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ENG 300

6 May 2022

Jurassic Park & The Desire For Environmental Control

Humans are the top of the food chain in nature. They believe that they have power over nearly every aspect of the environment, and are confident in their ability to keep said alpha status. For millions of years humans had to compete with nature, and it was only recently that we reached this level of power. This idea is challenged by the movie *Jurassic Park*, directed by Steven Spielberg and based on the novel by Michael Crichton. The movies often have a repeat narrative of control, then chaos. The park is created, or all is calm, then everything falls apart, and nature reclaims it. The dinosaurs are brought back to life from a past era of nature, and find a way to claim the modern environment. This is all due to human greed and their drive to gain power. The *Jurassic Park* franchise stresses humanity's hunger for environmental control through its use of natural and technological conventions.

The first and possibly the most compelling evidence of human desire for control are the relationships of various human characters with the Velociraptors. The raptors are the species of dinosaur that receives the most attention by the franchise. They are cunning predators that have intelligence similar to a dolphin, or even a human in some instances. In the beginning of the movie, John Hammond brings the visitors to the science laboratory where they create the embryos. As a baby raptor hatches, Hammond proceeds to help it come out of its shell, and says "They imprint on the first living creature they come in contact with. That helps them to trust me. I've been present for the birth of every animal on this Island..." (Jurassic Park Screenplay). This

insistence of imprinting on every creature that is born is a sign of Hammond asserting his dominance over his creations. Since he was the one to fund them being brought to life, he considers himself their master, even if he doesn't say it outright. While there is some scientific evidence to back up his imprinting claim, it is not the case for these animals. They later on consider humankind their prey. The raptors do not consider humans to be their masters. They are part of nature, even if they are in the wrong time period. In the first scene with the raptors, they are shown as helpless and at the mercy and control of humans. The baby raptor is literally held in the palm of their hands. Later on however, they overpower humans and essentially take control of the island, therefore representing nature overcoming human interference.

Another interesting aspect of the raptors is their alternate portrayal in future movies such as *Jurassic World*. In the future, many years after the events of *Jurassic Park*, the park has opened again. Owen Grady, an animal behaviorist formally employed by the Navy, is hired to train raptors to follow human command. Dr. Wu, the scientist who originally brought back the dinosaurs, has Owen interact with young raptors to see their reactions. Wu designed one raptor in particular, Blue, to have more motherly and empathetic traits. This led to the young raptor to be kind to Owen, unlike the others, who would immediately attack him at any sign of weakness. Despite this initial kindness, Blue grew up to be a powerful predator. She is not a domesticated animal, despite the opinion of Vic Hoskins, the leader of Jurassic World's private security force. He wants Owen to train the raptors for militaristic purposes, but Owen knows that this is almost impossible to do because of the raptors' wild nature. Hoskins is confident of his dominance over the raptors, and in one scene he compares the raptors to a pet he used to have, "I rescued a wolf pup. It was, like, two months old... It used to sleep by my bed. Watch over me. My wife, she came at me with a steak knife. It (the wolf) took a chunk out of her arm... we had an

unshakeable bond...” (Jurassic World Screenplay). He says this to one of the raptor handlers, and compares the bond between him and his wolf to the bond between the raptor handler and the raptors. However this comparison is between a human and a wolf. Wolves, while not domesticated, have been around humans for thousands of years, so they would be more likely to form a bond with a human. Dinosaurs however have no co-evolution with the human race, and represent the more wild aspect of nature. Just because he tamed a wolf, Hoskins thinks that taming a raptor would be just as easy. Later on he attempts to order one of the raptors around. He wants to control nature, and believes that he has the alpha status needed in order to make the raptor do what he wants her to do. However she had no respect for him, and as a part of nature, she felt no need to bend to humanity’s will. Hoskins gets devoured instead.

Before getting eaten, Hoskins makes an interesting point about nature and war to Owen. He says that “...we do own them. Extinct animals have no rights... These animals can replace thousands of boots on the ground. How many lives would that save? War is part of nature... Every living thing in this jungle is trying to murder the other. Mother Nature’s way of testing her creations. Refining the pecking order...” (Jurassic World Screenplay). Hoskins believes that because the company InGen brought back the dinosaurs, they belong to them. This is the same opinion of most of the scientist characters in the franchise. Hoskins wants these raptors to replace soldiers in battle. He believes that they can be controlled to the point of human command. Owen does prove that they can understand human directions, but they do not follow said orders unless they want to. They must respect the person instructing them immensely to listen, but it is more of a mutual bond. The person needs to be trusted and respected by the whole pack for them to even consider following through. They have the intelligence to have their own opinions about who is

the boss or not. The raptors are unpredictable because they are a part of nature, and not objects owned by humans.

This leads into the discussion of Owen Grady as a character in the franchise, and his role in the hunger for environmental power. Owen disagrees with the prospect of the raptors being used as militaristic weapons. He and the raptors have a form of mutual respect, and he is the person who knows their mannerisms and personalities best. However, in *Jurassic World*, he goes against his ideals by ordering the raptors to fight the Indominus Rex, a genetically modified hybrid dinosaur. This can be compared to many real life environmentalists or politicians who push for environmental reforms. They claim to have certain ideals, but still use private jets that burn lots of fuel, and damage the environment in other ways. Owen knows that he should not use the raptors for his advantage, but he does this multiple times. While he respects nature, he still uses it to his own (and humanity's) advantage.

This connects to the themes of corporate greed in the franchise. The collapse in the first *Jurassic Park* was sparked by Dennis Nedry, the stepson of John Hammond. He attempts to sneak dinosaur embryos off the island in order to sell them to another corporation that is competing with InGen. He turns off the power for the entire island, including the paddock fences, in order to slip by unnoticed. Nedry ends up failing, and is killed by a juvenile dilophosaurus before he can make the transfer. His and the corporation's greed is what led to the initial fall of the park.

However, the park's creation itself is a stronger example of how corporate greed can affect the environment. Hammond founded it with the idea of bringing something no one has ever seen before to the world. He wanted the park to be financially accessible to all. His intentions may have been good, but he still altered nature to use it for financial and corporate

gain. He brought extinct creatures back to life without considering the ethical and environmental consequences of his actions. Hammond had too much money to spend, and ultimately created an ecological disaster. This can be compared to companies in real life, who starve the environment of its natural resources in order to make a profit. Rich people have no regard for nature and their effect on it. Even if they claim that the purpose of their company is benevolent, they can still overlook major issues about their business. Hammond is an example of this, for he failed to realize the true consequences of bringing dinosaurs back to life.

The scientists are manufacturing nature into products for human pleasure and ego. Ian Malcolm says, "...were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, that they didn't stop to think if they should. Science can create pesticides, but it can't tell us not to use them. Science can make a nuclear reactor, but it can't tell us not to build it!" (Jurassic Park Screenplay). The science was there, so they used it without thinking of the natural consequences. Malcolm and Hammond go on to argue back and forth on the ethics of this decision. Hammond says that "How could we stand in the light of discovery and not act?" Malcolm responds by saying "...What you call discovery, I call rape of the natural world!" (Jurassic Park Screenplay). Malcolm uses very strong language to attempt to tell Hammond just how serious the choice was to bring dinosaurs back to life. He explains that dinosaurs had their chance, and nature chose them to become extinct. By bringing them back, they are going against what nature wants, and against the natural order of things. Hammond has essentially destroyed the harmony of the ecosystem. He does not listen to Ian, and refuses to accept that nature will find a way. There is a reason that scientists are limited by ethics, so nature will not be altered in such a dramatic way like in *Jurassic Park*.

Secondly, the *Jurassic Park* franchise brings attention to the lack of environmental control that humans have over nature by visually portraying the message of 'life finds a way.'

This is the main theme of the first film. All the dinosaurs were designed to be female, so their breeding could be regulated. After being told this, Ian Malcolm says to Hammond that “the kind of control you’re attempting is not possible. If there’s one thing the history of evolution has taught us, it’s that life will not be contained. Life breaks free. It expands to new territories. It crashes through barriers...” (Jurassic Park Screenplay). Malcolm was ultimately correct. The dinosaurs were easily able to escape containment once the power went out. It only took one slip up by one person for them to be able to break past barriers. Malcolm knows that life cannot be contained, and expresses his concerns to Hammond, who ignores him. In the future, the dinosaurs will escape and spread all across the world, therefore expanding to new territories. They started out by being supposedly contained by both the limitations of science and geographic location, but nature was able to overcome both these obstacles.

The scientists had to fill in the genome gaps with frog DNA, and failed to realize that the frogs were able to switch sex if necessary. Once the escape happened, the dinosaurs almost immediately began breeding and laying eggs. Life found a way to continue on and break away from human interference. Nature is always able to overcome the limitations that overconfident humans put into place, in some way or another. *Jurassic Park* gets this message across through the failings both biologically and geographically.

When talking about the drive for power that humans have over the environment, it is important to further discuss what happens after they fail. This is explored in the movies following *Jurassic Park*. In the sequel *The Lost World: Jurassic Park*, a few characters, Ian Malcolm, his girlfriend, and some new faces travel to Isla Sorna, an island nearby. This island was used to house dinosaurs before they would be taken back to the main island for display. After the fall of Jurassic Park, this island became an overrun sanctuary for many species. The

dinosaurs on this island have taken over the entire facility and there is no sign of any human interference at first glance. While their presence on the island is artificial, because they are part of nature, they are able to overcome the hurdles of not living in their natural environment and thrive. This proves that nature does not need human involvement in order to evolve.

Later on in the narrative, humans fail controlling nature once more. The group exploring Isla Sorna encounter a family of Tyrannosaurus Rex, and find that other people are on the island with them. These people seem nice at first, but it quickly becomes apparent that they are essentially poachers who are trying to kidnap dinosaurs to be put on display in San Diego. This operation is being run by John Hammond's nephew, Peter Ludlow. This leads to what is known as the San Diego incident, where a Tyrannosaurus male and his offspring are brought to said location. The pair is separated by humans, and in a fit of rage, the father overpowers the crew of the cargo ship he is traveling on. He proceeds to storm through the city, looking for his offspring. Many homes and businesses are destroyed, and multiple people are either wounded or devoured. This was all caused by Ludlow's attempts to bring nature to a location where it doesn't belong yet again. Nature yet again proved that it can't be controlled, and this destruction is what happens when people inevitably fail to do so.

The *Jurassic Park* franchise dives deeper into this theme of genetic and environmental control, and how it will always fail, in future movies. In *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, the volcanic island that the dinosaurs are living on is about to erupt, and will likely wipe them all out in a second extinction. Claire Dearing, the previous park operations manager, is now working with an environmentalist group to convince the US government to save them. Ian Malcolm returns in this movie in a news feed scene, talking in the US Capitol. He explains in further detail how he does not agree with the genetic power that the original park unleashed, "We altered the

course of natural history. This is the correction... In the last century, we amassed a landmark technological power. And we've consistently proven ourselves incapable of handling that power... we've got genetic power. So... how long is it gonna take for that to spread around the globe... I'm talking about... man-made, cataclysmic, change..." (Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom Screenplay). Malcolm is explaining that because of all the past mistakes that the scientists and humans have made with this genetic power, he thinks that it will just spread into more parts of the world. His point is proven by the creation of the Indoraptor, a custom designed dinosaur hardwired to follow directions. The creation however was not completed, and just a prototype. It was missing empathetic DNA that was hardwired into Blue the velociraptor, so it could follow orders, but if it wasn't given any, it would hunt whatever it pleased in a reckless manner. This genetic power was unleashed temporarily on the world, and if the Indoraptor hadn't been killed, it would have possibly been replicated or sold off to other militaries. As proven by past installments of the series, it would've been catastrophic. Malcolm's worry about genetic power being spread around the world is justified. He predicted this during the original *Jurassic Park*, that harnessing this kind of natural power would be harmful to humanity and the entire world.

When everything falls to chaos, how will the natural world and humanity be affected? This is explored in the short film *Battle at Big Rock* and the new movie *Jurassic World: Dominion*, which will be released in about a month. After the events of *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, dinosaurs and genetic power has been unleashed across the world. The dinosaurs brought to the US to sell at auction have either gone to their new owners to possibly be cloned into new versions, or escaped into the wild. They used to be confined to just the two islands, but now have been spread across the world without control. They are able to breed in the wild, as

shown through the baby Nasutoceratops in *Battle at Big Rock*. Since they have escaped, different organizations and governments have access to their genomes and biology, so they are now able to create more for a variety of reasons such as for the military, public display, or just because they can. The implications of this are huge, since the ecological balance of the world has been altered forever due to them escaping. The new movie is going to touch on this issue, but there is likely no true way to fix this problem.

Because of humans not considering the implications of the environmental power that they had, the dinosaurs have now found a way into the human lifestyle. After their escape, everything has changed. Usually people only have to worry about car accidents, modern wild animals, or other humans when going outside to live their lives. This also has huge implications for other species and plants that may be destroyed by the various prehistoric invasive species. As shown through *Battle at Big Rock*, humans now need to worry about being eaten or trampled by dinosaurs. The short film follows a family that tries going on a camping trip. They are convinced that the dinosaurs have not spread into this particular location in the mountains yet. Their vacation is cut short when a family of Nasutoceratops comes to investigate the campgrounds. The family hides, and the herbivores are fairly peaceful. However the dinosaurs are attacked by an Allosaurus, a large predator. The Nasutoceratops manage to escape. The human family thinks that they'll be safe, but their infant child starts crying and alerts the carnivore to their presence. There is a skirmish, and the parents are luckily able to drive the predator away (with the help of their young daughter and her small amount of crossbow experience). The overall message of this short is to show the audience that this universe is no longer safe. Dinosaurs and humans now have to learn to live together, and dinosaurs will likely be the most dominant species in a few years. This is all because of the actions of John Hammond in the beginning, who did not think of

the consequences of bringing extinct species back to life, and did not consider the ecological implications.

The themes taken from *Jurassic Park* can be applied to real life natural issues. People are putting these problems on the backburner, and letting future generations worry about the state of the environment. However, if nothing is done now, there won't be a possibility of a healthy world in the future. The first *Jurassic Park* movie focused more on the implications of genetic power, and how corporations do not think of the consequences that their actions have on the environment. The next few movies have themes of environmental action and looming disasters, all stemming from the initial creations from the first movie. They did this by using environmental and technological conventions of describing the creatures, their characteristics, the way they are created, and what world they ultimately lead to.

Similar conventions are used in *Annihilation* by Jeff VanderMeer. The story follows a Biologist, Anthropologist, Psychologist, and a Surveyor sent to explore a mysterious and dangerous area. In a similar fashion, *Jurassic Park* has a Paleontologist, Paleobotanist, and Mathematician sent to survey a park, based on values of fascinating new science and discovery. Both groups consider the environmental aspects of their respective areas of exploration. In *Annihilation*, they have essentially no idea what they are up against, and must figure out why nature is rebelling. One way to interpret it is as a failed attempt at humanity controlling the environment. Nature is rebelling against human control, and humanity has no way to stop this natural power. *Jurassic Park* follows these same themes, for humans brought dinosaurs back without thinking of the ecological consequences, and dinosaurs, as nature, were able to escape and grow on their own. Just as Area X is gradually expanding with no sign of stopping. Both of these stories explore this concept in similar ways, and get the same message across. Humanity,

by not considering the environment, will destroy itself, for nature will always grow back in one way or another.

The overall message of *Jurassic Park* is to explore humanity's hunger for power through various natural and technological conventions. In real life, humanity has almost given up on the environment. Yes, there are groups that strive to save nature, but unless huge corporations start changing, nothing can be stopped. Nature itself can't be destroyed, but parts of it can be. Such as certain species becoming extinct, or through the ice caps melting. However nature is always evolving into new versions and definitions of itself. Humans are part of nature, despite all of our technological creations. Humanity needs to consider the environment though, because we do have a massive effect on it, and humans treat it with disrespect. *Jurassic Park* explores this concept by pushing the boundaries on technological advancement, and essentially exploring an alternate reality where dinosaurs are artificially brought back to life against the natural order of things. In the new movie, *Jurassic World: Dominion*, this concept will likely be further explored. Humanity's reign may end, but nature itself isn't done, and the world has not ended. Nature is reclaiming the earth due to human tampering with the ecological harmony.