

Dutchman 'Identifies' as Young Man, Demands to Have 20 Years Taken Off Age

A 69-year-old Dutch man is crossing a new trans-identity frontier. Emile Ratelband, a colourful "positivity guru" (*pictured above*), has asked a court to turn his legal clock back 20 years so that he can be officially recognised as 49 years old.

He told the judge that he did not feel comfortable with his age and that doctors had told him that he had the body of a 45-year-old. In fact, Ratelband describes himself as a "young god". He wants his date of birth to be changed from 11 March 1949 to 11 March 1969.

His legal age allows people to discriminate against him, he complains, and it causes him acute emotional distress. "When I'm 69, I am limited. If I'm 49, then I can buy a new house, drive a different car," [he said](#). "I can take up more work. When I'm on Tinder and it says I'm 69, I don't get an answer. When I'm 49, with the face I have, I will be in a luxurious position."

Of course, Mr Ratelband could lie about his age, especially on the dating app Tinder, but he says that he doesn't want to lie. He wants to be 49.

His request is inspired by the transgender movement, which allows people to self-identify as whatever gender they want. He simply wants to identify as a younger man because he has the vitality and physique of someone 20 years younger. "We live in a time when you can change your name and change your gender. Why can't I decide my own age?" [he asks](#).

Mr Ratelband certainly has no shortage of vitality. He is currently arranging to have a child with a surrogate mother; he has been married twice; and he has seven children from three relationships.

Is this the new frontier in self-identification? A judgement in his case will be handed down at the end of November – and it is more than likely that the court will spurn his request. The judge expressed his scepticism at a recent hearing.

But isn't the logic of his case compelling, given the precedent of transgenderism? In the leading [feminist philosophy journal Hypatia](#), Rebecca Tuvel, of Rhodes College, in Memphis, has set down two conditions for claiming a change of identity:

for a successful self-identification to receive uptake from members of one's society, at least two components are necessary. First, one has to self-identify as a member of the relevant category. Second, members of a society have to be willing to accept one's entry into the relevant identity category.

Of course, she was defending the controversial possibility of trans-racialism – identifying as a member of a different racial group, like [Rachel Dolezal](#), a white woman who became president of a chapter of the NAACP. But Mr Ratelband's claim seems to meet these conditions. He identifies as 49 and doctors agree that he appears to be 49. What is the problem with changing his birth certificate? In many jurisdictions transgender people are allowed to change their natal sex on their birth certificate. Why not their age?

Another feminist philosopher who defends trans-racialism, the Canadian [Christine Overall](#), speaks of "life-changing and life-enhancing aspirations for personal transformation and self-realization". This describes Mr Ratelband's request perfectly.

Another man who turned back the clock on his age a couple of years ago might be regarded as a counter-argument to the current Dutch case. [Paul Wolscht](#), a 46-year-old Canadian mechanic with a wife and six children decided that he was really a 6-year-old girl named Stefonknee. He found “adoptive parents”, wore frilly dresses and played with dolls. However, the ridicule which this inspired was evidence that society would not accept his self-identification, one of the two conditions needed for social and legal recognition of the age change.

Mr Ratelband’s request is quite different, as he can legitimately claim to look and act like a 49-year-old.

If transgenderism is possible, why not transracialism? And why not transageism? Whatever the Dutch court rules, it’s impossible not to see the logic – and the justice – of his “life-enhancing aspiration”.

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