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NEOPLATONIC THOUGHT IN MEDIEVAL IRELAND: THE EVIDENCE OF SCÉLA NA ESÉRGI
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Abstract (Summary)
[...] I will examine briefly the overarching Neoplatonic structure of the text; then I will explore in more detail some specific instances of Neoplatonic concepts being transposed from Latin into the vernacular. In other words, the text moves from purification (in the removal of bodily imperfections that will occur at the resurrection) to illumination (in heaven) to union (with other righteous souls and ultimately with God).\n The marginal and supralineal notes in die Bodleian manuscript demonstrate a concern with language, grammar, and etymology, which could represent the transitional stage between the expression in Latin of the types of ideas mentioned above by Plato, his commentators, and John Scottus Eriugena on the one hand, and the expression in Irish of similar philosophical concepts on the other, as Irish scholars developed a vernacular vocabulary to express the complex philosophical and dieological ideas of die twelfth century.

Full Text
 (7402 words)

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Seek na esérgi is a Middle Irish sermon on universal resurrection, extant only in the late eleventh- or early twelfth-century vernacular manuscript Leborna hUidre) The first half of the text, with its focus on the materiality of resurrection and, in particular, its discussion of exceptional cases - miscarried foetuses, conjoined twins, those with congenital deformities, and so on - locates it within a literary genre that was common throughout medieval Christendom.2 Thus, even at its most basic level, the text is a witness to Ireland's extensive engagement with non-Irish textual culture in the Middle Ages. It has, however, been largely overlooked by scholars, and the characterization of Scéla na esérgi as 'not particularly original nor particularly Irish', and by extension undeserving of attention, epitomizes scholarly approaches (or the lack thereof) to the text.3 I would dispute this characterization by McNamara on both counts, and the purpose of the present study is to demonstrate that, while the text can certainly be read within a wider generic tradition, it is also a highly original composition. I suggest that one of the most important aspects of the text's originality is the author's manipulation of the Irish language to express complex concepts deriving from Latin theological and philosophical discourse. Indeed, the complexity of Scéla na esérgi is most impressively revealed in the author's use of the language and philosophy of Christian Neoplatonism, and it is this aspect of the text that will form the primary focus of my study. First, I will examine briefly the overarching Neoplatonic structure of the text; then I will explore in more detail some specific instances of Neoplatonic concepts being transposed from Latin into the vernacular. I end by discussing the implications for our understanding of Ireland's engagement with European intellectual culture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

Structure

Structurally, Scéla na esergi takes the form of a Neoplatonic ascent from matter to form to the divine (see Figure 1). It is within this overarching structure that smaller thematic units emerge. The text begins with a formulaic hortatory opening, which serves to inform the audience that the theme of the text is the universal resurrection at Judgement Day. It is immethately clear that, although the author's primary concern is with those destined for heaven, he is interested in their imperfections and irregularities. The author begins with irregular deaths: those who have drowned, or been destroyed by fire, or consumed by animals. From here, he moves to miscarried foetuses. The foetus is a bridge between the irregular death (it has not experienced life outside the uterus) and the subsequent theme, the irregular body (the foetus finds itself embothed in a manner that does not resemble the ideal human 'form', in the likeness of which mankind will be resurrected). The theme of irregular bothes encompasses a thscussion of the deformed, midgets, and the obese. The climax of this section is the thscussion of the wounds of the martyrs; the most perfect physical imperfection.

Next the author sets up the theme of man as a microcosm of the universe, and this is an aspect of the text

that I will address in more detail below. At this point, the author curbs his philosophical speculation and expresses the importance of scriptural ortliodoxy, before beginning a new section of the text which deals with the retention of gender thfferences following the Resurrection. Raising the issue of gender thfferences leads the author to weigh up the arguments for the physicality of the resurrected body. Specifically, he attempts to resolve satisfactorily the doctrine of physical resurrection with the Pauline notion of the 'spiritual' resurrection. This thsputatio on material and spiritual notions of resurrection is the point at which ScéL. na esérgi moves away from the issues of physicality which have dominated the first half of the text, toward the spiritual concerns which dominate the second.

In the second half of the text, the author examines the emotions and means of communication between the righteous in their various stations in heaven, and then turns to the relationship between the righteous and God. The very nature of God is such that he is unknowable and indescribable; therefore the text elucidates not God himself, but rather how the righteous experience God. Immettately, the author proceeds to an image of the pains of hell. To great rhetorical effect, he metaphorically flings us from the face of God to the depths of hell, and this is the first point at which the fate of the damned has been explored. The author cleverly leads the authence into the position of awaiting the conclusion of this text: that is, his explication of the concept of the 'first resurrection' of the righteous and the 'second resurrection' of all men, and an explanation of how that first resurrection can be attained.4 Before concluding, the author is careful to include tangible 'proofs' of the resurrection in the birth of animals and the renewal of plants each year. The text ends in a formulaic manner, with a summary of the events of Judgement Day, a reminder of the pains of hell, and an exhortation to the authence to strive to be among those worthy of the 'first resurrection'.

The structure of Scéla na esérgi Is complex and multifaceted. In addition to the structural ascent, from matter to form to God, there is a movement from the exterior to the interior, from the physical to the spiritual. The structure of Scéla na esérgi functions as a contemplative ascent to the vision of God. The text's structure embodies the Neoplatonic concepts on which the text is based. The author moves from matter to form to a fleeting experience of God, before the authence is transported to the depths of hell. In other words, the text moves from purification (in the removal of bodily imperfections that will occur at the resurrection) to illumination (in heaven) to union (with other righteous souls and ultimately with God).5 The vocabulary that the author uses to articulate these profound concepts is of fundamental importance if we are to understand how Neoplatonic thought was understood in medieval Ireland.

Medieval philosophy in the vernacular

The influence of Latin vocabulary on the author's Irish prose is obvious and extensive. By analysing some of the most complex words in the text we can begin to see the multiple layers of meaning which operate throughout Scéla na esérgi. Examining specific examples of complex philosophical terminology in the text, we can interrogate the author's vernacular philosophical vocabulary in more depth, beginning here with dliged. Thomas Charles-Edwards's investigation of this term highlighted instances in Old Irish glosses and scholia where the word was used to translate the Latin terms ratio, intellectus, sententia, and dictum.6 All of these Latin words have had an impact on our author's understanding of the semantic possibilities of dliged, particularly ratio, in the way that Anselm of Canterbury, for example, uses the term to mean 'ontological necessity', 'a situation which compels things to be or act in a certain way'.7 The concept which underlies the author's use of the term dliged throughout Scéla na esérgi is the Platonic 'idea' or 'form'. This is indicated by the first appearance of dliged In the text. The author is discussing the fate of miscarried foetuses, midgets, and people who lack limbs. He states that, at the final resurrection, these people will have their 'proper' height and their missing limbs restored to them, and foetuses will be resurrected as adults:

úair ni techtaidsium intib féin sin iar ndligud nemaicsidi 7 inclidii a n-aicnid céin co ro techtsat iar n-adbar nach iar méit chorpdai. (Lines 25 56-8)

(since that is something which they have in themselves in respect of die invisible and undisclosed form of their own nature, although they did not have it in respect of matter, or in respect of bodily stature.)

In Christian Neoplatonism, existence is divided into three principles: God, 'form' or 'idea', and matter. Humans, as they exist in our physical reality, as matter, are imperfect representations of the 'idea' or concept 'man'. Thus, as matter, foetuses might die before they attain life outside the womb, men may have genetic growth disorders, or be born without legs or arms, and yet there also exists separately the 'idea' man, which corresponds to how man would appear if his nature were to be fully realized. It is to this 'idea' that our author refers when he states that men possess the correct height or the correct limbs, 'iar ndligud nemaicsidi 7 inclithi a n-aicnid' ('in respect of the invisible and undisclosed form of their own nature'), i.e. it exists in their 'idea' although it does not exist in matter (adbar).

In the second and third instances of dliged in the text, we can see this idea developing beyond a simple referencing of basic Neoplatonic principles. The author is discussing whether particles will only be resurrected as themselves - for example hair resurrected as hair, and nails as nails - or whether man will be melted down and forged anew. He states that God may shape the bodies of the resurrected from whatever material pleases him:

... amai ro chumtaig diali i céttustin na ndúl na curpu dermara den nemaicside 7 den dligud nemchorptha ro techtsat co hinchlithe intib na dúli dia ro tusmidea na cu[i]rp sin. (Lines 2598-600)

(. . . as he had fashioned then in the primal creation of all the elements the vast bodies from the invisible form and from the incorporeal form which the elements out of which those bodies were generated possessed latent within them.)

God 'fashions' (cumtaigid) humans from the elements and the 'form' or 'idea' which exists within those elements; therefore, the act of creation itself is confined to the céttustìu ('the primal creation')8 and thereafter God acts in the manner of a divine sculptor - an extension of Augustine's metaphor of the physical resurrection being like the recasting of a statue9 - to make man from primal matter and 'idea'. The Augustinian motif of God as artist or craftsmen occurs elsewhere in Scéla na esérgi. Later in the discussion of whether hair will be resurrected as hair, and nails as nails, or whether men will be recast like statues, the author refers to the 'elathain diasneti ind ecnai diadai' (line 2588; 'indescribable art of divine intelligence'), which he compares to the 'eladain ind ecnai dóennai' (lines 25 9 if.; 'art of human intelligence') in purifying gold. God's skill will be employed in condensing and compressing the

. . . curpu trúalnidi na ndóeni i sémi 7 i fáelli ind folaid nemtrualnidi 7 a n-aicnid spirtállai, iarna terbud 7 iarna ndeligud o cech elniud ... (Lines 2588-90)

(. . . corrupt bothes of people into their rarefied and subde incorruptible substance and spiritual nature, after removing and separating them from every defilement ...)

Thus, after the final resurrection, the folud ('substance') of man will be nemthrúalnid ('incorruptible') and the aicned ('nature' or 'essence') of man will be spirtalla ('spiritual'). But what, exacdy, does the author mean by 'substance' and 'nature?

Understanthng the author's conception of folud and aicned is vital to understanthng his conception of the ontological status of man. He argues that man will be resurrected in accordance with his dliged. As seen earlier, the author follows Augustine in stating that midgets will be resurrected with a 'proper' height, miscarried foetuses will be resurrected as adults, and those lacking limbs will have them restored. He states that this is accorthng to their aicned. Those of excess weight will be resurrected 'i meit dlechtanaig 7 i méit mesardai a folaid 7 a n-aicnid thlis' (lines 25 61 f.; 'in the correct and moderate size of their substance and proper nature'). Aicned has the meaning of 'inherent quality, nature, essence'. The author's use of aicned relates to the idea of 'form', as expressed with dliged, but it also contrasts and complements the use of folud. Folud 'can hardly be rendered by a single word. It denotes that which constitutes the essence of a thing; in the case of words, the ideas they denote; in contracts, the objects or liabilities to which they refer; in the case of lords and clients, the essence of their relationship.'10 Foludwas the Irish word used to gloss Latin substantia in the St Gall Priscian.11 Embothed in foluths the idea that a word cannot be separated from its meaning; a concept of which the author was no doubt aware. Indeed, the use of folud in Scéla na esérgi contrathcts Daniel Binchy's assertion tliat 'outside the Old Irish glosses, folud never means substantia as a philosophical term'.12 Thus we can see the author using the vocabulary established in the trathtion of the Old Irish glosses with a philosophical sophistication hitherto unidentified by scholars. The phrase 'a folaid' in the passage quoted above means both 'of their material' and 'of their substance'; that is, it encompasses both the physicality of the resurrected body, but also the metaphysical substance of that body: the physical man and the concept 'man'. Complementing the use in the text of aicned, meaning 'nature, essence', we see that the author is concerned not just with the physical nature of resurrection, as a superficial reathng of the first half of the text might suggest, but he is at all times aware of the metaphysical properties which combine with the physical to make man: a man is not a man without both body and nature, substance and essence.

For our author, the ideal representation of the 'form' (dliged) man is the incarnate Christ. At Judgement Day, mankind will be resurrected 'iar cosmailius áesi 7 delbi Crist' (lines 2543f; 'accorthng to the likeness of the age and form of Christ'), that is, 'i n-ais trichtaigi' (line 25 50; 'at the age of thirty').13 Because Christ is the 'form', and men can only be imperfect manifestations of that 'form', men will be resurrected 'iar cosmailius 7 iar n-aicniud na n-amser 7 na ferand i rrogenatár' (lines 25 5 if; 'in accordance with the likeness and the nature of the times and the lands in which they were born'). Despite the universality of 'form', there will still be individuation in human physicality and in human nature. The idea that men will be resurrected close to the 'form' of Christ is influenced by the Pauline belief that man was created in the image of God, and will be resurrected in the image of God, as represented in its most perfect form in the incarnate Christ (I Cor. xv.49). After resurrection those who died as martyrs will retain their wounds, taking them closer to the likeness of Christ:

iar ndesmirecht sin chuirp in Chomded techtas and iar n-esergi fulliuchta na crédit forodaim ó Iu[dai]díb do folsigud a umalloti forbthi dond Athair nemda, 7 daño do thuilliud phene 7 todernama dona hlúdaidib o ro forodaim-sium na crechta sin. dines 2570-3)

(following that example of the body of the Lord which has in it after resurrection the impressions of the wounds that he suffered at the hands of the Jews, to demonstrate his complete humility to the heavenly Father, and, moreover, to merit pain and torture for the Jews, from whom he suffered those wounds.)

The umallóit of Christ (borrowed into Irish from Latin humilitatem and used to render that term in Irish) emphasizes his humanity, but the bringing low of the son of God also serves to increase the punishment of the Jews. This anti-Semitic rhetoric may be formulaic, or it may in fact have a more specific intellectual context, that is, the Jewish objections to the Incarnation which gave rise to Anselm of Canterbury's Cur Deus homo. As R. W Southern stated, 'the Jewish question was this: how can the Incarnation, with all its indignity of human misery, insult, and shameful death, be reconciled with God's supreme dignity and unchangeable stability?'14 The author of Scéla na esérgi, we might argue, addresses this by stating that, although the death Christ suffered at the hands of the Jews was indeed an example of umallóit (humilitatem), it was also foirbthe, 'perfect'. In religious contexts, foirbthe can also have the meaning 'holy'.15 Thus the humbling of Christ was 'holy' and 'perfect'. This echoes Anselm 's argument that the

divine humiliation at the Crucifixion was the only fitting means of redemption.16

We can, perhaps, also detect an Anselmian influence on the author's conception of heaven. He quotes Psalm lxxxiii, stating 'Mongenair don fajfind attrebait it [t]egdais[s]iu, a Chomdiu, not-molfat 7 not-adamraigfet do grés triasna saeglaib suthainib' (lines 2673-5 ; 'Happy are those who live in your house, O Lord, they will praise you and wonder at you perpetually through the eternal ages').17 But he follows this with a qualification:

Ni ó briathraib immorro nó ó gothaib corpdaib sechtair dogénat na nóim in molad-sa for Dia, acht o theorfegad spirtalla 7 o scrútan inmedónach a ndligid 7 a n-intliuchta. (lines 2675-7)

(It is not through speech, however, or through corporeal, external voices that the holy will make this praise of God, but through spiritual, contemplative vision, and by internal investigation of their form and their intellect.)

The idea that praise of God is not through loud words or external voices, but is silent, through the fixing of one's vision in the mind in order to see God, is found in the opening of Anselm 's Proslogion:

Eia nunc, homuncio, fuge paululum occupationes tuas, absconde te modicum a tumultuosis cogita tionibus tuis. Abice nunc onerosas curas, et postpone laboriosas distentiones tuas. Vaca aliquantulum deo, et requiesce aliquantulum in eo. Intra in cubiculum mentis tuae, exclude omnia praeter deum et quae te iuuent ad quaerendum eum, et clauso ostio quaere eum. Die nunc, totum cor meum, die nunc deo: Quaero uultum tuum; uultum tuum, domine, requiro.18

(Come now, litde man, put aside your business for a while, take refuge for a litde from your tumultuous thoughts; cast off your burdensome cares, and let your wearisome distractions wait. Take some leisure for God; rest awhile in Him. Enter into the chamber of your mind; put out everything except God and whatever helps you to seek Him; close the door and seek Him. Say now to God with all your heart: ? seek your face, O Lord, your face do I seek.')

Anselm's earthly meditation and Scéla na esérgfs heavenly praise of God share an interiority, a contemplative search for God within the mind, that suggests a similar spiritual framework; however, the author of Scéla na esérgi also has to balance this intimate interior relationship with God (with its origins in Augustinian thought) with his Pseudo-Dionysian hierarchical scheme.

Teorfegad, translated above as 'contemplative vision', occurs twice in Scéla na esérgi, but, according to the Dictionary of the Irish Language, it is not attested elsewhere in medieval Irish literature. Hence we could argue that the author must have felt it necessary to create a new term to explain the concept he is trying to articulate (or even translate) here. It is a compound word formed from two Irish words: teoir and fégad. Teoiris both derived from and used elsewhere to gloss the Latin word theoria}9 Theoria itself comes from Greek; its original meaning is 'looking at' or 'beholding', and from there 'contemplation', i.e. beholding something in one's mind. John Cassian, in his Conlationes, uses theôrêtikê to denote a higher form of spiritual knowledge which can only be obtained once practical knowledge has already been mastered. His definition of theôrêtikê is 'quae in contemplatione divinarum rerum et sacratissimorum sensuum cognitione consistit' ('that which consists in the contemplation of divine things and in the understanding of most sacred meanings'),20 which certainly accords with the view of the experience of God described in Scéla na esérgi. John Cassian was, in the words of Louis Gougaud, 'le principal agent de propagation' for the idea of theoria, in its contemplative sense, in western Europe.21 Wesdey Follett has discussed the significance of Cassian's thought for a number of early Irish religious texts, particularly in terms of the idea of meditatio theorica.22 However, it should be noted that theoria also has the meaning of 'theory' or 'idea', which is the sense that Irish teoir h usually used to gloss. The author of Scéla na esérgi has created, therefore, what we might call a 'glossing caique': he has added the word fégad, meaning 'looking at, beholding', in order to emphasize the visual and contemplative reading of teoir, as opposed to the sense of 'theory' or 'idea'.23 He follows teorfegad -with spirt alia, 'spiritual', indicating that this is contemplative vision, one's sight being fixed on God.

The point that the author is making is significant in our attempt to ascertain an intellectual context in which the text might have been composed. After stating that praise of God is made through fixing one's contemplation on God, the author goes on to say that the saints will also praise God 'o scrútan inmedónach a ndligid 7 a n-intliuchta' (lines 267Of1; 'by internal investigation of their form and their intellect'). The author's vocabulary - scrútan from Latin scrutinium, intliucht from Latin intellectus - explicidy equates praise of God with intellectual endeavour. This may reflect the growing belief in eleventh- and twelfthcentury Europe that human salvation could be achieved through knowledge and understanding. Early humanism 'aimed at restoring to fallen mankind, so far as was possible, that perfect system of knowledge, which had been in the possession or within the reach of mankind at the moment of Creation'.24 We might even suggest that, for the author of Scéla na esérgi, perfect knowledge can be equated with dliged, that perfect concept or 'form' of any given thing. The 'perfect system of knowledge', within man's reach at the moment of creation, is like the perfect 'form' of man latent within the elements from which man is created. Certainly our author states that in heaven the saints will continue the task of recovering that perfect state, and perfect knowledge, through constant investigation of themselves and their intellect, and through contemplation of God.

The author sets up a parallel between intellectual vision (terms such as teorfegad and scrútan inmedónach expressing in Irish the idea of the oculus animi, 'the mind's eye') and the beatific vision. It was Augustine of Hippo, in his De Genesi ad litteram, who first categorized modes of vision as corporalis, spiritualis, and ¿ntellectualis.25 In Scéla na esérgi, vision of God is explicidy stated not to be corporeal, but whether it is

spiritual or intellectual vision that the author is describing is a matter for debate. On the one hand, we have the teotfegad spirtalla, which implies a spiritual vision. However, after stating that praise of God is made through fixing one's vision on God, the author also makes clear that the experience of God in heaven includes 'scrútan inmedónach a ndligid 7 a n-intliuchta': there is an intellectual element to this heavenly vision too. Even in heaven, the faculty of the intellect must be trained in contemplation of the divine.

It is significant both structurally and theologically that the passage which follows the one just discussed, while its subject is the absolute antithesis of the experience of God, that is, the experience of the sinners destined for hell, echoes the language from the previous passage in order to more clearly articulate this opposition. Where the previous passage describes the beatific vision as praise of God ? theorfegad spirtalla 7 o scrútan inmedónach a ndligid 7 a n-intliuchta' , the following passage states that:

ni thatnéba daño i n-anmannaib na n-ecráibdech dliged intliuchta ná tocsen solsi ecnai nó eólais, acht bed fó brón 7 torsi co temei dorchaide a n-aneólais 7 a n-anecnai ar medón. (lines 2681-4)

(indeed, in the souls of the impious the form of intellect or understanding of illumination, of knowledge, or of wisdom, will not radiate; rather, they will exist in regret and sorrow, with the dark internal stain of their ignorance and inanity within.)

The emphasis on the lack of wisdom or knowledge amongst the sinners (note the use of the antonyms ecnae (knowledge) and ainecnae (ignorance), eólas (wisdom) and aineólas (inanity)) again raises the idea of the beatific vision as an intellectual experience as much as a spiritual one.

A major feature of the intellectual life of twelfth-century Europe was the 'growing sense of the proximity of God and man'.26 This attitude permeates Scéla na esérgi. We have seen that the author emphasizes that man will be resurrected closer to his 'form', which is embodied in the incarnate Christ. Also, the umallóit of Christ serves to emphasize his humanity. The equation of scrutiny of the inner self with praise of God suggests the redemptive powers of the intellect. Indeed, one might argue that man becomes God-like with the investigation of his 'form' whilst God becomes humanized with the Incarnation and the Crucifixion. Thus the proximity between God and man is a recurrent theme in the text. This belief in the capacity of mankind to redeem itself combines with the necessity of divine grace in the conclusion of the homily, where the author urges his listeners or readers to attain the cétesérgi, the 'first resurrection'.

Ind fairend immorro atragat innosa tria Crist isin chetna esergi i. ind esérgi bis tria aithrigi, atreset daño thall tria Christ i n-esergi in bethad sudiain, 7 nos-béra leis isin flaith suthain i frecnarcus ind Athair nemda tria bithu na mbetha. Is and sin fogébat na fíreóin focraic ndermáir ara sualchib 7 ara ndeg[g]nímaib i. in Comdiu fein o fúaratár na suálchi sin 7 na deg[g]níma. (Lines 2753-8)

(Those, however, who arise now through Christ in die first resurrection, i.e. die resurrection that is through repentence, will also arise there through Christ in the resurrection of eternal life. And He will take them with him into the eternal kingdom, in the presence of the heavenly Father, for ever and ever. It is then that the righteous will receive a very great reward for their virtues and good deeds, i.e. the Lord himself from whom they obtained those virtues and good deeds.)

Thus men can take action to attain their own salvation - through repentence, through good works, through virtue - and yet these things are given to men by the grace of God. It is only at this final point in the text that the authence senses any explicit homiletic purpose. Before this, the text has been concerned with philosophical enquiry, with elucidating the technicality of resurrection, and with a humanistic concern for the physical flaws of mankind and the ways in which they will be rectified at Judgement Day.

A recurrent motif in Scéla na esérgi is the relationship between the microcosmic and macrocosmic.27 We can see this clearly in the section of the text which offers 'proofs' of the final resurrection. Here, the author draws on what Armstrong has described as the 'revelatory function of the cosmos':28

A duine íarom, for in t-ecnaid, demnig[et] duit in mirbuilsea inna esergi, na craind dermara, cuirp na ndaine 7 na n-anmanna archena genit 7 tusmitir dina sílaib dereólaib: tercbala daño na rind íar funiud: athnugud daño na fér 7 na lubi 7 cech reta archena dia fil in forbait 7 in beógud. (Lines 2732-6)

CIndeed, O man', says the wise one, 'let diese attest to you this miracle of the resurrection: the great trees; the bodies of people and of the other creatures that are born and which are generated from the lowly seeds; moreover, the risings of the constellations after setting, the renewal, indeed, of the grass and of the herbs and of every other substance besides in which there is growth and life'.)

What is most striking about these 'proofs' of the resurrection is that none of them are resurrections in any eschatological sense. Rather, these are cyclical processes of renewal. However, that the author has recourse to evoking the splendour of the universe is consonant with the idea that 'natural processes are the channels through which divine power informs the universe, and hence to study nature is to acknowledge God's grandeur'.29 The text acknowledges the interrelatedness between man, nature, universe, and divine purpose - that is, between the microcosmic and the macrocosmic.30 Gregory of Nyssa argued that man is 'a litde world in himself [containing] all the elements which go to complete the universe'.31 This Neoplatonic idea is reflected in Scéla na esérgi in the juxtaposition of statements which demonstrate the fundamental unity of the substance of man with the substance of the universe.32 We saw above that, at the final resurrection, God will be able to remake humans from whatever material he chooses:

amai chumtaiges innossa inna curpu mora dena silaib dereolaib 7 dano amai ro chumtaig thall i céttustin na

ndúl na curpu dermara den dligud nemaicside 7 den dligud nemchorptha ro techtsat co hinchlithe intib na dúli dia ro tosmidea na cu[i]rp sin. (lines 2597-600)

(just as he fashions now the great bodies from the lowly seeds; and, moreover, as, in the primal creation of the elements, he fashioned there the vast [planetary] bodies from the invisible form and the incorporeal form, which the elements from which he generated those bodies possessed latent within them.)

Thus the metaphysics of creation are read as revelatory proof of the final resurrection of mankind. In the same way that the cycles of renewal in nature were conscripted as eschatological proofs, here the beginning of the world is linked to its end, in a manner which emphasizes the idea of the eschaton as cyclical return,33 perhaps indicating further the text's debt to Neoplatonic thought.

Conclusions

I have argued that Scéla na esérgi blends a variety of influences from early scholastic philosophy and theology within an overarching Neoplatonic eschatological scheme. From where might our Irish author have developed this combination of philosophical approaches as well as his complex vernacular terminology? Ireland's manifold connections with England and continental Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries provide us with numerous routes of transmission for texts, ideas, and modes of thought throughout this period.34 More specifically, there are a number of Irish manuscripts dating from the twelfth century which provide us with evidence of the kind of philosophical and grammatical training demonstrated by the author of Scéla na esérgi. For example, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Auct. F. 3.1 5 demonstrates die kind of educational context in which our audior could have developed his philosophical sophistication and his ability to express complex concepts in the vernacular. This is a twelfth-century Irish manuscript, mosdy in Latin, but with some Irish marginal notes and glosses.35 The manuscript contains Calcidius' Latin translation of Plato's Timaeus, with commentary, which includes sections of die twelfth-century commentaries on the Timaeus by Bernard of Chartres and William of Conches. It also contains substantial excerpts from books I-IV of John Scottus Eriugena's Periphyseon. This manuscript has been discussed by Pádraig O Néül, who concluded diat it is evidence of at least one Irishman studying at Chartres - and therefore being exposed to scholastic learning - in die mid-twelfth century.

For our purposes this manuscript demonstrates die type of educational context in which a text such as Scéla na esérgi might be produced. The marginal and supralineal notes in die Bodleian manuscript demonstrate a concern with language, grammar, and etymology, which could represent the transitional stage between the expression in Latin of the types of ideas mentioned above by Plato, his commentators, and John Scottus Eriugena on the one hand, and the expression in Irish of similar philosophical concepts on the other, as Irish scholars developed a vernacular vocabulary to express the complex philosophical and dieological ideas of die twelfth century. We can see this process in action in the Bodleian manuscript in the instance noted by Pádraig O Néill where the scribe included a supralineal gloss which is from Bernard of Chartres's commentary on the Timaeus, but die scribe translated die gloss into Irish before copying it into his manuscript.36 This provides an example of die intermediate stage between the reception of these Latin ideas and dieir use in original works in Irish. Another such manuscript is Florence, Bibliotheca Medici Laurenziana, MS Plut. 78.19. This manuscript contains a copy of Boethius' De consolatio Philosophiae along with two Lives of Boethius (one of which is attributed to John Scottus Eriugena) and a metrical tract.37 Again the manuscript contains glosses in Latin and in Irish which show an interest in syntax and grammar. In his analysis of these glosses O Néill remarked that 'it is likely that they reflect an advanced stage in die study of die Consolatio, where teacher (and students) no longer needed to be concerned about vocabulary and basic understanding of the text'.38

Certainly Scéla na esérgi was written in a context where scholars were fully engaged with continental modes of scholarly discourse. There is no direct evidence that would conclusively link the audior of Scéla na esérgi with die scholarly milieux responsible for the Bodleian or Florence manuscripts. Indeed, it seems likely die the composition of Scéla na esérgi should be placed several decades before the Bodleian and Florence manuscripts were compiled.39 However, the rhetorical structure of the text, die audior's use of complex philosophical terminology, as well as his humanistic concern with die individual, and die interrelatedness in die text between God, man, and die universe, suggest that we can place the text firmly within a humanistic and scholastic context, and die Bodleian and Florence manuscripts offer striking precedents for the transmission of scholastic ideas to Ireland. Scholars have previously been able to demonstrate some limited engagement with continental educational trends in eleventh- and twelfth-century Ireland: the commentaries on Plato in the Bodleian manuscript are one piece of evidence, and the impact of the arithmetical tract De abaco on British Library, Egerton MS. 3323 is another.40 However, my analysis of Scéla na esérgi shows that this vernacular text is imbued with the Latin vocabulary and Neoplatonic Weltanschauung of the eleventh- and twelfth-century European scholastic thinkers, and, as such, has significant implications for our understanding of Ireland's engagement with trends in medieval European thought.

[Footnote]
NOTES
1 Dublin, Royal Irish Academy MS 23 E 25, fols 33v- 35r, according to the modern foliation. The text is in the hand of the last of the diree scribes who compiled Lebor na hUidre, a scribe known to modern scholarship as H. The diplomatic edition is Lebor na hUidre/Book of the Dun Cow, ed. R. I. Best and Osborn Bergin (Dublin, 1929), with Scéla na esérgi at pp. 82-8. Other editions and translations of Scéla na esérgi are: Scéla na Esérgi/ A Treatise on the Resurrection, ed. and trans. John O'Beirne Crowe (Dublin, 1865); 'Tidings of the Resurrection', ed. and trans. Whidey Stokes, Revue celtique, 25 (1904), 234-59; Mil na mBeach, ed. and trans. Paul Walsh

(Dublin, 19 1 1), pp. 69-78. Here, ail references to Scéla na esérgi are to the line numbers in the Best and Bergin edition; translations are my own.

2 The seminal study is Caroline Walker Bynum, The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity, 200-1336 (New York, 1995).

3 Martin McNamara, 'Celtic Christianity, Creation and Apocalypse, Christ and Antichrist', Milltown Studies, 23 (1989), 5-39 (p. 33). In fairness to McNamara it should be noted that he is one of the few scholars to have taken any notice of Scéla na esérgi at all, and his Tatristic background to medieval Irish ecclesiastical sources', in Scriptural Interpretation in the Fathers: Letter and Spirit, ed. Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey (Dublin, 1995), pp. 253-81, contains a usefui, though preliminary, source analysis in the appendix.

4 The idea of two resurrections derives from the Apocalypse, or Book of Revelation, xx.4£, in which die the first resurrection announces the thousand-year reign of the righteous; the second is the moment of universal resurrection. However, in Scéla na esérgi die first resurrection is more metaphorical, representing a moment of spiritual renewal, perhaps influenced by Augustine's rejection of a Literal interpretation of the biblical account.

5 On purification > illumination > union, see Thomas Finan, 'Modes of vision in St Augustine: De Genesis adlitteram XIT, in The Relationship between Neoplatonism and Christianity, ed. Thomas Finan and Vincent Twomey (Dublin, 1992), pp. 141-54 (p. 154).

6 Thomas Charles-Edwards, 'Dliged: its native and Latinate usages', Celtica, 24 (2003), 65-78. On 'semantic loans' (or Lehnprägungen) from Latin into Irish see also Paul Russell, "'What was best of every language": the early history of die Irish language', in A New History of Ireland, I: Prehistoric and Early Ireland, ed. Dáibhí Ó Cróinín (Oxford, 2005), pp. 405-50 (p. 439).

7 Stephen Gersh, Anselm of Canterbury', in A History of Twelfth-Century Philosophy, ed. Peter Dronke (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 255-78 (p. 260).

8 The only other Irish attestations of this notion of 'the primal creation', according to the Dictionary of the Irish Language, Based Mainly on Old and Middle Irish Materials, ed. E. G. Quinn et al. (Dublin, 1983), hereafter DIL, are the glosses in Würzburg, Universitätsbibliothek M. p. th. f. 12 Codex Paulinus Wirriburgensis), iai: 'isin chétne toiste' Thes. Pal, I. 499) and 2ib4: 'ni ó aicned na chétne misten ...' (Thes. Pal. I. 633).

9 Augustine, Enchiridion, 23.89, ed. E. Evans, Corpus Chris tianorum, Series Latina 46 (Turnhout, 1964), pp. 49-1 14 (p. 97).

10 R. Thurneysen, cited in DIL, s.v. 'Folud'.

11 DIL, s.v. 'Folud'.

12 D. A. Binchy, 'Irish history and Irish law: IT, Studia Hibernica, 16 (1976), 7-45 (p. 28).

13 Cf. Julian of Toledo, Prognosticum futuri saeculi, 3.20, ed. J. N. Hilgarth, Sancti Iuliani Toletanae sedis episcopi opera, pars I, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 1 1 5 (Turnhout, 1976), pp. 94f.

14 R. W Southern, Saint Anselm: A Portrait in a Landscape (Cambridge, 1990), p. 200.

15 DIL, s.v. 'Foirbthe'.

16 Anselm of Canterbury, Cur Deus homo, ed. F S. Schmitt, Florilegium Patristicum 1 8 (Bonn, 1929); Southern, Saint Anselm, p. 206. See also Gilo, Vita Hugonis Cluniacenns abbatis a 1 20): 'What could they do that was more precious than to imitate Christ, who reigning in heaven received the form of a slave so that by humiliating Himself God raised the lowly condition of our guilt into the light of the new liberty', cited in Giles Constable, Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought (Cambridge, 199 5), p. 164.

17 Cf. Augustine, De cintiate Dei, 22. 30, ed. B. Dombart and A. Kalb, Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina 48 (Turnhout, 195 5), p. 862, lines 5f.

18 Anselm of Cantebury, Proslogion, 1.1, ed. F S. Schmitt, Florilegium Patristicum 29 (Bonn, 193 1), p. 9.

19 On its borrowing into Irish from Latin see R. Thurneysen, A Grammar of Old Irish, trans. D. A. Binchy and O. Bergin, rev. edn (Dublin, 1975), pp. 567e

20 Cassian, Conlationes, 14.1, PL, XLTX, col. 955; trans. Boniface Ramsey, John Cassian: The Conferences (New York, 1997), p. 505.

21 L. Gougaud, 'La 'Theoria" dans la spiritualité médiévale', Revue d'ascétique et de mystique, 3 (1922), 381-9 (p. 393). Gougaud also notes that Boethius and Pseudo-Dionysius were important conduits for the transmission of the concept of 'theoria'. Unfortunately Gougaud's argument regarding the role of the Irish in spreading the concept of theoria throughout Europe relies on ideas about the nature of 'la vie anchorétique' in Irish theology which have since been called into question.

22 Wesdey Follett, Celi Dé in Ireland: Monastic Writing and Identity in the Early Middle Ages (Woodbridge, 2006), pp. 36-54.

23 On caiques as a feature of learned Irish language see Russell, 'What was best', p. 438.

24 R. W Southern, Scholastic Humanism and the Unification of Europe, I: Foundations (Oxford, 1995)« PP- 41.

25 Finan, 'Modes of vision', p. 141.

26 Southern, Scholastic Humanism, p. 30.

27 Many of the most significant themes in Scéla na esérgi, particularly those pertaining to the intellectual capacity of man, and to the status of man as a microcosm of the universe, are also to be found in the Latin writings attributed to Gilla Pátraic, Bishop of Dublin (d. 1084), particularly his Versus de honore humanae condicionis The Writings of Bishop Patrick, 10/4-10S4, ed. and trans. Aubrey Gwynn (Dublin, 195 5), pp. 72-7). I am currendy preparing a study of the relationship between Scéla na esérgi and the writings attributed to Gilla Pátraic.

28 A. Hilary Armstrong, 'Man in the cosmos: a study of some differences between pagan Neoplatonism and Christianity', in Romanitas et Christianitas, ed. W den Boer et al. (Amsterdam, 1973), pp. 5-14, repr. in Plotinian and Christian Studies (London, 1979), XXII, at p. 7.

29 Winthrop Wetherbee, 'Philosophy, cosmology and the Twelfdi-Century Renaissance', in A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy, ed. Dronke, pp. 21-53 (p. 27)

30 For the development of this concept in European Literature see Willemien Otten, From Paradise to Paradigm: A Study of Twelfth-Century Humanism (Leiden, 2004).

31 Cited in Milton M. Gatch, 'Some theological reflections on death from the early Church through the Reformation', in Perspectives on Death, ed. L. O. Mills (New York, 1969), 99-136, repr. in his Eschatology and Christian Nurture, I (New York, 2000), at p. I03

32 As even the incomplete Timaeus accessible to the Middle Ages makes plain, man is himself a universe, composed of die elements . . . and endowed with a soul which reflects the divine wisdom and is by nature subject to its providential influence': Wedierbee, Tbilosophy, cosmology', p. 25. On 'man as microcosm' in the twelfth century see also Constable, Three Studies, p. 165.

33 On the idea of cyclical and vertical, as opposed to horizontal, views of redemption in early Christian thought see Paul Fredriksen, "Vile bodies: Paul and Augustine on the resurrection of the flesh', in Biblical Hermeneutics in Historical Perspective: Studies in Honour of Karlfried Froelich on his Sixtieth Birthday, ed. Mark S. Barrow and Paul Rorem (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1994), pp. 75-87 (pp. 76-80).

34 For an overview see Michael Richter, 'The European dimension of Irish history in the eleventh and twelfdi centuries', Peritia, 4 (1985), 328-45. On the family of Irish Benedictine houses in Europe known as the Schottenklöster see Pádraig A. Breatnach, 'The origins of the Irish monastic tradition atRatisbon (Regensburg)', Celtica, 13 (1980), 58-77; H Flachenecker, Schottenklöster. Irische Benediktinerkonvente im hochmittelalterlichen Deutschland (Paderborn, 1995). On contacts between Ireland and England see Denis Bediell, 'English monks and Irish reform in die eleventh and twelfth centuries', Historical Studies, 8 (1971), 111-35; Aubrey Gwynn, The Irish Church in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries, ed. G O'Brien (Dublin, 1992).

35 The manuscript and its contents have been discussed by Paul Edward Dutton, 'The uncovering of the Glosae super Platonem of Bernard of Chartres', Mediaeval Studies, 46 (1984), 192-221; Pádraig P. O Néill, An Irishman at Chartres in the twelfth century: the evidence of Oxford, Bodleian library, MS Auct FIII.15', Eriu, 48 (1997), 1-35.

36 The gloss at fol. I5V on 'speculis insolito' is a translation of Bernard's 'sed hic cum uisus iacitur in dextrum latus speculi relabitur in sinistrum, et e conuerso', which the glossator renders as 'in ruthen des isin leith eli in scaith uel e contra' ('the beam of Light from the right [appears] in the left side of the mirror uel e contray. O Néill, An Irishman at Chartres', p. 16.

37 life of Boediius, attrib. Quintus Fabius (fol. ir_v); tract on metres of De consolatio Philosophiae by Lupus of Ferneres (fols iv- 3*); Life of Boethius, attrib. John Scottus Eriugena (fol. 3V); De consolatio Philosophiae (fols 4'-47').

38 Pádraig Ó Néill, 'Irish glosses in a twelfth-century copy of Boethius's Consolatio Philosophiae', Eriu, 5 5 (2005), 1- 17 (p. 1 5). For the educational context of these glosses see Karin Margareta Fredborg, 'Speculative grammar', in A History of Twelfth-Century Western Philosophy, ed. Dronke, pp. 1 77-9 5 .

39 The date of scribe H is significant in this regard, but has been hody contested on linguistic and palaeographical grounds. See Tomás O Concheanainn, 'The reviser of Leabhar na hUidhre', Eigse, 1 5 (1973-4), 277-88; Gearóid Mac Eoin, 'The interpolator H in Lebor na hUidre', in Ulidia: Proceedings of the First International Conference of the Ulster Cycle of Tales, Belfast and Emain Macha, 8-12 April 1994, ed. J. P. Mallory and Gerard Stockman (Belfast, 1994), pp. 39-46, and Caoimhin Breatnach's review of that volume in Eigse, 29 (1996), 200-8. It is to be hoped that further literary study of H's additions to Lebor na hUidre might shed light on this issue.

40 Ó Néill, 4An Irishman at Chartres', p. 1.

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