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EDITED BY: DEAN A. KOWALSKI

# INDIANA JONES

## AND PHILOSOPHY

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# **INDIANA JONES AND PHILOSOPHY**

**WHY DID IT HAVE TO BE SOCRATES?**

**Edited by  
Dean A. Kowalski**

**WILEY Blackwell**

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## **Contributors: “We Have Top Men [and Women] Working on It”**

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**Lance Belluomini** did his graduate studies in philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley; San Francisco State University; and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. He’s recently published an essay on “Tenet” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Popular Culture as Philosophy* (forthcoming). He’s also contributed chapters to *The Philosophy of Christopher Nolan* (2017) and the Wiley-Blackwell philosophy and popular culture volumes on *Inception* (2011), *The Walking Dead* (2012), *Ender’s Game* (2013), and *The Ultimate Star Wars* (2015). Surprisingly, the iconic “Raiders March” theme isn’t the first thing that pops into his head when someone mentions *Indiana Jones*. Instead, it’s the cool ad-libbed lines by Harrison Ford in *Raiders*: “I don’t know. I’m making this up as I go,” and “It’s not the years, honey. It’s the mileage”—quotes that Lance would never use for he realizes Indy is the only person who’s allowed to talk like that.

**Matthew Brake** is an adjunct professor at George Mason University and Northern Virginia Community College. He is also the editor the *Theology and Pop Culture* series from

Fortress Academic and the co-editor (with A. David Lewis) of the forthcoming *Religion and Comics* series from Claremont Press. Matthew imagines a world where he, like Dr. Jones, can drop his teaching load at a moment's notice to go on an adventure, presumably paid for by his department.

**Timothy Brown** is the Dean of Southern Evangelical Bible College, and the Executive Editor of the *SES Christian Apologetics Journal*. He previously authored a chapter in *Disney and Philosophy* (2020), and courses he has instructed include Logic, Moral Philosophy, and Philosophy of Religion. Like Indy, he is a professor who has lectured in a bow tie and glasses, but unlike Indy he has his *mother's* eyes.

**Matthew Crippen** is a professor, who digs into history, cross-cultural value theory, and matters related to mind, and whips out articles in places like *Synthese*, *Topoi*, the *British Journal of Aesthetics*, *Environmental Ethics*, and *Transactions of the Charles Peirce Society*, also publishing a Columbia University Press book. He has collaborated creatively with his lifelong friend and co-author, Matthew Dixon, on music jobs, film projects, and popular philosophy pieces, which are small monuments to the long time they've known each other.

**Matthew Dixon** is interested in cultural studies and film, and works in the legal industry—where exhibits very often do mark the spot. He has been involved in theatrical productions, music jobs, and short films, in addition to publishing on popular art. He has known his co-author, Matthew Crippen, since kindergarten and treasures their various entries on pop culture and philosophy as time capsules of their friendship, perhaps to be excavated by other like-minded people in the future.

**Justin Fetterman** lives in Montreal, where he works as a writer, editor, stage director, and creative designer for opera. He is simply passing through history, and making it up as he goes.

**Duncan Gale** is an adjunct professor of philosophy at San Bernardino Valley College, Riverside City College, and Chaffey College, all in the Inland Empire of Southern California. You can find his other articles on popular culture and philosophy in *Avengers Infinity Saga and Philosophy* (2020) and *Dave Chappelle and Philosophy* (2021). In his classes, he does not allow students to communicate via messages written on their eyelids.

**Christopher Helali** is a graduate student in cultural studies at Dartmouth College researching religion (Orthodox Christianity), nationalism, historical trauma, and war in modern Greece. Other research interests include philosophy (Marxism), imperialism, and national liberation struggles. Notable discoveries include the second known phone book belonging to Jeffrey Epstein, which was uncovered in December 2020 and revealed to the public in the summer of 2021. Chris shares with Dr. Jones a mutual hatred of Nazis: “Nazis. I hate these guys.”

**Louise Hitchcock** has a Ph.D. in Aegean Bronze Age Art (UCLA 1998) and she’s currently a professor of Aegean Bronze Age archaeology in the Classics and Archaeology program at the University of Melbourne. Her books include *Minoan Architecture: A Contextual Analysis* (2000), *Theory for Classics* (2008), and *Aegean Art and Architecture* (2000) (with Donald Preziosi), and she is the co-editor of *DAIS: The Aegean Feast, Aegaeum 29* (2008). When not dancing on tables in Aleppo, running away from rattle snakes, or jumping into lost tombs, Louise has found time to publish 100 articles about Aegean, Cypriot, and Philistine archaeology, gender identity, architecture, and

theory. The Australian Research Council funded her excavations at the Philistine site of Tell es-Safi/Gath, where she collaborates with Aren Maeir. If adventure has a name, her name is Louisiana Hitchcock.

**Alexander E. Hooke** is a professor of philosophy at Stevenson University. His recent books include *The Twilight Zone and Philosophy: A Dangerous Dimension to Visit* (co-editor) (2018), *Philosophy Sketches—700 Words at a Time* (2nd edition) (2021), and *Alphonso Lingis and Existential Genealogy* (2019). He is to faculty meetings as Indiana Jones is to snakes. Unfortunately, he lacks Indy's fortitude and persistence to make the best of a bad situation.

**Justin Kitchen** teaches philosophy at San Francisco State University and CSU Northridge. His work centers around virtue ethics and virtue epistemology; it draws often from Stoic philosophy and early Buddhist philosophy. He hopes he never has to make a leap from the lion's head to prove his worth.

**Dean A. Kowalski** is a professor of philosophy and chair of the Arts & Humanities department in the College of General Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. He regularly teaches philosophy of religion, Asian philosophy, and ethics. He is the author of *Joss Whedon as Philosopher* (2017), *Classic Questions and Contemporary Film* (2nd edition, 2016), and *Moral Theory at the Movies* (2012). He is the editor of *The Big Bang Theory and Philosophy* (2012), *The Philosophy of The X-Files* (revised edition, 2009), and *Steven Spielberg and Philosophy* (2008); he is the co-editor of *The Philosophy of Joss Whedon* (2011). For him, attending Ripon College was the "X" that "marked the spot"; it was there he began "digging" for "the truth" (but he assures you that the ground floor of Lane Library remains safely intact).

**Annalissa Lane** has studied philosophy and religion at St. Olaf College and the University of Chicago. Her research interests include contemporary American religions, racism, and the rise of Christian nationalism in the United States. She has tried to practice archeology and foil tomb raiders around the world, but mostly in her daydreams when she is not writing papers on the danger of nationalism or knitting a sweater.

**Siobhan Lyons** is a researcher in media, cultural studies and philosophy, having earned her Ph.D. in 2017. Her books include *Death and the Machine: Intersections of Mortality and Robotics* (2018), and *Ruin Porn and Our Obsession with Decay* (2018). She has also previously contributed chapters to *Westworld and Philosophy* (2019) and *Philosophical Approaches to the Devil* (2016), among other books. She shares Indiana's pursuit of fortune and glory, but has found that academia isn't exactly the best place to find it.

**Aren M. Maeir** is a professor of Biblical and ancient Near Eastern archaeology in the Department of Land of Israel Studies and Archaeology at Bar-Ilan University, in Ramat-Gan, Israel. For the last 25 years, he has directed the excavations at the site of Tell es-Safi/Gath ([gath.wordpress.com](http://gath.wordpress.com)), and kept himself busy with this and various other archaeologically related endeavors. Aren is a big believer in Kent Flannery's characterization of the profession: "Archaeology is still the most fun you can have with your pants on."

**Robert M. Mentyka** is an independent scholar who spends his days working as an average file clerk. Just as Indiana Jones hides his dashing character beneath the veneer of a seemingly mild-mannered professor of archeology, Mr. Mentyka utilizes such an unassuming position to further his philosophical expeditions into the deepest and most

troublesome questions mankind has yet to pose. Primarily a student of ethics, personalism, and the history of philosophy, Mr. Mentyka received his M.A. in philosophy from the Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio. His previous contributions to the *and Philosophy* series include articles for *Bioshock and Philosophy* (2015), *Alien and Philosophy* (2017), *Lego and Philosophy* (2017), and, most recently, *Disney and Philosophy* (2019).

**Edwardo Pérez** is one of those Gen Xers who, influenced by Harrison Ford's Indiana Jones and John Williams' heroic theme, took a few archaeology courses in college. While they didn't help the GPA (because Mesoamerican archaeology on Wednesday evenings after marching band practice was a great time to nap), the courses did give Edwardo an appreciation for what real archaeology is all about (not the life and limb, but the folklore, to paraphrase Indy). So, while Edwardo might not be a swashbuckling obtainer of rare antiquities, he at least gets to be a dashing professor of English, keeping a brown leather jacket handy in case some rhetorical adventure demands a trip to the catacombs hidden deep below the Tarrant County College library in the legendary city of Cowtown, otherwise known (especially to those who don't speak Texan) as Fort Worth.

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**Robert Seddon** is a moral philosopher who holds an Honorary Fellowship at the University of Durham, his alma

mater, and is a member of its Centre for the Ethics of Cultural Heritage. Besides the kind of heritage archaeologists usually deal with, he has also written about heritage in outer space and heritage on the Internet. Where others want to be Indy, he identifies with the Staff of Ra: people keep wanting to know just how tall he is.

**Pankaj Singh** is an assistant professor at the University of Petroleum and Energy Studies (UPES), Dehradun, India. Although his formal research interests include philosophy of mind and existentialism, he loves writing about pop culture and philosophy. His publications include chapters in *The Expanse and Philosophy* (2021) and *The Palgrave Handbook of Popular Culture as Philosophy* (forthcoming). His thoughts and life philosophy mainly oscillate between doom and fortune and glory.

**Tait Szabo** is an associate professor of philosophy in the College of General Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. His specializations are in ethics and political philosophy. He has contributed chapters to *The Philosophy of Joss Whedon* (2011) and *Pornography and Philosophy* (2010). In his spare time, he practices judo and writes speculative fiction, for fortune and glory, kid. Follow him at [taitszabo.com](http://taitszabo.com).

**Charles Taliaferro** is a professor of philosophy and the Overby Distinguished Chair at St. Olaf College. He has authored, co-authored, or edited over 30 books, including the *Cascade Companion to Evil* (2020) and (with Jil Evans) *Is God Invisible?* (2021). While Charles idolizes Indiana Jones, he looks and acts just like Marcus Brody.

**Daniel Tilsley** is a Ph.D. researcher in film studies and philosophy at the University of East Anglia (UK), with an interest in cult cinema, American horror, and existential philosophy. His research focuses on nineteen-fifties and sixties American horror and science fiction films and

existential philosophy as culturally entwined. This all means that he really adores the silly aliens at the end of *The Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*—and is hopefully not the only one. He is also passionate about widening participation and inclusivity for young people in secondary and higher education in England, including young people with special educational needs.

**Mia Wood** is a professor of philosophy at Pierce College in Los Angeles, where she routinely conducts introductory courses across the philosophy curriculum. She has contributed essays to *Mr. Robot and Philosophy: Beyond Good and Evil Corp* (2017), *Westworld and Philosophy: Mind Equals Blown* (2018), and *Dave Chappelle and Philosophy* (2021). Among her research interests are personal identity and free will, causation, conditionals, philosophy of metaphor, and philosophy of death. As a child, Mia wanted to be an archaeologist—she sported a fedora and knew how to crack the bullwhip—but she hates snakes.

## **Acknowledgments: “We Can Discuss My Honorarium over Dinner and Champagne Tonight— Your Treat”**

I would like to thank all the contributing authors. Each was a pleasure to work with, and many of them participated in voluminous email exchanges and provided multiple drafts. Unlike Major Eaton’s disingenuous assurance, believe me that they are “top men and women,” each of whom worked enthusiastically to share with you their respective appreciation for *Indiana Jones*.

The contributing authors and I acknowledge that this book would not have been possible if it were not for the visionary efforts of George Lucas, Steven Spielberg, and Harrison Ford (and their associates and co-workers); we thank them for bringing to life one of the greatest film characters of all time, but remembering to make him human and thus relatable. Perhaps they were making some of it up as they went, but we’re no bureaucratic fools—all of us know very well what we have here.

Indeed, I am grateful for the efforts of many people on this project: Bill Irwin, who nearly 13 years after I first suggested this volume, surprised me with an unexpected and happy email one day in 2019, and then made the project a joy from start to finish; the College of General Studies Dean’s office for awarding me a course release to finish the manuscript; Assistant Library Director for the College of General Studies Scott Silet for obtaining *Indiana Jones* research materials; UW-Waukesha Emeritus Professor of Music Craig Hurst for helping me paraphrase the beginning of Indy’s theme; Ripon College Lane Library Director Andrew Prellwitz for providing me access to the

Ripon College archives on past faculty members; and Ripon College Emeritus Professors of Philosophy Vance Cope-Kasten and Robert “Spud” Hannaford for sharing their personal and professional recollections of their colleague William E. Tyree, many of which were incorporated into [Chapter 10](#). Like Harrison Ford, I was a philosophy major at Ripon College, though unlike Ford I did not have the privilege of taking classes with Dr. Tyree.

While I don’t know Harrison Ford personally, I think he is right about one thing: There is truth to be found “down the hall” on the second floor of East Hall. Like Harrison, perhaps, that is where I began my search. With great aplomb, Professors Cope-Kasten, Hannaford, and Doss masterfully set me on my path, and I couldn’t be more grateful; it is to them that I dedicate this book:

*To Vance, Spud, and Seale*

# **Introduction: “Indiana Jones—I Always Knew Some Day You’d Come Walking Back through My Door. I Never Doubted That”**

*Dah da dah Dahhhh/Dah da Dahhhhh/Dah da dah Dahhhh/Dah da-dah Dah dah ... Go ahead. You know you want to keep humming. I’ll wait ...*

The Indiana Jones theme song is unmistakable. Harrison Ford cannot escape it, as he once remarked (tongue firmly in his cheek), “That damn music follows me everywhere. They play it every time I walk on stage, every time I walk off a stage. It was playing in the operating room when I went in for my colonoscopy” (*Time*, June 10, 2016). Beyond the music, Indy’s leather jacket, brown fedora, and bullwhip are simply iconic, forever engrained in popular culture. We cannot escape Indiana Jones! (Not that we would want to, of course.)

Harrison Ford deserves credit for the character’s popularity. His ability to subtly play up Indy’s foibles while playing down the character’s heroism, makes Indiana Jones relatable. Of course, Lucas and the screenwriters are also responsible, as they magnificently depict Indy battling antagonists seeking to possess mystical objects for world domination. But Indy is no mere action hero. He also struggles with unrequited love that lingers for decades, an estrangement from his overbearing father that lasts just as long, and a lifelong obsession with regaining an important object unfairly taken from him.

As we know, Indy doesn’t always choose wisely, and if the *Young Indiana Jones Chronicles* are to be trusted, he made

many missteps in his youth on the way to becoming the hero we know and love. Indy loses a fight as often as he wins, and when he wins, he doesn't always fight fairly. In fact, he stumbles so often, one might wonder why he persists decade after decade toward his goals. He's not getting any younger. What's the point? And, as he inexplicably trudges on, he—in the four films and various graphic novels—has many alleged encounters with the supernatural. He's not a religious person (at all), so what should he make of those? Should he take the leap of faith and become a believer? While we often see him conducting his highly unconventional fieldwork, spending an unusual amount of time in caves, he cannot completely ignore his "day job" teaching undergraduates and aiding their pursuit of knowledge. But why should archaeologists strive to put artifacts in a museum, or search for "fact," but not "truth" (and who is Dr. Tyree, anyway)?

The Indiana Jones character is expressive of the human condition, vividly illuminating our struggles and issues on the big screen. True, we don't have John Williams's orchestra filling us with pride when we manage to do the right thing or play the part of the hero. Still, no one would blame you if you imagined Indy's theme blaring in the background while rising to meet a challenge!

Have you started humming Indy's theme again? I hope you hear it many more times as you read through this volume and relive some of your favorite Indiana Jones moments. I'll get you going as you turn to the first chapter: *Dah da dah Dahhhh/Dah da Dahhhh/Dah da dah Dahhhh/Dah da-dah Dah dah ...*

**Part I**

**“IT WAS WRONG AND YOU  
KNEW IT!”: ETHICS AND  
VALUES**

# 1

## Acting Without Thinking: The Sagacity of Indiana Jones

*Justin Kitchen*

Indiana Jones gets the job done. He may stumble and fall along the way, but he picks himself up (or is forcibly picked up by a Nazi strongman) and keeps going without hesitation. What motivates a person who rarely hesitates? How does Indy make such confident decisions in the heat of the moment? The answer lies, not with a clear moral code or formula for how to behave, but with his character. Indiana Jones's confidence and spontaneity reflects his moral character. He's just a good person who is eager to be good.

Philosophy can help us elaborate on this idea: according to many ancient virtue ethicists, people with the *best characters* are those who are *most wise*—so-called “sages.” Sure, Indy is a good person, but is he a sage? Once we get a handle on the quality of Indy's character and how he has become a good person, we'll be able to say whether he has attained sagehood or is at least heading in the right direction. Through it all, we can rest assured that Indiana Jones is at least a “hero,” but maybe we'll be able to understand what that word amounts to by comparing it to the ideal of the sage.

### Consequences or Character?

People adopt many different approaches when it comes to describing and justifying what's morally “right.” By far, the

most popular approach is one that looks at the consequences of actions. This is broadly called consequentialism: right actions are those that lead to good consequences. Another approach, instead, looks at the character of the moral agent. This is called virtue ethics: right actions are those performed by agents with good character, those who exhibit virtue.

We'll be taking the virtue ethics approach because of its focus on the moral agent—the person doing the moral action—rather than the action itself. If we took the consequentialist approach and focused primarily on Indiana's actions (more precisely, the consequences of his actions), we might encounter some problems.

The character Amy Farrah Fowler from the CBS sitcom *The Big Bang Theory* expresses one such problem regarding Indy's role in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*:

Indiana Jones plays *no* role in the outcome of the story. If he weren't in the film, it would turn out *exactly* the same. ... If he weren't in the movie, the Nazis would have still found the Ark, taken it to the island, opened it up, and all died. Just like they did.<sup>1</sup>

Amy's argument is strong. In fact, we could make her argument even stronger by correcting the claim that the Nazis would have taken the Ark to the island regardless of Indy's interference. A major scene in *Raiders* centers around Indy and Marion trying to board the plane set to fly the Ark to Berlin. If Indy did *not* interfere in the Nazi's archaeological expeditions, the Nazis would have still found the Ark, taken it to Berlin on an unexploded airplane, and opened it up in the presence of the Führer or some other high-ranking officials. This is a hypothetical scenario of a fictional story, but the theory holds water. And it befuddles anyone who is taking a consequentialist approach—Indy actually might have produced worse consequences by

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