

In Today's Culture, You Are What You 'Identify As'

Last month, a Dutch man, Emile Ratelband, asked a court in the Netherlands to permit him to change his legal age from 69 to 49. He said he "feels 49," and he said his doctor agrees that he looks young for his age. Ratelband complained that he has suffered from age discrimination—especially when looking for dates with women online.

Comparing himself to transgender people who change their sexual identity, Ratelbrand claimed in his lawsuit that age is not a fixed reality. "Time is just a figure," he said. "I say it is not fixed."

Unfortunately for Ratelbrand's dating life, the Dutch court ruled against him this week. While recognizing that "some people today feel fit and healthy in their old age," the judges did not regard this as a valid argument for amending a person's age. They affirmed that Ratelband's birthdate is still fixed at March 11, 1949.

We can be thankful that these Dutch judges ruled on the side of sanity. But in today's bizarre world of "self-identification," Mr. Ratelband's attempt to alter reality will likely become more common. Consider these recent examples:

- We all remember Rachel Dolezal, a white woman who pretended to be black while leading the local NAACP chapter in Washington state. When her deception was exposed in 2015, she told reporters that she "identifies as black"—as if her personal feelings about her race can automatically overrule genetics.

Dolezal later explained that she believes race is "a social construct" that has no basis in science. She said: "I really just prefer to be exactly who I am, and black is the closest

race and cultural category that represents the essence of who I am.”

- In November, controversial Irish singer Sinead O'Connor went on a racist rant on Twitter, announcing that “white people are disgusting.” The former pop star said, “I never want to spend time with white people again,” even though she herself is white. Known for her shaved head, O'Connor said she has changed her name to Shuhada' Davitt and has started wearing a head covering because she is now a Muslim.
- You may never have heard of “therians,” but it probably won't be long before you meet one. Therians don't believe they are humans, and they celebrate their animal identity on their Instagram pages and YouTube channels. One Norwegian woman named Nano said she realized at age 16 that she has been a cat all her life. She walks on all fours and claims she can see in the dark and hear things humans can't.

Dennis Avner, a famous therian who committed suicide in 2012, was so convinced he was a cat that he had his ears reshaped, got whiskers implanted and had cat stripes tattooed all over his body. (Today there are also “polytherians” who identify as more than one animal.)

- Things are becoming even more confusing when it comes to gender. Ever since athlete Bruce Jenner announced in 2015 that he was transitioning from male to female, the trans movement has exploded. There are now officially 63 different designations for gender on record. One of those, “gender fluid,” refers to a person who believes they are a mix of both genders and that their gender designation is not fixed.

What do we make of all this? For centuries people have assumed that things like gender, age and race are set realities based on science. Yet today all absolutes are being questioned.

More and more, in this selfie age, the self has become the standard. The new mantra is: "I can choose who I am. I am what I 'feel.' If I 'feel' like I am 49, I am 49—no matter what my birth certificate says. If I 'feel' like I am a dog, I am a dog. I determine reality."

I'm not shocked when I see this trend in our culture. The Bible warned us this would happen. The apostle Paul predicted that in the last days "men will become lovers of themselves" (2 Tim. 3:2). When we reject God and focus on ourselves, we actually lose our true identity. We cannot possibly know who we really are if we cut ourselves off from the Creator.

Without a connection to the true God, we become hopelessly disoriented and confused. This only hope for this growing confusion in our culture is the gospel of Jesus Christ.

This is not a time to judge people. Don't get angry at those who "identify" as something else. Love them anyway—and introduce them to the one who can restore their true identity. In the midst of today's selfishness, sexual confusion and family breakdown, Jesus has given us a chance to show His love to people who don't know who they are.