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INTERPRETATION WITHOUT AN INTERPRETER: ALGORITHMIC HERMENEUTICS AND NEW FORMS OF MEANING-MAKING

This article examines the phenomenon of “interpretation without an interpreter,” which emerges within digital ecosystems – interconnected digital environments conceptually close to Luciano Floridi’s *infosphere*, that is, a space of circulation and transformation of meanings – where texts are increasingly generated, processed, and analysed by large language models (LLMs) as well as artificially intelligent agents (AI-agents). Thus, the process of interpretation often occurs without the direct participation of a human subject. The *scientific novelty* of the study lies in posing the question of how real and in what ontological status meaning may be if it is not lived through by a subject and arises and circulates exclusively within algorithmic systems. The article compares classical approaches to interpretation (Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricœur) with contemporary theories of digital hermeneutics (N. Katherine Hayles, Luciano Floridi, Alberto Romele, David J. Gunkel), which reveal the specific features of meaning-making mediated by algorithms in digital environments. The *research tasks* include describing cases of text generation and analysis performed by interacting LLMs, as well as automated SEO optimisation and text humanisation (adaptation for human perception). In such a “dialogue” between AI-agents, meaning potentially becomes a function of digital interaction rather than of human experience. This determines the *relevance* of examining the phenomenon of algorithmic understanding as a philosophical problem. Through an analysis of classical hermeneutics and contemporary digital systems, the study identifies the boundaries and paradoxes of “algorithmic understanding,” raises the question of the possible existence of meaning outside the human interpreter, and discusses the potential consequences of such transformations for philosophy, culture, and communication.

Keywords: *AI-agents, artificial intelligence, hermeneutics, interpretation, LLM, meaning, subject.*

In recent decades, interpretation as a phenomenon has undergone profound transformations. The problem of interpretation can be traced in philosophy from ancient forms of exegesis to the hermeneutic systems of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, forming a long-standing tradition of reflection on the nature of meaning. Yet it is the digital era that introduces a fundamentally new point of rupture into this tradition. In contemporary meaning-making ecosystems, interpretation is increasingly mediated by digital and algorithmic infrastructures – autonomous or semi-autonomous agentic systems that execute goal-oriented sequences of operations. As a result, the very structure that links the subject, the text, and the act of understanding is transformed, calling into question the stability of the classical anthropocentric model of the interpreter. These global transformations have led to a situation in which, whereas “understanding” was previously directly associated with the human subject, today this fundamental philosophical process is increasingly realised outside immediate human experience. The density of artificial-intelligence-to-artificial-intelligence interaction within digital environments is becoming ever more pronounced: large language models (LLMs) and software agents generate texts, analyse them, and engage in complex communication with one another – without the involvement of a human interpreter and without any direct orientation of meaning toward a human recipient. Such developments constitute a problem and challenge foundational hermeneutic categories such as “interpreter,” “subject,” and “meaning.”

The *relevance of the study*. The accelerated proliferation of LLMs and AI-agents shifts a significant share of operations of textual analysis, selection, and transformation into machine-driven circuits – contexts in which human involvement is minimal. In the absence of a lived-through subject, the philosophical significance of revisiting the very formulations of “understanding” and “meaning” becomes increasingly evident. Despite the rapid development of

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digital and algorithmic hermeneutics, the existing literature still lacks focused studies that examine the concrete mechanisms of LLM-to-LLM interactions and agentic systems operating without a human reader. This article offers one possible approach to conceptualising these processes, outlining a framework for further, more specialised investigation.

The *state of research on the problem*. In traditional hermeneutics, the problem of interpretation is closely bound to the unique position of the subject (the human). According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, understanding is more than the “decoding” of meaning; it is an event in which the subject experiences the text and enters into a dialogue with it [Gadamer, 2004, pp. 269–272]. Interpretation as a process presupposes the presence of an interpreter who possesses historical situatedness, prejudices (Vorurteile), and the capacity for a fusion of horizons (*Horizontverschmelzung*) with the text.

Paul Ricœur, developing this line of thought, emphasised that meaning does not arise from the automatic processing of signs but emerges as the result of the subject’s lived experience. Thus, the moment of encountering a text generates not only interpretation – it also initiates the self-disclosure of the interpreter [Ricœur, 1974]. As a consequence, the hermeneutic circle – the continuous movement from part to whole and back again – is impossible without the personal participation of the subject. This paradigm does not allow for the “independent” existence of meaning: its being presupposes both the text and the subject who interprets, lives through, and re-opens it. Even communities grounded in traditions of collective interpretation – religious, literary, or otherwise – require human mediation between sign and significance.

Ultimately, in classical philosophy, interpretation is always an event of human life, a specific act of understanding that cannot be reduced to mechanical data processing. Such assumptions permeate both early and many contemporary works in hermeneutics, forming a powerful foundation for all reflections on meaning, text, and subjectivity.

Within the scope of this study, the *object of the study* is the processes of meaning-making in digital environments based on LLMs and AI-agents. The *subject of the study* is the conditions and criteria of algorithmic interpretation – understanding without lived experience – in comparison with classical hermeneutics. The aim of the article is to analyse the problem of “interpretation without an interpreter” through the lens of both classical and contemporary approaches.

The research tasks involve outlining the boundaries and paradoxes of algorithmic meaning-making, identifying the prospects for rethinking hermeneutics within the modern digital environment saturated with interactions among digital ensembles, and formulating operational criteria for algorithmic interpretation.

The *scientific novelty* of the study lies in the proposal to systematise cases of “algorithmic interpretation” and to compare them with classical hermeneutic criteria (dialogue, lived experience, fusion of horizons), thereby substantiating the possibility and the limits of an expanded concept of interpretation applicable to digital environments. The practical novelty consists in introducing into academic discourse an analytical model of “interpretation without an interpreter,” designed for examining computational forms of meaning-making within ensembles of LLM-based agents.

The *methodology* combines phenomenological analysis, hermeneutic comparison of classical and digital procedures of understanding, and rhetorical and comparative analysis aimed at investigating the forms of meaning-making in both human and algorithmic contexts.

From the perspective of the classical hermeneutic view of the subject and of meaning – from Hans-Georg Gadamer’s *Wahrheit und Methode* and Paul Ricœur’s *Le conflit des interprétations* to contemporary theorists – understanding was inseparable from the subject. It was the subject who lived through meaning and entered into a dialogue with the text. By contrast, in the contemporary digital context, new situations emerge in which the “processing” of meaning is no longer a subjective act. Within digital hermeneutics and the philosophy of information, this position can be supported by the arguments of N. Katherine Hayles (*Unthought: The Power of the Cognitive Nonconscious*), Luciano Floridi (*The Philosophy of Information*), Alberto Romele (*Digital Hermeneutics: Philosophical Investigations in New Media and Technologies*), David Gunkel (*Of Remixology: Ethics and Aesthetics after Remix*), among many others.

The phenomenon of “algorithmic” hermeneutics. The digitalisation and expansion of technological infrastructures have brought about new forms of meaning-making, such as the automatic transformation and classification of texts or the analysis of digital activity. In these processes, the traditional role of the human interpreter becomes increasingly blurred or even redundant. Artificial intelligence penetrates most domains ever more deeply, step by step excluding the human being from this process.

Large language models (LLMs) are capable of generating, analysing, and “interpreting” texts without direct human involvement. This process has already become a routine part of various spheres of life [Andersen, 2020; Floridi, 2023].

In these digital environments, meaning often emerges not as the result of human “lived experience” but as a product of algorithmic data processing. An LLM may generate social media posts on behalf of one person, while another program using the same LLM analyses and ranks this previously generated text, and a third algorithm then delivers it to relevant users who, in turn, may comment on it by generating their replies with the help of an LLM – mechanically copying the original post into their response.

Thus, at no stage does any human reading or lived experience of meaning take place. However, in the example above, there are at least certain points where mechanical actions and decision-making still involve a human. Viewed more broadly, and taking into account not only large language models but also the AI-agents built on their basis, it becomes evident that beyond analysing data and producing outputs, artificial intelligence is capable of acting and making decisions without any human involvement at intermediate stages.

The sequence of actions is defined by an initial instruction – the so-called “prompt,” that is, a textual or structured request in which a human formulates a task for the model. Such a request should be understood not as a technical command but as a hermeneutic procedure of establishing a frame of interpretation. This “instruction,” following Floridi’s methodological principle, fixes the relevant parameters of the task – the level of abstraction (LoA), the permissible contexts, and the criteria of success. In this sense, the prompt sets the horizon of possible readings in a Gadamerian sense. Accordingly, such an instruction not only initiates computation but also constitutes the very conditions of interpretativity: it determines what is to count as “meaning” and which result will be recognised as “understanding” at a given level of abstraction [Floridi, 2011; Gadamer, 2004]. The prompt defines the frame and conditions of the AI’s subsequent operation, after which chains of automated agents may “communicate” with one another, interpreting and transforming texts in order to carry out assigned functions (for example, generating metadata, producing automated responses, or redistributing information across systems).

Communication between agentic systems is enabled by orchestrators and specialised message-passing protocols, which allow models to interpret and process texts autonomously, without any reference to a human reader. Such processes give rise to what may be described as a “new scripturality” of algorithmic interpretation, resonant with Alan Kirby’s argument about digimodernism: the digital environment increasingly structures experience in such a way that authorship and interpretation are distributed across technical procedures and agentic architectures. In terms of levels of abstraction, this means that the “domain of meaning” is shaped not only by human dispositions and expectations but also by the constraints of the prompt, the logic of agent-agent interaction, and the limitations of the infrastructure itself. As a result, “understanding” may possess operational validity even without human lived experience, while remaining interpretative in a functional sense [Kirby, 2009; Floridi, 2011].

An example of such interaction can be found in automated reports: financial, legal, or marketing documents may not only be generated on the basis of a prompt but also analysed without any human involvement, and on the basis of an LLM’s interpretation, certain actions or decisions may be carried out automatically. In an LLM-LLM-algorithm chain, meaning circulates and is transformed exclusively within the digital environment, forming what may be described as algorithmic hermeneutics.

This phenomenon raises a number of fundamental questions. For instance, can such operations be regarded as interpretation in the philosophical sense? Can the meaning that emerges as the result of machine processing based on an initial (often general and simple) human instruction be considered real if no one lives through it as an event of understanding? And if the answer is affirmative, then in what does the essential difference consist between such meaning and the meaning that arises within human experience?

Thus, algorithmic hermeneutics emerges as a new field of inquiry in which the categories long established within the philosophy of language require reconsideration. The problem of interpretation itself extends beyond anthropocentrism and demands re-evaluation.

The *philosophical foundations of "interpretation without an interpreter."* The emergence of algorithmic hermeneutics has become possible due to a rethinking of the nature of meaning-making within the contemporary digital context. Whereas classical hermeneutics is grounded in the assumption that meaning arises in the dialogue between text and subject, modern research increasingly places the necessity of the subject into question.

Thus, N. Katherine Hayles, in the chapter "*Cognitive Assemblages: Technical Agency and Human Interactions*" [Hayles, 2017], argues that a significant part of cognitive processes does not require conscious human participation, and that digital systems exemplify a form of "nonconscious" meaning-making. In such systems, the processing and transmission of information take place outside the sphere of human awareness.

Luciano Floridi, developing the philosophy of information, likewise examines meaning as the result of data processing within distributed digital environments [Floridi, 2011]. From his perspective, information constitutes the very foundation of reality. Interpretation, accordingly, is a process that can be realised not only by humans but also artificially. Within this paradigm, AI-agents fit naturally as actors in the process of interpretation.

It is also worth mentioning Alberto Romele: in the context of new media, he develops the framework of digital hermeneutics [Romele, 2020], noting that within such environments meaning circulates and is transformed without the involvement or direct influence of individual experience. In essence, this perspective gives rise to a new configuration of the very notion of interpretation, in which algorithms, digital protocols, and the interaction of automated systems play a decisive role. David Gunkel, in his book *Of Remixology: Ethics and Aesthetics after Remix* [Gunkel, 2016], likewise offers an important assessment of posthuman interpretation and authorship: meaning, in his view, is understood as an act of remixing, re-use, and the automatic "reading" of content by machines.

Such approaches demonstrate how contemporary philosophy of information and digital humanities are gradually moving away from a rigid attachment of interpretation to the human subject. The new hermeneutics of the digital age allows for the existence of interpretations and meanings that do not require lived experience, reflection, or, in many cases, even human involvement. This shift of focus necessitates a rethinking of both the very notion of "understanding" and the overall structure of communication in digital society.

The differentiation of meaning: where does "understanding" end? Within the framework of algorithmic hermeneutics, one cannot avoid addressing the question of the boundaries and status of meaning in situations where the interpreter is an AI, a machine, rather than a subject. When contrasted with meaning in the classical paradigm – understood as something that results from appropriation and lived experience – in the digital reality, it becomes apparent that meaning can exist without consciousness and without an addressee.

This gives rise to a dual situation: on the one hand, can meaning that has not been lived through by a human being and has not become part of experience be called real; and on the other hand, does meaning not become a self-sufficient unit that no longer requires a human when it circulates autonomously within the digital environment?

The classical paradigm would be more inclined to question the reality of meaning that does not evoke reflection and does not become embedded within personal or collective history.

This position reflects the intuition of Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutics, in which understanding is an event of dialogue, a meeting of "horizons" [Gadamer, 2004, pp. 265–272].

On the other hand, contemporary cases demonstrate a certain mode of the functioning of meaning and of dialogue within machine communication. At the same time, machine communication carries an "imprint," a "trace" of the subject – the prompt. The initial instruction provides only the starting orientation – a kind of "first utterance" – yet the very architecture of LLMs and agentic systems develops it into a sequence of mutual responses: the models react to previous generations, refine them, rework them, and supplement them, reproducing the formal structure of dialogue even in the complete absence of human participation. Meaning, although not reflected upon in the classical sense, nonetheless becomes embedded in historical and cultural context. LLMs learn from large corpora of data, from chats, and, among other things, from interactions with one another. Moreover, a text generated by one LLM and processed by another may well "function" within the digital infrastructure – forming new connections, initiating processes, generating metadata, and even influencing real decisions. This occurs even if no human has read or made sense of that text.

The resulting paradox can be formulated philosophically as follows: is meaning "real" if it exists only within digital space? Or, put differently, is it "real" if no one lives through it? Can interpretation exist if the interpreter (the human) is absent from the process?

According to Floridi [2011] and Romele [2020], meaning can be understood as a particular mode of information: functioning outside individual consciousness – distributed and networked. Hayles [2017], in turn, argues that cognitive "nonconsciousness" is a natural companion of digital media: meaning is created, circulates, and disappears without human control.

However, such meaning becomes radically contextual and extremely fragile: it exists only insofar as it is sustained by the environment – by algorithms, protocols, infrastructure, and the broader system. Outside the digital bubble, the text loses its "significance" both for the human and for the system itself.

In summary, in the digital age, the boundary between "understanding" and the "processing" of meaning becomes blurred, shifting, and attenuated. Contemporary hermeneutics faces a challenge: should the concept of interpretation be expanded to include algorithmic forms of meaning-making, or should the uniqueness of human lived experience be upheld as the only genuine form of "understanding"? The expansion of the notion of interpretation within algorithmic hermeneutics presents philosophy, culture, and society with a range of new challenges that extend beyond the established academic theory.

First, the question of authorship and responsibility arises. If a text is generated, analysed, and decisions based on it are made within an environment in which the "interpreters" may be exclusively algorithms, then who bears responsibility for the meaning and its consequences? Can a subject who provides only the initial instruction (the prompt) and is unable to control the subsequent steps be held responsible for the chain of generations, interactions, and decisions? The traditional model of personal responsibility ceases to function: the author as such disappears, and the "interpreter" becomes a chain of "machines."

Second, the subject encounters the challenge of preserving their own hermeneutic competence. The large-scale delegation of meaning generation and interpretation to AI may lead to the gradual atrophy of skills of reflection, critical reading, and the construction of complex semantic connections. Human culture risks losing part of its capacity to engage in meaningful and profound dialogue with the text.

Third, algorithmic hermeneutics transforms the structure of communication, producing an enormous layer of meanings that never pass through human consciousness, yet influence recommendations, trends, social dynamics, and even political processes. Beyond altering the very fabric of contemporary society, this generates new forms of control and power – not only through language but also through AI algorithms. Moreover, unlike conventional software algorithms, AI-based algorithms prove to be far less predictable due to their specific nature.

Finally, contemporary philosophical discourse requires a certain rethinking of the concepts of “interpretation,” “meaning,” and “understanding.” It may become necessary to formulate a new methodology that takes into account both human and “non-human” (algorithmic) production and circulation of meanings. There emerges a need for the development of a “hybrid” form of hermeneutics that does not oppose the human and the machine, but instead examines their mutual influence and interaction within the new digital environment.

Conclusions. In summary, the phenomenon of “interpretation without an interpreter” can be regarded as a serious challenge for contemporary philosophy of language and hermeneutics. Unlike the classical tradition, in which meaning and the act of human understanding have always been intrinsically connected, the digital age no longer presupposes the personal “experience of the text” as the only valid form of meaning-making, offering instead forms of meaning generation and interpretation that are realised entirely by automatic systems and AI-agents.

The emergence of such chains of interpretation requires both a new language of description and a rethinking of the foundations of hermeneutics. Whereas previously meaning existed only insofar as it was lived through and actualised by a subject, now new distributed, networked forms of “understanding” arise and proliferate within the infrastructure of digital interactions. Although this transformation opens new horizons for the study of communication, information, and collective knowledge, it simultaneously calls into question the role of the interpreter, the responsibility for meaning, and the uniqueness of human subjectivity as such. Philosophical hermeneutics thus faces the task of developing new theoretical tools for analysing the hybrid semantic processes between the human, LLMs, and digital algorithms, for it is precisely this agentic interaction that increasingly shapes cultural and social existence in the contemporary world.

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**ІНТЕРПРЕТАЦІЯ БЕЗ ІНТЕРПРЕТАТОРА: АЛГОРИТМІЧНА
ГЕРМЕНЕВТИКА І НОВІ ФОРМИ СЕНСОТВОРЕННЯ**

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АНОТАЦІЯ

У цій статті аналізується феномен «інтерпретації без інтерпретатора», що виникає в цифрових екосистемах – взаємопов'язаних цифрових середовищах, концептуально близьких до infosphere Luciano Floridi, тобто до простору циркуляції та трансформації смислів, – де тексти дедалі частіше створюються, обробляються й аналізуються великими мовними моделями (LLM), а також агентами штучного інтелекту (ШІ-агентами). Таким чином, процес інтерпретації нерідко відбувається без безпосередньої участі людини. Наукова новизна роботи полягає в постановці питання про те, наскільки реальним є смисл і в якому статусі він перебуває, якщо не переживається суб'єктом, виникаючи й циркулюючи виключно в межах алгоритмічних систем. У статті зіставлено класичні підходи до інтерпретації (Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricœur) з новими теоріями цифрової герменевтики (N. Katherine Hayles, Luciano Floridi, Alberto Romele, David J. Gunkel), які розкривають особливості смислотворення за допомогою алгоритмів у цифровому просторі. Завдання дослідження. У роботі описано кейси генерації й аналізу текстів за допомогою LLM, автоматичну SEO-оптимізацію й «гуманізацію» текстів (адаптацію до сприйняття людиною), що здійснюються моделями, які взаємодіють між собою. У такому «діалозі» між ШІ-агентами смисл потенційно постає як функція цифрової взаємодії, а не людського досвіду. Це визначає актуальність розгляду феномена алгоритмічного розуміння як філософської проблеми. На прикладі аналізу класичної герменевтики й сучасних цифрових систем виявляються межі й парадокси «алгоритмічного розуміння», порушується питання про можливість існування смислу поза людським інтерпретатором і обговорюються потенційні наслідки таких трансформацій для філософії, культури й комунікації.

Ключові слова: герменевтика, інтерпретація, LLM, смисл, суб'єкт, ШІ-агенти, штучний інтелект.

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