



Center for the History of Women Philosophers and Scientists  
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## *Created Beings and Human Nature in Mary Astell (1666–1731)*

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Mary Astell addressed a number of questions that today we regard as philosophical from the standpoint of religious work and thought, almost always adhering to the standard Christian doctrine of her time as articulated by the Anglican church. As her biographer Ruth Perry notes, “Astell found this a comfortable frame...” within which to theorize. Hence she saw created beings as the work of the Christian God, and she was acutely aware that when we profess to love God we are professing love for one who was the Author of many sorts of entities. In addition, and perhaps more controversially, Astell saw human nature as created by the Divine as a sort of testing ground—and she was clear in her attempts to spell out the notion that it was perhaps more of a testing ground for women than for men. Thus in her “Reflections” piece, she states clearly that the flaws of the male version of human nature are soil for the work of the feminine side. As she repeatedly says, there is no inequality between male and female.

### **Primary Sources:**

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Duran, Jane 2005. *Eight Women Philosophers*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Perry, Ruth 1989. *The Celebrated Mary Astell: An Early English Feminist*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

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