

KAJIAN HERMENEUTIKA PADA KARYA MAHAYASA DENGAN ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

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Abstract

This study examines the meaning of Mahayasa's digital artworks produced with the aid of Artificial Intelligence technology through a hermeneutic approach. Mahayasa's works, which combine traditional Nusantara cultural values with modern AI-based aesthetics, present complex and multi-layered interpretative dimensions. Through the hermeneutic framework of Gadamer and Ricoeur, this study highlights how the process of "horizon fusion" between the cultural context of the work and the experience of the viewer opens up a dynamic dialogue of meaning. In addition, works produced by AI algorithms are understood as the result of collaboration between machines and human creativity, forming a "digital hermeneutic circle" in which meaning continues to evolve. This study shows that although Artificial Intelligence technology facilitates the creation process, the interpretative aspects and aesthetic value still depend on the active role of the artist and the viewer. Thus, Mahayasa's AI-based works not only represent technological innovation in art but also maintain philosophical depth through an open and layered interpretative space.

Keywords: Mahayasa, Artificial Intelligence, Hermeneutics.

INTRODUCTION

The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology has brought fundamental changes across various aspects of human life, including the domains of art, literature, and intellectual production. Works created through collaboration between humans and Artificial Intelligence no longer function merely as tools; rather, they have evolved into what may be termed "Mahayasa"—complex, multilayered, and meaning-rich creations that transcend conventional notions of singular authorship.

This phenomenon raises fundamental questions within philosophical inquiry, particularly in the field of hermeneutics: how is meaning produced, mediated, and interpreted in works that are not entirely created by a human subject? This question becomes increasingly relevant as the structure of creative production no longer relies solely on individual intentionality, but instead emerges from the interaction between humans, algorithms, and data.

In classical traditions, hermeneutics seeks to understand the author's intention as the central source of meaning. However, modern thought, as developed by Hans-Georg Gadamer, shifts this focus toward a dialogical relationship between text and reader through the concept of the *fusion of horizons*. Meanwhile, Paul Ricoeur emphasizes the autonomy of the text, arguing that meaning is no longer entirely dependent on authorial intention but remains open to multiple interpretations.

In the context of AI-based works, hermeneutical problems become even more complex. Artificial Intelligence does not possess consciousness, intention, or existential experience as

humans do; nevertheless, it is capable of producing works with coherent structures of meaning. This condition gives rise to an epistemological question: if there is no “author” in the traditional sense, then where does meaning originate? Can meaning still be traced back to the human subject who provides the prompt, or is it entirely the result of interactions between algorithmic systems and their underlying data?

This phenomenon further reinforces the thesis proposed by Roland Barthes regarding the “death of the author,” in which the authority of the author in determining textual meaning is deconstructed. In AI-generated works, this “death” is no longer merely metaphorical, but becomes an ontological condition in which authorship is distributed among humans, machines, and the data systems that underpin them.

AI-based Mahayasa works exhibit distinctive characteristics, such as a high degree of intertextuality, virtually limitless generative capacity, and an expanded field of interpretive ambiguity. Such works function not only as aesthetic objects but also as dynamic sites of interpretation, where meaning is continuously reproduced through the reader’s engagement. Thus, hermeneutics is no longer merely a method of interpretation, but becomes an epistemological framework for understanding the emerging relationship between humans, technology, and meaning.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the application of hermeneutical approaches in understanding Mahayasa works produced with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence. It is expected that this study will contribute theoretically to the development of hermeneutics in the digital era, while also prompting critical reflection on the role of Artificial Intelligence in the future production of meaning.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using hermeneutical analysis to understand and interpret meaning in Mahayasa works based on Artificial Intelligence (AI). A qualitative approach is chosen because this research focuses on the exploration of meaning, in-depth understanding, and interpretation of conceptual and philosophical phenomena, rather than on quantitative measurement.

This research is classified as library research, utilizing written sources as the primary data, including books, academic journals, articles, and AI-generated digital works. The approach applied is philosophical hermeneutics, referring to the ideas of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur (Gadamer, 2004; Ricoeur, 1976). This approach positions understanding as a dialogical process between the interpreter and the text, while acknowledging that meaning is not fixed, but evolves according to historical context and the reader’s experience.

The object of this study is Mahayasa works produced with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence, including textual forms (poetry, essays), visual forms (digital images), and other multimedia works. These works are selected based on the following criteria:

- a. They exhibit complexity of meaning (multi-layered).
- b. They contain elements of intertextuality.
- c. They are produced through interaction between humans and Artificial Intelligence systems.

Through this methodology, the study is expected to provide an in-depth understanding of how meaning in AI-based Mahayasa works is produced, interpreted, and understood within the framework of contemporary hermeneutics (Goodfellow et al., 2014).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Characteristics of AI-Based Mahayasa Works

Based on the analysis of several Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based works, it is found that Mahayasa works produced through human–machine collaboration exhibit characteristics that

differ significantly from conventional works. These works demonstrate a high level of complexity, both in terms of structure and meaning.

One of their primary features is their generative nature, in which the work is not fixed or final, but can continuously produce multiple variations. As a result, meaning is no longer singular, but remains open to unlimited interpretive possibilities. In addition, intertextuality in AI-generated works is particularly strong, as AI systems operate by processing and recombining data derived from various pre-existing sources.

Thus, AI-based Mahayasa works can be understood as dynamic and open-ended texts that do not possess clearly defined interpretive boundaries (Elgammal et al., 2017). Critically, however, this apparent openness of meaning may also obscure questions of originality and authorship, as the reliance on existing data raises concerns about whether such works truly generate new meaning or merely reconfigure pre-existing structures.

2. The Shift in the Concept of Authorship

In classical hermeneutic analysis, the author occupies a central position as the primary source of meaning. However, in AI-based works, this concept undergoes a significant transformation. Authorship is no longer singular, but distributed across three main elements: the human (as the provider of prompts and conceptual direction), Artificial Intelligence (as the processor and generator of content), and data systems (as the source of symbolic material).

This phenomenon reinforces the idea proposed by Roland Barthes regarding the “death of the author,” where the authority of the author in determining meaning is diminished. In the context of Artificial Intelligence, authorship can even be described as *fragmented*, making it impossible to trace meaning back to a single subject.

Nevertheless, this fragmentation also raises a critical issue: if responsibility for meaning is distributed, it becomes difficult to determine accountability, particularly in cases where the produced content carries ethical, cultural, or ideological implications.

3. Textual Autonomy and the Production of Meaning

In line with the thought of Paul Ricoeur, AI-based works demonstrate a strong degree of textual autonomy. Once produced, the text no longer depends on its process of creation, whether by humans or machines.

Meaning in AI-based Mahayasa works emerges through: the structure of language and symbols within the text, the relationships between elements within the work, and the interaction between the text and the reader.



Figure1. Self-Portrait

Source: Mahayasa, 28 September 2024.

Therefore, the text becomes an autonomous space for the production of meaning, which can be interpreted across multiple contexts without necessarily referring back to the original intention of its creator. However, this autonomy can be seen as paradoxical, since the text's meaning is still indirectly shaped by the limitations and biases embedded within the data and algorithms that produced it.

AI-based digital artworks produced within the framework of Mahayasa can be analyzed through a hermeneutic approach as an effort to interpret the meanings embedded within their visual representations. From the perspective of Hans-Georg Gadamer, the understanding of an artwork is not purely objective, but rather emerges from a dialogical process between the work itself, its cultural context, and the interpreter's horizon. Accordingly, such works should not be viewed merely as visual products, but as texts that remain open to interpretation.

Iconographically, the human figure adorned with complex head ornaments may be interpreted as a symbol of cultural identity and spirituality rooted in the traditions of the Indonesian archipelago. Visual elements such as the smoke surrounding the subject introduce a metaphorical dimension that points toward the concept of transcendence—that is, the relationship between the material and immaterial realms. Within a hermeneutic framework, these symbols function as “visual texts” containing multiple layers of meaning that can only be accessed through deep interpretive engagement.

Furthermore, the approach of Paul Ricoeur emphasizes the role of symbols as media that “invite further meaning.” In this context, ornaments, facial expressions, and the visual atmosphere can be understood as symbols that do not carry a single fixed meaning, but instead open up diverse interpretive possibilities. Smoke, for instance, may be interpreted as a representation of spiritual energy, impermanence, or even inner transformation.

The use of Artificial Intelligence technologies such as MidJourney and Stable Diffusion enables artists to produce highly detailed images in a relatively short time. Through textual descriptions or prompts, AI systems generate multiple visual variations, which are then selected and refined by the artist. In this process, Mahayasa does not rely solely on Artificial Intelligence, but assumes the role of a creative director who determines the conceptual framework, aesthetic direction, and meaning of the work.

Visually, the artwork highlights a fusion of realism and fantasy. The refined facial details reflect a realist approach, while elements such as smoke and dramatic lighting introduce an imaginative dimension. Warm color tones such as gold and brown reinforce impressions of grandeur and spirituality, often associated with mythological figures or symbols of leadership in traditional cultures.

Thus, AI-based Mahayasa works can be understood as a form of collaboration between humans and technology. Artificial Intelligence functions as a tool for visual exploration, while the artist remains the primary agent in shaping aesthetic value and meaning. Critically, however, this collaboration also raises questions about the extent to which cultural representation remains authentic, given that AI systems operate on global datasets that may dilute or reinterpret local symbolic meanings.

The artwork *Woman and Skull*, associated with the Mahayasa style, can be understood as a visual representation rich in symbolic and philosophical meaning. Through a hermeneutic approach, this work is not merely perceived as an aesthetic object, but as a “visual text” that opens interpretive space concerning life, death, and human existence.

Visually, the presence of a female figure juxtaposed with a skull creates a strong contrast between life and death. In Western artistic tradition, this motif recalls the concept of *vanitas*, a reminder of the transience of life. However, within a broader cultural context, the skull does not always carry negative connotations; it may also represent the cycle of life, transformation, or even spiritual wisdom. Thus, the work embodies a productive ambiguity of meaning that enriches the interpretive process.



Figure 2. Woman and Skull

Source: Mahayasa, 29 September 2024.

From the perspective of Hans-Georg Gadamer, understanding this artwork occurs through a process of the *fusion of horizons*, in which the viewer's experiences and background intersect with the symbols presented in the work. One viewer may perceive the skull as a frightening symbol of death, while another may interpret it as a philosophical reflection on impermanence. The female figure itself may be read as a representation of life, beauty, or even human awareness of mortality.

Furthermore, Paul Ricoeur argues that symbols always open up layered possibilities of meaning. In this work, the relationship between the woman and the skull can be interpreted as a dialogue between life and death, the finite and the eternal. Their visual proximity suggests that death is not something separate, but rather an inherent part of life itself.

When related to the use of Artificial Intelligence in its creative process, this work also reflects a new dynamic in the production of meaning. With the assistance of tools such as MidJourney and Stable Diffusion, artists are able to explore symbols and visual compositions more extensively. Nevertheless, meaning continues to be shaped by the artist's conceptual intention and the viewer's interpretation, positioning technology as a medium rather than the primary determinant of meaning.

Critically, however, the integration of AI in producing such symbolic imagery raises questions about the depth of intentionality behind the composition, as the juxtaposition of elements may emerge from algorithmic patterning rather than fully conscious artistic deliberation.

Thus, through a hermeneutic approach, *Woman and Skull* can be understood as a profound reflection on human existence. The work invites viewers to contemplate the relationship between life and death, while recognizing that meaning is never singular, but always open to interpretation in accordance with each individual's horizon of experience.

CONCLUSION

AI-based works produced within the framework of Mahayasa represent a significant development in contemporary art, integrating digital technology with aesthetic values and traditional cultural elements. The use of Artificial Intelligence tools such as MidJourney and Stable Diffusion enables the creation of visuals that are complex, detailed, and imaginative in a more efficient manner.

However, Artificial Intelligence does not replace the role of the artist; rather, it functions as a supporting tool within the creative process. The artist remains the primary agent in determining conceptual direction, selecting visual outputs, and assigning meaning and identity to the work. Thus, artistic value continues to reside in human creativity and interpretation.

Overall, AI-based Mahayasa works demonstrate that art and technology can function in a complementary relationship. These works not only represent digital innovation but also serve as a medium for expressing symbolism, spirituality, and cultural identity in forms that are more contemporary and relevant.

Nevertheless, this study also highlights a critical implication: as AI becomes increasingly involved in artistic production, the boundaries between human creativity and machine-generated output become more fluid, requiring new hermeneutic frameworks to understand how meaning is constructed in the digital age.

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