

**Exam: TEST ON FOREIGN LANGUAGE / FINALS  
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## The question

Notice how the question set includes no originality, asks for no critique, depth or comparison; notice that the answer doesn't really address "why" Lyotard's thought was foundational, but rather "what" his theory was. It uses the meaningful words "influential" and "cornerstone", probably because it pasted it from some other article in a philosophy-focused website. What grade would this essay get? Probably a high one, at least in secondary education. Chat GPT's answer on the set question is not at all different from what I would expect from a related wikipedia page or the Cambridge philosophy dictionary. Thus, it doesn't scare me.

In this essay I will explore the relationship between the educational system and tools such ChatGPT, explore the reasons why students would resort to using it and lastly explain why it can be beneficial to students and our perception of knowledge.

## The teacher

The problem begins with the teacher's expectations of the students, which are surprisingly low. Why does this happen? First I will give a more social-cultural answer to this, which is the age difference between most teachers and students. An important enough percentage of teachers hasn't adjusted to the world that is rich in information, where a student doesn't have to research loads of books to come up with a seemingly complete answer such as the one given by ChatGPT. An answer that includes Lyotard's place of birth, books, people who influenced him, and theories he attacked seems like a sign of deep understanding and hard work to teachers who haven't tried to explore the internet and its capabilities. Another factor that plays into this equation is the -maybe- hyperbolic importance of structure in recent writing. Teachers, in many languages, ask that students start every paragraph with a phrase like "On the one hand", "Additionally", "To sum up". This creates the underlying notion that a) students by themselves aren't able to express their ideas in a rational way b) that the reader of the text can't follow a train of thought and can't comprehend simple argument structure. Using the word "I", that is so important for some philosophers, is discouraged since it apparently makes texts less convincing. Teachers search for plausible and acceptable, rather than original or revolutionary.

## The student

Studies have showed that after 5th grade, most students in the US are incapable of producing a simple work of art or a creative writing., while the same children, a couple of years earlier, in the 3d grade, had no problem in doing so. That is because, what is enforced at school, and later on internalized by them, is the existence of the ultimate, universal truth, that is independable of any human and social factors, something that postmodernists rebut. The "I" or the "maybe" is supposed to show weakness in understanding and expressing the objective truth, and tired as they are from feeling wrong, students resort to ChatGPT. Students already avoided knowledge, as stated by Chomsky, because they were never intended to understand it. They are asked to write a text on Lyotard, yet if they tried to read just one page of the Postmodern condition they wouldn't grasp any concept because none of the paragraphs follow the strict structure they were taught to work with. The students wouldn't even get to the nebulous meanings behind the words, since they would simply struggle in the first place. Thus, the problem existed a while before any AI tool was ever invented

## Imitation and the Concept of language

What is thought-provoking about this kind of AI is the fact that it was made to imitate humans and our way of speaking. This academically acceptable paper created by ChatGPT was synthesized after the review of maybe million others that resembled each other in style, thought process and structure. Therefore, most of modern thought that exists in the academic world can be -so elegantly and easily- copied by a machine. The superficial standards upon which modern thought must abide with maybe proves why it lacks originality and any provoking ideas. The concept of imitation hides one very interesting side to be examined: ChatGPT used the same words that a human would, but only skipped the part of the thought process. It used the word "significant" without being able to compare it with other ideas or feel amazed, it used the word "tradition", without ever experiencing it. When a machine "understands" and uses such words appropriately, this reinforces the postmodernist ideas that language is self-contained and semantically independent from the world we live in. So if language is a social construct, how can it be used by something that isn't human? Is the fact that it's a social creation enough to justify its use of our language? AI's relationship with language is more intricate than just stealing words from already existing authors online and there is proof of that: if we asked AI to type the same question about Lyotard's philosophy in Greek, it would take a significant amount of time, exactly because the system isn't as experienced or as "intelligent" in this other language. A more simple answer to the questions that arise is that the machine translates languages to English and somehow manages to make its words make sense. But as a toddler learns what a map or a fish is through simple definitions, examples and pictures, maybe such tools teach AI human concepts hidden in the man-made words.

### Dangers of ChatGPT

Countless plagiarism detectors have already been created to expose students who prefer not to think about Lyotard's groundbreaking philosophy themselves, thus high-tech plagiarism doesn't trouble me. The same applies to new knowledge, where we need not forget that, at least at this point, AI doesn't create it, but it rather uses the one we have already found and published. Its ability to combine it and express it in different ways is an advancement, but one that is not that revolutionary compared to the countless results of a search engine. It just spares us the time of research. However I do find dangerous that we fail our innate curiosity when we ask machines already answered questions, in order to save time, instead of asking new, more troubling ones. I do consider worrying that AI will present ideas that are more searched online, more universally accepted, and it won't be capable to judge the importance of sharing different viewpoints, sharing a clash of ideas. And as it becomes more famous, it probably won't be free, it can thus evolve into a tool used to exploit people financially...

### Optimism in ChatGPT

What we should appreciate about this program is the fact that it answers "I don't know", something we consider shameful in modern times. Imagine if to the Lyotard-related question we added "...is foundational for postmodernity and the evolution of children's books?", for example. It wouldn't address the books because no one has ever searched their relation. Thus AI teaches us the value of accepting our limits, reintroduces the importance of relativism, and also shows us the miracle of human ingenuity and imagination, since some of us would be able to create a connection between Lyotard and children's books. If we asked ChatGPT for a poem, it would rhyme, yet it would be emotionless, reminding us the value of our human nature. Lastly, if the educational system didn't change and continued to ask such superficial questions, students could simply answer them through these tools and invest their time in actual questions and readings, a real learning process.

How would Lyotard feel about who is commenting on his philosophy? He would condemn the evolution of the dangerous technology and the emphasis on a single opinion. Judging, however, by the educational status quo and the limits of ChatGPT I believe that it will either serve as a wake-up call to change teacher's questions or it will give students the freedom to survive in this restrictive learning environment.

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