1 | *Introduction*

The introduction identifies the book's two main contributions – the explication of the megacorporate concept and of the infinite times ideology – and situates the work with reference to current discussions of Big Tech. In doing so, it is first emphasized that whereas current discussions of Big Tech often adopt a critical, and even a moralizing, tone, the present work strives to comply with an ideal of amoral analysis. The following sections then detail two supplementary contributions that the book makes to the scholarly fields of business and society and organization studies. The first of these domain-specific contributions relates to the book advancing a philosophical perspective, and the second to its demonstrating that corporations can shape social considerations of much broader importance than is commonly recognized. After this, the book's very simple method of construction and its three-part structure are described. The chapter concludes with a brief summary.

Beyond Big and Bad: An Amoral Analysis

The first two decades of the twenty-first century are notable for the emergence of Big Tech. Whilst open to interpretation, this term is generally used to refer to a select number of American corporations, i.e. Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Google and Microsoft, and their various activities. Further to their often being ranked as the world's largest corporations by market value, these firms are collectively referred to as Big Tech due to their being a major part of daily life for a great many people. On any given day, for example, people around the world will use an Apple device to post a message on Facebook, purchase a product on Amazon, conduct a search on Google and write a document with a Microsoft program.

Given the assumption that those with great power often fail to discharge their responsibilities, it is to be expected that the 'Big Tech'

label has quickly come to possess a negative connotation. Thus, Wu (2018) has suggested that Big Tech is a social, political and economic curse, and Foer (2017) has warned that Big Tech constitutes an existential threat. Likewise, Zuboff (2015: 81) has voiced her concern that Big Tech is responsible for the emergence of the 'Big Other': 'a new universal architecture existing somewhere between nature and God . . . that records, modifies, and commodifies everyday experience . . . with a view to . . . monetization and profit'.

The critiques that these three authors have advanced, along with others of a broadly similar mind (e.g. Morozov, 2011), are often well founded. Yet, in their concern to resist 'the ideas that fuel these companies' (Foer, 2017: 8); to 'struggle for democracy' and diminish 'private power' (Wu, 2018: 138); and to mobilize 'in the name of humanity and the future' (Zuboff, 2019: 41), such authors tend to overlook, if not deliberately obscure, a variety of more general, and very fundamental, impacts that Big Tech is having on lived reality.

With the present work, I propose that the idea of a megacorporation can help to further reveal such considerations. Whilst the term 'megacorporation' is itself far from new, I am unaware of any sustained effort to detail its meaning. Given as such, the first contribution I make with the present work is to conceive of the megacorporate concept. In short, and as the prefix 'mega' indicates, I posit that a megacorporation is defined by its possessing a level of importance and influence that greatly surpasses that of other corporate forms, and by its influencing the lives of a huge number of people in very basic, foundational ways. Given the oversized breadth and depth of their influence, megacorporations will always be more or less limited in number. In fact, there may be times when no corporation is capable of satisfying such demanding criteria.

Apple and Facebook, for instance, are both of sufficient influence as to merit being included amongst the Big Tech brethren. Nevertheless, their respective business interests remain relatively narrow in focus – with Apple being best known for its consumer products and Facebook for social media. And whilst Microsoft and Amazon are more diverse, they likewise remain focused on developments in computing and online commerce respectively. As a result, none of these four companies can currently be considered a megacorporation.

Alphabet on the other hand, which was created back in 2015 through a corporate restructuring of Google, can be considered

a megacorporation given its range of interests. In addition to Google Search, Android and YouTube, each of which have more than a billion users, Alphabet is heavily invested in the health sciences through companies such as Calico and Verily, in automated vehicles through its holdings in companies like Waymo and Uber, in urban design and development through Sidewalk Labs, and in the new space industry through its investment in SpaceX.

Whilst this breadth of investments differentiates Alphabet from its Big Tech contemporaries, it does not make it a unique corporate form. Indeed, there is a relatively significant number of corporate groups around the world that have similarly diversified, or even more diversified, investments: South Korea's chaebol (e.g., Samsung, LG) and Japan's keiretsu (e.g., Mitsubishi) spring to mind. What differentiates Alphabet from these conglomerates, and all other (groups of) corporations, then, is its capacity to shape how we construct and experience the past and the future at both the personal and social levels.

To begin making sense of this last statement, it helps to note that Alphabet's biotech subsidiary Calico is, as *Time* magazine once put it, trying to 'solve death' (McCracken & Grossman, 2013). Even if Calico's efforts prove just partly successful (by pushing death's door just a little farther back for just a few people), Alphabet will help change the experience of personal futures. In many ways, Alphabet's Google has already had such an impact on our personal pasts. The European 'right to be forgotten' ruling, which enables people to ask Google to remove links to (mis)information that would otherwise be returned when someone 'googles' their name, provides one specific manifestation of the megacorporation's influence in such regard.

Alphabet is impacting on similar matters at the social level too. By collecting more and more data on more and more aspects of domestic and communal life, Alphabet investments – such as Orbital Insight, a geospatial analytics organization that works with satellite imagery, and Nest, a smart or connected home company – are helping to build an historical store of information that changes how we can construct and conceive our social pasts. And with its various moonshots, and many other less speculative investments, Alphabet is contributing to a whole new set of means by which future human societies on Earth and beyond might be created and governed.

All of these various impacts, even those that are described as being potential at best, are controversial. In fact, one can commonly pick just

one development that Alphabet is invested in, do a quick search on it and find a whole list of moral concerns. Alphabet's investment in SpaceX – which as a result of its plans to create a huge satellite internet service called Starlink has been accused of starting a project that could 'blight the night sky' for earthbound astronomers (Devlin, 2019) – provides a case in point. In addition to that, reports disclosing the presence of a hidden microphone within a Nest home security system (Amadeo, 2019) provide yet one more illustration of why so many people think of Alphabet entities as spies.

In light of this well-established, Alphabet-focused 'cacophony of critique' (Boland, 2018), the present analysis is more concerned to remain amoral than it is to moralize. Whilst I fall short of achieving this goal – in that the work is unavoidably informed by my own values – I have tried to be morally indifferent in completing the analyses, and building the conceptual constructs, that the book contains. That being said, I also think that this amoral ideal is justifiable. For whereas the concern to morally judge can narrow vision, the concern to amorally understand can broaden it.

This ideal of amoral analysis also informs the book's second contribution: the explication and elaboration of the ideology of infinite times. When conceived amorally, ideology refers to the cognitive structures that shape and limit our experiences (e.g., Jameson, 2016). It also refers to motives that – because they tend to be implicit or taken for granted – give rise to much of what we strive for and much that we want to be (Greimas, 1983: 293; Greimas & Courtés, 1982: 222). It is in this non-pejorative sense of ideology, that the ideology of infinite times is here associated with the widespread concern to indefinitely extend humanity's past and future at both the personal and social levels.

To begin with its historical aspect, the ideology of infinite times can be seen to manifest through the – currently ever-increasing – documentation of daily existence for specific individuals and whole societies. Presuming it is successfully stored and maintained, this information will provide future historians, and anyone else that is interested, with details about daily life that far exceed those that we have had on prior lives and generations up until now. And with regard to its forward-looking aspect, the ideology of infinite times is evidenced by the widespread concern to extend the length of healthy existence for individual humans and to sustain humanity's development for as long as possible.

Further to informing a whole range of activities at the individual, industrial and social levels, the infinite times ideology specifically shapes Alphabet's activities too. Without an awareness of the infinite times ideology, however, Alphabet's diverse activities and interests can seem fragmented and unrelated. What the explication of the infinite times ideology therefore does is show how these diverse ongoings come together to form a whole. It reveals that the concern to expand our temporal horizons as far as possible, both backwards and forwards, plays a key role in ensuring that Alphabet's many interests do not pull it apart.

The explication of the infinite times ideology has a number of other benefits too. First, and given that many others appear to be informed by the ideology of infinite times, the detailing of this ideology helps explain why the masses might actively support Alphabet's huge accumulation of wealth and power – an accumulation that Zuboff (2015) argues is based on an extractive relationship that people could never reasonably consent to.

The identification of the infinite times ideology also suggests that ideological conflicts will increasingly focus on the merits of human civilization and human pre-eminence. At the moment, ideological conflicts are commonly fought from a variety of political-economic perspectives, e.g., libertarian, liberal, democratic, socialist. Whatever else their differences, these political-economic perspectives are all similar in that they tend to take the merit and superiority of humanity for granted. Such assumptions, however, are likely to be increasingly reconsidered if investments by Alphabet, and other similarly informed organizations, continue. The reason why is that these investments can contribute to risks that could undermine the infinite times ideology both directly (e.g., through the risk of technologically induced extinction) and indirectly (e.g., by encouraging those opposed to the infinite times ideology to resist it).

As these initial remarks indicate, by conceiving of the megacorporate construct and the infinite times ideology, I contribute to the flourishing literature on Big Tech by showing that Alphabet is reshaping existence in ways that are more fundamental than are generally recognized. In doing so, I also make two additional contributions to the more specific fields of business and society and organization studies. These contributions relate to my proposing that scholars in these related domains can benefit from a philosophical turn and from an increased focus on how

business organizations influence society. As these field-specific contributions are not of explicit concern throughout the rest of the book, I quickly detail them in the two sections below.

A Philosophical Turn

Underpinning the academic field of business and society teaching and research is the recognition that business plays a significant role within modern societies. Given that this role will often be linked to other organizations or institutions – e.g., governments, laws, religions, the non-profit sector – the business and society literature discusses other actors and structures as well. Nevertheless, the business and society literature remains focused, by definition, on the relationship between commercial activities and communal concerns (Crane et al., 2015; Greenwood & Freeman, 2017). Like other academic fields (e.g., cultural studies, international relations), the field of business and society has been informed by a number of different, and more or less longstanding, theoretical traditions. Consequently, and prior to arguing that the field can benefit from an increased engagement with philosophy, I first differentiate between the ethical, political and socioeconomic theoretical traditions that currently dominate.

Ethical Theory

Ethical theory, or what is sometimes termed moral philosophy, is concerned with questions of right conduct, with the prescribing and proscribing of behaviour, and with the promotion of well-being at various levels (e.g., individual, social, environmental). So defined, ethical theory is less descriptive than it is normative: for it identifies what should or should not be done. Whilst any posited link between ethical reasoning and individual welfare/self-interest is a complex matter (Parfit, 1984), ethical theory often suggests that moral action requires some sort of self-sacrifice (Kant, 1997). Widespread notions of honesty and fairness, of equality, of familial responsibilities and so on, commonly require that individuals give up opportunities or resources that they would otherwise enjoy. Ethical theory therefore concerns itself with explaining why such notions or ideals should be complied with.

Within the business and society field, ethical theory has been used and developed to complete a number of tasks. First, ethical theory has

been used to make arguments for and against the existence of business organizational forms and market institutional structures. One example is provided by Donaldson (1982: 48), who, in building on the social contract tradition, has proposed that 'hypothetical contractors in a state of nature' would consent to the corporate form's existence so long as they believed it would lead to an increase in efficiency, and benefit all affected by it. The flipside of this, of course, is that if the corporate form is not thought to meet such standards, then it cannot, according to Donaldson, be morally defended.

Second, and given the presumption that business forms do generally meet the standards set by the likes of Donaldson (1982), ethical theory has been used to make arguments for and against different types of product and service being produced and consumed by them. One clear illustration of this approach is provided by critics of the tobacco business, who propose that as 'smoking is both addictive and lethal', it is inconsistent with the common good (Palazzo & Richter, 2005: 388). Many other 'vice' or 'sin' industries, e.g., alcohol, gambling, pornography, are subjected to similar critiques (Miller & Michelson, 2013: 601).

Third, and given the presumption that both the institution of business and a great many products and services are morally justifiable, there is a body of work concerned with detailing what process standards businesses need to meet, and what responsibilities commercial actors need to discharge, in their various productive activities. The list of concerns such standards relate to is evergrowing. Amongst many other topics, standards have been developed, and responsibilities detailed, with regard to algorithms (Martin, 2019), marketing to the vulnerable (Brenkert, 1998), the amelioration of sweatshop labour concerns (Miklos, 2019), the extent of fiduciary duties (Marcoux, 2003), and women's empowerment in supply chains (McCarthy, 2017).

Political Theory

Along with the use it has made of ethical theories, the field of business and society has made considerable use of political theory and political philosophy. By and large, business and society scholars informed by the political theory tradition have sought to detail appropriate divisions of labour between business, government and civil society. In

doing so, they have advanced our understanding of long-standing concerns regarding the accountability of corporations to their various constituents or publics (e.g., Clark, 1916; Dodd, 1932).

One illustration of such work is Evan and Freeman's stakeholder theory of the firm, which proposes that economic and political freedoms necessitate that stakeholders (directly) participate in corporate decision-making; that stakeholders and managers should be protected by a 'bill of rights'; and that the 'task of management in today's corporation (i.e., the balancing stakeholder interests) is akin to that of King Solomon' (Evan & Freeman, 1988: 103–105). Although stakeholder theory has changed, Freeman (e.g., Freeman, Wicks & Parmar, 2004) continues to argue that it is essential for protecting stakeholder's political (and economic) freedoms. Stakeholder theory has also come to be more explicitly associated with a libertarian political philosophy. To this end, Freeman and Phillips (2002) have proposed that one of the major benefits we would derive from the increased actualization of stakeholder principles, would be the diminishing of state regulation and the need for coercive control.

Scherer and Palazzo (2007, 2011), by way of contrast, have proposed that it is because states face increasing difficulties in regulating corporate activities and making sure they are directed towards the public good, that corporate decision-making needs to be increasingly aligned with the interests of stakeholders and civil society. The general idea is that liberal models of corporate governance, which are built on a division of labour between profit-focused corporations and (democratic) states concerned to protect and ensure the public good, are breaking down due to the globalization of economic relations and the emergence of governance gaps. In terms of theory, Scherer and Palazzo make use of a 'thin conception' (Durant, 2011) of Habermas's (1990) discourse ethics (see Whelan, 2012: 726). They build on the belief that all affected by a decision should be free to debate it to suggest that corporations should participate within multi-stakeholder initiatives that govern their activities (e.g., the Forest Stewardship Council) or that corporate boards should be comprised of representatives from stakeholder groups and civil society.

Another line of work uses theories of citizenship to make sense of corporate–society relations. This has been done in three ways: First, corporations have been metaphorically conceived as different types of corporate citizens (e.g., deliberative, republican), so as to show how

different understandings of corporate social responsibility are in effect always informed, whether consciously or not, by broader political philosophies (Moon, Crane & Matten, 2005). Second, it has been argued that corporations can be conceived as administering a set of citizenship rights (Matten & Crane, 2005), particularly when the 'liberal' division of labour between business and government breaks down. Third, the idea of 'citizenship arenas' (Crane, Matten & Moon, 2008: 9–12) has been used to make sense of the ways in which social media corporations have created new spheres from within which individuals can exert influence over the political-economic actors and structures that surround them (Whelan, Moon & Grant, 2013: 780).

Socio-economic Theory

In contrast to the ethical and political theory disciplines, which tend towards the normative, the discipline of socio-economic theory tends more towards description and explanation. As its hyphenated label suggests, socio-economic theory can be found in various forms throughout the business and society field. Indeed, specific lines of work within this tradition – such as those that adopt a macro focus and investigate the influence of national legal and cultural considerations on corporate governance structures and corporate social responsibility policies and practices – constitute significant literatures in their own right (Crane et al., 2016).

One illustration of such work is provided by Kinderman (2012), who used an institutional lens to explore the co-evolution of corporate social responsibility and neo-liberalism in the United Kingdom between 1977 and 2010. Another is provided by Matten and Moon (2008, 2020), who influentially built on work in 'national business systems' (e.g., Whitley, 1997) to differentiate between an 'implicit' and 'explicit' understanding of corporate social responsibility that respectively refer to a European approach characterized by coordinated markets and collective obligation, and to a US approach characterized by liberal-market economies and individual discretion.

Unlike the just-mentioned macro-level studies, which focus on how (inter-)national considerations shape the policies and practices of corporations, meso-level studies tend to focus on how individual corporations can legitimate or justify their policies and practices in the face of conflict and reputational threats. Some of these studies, such as Helms'

and Patterson's (2014) analysis of the private corporation that owns the Ultimate Fighting Championship (a mixed martial arts organization), reveal the ways in which corporations can (partially) transform society's understanding of (il)legitimacy.

Much more common, however, are studies that show how corporations comply with societies' existing understandings of (il)legitimate behaviour (Boswell, 1983). In this vein, Patriotta, Gond and Schultz (2011: 1806) built on Boltanski and Thévenot (2006) to show how various forms of justification (e.g., measures of efficiency and sustainability) helped to repair the legitimacy of corporate activities following a safety controversy 'provoked by a major nuclear accident'. Many others have drawn on institutional and resource-dependency theories to complete similar tasks (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Oliver, 1991; Suchman, 1995).

These varying strains of socio-economic analysis have advanced our understandings of how business is shaped by institutional norms and practices. Nevertheless, and as with works informed by the ethical and political theory traditions, works informed by socio-economic theory have tended to focus on relatively discrete concerns (e.g., sweatshops, corporate governance, corporate social responsibility, the safety of nuclear energy) that are of interest to relatively limited audiences (e.g., supply chain managers, financiers, civil society organizations, energy industry professionals). A philosophical perspective, by way of contrast, helps bring considerations of more general and wide-ranging interest to the fore.

Philosophy

Philosophy is generally conceived as relating to considerations of central importance to existence and experience. On the one hand, this meaning is suggested by the colloquial references that people make to their 'philosophy' when discussing the guidelines or assumptions that shape their behaviour in daily life: such as 'family first' versus 'money over everything', or 'the best defense is a good offense' versus 'you can't lose if they don't score'. On the other hand, this meaning is also suggested in more formal contexts, where philosophy is associated with questions regarding the nature of being and sentience, the possibility of knowledge and so on.

A hallmark of philosophical concerns, then, is their focus on considerations that are in some sense basic, that are in some sense unavoidable or that possess something like omnipresence. As a result, the importance of philosophical concerns – such as the a priori of cause and effect (Kant, 1998); or the explication of presuppositions that make discourse and deliberation pragmatically possible (Habermas, 1990) – transcend disciplinary divisions and demarcations. Such concerns, however, do not just transcend theoretical divisions, but those that separate the practical and concrete worlds of everyday life from the more abstract and theoretical worlds of academia as well (cf. Kieser & Leiner, 2009). In light of such, the first motivation that business and society scholars might have for taking a philosophical turn relates to it potentially enabling them to speak to, and engage with, a much broader audience.

The second reason for suggesting that the business and society field, and the related fields of organization and management studies, can benefit from a turn towards philosophy, is that it opens up new areas of research that are interesting in and of themselves. Of course, these fields already address a number of philosophical matters. Cooper's work on organization as the construction and internalization of comprehensible and fungible phenomena (e.g. Cooper, 1990) provides one example (see also, Helin et al., 2014: 15). And the existence of journals like the *Philosophy of Management*, which invites 'inquiry into the nature, knowledge, practice, limits, hopes, and possibilities of management' (Vandekerchkove, 2017: 91); and of edited collections on philosophy and organization theory (e.g. Mir, Willmott & Greenwood, 2016), suggests that self-consciously philosophical works are growing in number. This growth, however, appears to remain slow, with any growth in philosophical interests likely to have been outpaced by the apparent tendency for theoretical disciplines to split up, drift apart and become ever narrower in their specific interests (van Liedekerke & Dubbink, 2008: 278–279).

The most immediate cost that is paid for such specialization, for the multiplication of tightly focused disciplinary perspectives, is that those working in the field of business and society miss out on the pleasure of engaging with fundamental considerations. Whilst tastes will always differ, many are curious as to the underlying frameworks or abstract qualities of experienced reality, of the motives of human behaviour, or

of the ways in which socialization shapes perception. So in addition to furthering the self-promoting (and somewhat ignoble) goal of increasing the field's clout, a philosophical turn could help make the field of business and society a little more fun.

Corporate-Shaped Societies

If one was forced to pick the main idea advanced by the business and society literature, one could do worse than refer to the posited need for businesses to comply with existent social understandings. Thus, the ethical tradition commonly suggests that corporations need to comply with extant norms regarding human rights wherever they operate; the political tradition that corporations need to be governed in an increasingly deliberative fashion if they are to be considered democratically legitimate; and the socio-economic tradition that corporations need to respond to reputational threats if they are to prove capable of maintaining their socially sanctioned 'licence to operate'.

This general tendency to emphasize the power that society has to shape corporations, is consistent with, and often directly informed by, trends throughout the organization and management studies literature. Institutional theorists, for example, have long focused on how external environments shape internal organizational environments, and critical theorists have explored the ways in which macro-level discourses shape corporations in a top-down fashion (Weber & Waeger, 2017).

This tendency to emphasize how corporate agency is socially shaped and constrained is also consistent with developments found throughout the humanities and social sciences, where Foucault's (1977: 31) idea of genealogical analysis as a 'history of the present' has shaped a great deal of work (Garland, 2014). Barkan's (2013) genealogical inquiry of the manner in which medieval religious thought helped give rise to ideas of corporate sovereignty, and of how subsequent transformations in US law in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries helped shape contemporary notions of corporate personhood, provides one illustration.

The point being made is that the business and society literature tends to reverse its alphabetic ordering when it comes to the apportioning of power. As various authors operating outside the traditionally defined field of business and society suggest, however, the rapid emergence of Google (e.g. Stross, 2008; Vaidhyanathan, 2011), and the rest of the

Big Tech cohort, indicate that at least a little more weight should be placed on the business side of the scales. Numerous historical cases suggest the same thing. The Massachusetts Bay Company, whose corporate charter from 1629 enabled it to operate more or less independently of British Royal oversight (Anderson 1998: 198), and to help form American ideals of association and democracy (Conway, 1998; de Tocqueville, 1945; Innes, 2001; MacMillan, 2013; Maier, 1993; Shy, 1998), provides one illustration. The English East India Company, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2 provides another.

A Simple Method of Construction

The two main ideas advanced throughout the present book are that (1) megacorporations are defined by their capacity to shape fundamental considerations of existence for a large number of people and that (2) the ideology of infinite times underlies the existential impacts of the megacorporation Alphabet. As I imagine is the case for many other ideas or concepts, the two just mentioned did not emerge *ex nihilo*, but from my engaging with colleagues and friends, paying attention to Google and then Alphabet, and from my consumption of media in general. No doubt, the ideas are informed by other factors too. Whatever the case, the point to note is that once I fixed on these two ideas, I used them to guide my engagement with all the materials that are referenced throughout the book. In this fashion, all the other ideas here referred to are, more or less literally, defined by the use I make of them (see Dewey, 1933: 136).

If one is willing to conceive 'method' loosely, then this approach can be considered a (purpose-driven) method (Freeman & Greenwood, 2020). More specifically, it is consistent with what I term the mélange approach to (historical) composition in Chapter 5. In contrast to the massive approach that is also detailed in Chapter 5, and which strives for exhaustiveness in its treatment of data, the mélange approach enables a user to pick and choose between the materials they utilize. Such an approach, suffice it to note, has little interest in providing the last word on original empirical sources, or in idolizing extant theoretical perspectives. But it is not interested in bastardization (of other works) for bastardization's sake either (see also, Deleuze, 1977). Rather, this very simple method of construction enables those who use

it to combine and utilize different ideas and sources of data to realize their own goals.

A Three-Part Structure

In detailing and illustrating the megacorporate concept and the ideology of infinite times, the book is structured into three main sections. The purpose of Part I is to introduce and define the megacorporate concept, and to show that Alphabet is a megacorporation. Accordingly, Chapter 2 begins by proposing that a megacorporation can be differentiated from the related notions of a normal corporation, a multinational corporation and a total corporation, on two grounds. First, and unlike both normal corporations and total corporations, megacorporations are defined by the global scale of their operations. Second, and in contrast to both normal corporations and multinational corporations, megacorporations are defined by the broad scope of their influence. Having made these general distinctions, it is then more specifically suggested that, if a corporation is to be characterized as a megacorporation, then it will need to be associated with monopolistic activities, corporate social responsibility concerns, political-economic hybridity and existential impacts. As the English East India Company was associated with all these considerations, Chapter 2 argues that it provides one, particularly clear, historical illustration.

In applying the same criteria, Chapter 3 proposes that Alphabet is a megacorporation too. As Alphabet's existence is dependent – some would say parasitic – upon Google's massive profitability, Chapter 3 begins with an overview of Google's context, creation and success. The emergence of Alphabet is then contextualized by the seeming need for Google's founders, Sergey Brin and Larry Page, to 'burn' some Google cash and broaden Google's, already ambitious, organizational vision. Following this, and prior to concluding, the chapter details the first three considerations that make Alphabet a megacorporation: i.e. its monopolistic activities, its political-economic hybridity and its corporate social responsibility concerns.

The fourth and most important consideration that results in Alphabet being considered a megacorporation, its existential impacts, are the subject of Part II. The purpose of this second part of the book is to show how Alphabet is changing how we construct, experience and manage, both that which is already past and that which is yet to be. As

Table 1.1 *A Summary of Part II*

		Level of		Constructive Tendencies	
Chapter	Orientation	Analysis	Speculation	Monolithic	Multiple
4	Past	Personal	Low	Careful	Carefree
5	Past	Social	Low	Massive	Mélange
6	Future	Personal	High	Sequential	Simultaneous
7	Future	Social	High	Autocratic	Autonomous

detailed in Table 1.1, the four chapters that Part II contains are characterized by a number of differences and similarities.

To begin with the differences, each chapter is distinguished in terms of orientation (past or future), level of analysis (personal or social) and the extent to which the matters discussed are speculative (low or high). And in terms of the similarities, each of the chapters show how the changes (potentially) being wrought by Alphabet can be conceived as encouraging more monolithic developments on the one hand, and more multiple developments on the other.

To further explain, note that orientation is here said to change when an agent turns backwards to consider the past, or forwards to consider the future. Of course, the past and the future, and the present too, can be difficult to disentangle. Hence, Chapter 4 is less concerned with discussing pasts already created, than it is with the pasts that people are constantly in the process of helping create for their future selves. And Chapter 5 suggests, amongst other things, that a key motivation for engaging with social pasts is to encourage some sort of change or development in present-day societies. By way of contrast, the future orientation of Chapters 6 and 7 is simpler, in that both chapters are focused on the role technologies can, or could, play in making future existences longer.

The second main difference characterizing Part II's chapters is due to their being situated at either the personal level of analysis – which relates to identifiable individuals, albeit ones that might increase in number (as per the multiple constructive tendency – see below) or the social level of analysis – which relates to communities of variable characteristics and size: e.g. local communities, national communities, global communities (see also, Aguilera et al., 2007).

Third, the chapters of Part II are also distinguished on the basis of their being more or less speculative. Chapters 6 and 7 are conceived as relatively high in this regard given that they both refer to developments that are far from certain, such as the possibility of radically extending individual biological existence (Chapter 6) and of inhabiting other planets (Chapter 7). Most of the technologies discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, by way of contrast, are already existent. Consequently, these chapters are marked as having a low degree of speculation.

Notwithstanding these differences, Part II's chapters are also similar in that two constructive tendencies are associated with their various developments. The first tendency is termed monolithic. It is associated with phenomena that are more or less singular. This monolithic tendency results in individuals or societies being pulled together so as to create, or maintain, what amounts to one more or less integrated and homogeneous whole. The second tendency is termed multiple. It relates to efforts or concerns to keep individuals or societies in a heterogeneous state, to break them up or tease them apart, or to decompose individuals or societies into separate elements. In short, what the four chapters that comprise Part II suggest – with regard to the pasts and the futures that are being created at both the personal and social levels – is that Alphabet's existential impacts are simultaneously encouraging, or enabling of, these monolithic and multiple constructive tendencies.

With the idea of a megacorporation having been defined and illustrated in Part I and with the nature and importance of Alphabet's existential impacts having been detailed in Part II, the book concludes, in Part III, by reflecting on the main threats to Alphabet's being. Accordingly, Chapter 8 notes that, whilst the ideology of infinite times plays a key role in holding Alphabet together – by helping the megacorporation to be conceived as the custodian of our pasts and futures – it also contributes to its ultimate falling apart. The reason why is that, like everything else, the ideology of infinite times is itself finite. And in turning to a variety of more mundane considerations, the book's final chapter (Chapter 9) posits that Alphabet's megacorporate status is externally threatened by concerns to undermine its various monopolies, and internally threatened by what appears to be increasing discord amongst its employees. Whilst the exact date of Alphabet's death remains uncertain, Part III emphasizes that Alphabet will one day cease to be.

Summary

This chapter began by noting that, in striving for an amoral ideal of analysis, the present book develops and illustrates the megacorporate construct, and explicates and details the ideology of infinite times. Following this, the book's more implicit concerns of encouraging the fields of business and society, and organization studies, to take a philosophical turn, and to focus more on corporate capacities to shape societies, were outlined. Brief discussions of the book's very simple method, and of its three-part structure, were then provided. In short, this introduction has clarified my motivations for writing the book, acknowledged the broader context shaping it, and explained the constructive process that informs its final structure.