

The Gender/Sex Debate: Category Errors, Intentional Ignorance, and Orwell's Long Shadow

Originally posted on Facebook, 22 August 2026. Expanded here for the Blog.

The whole trans-related "Gender versus Sex" debate — and let's be honest about this straight away, pet — *is not a debate*. A debate is when two parties with different views sit down and reason together, each willing to follow the argument wherever it leads. What we're actually watching in most public discourse about trans people is something rather different: a weaponised diatribe dressed up in the language of philosophy. And like all bad-faith arguments, it falls apart the moment you apply even the most basic logical scrutiny.

The first and most fundamental problem is a **category error**. And once you see it, you can't unsee it.

The Category Error

Here's the thing. We actually have two perfectly serviceable words in English: **sex** and **gender**. They mean different things. We've always known this, even before the contemporary debate made it politically charged. Sex refers — in the simplest sense — to the biological machinery: chromosomes, hormones, reproductive anatomy. Gender refers to the person *society* knows and interacts with day to day: the name, the pronouns, the social role, the sense of self. One is largely private and physical; the other is public and social. They are not the same thing. They have never been the same thing. And the insistence on collapsing them into one is not an intellectual position — it's a *category error*.

Think about it like this. A person's primary sex characteristics are known only to very few: their doctor, perhaps their intimate partner. The rest of society knows their *gender*. When you meet someone in a shop, or at a meeting, or in the street, what you interact with is their gender — the person they present as, the social identity they move through the world in. Their sex is largely irrelevant to that interaction, and in most cases, entirely unknown to you.

To insist that this person's gender must be forcibly aligned with their sex — that we must ignore who they are in order to reduce them to what they are — is to commit a logical error of the most basic kind. It's like insisting that because a person has a certain passport (a legal document), they must also be the nationality stamped in that passport, regardless of where they were born, raised, or where their actual life is rooted. The document and the life are related, but they are not the same thing. And confusing them causes nothing but harm.

This is what the anti-trans lobby does, consistently and deliberately: it subsumes all terminology into "sex" and then claims to be defending biology. But biology itself is far more complicated than the crude simplifications allow. Intersex people exist. Chromosomal variations exist. Hormonal variations exist. To pretend that sex is a simple binary that maps neatly onto every human body is to lie about biology as surely as it is to lie about anything else.

Crimestop — The Intentional Ignorance

But there's something else going on here, something even more insidious. Orwell wrote about it in 1984 — the technique he called **crimestop**: the automatic suspension of critical thinking at the precise moment where the argument might lead somewhere inconvenient.

The transphobic antagonist doesn't reason their way to their position. They *stop* reasoning the moment the logic of their own thought threatens to show them something they'd rather not see. It's not that they haven't thought it through — it's that they deliberately, almost instinctively, refuse to go further. The hatred reaches its limit exactly where the rational alternatives begin.

Point out that gender and sex are different? The response isn't engagement — it's "you're mentally ill." Note that the person's social identity is what everyone around them actually knows and respects? The response isn't consideration — it's "you're delusional." Ask a simple question about consistency — if sex determined social role in the way claimed, what do we do with the countless historical and cultural examples where it clearly didn't? The response isn't an answer. It's silence, or abuse, or the retreat to the fallback position of **ad hominem**.

And here's the thing about the "mentally ill" accusation: it reveals its own absurdity upon examination. If a trans person's identity is a mental illness, then the appropriate response is compassion, treatment, support. Nobody throws bricks at people with mental illness. Nobody writes hostile legislation aimed at stripping away the rights of people with depression or anxiety. The "mentally ill" label is deployed not from concern but from contempt — a rhetorical stick to justify treating someone as less than human, wrapped in the language of psychiatric concern. It's the politics of the 欺 platform masquerading as clinical opinion.

The 1984 Parallel

Nearly eighty years after George Orwell wrote 1984, it is genuinely staggering — and genuinely frightening — how much of the book's playbook is being deployed against trans people.

The renaming of things: "gender identity" becomes "ideology," "affirmation" becomes "grooming." The doubling of standards: it's fine for a woman to objectify trans women, but trans women raising safety concerns are "weaponising feminism." The enemy who is simultaneously weak and all-powerful: too fragile to compete in sports, yet somehow a threat to all women in changing rooms, in schools, in law. The deliberate fuzziness of language so that any rebuttal can be reframed: "I was just asking questions," "you're overreacting," "this is about biology."

Orwell described Big Brother's world as one where the Party understood that "the very existence of truth and reason depends on the existence of a thinking enemy." The trans community, in its current form as a lightning rod for a particular kind of manufactured panic, has become that thinking enemy — and the response has been precisely what Orwell predicted. Not argument. Not evidence. Just the organised suppression of the very possibility of a different view.

So No — It's Not a Debate

When someone refuses to engage with the substance of an argument, when they retreat to insults the moment their position is questioned, when they deliberately stop thinking rather than follow the logic where it leads — that is not a debate. That is a diatribe. And like all diatribes, it tells you far more about the person delivering it than it does about the people they're targeting.

The category error is the foundation. The intentional ignorance is the structure built upon it. And the *ad hominem* is the sign that whoever is making the argument knows, somewhere beneath the hatred,

that the foundation and the structure are both rotten.

Gender is who a person is. Sex, in the simplest sense, is what they are. Confuse the two, and you have not philosophy. You have a category error with a mob behind it.

That's all it ever was.

Bea Groves-McDaniel | 22 August 2026