3-22-2017

Playing-With the World: Toy Story's Aesthetics and Metaphysics of Play

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Playing-With the World: Toy Story’s Aesthetics and Metaphysics of Play

by

Jonathan Hendricks

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Film Studies
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Date of Approval:
May 21, 2017

Keywords: Toy Story, Metaphysics, Ecology, Economics, Heidegger, Ontotheology

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and profoundly thank Amy, Scott, Dan, and Winters for their incredible support not only as academics, but as wonderful people as well. Furthermore, I would also like to thank Taylor, Zach, Charlie, Eric, Brett, Rachel, Mikey, Kevin, Dan Holland, and of course my Mom and Dad for their unwavering support. I also thank Sara, Benny, Todd, Brendan, Andy, and Maria for their guidance, reassurance, and wonderful conversations through my journey from an undergraduate to finishing my graduate degree. I would also like to thank professors Dr. Lee Braver, Dr. Joshua Rayman, Dr. Doug Jesseph, and all of the other Philosophy graduate students for their guidance and company in my furrows through the USF Philosophy department. Special thanks to Dwight, Zac, Will, Simon, Bryan, Alex, and finally, yet importantly, my favorite PhD candidate, Will the service dog who is a prime example of the answer of the most hard to answer question of philosophy; “who is the good dog?”
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ABSTRACT

Pixar’s *Toy Story* (John Lassiter, 1995) is not just a story about toys and the children that play with them, but a demonstration of how we interact with the world. This thesis looks at the way in which both main children, Andy and Sid, interact with their toys and how this interaction is one that is structured by way of what Martin Heidegger calls “Enframing.” In this modality of playing, toys and other things and entities in the world, and the world itself, appear to the children as on-hand resources for use at any time and can be molded, as if plastic, to fit their needs. I problematize this way of interacting with the world by looking at not only it manifests in *Toy Story*, but also in the process of the film’s production, Silicon Valley aesthetics, our reliance upon plastics, neoliberal capital in light of the “1099 economy,” and ecological ramifications of these practices as seen in the ecological registers. Through these metaphysics, we seek to mold the world in accordance with human-centered interests as we play within the world. My thesis also turns to understand how metaphysics has transformed over time so that we can work towards bringing forth a different way of relating to the world that is sustainable, ethical, and one of care. I argue for an understanding of things in the world likened to an interconnected and interdependent network that we are always connected to, and in an “interplay” with. I conclude the project by arguing for a possible turn to the writings of Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, and other philosophers who work in process metaphysics for a possible reinvigoration of “apparatus theory,” which has lost favor with many film scholars since the 1970s/1980s. I argue that a process framework could provide fresh light on the cinematic apparatus in light of
digital at-home streaming services, as well as work towards revealing stronger interlinked
connections between media, economics, ecology, geopolitics, etc.
INTRODUCTION: ROCKETS EXPLODE

_Toy Story_ (John Lassiter, 1995) is a story about play. In the film, we follow the two primary toys of one of the main children, Andy, as they struggle to get back home. Along the way, they face various struggles of camaraderie, bodily danger, and existential crisis. However, I am interested in talking about how _Toy Story_ presents play, and specifically, what play is and how play is formally structured in its metaphysical foundation. I argue that _Toy Story_ not only depicts our everyday way of playing, and when we take a careful look, we can find the dangerous ways in which we play in the world. Specifically, and I will elaborate more on this in a moment, the seeing of the world as an on-hand resource for a fixed human-centered control and organizing of the world. To this end, I will show how _Toy Story_ presents our relationship to things in terms of objects, the problematic relationship it has with plastic, and how both of these dangers and our dangerous way of playing contain within them saving possibilities that can be found in ‘things’ (or what Jane Bennet calls “Thing-Power”).

As _Toy Story_ is a story about play, we must first understand what play is. Johan Huizinga in _Homo Ludens_ defines play as “a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it is ‘different’ from ‘ordinary life.’”¹ I would also add that play is always an event that takes place between a

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person and a person, or a person and a thing. Moreover, I add to what Huizinga states insofar as
play carries with it “the consciousness that it is ‘different’ from ‘ordinary life.’” By pulling from
the German word for play, game, drama and dance, Spiel, Hans-Georg Gadamer makes the point
in *Truth and Method* that when “we say that something is ‘playing’ (spielt) somewhere or at
some time, that something is going on (im Spiele ist) or that something is happening (sich
abspielt)” it implies that **play is always-already happening.** Thus, we are always within the
domain of and in the act of playing at any given time. In effect, to play is to be and to be is to
play in the world.

*Toy Story* itself traces the play of the two main children, Andy and Sid, and the
adventures of Woody and Buzz that take place within the everyday existence of all of the film’s
characters. Since play is always-already happening as we are in the world, play, and the study
thereof, becomes an attempt to understand our everyday way of comporting ourselves in the
world. Quite similarly, Timothy F. H. Allen states that, “Ecology is one of a handful of
disciplines whose material study is part of everyday encounters.”

Furthermore, what qualifies an
ecology is that there is a relationship between person(s)/thing(s) in space and time, something
that play as well demonstrates as children play with toys in a space for play within a temporal
structure. Thus, since *Toy Story* is a film about children playing with things in space and time,
we can read the film as not simply a story about toys, but also an ecological story as well. I

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2 Huizinga does qualify that all entities, humans and animals, play (Huizinga *Homo Ludens* 1). I qualify my
definition with ‘person’ as I would also extend personhood to animals. For the sake of brevity, I cannot discuss at
length an ethic as it pertains to animals. Basing his understanding of play off the German Spiel (translates to
dance/play), Hans-Georg Gadamer thinks that it is not important that even a subject is present as long as there is
1996) 103.

3 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 104.

4 I carry with this notion a nod to Martin Heidegger’s “being-in-the-world.” See *Being and Time* Division 1.

define ecology rather broadly in this project, quite similar the field of ecology itself, to stress the point that we are always-already engaged in relationships with entities and things in the world. With this broad definition of ecology, one cannot argue that they are separate from the world or that the world is separate from their actions. As Allen states, “Ecology is also a way of keeping track of the range of systems (i.e. biosphere, biome, landscape, ecosystem, community, population, organism, and cell) ... [these] levels of organization are very important for ecological understanding, particularly when each is given autonomy separate from the grand conventional scheme.” Ecology is a methodology which monitors various levels/ranges or ecosystems which seeks to grasp an understanding of the ‘whole-some’ totality of all systems within the one system.

What ecology does, in effect, is that it creates a framework that scientists and others can use to understand and organize experience. For Toy Story, the framework that structures the children’s (Andy and Sid) experience of the world is one of a subject/object distinction of the world—the subject, child, and the object, toy, are understood to be separate entities in the realm of play [Spielraum]. Similarly, our own way of experiencing the world itself is one of a hierarchical system where humans are at the top while not just other entities and things follow, but also humans are seen as the central-hub for all matters in the world. Furthermore, in this line of thinking, the world itself is understood to be-there as resource for human’s to work over and remold in accordance to their interests. In a staff meeting that Woody calls, and in other parts of the film, Woody tells his fellow toys that they are there for Andy when he needs them. Not only

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6 Allen, Toward a Unified Ecology, 14 and 17.
7 Allen, Toward a Unified Ecology, 12.
does Woody see himself as being-there for his owner, but also the toys even risk their very lives to get back within human controlled ordering of the world.

When thinking of ‘things’ as ‘objects,’ it carries with it an entire metaphysics, that which structures ‘how’ things exist within our contemporary understanding of Being, of human-centered control over ‘things.’ Within these metaphysics, things and the world are revealed to us as on-hand resources that are ready to be used at any time. This way of interacting with the world is quite similar to what Martin Heidegger calls “Enframing:” technology’s current form of revealing the world as to be ordered on-hand for human use at any time, thus turning the planet into a kind of gasoline station. As things are conceived as ‘objects,’ the toys in the film are always positioned to be-there for their owners just as our current understanding of the world, in terms of our current revealing of the world (Enframing), sees the world as something that is there-for humans to mold and shape it to fit our needs/desires, as if a plastic.

Many of the toys in the film are comprised of plastic and vinyl, not to mention that the early Computer Generated (CG) film itself has a plastic-like glean. I argue that we can look at plastic to understand the rise of only consumer products and geo-economics with the advent of neoliberalism, but that we can work through plastic to understand how this “metaphysics of plasticity” functions in itself. In this project, I show how this reworking of the world, as if molding the world, to fit our needs and desires not only has ecological ramifications in light of climate change, but socioeconomic issues as well with the advent of the “1099 economy.” In this 1099 economy, workers continuously appear to employers as on-hand resources to mold to fit

their product flows and ever shrinking budgets. I turn to plasticity, the ability to remold oneself, in the later half of this project as a way to pull out a saving potential of reconfiguration that inherently lies in Enframing and plastic.

However, I believe that Toy Story can teach us something about our relationality with the world, and, furthermore, how we can work towards a different way of dwelling in the world. As Sid is encircled by the toys he has operated on in the backyard of the film’s finale, Sid is enlightened to his interconnectivity between all parts, all toys, that constitute the whole, the whole-some totality of relations, of his play in the world. This unveiling of his interconnectivity is one that comes through a realization that he is in the world with his toys, and furthermore through a meeting of technology, nature, and humans, an “interplay,” as Walter Benjamin would sate, when Sid tries to light the rocket, “The Big One,” that will blow-up Buzz. As Allen argues to unify ecology to understand different ranges/levels as “structures that come from distant places in a conventional order,” I argue similarly that we must unify our own understanding of ourselves and the world as within a structure of a whole-someness, holistic, network of entities and things in the world. This structure is similar to the understanding of ecology, a “deep ecology,” that Arne Naess describes which seeks to understand “organisms as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations.” Through this biospherical net, all entities and things are understood in their relationship to one another, and it is through one another that we can work towards a way of dwelling in the world that is sustainable for future generations.

10 Allen, Toward a Unified Ecology, 18
*Toy Story* in the interpretation that the film wishes to convey creates a binary opposition between Andy and Sid as one child being wholly good while the other is wholly bad; something with which the secondary literature problematizes slightly, yet still maintains as a binary. Not only is this binarism dangerous in its reducing differing ways of playing to supposedly simple sides of good and evil, but it also does not pay keen attention to how ‘things’ are revealed and being enacted upon in the film. Furthermore, the film tries to posit each child within a realm of either 1990s nostalgia for the 1950s through a lens of wholesomeness (Andy) and the other through a dis-integrative viewing of the 1970s/80s (Sid).

Shannon R. Wooden and Ken Gillam focus on the play of both Andy and Sid in their book *Pixar’s Boy Stories: Masculinity in a Postmodern Age* by arguing for the normalcy of Sid’s mode of playing, the tearing apart and putting back together of toys to form hodge-podge amalgams. Sid does not take toys apart or blow them up out of true sadism as he does not know that the toys are sentient, he never harms other humans or animals in his play, he does not intentionally steal (Buzz and Woody arrived to his ownership by happenstance), and his sister bullies almost just as much as him (suggesting sibling rivalry). As Wooden and Gillam state, “Sid’s punishment seems deserved only by the nature of his play. Sid is a bad kid, the film seems to say, because he plays wrong.” I find Wooden and Gillam’s focus on Sid’s play helpful as it works to break down a binary of good and evil between the two children by suggesting that Sid is the far more creative child who does not stick to prescribed play narratives based upon socio-historical and brand conventions.

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14 Wooden and Gillam, *Pixar’s Boy Stories*, 92
Wooden and Gillam work to save Sid from Pixar’s tendency to vilify smart children, and I, too, work to pick up their conversation to push the film further by reading *Toy Story* as an ontological tragedy.\(^{16}\) I argue that it is not only Sid’s play that is at stake, but the play of everyone else in the film and in our world as well, hence also why I read *Toy Story* as being an ecological story. By looking at not only how Andy and Sid play, but by looking how they interact with things, I show how the way both children engage within the same problematic way of relating to the world: Enframing (fixed human-centered control over the world as on-hand resource). However, I also press my argument further by bringing Benjamin’s term “interplay” into the picture. To this, I work to show how there are moments not just in the film, the when the toys confront Sid, for example, but also within the very structure of enframing itself that provides conditions of the possibility to prepare us for a new way of dwelling in the world. My project is one of locating the problematic ways of our interacting, and saving aspects within the problem so that we can make subtle changes to our everyday relationality to the world in space and time, our ecology, towards a different way of experiencing the world.

In Alan Ackerman’s book *Seeing Things*, there is movement to destabilize the binary between Andy and Sid: “Andy performs his own happy violence on his toys.”\(^ {17}\) With this insight, one cannot claim that Andy is a pure ‘good’ child who is free of violence, while at the same time putting Sid down for being a violent “problem child.” Authors of *Animating Difference: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Films for Children* (Ricard King, Carmen R. Lugo-Lugo, Mary K. Bloodsworth- Lugo) focus on the ways in which the toys play with one another. Their focus on *Toy Story* is in terms of how the film, and other animated films, function to train

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\(^{16}\) Wooden and Gillam. *Pixar’s Boy Stories*, 95. For the term “ontological tragedy,” I am indebted to Heidegger scholar Hubert Dreyfus for this term as he mentions it in his iTunes University lecture series on ancient philosophy where he discusses the Greek playwright, Aeschylus (Philosophy 6, 001, Fall 2010, UC Berkeley).

\(^{17}\) Alan Ackerman *Seeing Things* (Toronto, CA: University of Toronto Press, 2011) 100.
children into a heteronormative way of being in the world by squelching sexual difference and reifying racist connotations. Wooden and Gillam as well bring this tendency of squelching sexual difference in *Toy Story* by discussing how the female characters in the film, Barbie and Bo Peep, are overly sexy and identified as objects of desire by and for the male characters in the film. Again, I pick up from these authors where they left off by expressing that my intervention of *Toy Story’s* expression of play is situated in Enframing. As Enframing reveals the world as to be within fixed human-centered control, Pixar places sexuality within heteronormative fixity. I argue that through an understanding of play as that which structures the way one *is* in the world, and that because play is a relationship between persons/things in space and time, if the form of play is not one that is desirable, one must make subtle changes to transform the way the world reveals itself.

For Andy and Sid, play is always a modality that stresses the limitations of movement of bodies in space and time. Andy tosses and smacks his toys, and Sid presses their body parts beyond their structural limits causing limbs to snap off of bodies. Quite similarly, Tom Gunning, in “Animating the Instant: The Secret Symmetry between Animation and Photography,” defines animation as a playing with the limits of movement. Gunning discusses how cinema, whether live-action or animated, is not only always-already animated but it is also always-already within limits of a frame rate. ‘Animated film,’ as Gunning discusses is always working to

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19 Wooden and Gillam, *Pixar’s Boy Stories*, p37
“visualize and act out the process of producing motion,” and in its act of doing this ‘animated film’ is always playing with movement and exploring the limits of movement through its own self-reflexive construction. I borrow these notions from Gunning to further develop my understandings of play as being always-already within limits. Animation stresses the limits of the moving image, and furthermore provides the grounds for how the limits can be expressed and played with inside of them.

As Gunning has elaborated that animation plays within the limits of movement, as it also works to push the limits as well, I find Scott Bukatman’s essay “Some Observations Pertaining to Cartoon Physics; or, The Cartoon Cat in the Machine” helpful for elaborating pre-Pixar aesthetics when cartoons expressed “an alternative set of means by which bodies navigate[d] space.” Bukatman’s piece also discusses how the condition of possibility for a more cartoonish relationship to physics, something that is more playful like Warner Bros. Merrie Melodies cartoons where one falls only once they look down, lurks within digital animation. Digital animation has tendencies towards replicating real-world physics, as gamers can manipulate digital images via manipulating the code to alter space-relational properties in the game world. What this does is tamper with the fixity of a human-centered control over a digital environment to explore different possibilities of relating to a world. I use this in tandem with Heidegger’s writings in “The Turning” to suggest how one can make preparations for a new way

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of Being through subtle changes to code, or to our daily lives, to achieve a completely different relationship to the world.

Within the context of neoliberal geo-economics, Bill Brown, in “How to Do Things with Things (A Toy Story),” highlights the ways in which our contemporary way of relating to the world sees other countries and its inhabitants as on-hand resources for our commodity production. Brown’s essay discusses the neoliberal geographic spread of commodity production. Giving the example of how the toys inquire upon Buzz’s production country of origin (Taiwan), Brown writes, “To be an American toy in the 1990s is to have come from elsewhere.” Since the of people and things in various spaces and across times is a feature of Brown’s project, I argue that this sheds light on how economics is directly involved with and working over/through the ecological.

In this ecological, as there is an interconnectedness, Eric Herhuth’s essay on WALL-E, “Life, Love, and Programing: The Culture and Politics of WALL-E and Pixar Computer Animation,” situates Pixar’s aesthetics within Silicon Valley tendencies towards communication technology fostering intimacy and connectedness. In WALL-E, Herhuth mentions how “WALL-E inadvertently interrupts the routines of two humans, they instantly see their environment in a new way.” I see this tendency in Toy Story as well when the toys confront Sid in his back yard causing him to relate to things and the world that he plays in differently. In Chapter Two, I read this scene once according to Pixar’s terms of how it is problematic to try to scare Sid “straight” into not harming toys. Following this reading, I read the very same scene

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“against the grain” to bring out the possible interplay of human, technology, and nature that lies within it. Herhuth’s brings to light the subtle alteration of one’s comportment, such as being knocked out of a hover chair or a toy telling one to play nice, one’s way of relating, one’s way of playing, can dramatically change. The coding suggests alteration, as I have gestured to Bukatman earlier with his illumination on altering of code to yield a different relationship of character to world.

Developing Huizinga’s definition of play, Brian Upton tells us that not only everything is a game, and that play is simply a “free movement within a system of constraints.” As play is always occurring and that play is a freedom within constraints, I argue against neoliberalism’s motif of freedom-from limits/regulation by showing how neoliberalism’s own motif of freedom-from limits is in itself a limit. Miguel Sicart also comments how this notion of play has integrated itself within Silicon Valley’s understanding of office environments and relationships. Sicart discusses how employees within these environments like to feel more like “play pals” instead of cogs in a machine. Sicart asserts that we have a tendency to want play without being confined to a common understanding of play as only being for children or in games. Sicart also discusses how playfulness brings together an ecology of playthings, situations, behaviors and people as it extends play towards an attitude for being in the world and asserts that playfulness works to structure the world in terms of play. I find Sicart’s assertions helpful as he is outlining play as not only being a phenomenology, a description of the way we experience the world, but also contextualizing it in contemporary aesthetics of labor within neoliberalism and Silicon Valley which are not only “playfully” structured, but further structured as on-hand resources for

32 Sicart, Play Matters, 25.
the company’s use at any time.

To bring this term within the context of neoliberalism, I turn to David Harvey’s work in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* to build my case that neoliberal freedom is situated as a freedom from constraints that emanates from free trade and lessened regulation of the markets. I expand on this by arguing that technological modes of operation within our contemporary socioeconomic context, such as geoengineering, work to keep the world within a fixed human-centered control. What this does is that it works to maintain a radical freedom from limits, that climate change brings to light about our tendencies, which use more resources than the world can provide.

ORGANIZATION

CHAPTER ONE: A GROUNDWORK—THAT WHICH IS, AND WHENCE

With an understanding of play being not only informed by our metaphysics that reveal the world in terms of on-hand resources for humans to use at any time, and as an ecological event as well, I show how *Toy Story* has a strange relationship to space and time. The film seeks to position the two children in different decades, 1950s/90s for Andy and 1970s/80s for Sid, to attempt to create a false dichotomy of wholesomeness of a 1990s nostalgia for the 1950s (Andy) and dis-integration of the 1970s/80s (Sid). To this, the film works through the contemporary neoliberal desire of freedom-from market regulation and structures this motif through the very commodity form and encumbered aesthetic of the film: plastic. As plastic itself has become a material for commodity production and the film’s aesthetics, I also argue that plastic itself is a

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way that we can read the metaphysics that inform the way that the children play with their toys as on-hand resources. Moreover, plastic becomes a way to understand the specific tendencies in Silicon Valley’s techno-fetishism (“technological solutionism”) and neoliberal labor relations. I explicate how these metaphysics of plasticity function in relation to our ecological crisis as seen in climate adaptation measures as these measures seek to mold the planet in accordance with human needs instead of remolding the human to stay within the boundaries of the planet itself. As both Silicon Valley and neoliberalism writ large mobilize their economics globally through outsourcing (and now with the advent of insourcing via the “1099 economy”), I argue that these are the symptoms of the metaphysics of plasticity that seek to create the labor market as malleable for business demands as if an orderable on-hand resource. I argue that Toy Story can teach us about this moment in our cultural history and provide an insight into how we can work forward into a new way of interacting with the world and entities/things within it.

CHAPTER TWO: FRAMEWORK—BEING-THERE-WITH ANDY

With the dangers of our current metaphysics, the seeing of the world and things/entities within it as on-hand resources to be molded for human interests, laid out before us, I move onward to understand how these metaphysics “double ground” themselves within the form of what Heidegger calls “ontotheology.” As I paint a picture for how ontotheology appears to us, I then perform two readings of the film’s climax where in the toys confront Sid. In this double reading, I first read the film according to its terms and the terms laid out in Chapter One, and a second time, to bring out the inherent forms of interplay that lie within the metaphysics of plasticity. In this interplay, I also illuminate how there are motifs of networking that can be used to lay grounds to prepare us for the coming to presence of a new form of metaphysics. For Toy Story, Pixar, Silicon Valley, and neoliberal ecologies/economics, I turn to deep ecology as a
possible venue for reconfiguring our understanding of the world/reality in terms of interconnected and interdependent net(-work) that stresses our dependence upon all parts that constitute the whole. I then explicate ecological ramifications that are projected to occur if we do not stop conceiving the world as plastic, as on-hand resource that is malleable for our use at any time.

**EPILOGUE: PLAYING-WITH THE WORLD**

To conclude the project, I argue for a turn to the writings of Alfred North Whitehead, Henri Bergson, and process metaphysics to work towards an understanding of reality as a whole which understands the totality of parts, or processes, to be necessary for attempting to understand the whole-some of the process of reality. I argue that this mode of analysis can be helpful for film studies as I believe that it can reinvigorate “apparatus theory” which has to some extent lost favor since the 1970s/1980s. With the rise of home-streaming technologies such as Netflix, Hulu, Amazon, and so on, I argue that a process framework can be helpful for understanding the ways in which spectators, exhibition practices at home, and socioeconomic structures are all intertwined within one ecological process.
CHAPTER ONE: A GROUNDWORK—THAT WHICH IS, AND WHENCE

In this chapter, I will present an argument that shows how the world of *Toy Story* appears to us through the two main children (Andy and Sid), how their world is interlaced with the neoliberal tendencies of their time, and how these tendencies of the present have been structured through a metaphysics inherent in plastics/plasticity and on-handedness. Furthermore, as the metaphysics of plastics/plasticity can be seen in *Toy Story* via the films encumbered plastic aesthetic and Pixar’s animation software suite, I elucidate how this also appears to function within Silicon Valley’s approach to technology in terms of interaction between technology and humans as well as technological streamlining. Finally, for the implications of this revealing, I show the economic and ecological implications of such a guiding metaphysics as can be seen in our ecological disaster of climate change and the economic crisis of what is being called the “1099 economy.” The goal of this chapter is to paint a picture establishing Pixar’s usage of space and time in *Toy Story* within its cultural contexts to elucidate dangers of their, and our, current way of relating to the world to lay the groundwork for Pixar’s problematic mode of fixing of Sid that I discuss in Chapter Two. Furthermore, I argue that Pixar’s problematic, and dangerous, mode of fixing is garnered by the problematic metaphysics of Enframing that I map out here.

*Toy Story* has a strange relationship with space and time as it works to play with both space and time in the film’s aesthetics. Its story is set in a suburb where Andy, his sister, and his

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34 My translation.
mom inhabit a white two-story house that is nested next to a tall tree with a small carport and shed on the other side. Looking from the street, the house itself has the main entrance on the right side, next to a small flower garden and has plenty of windows to naturally light the inside of the house. The mom drives a blue mini-van, a middle-class cultural signifier of “mom’s vehicle,” which totes around the family (later, fathers got their own version of the mini-van with the advent of the Sport Utility Vehicle [SUV]). With the banality of the suburban setting, it evokes an understanding that this story, a story of toys and the “good” and “bad” children who play with them, is the story of any-town, in any-time. Still, *Toy Story* seeks to posit within its spaces specific times—a nostalgia for the 1950s wrapped up in the present (the 1990s at the time of the film’s release) in Andy’s house while attempting to present a *wholesome* unity of familial dwelling. In this *wholesomeness*, Pixar attempts to forge a union between the 1950s techno-utopianism and economic growth in order to soothe a 1990s anxiety of white middle-class familial *disintegration*.

The inside of Andy’s house is brightly lit with a color palette of whites, reds, yellows, blues, greens, and other colors from the decorations for Andy’s birthday party (pink, orange, teal). The house has white wainscoting in all of the rooms, vibrant wallpaper (clouds in Andy’s room and a pleasant floral print in the living room) and red paint, and a fireplace in the family/living room that brings a sense of warmth and ‘wholesome’ togetherness to Andy’s house. There is even a small 1990s-era TV with what appears to be the plastic casing of a Super Nintendo (released November 21, 1990) and a VHS player (the 1990s saw the summit of the format’s popularity before the DVD became the dominating format in the early 2000s). Yet, even with the presence of these pieces of 1990s family entertainment technology, the 1950s styled furniture face each other with only a coffee table mediating in between. With this arrangement of
their dwelling space, *Toy Story* brings forth a critique of the contemporary family, as abstracted and via entertainment media, while asserting to the viewers of the film that Andy’s house is one where the family members are strongly interconnected within a wholesome middle-class dwelling. All of this juxtaposed to Sid’s house, right on the other side of the picket fence, who’s household represents ‘the dis-integrated family’ of the 1990s (more on Sid’s house in a moment).

With the heavily periodized technology and furniture, even Andy’s play works to bring to light the cowboy/spaceman tension of the 1950s. With the space race well under way in the mid-1950s, a bifurcation in characters of children’s play emerged. The cowboy, an icon of American lonesome ruggedness, freedom, and hard outdoor work, became a solidification of conservative American values. Meanwhile, the spaceman, a figure of technocratic idealism, trust in technology, and penetrating further into the frontier of the unknown, was the embodiment of the post-war Keynesian economics35 where government invested heavily in social programs to help the nation grow not only scientifically, but nationally as well. As Ham deduces, Buzz’s (who even shares a name with Buzz Aldrin, one of the first astronauts to land on the moon) copper wiring that networks his “multi-phrase voice simulator,” brings a new technology face to face with Woody’s embodiment of conservative 1950s nostalgia. As Woody’s pull-string voice system squawks in relation to Buzz’s clean and smooth voice system, the 1950s tension of spaceman/cowboy is brought into the 1990s, while also setting up the fusion of the two decades that Andy’s house also strattles.

As Andy’s house is attempting to straddle and celebrate the fusion of the 1950s and 1990s, Pixar seeks to unify nature-culture and human-technology within a stable white, middle-

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class, past and future. However, Pixar seeks to dispel and dis-integrate (and disintegrate, in the explosive sense) excesses of technology and capitalism from the 1970s and 1980s (a period of Pixar’s own origins) by displacing them into a world of horrors: Sid’s house. As the film portrays Sid to be a monster, a torturer of toys, the house he lives in appears to be monstrous as well. The house’s “eyes,” dorm windows, are illuminated to gaze out while the light from its maw, the front door, stretches out upon the front yard which we only see at night as it strikes a similar appearance to the house in *The Amityville Horror* (1979, Stuart Rosenberg). There are only four windows on the front of Sid’s house (as opposed to the nine on Andy’s house), suggesting that the inside of the house is mostly artificially lit with light bulbs—a definite contrast to the “authentic” natural lighting of Andy’s house. As Andy’s house has been coded as a quaint white-collar middle-class household, Sid’s house is marked as being not only blue-collar and lower class, but also with 1970s interior decorating. The inside of Sid’s house is tacky with tile flooring and wallpaper, the upstairs hallway has the same carpet as one of the halls in *The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick, 1980). Furthermore, Sid’s family does not appear to own a car, and Sid gets around town on his skateboard—further aligning him with 1990s anxiety of problem children which came out of the 1950s and became solidified in the decades that followed.

Sid’s room, a stark contrast to Andy’s, is darkly lit, cluttered, messy, and feels more like a dungeon with his un-sheeted bed on a metal bedframe donning barbed wire above the headboard with a stained, puke-green carpet, and cheap 1970s wood walls slightly illuminated by a desk lamp and a doll head filled “lava lamp.” On one hand, Andy’s room feels like the warm and safe thesis of what a “good” child’s room and play should look like. On the other, Pixar presents Sid as the vulgar antithesis that one “should hope” their children never become.
Furthermore, the film seems to argue that there is no sense of wholesomeness or unity in Sid’s household as all members and modes of entertainment are segmented off in their own rooms creating a sparseness of familial cohesion. The only TV, which looks like it was manufactured in the 1970s, is not only larger than Andy’s, but also in disrepair as pliers are attached to the broken knob to change the channel. Furthermore, Pixar is coding this 1970s/1980s home in familial disrepair/disintegration. The TV is separate from all other members of the household by placing it in the father’s room, where he lies in his chair appearing to be passed out drunk surrounded by empty beer cans. As Pixar seeks to cleave, as if able to make separate in the beginning, these two worlds of Andy (integration, wholesomeness, what is “natural/good” and human) and of Sid (disintegration and what is “artificial/technological/bad” and alien), the film tries to reconcile all aspects through Andy’s world via the 1950s and 1990s. Andy gets all of the abstraction and technology, while also being gifted the ability to seemingly be within and generate wholesomeness. Andy is able to play with and as his toys as he channels himself through their bodies as he becomes their voice and mobilizer of their action, and yet Andy is argued to be the greater child, even though Andy’s play reveals itself to be dis-integrating at its core. Andy places himself fully as the toy while also controlling all actions of the toys themselves, thus dis-integrating any sense of how parts/groupings/amalgams form cohesive wholes as Andy plays as if he is the total sum of all interaction.

Sid is presented to be one who can only destroy and disintegrate his toys. Even though Sid’s act of play itself is one of integration via amalgamation as he procures the bringing together of parts to form whole bodies, the film denies Sid’s ability to be able to perform wholesomeness. Yet, what Sid does, more so than Andy, is an action of “whole-someness,” the beginnings towards an understanding of a relationality between parts (some) that form the sum
totality (whole). Even more so, Sid does not squelch the toys by channeling his voice through them. Rather, he integrates himself in and with the toys as he takes on surrounding characters that function within the story instead of being the omnipotent puppet-master that controls all agency of the toys while at play. Sid, more so than Andy, has a sense of integration and wholesomeness, yet is painted as the torturer and great destroyer of toys as he philosophizes with pliers, tape, and explosives.

As we have come to a playful tension of wholesomeness as presented through the guise of 1950s/1990s nostalgic fusion, and a notion of whole-someness that establishes an understanding of parts constituting the whole of the world, I argue that we must look further into the form of these children’s play. We have discovered that play helps us understand the construction of reality as both play and reality is always a relationship between entities and things in space and time—which also further defines play as an ecology and a way of experiencing and organizing everyday reality. As I stated in the Introduction, ecology is a methodology which monitors various levels/ranges or ecosystems which seeks to grasp an understanding of the ‘whole-some’ totality of all systems within the one system. What ecology does, in effect, is that it creates a framework that scientists and others can use to understand and organize experience. In play, and play as always-already being part of an ecology, we operate within the conditions that structure the ways in which we interact with all objects in our everyday existence. Furthermore, as it has become present that Sid’s play reveals a basis of reality, a whole-someness of entities/things always-already relating within unified whole, I argue that we

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must look further into how both children’s play (Andy and Sid) function at, and are influenced by, the ontological and metaphysical registers.

So, Play Nice

Since play itself has lead us to a groundwork for understanding the formation of reality, and that this formation is of an interaction of entities/things that formulate the parts within the whole-sum of reality, I will further show how this construction is laid out in Toy Story’s formulation of space and time. Furthermore, I will reveal how this has tendencies towards seeing not just things as resources, but persons within them as well.

Play is an action between a person/thing or person/person that occurs in space and time, while simultaneously being an event of world-building (permanent or temporary) within space and time itself. Since we have discovered, Sid’s play has its roots in whole-someness, the bringing together of parts that formulate wholes, and how these new wholes through their abstraction reveals one’s interconnection to the totality of things. While Andy’s play, by contrast, brings-forth a dis-integration of part/whole relations by his diving fully into the characters that he plays through his toys, thus not revealing how these configurations constitute the whole ‘network’ of entities and things in the world.

Yet, in this revealing of the world what occurs, even more so in the film and in our own socio-economic reality, is a fundamental shift in transformation of space over time to better suit the interests of international conglomerates—something that the toys themselves express as they ask Buzz if he is from Singapore or Hong-Kong. Rex, the rather anxious and excited plastic dinosaur (ironic that a dinosaur is made from plastic as dinosaurs and other plant matter are the key ingredients in oil, and vicariously plastic), tells us that he was from a company that was
purchased in a leveraged buyout by Mattel. Such mergers are not unknown to the world of toy production as conglomerations, horizontal integration, and a freedom-from-limits (i.e. regulation) are common within our contemporary socioeconomic model of “neoliberalism.”

Created through the end of the Bretton Woods agreements and various institutions, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the IMF, and the Bank of International Settlements in Basle, neoliberalism carries within its core doctrine the flag of “freedom.” The “neoliberal state” is one of the assumption that individual freedoms are best guaranteed by the freedom of the market and of trade with heightened interests of private property ownership, businesses, multinational corporations, and finance capital.\(^{37}\) As the doctrine tries to secure “human well-being … by liberating the individual entrepreneurial freedoms … free markets and free trade,”\(^{38}\) neoliberalism believes that, as David Harvey States,

State interventions in markets (once created) must be kept to a bare minimum because, according to the theory, the state cannot possibly possess enough information to second-guess market signals (prices) and because powerful interest groups will inevitably distort and bias state interventions (particularly democracies) for their own benefit.\(^{39}\)

Since the 1970s, the neoliberal turn has brought about massive deregulation, privatization, and withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision in order to work towards the ideology’s belief in “an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs.”\(^{40}\) It does this by placing all emphasis in the

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\(^{38}\) Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2.

\(^{39}\) Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 2.

\(^{40}\) Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 3.
marketplace and “holds that the social good will be maximized by maximizing the reach and frequency of market transactions.”

Yet, as neoliberalism works to create its social good and freedom as being one that is a freedom-from limits, it does so, paradoxically, through limits itself. As neoliberalism is an attempt to get back at the domain of the unfettered capitalism of the industrial era by seeking a freedom-from limits, it is always operating within a limitation. To forge an ideology around the idea that the markets are to be completely free, a freedom-from regulation and restriction of the market, and vicariously individual freedom and well-being, is always-already situated within a freedom-within regulation—a freedom-within limits, however disavowed.

In light of this freedom-from motif, both Sid and Andy have a tendency in their play that, when looked at formally, cannot be told to be so dissimilar. Andy navigates his toys and turns boxes so that they transform from the space of a western town into cattle on the prairie, while Sid navigates his toolbox to transform toys and backyard space from a patchy-grass area into a launch-site for mission control. Both do this transforming of space and time into to make the most use imaginable at that moment, as they are rooted in their time of play. In addition, as Buzz Lightyear’s voice and advertisements tells us, one is to go “to infinity; and beyond!” in one’s play itself. One is to be infinite, to be without finite limitation, and to go a step further—to go beyond it! As Andy is wrapped in the aesthetic of Buzz Lightyear paraphernalia, and Sid is iconized as the “problem child” (more on this in a moment) and inheritor of a Buzz Lightyear, Buzz becomes the binding plastic fabric (flexible nylon and hard material) to connect both

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41 Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism, 3.
42 One can even see this in their tactics of union busting and relocating of factories from the “rust belt” to the “sun belt”—see Steven High’s Industrial Sunset: The Making of North America’s Rust Belt, 1969-1984 (Ontario, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).
children together in the film’s, and “neoliberalism’s” desire for a freedom-from limits. The film’s critique of the dangers of a child who plays without limits becomes troubled. The film argues that Andy plays within limits and Sid who dangerously plays without limits—even though Sid never hurts animals, other humans, and other sentient beings while allegedly reversing his actions once he finds out that the toys are sentient.43 The problem is that we have an socioeconomic and an ecological understanding of the world as limitless, and that we can go beyond the limitlessness itself, when in actuality, there are severe limitations to socioeconomic growth put in place by ecological limitations itself (Chapter Two will discuss more on these limits).

Within this meeting, reconfiguring, and merging of different registers of space and time, Andy and Sid’s dwellings and their periodizations are brought into relation. Both are folded together in not only the freedom-from, but also in terms of plasticity. As neoliberalism has brought the amplified understanding of freedom into the market, it has done so centered around two understandings of plastics. On one hand, plastic is a production material itself, a cheap alternative to more expensive materials, and on the other hand plastic has an understanding of malleability, flexibility, moldability—plasticity. In the ideology of the freedom-from limits, plastic itself has been a keystone to structuring one who is not only free from the financial limits of expensive materials. However, it also carries the understanding of one who remains flexible in one’s allocation of resources in order to attempt to solve complex product flows and negotiations over production.

*Toy Story* overwhelmingly relies upon *plastics* in the film’s household commodities and toys as the majority of the toys appear to be constructed out of plastic/vinyl. Not only do the toys appear to be of a plastic construction, but the wood on the floors and other household furniture too, such as the metal on beds and guardrails, seem to have a plastic like glean to them. Furthermore, the sheen of plastic can even be found in the film’s own environment as well. Plants shimmer and move as if plastic as Buzz moves in and through bushes on his way to jump onto Andy’s Mom’s SUV on their way to Pizza planet. Since plastic is revealing itself to us as the socioeconomic and ecological binder for *Toy Story*, as well as being the forming material of neoliberal capitalism, that makes *Toy Story* ‘play out,’ it is an imperative that we seek a more rigorous understanding of plastic. I argue that to understand plastic itself we must press forward into the guiding principles that structure plastic/plasticity in the first place. To this, I will turn to the metaphysics that structure this tendency towards a cultural logic of plasticity. I argue that this in the understanding of the world in terms of on-handedness in resources is one that stems from the drive of/towards plasticity that we have been beginning to trace thus far.

**Plastics: Consumer Product Material, and More…**

As plastic functions as something that creates boundaries and borders, to keep things fresh, separate, and ordered neatly on a shelf, plastic works to situate the world not only within our control, but to also order the world in such a way that things are on-hand ready to be used at any time. This sense of resources being on-hand ready to be used at any time, which plastics, and arguably, plasticity carries with it, is a freedom from the constraints of limited resources I argue is a focal point to our contemporary metaphysics that the film clearly articulates. In this section, I will be pursuing our cultural logic of plastic/plasticity to show how it has worked to mold our culture and can be used as an allegory for our understandings of reality itself.
Plastic, or “Bakelite” as it was called upon its creation in 1907 by Leo Baekeland, was created to fill consumer demand for commodities that were harder to come by (i.e., nylon replaced silk) stemming from anti-colonial resistance movements that caused costs of commodities to rise. As Heather Davis states in “Life & Death in the Anthropocene: A Short History of Plastic,” plastic became a cheap alternative for more expensive and now harder to obtain commodities which helped with the rise of the post-WWII economy. Davis continues to elaborate that the emergence of plastic in consumer life helped decrease the cost of commodities while also increasing the readiness and availability of commodities to help foster the rising of the American middle-class that was and is “defined by consumption.” Plastic became the material which enabled not only companies to be free-form geo-political and geo-economic concerns of materials in trade, but it also allowed the freedom of capital to flow, malleable like plastic itself, in order to create an immense economic boom in the post-war economy of the 1950s.

Furthermore, plastic did more than just help expand and define the new middle-class in the post-WWII economy, “plastic [also] created the conditions for global trade and consumerism” that neoliberalism heavily relies upon.

What is interesting is that plastic itself contains within it an ideology, or a “metaphysics,” a way of relating to the world that one grows accustomed to as they are placed in the world in a specific time and culture. Plastic is a material that forms barriers, keeping outside contaminants apart from the container’s boundaries while also streamlining product flow and facilitating

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abundance.\textsuperscript{48} Around the same time that plastic was institutionalized as a household commodity, container, and when \textit{Toy Story} attempts to awkwardly place itself, Martin Heidegger, in 1954, publishes his essay “The Question Concerning Technology” [\textit{Der Frage nach der Technic}] in Germany. In “The Question Concerning Technology,” Heidegger seeks to shed light on the essence of technology and how reality \textit{reveals} itself to us. Technology, for Heidegger, is not just a question of what the thing does, an instrumental understanding, or what the culture uses it for, an anthropological understanding, nor is technology’s essence anything technological.\textsuperscript{49} The essence of \textit{modern technology}, for Heidegger, is a way of interacting with the world, a kind of attitude, that stems from a particular way of seeing and relating to the world, which prior epochs\textsuperscript{50} did not share. This way of relating to the world is structured by a particular way of modern technology’s revealing [\textit{ἀλήθεια}; aletheia]\textsuperscript{51} of the world as “standing-reserve” [\textit{Bestand}], the ordering, both in the sense of commanding and organizing/ranking, of the world and its resources to be on-hand for use at any time. The process that this happens within is what

\textsuperscript{48} Davis, “Life and Death in the Anthropocene,” 349.
\textsuperscript{49} Martin Heidegger “Question Concerning Technology”. \textit{Basic writings: From Being and time (1927) to The Task of Thinking (1964)} D. F. Krell, Ed. (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 2008) p312-313. Hereafter, all citations to “Question Concerning Technology” will be notated as: QCT. In addition, QCT 311 and 325.
\textsuperscript{50} See QCT 325. I italicize ‘modern technology’ to stress that this mode of revealing is a different way of revealing than that of prior epochs, historically prior ways of Being in the world, would have understood the world. The revealing of the world as resource is something ‘new’ to our way of Being. Furthermore, I would not argue that this mode of seeing things/entities as resources is not something radically new to the 20th century and beyond. Spinoza saw this tendency coming as early on as when \textit{The Ethics} were published in 1677—see \textit{Spinoza: The Complete Works} (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc, 2002,) Part 1, Appendix, 239. Also, Heidegger often uses the word “epoch” as a jab at Edmund Husserl’s (Heidegger’s teacher) notion of the “epoché,” an attempt to study things ahistorically and aconceptually (see “The Basic Approach to Phenomenology” §27-33). This is one of the main disagreements between Heidegger and Husserl (see \textit{History of the Concept of Time} §20-22) as Heidegger believes that the way one should do phenomenology is through a historical approach to understand how prior epochs/cultures understood Being. Through understanding how Being has developed, we can work to understand the meaning of Being within our own epoch.
\textsuperscript{51} See QCT 318. \textit{ἀλήθεια} carries with it the notion of something being un-concealed, or uncovered/revealed, in its truth. Heidegger tells us that as technology is always caught up in \textit{ἀλήθεια}, as “technology is no mere means [ie. instrumental and anthropological]. Technology is a way of revealing” (QCT p318). I ask the reader to keep in mind that Heidegger keeps enframing, as it is a \textit{revealing}, within the status of a verb. That \textit{revealing} is always an active and \textit{continuing} process. It is not that technology today is a way of revealing, but that it has always been a way of revealing. The problem is the way technology is revealing today and when it becomes a destining—when it becomes the way that we “naturally” experience the world.
Heidegger calls “Enframing” [Gestell], which as Heidegger scholar Lee Braver states, “is what makes technology possible.”\(^{52}\) The \textit{active process} of Enframing, is what reveals the way the world appears to us. Through Enframing, the world is revealed to us as to be ordered standing-reserve as if it is what we are to “naturally” do. This is what Heidegger means when he states, “Destining of revealing holds complete sway over men. But that destining is never a fate that compels.”\(^{53}\) We are not coerced to reveal the world this way, it is how we see and understand the world as we are thrown \([\text{Gewordenheit}]\)\(^{54}\) into our own specific epoch which carries with it its own way of relating to the world in terms of resources to be ordered on-hand for greatest efficiency. The toys in \textit{Toy Story} fall within this “destining” as well. Not only do the children engage with them in terms of resources, Buzz should be there for Andy to take to Pizza Planet or the toys/tools should be there on-hand for Sid to use at any time, but the toys also, as Woody iterates multiple times, believe that they are to be there for Andy when Andy needs them.

Plastic has a rich cultural tradition as well in the 1950s. During the rise of suburbanization, plastic became a way of gathering together household parties where suburban women could come together and socialize while also learning about the latest state-of-the-art food storage system: Tupperware. The plastic barrier of Tupperware promised to lock in your food’s fresh flavors and aromas, while providing a strong air-tight seal that would enable you to stack the containers in any which way.\(^{55}\) Tupperware, and by extension plastic, promised to keep

\(^{52}\) Lee Braver \textit{Heidegger’s Later Writings}, (New York, NY: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2009,) 84.
\(^{53}\) QCT p330 also p332
food fresh in an easy to stack manner while also promising to order one’s refrigerator in the most efficient way possible in order to keep one’s resources, one’s food, on-hand to be heated up and consumed at any time. The film demonstrates this as well in both children’s rooms—Andy and Sid both store their toys on shelves and in crates/cheses so that they can be utilized for maximum fun at any time (more on this in Chapter Two) and Sid’s Pop-Tarts’ plastic-foil seals out any foreign contaminants (similar to a gate in a suburban community).

This tendency towards efficiency and consumption garnered by the revealing of the world as standing-reserve that plastic offers was not left behind in the 1950s. Toy production saw a large increase in the utilization of plastics in the 1960s and 1970s to keep up with the growing consumer demand of the expanded middle-class. Such instances can be seen in toy cars and trucks that still possessed a metal frame, but increasingly were featuring plastic chassis and wheels, as well as the rise of fully plastic toys like the Wham-O “Frisbee,” which promised such plastic versatility that could bring fun to the whole family (over 100 million units sold by 1977).56

Yet, as “the 1950s witnessed the height of U.S. toy production,” toy production in the U.S. has steadily declined since the 1970s.57 Through the 1980s with the rise of neoliberal globalization, deregulation, and union busting, the toy industry had made dynamic changes in its organization. Hasbro acquired Coleco, Milton Bradley, Warner Communication’s Knickerbocker Toy Company, and Playschool since 1989. Before Hasbro acquired Tonka in

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early 1991, Tonka had already acquired Kenner-Parker toys in 1987.\textsuperscript{58} Meanwhile, Tyco acquired View-Master and Nasta International in 1989.\textsuperscript{59} Through this mode of horizontal integration, companies produced a denser network through mergers and acquisitions that worked to squelch competition (thus forming legally questionable monopolies). The primary reason for this was the increasing availability of “lower labour costs available overseas, especially in Asia, [leading] many of the larger toy producers to shift production to these areas by either opening production facilities, entering joint ventures, or contracting with Asian Manufacturers.”\textsuperscript{60} With the increasing trend towards outsourcing, we can see the world and the commodities that we create within it being treated as on-hand resources, as standing-reserves, for human use at any time. Moreover, entire bodies of people and cultures are being treated in this same way and are ordered to remain as malleable as plastic (hours, wages, etc.) if they are to continue getting work. This outsourcing and resource oriented thinking is problematic as well for digital animators, as digital effects creators have to migrate around the world to stay in work since Hollywood farm out effects jobs to multiple companies. Hollywood does this to hedge against possibly losing all of the effects for the film as effects houses typically bid so low for work contracts that they either cannot make much money, break zero, or most of the time fall below budget.\textsuperscript{61} For \textit{Toy Story}, not only do the toys themselves understand these acquisitions, mergers, and resource oriented thinking, they desire it as they wish to remain within this on-hand resource based way of relating to the world. Woody states in the staff-meeting that they have that it does not matter how often they are played with, but what matters is that they are there for Andy when he needs them.

\textsuperscript{58} USITC, 2.
\textsuperscript{59} USITC, 2.
\textsuperscript{60} USITC, 2.
\textsuperscript{61} For more on these conditions, see Julie Turnock’s interview with Craig Chamberlain “‘Star Wars’ and the coming of age of special effects” in Illinois News Bureau https://news.illinois.edu/blog/view/6367/286838 (Accessed March 18th, 2017)
Pixar’s Standing-Reserve: Andy and, moreover, Sid

As we have traced these metaphysics that structure the way the world reveals itself to us in terms of on-hand resources for use at any time, I argue that we must turn to Toy Story’s largest resource that it has on-hand for critiquing forms of play, Sid. As we work towards further revealing the form of Silicon Valley and Pixar’s form of human/environment/technological interactions, I will show how this form is problematic to its core as it is structured fully from these metaphysics of plasticity that we are tracing.

Sid, the bastard child of the 1970s and 1980s, is vilified for his tendency towards a form of bricolage, the repurposing and reconfiguring of objects to form new objects, and thus becomes Pixar’s on-hand resource as whipping boy for 1990s concerns of “problem children.” Sid plays with tools of production such as vices, pliers, matches, explosives and does not so much hug his toys as achieve satisfaction from disassembling them to see how they work. Sid’s play is quite similar to Charles Baudelaire’s notes in “Philosophy of Toys,” where the child rips off the head of the doll to look inside and find the doll’s soul, only to find that there is no soul and only stuffing or empty space. That Sid, in his more explorative play, utilizes high degrees of abstraction making him proto-philosopher of the film and allows his play to explore all aspects of children’s play with toys.

Yet, what Sid’s play does even more for us is show how Sid holds a higher degree of relationality with the space and time that he inhabits. Sid is more connected with his toys as he not only plays with them but also builds them in his form of bricolage. What Sid truly has is a higher sense of play likened to what Walter Benjamin names “interplay,” an interconnectedness.

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between nature and humanity that relaxes our rigid control over the world. Yet, unlike Benjamin’s interplay, Sid still seeks a mastery over his toys and nature and both Sid and Andy not only see their toys as within the context of the standing-reserve, but the toys themselves seek to remain within this human-centered ordering.

I return to the glorification of Andy as I argue that Pixar is treating Andy as their avatar for Silicon Valley, since they, too, are interested in this meeting of human and technology that Silicon Valley seeks to bring to the table. Andy’s play is one of evoking a spirit of being best buddies with his toys, he always engages in a loving communal spirit. Andy lays out his toys next to one another while he is playing in horizontal fashion as if likened to a horizontal integrative outward stretching where he becomes the central organizer of all spread out entities. I argue that Pixar desires to wrap their wholesomeness of Andy around neoliberal economic tendencies.

Conversely, it also appears that Pixar constructs Sid to be a stand in for the top-down corporate oppression that the founders of the Silicon Valley sought to escape has he plays as the top-down oppressor of his toys. Pixar further seeks to position Sid as what they are against, dis-integrative and un-wholesome abuser of entities as on-hand resources, even though it appears to us that the truth is equally applied to both children in Pixar’s argument. However, this critique is further based within Silicon Valley’s sociohistorical contexts that must be understood to fully grasp the tension of good/bad child that Pixar is expressing through Andy and Sid while also shedding light on why they constitute each character as operating to soothe white middle-class familial and economic anxieties of the 1990s.

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A Brief History of Silicon Valley: From Counterculture to Mainstream-Culture

In this section, I outline the anxieties of popular culture’s response to the countercultures of the 1960s and 1970s as Pixar seeks to concretize these anxieties within the form of not only Sid, but also Sid’s play and room. Both Sid and his room appear to be cast in the anti-authoritative cloth of the eras’ counterculture movements; most explicitly in Sid’s Do-It-Yourself (DIY) form of play, quite similar to the beginnings of Silicon Valley itself. I explicate further how both Sid and Andy become the resources utilized for Pixar’s complicated, yet arguably confused, critique of top-down office hierarchies and praise of horizontal integrative corporate play.

My understanding of Silicon Valley culture and its historicity largely stems from Fred Turner’s book *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*. Turner argues that Silicon Valley’s culture and ethos emerged out of the “New Communalists,” Turner’s term for the counterculture group who sought to remove themselves from the culture in the 1960s (later returning in the 1970s and 1980s) who, “Turned away from political action and towards technology and the transformation of consciousness as the primary sources of social change.” The New Communalist culture’s spirit was one of DIY and freedom-from control with a copy of the *Whole Earth Catalog*, a collection of every tool on the planet earth and what it was used for, in hand. The *Whole Earth Catalog* carried with it an ethos of individuality, shaping one’s world with the tools available, and sharing this experience with others who desire to. One was to challenge the system of top-down restrictive corporations by leaving society with their *Whole Earth Catalog* in hand to help

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65 Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, 112 and 103.
66 See inside cover of *Whole Earth Catalog*. Also cited by Turner *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, 82.
them remold themselves, plastically, towards their building of a new cultural ethos of being outside the system. Yet as the New Communalists worked to flee from society and embark towards a new relation towards the world with the late 1960s hippy countercultural spirit in their hearts, their communes began to crumble once funds ran out and family/friends no longer gave to help keep the communes going. To survive, the New Communalists, as Turner states, “Needed structures of governance and structured ways of making a living—the very institutional elements of social life that many … had hoped to avoid.”

Because the Silicon Valley spirit since its early days, arising from the New Communalists, has been one of escaping the top-down oppression of the late 1960s and into the 1980s, I argue that Pixar has constituted this detest towards top-down corporate oppression within Sid, which does not have the ‘smiling face’ that Silicon Valley companies put forward on the surface. At the same time that Pixar performs this constitution of Sid as top-down oppressor, they unwittingly fuse their own cultural DIY roots within him—Sid becomes not only the destroyer, but the proto-hacker of computer programs that Silicon Valley concretized themselves around. Not only does Sid become the whipping boy for Pixar’s condemnation of 1970s/80s changes to geo-economics (Reagan deregulation, Margret Thatcher’s rise to power, etc.). As the New Communalists were seeking to live outside the system to escape from the top down hierarchies of corporate culture, I claim that we can see these instances in how Sid plays. Sid is the ‘overlord’ of his room and that he is the one who is always in control of his play in such a way that is deemed vulgar by the film’s manifest depiction: he tortures, tears apart, and blows up toys while having no recollection of the toy’s sentience. What Sid says, goes, and Sid pushes to

67 See Stewart Brand “We owe It All to the Hippies,” in Time magazine “Welcome to Cyberspace” (1995). Turner provides a short summary: From Counterculture to Cyberspace 103 and 118-120.
68 Turner, From Counterculture to Cyberspace, 118.
69 See Harvey’s Brief History of Neoliberalism.
great lengths to keep things within this mode of play. Sid plays multiple human characters who follow down the hierarchy similarly to the prototypical understanding of corporate office culture. Thus, as Silicon Valley sought to escape this top-down corporate oppression, Woody and Buzz too desire this as well, but interestingly run back into another form of a horizontalized “buddy” schema where the toys are still regarded as on-hand resources, Andy’s care, which Silicon Valley prefers.

Furthermore, Pixar also utilizes Sid as their resource to flex 1990s concerns about “problem children” by expressing this through the trend of the condemnation of “extreme music.” As Sid’s room is darkly lit, it also dons various neon black-light style posters (a trend from the psychedelic 1960s and continued into the 1970s) one of which featuring a band called “Mega Dork.” Arguably a combination based allusion to 1980s-present American metal band “Megadeath” and the United Kingdom’s Ozzy Osbourne. Megadeath’s first two full-length releases featuring themes of annihilation and corrupt business practices in Killing Is My Business... and Business is Good as well as Peace Sells... But Who’s Buying? Meanwhile, the Ozzy Osbourne’s early albums held themes of madness and lycanthropy with such titles as Diary of a Madman and Bark at the Moon. This anxiety about heavy metal and some pop music sparked the founding of the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC), fronted by Tipper Gore in 1985. Being a convenient scapegoat for conservatives and liberals alike in the 1980s and 1990s (and arguably still today), extreme music was also used as a form of syllogistic logic to understand the rise in school shootings from the 1950s-1990s. Adding the number of shootings up, the 1990s saw 62 school shootings—36 of which occurred up until November 15, 1995—just

70 Wooden and Gillam make a similar observation in Pixar’s Boy Stories: Masculinity in a Postmodern Age (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014,) 90.
12 days before the release of *Toy Story* on November 22. A similar witch-hunt was launched upon similar music artists just less than four years later after the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado.

Nevertheless, Sid’s connection to the counterculture, “problem children,” or the perception of individuals who “are a tax on society” does not end with his fashion sense of wearing a black t-shirt with a skull on it or the idolizing of heavy metal. His play itself incorporates another trend from 1970s-1990s countercultures (punks, metal heads, goths, etc.): DIY. Sid’s toys themselves are in this bricolage hodgepodge of pieces and parts reminiscent of the destitute impoverished punks who birthed band patch culture. Beginning out of the inability to afford clothing, the punks had to patch together what scraps of clothes that they had in between squatting in abandoned houses (often a trend for Crust Punks, then and still today) from the evacuation of the Rust Belt due to the rise of the Sun-Belt from Reaganite deregulation.\(^72\)

The late 1980s and early 1990s saw a massive incorporation of counterculture aesthetics into consumer niche/target marketing to Generation X’ers. Through this, these seemingly extreme cultural movements were “defanged” and made palpable to the masses as they were stripped of their political pulsations and repackaged in a safe alternative, a “special edition” if you will, for sale in mall stores such as Spencer’s Gifts, Hot Topic, Sam Goodie, etc. Potentially "extreme" and political music was rendered harmless through this banalization of the counterculture aesthetic and politics with the corporate variety of Pop Punk. With bands such as Green Day and Blink 182 who took the ‘poppier’ sounds of bands like Bad Religion but wrote songs, or were told to write songs, that were not as politically aggressive as their predecessors

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were. With this commercialization, no longer did one have to listen to hours of punk and metal records to know which patches to sew on their vest, or which t-shirts they wanted to buy; the companies now became the resource for all shirts and pre-stitched patch-laden vests.\textsuperscript{73} The enjoyment process of a culture, even if lifted into the mainstream, was \textit{streamlined} (this will become important momentarily) for economic and supposed personal enjoyment. Sid is both denigrated as a form of control, a terrifying top-down oppressor, but also is interwoven within a countercultural tendency and style that has roots in Silicon Valley’s historicity. Pixar, in a sense, lays out a confused formulation of cultural resistance and oppression in Sid while painting his creativity as a vulgarity.\textsuperscript{74}

However, Sid is not only character used as an on-hand resource to pour in Pixar’s ideological critique—Andy becomes Pixar’s champion for the Silicon Valley spirit which came out of the same historical period that they are critiquing through Sid. The New Communalist spirit later began to shift due to influence from Gregory Bateson’s work on cybernetics and meditations in \textit{Steps to an Ecology of Mind}. Bateson’s theories on cybernetics and ecology enabled the New Communalists to believe in a society that one is always ‘plugged into’ as “Bateson outlined a vision of the natural world as a set of information systems in interaction with one another.”\textsuperscript{75} This notion of interconnection and interaction allowed the waning New

\textsuperscript{73} In the scenes, bands who sell their merchandise, or “merch,” at these stores are often pejoratively called “Mall-Core” bands as one can conveniently purchase the DIY aesthetic at their local Hot Topic.

\textsuperscript{74} Wooden and Gillam in \textit{Pixar’s Boy Stories} (83-96) express a similar motif by illuminating through multiple of Pixar’s young boy villains (Sid and Syndrome of \textit{The Incredibles} [Brad Bird, 2004]) how creativity and being a “non-jock” boy become building blocks for evil. Alan Ackerman expresses the tension of how one cannot easily portray Sid as being the only violent one as Andy himself expresses his own “happy violence.” \textit{Seeing Things: From Shakespeare to Pixar} (Ontario Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011,) 100.

\textsuperscript{75} Turner \textit{From Counterculture to Cyberculture} 123. Turner is referencing the following quote from Bateson’s \textit{Steps to an Ecology of Mind}, found on the same page I have cited: “The individual mind is immanent but not only in the body. It is immanent also in pathways and messages outside the body; and there is a larger Mind of which the individual mind is only a sub-system. This larger Mind is comparable to God and is perhaps what some people mean by ‘God,’ but it is still immanent in the total interconnected social system and planetary ecology.”
Communalist movement to realize, as Lee Felsenstein stated, “You don’t have to leave industrial society, but you don’t have to accept it the way it is.”76 This liberated the New Communalists with the realization that they do not have to leave society to make changes, they can make the changes within society itself by being a part of the society.77 For the New Communalists, it allowed an opening of freedom from their very constriction of their form of freedom-from society by finding freedom within the limits of society.

The 1970s also saw the birth of the “hacker ethic” from up and coming computer ‘geeks’ coming out of tech schools such as MIT that focused on the practical elements of computers over theoretical-oriented approaches in a playful and communal way. Eventually finding themselves clustered around the San Francisco Bay area, these hackers included “the young founders of Apple Computers, Steve Jobs, who would later purchase Pixar from Lucasfilm in 1986, and Steve Wozniak, as well as early proselytizers for personal computing such as Lee Felsenstein, Bob Albrecht, and Ted Nelson.”78 The hackers saw themselves as opposed to the “planners,” theoretically minded students who meticulously worked through computer issues, by instead opting to play with the computers for the fun of it.79 These hackers played with computers and created programs that were open for anyone to use for their own programs, or to develop further and then ‘put it back into the bin’ for others to pick up and play with down the road.80 The hackers also worked with local corporations (DEC and Bolt, Barnek, and Newman) that were part of the leading edge of personal computer (PC) technology and that would lead to the

77 Turner expresses a similar motif in From Counterculture to Cyberculture (124) while discussing Bateson’s epistemology from Steps to an Ecology of Mind.
78 Turner, From Counterculture to Cyberculture, 133.
79 Turner, From Counterculture to Cyberculture, 133.
80 Turner, From Counterculture to Cyberculture, 134.
formation of the internet. However, within the hacker ethic, that Steven Levy wrote, “Access to computers—and anything which might teach you something about the way the world works—should be unlimited and total.” Not only did the hackers structure their work relationality as one that is a freedom from limits, but they conceived of the world itself as something that is unlimited itself.

This communal play-room with their ‘toy-chest’ of programs and interaction with corporations became part of the root for the Silicon Valley’s work relationality that was not of the top-down oppressive corporate culture that they forge within Sid. What they instead work to craft is a work relationship that is constituted around the form of play itself by channeling it through the attitude of play—“playfulness.” As Miguel Sicart states, “Playfulness assumes one of the core attributes of play: appropriation. To be playful is to appropriate a context that is not created or intended for play.” What Silicon Valley types wanted is the playfulness that comes from the foosball table in the office, the attitude of communalism and fun, and a freedom-from the rigid top-down structures of the corporate meeting room. With this form of playfulness, the flatness of the water-cooler being the only place to gather and share trivialities of the weather and what was for lunch associated with boring and oppressive corporate culture. As I have gestured before, Andy embodies this communal spirit where he surrounds himself with his toys as he plays as them and lays them out horizontally while playing the central guiding figure in a seemingly more communal relationality when the film compares Andy to Sid. Yet, playfulness is not merely local to the workspace relationship. Silicon Valley has labored tirelessly to

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81 Turner, From Counterculture to Cyberculture, 134.
82 Turner, From Counterculture to Cyberculture, 134.
84 Sicart, Play Matters, 27.
aesthetically incorporate this within the totality of their products at the levels of form and content—software and hardware.

**The Geist Institutionalized: Dawn of the Age of Apple Aesthetics**

Thus far, we have seen how *Toy Story* presents the use of space and time of the two children, and the modulation there of through their play, is also something that can be found within the socioeconomic structures of neoliberalism. In addition, as the children play within the neoliberal space/time relationships, they do so with plastic things and within an encumbered plastic aesthetic. This plasticity, and its malleability, that is present in *Toy Story* has been revealed to be manifest within the metaphysics that govern the time and place we are thrown in the world in terms of Enframing, the revealing of the world as on-hand resource for human use at any time. This has extended not only from things, made of plastic or not, the world as being seen as total sum of resources for humans to utilize, and even extended to workers in the geo-economics of neoliberalism. Furthermore, we have seen how Pixar utilizes the children of *Toy Story* themselves as resources for flexing concerns about corporate structures and anxieties of problem children of the 1990s via placement (space) and periodization (time). We will see how Silicon Valley’s rebellion against top-down corporate environments has manifested from playfulness and merged into a form of interplay, though one that I will critique and offer a different form of interplay in the Benjaminian sense of the word as interconnection between humans, technology, and nature.

At the 2009 unveiling of the iPhone, Jobs claimed that Apple would once more transform the technological typography with the integration of the iPod, the phone, and information technology (internet). In the description of the User Interface (UI), Jobs tells the audience that what Apple has sought to do, and accomplished in the iPhone, is an *interplay* of hardware and
software.\textsuperscript{85} To be clear, I am not arguing that Silicon Valley’s mode of interplay is the same as Benjamin’s notion of interplay. As Benjamin’s mode of interplay is one of an interconnectedness and a being-with nature, Silicon Valley’s mode of interplay based on human and technology (sans-nature) and is nothing revolutionary as it is still a conception of the world based off the metaphysics that reveal the world as purely an on-hand resource to be ordered to maximum efficiency. This is how Silicon Valley abused the systems theory of Bateson who conceived of the individual who was “a servosystem coupled with its environment.”\textsuperscript{86} What Silicon Valley did was to take this ‘plugging into,’ yet still detach the human from the environment and social totality which is effected by such devices (more on this in a moment). Instead, what companies like Apple did was focus on the human and technological interplay while bracketing larger ecological concerns, and at the same time being an interplay that is ‘encoded’ within these problematic metaphysics which we have been tracing. For the iPhone, the phone, MP3 player, and information technology has been ordered to maximum efficiency. As will be uncovered later in this chapter (and explored further in Chapter Two), this mode is extended to the workers of Silicon Valley as well through the “1099 economy.”

Nevertheless, Apple’s interplay, and the interplay of Silicon Valley, as it evolved from the 1980s into the 2000s and beyond has still been one of a human-centered control over things. To turn information into the ultimate standing-reserve, to make information easily accessible, ready at hand, for use at any time by tapping a few times on your phone’s screen. Ultimately, Apple’s version of interplay was one of plasticity through technological streamlining—one of


\textsuperscript{86} Gregory Bateson “Effects of Conscious Purpose on Human Adaptation,” in \textit{Steps to an Ecology of Mind}, 448.
“technological solutionism,” the turning to technology to solve all problems. As Evgeny Morozov elaborates in *To Save Everything Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism*, is the “recasting of all complex social situations either as neatly defined problems with definite, computable solutions or as transparent self-evident processes that can easily be optimized,” with technology as the streamlined source for all solutions. As Silicon Valley companies work to streamline their productivity, they yield to technology to solve all of their problems. Now, this does have a tendency to fix problems—and that is a good thing! However, what Morozov is arguing is that sometimes the problems that solutionism/streamlining solve might also be virtues as well. Morozov gives an example: if one streamlines the cooking process to a base set of tasks and specifically measured ingredients, one will achieve a tasty meal that tastes exactly like the recipe. However, what Morozov is getting at is that through the act of relying on streamlining for everything we could be destroying the condition of possibility of failure and experimentation. Entire cuisines have been started through the very virtue of failure and experimentation, and it is through a heavy reliance upon streamlining and technological solutionism that we could possibly lose this virtue. For *Toy Story*, Buzz needs to fall from the sky onto the tile ground, Buzz needs to fail, in order to realize he is a toy and reconceptualize his existence. Without this failure, he would still be running about trying to fight emperor Zurg thus stressing the virtue of and the revealing nature of failure.

For example, Apple, I argue, is at the forefront of technological solutionism/streamlining/optimization. Features are often shaved off their hardware to save space, weight, and power consumption. Things are supposed to be, as an idiom goes, ‘high speed

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87 See Evgeny Morozov’s *To Save Everything Click Here: The Folly of Technological Solutionism* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2014). I will elaborate on this in the next paragraph as I continue my argument.
88 Morozov, *To Save Everything Click Here*, 5.
and low drag.’ For example, the release of the iPhone 7 received a large backlash from Apple’s consumer base as they removed their headphone-jack in favor of a USB-C port that allowed the use of wired headphones via “dongle,” an adapter plugged into a port to allow for other devices and ways of connecting to the host device. However, Silicon Valley’s streamlining of commodities towards solutions for problems does not end with Apple’s fixation on removing and replacing connectivity ports—it is a matter of coding as well, that which structures how it looks.

Pixar’s animation software suite consists of three main programs: “Open Subdiv,” “Presto,” and “RenderMan.” Open Subdiv is the modeling tool that Pixar’s animators use for character creation in order to construct characters/things from a basic framework, or wireframe. Open Subdiv does more than basic rigging as the software is used all the way to the finished character/thing that is colored, weighted, “avars” applied (hinges for movement), and ready for the animation process. Presto is the animation software that controls the way in which characters and things act in the created world—their movement, interaction with things, speaking, etc. RenderMan is the “render” software that takes the final images and animated programming and converts them into the final product—the film. All of these animation programs from Pixar are coded to quickly model, animate, and render digital animation, but they are always geared towards streamlining the production process to save on artist fatigue, and ultimately, to save money as well. Within the Pixar animating software systems, one never needs to ask the question “What is animation?” as the answer to the question is technologically solved as it is built into the programming. Things and characters are always to be wired, rigged, weighted, modeled, muscles

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added, etc. thus streamlining the process and not even allowing the question of “What is animation?” to come up.

As Pixar has established the aesthetic of digital animation as the forerunner of the industry, it has also defined the way in which one is to animate digitally. The animation process itself has been streamlined in the sense that animators work in specific departments to speed up production (albeit, this is a strategy implemented by Walt Disney and his admiration for the Ford factory model). Moreover, the programming systems themselves have streamlined the process. Programs always offer the specific parameters that define what animation is to be. Gone are the days of the squash and stretch “Steamboat Willy” where the environment and smokestacks spring to life to dance and sing at any moment. Now, Pixar not only picks that which possesses animus within the first few minutes of the film, and never wavers thereafter, but the way in which things are to be is encoded, “hard-wired,” into the programming itself. Trees no longer pop into and out of animated life and cars no longer squash and stretch as they roll to a stop. Instead, when Buzz falls to the ground, he crashes and breaks instead of squashing, stretching, and snapping back into his normal shape. Environments, and things within it, are to mimic the physics of the “natural” world as closely as they can as even prescribed by the animation software itself. One could take modeled characters and animate them to not follow a rigid closeness to “real world” physics, but one would be doing so on terms of the programs’ parameters of weight, gravity, muscles, rigidity, etc. that the programs require for input. Thus, even a rebellion of “real world” physics is one on terms of “real world” physics as the parameters to constitute these, or rebel against them, are “hard wired” into the animation programs.
As Pixar flexes their heightened control over environments through their streamlining of coding and programming, I will shift the focus to the environments themselves that they create in *Toy Story*. As the environments in the film are malleable for the creators to mold into their digital shape, the environments in the film also look plastic. After Buzz is pushed out of Andy’s window accidentally by Woody, Buzz falls in the bushes outside. As Andy and his family are leaving for Pizza Planet in the Mom’s SUV, Buzz comes out of the bushes through the leaves that look like they are made of plastic. Not only this aspect of the film’s environment, but the trees, grass, hardwood floors and beds, and even metal structures in the film look plastic. Furthermore, of course, all of the toys themselves are made entirely of, or have components that are, plastic. Because of this, *Toy Story*, and by extension Silicon Valley is richly rooted in plastics, plasticity, and the metaphysics associated with it. For implications of this *Tractatus*, I will now show how these problems of play and plasticity that I have uncovered in *Toy Story* are not just local to the film itself, but are real problems for our world that we dwell within.

Plastic is an ecological catastrophe, but it is not just about plastic bags, bottles, etc. floating around in landfills and in the water. Plasticity is an ecological catastrophe as its metaphysics of malleability and flexibility is applied to our planet thus seeking to shape and keep the planet in accordance to human desires of the world. Known as climate adaptation, or adaptive measures, this methodology seeks to reduce the drag in the planet insofar as one is not held back by limitations of the planet’s resources so that productions and growth can continue to build.

Adaptation has an aesthetic of a friendly face, as if we are merely adapting to the presence of climate change to try to save the planet for a brighter tomorrow.91 To cast a familiar

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91 Sentiments of making the world a better place are also echoed by Google and Facebook executives as noted in Morozov, “*To Save Everything Click Here*” vii-viii.
light to us by now, adaptation is a freedom-from the limits being applied to the planet by seeking to keep the planet ordered for our use, human use, at any time. Adaptation seeks, as Philosopher and Heidegger scholar Casey Rentmeester states, to “reengineer the planet in accordance with human interests… [with examples such as] carbon dioxide removal (CDR) … [and] carbon capture storage (CCS).”92 CDR and CCS work by capturing carbon from atmosphere and storing it in a safe location until the end of time.93 Adaptation measures are not local to storage or removal of carbon through “conventional” means. Rentmeester also discusses genetically enhanced trees94 that absorb more carbon than “normal” trees. Two problems can be seen in this streamlining solution: (1) if the containers fail, trillions of tons of carbon dioxide flood back into the environment, and (2) that this measure does nothing to change the way we interact with the world or the way the world reveals itself to us. This is why, from a metaphysical view, that it is not enough to simply invest more money into renewable energy resources as this kind of thinking only propitiates the same tendency to think of the planet and sun as an energy resource waiting to be tapped into at any time. A tendency that is garnered by our contemporary mode of revealing (enframing) that we have been tracing this entire chapter.

Stephen M. Gardiner predicts a cultural draw towards adaptation as the seeking of quick methods of coping with the crisis become palpable through the advancement of the metaphysics of plasticity and technological solutionism. Gardiner thinks if an abrupt change in environment is inevitable, as an increasing amount of climate data is showing, future generations may actually move towards increasing their emissions due to the abrupt change in the environment and have

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93 Rentmeester, Heidegger and the Environment, 54.
the mindset to over-invest in adaptation instead of mitigation. "Moreover, even within the category of adaptation, the current generation will have an incentive to prioritize projects and strategies that are more beneficial to it (e.g., temporary ‘quick fixes’) over those that seem best from an intergenerational point of view.” Gardiner is afraid that this and future generations will instead opt for panic quick fixes of which do nothing to change the way we comport ourselves towards the world which would lead to solving the issue that caused the problem in the first place. This, in a sense, reveals two things: (1) that this tendency towards adaptation not only works to keep the world as confined within human-centered ordering of the world as resource that I have elaborated on with the metaphysics of plastic, but also (2) projects the desired infinite growth of unfettered capitalism onto the planet itself.

However, the ecological issues that arise in this form of plasticity are but one side of the blade. Plasticity has also been taken to our economic relations through what is known as the “1099 economy,” causing a substantial reduction in cost per worker at the cost of worker’s physical and mental health. As we have seen the tendencies and ramifications of plasticity in the ecological, we can see similar tendencies in the economic as well. Silicon Valley is one of the leaders in what is being called the “1099 economy,” which was coined at the September 2014

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96 Gardiner “Saved by Disaster?”, 140-162.
97 I feel the need to implicate myself here. My entire project is a continuation, yet also a complication, of the metaphysics that I have been uncovering and critiquing. My project is fully one of revealing, and one could argue that I am treating these histories as on-hand resources for me to summon in order to build my argument. If this is the main critique, one has apprehended me. Yet, as the reader will see in Chapter 2, I argue that the only way out of the problem is to dive deep within it to pop out the other side into a new way of relating to the world—something that I will chart out in Chapter 2. Again, the problem is not that technology is a revealing (as all technology has always-already been a revealing [alethea]), but that the way technology reveals the world (its form) today and thus orients us in our current revealing, and as it is a destining, in terms of the standing-reserved garnered by our mode of enframing is the problem.
98 See Steven Raw Deal: How the “Uber Economy” and Runaway Capitalism are Screwing American Workers” (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2015) and Turner; both discuss these problems of the 1099 economy.
TechCrunch Disrupt conference in San Francisco. At this conference, the 1099 economy was praised as “the innovative labour practices of Silicon Valley start-ups.” When a person is hired on under the classification of 1099, instead of being classified as an employee who receives a W2, the person hired is considered an “independent contractor.” This misclassification of employees as independent contractors allow companies to “avoid paying Social Security, Medicare, and unemployment and injured worker compensation for those workers; they also circumnavigate paying overtime, holidays, vacation or sick pay.” With workers classified as independent contractors, labor is now as flexible as plastic as contracts are short can be terminated at any time, and contracted laborers typically cost companies 20 to 30 percent less than a W2 receiving worker, regardless of industry. This practice of independent contractors and subcontractors even allows plasticity to reign in company accountability insofar as companies can now be flexible in their blame and, interestingly, outsource the blame itself. When 150 subcontracted employees of Foxconn, a contractor hired to build the “iPhone, iPad, Xbox, Kindle, and other tech gadgets,” threatened to commit suicide due to poor working conditions, “Apple just blamed the contractor”—Foxconn.

Contract workers can even be switched “on and off as needed,” while not being paid for time on-call, revealing not only their malleability in the economically implemented plasticity, but presenting the worker themselves as being “treaded like just another resource to be fed into the

100 Hill, Raw Deal, 25.
102 Hill, Raw Deal, 21 and 25.
industrial machine.” Moreover, this trend towards independent contractors is not local to Silicon Valley companies and has worked further into the labor market of what were once considered middle-class generating jobs such as telecommunications (telecom) and manufacturing. Nissan’s Tennessee manufacturing plant and Comcast (who contracts to the Residential Communications Network) have been operating with a large portion of their workforce classified as independent contractors. The 1099 economy has also been quite costly for Visual Effects (VFX) workers in the industry as these laborers work well over 40-hours a week, receive no overtime compensation, and, in some cases, are not even paid for their work.

Toy Story reveals to us a 1990s middle-class neighborhood that tries to eschew these resource oriented ways of treating workers and the environment by locating all of the ‘bad’ within one family’s house: Sid’s. Toy Story illuminates a house within the neighborhood that has been left behind from socioeconomic care, and a structure of relating to the world, of playing with the world, that is constituted around a problematic modality of care. A care that seeks to simply mold the world in accordance with human, and business, needs.

Moving Forward: Thinking Through an Interplay of Plastic Itself

As Davis states, plastic is not just a barrier that keeps things out/off/away, it also has an ability to “[morph], [retain] its rigidity, and [reflect] us—not only in the sense that we can see ourselves in it, but it becomes a reflection of the way we treat the environment.”

The goal for us is to think through plasticity not only in the sense that we are awakened by our own reflection,
our way of treating the environment and each other via our socioeconomic structures, but that we realize that we too can mold into many different ways of relating to, or playing in, the world. Just as the toys surround Sid at the end of Toy Story in his backyard, he experiences the beauty and terror, the sublime, of the realization that toys were always-already living things. In this awe, Sid runs in horror and alters his way of playing in the world in such a way that he realizes that all toys and things are interconnected in the world.

This sense of interconnection between humanity/technology/nature, or interplay in the Benjaminian sense, that one has in and with the world is something that I will press further in the next chapter. I will also stress how if we embrace plasticity, the ability to morph and remold ourselves towards a sustainable revealing of the world, the we will only have to do so via small incremental changes that will have relatively little impact on our economics and our daily lives. I argue that through interplay, streamlining, and plasticity, we may be able to work towards a new clearing. To this, we must lay grounds towards a slightly different economics, ecology, way of revealing, way of Being-in-the-world: an “ontotheology.”¹⁰⁶ However, we must also go past Heidegger’s anthropocentrism, as Heidegger still believes in a human-centered hierarchy.¹⁰⁷

What we also must consider is another tendency of Silicon Valley to work towards not a hierarchy/ranking of entities, but of a network of them. That only through a network of things in

¹⁰⁶ One of Heidegger’s most “out-there” terms that Iain Thomson explicates in his book Heidegger on Ontotheology (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Heidegger believes that Ontotheology is metaphysics (11) and that the moment of Ontotheology itself is the point when the question of “What is an entity?” and “Which entity is the highest” is asked simultaneously (13) causing a “double ‘grounding’ of our changing historical sense of what is” (18). It is a reconceptualization of what and how entities are in the world from the bottom-up and the top-down reconfiguration of the metaphysics (18). I will be explicating and complicating this more in the beginning of Chapter Two.

the world can we achieve a moment of reflecting as we gaze into the plastic; a saving wholesomeness that, for Toy Story, only Sid experiences and one that Sid can provide.
“As if we never broke people out of sheer boredom
And slept calmly among the wastes
And then we see bright and clear”
– Mgła [Fog/Mist]

INTERMISSION—A TRANSFORMATION:

1
It is an absurdity for one to believe that they can cast stones without causing ripples in the water. It is not that the universe functions on a law of cause and effect, but that human stupidity clings to this truism and denies it at the same time in their operations.

2
The human condition within the Anthropocene is best surmised as thus: a person who repeatedly plummets their head into the desk, complains of a headache, yet continues to strike their head on the desk while offering pseudo-evidence that their striking could not lead to such an event. In between each strike, the suffering human proclaims that they are of the greatest species on the planet. I take no solace with these creatures—the “animals” are far better people.

3
It makes little sense that we consider play as something that is only there for children. I say to you, the “authentic one,” are you not also playing your role? You claim to have grown up, but are still throwing tantrums and desiring for absurdities like a child who plays king of the world. The sadness of the world is that it is believed that life is able to be purchased, and if the price is too high, one will remain unhappy. Know you nothing of the joy of life when one accepts that they should only strive and concern themselves with things that are within their abilities? To you, quantifier of happiness, I speak in terms that you would only understand: a life amongst the garbage under the stairs with the dogs should fetch a higher price.

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Humans do not only cover up things, as the Germanic Madman has said; they cover up all processes too. Why is it that we, “the glorious ones,” believe full heartedly that we are the bestowers of logic, of concepts, of humility. Have we no humility for the way in which we treat others of a feather, much less any other persons who cross our path? As the stones we cast crystalize midair into mirrors, what comments does this produce about us now as the glass lays littered on the ground beneath our feet? Are we stupid enough to cut ourselves upon the glass and condemn not ourselves, but others?

5
As the neoliberal man cries out that we are to be free from constraint and intervention, they profess an absurdity. To be free from constraint is to be within a constraint itself. Yet this logic brings out an ontological certainty—that if there is to be freedom, that it is always-already
formed within a construct of freedom within limits. Even the presumed stupid child playing videogames knows this to be true, while being perceived as a fool for wasting their time with such trivial errands. As if the accumulation of finance wasn’t a trivial errand in itself.

It is not that we should not play more, but realize that our way of playing is sculpted by and sculpts our perception of others. It is not a question of having one’s head in the clouds and demanding what the sovereign could never obtain. It becomes a question of how one plays with others in the world. And, does the entity who plays poorly with others, do they learn to play differently?

The Zoologist tells us, “sanity is a full-time job.” The true pity of our existence at this point in time is revealed to us when we conceive of our sanity as being of labour. That we are to labour towards being sane in this world as the conditions for sanity are not set in motion to promote a base line level of sanity for all. Does one cry out that sanity is a responsibility while supporting structures that keep others from sanity? To this, I say: cast these notions to the fire, for they do nothing but harm others—it is the only responsible thing to do as to stay from care is an evil.

More and more again, I find myself leaning towards the serpent as being the form of the new philosopher. Able to shed its skin to take on new ideals, it physiologically embodies the process of knowledge. That one is to put ideas on trial and shed them off if they do not pass the gauntlet. Heresy is the mantra of this new philosopher of tomorrow that the prophet spoke of, aeons ago.

The coming of a new day is more than the sun rising into the sky. It is also the child of the sky, the child of the new day as the old ideals have been laid to rest: fecundity. The philosophers of the future are these children of tomorrow, the children of new ideals. Their project comes as the sun makes its way into the air towards new virtues and new forms of relations. A dawn brings with it a new way of building, dwelling, and thinking—a new light to cast reason. And, it is at this moment before daybreak which is the absolute danger, for if we do not prepare adequately for the tasks ahead we may falter. The only way out is through the darkness to press forward towards the red morning light to come out brighter and stronger than ever on the other side.

Have we come so far, yet to fall so much further? I do not believe that this is the last night that we shall face for at some point it will be time for us to shed our skins, to lay our tools down to take up new ones, for another epoch to rise. As the sun begins to rise over the horizon, come forth into the morning light and shed your skins once more, serpents of tomorrow!
“I walked inside the monolith; in plastic I was reborn.”
—Travis Ryan

CHAPTER TWO: FRAMEWORK—BEING-THERE-WITH ANDY

Where have we journeyed? We started at the space and time of two children, Andy and Sid, in Toy Story and then furrowed onwards through their interconnections with plastics, metaphysics, economics, ecology and found our way all the way to something called “ontotheology.” As we have laid out before us the status quo of where we are, this chapter will paint a picture to where we could go. I turn to ontotheology at this point to illuminate how not only Toy Story presents a specific way of interacting within the world, but how Toy Story can also teach us that we do not have to keep interacting in this way. Toy Story, by way of ontotheology, reveals to us the way we play, and that we can also prepare ourselves to play differently within and with the world.

Moving forward, I will provide a definition of ontotheology in its present-tense understanding followed by two passes, and subsequently two readings, of the climax of the film where the toys confront Sid in the backyard to ‘correct him’ into playing “nice” with his toys. My first pass will be a reading that the film provides on the surface by a problematic modality of “fixing” and “care,” according to the terms disclosed in Chapter One. The second pass will be of my own while I show how there are inherent forms of interconnection and interplay within the same scene that Toy Story can teach us about if we approach the film, and even our own relationality to the world, in the way that I will disclose. The final turn of this chapter suggests

108 Excerpt from “The Product Alive.”
how we can prepare for a new metaphysics via our way of thinking, and how through this act of preparing a new metaphysics emerges.

**Ontotheology: Double Groundedness**

Ontotheology is one of the strangest notions of Martin Heidegger, similar in difficulty to the “four-fold” that emerges in “Building Dwelling Thinking.” Our question begins with the answer that Heidegger came to after his investigation into western metaphysics: ontotheology *is* metaphysics.\(^{109}\) Heidegger concluded that metaphysics is always seeking an understanding of the totality of beings in the world via a “twofold question” of “what *is* an entity?”\(^{110}\) In this twofold question, metaphysics is always asking the question of what *is* and the Being of the *thing* in question—that which is and how it comports itself. To be clear, I will first discuss (1) the *ontos* and then (2) the *thelos* implied within ontotheology. The *ontos*, or *ontology*, of ontotheology takes into question *that which is*. The *thelos* of ontotheology is likened to an understanding of *how it is* in the world.\(^{111}\) This “*how it is*” is the formal structure of metaphysics in its understanding of not just what an entity is in general, but “which entity is the highest entity.”\(^{112}\) For *Toy Story*, and the audience (us), the highest entities are humans, moreover the toy’s children, followed by animals, toys, etc. Since the question of metaphysics for Heidegger is “double grounded” in *that which is* and *that which is highest*, metaphysics attempts to “ontologically anchor its understanding of the being of entities in a basic entity and theologically

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\(^{111}\) Remember, Heidegger’s understanding of Being is one that is historically rooted in diachronicity. In order to understand how we conceive of being, we must understand the historicity of Being insofar as how it has developed over the aeons.

derive it from (and so justify it by appeal to) a supreme entity." Therefore, the question “what is an entity” carries with it an understanding of what and where it is placed within a hierarchy, a double grounded question as ontotheology works as a bottom-up and the top-down conception of the metaphysics as they are in space and time.

Yet, ontotheology is not in itself a static term. Just like how our revealing of the world shifts over different epochs, different periods have their own understanding of Being, the ontotheology, the metaphysics, shifts as well. For example, Heidegger provides an example of this in “Question Concerning Technology” when discussing how the revealing that the Greeks were positioned within was not in terms of enframing, the revealing of the world as to be ordered on-hand for human use at any time, but one of poïēsis [ποίησις]. Since we now in the 21st century have a different revealing/understanding of the way the world is, ontotheology shows itself to be an active term, just as revealing [αλήθεια; ἀλήθεια] is an active process as well. This is the case since “the peculiar ‘double grounding’ attempted by metaphysics always leaves our understanding of the being of entities epistemically ‘suspended’ between foundation and abyss.” As philosopher and Heidegger scholar Iain D. Thomson further states, “This insight turns out to be very important, because it helps explain why the history of metaphysics looks like a succession of relatively durable understandings of being, rather than either a single unbroken epoch or a continuous flux.” In this suspension, there is a holding back of the ontological floodwaters of history for a duration of time, for an “epoch.” In this holding back, the large-scale understanding of Being forms into a “doubly grounded” “constellation of intelligibility” for

113 Thomson, Heidegger on Ontotheology, 19.
114 Thomson, Heidegger on Ontotheology, 18.
115 QCT 339-340.
116 Thomson, Heidegger on Ontotheology, 19.
117 Thomson, Heidegger on Ontotheology, 19.
118 Thomson, Heidegger on Ontotheology, 20.
it to then become contested once more as historical understandings of what and how entities are transforms further the metaphysical tradition into “the history that we are.”\textsuperscript{119} Thus, the contemporary revealing of the world in terms of enframing is but one totem that identifies the ontotheologically double-grounded epoch that we dwell within and constitutes our mode of comportment towards the world and entities/things contained within it. However, this revealing of the world could be otherwise, something that I will be working towards throughout this chapter.

Nevertheless, what of \textit{Toy Story}? As we have seen in Chapter One, the ontotheology, the metaphysics that we operate as and within, is situated in such a way that humans are that which is above (the top of the hierarchy of Being) and all other entities and things are that which is below (the preceding ranks of the hierarchy of Being). For \textit{Toy Story}, as it is a product of our way of understanding reality, humans are that which is highest followed by animals, toys, and other assorted objects. Furthermore, the orthodoxy that Pixar puts forth in \textit{Toy Story} is one of play \textit{as} enframing. That is, one plays within the world in terms of ranking and ordering entities/things to be best utilized not only for human use, but also for maximum fun. For Johan Huizinga, play itself is structured in this compartmentalized form as Huizinga conceives of play as a form of container that sets play aside to be different from ordinary life.\textsuperscript{120} Since the ontotheology of which we inhabit acts as the \textit{container} for this modality of Being in the world, the film’s aesthetic structures itself through another form of \textit{physical container} which not only forms the toys that the children play with, but also encumbers itself in the aesthetic of the film’s environment as well—\textit{plastic}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{119} Thomson, \textit{Heidegger on Ontotheology}, 20, 54-55.  \\
\end{footnotesize}
Plastic, of which the film molds its aesthetic around and through, within our contemporary time since the 1950s has been fully one that embodies the metaphysics of enframing. These “metaphysics of plastic” have become a literal and figural driving force in not only our way of comporting ourselves in and towards the world, but also insofar as influencing the tools of cultural products as well. Since plastic, as it has been shown, also carries with it a praxis of streamlining and lowering in cost of commodity production, Pixar’s animation technology is molded quite similarly as the software itself is molded to streamline film production to produce films faster with less time (lower artist fatigue, and labor costs).121 Furthermore, just as plastic is malleable and able to mold to different shapes, Pixar’s animation software is similarly structured insofar as one can manipulate/mold not only the parameters of each character, but also that of their “physical” world around them. Even more so, plastic has transformed our physical world as well within the globalization efforts of the neoliberal market and the ecological catastrophes in which plastic as material/metaphysics and our tendency of play as enframing are active players.

Moving forward, I explicate in this chapter how our current conception of play as enframing and as plastic, that the characters, filmmakers, and audience all share harbors a formulation of care [Sorge] that lies in play as interplay and networking. I argue that even though Pixar puts forward in Toy Story’s thematics and form the absolute danger of play as enframing, one can look deep within these very aspects and find the interplay and networking which are worth saving within these containers of play. Within the limits of play, realms and conditions of possibilities open themselves up [Spielraum]. I argue that it is this interplay of humans, technology, and nature in terms of a networking that shows the interconnectedness of

121 I want to be clear that I am not pressing a pejorative against Computer Generated (CG) effects or fully CG films.
this triad we can find care [Sorge]. This care itself provides the conditions of the possibility for
the coming to presence of a different formulation of metaphysics through “ground laying” which
prepares for the coming to presence of a new way of Being—one that is interconnected and
interdependent upon the totality of entities/things in the world (whole-someness) through a
biosphерical network.

For the next two sections, I make two passes providing two different readings of the
climax of the film where Woody and the other toys confront Sid in the backyard while Buzz is
strapped to a rocket, “The Big One,” on a makeshift dartboard launch pad. In this scene, the toys
break their, presumably, greatest “rule” by alerting a human to the fact that toys are really living
and sentient beings. The first pass (1) reads the scene according to the terms of Chapter One that
I have just recapitulated, drawing out what these terms mean for Sid, the toys, and for their
relationality as static parts (wholesomeness)—a meaning that Pixar encourages. The second pass
(2) reads the scene against Pixar’s orthodoxy as I work to disclose latent interplay within
enframing and the networks within plastic that transform what this means for Sid, the toys, and
their relationality as dynamic wholes (whole-someness) that Pixar does not put forward on the
surface. My act of heresy brings into the foreground the dynamism of the parts that constitute the
dynamic wholes, exemplified by the meeting and surrounding of the toys and Sid in the backyard
environment, to press towards a way that we can work towards a new metaphysics in terms of
interplay and networks and that care [Sorge] that it contains. Furthermore, I illustrate the stakes
of my argument through the ecological and economical catastrophes that we can avoid if we
simply make subtle changes in our daily lives, in our everydayness.

**Orthodox: Sid, the Top-Down Oppressor, Now Terrified**
As Sid plays in his backyard in the final act of the film, he stages a scene, much like Sid and Andy have done throughout the film. In this scene, Buzz is strapped to an explosive rocket, “The Big One,” waiting to be launched into the air and blown to pieces. Sid is both the leader of mission control and a worker at the launch site and uses a box of matches as a walkie-talkie for inter-communication. While Sid talks back and forth to the characters that he inhabits, confirming to himself the status of the launch site, he works to build it to resemble something in the likeness of NASA’s Shuttle Program (April 12, 1981 to July 8, 2011). The launch site has a pad (dartboard), a supporting tower (construction barrier), a water supply (5-gallon plastic water jug), and a mechanism to pour water into the concrete structure to cool it while the shuttle takes off (plastic tubing). As Sid’s bricolage hodge-podge DIY tendencies manifest outside the bounds of the creations made in his bedroom, the backyard as well becomes an area for not just toy construction but space construction as well. Moreover, it appears as though Sid’s horrors are not creations of the vacuous space of his mind and bedroom as they take on similar forms to surrounding cultural events and social programs in a socioeconomic era which, as I suggest in Chapter One, denies the effectiveness and care that comes from social programs such as Medicaid, food stamps, public housing, and resists larger social institutions such as a universal healthcare system. In sum, the vulgar care for corporate interests is placed over a care for the individuals who fall within and support the sovereign and are left behind to try to piece their lives together within a system that is designed to not benefit the people, but to benefit the few.

When Sid lights the match while counting down to light the rocket to which Buzz is taped, he presses the match to the wick and suddenly hears Woody’s voice box tell him to “reach for the sky.” As Sid pulls away the match, he turns in a wondering “huh?” and begins to advance towards the barbeque grill upon which Woody lies. While the digital camera cuts to a POV shot
of Sid’s, Woody continues his curious solicitation, “This town ain’t big enough for the two of us…. Somebody’s poisoned the water hole!” Picking up Woody, Sid declares, “It’s busted” to which Woody exclaims, “Who are you callin’ busted, buster!?” As Sid examines Woody, Woody tells Sid, “We don’t like being blown up…. Or smashed, or ripped apart.” Upon the mention of the “we” of Woody’s dialogue, Sid’s eyes widen and dart around in profound awe and terror while his breathing increases to reveal panic. The camera cuts to a low angle shot of the sandbox in the backyard where the Sally doll (the doll to which Sid attached a Pterodactyl head during one of his “operations”) rises from the sandbox, not unlike cinematic representations of Dracula rising from the coffin. While Sally walks towards Sid from the sandbox crying out, “Mama, mama…,” the camera cuts to a higher angle showing the inside of the sandbox. The sand begins shuddering and sliding before revealing a toy truck as well as a small car with toy arms for legs that comes out from under one of the corner planks with loose nails/screws which could snag clothing and cut skin suggesting the space’s danger to not only the toys, but children, too.

When the camera cuts to a drainage trench, the muddy water ripples for a split second before showing two toy soldiers (one with a missing head and mangled arms and other with missing arms and a nail through its head) and a wind-up frog coming up through the water in a homage to *Apocalypse Now* (Francis Ford Coppola, 1979). While these toys limp towards Sid, they call to mind the slow limping zombies of horror films and suggest not only the horror of Sid’s mangling of the toys, but also the horror of the confrontation with “the damned” he is experiencing. As the toys come up and through the backyard environment, they encircle Sid while the camera performs a circling low to high angle boom shot while Woody commands him that “from now on, you must take good care of your toys! Because if you don’t, we’ll find out, Sid.” Cutting to a POV shot of Sid, Woody’s head begins to slowly spin 360 degrees around, as
in *The Exorcist* (William Friedkin, 1973), seemingly miming the camera’s encircling boom. “We toys can see everything,” he utters, followed by a quick cut to show Sid recoil in horror followed by a cut back to the POV through which Woody follows up with a threatening “so play nice.” Sid immediately screams, tosses Woody into the air as Sid shakes his arms and stomps in horror just before running into his house, arms flailing in the air.

It is not just the toys that surround Sid in this climax of the film. As the camera encircles Sid through the low to high angle boom shot that moves through the backyard, the viewer as well is placed in the position of encircling Sid aligning the viewer as one who confronts Sid’s “bad” playing. At the same time, the viewer is directly implicated as well insofar as Woody gazes directly into the camera and tells Sid and the viewer, too, to “play nice.” In this positioning, the spectator is encouraged to feel as if they are on the toys’ side in the matter of confronting and correcting Sid while also being implicated by looking through Sid’s eyes in the POV shot. In this aligning via the digital camerawork, Pixar makes the viewer support correcting of Sid.

Yet, this correcting is one that is in line with play as enframing that we have seen in Chapter One as it seeks to remold Sid in lines with what a ‘normal’ form of play, a wholesome form of play—one that does not entail reconfiguring and blowing up toys. Just as plasticity, and the metaphysics that motivate it, seeks to fix market and ecological problems to keep them within desired parameters, Pixar mobilizes the formal patterns of the streamlining businessperson, technological solutionist, or advocate for adaptive responses to climate change to correct Sid. In effect, Pixar seeks to force Sid to adapt, or to mold, as if plastic, to Pixar’s and popular cultural standards of what a white middle-class young boy *should be*: Andy. Pixar unknowingly does this in accordance with the ontotheology, the double groundedness of what is an entity that also provides an understanding of how an entity is, of our epoch and through a
1990s as 1950s nostalgia of wholesomeness. Furthermore, Pixar ‘fixes’ Sid not only through this wholesomeness, but also by way of and through the toys’ performances that harken to 1970s war and horror films, just like Sid’s house.

However, it is not just Sid who is a part of this way of structuring entities in the world. Also within this structure are the toys themselves as Pixar makes them work to perform this fixing of Sid to keep him within, to make him adapt to, parameters of what a ‘good’ child is and to also stay within their particular ordering of the world as double grounded by the ontotheology. Furthermore, Pixar situates the viewer through Woody’s direct address as to be (re-)molded in accordance with this, as well. The toys want to stay as resources for the children that own them, as they are to be there for Andy when he needs them as Woody recants earlier in the film. Furthermore, the whole film is a story about running back into one’s destined place, their destined place of a 1990s as 1950s ‘wholesomeness’. This destined place within the ontotheology for a toy is to be within the fixed human-centered ordering of the world as on-hand resources organized for maximum efficiency—enframing.

Furthermore, Toy Story is a story that teaches us about social function of things in the world. Walter Benjamin discusses how the primary social function of art/film is that it teaches and rehearses interplay, the interconnection of humans and nature. This interplay, which is garnered by “second technology,” seeks to let go of some of the control over nature so that we can become liberated by technology and to labor less.\textsuperscript{122} To that, film itself functions to rehearses the “apperceptions and reactions needed to deal with a vast apparatus whose role in [our] lives is

expanding almost daily.” It is through cinema and interplay that Benjamin believes that we can lessen our control of things/entities in the world so that we can live our lives more fully. Aside from cinema, toys themselves promote a similar function, as etymologically suggested by its connections in Danish (tøi), Swedish (tyg), and Dutch (tuig) to “tools,” “matter,” “stuff,” and even “trash.” Toys, especially for Toy Story, become the way that we learn to engage with the world, and Benjamin tells us as much in “The Mimetic Faculty,” where the “child plays at being not only a shopkeeper or teacher, but also a windmill and a train.” Play, and the toys that take place within it, are an engagement with the world that is structured through an interplay of human/technology/nature.

Yet, the interplay that Pixar offers is one that is structured through the problematic metaphysics of enframing/plastics as both sides of the coin, the children (Andy and Sid) and the toys, function to enforce the ontotheology of humanity as fixed dominator of the planet. Therefore, I argue the issue reveals itself as not a problem with Sid, but rather a problem with the very metaphysical structures that establish the way he plays in the world with things/entities within it. Moreover, as this problematic structure works over the children of the film, the same applies to not only the creators of the film themselves, but also the audience that watches the film. As the booming camera encircles Sid, the viewer, too, is placed in and swipes through this problematic world, this realm of play [Spielraum]. Moreover, in this realm of play, one comes

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123 Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of its Reproducibility,” 108. It is also interesting that Heidegger discusses “interplay” in Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event, trans. Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2012) §3 Of the event, 10: “The interplay of the questioning of beyng [sic]. The interplay commences with the first beginning player over the other beginning, in order to bring the latter into play such that out of this mutual interplay, the preparation for the leap develops. The leap into beyng. The leap leaps into the abyss of the fissure and so for the first time attains the necessity of grounding Da-sein, which is assigned out of beyng. The grounding of truth as truth of beyng: (Da-sein).”

face to face with a troubled mode of dwelling within it as constituted by the problematic revealing of the world as on-hand resource and moldable for human interests and desires. Therefore, Pixar’s modality of play is not one of interplay, an interconnectedness of human/technology/nature, but one of human-centered domination of the world as garnered by the ontotheology/metaphysics.

According to the relationality that Pixar puts forward in *Toy Story*, the humans work within the hierarchical structure, and the toys work to stay within the hierarchical structure, the *thelos* of the ontotheology, of humans on top with toys being below them as simply objects on hand and ready for play. However, Pixar advocates for a hierarchical structure that does not want play that is ‘too rough,’ like Sid. As Woody orders Sid to “play nice,” the film presents this assertion as (1) one of correction while also (2) being one of care. Pixar proposes this ‘care’ as a “scaring straight,” which is problematic in and of itself as care is not something that someone shocks someone into Being. Rather it prepares them to Be different. Instead, Pixar’s ‘care’ it is a movement inspired by the problematic metaphysics insofar as the toys operate under the desire to mold/adapt Sid to fit within their parameters. That is, the problem with this correction is that they are seeking to correct Sid’s comportment with the very problematic metaphysics themselves. Likewise, this motif of care that the toys supposedly put forth is not one of obligation towards another to project the same love for oneself upon another, but one of seeking change through horror as the toys walk through the backyard to encircle Sid as if zombies/vampires or other such entities of the damned.

The very problem is that this correcting, fixing, or “scaring straight” of Sid is that it does not work to transform the way the world reveals itself to Sid or the spectator. Instead, the toys “scare him straight” *not* into a different way of relating (not seeing entities, things, and the world
as mere on-hand resources; not playing as enframing), but instead only elucidates to him that they are in fact living sentient beings with their own intentionality. As Heidegger writes, “Metaphysics cannot be abolished like an opinion.”¹²⁵ This means that one cannot simply drop metaphysical views and take up new ones. Just as a person can be shown videos of the horrors of slaughterhouses in animal agriculture and see cute videos of the animals in this industry, one could become compelled to become vegetarian/vegan. Yet, this only abolishes the opinion of what to eat and does not alter the perception of the world as being there as moldable, as if plastic, on-hand resource for human needs/desires.¹²⁶

Even though Sid now knows that the toys are alive and sentient beings capable of their own interests and desires who have the ability to grasp concepts and feel ‘complex emotions’ such as shame and humility, this does nothing to alter his comportment. Furthermore, this awakening does nothing to alter the comportment of the audience watching, to other entities/things in the world writ-large. Toy Story’s fixing of Sid is as if one is driving a nail into a board with a hammer, and one hammers in such a way that it causes the hammer to break. Instead of realizing that it was the way one was hammering which caused the tool to break, the person instead gets a new hammer, perhaps made of stronger materials, and continues to hammer in the same way as before. The issue is that we have to work towards a different way of dwelling in the world so that the world reveals itself to us in a new way, something that I believe that this scene with Sid being surrounded by the toys in Toy Story can also provide.

¹²⁶ To be clear, I am not stating that these lifestyles do not have their merits as I, too, practice a vegan lifestyle. My critique is aimed at one’s thinking of the world as garnered by metaphysics, and how a simple opinion of what to eat is similar to the ineffectiveness of simply changing the resources that we extract from the world (e.g. solar/wind). The goal is to stop thinking of things as resources for human interests and to dwell with the world.
This is where I move next as I read through this very scene again providing a different reading that illustrates the things that are worth saving. I argue that these things can help move us towards a new revealing of the world. A different form of ontotheological schema without the hierarchical ranking of entities as implied by the thelos—a different realm, or clearing, of play, a different Spielraum, as Benjamin calls it, and one grounded in interplay.127

**Heresy: Sid as Now Aware of Interplay**

In this section, I introduce my intervention into the very same scene to suggest another possible reading that brings out the interplay that lies within Pixar’s problematic form of fixing as structured through enframing. A reading where *Toy Story* can teach us how to tune our attention to the world and reveal how our interactions within and towards it are not only harmful, but are structured through a problematic form of care. Precisely, I argue that Sid’s play is one that can enlighten us to the interplay, the meeting and interconnection of humans and nature, and that how we can play within limits without a reduction in happiness since playing within limits, as Huizinga tells us, opens conditions of possibilities. This section pulls out motifs from the first reading illuminating how the scene can be read against itself and shed light on moments that, when saved, create a different constellation of possibilities of an interplay of human, technology, and nature. What follows this reading is a mapping out of how one might possibly work towards this new revealing and the implications for why it is imperative that we do so, and how we can do so.

In this final scene, when Sid lights the match while counting down to light the rocket, to which Buzz is taped, a breaking of Pixar’s fixity on animus occurs. When Sid presses the match

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127 Heidegger also discusses *Spielraum*, translated as playing field, in *Contributions to Philosophy (of the Event)*.
to the wick, *the fire suspiciously appears to resist igniting the fuse.* Just after the Sally doll *rises from the sandbox, the sand begins shuddering and sliding* before revealing a toy truck buried beneath as well as a small car with toy arms for legs that *comes out from under* one of the corner planks. When the camera cuts to a drainage trench, *the muddy water ripples for a split second before showing* two toy soldiers and a wind-up frog *coming up through the water.* As the toys *come up and through the backyard environment,* they encircle Sid while the computer generated camera performs *an encircling low to high angle boom shot* to which the environing computer program, the program that gifts the film an *environment,* encircles Sid. While the camera booms up and around Sid where the toys encircle him, we see the toys not only coming to life and coming up and through the environment, but we also see, as if in an act of magic, the environment itself springing to life.

In this, it appears as if Pixar has even broken their own rigid form of picking what does and does not have animus and sticking to it for the duration of the film (as explicated in Chapter One), and now has given animus to the environment itself. It is precisely in a moment like this where things, *plastic things,* become, as Jane Bennet describes, “strangely vital things that … rise up to meet us … [and] are characters in a speculative onto-story.”

128 Bennett’s notion of “thing-power,” an attentiveness to things as having the ability to shape our perception and relationship to the world and our interdependency with them, seeks to reveal a perception of the world and things/entities within it as “not entirely reducible to the contexts in which (human) subjects set them.”

129 These contexts are consistent with our contemporary way of relating to, and playing in, the world as moldable on-hand resource that is garnered by the ontotheologically
supported revealing of the world in terms of enframing. To this, Bennett adds, “such newfound attentiveness to matter and its powers … can inspire a greater sense of the extent to which all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably enmeshed in a dense network of relations.” Bennett hopes that her notion of ‘thing power’ within this onto-story will “enhance receptivity to the impersonal life that surrounds and infuses us [and will] generate a more subtle awareness of the complicated web of dissonant connections between bodies, and will enable wiser interventions into that ecology.” It is through this ‘thing power’ that one realizes the interplay between themselves and the things/entities in the world that they are “inextricably enmeshed” with and in that one is always-already in an interplay with the world.

In Toy Story, while the backyard becomes alive and encircles Sid, he and the audience are now aware of things in the world, both are now explicitly aware of the relationship and interconnectivity. Moreover, this is quite similar to the Pixar animators since they are interconnected to the environments that they digitally create with the technology that surrounds them and interacts with their own environments. It is through this relationality and interconnectivity that the interplay between parts and wholes that they constitute that things and entities have as they are in the world. This is an implication that we share with both Sid and the toys themselves as we, too, can realize the interplay that we also have with the parts that constitute the wholes. Pixar’s interconnectivity through their animation software illuminates as much as it has strict control over not only the entities that they code, but the environments as well, showing the immense interconnection that the filmmakers have in their world and the world that they create. Toy Story can teach us that ourselves, things, others, and the projects that

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we create are not separate parts. Rather, Toy Story illuminates how our projects and all entities/things in the world are interconnected within one continuous holistic system of our everyday experience. Toy Story reveals our interconnection and dependency upon our daily ecologies—ones that are social, economic, and environmental as they all bleed into one another.

In this very moment in the backyard, Sid discovers the radical limit to his play and in this, animation does something similar. Animation, as Tom Gunning tells us, not only “plays with movement,” but it also “directs our attention to the effect of movement and explores its limits, its ‘room for play.’” What Gunning means by this is that (classic) animation brings with it an attention to its own process insofar as it arouses curiosity to how animation is made while not requiring a sophisticated technological understanding. Film Scholar Scott Bukatman tells us, “Cartoon physics are ultimately about the body.” To this, Bukatman states that this provides an “alternative set of means by which bodies navigate space: momentum trumps inertia, gravity is a sometime thing, solid matter often isn’t. And cartoon bodies are possessed of nearly infinite pliability, which allows them to weather the vicissitudes of cartoon physics.” Not only does animation perform this bodily play with physics in the “Golden Age” of American animation of the 1930s-1950s where ‘nature’ at the meeting point of human and technology achieves its own life, and arguably logos.

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133 Gunning, “Animating the Instant,” 40.
134 Bukatman, “Some Observations Pertaining to Cartoon Physics,” 303. Bukatman also lists several laws noticed in this era of animation, some of which do not carry over to digitally animated works which seek for continuity of physics. For those laws, see the cited essay, 302-303.
136 Granted, there are instances of similar animation motifs as early as 1911 with Little Nemo in Slumberland which features an early iteration of squash and stretch animation that tests the boundaries of physicality as we know it in our daily experience of the world.
Similarly, at the end of *Toy Story*, when the fire resists lighting the fuse to the rocket that they are harkening back to the days of classic Disney. This gesture, this loosening of physical mimesis is similar to the climax in *Cinderella* (1950, Clyde Geronimi, Hamilton Luske, and Wilfred Jackson), Gus(-Gus), one of the mice, lies in tea cup. When the wicked stepmother begins to pour a cup of tea for the caller, the tea-drop hesitates to land on Gus and retracts back up into the teapot. In moments like this, it is as if the environmental forces themselves could decide the fate of entities, that environmental forces possess a form of *logos*. Even though cartoon animation appears to have an inherent plasticity within it, “Digital animation has, historically, had a different set of concerns—its task defined, more often than not, by replicating (and perhaps tweaking) real-world physics.”¹³⁷ Not only is this tweaking of real world physics¹³⁸ a symptom of these metaphysics of plasticity that we have been tracing, but moreover I would add that this tweaking is done in the name of plasticity itself. To make sure that the digital worlds that the creators fabricate align up with not just the story they want to tell, but also the way the want the story to look, the worlds themselves within the computer are to be malleable and moldable as plastic itself.

I argue that animation, especially in the case of this final scene in *Toy Story*, is about the body, but even more so about the meeting and interplay of technology, humans, and nature and the malleability/plasticity that this interplay carries with it.¹³⁹ In this malleability/plasticity that

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¹³⁷ Bukatman “Some Observations Pertaining to Cartoon Physics,” 312.
¹³⁹ Bukatman “Some Observations Pertaining to Cartoon Physics,” 312.
Digital Hollywood put forward through their effects, Film and media scholar Scott Ferguson states, “Digital Hollywood feverishly grounds its figures in a terrestrial and bass-laden physics, subjecting their fleet-footed movements to friction, resistance and gravity’s all-encompassing downward pull.” In this techno-fetishism of digital Hollywood cinema, Ferguson tells us that it is beyond simply a replication of Newtonian mechanics. Rather, the digital expression is but a hyperbolic expression of a form of Newtonian mechanics, as if vortices were pressing the matter higher into the air and causing it to fall much harder. The implication for Ferguson is that within the neoliberal paradigm, more resources and emphasis are placed on technological innovation and utilizing physics as if a material substitute for care. In this event, physics is used to line the digital abstraction within a sociopolitical context that has a structural absence of care where the general welfare of the public is placed below that of private business concerns. Just how we have seen how Silicon Valley types favor technological solutionism and streamlining, as well as the problematic adaptive responses to climate change, which stem from a similar understanding of the world as the tech-solutionist, digital abstraction is seen to be the ‘material’ that can provide some form of grounding. Ferguson is getting at how this grounding is one that comes from a world where people within it feel like they have no ground—where people feel like they have no support structures to ensure a base level of care itself. Like in Toy Story, Sid’s house takes place within a ‘care vacuum’ where the parents are absent and no social institutions of care, school for example, can be seen.

Moreover, phenomenologist Vivian Sobchack tells us that digital cinema also carries with it an erasure of labor as digital technology and animation becomes more and more streamlined.

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140 Scott Ferguson “Towards an Unbearable Lightness” in Screen 55:2 (Summer 2017) 166. Originally published by Oxford University Press.
141 Ferguson, “Towards an Unbearable Lightness,” 166
142 Ferguson, “Towards an Unbearable Lightness,” 172
and automated.¹⁴³ What this causes is “an aesthetics of effortlessness” which causes a lightening of labor, as if made invisible, which still alienates not only the animator, but also the viewer as well from the labor required to produce the film commodity.¹⁴⁴ Even though Sobchack is discussing a different Pixar film, WALL-E (2008, Andrew Stanton), Sobchack’s thoughts hold for Toy Story since they target the same production company, and both films inhabit cultural moments that are not so dissimilar. Sobchack critiques this lightness whereas Ferguson’s work explicitly argues for lightness, what I am arguing is that not only Toy Story, but these authors as well stress that we can see similar erasures in light of the “1099 economy.” As I have demonstrated in Chapter One, within the 1099 economy, neoliberal companies seek to order and control their workforces not just for maximum efficacy for maximum profits at the cost of their workers’ well-being and even their death, but also to streamline the labor process to be as ‘invisible’ as possible.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore, as Bennett discusses the inextricable nature of our ‘enmeshedness’ in the world, we can see this in the sociopolitical modality of our ecology in the 1099 economy, as it has been demonstrated in Chapter One.

Animation, whether classic or digital, is not just concerned with the limits of the body within space and time, but it is also concerned with the inextricable nature of our enmeshedness in the world, as Bennett would say.¹⁴⁶ Even though Pixar seeks to replicate and reinforce as close to possible physical standards that we understand to be ‘true’ in the world, they still are obsessed with the way in which the body exists in the world. The classic cartoon body might not fall until it looks down (i.e., Wile-E Coyote), but the body is concerned about its presence in the world

¹⁴³ Vivian Sobchack “Animation and automation, or, the incredible effortfulness of being” in Screen 50:4 (Winter 2009) 383.
and demonstrates an interconnectivity to the world. It is in the climax of *Toy Story* where Pixar could show us that Sid has become aware of his bodily and ethical limits with his becoming awareness of his mutual implicated existence in the world with the toys. In this moment, Sid realizes that he is inextricably enmeshed in and with entities/things that are in the world and that his play, that his actions, have radical limits to them—quite similarly to how Huizinga tells us about play being an event that is always-already structured within limits which opens conditions of possibilities.  

However, what appears to us in *Toy Story*’s climax is not just a concern of the limits of the toy/human body in space and time. In the moment when Sid lights the match and presses and holds the match to the wick of the rocket to which Buzz is taped, the fire does not ignite the rocket. It almost appears as if the fire hesitates to ignite the fuse in this moment by ignoring or resisting/refusing the fuse altogether where human (Sid), technology (match), and nature (fire) have been brought together to constitute an intervention of sorts. As the tea resists splashing onto Gus’ stomach in Cinderella, the digital flame in *Toy Story* does something more. Instead of mere resisting and retreating, there is complete refusal to light the fuse itself. The flame, at this meeting of human/nature/technology, sets a boundary, a limit, that it will not transgress. It is through this limit, through a separate constituted realm of play from our everydayness that Huizinga tells us of, that can provide an opening for new possibilities, relationships, and pave the way to reconfigure our understandings of the way things are. Just as the drop of tea in *Cinderella* withdraws back into the teapot instead of landing on Gus’ stomach and burn him as he recoils in the bottom of the teacup, it is at the space where a meeting of human, technology, and nature a magic can happen. What one can realize from moments such as this is that there is a profound

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interconnection, a profound interplay, of the triad (human/technology/nature). It is through this interplay that is inherent within digital cinema that not only enables us to reveal, or play in, the world in terms of enframing, but also can lead us to reconsider the way we engage with the world. This is precisely how the digital cinema itself can provide openings of experimentation and freedom within its limitations of its own animated form as regulated by the animation software’s prefigured relations to physics, as demonstrated in Chapter One. There becomes a joining of technology, human, and nature in these moments, an interplay within our contemporary revealing of enframing, that opens up the condition of the possibility for things to shift away from our understanding of the way ‘nature’ is.

This moment, this meeting of technology, human, and nature allows for the coming to awareness, the spark of fire, of an interplay between the three. This interplay, or play [Spiel], allows for an, as Miriam Hansen states, “alternative mode of aesthetics on par with modern, collective experience, an aesthetics that could counteract, at the level of sense perception.”\textsuperscript{148} Hansen continues that this perception illuminates “the political consequences of the failed—capitalist and imperialist, destructive and self-destructive—reception of technology.”\textsuperscript{149} With this in mind, I suggest that Benjamin’s interplay is a crucial step towards working towards a reconfiguration of our position and responsibility in the world. This is what Sid/we could become towards, and what Sid/we should have become towards, if Sid is to, if we are to, make any alterations in the way that he/we not only play(s) with toys, but to make alterations in how he/we play(s) in the world.


\textsuperscript{149} Hansen, \textit{Cinema and Experience}, 183.
Quite plainly, a shift in Sid’s/our metaphysics that allows for a different form of revealing to come to presence. Even though Pixar paints Sid with a broad brush of being the top-down destroyer, through Sid’s play as it is a DIY bricolage, I see Sid as being more along the lines of not only whole-someness, the understanding of wholes that constitute the sum total, but also one who is more along the lines of this play as interplay. Sid’s play brings with it the interplay of human/technology/nature and stresses how toys are not just pieces to be picked up and played with at any time for maximum fun, but that they are parts that constitute the whole relationality between entities and other things. This is where Huizinga further helps our story as Huizinga defines play as taking part within a realm of play that takes place “within certain fixed limits of time and place.” Since Huizinga defines play as occurring in a limited space, as apart from daily life, Huizinga is not simply locking play down, but rather is instead expressing how the limits of play allow openings for conditions of possibilities for different ways of playing (Being) in the world. Because play, and any other event, takes place within these constraints, or any constraints for that matter, there is a freedom within those constraints to move towards a different form of relating to, or playing-with, things in the world as they are parts that constitute the whole. Moreover, Sid’s own toys are amalgams of parts that constitute a whole, which then work further to constitute a relationship between Sid/toy and Sid/toy/world. One can even place [geo-]economics here, too, since the neoliberal model of horizontal integration, the spreading out of companies for market domination and portfolio diversity, stresses the mutual interconnected amalgam that formulates the whole of the group.

As toys train Sid how to play, just as they train any other child, Sid’s tendencies of tearing toys apart to create new amalgams can be a useful tool for thinking through ways in

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which one can move forward towards a different metaphysics. It is as if in this final scene the camera can no longer contain itself to one position and must encircle Sid, which the camera itself, the very form of the film, must intervene and confront Sid at this exact moment. However, this confrontation comes with a ‘making invisible’ of the creators behind the digital camera, first by the “labour of their computers, and then by the apparent and effortless vitality of their creations.”  

It is that within these metaphysics of plasticity that situates things as malleable, automated, streamlined, and ordered to yield the maximum efficiency possible—the effects of this can be seen in cultural products such as animation, the economy (1099), the environment, and even social relations via the (social) networking.

It is in a moment like this when the camera encircles Sid that *Toy Story* teaches, and reveals, to us the dangers of these metaphysics of plasticity in the face of the horrors of the 1099 economy and the climate disaster, we then can realize that we need not adapt the markets/planet to the problem. Rather, we realize that we can remold ourselves do a different way of playing towards a different formations of geographical spatial and cultural relations, realm of play [*Spielraum*], so that we no longer comport ourselves in such a way that could let this happen again. Nevertheless, we need direction, something that this section lacks. If we cannot ‘fix’ or ‘change’ the metaphysics, because that would be merely an expression of the metaphysics keen on ‘fixing’ and ‘changing’ things to be best ‘adapted’ for human control, then what can we do? The next section turns back to Heidegger to show how his ideas on ‘preparing’ can help us move forward.

**Preparing for a Different Way of Being: Towards a Metaphysical Shift**

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Just as a child lays out their toys in preparation to play, the preparations themselves shape the way in which the play is formed. Playing thus not only reveals itself to us as a thing for children, but as a motif for the way in which reality forms its revealing to us. For this, “What shall we do?” as Heidegger asks. If we cannot fix/remold/adapt the way the world reveals itself to us, then what can we do? Heidegger believes that our answer lies in thinking. “We ponder this: How must we think [Was sollen wir tun, dies bedenken: Wie müssen wir denken]? For thinking [das Denken] is genuine activity, genuine taking a hand, if to take a hand means to lend a hand to the essence, the coming to presence, of Being.” Heidegger’s solution to understanding the way that Being appears to us is through thinking. The best way I can explain this with brevity is that Heidegger’s intervention of thinking leading to Being is through an old adage that my father used to tell me when I was a child: “Your attitude determines your altitude.” Truism aside, it does convey the notion that one’s thinking lays grounds for the way that one understands and views the world. Quite plainly, thinking is the way one reveals the world (as enframing is also a modality of thinking garnered by metaphysics), and it is that thinking which destines the revealing with which one ends up. If our thinking leads us to our way of Being and revealing of the world, and in the case of our ecological and socioeconomic concerns vis-à-vis these metaphysics of plasticity, it is imperative that we prepare to think differently about the world. Just as “an explicit ground-laying of metaphysics never happens ex nihilo, but rather arises from the strengths and weaknesses of a tradition which designates in advance its possible

points of departure,” we must find the strength as we move forward to welcome the coming to presence of a different way of Being in the world—a slightly different formulation Dasein.  

Benjamin adds to this construction of thinking as Being through play as a bodily and tactile interplay with the world, something that toys provide as well. Benjamin writes, “for the tasks which face the human apparatus of perception at historical turning points cannot be performed solely by optical means—that is, by way of contemplation [der Kontemplation]. They are mastered gradually—taking their cue from tactile reception—through habit.” Benjamin feels that it is not simple contemplation that performs this, which I urge the reader to not equate to “thinking.” Heidegger’s thinking [Denken] is more focused ontological/metaphysical sense that thinking is something that is structured by metaphysics and how one ‘understands’ [verstehen] the world, where as contemplation [der Kontemplation], on the other hand, is more of a casual/ontic ‘thinking about.’ For example, the way I think of and am within the world carries with it the space, time, and metaphysical understandings within which I am placed. Contemplation, by contrast, can be likened to what one is considering to do, an ontic concern, as Heidegger would assert. I can think about something as this thinking is informed by the metaphysics within which I am posited, or I can contemplate what I am going to buy at the store. However, I argue what is enlightening about this is that through a shift in one’s thinking [Denken], one’s contemplation [der Kontemplation], the way one ‘thinks about’ things, will change as well. For Toy Story, Sid’s thinking about toys concerns what/how they are [Sein] in

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154 Heidegger Kant and the problem of Metaphysics, trans. G. Fried and R. Polt (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1997) 2. Also, Dasein is Heidegger’s term for humans. Dasein literally translates to “Being-there,” and carries with it the active connotation of how one comports themselves in the world. Being and Time is a story about how Dasein experiences the world in terms of Heidegger’s trifecta of fallenness, anxiety, and care (all of which are defined and explained in Division 1). For the sake of brevity, I will not go in depth on these terms and how Dasein is constituted. See Dreyfus and Braver for more explication.

155 Benjamin, “Work of Art in the Age of its Reproducibility,” 120.
the world in relation to himself, but he also can contemplate what he can blow up with “The Big One.” This is why interplay itself is that of ‘thinking’ which then influences ‘contemplation,’ since interplay itself is structured by the way in which we ‘think of’ the world and how we comport ourselves within it.

Heidegger, though, has severe limitations as Heidegger’s thinking is quite anthropocentric in form. Heidegger’s form of Being is situated such that humans are still anchored not only as Dasein, but also as the top of the hierarchy of Being implied in the thelos of ontotheology. Even though Heidegger does lax his anthropocentrism in the later works by critiquing rigid human-centered control of the world, his laxing of control, Glassenheit (which I will discuss in a moment), still carries within it the top-down hierarchical schema that places humans at the top. Furthermore, I claim that a top-down hierarchical metaphysical structure does not work well for forging a different relationality towards the world and that which falls within it. What we need instead is an interplay, a coming together and realization of the interconnection of humans with their technology, the world and others within it, over a human-centered “man in environment” understanding of the world. I argue that we cannot be orthodox Heideggerians as we would still end up in a problematic top-down structure that could cause further socioeconomic and ecological crisis. I argue that the answer lies in Silicon Valley itself and its tendency towards the “network” as the notion of network itself carries with it a motif of a spreading out, a horizontalism, instead of a top-down ranking system of subordinates to human whims. That through the net, the network, through a coming together, spreading out, encircling—just as Sid experiences at the end of Toy Story—one can see how all entities and

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things are vastly interconnected in the world similar to the horizontally integrated corporations stress a motif of interdependency and interconnection; interplay.

Thinking [Denken] itself can be further clarified by this interplay. As thinking [Denken] is that which is structured by our metaphysics, interplay as well is not just an aspect of thinking but should be understood that interplay is thinking. For one to be situated within a clearing, within a historical epoch that has its own metaphysical understanding of the Being of beings/things, one is always structured not only in a specific way of thinking [Denken], but is also structured to function-with entities/things in a specific way—interplay. Since interplay is thinking [Denken], and that interplay is an interconnectedness between humans/technology/nature, what interplay takes the form of is a dense enmeshed network.\footnote{Bennett, \textit{Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things}, 13.} However, this understanding of network that we have been preparing to reveal is not one of the Silicon Valley modality, which is but another iteration of enframing as it is a flattening into a form of wholesomeness.

Within the paradigm of networking, networking is often aestheticized as a spread out linking between persons as bubbles interconnected with other persons as bubbles. As the network spreads out, the interconnections between persons, and networking technology, reveals itself to shed light on our interconnectivity, the interplay, which we have with one another in the world. With advancements of Silicon Valley technology from the 1980s and beyond, we have seen the rise of the buzzword “networking.” Not only a term associated with business, but also a term seen within our superstructure as well in the form of social networking sites such as MySpace, Google+, Facebook, Instagram, etc. Networking rings the promise and interplay, yet it is a vulgar
form of interplay as its form is along the same lines of the metaphysics of enframing that we have been tracing. Networks remain a resource for one to utilize to gain peer/personal approval/attention and even become utilized in order to not only use the network as a means to an end, but people as well as one utilizes the network as a resource to interconnect into employment opportunities. What networking does, in our current iteration, is an exchanging of a hierarchy, a step towards what we need, but it situates it thorough a flat(-tening) wholesomeness which reveals it thus as another expression of enframing.

In this wholesomeness/flattening, similar motifs have been applied to the binarisms of human/non-human and culture/nature. Media scholar Steven Shaviro comments, “Today, we are inclined to see nearly everything in terms of connections and networks. … A rainforest is an ecological network, according to both popular and scientific opinion. And … the technoliberarians of Silicon Valley … tend to regard the capitalist economy as a natural, organic network, just like the rain forest.” Shaviro sees the naturalistic fallacy in this attributing of information technology and ideology towards the ‘natural’ world, but I turn to it here to stress how ingrained into our cultural and scientific practices the notion of the network has become. The point is that a flattening that occurs within our problematic way of relating, as garnered by our metaphysics of enframing/plasticity. In this, there is a working towards the collapsing of a hierarchy to put humans more close to being alongside the world. Yet, this collapsing is still one that is structured by a human-centered desire to mold the world in accordance to human interests. Therefore, the collapsing puts humans alongside the world and still situates the world as malleable to human interests instead of situating humans to be in and with the world. As

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158 Steven Shaviro Connected, or What it Means to Live in the Network Society (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press) 3-4.
demonstrated in Chapter One, Silicon Valley took the systems theory of Gregory Bateson who conceived of the individual as one that was “a servosystem coupled with its environment.” However, Silicon Valley abused this distinction by still situating the environment as that which one plugs into as means to and end instead of an environment that one is always connected into and is with. What is needed instead is a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness and interplay that humanity has in the world that they are with.

The United Nations Conference in environment and Development in Rio de Janerio worked to critique corporate, or “shallow environmentalism,” which advocated for ecological protection in terms of technological intervention, scientific resource management, and mild changes in lifestyle. This movement of “shallow environmentalism” avoided “serious fundamental questions about our values and worldviews; it [also did not] examine our sociocultural institutions and other personal lifestyles.” In reaction to this, what was known as the “deep ecology” ecosophy began to increasingly rise in popularity as deep ecology sought more mitigative responses to climate change by looking towards a “fundamental ecological transformation of our sociocultural systems, collective actions, and lifestyles.”

As Arne Naess, the coiner of “deep ecology,” writes, the deep ecology ecosophy seeks to reject “the human-in-environment image in favor of the relational, total-field image,” the large-scale picture of things/entities that constitute the whole of relations, a rationality of whole-someness.

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159 Gregory Bateson “Effects of Conscious Purpose on Human Adaptation,” in Steps to an Ecology of Mind, 448
162 It is important to know that many in deep ecology do not consider it a movement, but more so a form of environmental philosophy. See The Deep Ecology Movement xxi for further explication. Quote from Drengson and Inoue, The Deep Ecology Movement, xix.
Naess does not want an understanding of “thing in-milieu—except when talking at a superficial or preliminary level of communication,” meaning an understanding of a thing/entity within the whole. What Naess instead wants is an understanding of ecology/reality as mutually interconnected wholeness, a whole-someness, that shows how all things/entities are mutually dependent upon one another—that there is only the whole. The only reference that Naess wants to particular things/entities would be in the case of attempting to understand the formation of the whole (i.e., that coral is a part of the reef which is part of the ocean which is part of the world) and the needs of the parts within the whole.

As we have seen in Chapter One, and leading up to this point, the metaphysics that we have been tracing is one of plasticity with humanity being conceived of that which controls the molding, or that which is highest in Heideggerian terms. What Naess is attempting to do is restructure our understanding of reality in terms of “organisms as knots in the biospherical net or field of intrinsic relations.” With this in mind, Naess wants us to conceive of our relations between all entities more like a net, or network, where in all entities are mutually implicated and dependent upon one another instead of a top-down hierarchy. Furthermore, this net/network understanding of ecology/reality is not one that squelches difference and denies otherness, but rather, one that sees all entities/things as within the same spread out structure as all are interconnected as individual knots in the net itself. Without the individual knots, the net would falter, thus there is and must be an understanding of difference/otherness within a deep ecological framework. What this net/network framing does better than seeking to mold the world to our needs (plasticity), is that we can reflect upon ourselves and see how our interplay in the

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net/network effects other entities/things within it so that we can remold ourselves in accordance to keep the net/network functioning. Furthermore, since interplay is also a mimesis, it is constituted in and of otherness—thus shedding light upon the facticity of a self and other implying not only difference, but also interconnection. This is why I claim that we need Naess to carry us further than Heidegger himself as Heidegger’s system would still reinforce a problematic understanding of the structure of reality as a human-centered ontology/metaphysics that got us into this problem in the first place.

Just as I have asserted that we cannot say that Sid’s play is immoral, one can say that Pixar’s correction of Sid lacks love, or moreover care. Naess also writes, “We need not say that today man’s relation to the non-human world is immoral. It is enough to say that it lacks generosity, fortitude, and love.”\cite{Naess166} As Pixar puts forward a motif of care in their correction of Sid, as I have argued, their care is not the care that we need. Pixar’s care is masked in the problematic ontotheology that still maintains a hierarchical structure of human-centered relationality with the world. Ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood states that these moral feelings, which Naess discloses, “involve cognitive elements, ethical elements and emotion in ways that do not seem separable. These are more local concepts, which allow for particularity and do not require either assimilation or, mostly, reciprocity.”\cite{Plumwood167} Through a virtue based ethics, Plumwood brings out the incorporative elements of deep ecology and fuses them with a directionality towards the importance of bringing into the fore the virtues of generosity, fortitude, and love.\cite{Plumwood168} Plumwood states, “You can come to understand the relationship between your own loss and that of others, the degradation of your own local ecosystem and that of the global

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Naess166} Naess “Environmental ethics and Spinoza’s ethics” \textit{Inquiry} 23 (1980) 323.
\bibitem{Plumwood167} Val Plumwood \textit{Feminism and the Mastery of Nature} (London, UK: Routledge, 1993) 84.
\bibitem{Plumwood168} Plumwood, \textit{Feminism and the Mastery of Nature}, 84.
\end{thebibliography}
ecosystem, the impoverishment of social and natural life-forms and that of your own life and the
lives of those you know.”\textsuperscript{169} The point is that the interplay that lies within a virtue based ethical
framework can reveal not just the degradation abroad, which feels as if it’s something “on those
people,” but show how the problem of the ‘them’ becomes one of the ‘us,’ and thus a problem of
the ‘whole.’ I believe that Plumwood’s thoughts on bringing these virtues of generosity,
fortitude, and love can have fidelity as these virtues are of the everyday (everydayness) that we
experience. If we are to lay grounds in preparation for the coming to presence of a new way of
Being, it is through these leitmotifs of the everyday that we can work through towards new
understandings. This reliance upon the everydayness of our existence being the site in which we
lay grounds leads not only to a reduction of suffering (Utilitarian) or becomes a stark realization
of the reflection that our treatment of the planet casts (Kantian), but one that sees the virtue in
caring for the world in our everyday actions.

Not just turning back to \textit{Toy Story}, but to turn towards ourselves, what could happen is
something similar to what happened to Sid when the camera boomed up and around him and his
toys as they confronted him. It is precisely in a moment like this where things, plastic things
become, as Bennett might describe them, “Strangely vital things that … rise up to meet us …
[and] are characters in a speculative onto-story.”\textsuperscript{170} I return to Bennett once more as Bennett’s
notion of “thing-power,” an attentiveness to things as having the ability to shape our perception
and relationship to the world and our interdependency with them, as a way to work towards
preparing for a new way of Being. This “newfound attentiveness to matter and its powers … can
inspire a greater sense of the extent to which all bodies are kin in the sense of inextricably

\textsuperscript{169} Plumwood, \textit{Feminism and the Mastery of Nature}, 86.
\textsuperscript{170} Bennett, \textit{Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things}, 3-4.


173 I am alluding here to proposition one in Ludwig Wittgenstein’s Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, “Die Welt is alles, was der Fall ist.” The Ogden translation suggests, “The world is everything that is the case,” while the Pears/McGuinness translation suggests, “The world is all that is the case.” I do this to stress a deep ecological understanding of reality in terms of a universal wholeness which all parts constitute the whole—a form of wholesomeness.

174 Rentmeester, Heidegger and the Environment, 70

World Watch Institute published a study that suggests, “Livestock and their byproducts actually account for at least 32.6 billion tons of carbon dioxide per year, or 51 percent of annual worldwide GHG emissions.”¹⁷⁶ Due to the increased carbon emissions from the burning of fossil fuels, scientists from the International Programme on the State of the Ocean (IPSO) are speculating that there is an almost inevitable mass extinction of key species. With higher carbon emissions, so follows higher levels of ocean acidity that harms marine creatures “that rely on calcium carbonate to build coral reefs and shells, as well as plankton, and the fish that rely on them.”¹⁷⁷ Further effects of these events have a substantial impact upon the developing world, many coastal regions who rely heavily upon fisheries and crop farming especially with the rise of the concern of desertification. Primarily caused by the removal of vegetation (forests), nutrients are removed from the soil, desertification causes land to become infertile and unable to farm with further problems of the drying up of above and below ground water sources.¹⁷⁸ Due to desertification, it will be harder to grow crops there, and this will force people to immigrate to other more northern countries where crops can still grow, something troubling in a time when xenophobia runs rampant. Furthermore, humans are interlocked with other species as desertification could also lead towards a heightened increase in mosquito and other insect populations due to a dramatic decrease in amphibian life,¹⁷⁹ possibly causing a surge in malaria and other such diseases.

¹⁷⁷ Fiona Harvey “Rate of ocean acidification due to carbon emissions highest for 300m years” Guardian October 3, 2016 https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2013/oct/03/ocean-acidification-carbon-dioxide-emissions-levels (accessed February 26, 2017)
Regulation, I believe is something that can help work us towards an implementation of a ‘saving.’ Steven M. Gardiner even states that the small change needed would only come at the cost of 2% of world production. Yet, Herman Daly, who elaborates on an economy that could yield a positive relation to the world states, “[that] it will probably take a Great Ecological Spasm to convince people that something is wrong with an economic theory that denies the very possibility of an economy exceeding its optimal scale.” One significant way that we can prepare is through substantial regulation in terms of environment and economic operations. Regulations themselves should not be feared as regulations are simply limits to the ways in which we play and interact with the world. Not only are these limits in terms of environmental interactions, but economic interactions as well. The limits that regulations provide do not squelch freedom, but simply focus freedom within the limits, the rules of the game, that they constitute.

Just as Sid’s launch site and horrific toys reveal themselves to not take place within a vacuous space of his mind and his bedroom, our ecological disasters are not events that have produced themselves ex nihilo. These examples of ecological catastrophes are but a sample of the horrors that we can avoid as we reveal how our own planet begins to encircle us as the toys did Sid. Will we learn from the broken hammer that we hold in our hands that it is not the hammer that needs replacing/fixing, but that it is the way in which we are hammering that is the problem? The goal is to stop thinking towards the world as terms of being a malleable ‘blue-marble’ of plastic that we can reconfigure into whatever shape we want it to be. The goal is to realize that we are the ones who must reconfigure, remold, ourselves in accordance with the limits that the world has. The goal is to learn from our dangers, our problems in our

socioeconomics and ecological disasters, and to see how we can reshape our understanding of not just the planet *qua* resource, but other entities and things as well towards one of care [*Sorge*]. One is fully interdependent upon all things and entities in the world (and the world itself as well), and because of this one is beckoned to care [*Sorge*] for other parts that make up the whole of which one finds oneself within and a part. Care [*Sorge*] is a drive that is the bedrock of our existence, the way “being gets to [us],”\(^{182}\) and one that we are obligated to—it is a limit within which we are free to dwell. One does this out of a deep existential anxiety that compels one to care, that one *must* [*müssen*] care for others in the world, as one is directly dependent upon all knots in the network of the totality as deep-rooted ontological condition. Care [*Sorge*] is “not an ontic, psychological claim.”\(^{183}\) The concept of care [*Sorge*] “has nothing to do with ‘tribulation,’ ‘melancholy,’ or the ‘cares of life,’”\(^{184}\) and is not a sense “of care as worry or even simply pragmatic concern—the connotation of the term *Sorge* … in German means care as in ‘the cares of the world.’”\(^{185}\) As philosopher and Heidegger scholar Hubert Dreyfus states, “care is the reason why I do [anything]” and what enables us to make meaning of the our being in the world.\(^{186}\) Furthermore, as Heidegger states, “‘theory’ and ‘practice’ are possibilities of Being for an entity whose Being must be defined as ‘care.’”\(^{187}\) As we move forward, all actions of these categories, theory and practice, are the conditions of possibility towards a future. And, for us to have a future, we must make changes to ourselves and work towards getting away from seeing

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\(^{182}\) Dreyfus, *Being in the World* 239. “*Sein geht mich an.*” Dreyfus tells us that this is from a personal conversation that he had with Heidegger when Dreyfus was explicating that the English understanding of “care” carries with it the understanding of “love and caring.” Heidegger responded that it was “fortunate since with the term ‘care’ he wanted to name the very general fact that *Sein geht mich an,* roughly, that being gets to me.”

\(^{183}\) Dreyfus, Hubert L. *Being-in-the-World: A commentary on Heidegger’s Being and Time, Division I* 238.

\(^{184}\) Heidegger, *BT*, Division 1 §§2 §§12 H57.

\(^{185}\) Dreyfus, *Being in the World*, 239.

\(^{186}\) Braver, *Heidegger*, 69.

\(^{187}\) Heidegger, *BT*, Division 1 §6 §§41 H193.
ourselves as the center of flux and rather seeing the total-field networked whole as the center of not only ecological relations, but socioecological relations as well.

These changes do not have to be astronomical in scale, but, rather, small changes in our daily lives. As Heidegger has shown us, that when one prepares to receive a new way of Being, when one lays grounds to welcome the coming to presence of a new way of Being, change will follow. Moreover, Benjamin and Naess have told us as well that one has an enmeshed interconnectedness within and a part of the totality of networked relations in the meeting of human/technology/nature. We must see the interplay that is within these networks, the wholesomeness that comprises and constitutes the networks themselves. When we must realize that we must perceive the world in terms of whole-someness which garners us to mold ourselves and not in terms of enframing that seeks to mold the planet in terms with human interests. We do not need an understanding of plastic as wholesomeness, some looking back pastoralization of the way things were and seeking to remold the world to fit in accordance with that. What we need is a whole-someness that realizes that we are the ones that should be considered as plastic, as re-moldable, so that we can avoid potential horrors of our current way of relating to the world as it is structured through enframing. This is specifically why *Toy Story* shows us the way out of the cave into the light of the realization of our interconnection, interdependency, and interplay within and with the world. It is for Sid, it is for us, that he can realize the rich interplay that he has in the world with his toys, his dog Spike, his sister, the neighborhood, etc. which can prepare him, to prepare us, to welcome a new way of thinking of, a new way of Being-in, the world. Heidegger would assert that any changes cannot be at the ontic register, at the level of one entity. However, it must be at the ontological register where the entire population makes the transformation. As the truism goes, “change is slow,” yet it is through incremental shifts in
regulations, and even more so in our daily habits, such as our daily diets, that can alter one’s entire way of thinking about the world, and thus, one’s perception of the world and how one dwells with and within it. Through just a simple shift in one’s everyday habits, one’s thinking of the world will change, and one’s ecology will change as well.\textsuperscript{188}

“When we are no longer able to change a situation, … we are challenged to change ourselves”
Viktor Frankl\textsuperscript{189}

EPILOGUE: PLAYING-WITH THE WORLD

Where have we ventured? We have journeyed together through space and time finding ourselves shifting from places of play and working towards an understanding of play only to find ourselves questioning the very metaphysical structures that constitute our relations—that which structures the way things \textit{are}. Through \textit{Toy Story}, a mere digitally animated Hollywood blockbuster, we have uncovered the economic and ecological ramifications of our current way of revealing, and even learned how one can work towards another revealing by laying the grounds to welcome the coming to presence of another way of Being. Yet, where do we go from here?

I think that other places to turn to could be found within a leaning into the world of process metaphysics, as I see certain structural similarities with the deep ecological network account of interplay that I have revealed through the pages of this treatise. I believe that the work of process philosopher Alfred North Whitehead is a place to which film scholars, economists, and ecologists should be turning as Whitehead questions “the anthropocentrism that has so long seen a key assumption of modern Western rationality. Such a questioning is urgently needed at a time when we face the prospect of ecological catastrophe and when we are forced to recognize that the fate of humanity is deeply intertwined with the fates of all sorts of other entities.”\textsuperscript{190} I feel that Whitehead’s ideas will perhaps not come off as so unfamiliar to film scholars. Many interpretations of the very metaphysics of film already come from Henri Bergson and the

\textsuperscript{190} Steven Shaviro \textit{The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism} (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) 1.
writings of Gilles Deleuze on him in the *Cinema 1* and 2 books, whose ideas were incredibly important for the formation of process metaphysics (on the more continental side as opposed to Whitehead’s analytics as Shaviro observes). A processual account of cinema not only works to understand how the film itself is composed, but can provide a reinvigorating look at apparatus theory that has been left by the wayside of film theory since the 1980s which worked to largely question the event of *the* Cinema and spectatorial relations to it.

I believe that through an understanding of the world in networked holism, as one continuous process, as a formation whole-someness, we can work towards welcoming a new way of relating—a new way of playing—in the world. We can have a similar realization to Buzz that he has when lying on the floor, broken, in Sid’s house after attempting to fly out a window. We can realize this brokenness of one’s Being in the face of climate change and other sociopolitical issues as well. The realization is that when the Buzz Lightyear breaks, when we realize that our way of relating to things is broken, we can begin towards a new project of preparing for a new way of relating to things. When one hammers, and then the hammer breaks, one must not only realize that they too will break one day (die), but that their way of hammering, their way of living, itself lead to the hammer, the world, breaking. When one hammers a particular way that causes the hammer to break early on in its use, does one pick up a new hammer and continue hammering in the same way? Or, does one learn that they should change their way of hammering so that the problem does not continue. *Toy Story* can teach us that we must alter our way of dwelling in the world towards one of care for another that stems from an obligation to be there for one another. This obligation does not squelch our ability to be free and to do what we want—

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191 Heidegger gives an example of a breaking hammer in *BT*. That when the hammer breaks, we realize we too will break (die), and are thus free within the limits of our life-time to make changes in our lives.
on the contrary, it structures a system of care so that we all can do what we want. It is a freedom-
within these rules of our play to be-there for one another in a positive sense, and not in terms of a
means/resource. One must realize that the lyric in the film’s leitmotif “you’ve got a friend in me”
not only suggests camaraderie between persons, but it also suggests an interplay to others and the
world. We are always-already interconnected, always-already in an interplay, always-already
within the network, and are free within its limits to play in such a way that we too can be-there192
for others.

This story, a Toy Story, our story, has highlighted and made us aware of the “extent to
which human being and thinghood overlap, the extent to which the us and the it slip-slide into
each other. … The hope is that the story will enhance receptivity to the impersonal life that
surrounds and infuses us, we generate a more subtle awareness of the complicated web of
dissonant connections between bodies, and will enable wiser interventions into that ecology.”193
And it is through this understanding of this network, of this interplay, of this whole-someness, of
this freedom within our limits that we become most liberated not just to understand our
interconnectedness and limitations, but to also at the same time to push past the limitations of our
understanding of the world as human-centered on-hand resource. This understanding of the
interplay, of the immense interdependency interconnected enmeshedness one has with the
totality of the world, can move us to understand a fundamental revealing in Toy Story’s lyrical
leitmotif “you’ve got a friend in me.” That one is a friend with another, in spite of and because of
difference, and that one is inextricably in the world with another that establishes not just an
existential fact, but also to care [Sorge] for another. As any project that lies before us, one must

192 Reference to Heidegger’s notion of Dasein, or there-being if literally translated. I am, however, trying to
illustrate a way in which we can see the inherent care that the word Dasein carries within it. Not only is one there in
the world, one is also there for others.
193 Bennett, Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things, p4
always contemplate upon it to prepare to work forward into how to think about it. Heidegger tells us that we become truly free only insofar as we belong “to the realm of destining and so becomes one who listens, though not one who simply obeys.” 194 We must ask ourselves, will we simply obey these metaphysics, or do we consider it something that is within our power to do differently? 195 We must prepare ourselves to be differently not just with, but in and alongside, the world. It is because we have challenges that make us care [Sorge] that make us be in-and-with the world.

FINIS

194 QCT p330
195 See Epictetus’ Encheiridion [Ἐγχειρίδιον Ἐπικτήτου] (translated as “The Handbook” or “Manual”) §1
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