



Mind-Body Problem in Mary Astell (1666-1731)

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Mary Astell, a devout believing Christian and committed Tory, held the conventional religious position on the mind and body, one that involved the notion of a soul imprisoned, so to speak, in human matter. Ironically, this type of belief would allow the Dissenters to champion personal freedom of thought with respect to religion, but Astell was no Dissenter. Her belief in the Christian ontology, along with her stated commitment that the earthly life afforded much opportunity for the growth of women's souls, due to enormous suffering, permitted her to write openly of the need for women to think of the trials of their souls-souls to be conceptualized along Christian lines, as having an eternal component-as a way to salvation. Astell's views on these matters reflect her lifelong commitment to the cause of the Crown and its political underpinnings.

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