



Woman, Nature of in Mary Astell (1666-1731)

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Mary Astell held what today would be regarded as a very conservative position on the nature of woman, but it was a stand that was completely consistent with her own thinking and much of the Tory and royalist thought of her time. A believing Christian, Astell experienced no problem with the concept of woman as man's helpmate, but took issue with the notion that woman was inferior to man. As she herself wrote in *Some Reflections*, "The Apostle [...] adds [...] that Woman is the Glory of Man, [b]ut what does he infer from hence?" She was also a strong believer in the notion that women's innate sense of compassion and virtue would enable them to obtain much from the injustice of marriage; her views on this have to do with the concept that suffering is beneficial for the individual's growth. As she also wrote in *The Christian Religion*, a "Woman may put on the whole Armour of God without Degenerating into a Masculine Temper..." Astell sees that the helping virtues of women may serve them well as constructs for internal growth in their worldly lives.

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