*“For if you want to save your own life, you will lose it; but if you lose your life for my sake, you will find it.”* Matthew 16:25

Who I am is not who I *am*. I am perpetually ‘on the way’ to myself, but I never get there. I am always already gone by the time I arrive at where I was (having left only a trace). No matter how hard I try, I am unable to catch up with myself. Temporality.

The problem with being temporal is that part of me is always out ahead of myself into the future, while another part of me is being dragged along from the past, always late to arrive at the scene of who I *am*. Past and future should meet in the present, but they don’t. The present never *is*.

‘Now’, this very instant, which seems to be *perpetually* present, is always gone when I try to grasp it, replaced by another now and then another. Take this sentence, for example: “Now I am who I am.” By the time I get to the end of the sentence the “now” at the very beginning is long gone, its tracks disappearing into the past.

On the other hand, and despite the temporal conundrum of presence, my immediate experience of myself is that I am, in fact, a clear and definite ‘somebody’. I am, me, Robert, the same as I have always been. I have an identity, a sameness that persists over time. Bills must be paid by the same ‘me’ who gets billed every month. My students expect ‘me’ to show up for class, not someone else.

Thus, the full truth of who I am is ambiguous: I am always the same person that I am and, at the same time, am always someone different than who I am. A sameness-in-difference; a paradox; an enigma; an impossible possibility.

And here is another problem with trying to say who I am. I cannot determine who I am apart from others (and the otherness of the world as a whole), as if I were a single, solitary human being perfectly complete in myself. Rather, who I am is always already entangled with other people. I may appear to be separate from others, yet I could not possibly conceive of myself as a being who had never been one-among-others or one-with-others.

Yet this idea of essential connection does not stop a certain a-lone-ness from creeping into my bones and rendering me a stranger in a strange land, an alien among those who think they have their identification with themselves, their unthinking sameness, while I am bereft of myself.

Perhaps I will fully catch up with myself when I am dead, as reported in my obituary. And from that moment on I will finally be, forever and ever, who I am.