

## **Internet Giants**

### **Key words/ideas**

#### **Internet research**

1. **warehouse** size => very large, as big as 59 football fields (rows and rows of shelves => specific organization // **an assembly line => tasks are divided (taylorism)**)

- computers and robots => work has been partly **automated**

2. Because it's where people actually shop!

They want to be present on every market

=> see Amazon Go (grocery store) => it's a kind of showcase (// Apple Stores), to **show they are always innovating and using state-of-the-art technology.**

In France, see the joint venture between Amazon and Monoprix ("dark stores")

But in the USA, Amazon has decided to close its bookstores (24 stores around the country, including 7 in California) in 2022.

3. Quantum computing allows more and faster calculation than classical computers, thanks to the collective properties of different states (either 1, or 0, or quantum state).

4,5. Google's research companies: focus on AI.

=> strategy: to buy leading companies, with the best workers (engineers, scholars, IT specialists, computer scientists etc.) => this is called **talent acquisition.**

=> all of Google's new activities are gathered under the name **Alphabet** (see Meta for Facebook and its activities)

=> common point with all of Google's **subsidiaries (= filiales)** (in the sectors of driverless cars, AI, health etc.) : **the data processing power : data gathering => modelling, simulation => predictions (health/biotech, robotics, driverless cars, environmental policies etc.)**

6. Azimov is a sci-fi novelist. He wrote his three laws of robotics in a novel published in the 1940s.

=> 1. A robot may **not injure** a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to **harm.**

2. A robot must **obey orders given** it by human beings **except** where such orders would **conflict with the First Law.**

3. A robot **must protect its own existence** as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law.

=> Are they enough to ensure the safety of humans in an era of AI and machine learning?

In sci-fi, robots usually **turn against** humans (// the Creature in *Frankenstein*).

=> to safeguard society from independent robots. (those laws do not come from a philosopher/thinker, a politician or a scientist => from a sci-fi writer)

### **Driverless car videos: key questions**

Can AI be trusted to take life and death decisions?

Are driverless cars really useful/worth the investment?

Driverless cars: towards a future without accidents?

### **Detailed outline**

1. Driverless cars: on the road to a safer, greener future
2. Safety and ethical issues

### **Amazon's camper workforce**

1) No, they are **seasonal workers**. Amazon needs a lot of extra workers **before Christmas** (during the holiday season).

2) They live in **RVs/campervans** in a campground near the warehouse.

3) Most of them are **retirees** in their sixties or seventies.

4) He says he expected Amazon's fulfillment centre to be more robotised/automated, but in fact it is "**human robots**" who work there (= workers work like machines).

5) Wages start at \$10.75 an hour. Campers get their campsite for free.

6) She said the job was too **boring** it was too **hard physically**.

7) 13 miles (= about 20km) of walking in a 10 hour shift.

He lost 53 pounds => 4 pounds a week (= 2kg a week)

He feels healthier than ever.

8) She feels Amazon is using **this cheap and vulnerable workforce**. But she mostly blames **the American economic system** (= "the game"), not necessarily Amazon itself (= "the player"). The workers, however, are satisfied with their job at Amazon. But some of them still quit or don't come back the year after.

### **Google's tax evasion**

The video's main topic is **tax minimization** and **tax avoidance/evasion** => how tax payers are trying to **pay less income tax/corporate tax**.

Kerry Packer, a former Australian media tycoon<sup>1</sup>, says that everybody in Australia should try to pay as little tax as possible (= tax minimization). To him, the Australian government is not using the tax payers' money well/properly, therefore he refuses to pay high taxes.

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<sup>1</sup> a media tycoon is somebody who owns many media outlets, somebody who made their fortune by owning media outlets and who has therefore a large political influence (e.g. Rupert Murdoch in the USA, Xavier Niel or Vincent Bolloré in France). In French = un magnat de la presse

The "**Google tax**": multinationals like Apple, Google etc. make a lot of profit in countries like Australia, but don't pay their taxes there because their **head offices/headquarters** (= leurs sièges sociaux) are in other countries. This tax would make them pay taxes in the country where they earn their profits. Such a tax hasn't been implemented yet.

The Australian government is investigating 370 companies (2/3 (= two thirds) of the government's corporate tax revenues). That includes 12 tech firms such as Google, Apple, Microsoft etc.

These companies are accused of "moving profit offshore". The companies base their **headquarters** in countries where corporate taxes are low ("tax havens<sup>2</sup>")

There are **loopholes** in the law (= des vides juridiques/failles dans la loi), those multinationals are exploiting them. What they are doing is not illegal!

Google's justification is to say that they do pay taxes (in the country where they are based: Google Australia is in fact based in Singapore). **On average**, Google pays 19% of corporate tax around the world.

Why is tax avoidance a problem for governments?

It brings less **revenue** (= recettes fiscales), therefore the government has less money to invest in projects for its citizens and less wealth to redistribute to those who need it. The country's debt could increase as a result.

Moreover, it's difficult for a government to justify the fact that, relatively speaking, **tax paying citizens pay more taxes than multinational corporations**. It seems unfair.

But if those companies were forced to pay taxes in the countries where they operate, they could leave the country. Also, such a reform would be difficult **unless** all countries around the world adopted it.

**Note:** In France, the corporate tax rate is 25%, the income tax rate is between 11 and 45%

### **Big tech vs the EU**

- the issue of **government surveillance/data gathering on the Internet**
- enormous **profits** generated by those **US corporations** => **overwhelming power, little to no competition**  
=> **monopoly** on online services
- **tax minimization**, the use of loopholes in the law not to pay taxes in the countries where they operate => **lack of redistribution** of the wealth generated in a particular country + **no financial participation in the investment on infrastructures** used to power the Internet.

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<sup>2</sup> ! a haven ("heï-veun") = un havre vs heaven ("hè-veun") = paradis. En anglais, on ne dit donc pas "un paradis fiscal", mais un "havre/refuge fiscal"

- **expansion and diversification** of their activities
- **job destructions** due to digitization

In the EU, the **GDPR** was implemented in 2016, to protect Internet users' data and their privacy.

For the past few years, the EU and the G20 have worked to implement a **minimum corporate tax law**. It will be enforced in 2024 and will force multinational corporations to pay **at least 15% of corporate tax** in the countries where they operate.

### **Increase in the number of jobless workers in Silicon Valley corporations**

During Covid => many workers were **hired** to meet the increasing demand of online services

Now, these extra workers are being **laid off** massively (up to 20% in some companies).

They lose their job **overnight** and some leave the area (San Francisco lost a large part of its population) or even have to leave the country (if they were foreign workers).

It's difficult to collect the workers' point of view on the situation because they are linked by **non disclosure agreements**, even after they leave the company.