 206–227). This approach integrates linguistic and psychological interpretation, as comprehension arises from the interaction of these dimensions (Sharafi, 2007, p. 27).

This distinguishes Schleiermacher's hermeneutics from classical hermeneutics, which focused on literal and metaphorical meanings. Schleiermacher, instead, emphasizes the uniqueness of discourse, seeking to understand the other's distinct linguistic and subjective experience. Language, for him, is not bound by fixed concepts; it escapes stability, revealing the author's individuality within the literary work. To capture this individuality, Schleiermacher proposes two complementary methods: divination (*La divination*) and comparison. Divination involves self-determination of principles through examining the work and its generic ideas, while comparison evaluates works within their shared genre to illuminate unique aspects of the text (Sharafi, 2007, pp. 28).

The core of Schleiermacher's approach lies in his establishment of a comprehensive study that paved the way for understanding the author's creative activity and its relation to the "totality of the person" or the entirety of their lived experience. Hermeneutic practice is not merely concerned with understanding the author's transformation of the common language and stable forms as an individual linguistic modification. Rather, it addresses the original psychological process responsible for producing and connecting forms and images, reflecting the author's subjectivity, experiences, and thoughts (Sharafi, 2007, p. 28).

According to this principle, the poetics of the 18th century, which treated language, forms, images, and literary genres merely as "vehicles" or "templates" for personal ideas and emotions, were rejected and surpassed. This marked the emergence of the foundations of 19th-century poetics and modern poetics.

Romantic elements began to emerge in Schleiermacher's thought, particularly the ideal of self-realization as an individual with distinct and unique characteristics. Consequently, Schleiermacher argued that understanding a text requires understanding the individual. From this stems the necessity of empathizing with others (*Lempathie*). For Schleiermacher, the central tenet of hermeneutics is understanding the author, not merely the text, or understanding the text as a revelation of the author's lived experience, including their understanding of others, the world, language, and literary forms (Sharafi, 2007, pp. 28–29).

From Schleiermacher's perspective, several concepts reinforce this hermeneutic approach. These include "emotional penetration," "identification with the spirit of the author," "feeling the spirit of the other" (*Lempathie*), "psychological acquaintance," "lived experience," and "real experience," among others. To fully understand the author—or for the interpreter to understand the text as the author did—the interpreter must possess the same level of understanding as the author. They must be proficient in the language used by the author and attempt to grasp the internal and external life of the

author, studying and understanding all aspects related to them. Only when the interpreter reaches the same level of thought and understanding as the author can they comprehend the literary text more fully than the author might have expected (Sharafi, 2007, p. 29). This is because the interpreter or reader possesses certain abilities and insights that the author may have overlooked or been unaware of.

Ultimately, Schleiermacher established a new hermeneutics and refined its principles, drawing on the experiences of Cladenius and others. He believed that applying these principles would lead to understanding the author's intent. He did not distinguish between religious and non-religious texts, whether legal, artistic, or ethical (Al-Kilbikani, 2013). Schleiermacher's contributions occupy a central position in the account given by Wilhelm Dilthey regarding the "revival of hermeneutics," which, through Dilthey, became a foundational component of the self-definition of the human sciences (Muhammad, 2018).

### **Critiques of Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics**

Schleiermacher was among the first to expand hermeneutics from its narrow theological domain to encompass literary and other fields. He was a pioneer in transferring the concept from religious text studies to a science or art of understanding, with specific conditions for textual analysis (Al-Qader, 2012). Nevertheless, his approach attracted significant criticism.

Schleiermacher's hermeneutics caused controversy because it assumed a correspondence between literary texts and the author's goals and intended meaning. He trusted that one could access the author's objectives objectively and sincerely. This stance aligns with Dilthey's position and also with the psychological approach to literature initiated by Sainte-Beuve, reflected in Freudian analysis. According to Schleiermacher, experiencing the author's creative process is a prerequisite for understanding (Sharafi, 2007, p. 30). This process involves internal components interconnected within an "organic unity," through which the literary work appears as a coherent whole.

Schleiermacher believed that the author's intentional symbols and the circumstances of the creative process could not be studied outside what he termed the "external" and "internal" form of the creative output or its "internal coherence" and "sequence," which renders it a structured whole. Literary studies have shown that an author's creations often diverge from their original aims, yet the works themselves possess vast meaning and capabilities, except for authors who cannot understand or explain their works.

Regarding conscious and unconscious creative processes, Schleiermacher observed that they are hypothetical and cannot be fully reconstructed. These experiences contain potentialities, yet they are not entirely accessible within the text itself. At the same time, Schleiermacher advocated for equality between the interpreter and the author, overlooking that the interpreter possesses their own experiences, background, references, knowledge, and current situation (Sharafi, 2007, pp. 30–31). While equality is a key principle in Schleiermacher's approach, it is epistemologically unrealistic, especially across significant historical or temporal gaps. Consequently, his Romantic inclinations

sometimes led him to disregard the interpreter's contemporary context, which is the starting point for understanding.

Here emerges the methodological challenge in Schleiermacher's theory of textual understanding. He viewed language as an infinite whole and saw hermeneutics as the task of reconstructing the creative process that occurred in the mind of the author (Qattan, 2011).

## **CONCLUSION:**

Schleiermacher is considered the first to liberate hermeneutics from its dependence on other sciences. He elevated it from specialized fields, such as philological studies of classical texts—especially Greek and Latin—and theological interpretations of the Old and New Testaments. With Schleiermacher, hermeneutics became a general theory focused on understanding and interpretation. It gained independence from other sciences and shifted its concern from seeking multiple meanings or intellectual content in religious texts to focusing on the central process that unifies all interpretations: the process of understanding itself. This process is guided by specific rules, conditions, and criteria necessary to achieve "correct understanding." For this reason, Schleiermacher is regarded as the spiritual father of modern hermeneutics. He established its foundations and principles in their contemporary hermeneutical form.

Schleiermacher also initiated a qualitative leap in traditional hermeneutics. He expanded hermeneutic practice beyond theological interpretation to include philosophical, legal, historical, literary, and other types of texts. He criticized and rejected Catholic scholasticism and Kabbalah. He emphasized moving away from traditional methods of interpreting sacred texts and advocated for applying generalized interpretive methods to secular texts. Schleiermacher argued that sacred texts are human creations, written by humans for humans. Therefore, they must be subject to the same rules and principles as any other text.

A key pillar of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics is the restoration of value to the spiritual sciences, that is, the human sciences. He recognized the existence of a method of understanding based on two complementary approaches. The first is grammatical or linguistic interpretation, which studies discourse in relation to language. The second is technical or psychological interpretation, which studies discourse in relation to the reflective subjectivity of the author. These two pillars cannot be separated. Together, they enable the process of understanding, creating integration between the interpreter and the author, and allowing the creative process to be reproduced anew.

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