

The hermeneutic workflow methodology movement is **a conceptual framework and ongoing discussion about how humans should work with AI, emphasizing human direction, interpretation, and understanding rather than treating AI as a mere "generate button"**. It proposes a shift in mindset, applying the principles of the hermeneutic circle—the iterative process of understanding parts within the whole and the whole through its parts—to AI-assisted work to create a meaningful, human-guided process. [1, 2]

Key Principles of the Hermeneutic Workflow Methodology Movement

- **Human-Centered AI Interaction:** The core idea is to place the human expert at the center, not the AI. [1]
- **AI as a Tool:** AI is seen as a supportive tool for interpretation and meaning-making, not as an author or a replacement for human skill. [1]
- **Iterative Understanding (Hermeneutic Circle):** The process of interacting with AI involves a continuous back-and-forth between pre-understanding, guiding the AI's outputs, and reinterpreting those outputs in light of the larger goal. [1, 2, 3]
- **Meaning-Making:** The focus is on shaping and understanding meaning, which is a fundamentally human and interpretative activity. [1]
- **Professional Expertise:** The methodology emphasizes leveraging the skills and judgment of the human professional to direct the AI towards a meaningful outcome. [1]

How It Relates to the Hermeneutic Circle

The hermeneutic circle is a foundational concept in hermeneutics (the theory of interpretation). It describes the dynamic process of understanding: [2, 3, 4, 5]

- **Parts and Whole:** To understand a text, you must understand its parts, but to understand the parts, you must also understand the whole. [3, 6]
- **Iterative Recontextualization:** This understanding is built through an iterative process of moving back and forth between the parts and the whole, continually refining one's interpretation. [2, 7]
- **Spiral Movement:** The process is often visualized as a spiral, where each iteration leads to a deeper, more comprehensive understanding. [2, 7]

In the Context of AI

Applying this to the hermeneutic workflow means:

1. **Formulating an initial understanding:** (pre-understanding). [6]
2. **Directing the AI:** to generate outputs based on that understanding. [1, 4]
3. **Interpreting the AI's output,** relating it to the whole task and refining the initial understanding. [1, 3]
4. **Providing new guidance or requests:** to the AI, informed by the reinterpretation, continuing the cycle. [1, 2, 7]

This movement is a response to the rise of AI, advocating for a sophisticated, human-directed approach to integrating these powerful new tools into workflows for better results. [1]

Who is involved?

Because it is not an organized movement, the people involved come from various fields, including:

- **AI experts and developers:** Creating tools and platforms that enable a more interactive, human-led process.
- **Creative professionals:** Designers, writers, and artists who use AI as a tool for generating new ideas and content, but maintain creative control through an iterative, interpretive process.
- **Qualitative researchers:** Who have historically used hermeneutic methods and are now adapting them for use with digital and AI-generated data.
- **Educators and philosophers:** Concerned with integrating AI into professional and academic work in a way that prioritizes critical thinking and human judgment over purely algorithmic efficiency.

Why "movement"?

While not a formal movement, the term describes a shift in professional mindset. It is a reaction against the view of AI as an independent producer of finished work. Instead, it advocates for a collaborative process where human insight is actively engaged in interpreting, judging, and refining AI output. In this sense, it describes a "movement" of expertise and creative control from the machine back to the human expert.

Workflow and process

A hermeneutic-inspired transcreation workflow can be understood in contrast to a more traditional, linear model.

Feature	Traditional workflow	Hermeneutic workflow
Focus	Prioritizes linguistic equivalence and faithfulness to the original text.	Prioritizes creative and cultural resonance, with fidelity to the original's <i>purpose</i> .
Process	A linear process of translation, review, and finalization, with limited room for creative ideation.	An iterative, circular process involving continuous analysis, creative brainstorming, and refinement.
Transcreator role	The transcreator acts primarily as a linguistic specialist.	The transcreator serves as a consultant, copywriter, and cultural expert who provides strategic direction.
Use of AI	Views AI primarily as a tool for automation and efficiency.	Views AI as a creative partner that can be directed by human experts to elevate the final product, rather than just a shortcut.

Impact of AI and the future

The rise of generic AI-generated content has accelerated the hermeneutic movement by highlighting the unique value of human expertise. While AI can handle the more repetitive, linguistic tasks of translation, it lacks the human capacity for holistic interpretation, cultural empathy, and creative judgment.

The hermeneutic workflow provides a framework for human transcreators to:

- **Leverage AI effectively:** Transcreators can use AI tools to generate initial concepts or suggest context-aware insights, freeing them to focus on high-value creative and strategic decisions.
- **Add value beyond automation:** By centering the process on interpretation and cultural nuance, transcreators can prove their worth in a market where basic translation is easily commoditized.
- **Future-proof the industry:** Focusing on interpretation, strategy, and judgment ensures that human expertise remains central to high-end, brand-critical transcreation work.

AI responses may include mistakes.

- [1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a2z1Xy125JM>
- [2] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HdfrVBynNew>
- [3] <https://atlasti.com/research-hub/hermeneutic-research>
- [4] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermeneutic_circle
- [5] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zIEzc_BBxs
- [6] <https://sustainabilitymethods.org/index.php/Hermeneutics>
- [7] https://www.researchgate.net/figure/The-Hermeneutic-Spiral_fig1_254456764

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