

A FINAL NOTE

Brigitte Lewis¹

First, I extend a gracious thankyou to Nigel Rapport for engaging with my critique. In terms of our positions, I agree with him that in an ideal world we could do away with ‘identity politics’ (p.20) as he calls it. But feminists have long argued that all identities are political – not just those outside of the unnamed identity politics to which identity politics becomes the Other to. Our world, unfortunately, is far from ideal and a universalising theory cannot do justice to all people’s embodied experience. The lived reality of the individual ‘Anyone’ cannot occur outside of communities and hierarchies of power.

Rapport insists ‘there are no identities that must legally, politically and morally be recognised and guaranteed besides individuality and humanity’ (p.25). If this were true there would be no need for the various Anti-Discrimination Acts in Australia which exist because it was recognised that individual recognition disguised the subject who was being protected and silenced all others. That is, largely, the white, male, heterosexual subject. I take to task, Rapport’s framing of my identity, as a cultural identity which is ‘fiction’ and that I should ‘overcome’ (p.24) it. Especially at this moment in history when Australia is being surveyed on their thoughts as to whether I should be allowed to legally marry my same-sex partner. It is clearly not ‘the individual who is the holder of rights’ (p.25). Again I discount his proclamation that the ‘law recognises the individual as citizen’ (p.25). It is always a very particular individual who is allowed the subject position ‘Anyone.’ And it is always a very particular body who is read and interacted with as an individual and accorded the dignity or ‘politesse’ Rapport champions.

Rapport references the fact of ontology as it extends to individuals in opposition to culture which is socially constructed (p.24). Contrary to Rapport’s assertions about my identity, the terms ‘woman’ and ‘lesbian’ do contain my personal awareness because I am read as these before I am read as human or person, and this reading qualifies or frames the reading of human or person. For me, these are ontological truths. It is not a social conditioning but a

phenomenological ontological fact. These facts define my very experience of humanness and cannot be excluded from it.

Nigel Rapport and I may disagree on what we consider truth, ontological fact and the nature of being-in-the-world. What we unequivocally agree on though, are our aspirations to live in a world where we are all seen and treated as human beings.

NOTE

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