One is not born, but becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.

However, most of the feminists and lesbian-feminists in America and elsewhere still believe that the basis of women's oppression is biological as well as historical. Some of them even claim to find their sources in Simone de Beauvoir. The belief in mother-right and in a "prehistory" when women would have created civilization (because of a biological predisposition), while the coarse and brutal men would have hunted (because of a biological predisposition), does not make the biological approach any better. It is still the same method of finding in women and men a biological explanation of their division, outside of social facts. For me this could never constitute a lesbian approach since it assumes that the basis of society or the beginning of society lies in heterosexualitv. Matriarchies are no less heterosexual than patriarchies: it's only the sex of the oppressor that changes. Furthermore, not only is this conception still a prisoner of the categories of sex (woman and man), but it keeps to the idea that the capacity to give birth (biology) is what defines a woman. Although practical facts and ways of living contradict this theory in lesbian society, there are lesbians who affirm that "women and men are different species or races (the words are used interchangeably); men are biologically inferior to women; male violence is a biological inevitability..." By doing this, by admitting that there is a "natural" division between women and men, we naturalize history, we assume that men and women have always existed and will always exist. Not only do we naturalize history, but also consequently we naturalize the social phenomena which express our oppression, making change impossible. For example, instead of seeing giving birth as a forced production, we see it as a "natural," "biological" process, forgetting that in our societies births are planned (demography), forgetting that we ourselves are programmed to produce children, while this is the only social activity "short of war" that presents such a great danger of death. Thus, as long as we will be "unable to abandon by will or impulse a lifelong and centuries old commitment to childbearing as the female creative act," having control of the production of children will mean much more than the mere control of the material means of this production. Women will have to abstract themselves from the definition "woman" which is imposed upon them.

A materialist feminist approach shows that what we take for the cause or origin of oppression is in fact only the mark imposed by the oppressor: the "myth of woman," plus the moral, psychological, and material effects and manifestations in the appropriated consciousness of the bodies of women and bodies of men. Thus, the mark does not preexist oppression. Colette Guillaumin, a French sociologist, has shown that before the socio-economical reality of black slavery, the concept of race did not exist (at least not in its modern meaning: it was applied to the lineage of families). However, now, race, exactly like sex, is taken as an "immediate given," a "sensible given," "physical features." They appear as though they existed prior to reasoning, belonging to a natural order. But what we believe to be a physical and direct perception is only a sophisticated and mythic construction, an "imaginary formation" which reinterprets physical features through the network of relationships in which they are perceived. (They are seen black, therefore they are black; they are seen women, therefore they are women. But before being seen that way, they first had to be made that way.) A lesbian consciousness should always remember how "unnatural," compelling, totally oppressive, and destructive being "woman" was for us in the old days before the women's liberation movement. It was a political obligation and those who resisted it were accused of not being "real" women. But then we were
it is, then, this movement that we can question for its meaning of "feminism." It so happens that feminism in the last century could never resolve its contradictions on the subject of nature/culture, woman/society. Women started to fight for themselves as a group and rightly considered that they shared common features. But for them these features were natural and biological rather than social. They went so far as to adopt pseudo-Darwinist theories of evolution. They did not believe like Darwin, however, "that women were less evolved than man, but they did believe that male and female natures had diverged in the course of evolutionary development and that society at large reflected this polarization. . . . The failure of early feminism was that it only attacked the Darwinist charge of female inferiority, while accepting the male claim to this charge—namely, the view of woman as 'unique.'" And finally it was women scholars—and not feminists—who scientifically destroyed this theory. But the early feminists had failed to regard history as a dynamic process which develops from conflicts of interests. Furthermore, they still believed that the cause (origin) of their oppression lay within themselves (among black people only the Uncle Toms believed this). And therefore feminists, after some astonishing victories, found themselves at an impasse for lack of reasons for fighting. They upheld the illogical principle of "equality in difference," an idea now being born again. They fell back into the trap which threatens us once again: the myth of woman.

Thus it remains historically for us to define our oppression in materialist terms, to say that women are a class, which is to say that the category "woman," as well as "man," is a political and economic category, not an eternal one. Our fight aims to suppress "man" as a class, not through a genocidal, but a political struggle. Once the class "women" disappears, women as a class will disappear as well, for there are no slaves without masters. Our first task, it seems, is to always thoroughly disassociate "women" (the class within which we fight) and "woman," the myth. For "woman" does not exist for us: it is only an imaginary formation, while "women" is the product of a social relationship. Furthermore we have to destroy the myth within and outside ourselves. "Woman" is not each one of us, but the political and ideological formation which negates "women" (the product of a relation of exploitation). "Woman" is there to confuse us, to hide the reality of "women." In order to become a class and to be aware of it, we have first to kill the myth "woman" even in its most seductive aspects.

To destroy "woman" does not mean to destroy lesbianism, for a lesbian is not a woman and does not love a woman, given that we agree with Christine Delphy that what "makes" woman is a personal dependency on a man (as opposed to an impersonal dependency on a boss). Lesbian is the only concept that I know of which is beyond the categories of sex (woman man), because lesbian societies are not based upon women's oppression and because the designated subject (lesbian) is not a woman either economically or politically or ideologically. Furthermore, what we aim at is not the disappearance of lesbianism, which provides the only social form that we can live in, but the destruction of heterosexuality—the political system based on women's oppression, which produces the body of thought of the difference between the sexes to explain women's oppression.

Beyond or within this class consciousness, this science/experience, while in the separateness of one's ego, do we still have to fight to exist as an autonomous entity? There is no doubt that we have to fight for this entity, since we are left with nothing.
once we reject the basic determination "woman" and "man," once we have no more attributes by which to identify ourselves (I am this or that). We are for the first time in history confronted with the necessity of existing as a person.

Sex Equality: Difference and Dominance
Catharine MacKinnon

There is one thing of which one can say neither that it is one meter long nor that it is not one meter long, and that is the standard meter in Paris.

Ludwig Wittgenstein

The measure of man is man.

Pythagoras

[Men] think themselves superior to women, but they mingle that with the notion of equality between men and women. It's very odd.

Jean-Paul Sartre

Inequality because of sex defines and situates women as women. If the sexes were equal, women would not be sexually subjected. Sexual force would be exceptional, consent to sex could be commonly real, and sexually violated women would be believed. If the sexes were equal, women would not be economically subjected, their desperation and marginality cultivated, their enforced dependency exploited sexually or economically. Women would have speech, privacy, authority, respect, and more resources than they have now. Rape and pornography would be recognized as violations, and abortion would be both rare and actually guaranteed.

In the United States, it is acknowledged that the state is capitalist; it is not acknowledged that it is male. The law of sex equality, constitutional by interpretation and statutory by joke, erupts through this fissure, exposing the sex equality that the state purports to guarantee.\textsuperscript{1} If gender hierarchy and sexuality are reciprocally constituting—gender hierarchy providing the eroticism of sexuality and sexuality providing an enforcement mechanism for male dominance over women—a male state would predictably not make acts of sexual dominance actionable as gender inequality. Equality would be kept as far away from sexuality as possible. In fact, sexual force is not conventionally recognized to raise issues of sex inequality, either against those who commit the acts or against the state that condones them. Sexuality is regulated largely by criminal law, occasionally by tort law, neither on grounds of equality.\textsuperscript{2} Reproductive control, similarly, has been adjudicated primarily as an issue of privacy.\textsuperscript{3} It is as if a vacuum boundary demarcates sexual issues on the one hand from the law of equality on the other. Law, structurally, adopts the male point of view: sexuality concerns nature not social arbitrariness, interpersonal relations not social distributions of power, the sex difference not sex discrimination.

Sex discrimination law, with mainstream moral theory, sees equality and gender as issues of sameness and difference. According to this approach, which has dominated politics, law, and social perception, equality is an equivalence not a distinction, and gender is a distinction not an equivalence. The legal mandate of equal treatment—both a systemic norm and a specific legal doctrine—becomes a matter of treating likes alike and unlikes unlike, while the sexes are socially defined as such by their mutual unlike-ness. That is, gender is socially constructed as difference epistemologically, and sex discrimination law bounds gender equality by difference doctrinally. Socially, one tells a woman from a man by their difference from each other, but a woman is legally recognized to be discriminated against on the basis of sex only when she can first be said to be the same as a man. A built-in tension thus exists between this concept of equality, which presupposes sameness, and this concept of sex, which presupposes difference. Difference defines the state's approach to sex equality epistemologically and doctrinally. Sex equality becomes a contradiction in terms, something of an oxymoron. The deepest issues of sex inequality, in which the sexes are most constructed as socially different, are either excluded at the threshold or precluded from coverage once in. In this way, difference is inscribed on society as the meaning of gender and written into law as the limit on sex discrimination.

In [the] mainstream epistemologically liberal approach,\textsuperscript{4} the sexes are by nature biologically different, therefore socially properly differentiated for some purposes. Upon this natural, immutable, inherent, essential, just, and wonderful differentiation, society and law are thought to have erected some arbitrary, irrational, confining, and distorting distinctions. These are the inequalities the law against sex discrimination targets. As one scholar has put it, "any prohibition against sexual classifications must be flexible enough to accommodate two legitimate sources of distinctions on the basis of sex: biological differences between the sexes and the prevailing heterosexual ethic of American society."\textsuperscript{5} The proposed federal ERA's otherwise uncompromising prohibition on sex-based distinctions provides parallel exceptions for "unique physical characteristics" and "personal privacy." Laws or practices that express or reflect sex "stereotypes," understood as inaccurate overgeneralized attitudes often termed "archaic" or "outmoded," are at the core of this definition of discrimination.\textsuperscript{6} Mistaken illusions about real differences are actionable, but any distinction that can be accurately traced to biology or heterosexuality is not a discrimination but a difference.

From women's point of view, gender is more an inequality of power than a differentiation that is accurate or inaccurate. To women, sex is a social status based on who is permitted to do what to whom; only derivatively is it a difference. For example, one woman reflected on her gender: "I wish I had been born a doormat, or a man." Being a doormat is definitely different from being a man. Differences between the sexes do descriptively exist. But the fact that these are a woman's realistic options, and that they are so limiting, calls into question the perspective that considers this distinction a "difference." Men are not called different because they are neither doormats nor