



WINTER 2026 *Colloquium*

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“Are Two Selves Too Many Selves?: A Puzzle about the Relation Between Selves in Kant”

Kant refers to at least two selves: a metaphysically real, self as it exists in itself, and an empirical self that is an object of spatiotemporal experience. Both seem like candidates for the thing that is me: my self, or the referent of ‘I’. But if I told you that you were two selves, or two people, your reaction might be one of confusion. In so stating, I appear to have made a mistake: philosophical and commonsense intuitions both support the view what it is to be you is to be exactly one person or self. These intuitions have prompted a long-standing debate about whether the 'selves' that Kant refers to pick out one or two selves. Here, I argue that our best reading of Kant’s metaphysics of the self is one that conceives of the selves as two entities that stand in an intimate relation, and that this reading—far from being confused or implausible—highlights the applicability of Kant’s metaphysical framework for tough practical questions about identity.

FRIDAY FEBRUARY 13

1:30 P.M.

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