

# AMA Announcement: Tuesday 8/30 1PM EST - Caspar Hare (MIT) on ethics, rationality and edX intro to philosophy MOOC

A Definite Description <sup>1</sup> and r/Science AMAs<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Affiliation not available

April 17, 2023

## Abstract

As previously announced, /r/philosophy is hosting an AMA series this fall semester which kicks off this upcoming Tuesday August 30th, 1PM EST. Caspar Hare, Professor of Philosophy at MIT, will be joining us to answer questions about his work on ethics, rationality and a special edX course he is running called “Introduction to Philosophy: God, Knowledge and Consciousness”. Professor Hare has published two books, *The Limits of Kindness* and *On Myself, and Other, Less Important Subjects*. You can read free online reviews of those books here and here respectively. He has also published a number of papers, all of which are available online at his website for free. Check out some blurbs for his books below: *The Limits of Kindness* Caspar Hare presents a novel approach to questions of what we ought to do, and why we ought to do it. The traditional way to approach this subject is to begin by supposing a foundational principle, and then work out its implications. Consequentialists say that we ought to make the world impersonally better, for instance, while Kantian deontologists say that we ought to act on universalizable maxims. And contractualists say that we ought to act in accordance with the terms of certain hypothetical contracts. These principles are all grand and controversial. The motivating idea behind *The Limits of Kindness* is that we can tackle some of the most difficult problems in normative ethics by starting with a principle that is humble and uncontroversial. Being moral involves wanting particular other people to be better off. From these innocuous beginnings, Hare leads us to surprising conclusions about how we ought to resolve conflicts of interest, whether we ought to create some people rather than others, what we ought to want in an infinite world, when we ought to make sacrifices for the sake of needy strangers, and why we cannot, on pain of irrationality, attribute great importance to the boundaries between people. *On Myself, and Other, Less Important Subjects* Caspar Hare makes an original and compelling case for “egocentric presentism,” a view about the nature of first-person experience, about what happens when we see things from our own particular point of view. A natural thought about our first-person experience is that “all and only the things of which I am aware are present to me.” Hare, however, goes one step further and claims, counterintuitively, that the thought should instead be that “all and only the things of which I am aware are present.” There is, in other words, something unique about me and the things of which I am aware. *On Myself and Other, Less Important Subjects* represents a new take on an old view, known as solipsism, which maintains that people’s experiences give them grounds for believing that they have a special, distinguished place in the world—for example, believing that only they exist or that other people do not have conscious minds like their own. Few contemporary thinkers have taken solipsism seriously. But Hare maintains that the version of solipsism he argues for is in indeed defensible, and that it is uniquely capable of resolving some seemingly intractable philosophical problems—both in metaphysics and ethics—concerning personal identity over time, as well as the tension between self-interest and the greater good. Professor Hare is teaching a free online MOOC this semester called *Introduction to Philosophy: God, Knowledge and Consciousness*. You can read an article about the MOOC by MIT News here. This iteration of 24.00x is (to our knowledge) the first philosophy MOOC in history to offer instructor grading of, and comments on, your work. Basically you get to do philosophy for real, with individual instruction, for a small fraction of the cost of taking the course at MIT. The blurb for the course is as follows: This philosophy course has two goals. The first goal is to introduce you to the things that philosophers think about. We will look at some perennial philosophical problems: Is there a God? What is knowledge, and how do we get it? What is the place of our consciousness in the physical world? Do we have free will? How do we persist over time, as our bodily and psychological traits change? The second goal is to get you thinking philosophically yourself. This will help you develop your critical reasoning and argumentative

skills more generally. Along the way we will draw from late, great classical authors and influential contemporary figures. AMA Professor Hare will join us this Tuesday for a couple hours of live Q&A on his work and teaching, as well as philosophy and education more generally. Please feel free to post questions for Professor Hare here. He will look at this thread before he starts and begin with some questions from here while the initial questions in the new thread come in. Please join me in welcoming Professor Hare to our community!

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ADEFINITEDESCRIPTION [R/SCIENCE](#)

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### ***The Limits of Kindness***

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### ***On Myself, and Other, Less Important Subjects***

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#### **CORRESPONDENCE:**

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