

Irish Catholics, French Cartesians: Irish Reactions to Cartesianism in France, 1671-1726

Historians have long been aware of the scale of Irish Catholic student attendance at French and other European universities. Recent work has underlined the prominence of the University of Paris as the destination of choice for a large number of Irish student migrants.¹ However, little attention has been devoted to the educational curriculum undertaken by Irish students abroad. This lacuna has become particularly glaring in the light of the work of Laurence Brockliss and others on the French university curriculum in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.² Indeed Brockliss has noted that the scale of Irish student attendance at the University of Paris meant that it 'must have had a profound and probably pre-eminent influence on determining the position of the Irish church on all the contentious contemporary theological and political problems'.³ He has also noted that we need to examine: '...the cultural effect of study at Paris, both on the students themselves and the public they later served... Indeed until much more is known about the content of university teaching during the period and some attempt is made to study the philosophical, theological and political views of Scottish and Irish clerics, such an analysis is impossible.'⁴ This article addresses these issues by providing a

- 1 Patrick Boyle, *The Irish College in Paris from 1578 to 1901* (London: Art & Book Co., 1901); T.J. Walsh, *The Irish continental college movement: the colleges at Bordeaux, Toulouse and Lille* (Dublin: Golden Eagle Books, 1973); L.W.B. Brockliss and P.Ferté, 'Irish clerics in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a statistical study' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 87C, 9 (1987), pp.527-72.
- 2 L.W.B. Brockliss, *French higher education in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: a cultural history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- 3 Brockliss and Ferté, 'Irish clerics in France', p.550.
- 4 Laurence W.B. Brockliss, 'The University of Paris and the maintenance of Catholicism in the British Isles, 1426-1789: a study in clerical recruitment' in Dominique Julia, Roger Chartier et Jacques Revel (eds), *Les universités européennes du XVIIe*

brief study of Irish reactions to a significant example of curricular controversy: the battle between Aristotelians and Cartesians for philosophical hegemony in French universities in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

Until well into the seventeenth century, Aristotelianism, or Scholasticism, dominated the philosophical curricula of European universities. Based on the writings of Aristotle, and presented through the prism of medieval writers such as Thomas Aquinas, Scholasticism offered a complete philosophical understanding of what could be known. Far from monolithic, Scholasticism was able to adapt to novel ideas and discoveries, which in part explains its astonishing longevity.⁵ But Scholasticism came under increasing pressure during the Scientific Revolution, which witnessed new discoveries and the development of quantitative, mechanical and experimental explanations of natural phenomena. In France, the mathematician and philosopher René Descartes provided what would become the most serious challenge to the dominance of Scholasticism in the universities. But the impact of Descartes's philosophy was slow and even by the year of his death, 1650, it had made little headway. In 1663 Descartes's works were placed on the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* with the note 'until they are corrected', creating a further barrier to the spread of his books. Despite official sanction, Descartes's philosophy began to creep into university teaching in the 1660s and 1670s. At the University of Paris professors of philosophy like Edmond Pourchot surreptitiously taught aspects of Cartesianism within an otherwise standard scholastic philosophy course. In this way students were introduced to Descartes's 'new philosophy'. Other professors also began to introduce students to Descartes, if only to reject him.⁶ By the 1690s full-scale battle was

au XVIIe siècles: Histoire sociale des populations étudiants 2 vols, (Paris: Editions de l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, 1986-9), ii, p.605.

5 Edward Grant, 'Aristotelianism and the longevity of the medieval world view,' in *History of Science*, 16 (1978), pp.93-106.

6 On the philosophy curriculum and the reception of Descartes in the university: Brockliss, *French higher education*, pp.185-227, 337-90; *idem*, 'Philosophy teaching in France 1600-1740' in *History of Universities*, i (1981), pp.131-68; *idem*, 'Aristotle, Descartes and the new sciences: natural philosophy at the University of Paris 1600-1740' in *Annals of Science*, 38 (1981), pp.33-69; *idem*, 'Descartes, Gassendi and the reception of the mechanical philosophy in the French collèges de plein exercice, 1640-1730' in *Perspectives on science*, 3, 4 (1995), pp.450-79.

underway between Aristotelian and Cartesian professors. Learned treatises, textbooks, satires, condemnations, attacks and counter-attacks poured from the printers situated around the university on rue St-Jacques.⁷ Nor was the debate confined to the university. The nature of *ancien régime* society dictated that the church and state became involved. Following royal and ecclesiastical pressure, Cartesianism was condemned at the University of Paris in 1671, 1685, 1691, 1692, 1704 and 1705.⁸ The need to repeat the ban on Descartes in itself indicates the losing battle that the Aristotelians were fighting. Nonetheless, this was much more than a petty squabble between academic minnows. As Charles Alan Kors has commented: 'In its deepest terms ... [the debate] was nothing less than a contest for status in which the highest ideal aspirations and the rawest ambitions touched and reinforced each other: the right to teach others in the name of Christendom ... Aristotelians and Cartesians in short, struggled for nothing less than the soul and mind of France, and for the satisfactions and rewards of winning that struggle.'⁹ During the 1690s the Cartesians gradually gained the upper hand and by 1700 they had transformed the natural philosophy curriculum, though recent research has pointed out that their victory was far from complete.¹⁰

Just as the contest between Aristotelians and Cartesians was reaching its apogée in the 1690s, Irish students were arriving in Paris in increasingly large numbers.¹¹ The wider Irish community in France was also growing. A recent study indicates that 15,000 soldiers and 4,000

7 Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, 'Peripatetic adversaries of Cartesianism in 17th century France' in *Review of Religion*, 22 (1957), pp.14-40; Charles Alan Kors, *Atheism in France 1650-1729* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp.265-322; Roger Ariew, *Descartes and the last scholastics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999).

8 Roger Ariew, 'Damned if you do: Cartesians and censorship, 1663-1706' in *Perspectives on science*, 2 (1994), p.261. See also: Thomas McLoughlin, 'Censorship and defenders of the Cartesian faith in mid-seventeenth century France' in *Journal of the history of ideas*, 40, 4 (1979), pp.563-82; Ariew, *Descartes and the last scholastics*, pp.155-87; François Azouvi, *Descartes et la France: histoire d'une passion nationale* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), pp.15-47.

9 Kors, *Atheism in France*, pp.265-6.

10 The philosophy curriculum was divided into four sections: logic, metaphysics, physics (or natural philosophy) and ethics. Brockliss, *French higher education*, pp.205-16; Brockliss, 'Philosophy teaching in France, 1600-1740', pp.141-2.

11 Brockliss and Ferté, 'Irish clerics in France', pp.539, 543-4.

dependants migrated from Ireland to France during the winter of 1691.¹² Irish students arriving in Paris would certainly not have been immune to ongoing debates. All Irish students who wanted to study for a 'higher' degree in theology, law or medicine, had to take a two year course of philosophy leading to the award of a Master of Arts degree. Philosophy was not the preserve of a minority of interested students in the early modern university. According to a 1762 source, priest-students resident at the Irish Collège des Lombards took their philosophy course at the nearby Collège des Grassins 'from time immemorial because of its proximity'.¹³ The experience of one student, Neal Carolan, must have been fairly typical. He explained that: 'I was admitted into the seven holy orders of the church in a weeks time, by Anthony Geoghegan, Bishop of Meath in the year 1662, and in the month of August of the same year I was sent to Paris, where I was instructed in philosophy at the College of Grassini [sic], and took the degree of Master in Arts in the University of Paris aforesaid, and after writing my speculative divinity in the College of Navar [sic] in the said university ... I finished my course.' Carolan returned to Ireland in 1667 and ministered in Meath.¹⁴ In the 1670s and 1680s the Collège des Grassins employed one of the most prominent early proponents of Cartesianism at the university, the aforementioned Edmond Pourchot.¹⁵ Therefore, Irish students may have been better acquainted with the 'new philosophy' than some of their colleagues at other colleges. So how did Irish students react to the Aristotelian-Cartesian struggle for curricular control? They left little evidence of their position. This was hardly surprising since the Irish were a precarious immigrant group. Indeed, their disastrous intervention in Jansenist theological poli-

12 Guy Rowlands, 'An army in exile: Louis XIV and the Irish forces of James II in France, 1691-1698' in *Royal Stuart Papers*, 60 (2001), pp.2-3.

13 Liam Swords (ed.), 'History of the Irish College, Paris, 1578-1800. Calendar of the papers of the Irish College, Paris' in *Archivium Hibernicum*, xxxv (1980), p.105. 'Priest-students' were ordained before leaving Ireland to commence their studies so that they could finance themselves by saying masses and undertaking other clerical duties.

14 Neal Carolan, *Motives of conversion to the Catholick faith, as it is professed in the reformed church of England* (Dublin: Jos. Ray, 1688), preface, unpaginated. Carolan converted to the Anglicanism sometime after 1679.

15 Charles Jourdain, *Histoire de l'Université de Paris au XVII et au XVIII siècles* (Paris: Hachette, 1862), p.236.

tics in 1651, what became the 'Affaire des Hibernois', probably convinced them that silence was the best policy.¹⁶

However, evidence is available in the form of contemporary French commentaries on Irish clerics and students. In his study of French Enlightenment attitudes to Ireland and the Irish, Éamon Ó Ciosáin has pointed out that French writers frequently satirised the immigrant Irish as 'pedantic clerics and squabbling Hibernians'.¹⁷ He argues that the term 'Hibernian' (Hibernois) was loaded with negative connotations from at least the sixteenth century, but 'the clearest shift took place ... in a satirical text by [Nicholas] Boileau'.¹⁸ The key text was Boileau's *Arrêt burlesque*, published in 1671. The *Arrêt burlesque* was a satirical attack on the attempts by Louis XIV, the Archbishop of Paris, François de Harlay, and the authorities at the University of Paris to ban the teaching of Descartes and uphold the pre-eminence of Aristotle. Turning the tables on the censors, Boileau's *Arrêt* 'commanded' that the authority of Aristotle be restored to the imaginary 'Université de Stagire'.¹⁹ The opponents of Aristotle were identified as 'Gassendistes, Cartésiens, Malebranchistes et Pourchotistes', the latter a reference to the Cartesian professor Edmond Pourchot.²⁰ Boileau's text is well known and has been credited with preventing the successful censorship of Cartesianism in 1671.²¹ But the Irish dimension to Boileau's text was largely overlooked, until recently, and raises interesting questions about the role of Irish students in the University of Paris.

Ó Ciosáin has pointed out that Boileau firmly identified Irish students and masters with the Aristotelian or Scholastic side of the debate. The *Arrêt* 'enjoins all Professors and Masters to give assistance to the

16 Joseph S. O'Leary, 'The Irish and Jansenism in the seventeenth century' in Liam Swords (ed.), *The Irish/French connection 1578-1978* (Paris: Irish College, Paris, 1978), pp.23-31.

17 Éamon Ó Ciosáin, 'Attitudes towards Ireland and the Irish in Enlightenment France' in Graham Gargell and Geraldine Sheridan (eds), *Ireland and the Enlightenment 1700-1800* (London: Macmillan, 1999), pp.141-6.

18 *Ibid.*, p.142.

19 Nicholas Boileau, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Antoine Adam (Paris: Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1966), pp.326-30.

20 *Ibid.*, p.327. Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) was a prominent French mechanical philosopher and Catholic priest whose natural philosophy revived Epicurean atomism. Another Catholic priest, Nicolas Malebranche (1638-1715), attempted to provide a theologically orthodox version of Cartesianism.

21 Ariew, 'Damned if you do', p.261.

application of the present decree [...] and all Irish tutors and other subordinates of the University to lend them their arms and to round on all those who disobey'.²² Furthermore, the decree announced that supporters of Aristotle who had gone into exile in 'Hibernia' would be restored to their positions in the university.²³ Ó Ciosáin underlines the importance of this association: 'Boileau's text was popular, and was republished twice after 1671. It sowed the seeds of some of the eighteenth century satirical lore about Irish students disputing furiously in the streets of Paris.'²⁴ The latter stereotype re-appears frequently in the works of prominent Enlightenment writers. Perhaps most famously, Montesquieu wrote in the *Persian Letters* (1721):

Those whom I have mentioned argue in the common tongue, and are to be distinguished from another kind of disputant, who uses a barbarous language which seems to increase the fury and obstinacy of the combatants. In some parts of Paris you can see a dense black mob, as it were, of this class of person; they feed on distinctions; they live on unclear arguments and false conclusions. They might have been expected to die of hunger at this business, but it is profitable all the same. A whole nation [the Irish], expelled from its country, was observed to cross the seas and settle in France, without anything to assist in providing the necessities of life except a redoubtable talent for debate.²⁵

The stereotype even extended to twentieth century Irish writing. In the 1920s the rather extreme *Catholic Bulletin* took some pride in the alleged connection between the Irish and Scholasticism: 'It is very different in Ireland now to those old days [the eighteenth century] when the poorest

22 Cited in Ó Ciosáin, 'Attitudes towards Ireland', p.142.

23 *Ibid.*

24 *Ibid.*, p.143.

25 Montesquieu, *Persian Letters*, trans. C.J. Betts (London: Penguin, 1993), p.90. (Ó Ciosáin also cites this passage.) It is often overlooked that in the same letter, Montesquieu ridiculed coffee drinking intellectuals who 'fritter away their talents on puerilities.' (*Ibid.*, p.89). For Voltaire on Ireland and the Irish see: Graham Gargett, 'Voltaire and Irish History' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, 1 (1986), pp.117-41; Idem, 'Voltaire's view of the Irish' in Gargett and Sheridan (eds), *Ireland and the French Enlightenment*, pp.152-70. For contemporary English views of the Irish see: David Hayton, 'From Barbarian to Burlesque: English images of the Irish c. 1660-1750' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, xv (1988), pp.5-31.

Catholic family would, on assembling in the evening, discuss scholastic philosophy and such subjects.²⁶

Poor Catholic families in eighteenth century Ireland undoubtedly had more pressing conversation topics than Scholastic philosophy. But the connection between Irish students in France and Scholasticism merits investigation. Éamon Ó Ciosáin proposes a number of explanations for this aspect of Boileau's text. First, he linked the pro-Aristotelians, the Irish among them, with the medieval Franciscan thinker John Duns Scotus. As Ó Ciosáin points out, a number of Irish Franciscan writers were at the forefront of the rehabilitation of Scotus in the seventeenth century, allied to their claim that Scotus was Irish. Moreover, recent research by Roger Ariew indicates that Scotist philosophy was much more influential in seventeenth century France than is often assumed.²⁷ Second, as immigrants the Irish provided a soft target. Third, financial hardship meant that Irish students were 'forced to live on their wits, their theological training being one of their few marketable skills.' In other words, opportunism played its part in shaping the philosophical outlook of Irish students and clerics.²⁸

To return to Boileau's *Arrêt burlesque*, there may be more immediate reasons for the link drawn between the Irish and the attempt to censor Cartesianism at the University of Paris in 1671. On royal instruction, the archbishop convened a meeting of the rector, the deans of the faculties of theology, medicine and law, the procureurs of the four nations which comprised the faculty of arts and the principals of the university colleges. The archbishop instructed them to abide by the 'rules and statutes of the University' and thereby uphold the authority of Aristotle.²⁹ The intervention was not entirely successful. While the Faculty of Theology (1671) and the Faculty of Medicine (1673) duly condemned Cartesianism, the

26 *Catholic Bulletin*, June 1925 cited in Margaret O'Callaghan, 'Language, Nationality and Cultural Identity in the Irish Free State, 1922-27: The *Irish Statesman* and the *Catholic Bulletin* reappraised' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxiv, 94 (Nov. 1984), p.242.

27 Benignus Millet, 'Irish Scotists at St Isidore's College, Rome in the seventeenth century', in *De doctrina Ioannis Duns Scotus*, 4 (1968), pp 399-419; Ariew, *Descartes and the last scholastics*, pp.39-57.

28 Ó Ciosáin, 'Attitudes towards Ireland', pp.145-6.

29 Cited in Ariew, 'Damned if you do', pp.257-8.

Faculty of Arts remained silent.³⁰ There was probably one Irishman present at the 1671 meeting, Michael Moore, a Dublin priest who was then serving his first term as procureur of the German Nation (Nation d'Allemagne).³¹ Two years later, in 1673, a college register noted that Moore was already a well-known defender of Aristotle.³² It is quite likely, given the evidence of his subsequent career, that Moore was a prominent advocate of the censorship of Cartesianism in 1671, and that there was some substance to Boileau's association of Irish students and clerics with Aristotelianism. It is also interesting to note that in 1672 'some poor Irish priests and students' in Paris were granted royal permission to collect donations which could be used to purchase property for use as a 'college or hospice'. Five years later, the Irish community in Paris was granted full rights to the vacant Italian Collège des Lombards.³³

Moore's career and thought provides an unusual opportunity to explore the philosophical ideas of an early modern Irish migrant. At least eleven Irishmen taught philosophy at the University of Paris in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries, but only Moore is known to have published on the subject.³⁴ Moore was particularly concerned with the way in which Cartesian ideas entered the philosophy curriculum of the university. Lecturers like Edmond Pourchot, or others outside the university like Jean Baptiste du Hamel, urged a conscious accommodation between the competing 'old' and 'new' philosophies. They wanted to amalgamate what was considered orthodox in the work of Descartes, with what could be salvaged from the writings of Aristotle and his followers. It was in this way that Descartes entered the textbooks, classrooms and lecturing halls

30 Ariew, 'Damned if you do', p.261; McLoughlin, 'Censorship and defenders', pp.566-7.

31 Liber procuracionem constantissimae Germanorum Nationis (1660-98) (Archives de l'Université de Paris, Registre 28), f. 118.

32 Collège des Grassins, Annales XVIIe siècle (1665-72) (Archives Nationales MM 447), f. 318.

33 Swords (ed.), 'History of the Irish College, Paris', pp.27-8.

34 Brockliss and Ferté, 'Irish clerics in France', p.547, fn 74. Michael Moore, *De existentia Dei et humanae mentis immortalitate secundum Cartesii et Aristotelis doctrinam disputatio* (Paris: C. Robustel, 1692). For a preliminary assessment of Moore's philosophy: Liam Chambers, 'Defying Descartes: Michael Moore (1639-1726) and Aristotelian philosophy in France and Ireland' in Michael Brown and Stephen Harrison (eds), *The medieval world and the modern mind* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp.11-26.

of French universities in the late seventeenth century.³⁵ Moore and Pourchot both taught at the Collège des Grassins; Moore was therefore well aware of the growing popularity of Cartesianism.

Moore and other Paris Aristotelians were concerned with the implications of the new mechanical, mathematical, quantitative understanding of the natural world. This included the rejection of the traditional Aristotelian position that all substance was composed of matter and form. Descartes and his followers argued that matter was extension alone, abandoning form. Thus the actions of matter, for instance motion, could be measured and explained using mechanical rather than qualitative models. This may have provided a better explanation of natural phenomena, but for the Aristotelians it had profound consequences. If basic Aristotelian positions concerning causality or substance were rejected, it would be difficult to account for divine agency in the world. The Cartesian mechanical philosophy of nature seemed to open the door to a purely material universe devoid of divine presence or intervention.³⁶ Much of the controversial debate generated in the 1680s and 1690s therefore centred on subjects like divine providence, transubstantiation, God's existence and the nature of the soul.³⁷ Indeed it has recently been argued that most philosophers, traditionalists and novatores, wished to retain basic concepts such as divine agency or human souls and that many were deeply concerned by the spectre of materialism and even atheism, each side strenuously claiming that their philosophy better defeated the imaginary foe.³⁸

At no point did Moore directly relate his Aristotelianism to his Irishness, but it is clear that there was a strong Irish impulse to the development of his thought. The failure of the Catholic revival in Ireland in

35 For example: Edmond Pourchot, *Institutio philosophica ad faciliorem veterum ac recentiorum philosophorum lectionem comparata* (4 vols, Paris: Joannem Baptistam Coignard, 1695); Jean Baptiste Du Hamel, *Philosophia vetus et nova ad usum scholae accomodata* (4 vols, Paris: Stephanum Michallet, 1678).

36 *De existentia Dei*, preface, unpaginated and *passim*.

37 The debate about souls and especially the immortality of the human soul runs through all Moore's publications. See for example: *De existentia Dei*, pp.101-29, 313-31, 345-452.

38 Simon Schaffer, 'Godly men and mechanical philosophers: souls and spirits in restoration natural philosophy' in *Science in context*, 1, 1 (1987), pp.55-85; Margaret J. Osler, 'Whose ends? Teleology in early modern natural philosophy' in *Osiris*, 16 (2001), pp.151-68.

1689-91 and the defeat of Jacobite forces meant that Irish Catholic students would continue to rely on French and other European universities.³⁹ It was therefore important that the orthodoxy of the University of Paris and other institutions was maintained, if the future of the Irish church was to be ensured. Moore clearly believed that security was provided by reliance on traditional thought and practices. In 1708 he was described in a university register as '...always consistent, not as a little one swayed by the wind of every doctrine nor as a reed moving to and fro, but imperturbable as a rock in the midst of storms'.⁴⁰ During the early eighteenth century he continued to defend Aristotelianism in the philosophy courses he taught at the *Collège de France* and two of these courses were later published.⁴¹

The new mechanical philosophy made a different impact on Ireland, and on Irish students, in other circumstances. The Irish writer William Molyneux published one of the first English translations of Descartes's *Meditations on First Philosophy* as *Six metaphysical meditations wherein it is proved that there is a God* (London, 1680). Molyneux appended a glowing account of Descartes's life to his translation.⁴² Three years later, in 1683, Molyneux was a founding member of Ireland's first formal scientific society, the Dublin Philosophical Society, which became an important advocate of the mechanical philosophy in Ireland.⁴³ Though the society was overwhelmingly Protestant in composition, there was at least one Catholic member. Mark Bagot from Carlow had a particular

39 Moore returned from France to Ireland in 1686 and was closely involved in the Catholic revival in Dublin before falling foul of James II in early 1690 after a dispute concerning state control of ecclesiastical patronage. See Liam Chambers, 'The life and writings of Michael Moore, c. 1639-1726' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, N.U.I., Maynooth, 2001), pp.70-104.

40 Translated and cited in Boyle 'Dr Michael Moore', p.12.

41 Michael Moore, *Vera Sciendi Methodus* (Paris: ex typographia theobustea, 1716); Idem, *De principiis physicis, seu corporum naturalium disputatio* (Paris: C. L. Thiboust, 1726). See Liam Chambers, 'Knowledge and piety: Michael Moore's career at the University of Paris and Collège de France, 1701-20' in *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, 17 (2002), pp.9-25.

42 William Molyneux, *Six metaphysical meditations wherein it is proved that there is a God* (London: B.G., 1680), preface, unpaginated.

43 K.T. Hoppen, *The common scientist in the seventeenth century: a study of the Dublin Philosophical Society 1683-1708* (London: Routledge, 1970).

interest in the works of Galileo, though he may have had difficulty acquiring printed texts for he owned hand-written copies.⁴⁴

Other Irish Catholics were also attracted to the mechanical philosophy, though not necessarily the Cartesian variety. Bernard Connor, an Irish Catholic physician who was educated at Paris, Montpellier and Reims in the 1680s and early 1690s, applied mechanical principles to the study of medicine.⁴⁵ He also published a controversial tract on miracles, which attempted to reconcile miraculous events with the 'principles of physick'. Connor's solution, that miracles resulted from the suspension of the laws of motion, landed him in trouble because it seemed to deny the possibility of some miracles recorded in the bible.⁴⁶ The basic point here is that the French education of Irish Catholics did not produce an intellectually monolithic group. There was room for dissent from Scholastic orthodoxy; clearly Connor came into contact with mechanism while at university in France in the 1680s and 1690s. However, it is interesting that Connor moved to England in 1695, converted to Anglicanism and altered his surname from 'O'Connor' to (the apparently de-Gaelicised) 'Connor'. It was in England, as an Anglican, that Connor published his controversial *Evangelium Medici*, though when he died prematurely in 1698, there was evidence that an Irish Catholic priest administered the last rites.⁴⁷

Bernard Connor appears to have been an exception. In fact, Ó Ciosáin was correct to surmise that there was some truth to the connection drawn between Irish students in France and Scholasticism. As well as the important Irish involvement in the seventeenth century re-generation of Scotism, he points to a rather odd, rhyming Thomist text, Michael Corcoran's *Rithmus Pan-Philosophicus*, published in 1690.⁴⁸ Walter Harris's updated *The Writers of Ireland*, published in the mid-eighteenth century, adds further weight to the theory that Irish teachers and professors pub-

44 *Ibid.*, pp.25, 49, 235n.

45 *Dissertationes medico-physicae* (Oxford: Henrici Clements 1695).

46 *Evangelium medici, seu medicina mystica, de suspensis naturae legibus, sive de miraculis* (London: R. Wellinton, 1697).

47 William Hayley, *A sermon preached in the parish church of St Giles in the fields. At the funeral of Bernard Connor, M.D. who departed this life, Oct. 30 1698. With a short account of his life and death* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1699), pp.29-33. For a recent assessment see: David Coakley, *Irish masters of medicine* (Dublin: Town House, 1992), pp.15-25.

48 Ó Ciosáin, 'Attitudes towards Ireland', p.143.

lished Scholastic philosophy throughout the seventeenth century and even into the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ Indeed, the simple fact that there were no Irish proponents of Cartesianism in late seventeenth century France is surely telling. Of course the pen pictures of Boileau and Montesquieu depicting passionate Irish scholastics ‘debating furiously’ in the streets of Paris were deliberately exaggerated satires. The Irish were clearly not alone in their defence, active or passive, of Aristotelian Scholasticism. French writers singled out Irish Catholics for special comment because they represented a large and visible émigré community of students at the University of Paris and an even more conspicuous series of communities in French towns and cities. Irish students, teachers, priests and administrators were no more Aristotelian than many of their French colleagues. In any case their orthodoxy was predicated on the prevailing intellectual trends favoured by the political and religious authorities in France.⁵⁰

There was no coherent Irish Catholic response to the intellectual challenges of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. But the uncertain circumstances in which Irish Catholics found themselves, at home and abroad, meant that few of them wandered from the orthodoxies in philosophy and theology prevalent in France. Joseph Ignatius O’Halloran, an Irish Jesuit and brother of the Limerick doctor and historian, Sylvester O’Halloran, was able to promote Newtonian natural philosophy at Bordeaux in the 1730s, but by this stage Aristotelianism was vanquished and Cartesian natural philosophy was on its last legs.⁵¹ Irish migrants in France operated within a complicated set of dual social, political, cultural and historical contexts, analogous to what Edward Said

49 Sir James Ware, *The whole works of Sir James Ware concerning Ireland, revised and improved*, Walter Harris (ed.) (2 vols, Dublin: E. Jones, 1739-45), ii, pp.133, 161, 166, 187-8, 258, 286, 294.

50 Though clearly in retreat, there was continued opposition to Cartesianism at the University of Paris and elsewhere in France during the first two decades of the eighteenth century. Jourdain, *Histoire de l’Université de Paris*, p.286; Brockliss, *French higher education*, pp.350-4, 357; Jonathan I. Isreal, *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity 1650-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p.41.

51 Christopher Preston, ‘Le Collège des Irlandais de Bordeaux’ in Richard Hayes, Christopher Preston and J. Weygand (eds), *Les Irlandais en Aquitaine* (n.p., 1971), pp.19-27; Brockliss, *French higher education*, pp.360-71. My thanks to Peadar Ó Maoláin for bringing O’Halloran to my attention.

described as the exile's 'double perspective'.⁵² For Irish students and the Irish Catholic church, reliance on France was a matter of survival, increasingly so after 1691. For many students this was enough to condition responses to curricular changes and intellectual challenges. Indeed such changes and challenges provided opportunities to underline one's orthodoxy and thereby seek academic or ecclesiastical preferment.⁵³

It would be premature to draw conclusions about all Irish Catholic students or scholars in France. Indeed there has been little research about how different educational destinations created diverging outlooks among students. Moreover, much fuller investigation of the impact of Cartesianism and, more generally, the mechanical philosophy, on Irish Protestants, building on the work of Hoppen, is necessary before serious conclusions can be reached.⁵⁴ Presbyterian teachers like Thomas Gowan seem to have imported Cartesian ideas to Ireland in the 1670s, but we still know relatively little about them.⁵⁵ If we want to know what the Irish Catholic elite thought in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, one crucial avenue of investigation is surely the impact of the French higher education which so many of them experienced. Migration and exile played a fundamental role in fashioning, if not determining, Irish Catholic attitudes not only to Cartesianism, but also Gallicanism, Jansenism and the eighteenth century Enlightenment.

52 Edward Said, 'Intellectual exile: expatriates and marginals' in *The Edward Said Reader*, Moustafa Bayoumi and Andrew Rubin (ed.s) (London: Granta, 2000), p.378.

53 See also: Thomas O'Connor, 'The role of Irish clerics in Paris University politics 1730-40' in *History of Universities*, xv (1997-9), pp.193-225.

54 Hoppen, *The common scientist*; idem, 'The papers of the Dublin Philosophical Society 1683-1708: introductory material and index' in *Analecta Hibernica*, 30 (1982), pp.151-248.

55 Thomas Gowan, *Ars sciendi sive logica. Novo methodo disposita, et novis praeceptis aucta* (London: Joannis Richardson, 1681). On the author: Ware, *The whole works*, ed. Harris, ii, p.351. My thanks to Dr M.A. Stewart for drawing my attention to Gowan.