

## Mines-Ponts 2017 - Correction

### Q1

Performing several tasks simultaneously has no positive effect whatsoever<sup>1</sup>. To be sure, it does have a rewarding effect on the brain, but as people do it more and more – to the point of<sup>2</sup> getting addicted – they unknowingly become less efficient and productive. Paradoxically, multitasking is also a source of stress. Compulsive email-checkers, for example, are under constant pressure and their brains get worn out<sup>3</sup>, which seriously reduces their capacities too. Worse, it can even affect our personalities and make us more insensitive and irascible. (84 words)

### Q2

As the 18<sup>th</sup> century adage goes: “There is time enough for everything in the course of the day if you do but one thing at once. But there is not enough in the year if you will do two things at a time.” But in the age of smart devices and NICTs, this may sound a little outdated . Does it mean that multitasking is inevitable / irreversible?

- At first sight, Man is a multitasking animal (evolved brain / can drive and talk and listen to the radio). But most of the time, we do single / individual actions in rapid succession. When it comes to performing two tough tasks at the same time like, say, texting and driving, it turns out that we're wired<sup>4</sup> to be monotaskers.
- And yet, multitasking has gone out of control, so much so that it **has become a defining feature** of modern society. The reason is we feel empowered to tackle the day's assignments all at once.

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<sup>1</sup> No X whatsoever = pas le moindre / absolument aucun

<sup>2</sup> To the point of = au point de

<sup>3</sup> To wear out = s'user / s'épuiser  
To be worn out = to be very tired / exhausted

<sup>4</sup> To be (hard) wired to do sth = to be genetically or innately determined to do sth

- Why is it so? Because society imposes it on us. We have to be reachable anywhere, at any time. Quick answers / replies are expected from our bosses and workmates who themselves never slow down / step off the hamster wheel<sup>5</sup>.
- But isn't that just an excuse? Maybe we like goofing off<sup>6</sup>, and multitasking just provides us with the illusion that we're working, when we're actually not doing much.
- It *is* possible not to multitask
  - Some people do it (e.g. surgeons)
  - The law is forcing us not to text and drive
  - France : email law = allowed not to be constantly connected.
- So those who keep doing it only have themselves to blame (looks like it's imposed, but it's probably more of a personal choice).

**Conclusion :** Multitasking is part and parcel<sup>7</sup> of today's society. The challenge of the next decades will be to make it chosen and not imposed and then learn how to do one thing at a time. It's a tall order<sup>8</sup>, but it's definitely worth trying.

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<sup>5</sup> The hamster wheel = a repetitive and boring task

<sup>6</sup> To goof off = tirer au flanc

<sup>7</sup> It's part and parcel of = cela fait partie intégrante de

<sup>8</sup> A tall order = A goal that is hard to fulfill or achieve.