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17th Century French Philosphy

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Benedikt Gottwald

17th-century French Philosophy: The main parameters of the decades long debate between Nicolas Malebranche and Antoine Arnauld, in specific the nature of ideas and the controversy on grace and freedom. (Dates of research: 23rd January 2012 – 16th April 2012)

If faith and reason do not contradict one another, as Nicolas Malebranche claims, we need to either completely separate the two as disciples of philosophy and theology, or we can furthermore follow Malebranche in talking about a coherent body of philosophical theology. The great philosophical debate between Nicolas Malebranche and Antoine Arnauld, which was centered around some of the core issues in early modern philosophy, was to subsequently have significant influence on the development of modern philosophical thinking. Next to the controversy on the nature of ideas, their disagreement on grace and freedom especially triggered conflict between the two 17th-century French philosophers. As introduced earlier, a major point of conflict for Arnauld was Malebranche's incursion of philosophical rationalism in theology. The research paper will consist of annotated translations from the French originals, mainly focusing on the extracts relevant to the indicated topics. This deep insight will enable me to extend the philosophical span of the "History of Modern Philosophy" course, which the research paper is in conjunction with. Professor Andrew Pessin, a specialist in modern French philosophy will supervise my research project and might include my findings in the class in form of a presentation.