

# interpretation

A JOURNAL OF POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

September 1981

Volume 9 Numbers 2 & 3

- 141 Larry Arnhart The Rationality of Political Speech:  
An Interpretation of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*
- 155 Jan H. Blits Manliness and Friendship  
in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*
- 169 Mary Nichols *The Winter's Tale*:  
The Triumph of Comedy over Tragedy
- 191 Jerry Weinberger On Bacon's *Advertisement Touching A Holy War*
- 207 John Parsons, Jr. On Sir William Temple's  
Political and Philosophical Teaching
- 229 Susan Power John Locke:  
Revolution, Resistance, or Opposition?
- 245 Barry Cooper The Politics of Performance: An Interpretation  
of Bolingbroke's Political Theory
- 263 Philip J. Kain Labor, the State, and Aesthetic Theory in the  
Writings of Schiller
- 279 Michael H. Mitias Law as the Basis of the State: Hegel
- 301 Stanley Corngold Dilthey's Essay *The Poetic Imagination*:  
A Poetics of Force
- 339 Kent A. Kirwan Historicism and Statesmanship  
in the Reform Argument of Woodrow Wilson
- 353 Richard Velkley Gadamer and Kant: The Critique of Modern  
Aesthetic Consciousness in *Truth and Method*
- 365 Robert C. Grady Bertrand de Jouvenel:  
Order, Legitimacy, and the Model of Rousseau
- 385 William R. Marty Rawls and the Harried Mother
- 397 Jürgen Gebhardt Ideology and Reality:  
The Ideologue's Persuasion in Modern Politics
- 415 Kenneth W. Thompson Science, Morality, and Transnationalism
- Discussion*
- 427 Peter T. Manicas The Crisis of Contemporary Political Theory:  
on Jacobson's *Pride and Solace*
- Book Reviews*
- 437 Patrick Coby *The Spirit of Liberalism*,  
by Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr.
- 439 Will Morrisey *Political Parties in the Eighties*,  
edited by Robert A. Goldwin

# interpretation

Volume 9 numbers 2 & 3

Editor-in-Chief Hilail Gildin

Editors Seth G. Benardete • Hilail Gildin • Robert Horwitz  
• Howard B. White (d.1974)

Consulting Editors John Hallowell • Wilhelm Hennis • Erich Hula •  
Arnaldo Momigliano • Michael Oakeshott • Ellis  
Sandoz • Leo Strauss (d.1973) • Kenneth W.  
Thompson

Associate Editors Larry Arnhart • Patrick Coby • Christopher A. Colmo  
• Maureen Feder • Joseph E. Goldberg • Pamela  
Jensen • Will Morrisey

Assistant Editor Marianne C. Grey

Production Manager Martyn Hitchcock

Authors submitting manuscripts for publication in INTERPRETATION are requested to follow the *MLA Style Sheet* and to send clear and readable copies of their work. All manuscripts and editorial correspondence should be addressed to INTERPRETATION, Building G Room 101, Queens College, Flushing, N.Y. 11367, U.S.A.

Copyright 1982 • Interpretation

## ON SIR WILLIAM TEMPLE'S POLITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL TEACHING

J. E. PARSONS, JR.

At first sight it might appear that Sir William Temple had no political teaching. Temple was, as I aim to demonstrate, an Epicurean, and Epicurus taught that the apolitical life is superior to and nobler than the life devoted to politics. However, this objection can be answered in two ways. First, Epicureanism presupposes a general and comprehensive reflection on political life, as in Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, the latter part of Book V. Second, Sir William Temple fully led an Epicurean life only after 1680, following his permanent retirement from politics at the age of fifty-two. Prior to that time, Temple was a political advocate and, indeed, sponsored a plan to alter the English constitution. Thus Macaulay's portrait of him as a man inclined to "valitudinarian effeminacy" and as "not a mediator" but "merely a neutral"<sup>1</sup> does scant justice to Temple. What gave rise to this judgment is a misacknowledgment of Temple's Epicureanism and the accompanying view that Temple was only a statesman and not, first of all, a philosopher.<sup>2</sup> Yet not everything Macaulay writes about Temple is to be dismissed, though it is chiefly in Temple's own works that we find the vindication of his thought as well as that of his character and deeds.

Accordingly, a certain tension does exist between Temple the statesman and Temple the Epicurean philosopher. For while he states in his *Memoirs*: "I never had my Heart set upon any thing in publick Affairs, but the Happiness of my Country, and Greatness of the Crown; and in Order to that, the Union of both, by which alone I thought both could be atchiev'd," he also states in his Epicurean essay on gardens that his private bent was for a retired life and that

These are Questions that a Man ought at least to ask himself, whether he asks others or no, and to chuse his Course of Life rather by his own Humour and Temper, than by common Accidents, or Advice of Friends; at least if the *Spanish Proverb* be true, That a Fool knows more in his own House, than a Wise Man in another's.<sup>3</sup>

We may observe from this that the ends Temple proposes for political action are nonpartisan, the support of king and country, and that the motive is the advice of friends, as appears from several passages in his works. It is this nonpartisanship of the ends of his political action and the fact that Temple's statesmanship consisted in administration and negotiation rather than partisan politics that make it possible to lessen the tension between the statesman and

<sup>1</sup>T. B. Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays* (Leipzig, Tauchnitz, 1850), III, 151, 236.

<sup>2</sup>Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, III, p. 160.

<sup>3</sup>Sir William Temple, *Works*, ed. Jonathan Swift (London, 1740), I, 351, 189, emphasis in original.

the Epicurean philosopher in his character. For, while Sir William Temple is more a public-spirited statesman than a public-spirited philosopher, yet the latter character does not altogether escape him. In his own words we find the statement: "I can truly say, that of all the Paper I have blotted, which has been a great deal in my Time, I have never written any thing for the Publick without the Intention of some publick Good." This statement might be considered to contain in compass the essence of Temple's political Epicureanism, along with the following, in which Temple writes concerning his role as a negotiator and peacemaker:

Peace is a publick Blessing, without which no Man is safe in his Fortunes, his Liberty, or his Life: Neither Innocence or Laws are a Guard or Defence; no Possessions are enjoyed but in Danger or Fear, which equally lose the Pleasure and Ease of all that Fortune can give us.<sup>4</sup>

This quotation, while it applies immediately to peace abroad, also more mediately covers the situation of internal peace threatened, as it was in Temple's lifetime by incipient civil war. At no time was this truer than at the time of Temple's self-enforced retirement in 1680 during the Popish Plot furor and the Exclusion Bill crisis. Rather than accept the position of secretary of state in Charles II's cabinet, Temple opted for retirement, rather like Atticus in the midst of the downfall of the Roman republic, who remained on good terms with all the leading men on both sides, but refused to be a partisan. Again, like Montaigne, his favorite modern author, Temple preferred a retired life to one exposed to continual dangers and temptations to commit insalubrious deeds. As Montaigne wrote during the civil wars of religion in France: "It is no small pleasure, for one to feele himself preserved from the contagion of an age so infected as ours. . . . [And Montaigne mentions] this Epicurus, most agreeing with my manner. . . ."<sup>5</sup>

We turn accordingly to the directly Epicurean sayings to be found in Temple's writings. These are discovered in *Miscellanea*, Part III, "Heads designed for an essay upon the Different Conditions of Life and Fortune" as follows. (1) "A thinking Man can never live well, unless content to die"; (2) "The greatest Prince, possess'd with Superstition and Fears of Death, more unhappy, than any private Man of common Fortune, and well constituted Mind"; (3) "A Man's Happiness, all in his own Opinion of himself and other Things"; (4) "The Difference . . . between one Man and another; onely whether a Man governs his Passions, or his Passions Him"; (5) "We ought to abstain from those Pleasures, which upon Thought we conclude are likely to end in more Trouble or Pain, than they begin in Joy or Pleasure."<sup>6</sup>

Certain comparable sayings are disclosed in the writings of Epicurus him-

<sup>4</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 272-73.

<sup>5</sup>*The Essays of Montaigne*, trans. John Florio (Tudor Translations) (London, 1893), III, 24, 59.

<sup>6</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 306-07.

self. (1) "Become accustomed to the belief that death is nothing to us. For all good and evil consists in sensation, but death is the deprivation of sensation. And therefore a right understanding that death is nothing to us makes the mortality of life enjoyable, not because it adds to it an infinite span of time, but because it takes away the craving for immortality"; (2) "But the many at one moment shun death as the greatest of evils, at another yearn for it as a respite from the evils of life. But the wise man neither seeks to escape life nor fears the cessation of life, for neither does life offend him nor does the absence of life seem to be any evil"; (3) "Self-sufficiency is the greatest of all riches"; (4) "Nothing satisfies the man who is not satisfied with a little"; (5) "And since pleasure is the first good and natural to us, for this very reason we do not choose every pleasure but sometimes we pass over many pleasures, when greater discomfort accrues to us as the result of them. . . ."

Thus by comparing Temple with Epicurus himself on these five topics we may clearly discern the Epicurean propensity in Temple's way of thinking. As Norman Wentworth De Witt, an historian of Epicurean thought, points out: "From France the doctrines of Gassendi were carried to England in the Restoration period and won a vogue for Epicurean studies which lasted for about seventy-five years, roughly from 1650 to 1725."<sup>8</sup> Temple's writings fall into almost the midpoint of this period. In addition, a further indication of his Epicureanism is that the only philosopher named in the title of his writings is as follows: "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus; or of Gardening," an essay written in 1685.

The result of Temple's adherence to Epicureanism is his oft-stated preference for ancient over modern learning. Temple, after all, is rather an ancient in temperament and philosophy than a modern, and for this reason Macaulay dismisses most of his writings to that effect.<sup>9</sup> Yet when we remember that Jonathan Swift, the protégé of Temple's last years in retirement, was also an ancient as opposed to a modern, we may quite pardonably revise for ourselves Macaulay's poor estimate of Temple's intelligence. For it was justifiably possible in Temple's time to choose the side of the ancients in the ancients-moderns controversy that raged in France and England toward the close of the seventeenth century. Nor was this merely a literary argument; it also touched upon political science, as we shall see in Temple's political teaching.

At this point, it behooves us to examine Temple's essay, "Of Heroick Virtue," as a suitable introduction to his political teaching proper.<sup>10</sup> As Temple states initially in this essay: "Among all the Endowments of Nature or Improve-

<sup>7</sup>*Epicurus: The Extant Remains*, trans. Cyril Bailey (New York, 1970), pp. 85, 137, 89.

<sup>8</sup>Norman Wentworth De Witt, *Epicurus and His Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1954), p. 356.

<sup>9</sup>See Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, III, 241-42.

<sup>10</sup>Although "Of Heroick Virtue" was written after Temple's political teaching proper (1672), it can serve better to lead toward than lead away from that teaching, because its theme is more properly prepolitical than postpolitical.

ments of Art” by which men have excelled and distinguished themselves, there are principally only two that have “the Honour of being called Divine, and of giving that Esteem or Appellation to such as possessed them in very eminent Degree; which are Heroick Virtue, and Poetry. . . .”<sup>11</sup> Temple treats Poetry in another essay, and it can be said to feed on heroic virtue rather than to supply its place. It should be noted that Temple suggests that heroic virtue is an “Endowment of Nature” and not an “Improvement of Art,” unlike poetry for the most part. This means that heroic virtue is natural virtue, natural in the sense of inborn and original, not a product of convention. Now, while Temple states that it is easier to define heroic virtue in terms of effects and examples than through definition proper, he does deliver this definition: that such virtue arises from “some great and native Excellency of Temper or Genius transcending the common Race of Mankind in Wisdom, Goodness and Fortitude.”<sup>12</sup> Such virtue is advantaged by noble birth, improved by special education, and assisted by good fortune, so that heroes are honored and obeyed during their lives and bewailed and adored after death. In the definition that Temple offers, wisdom appears to be of more significance than fortitude, as we shall see. For it is wisdom whose greatness appeared “in the Excellency of Inventions . . . in the Institutions of such Laws, Orders or Governments, as were of most Ease, Safety and Advantage to Civil Society.”<sup>13</sup> Such talents were devoted to remedying political faction at home and foreign oppression abroad, and in relieving both fellow countrymen and foreigners from the violence of tyranny. Thus, unlike as in Machiavelli, these great founders and legislators practiced first and foremost a political, nontyrannical wisdom. They are to be divided into two groups that in fact merge into one: the first inventors of useful arts (who perhaps became kings and the founders of civil society according to the Epicurean doctrine)<sup>14</sup> and the first authors of any good and well-instituted civil government in any country, who may also be inventors of the arts. By means of these discoveries and institutions, men were lifted above savage and brutish lives to the safety and convenience of civil society, the enjoyment of private property, the observance of civil or religious orders, and the obedience of wise laws. By such means, further, were obtained security, plenty, civility, industry, and all kinds of arts. Such founders were obeyed as princes and lawgivers in their own times, and were called by posterity by the name of heroes. Such were the founders of the four great ancient empires: Assyria, Persia, Greece (Macedon), and Rome. According to Temple, Saturn and Jupiter were originally kings of Crete and later deified, supplying the origins of the Greek pagan pantheon. Temple traces the origins of all religions to human invention, excepting Judaism and

<sup>11</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 191.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup>See James H. Nichols, Jr., *Epicurean Political Philosophy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 139.

Christianity, which he does not mention except in relation to Islam, perhaps for prudential reasons.

Among the Greek heroes, Temple numbers Theseus, founder of Athens; the Cretan king, Minos; and Lycurgus, founder of Sparta. Alexander the Great and Caesar are, in Temple's account, great captains and conquerors, but not authentic heroes due to their moral defects. This distinction is enough, when considered with Temple's demotion of Mahomet, to show his disagreement with Machiavelli, since Temple does not honor "armed prophets" who do not uphold the highest standards of morality. Machiavelli honors founders for their power and authority rather than for their political wisdom.

Temple states that the heroes of the four great monarchies—Cyrus, for example, having been immortalized by Xenophon as "the truest Character that can be given of Heroick Virtue"<sup>15</sup> (in the *Cyropaedeia*)—and their achievements are what inspire contemporary instruction of princes and statesmen in Europe and provide the modern examples for political discourse and reflection. They are authoritative for Europeans, or descendants of Europeans. But they are not the only models of virtue in the world, nor are their regimes the only governments worthy of imitation. Then Temple describes the Chinese empire, the empire of the Incas, the Goths (including the Tartars), and finally Islam. Temple mentions "the Islamic Empire, which seems to have been in all points the fiercest as that of the *Inca's* was the gentlest, that of *China* the wisest, and that of the *Goths* the bravest in the World."<sup>16</sup> Passing for a moment over both Islam and the Incas, we find two of the cardinal virtues, courage and wisdom, incarnated in two different regimes, the Gothic and the Chinese. Temple, even more than Montesquieu, draws a distinction between absolute monarchy and despotism.<sup>17</sup> The former is the absolute rule of wisdom, or, at least, of long experience (understood as practical wisdom), whereas the latter is the absolute rule of the ungoverned passions, entirely base and arbitrary. The former characterizes China, the latter Islam. What transforms the Chinese autocracy into the rule of embodied wisdom is that the Chinese emperor does not make a decision without the assent of the highly educated Confucian mandarin, and even the Tartar invaders submitted themselves to this dianoetic form of government. In Islam, due to the enthusiastic and fanatic origin of their religion, the Muslim rulers have their whims constrained by *nothing but* religion. As for the Gothic constitution with its limited monarch, leader in war and peace, its council of barons and its commons: ". . . this Constitution has been celebrated, as framed with great Wisdom and Equity, and as the truest and justest Temper that has ever been found out between Dominion and Liberty. . . ."<sup>18</sup> In addition, it fulfills

<sup>15</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 194.

<sup>16</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 225.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. Montesquieu, *On the Spirit of the Laws*, XI, 9. See Thomas L. Pangle, *Montesquieu's Philosophy of Liberalism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), p. 70.

<sup>18</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 220.

the political norm of governing “all by all.” It seems that in order to have enough political freedom consistent with authority, the virtue needed in the Gothic regime is courage, the hallmark of the ancient Britons. Because of the bravery of their ancestors the English enjoy a limited, mixed regime, which is as monarchical in the use of absolute authority as it is free in the allowance of popular liberties. The British constitution thus represents the ancient Gothic balance of king, lords, and commons, whose guiding corporate virtue is courage. As Temple states in the summation of “Heroick Virtue”:

Now the true original Greatness of any Kingdom or Nation may be accounted by the Number of strong and able Bodies of their Native Subjects [the roots of courage]. This is the Natural Strength of Governments, all the rest is Art, Discipline, or Institution.<sup>19</sup>

But conquerors are second in glory and fame to those who originally founded the orders and institutions of the various governments. If the Gothic constitution is the best balanced and most appropriate one for modern times, the Chinese regime most approaches the Platonic paradigm of rule by embodied wisdom. It seems that Temple may be willing to derogate wisdom as the supreme virtue in favor of courage or resoluteness, a distinctly modern tendency, as in Descartes and Kant,<sup>20</sup> for the welfare of his own political regime. Or it is rather perhaps that he sees the operative virtue for his place and time as courage tempered by prudence and as unavoidable, if not preferable to rule by wisdom. At the very least, Temple does not divorce wisdom from courage in his characterization of the Gothic constitution.

After such an introduction, we come to Sir William Temple’s political teaching proper as presented in “An Essay upon the Original and Nature of Government.” It is significant that the essay was written in 1672 during Temple’s active political career. It starts with the proposition that the nature of man is the same in all times and places and that the variation observed among men is due to climate and consequently differing humors and passions, from which arise the several customs, educations, opinions, and laws of mankind. Further, if revolutions do not utterly destroy the state, “. . . it commonly returns in Time to its natural Constitution, or something near it.”<sup>21</sup> The concept of a permanent overturning or revolution so prevalent in Marx, Nietzsche, and some twentieth-century thought, is entirely lacking in Temple. Instead, he conceives of “revolution” as a return to the natural status quo before the outbreak of civil war, which the English upheaval of 1640–60 bears out. Also, Temple exempts the historical part of Scripture from his political analysis, since “the more immediate and evident Operation of Divine Will and Providence is a theme of

<sup>19</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 230.

<sup>20</sup>See Descartes, *Philosophical Letters* (Oxford, 1970), p. 165; I. Kant, *The Doctrine of Virtue*, Part II of *The Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Mary J. Gregor (New York: Harper Torchbooks), p. 67.

<sup>21</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 95.

Divines and not common Men” and the subject “of our Faith, not of Reason.” Temple observes in passing that the geographical extremes of north and south have always lived under despotism, but that the moderate climates are “used to more moderate Governments, running anciently into Commonwealths [i.e., republics] and of later ages into Principalities bounded by laws, which differ less in Nature than in Name.”<sup>22</sup> Unlike some moderns, Temple does not draw so sharp a distinction between ancient and modern regimes, notwithstanding his insight that in Europe the Gothic constitution has replaced the ancient form of republics and empires. In addition, Temple discerns only two basic forms of government: autocratic despotism, whether religious or secular, and the regime of rule of law. Under these two heads may fall many more kinds than the five or six regimes enumerated by Plato, Aristotle or Polybius, according to whether the despotic autocrat is mild or fierce and whether the rule of law is extensively or selectively based, for example. Further, the political regimes in the United Provinces of the Netherlands and in Poland fall under no category yet invented by political theorists, ancient or modern.

The ancient Mediterranean principedom, according to Temple, was not a tyranny. The prince served as general-in-chief in war and in peace lived without armed guards as chief of the popular councils and assemblies. Such was the monarchy of Macedon, for example, and it in some ways approximated the Gothic constitution, thus revealing some continuity between ancient and modern regimes. The commonwealths or republics of ancient times were more volatile than the ancient principedoms, and frequently revolved into tyrannies, which sprang naturally from purely popular regimes. Where an oligarchy suppressed the multitude, the multitude often resorted to autocratic rule, contented to see those they hated and feared before now in an equal condition with themselves. A multitude, says Temple, is incapable of framing or founding political orders and institutions, though it is quite capable of conserving or maintaining them when once formed. The founders of civil society are always individual princes, as in Machiavelli; but unlike Machiavelli, Temple does not accept the class analysis of, say, the Roman polity, but rather, as with Aristotle, the regime analysis.<sup>23</sup> For example, according to Temple, Rome began to lose its republican liberty only when the Roman regime could not ensure that the plebs only elect patricians to public office.

A good reason for the many commonwealths or republics of the ancient world was that the combined riches of these communities inclined toward a republican regime. The same motive can be found in the modern world inclining the United Provinces of the Netherlands toward a republic, although this particular regime cannot exactly be described as the modern form of an ancient republic due to the factor of Christianity. As Temple expresses his

<sup>22</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 95.

<sup>23</sup>I am indebted for this distinction to Harvey C. Mansfield, Jr. See his forthcoming book *Machiavelli's New Modes and Orders* (Cornell University Press).

general point here: “. . . where Men grow to great Possessions, they grow more intent upon Safety, and therefore desire to be governed by Laws and Magistrates of their own Choice, fearing all Armed and Arbitrary Power. . . .”<sup>24</sup> Other reasons for this republican trend are the smallness of cities, which makes it easy for the people to gather together in assemblies, and the mutual commerce of men in small cities rendering their wits nimble and making them political reasoners. The opposite of the republican trend occurs in the extreme north and south where the sparseness of population and the lack of cities, except as the residences of absolute rulers, render the people apt to accept despotism and its arbitrary decrees in the same manner as they accept the weather and the will of heaven. The poverty of such a people also inclines them in this direction. In addition, the less moderate climates enervate the spirits of men by excessive heat or cold, and for that reason men grow tamer and more fit for servitude. In the more temperate regions men are more inspirited and courageous and so less liable to despotic autocracy. This theory of the political significance of climate in Temple, though found in part in Aristotle, foreshadows Montesquieu’s political theory of climate,<sup>25</sup> and it is just possible that Montesquieu may have read Temple on this subject. Certainly, Temple’s theory here accords with what we may call his political Epicureanism, according to which man is first of all a sensuous, earth-bound animal, though capable of subsequent guidance by reason.

Yet even between despotism and the regime based on rule of law, every government by itself is always a restraint and Temple asserts that all rule is equally absolute, “where it is in the last Resort.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore, when men contend for liberty it is either for a change of rulers or out of nostalgia for forms of government they have formerly been used to and now regret, forgetting the inconveniences, pressures, and complaints of their former regime. This interpretation of revolutionary change clearly puts Temple among the conservatives of his age, though unlike the more radical and less liberal Hobbes, he does not condemn all resistance or revolt against the more or less limited monarchies of his time. In this Temple is closer to the Marquis of Halifax than to Hobbes, for it was Halifax, a sometime political confederate of Temple’s, who masterminded the revolution of 1688.<sup>27</sup>

If political power rests with the people and political authority rests with the few or the one, it is always opinion that inclines political power to respect political authority. “*For Power, arising from Strength is always in those that are governed, who are many: But Authority, arising from Opinion, is in those that govern, who are few.*”<sup>28</sup> This is the reason why “vast Numbers of Men

<sup>24</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 96.

<sup>25</sup>See Montesquieu, *On the Spirit of the Laws*, XV–XVII.

<sup>26</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 77.

<sup>27</sup>See J. E. Parsons, Jr., “Halifax: The Complete Trimmer Revisited,” *Interpretation*, 7, No. 3 (September 1978), 66–94.

<sup>28</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 97, emphasis in original.

submit their lives and Fortunes absolutely to the Will of one" because it "must be Force of Custom, or Opinion" that constitutes "the true Ground and Foundation of all Government, and that which subjects Power to Authority." Temple shares with Hume the view that the authority of all government rests on public opinion. Hume wrote in his "Essay IV, Of the First Principles of Government": ". . . as Force is always on the side of the governed, the governors have nothing to support them but opinion. It is, therefore, on opinion only that government is founded; and this maxim extends to the most despotic and most military governments, as well as the most free and most popular."<sup>29</sup> In this conviction, Temple may correctly be said to anticipate Hume.<sup>30</sup>

Temple examines the origin of natural political authority in terms of its constituent parts. Natural political authority derives from the opinion of wisdom, goodness, and valor, or courage in the persons who possess it. Temple defines wisdom as that which makes men judge what are the best ends and what are the best means to attain them. Wisdom is more than mere prudence because it has a theoretical dimension, the proper judgment of the best ends, and can be termed noetically inclined *phronesis*. For Temple, as for Aristotle, the ends are supplied by nature, but it still requires rational choice or deliberation as to choice between the best alternative ends. This is what wisdom, properly understood, does.

Goodness is defined by Temple as the quality that makes men prefer their duty and promises before their passions or self-interest. Temple also uses the term "honesty" as a synonym for goodness. The Greek term here among the virtues would be *sophrosyne* or temperance, because temperance tempers the passions of self-interest through *thumos*. Valor or courage (*andreia*) is the lowest of the virtues and ". . . as it gives Awe, and promises Protection to those who want either Heart or Strength to defend themselves: This makes the Authority of Men among Women; and that of a Master-Buck in a numerous Herd. . . ." Temple, it should be noted, leaves out justice as a constituent of natural political authority, and he seems to substitute duty for justice, a tendency that would anticipate the pure practical reason of Kantian morality. We should, however, observe that Temple here, as before, does not dis sever courage from wisdom but insists on their union.

Derivative from these three political virtues constituting natural political authority are three subsidiary virtues. "Eloquence, as it passes for a Mark of Wisdom"<sup>32</sup> is the first. From goodness or honesty, the derivative virtue is personal beauty. From valor or courage the derivative is conventional nobility. These subsidiary virtues have some effect on the public opinion of natural political authority, but especially if they resemble the originals from which they derive. A further source for authority, which is greater than any of the subsid-

<sup>29</sup>David Hume, *Essays: Moral, Political and Literary* (Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 29.

<sup>30</sup>Hume cites a writing of Temple's in his *Essays*, p. 423, note.

<sup>31</sup>Temple, *Works*, I. 98.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

itary virtues, is the opinion of divine favor or the appearance of piety. Piety, as it is thought a way to the favor of God and good fortune as it seems either to be an effect of piety or of prudence and courage, produces authority. Also secondarily, splendor of living, observance of obedience, i.e., fealty, and a rich equipage, seem to be the reward of those virtues already mentioned or the effect of good fortune. "From all these Authority arises, but is by nothing so much strengthened and confirmed as by Custom."<sup>33</sup> Temple evidently founds natural political authority partly on prescription, anticipating Burke. Temple differs from Burke in seeing at the origin of civil society not a gradual process of prescription continuing from "time out of mind," but the discrete acts of a founder or founders.

In order to gain new authority and discard the old, revolutionaries are obliged to attain, in public opinion, a reputation for wisdom, goodness, and valor. Thus power must be seized.

This induces a general Change of Opinion, concerning the Person or Party like to be obeyed or followed by the greatest or strongest part of the People. . . . So as in Effect all Government may be esteemed to grow strong or weak, as the general Opinion of these Qualities in those that Govern is seen to lessen or increase.<sup>34</sup>

Power must be seen to follow authority in all civil societies, as a natural law, just as in natural bodies, bodily motions follow those of the mind, the many always pursuing what the few who are trusted begin or advise.

Natural political authority, therefore, is the origin of all regimes among men, and it precedes contract as the chief principle of government, although the principle of contract is established "by the great Writers concerning Politicks and Laws." Here, in his reliance upon the principle of natural political authority, Temple shows his political Epicureanism to be more an ancient than a modern doctrine. For even if men are conceived to come together to agree contractually on any civil constitutions, they do so not as individuals but already as heads of families whom they represent. Thus the origin of natural political authority is the authority of the patriarchal family. In this teaching Temple leans toward Aristotle, according to whom the polity is composed of overgrown families. But Temple does not agree with Aristotle that man is naturally a political animal, and in this shows himself to be a political Epicurean.

Some of them [political theorists] lay for their foundation, that Men are sociable Creatures and naturally disposed to live in Numbers and Troops together. Others, that they are naturally creatures of Prey, and in a State of War one upon another; so as to avoid Confusion in the first Case, and Violence in the other, they found out the Necessity of agreeing upon some Orders and Roles, by which every Man gives up his common Right for some particular Possession, and his Power to hurt and spoil others for the Privilege

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 98–99.

of not being hurt and spoiled himself. And the Agreement upon such Orders, by mutual Contract, with the Consent to execute them by common Strength and Endeavours, they make to be the Rise of all Civil Governments. . . . So that, if Mankind must be ranged to one of these Sorts [i.e., man as a political animal, or man as a warlike beast] I do not know well which it will be. . . . Nor do I know, if Men are like Sheep, why they need any Government: Or, if they are like Wolves, how they can suffer it.<sup>35</sup>

Accordingly, Temple rejects both the *zoon politikon* of Aristotle and the *homo homini lupus* of Hobbes. Men do not come to sight first as antisocial, apolitical individuals, but as members of a family. Temple's rejection of both Aristotle and Hobbes on this point indicates the unique character of his political Epicureanism, although the absolute primacy of the family is not a teaching to be found, for example, in Lucretius. Man, according to Temple, is neither a political nor an antipolitical animal at first, but finds his way into political life through the family more or less as a result of a series of accidents. From the family, the first lawgivers of civil society spring, not by contract, but by the institution or founding of a preeminent man or men. The foundation of natural political authority is thus patriarchal, a doctrine that the Marquis of Halifax told Sir William Temple was taking too far "that Principle of Paternal Dominion . . . for fear of destroying the Rights of the People,"<sup>36</sup> so close to him did it seem to be to the exploded system of Sir Robert Filmer. If Temple retained in his account the residual truth of the Filmerian system, but under careful restraint, he did not do so to discredit the prerogatives of the people, but to vindicate the Gothic constitution, in whose balance he transposed the Restoration constitution. For the patriarchal family provided the model of the Gothic constitution, the patriarch corresponding to the king, the legitimate sons and heirs to the barons or nobility, and the servants to the commons. The patriarchal family continued its own being through "Lesson and Example," forming and propagating primitive moral distinctions and teaching religion by "having Recourse to a higher and a greater Nature" in adversity. Opinion is thus the basis of succeeding patriarchal families, and the patriarch, if long-lived, becomes a *Pater patriae*, the chief of a nation. Temple specifically relates the origin of the ancient British nation to the patriarchal family and its institution of "Deference."

Incidentally, Temple interrupts his political discussion to discuss "the Authority of the Ancients in Matters of Opinion," and finds that it is not clear "why one Age of the World should be wiser than another." For if such a distinction be drawn, it is rather the later ages that could claim superiority since they enjoy more experience "of the more particular Experiments of Life."<sup>37</sup> Here we see clearly that Temple's political Epicureanism belongs more or less to the period of active politics ending in 1680, and that his Epicureanism *tout court* that hails the superiority of the ancients to the moderns in learning only,

<sup>35</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 99.

<sup>36</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 339.

<sup>37</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 101.

develops as a result of Temple's retirement from politics after 1680. This may explain in part why his political Epicureanism does not follow Lucretius very carefully in that Temple, unlike Lucretius, makes the family the primal condition of man. We cannot therefore expect Temple's full philosophical teaching to be present at all points in his life. It is only as a result of further reflection in retirement that Temple supported the Epicurean superiority of the ancients over the moderns in learning.

Returning to Temple's political Epicureanism, we see that Temple traces patriarchal authority throughout all stages of a nation's political growth: "Thus a Family seems to become a little Kingdom, and a Kingdom to be but a great Family."<sup>38</sup> In the third estate Temple sees the role of contract: In the corresponding family structure Temple notes: "What is due to the Servants by Contract, or what is fit for them to enjoy, may be provided."<sup>39</sup> Temple observed how tyranny or despotism is the rule of a harsh, intemperate, willful, and arbitrary patriarch. "And therefor Martial Law is of all others the most absolute, and not like the Government of a Father, but a Master."<sup>40</sup> Riches to gain hired or mercenary soldiers is but "a Support of decayed Authority," for it serves the interest of the governors, instead of the governed, which ought to be the same. Thus Temple derives both despotism and the regime of the rule of law from the patriarchal family, the former seen as its decay and corruption, the latter as its health and strength. But even where mercenary armies are prevalent, the people control the ultimate power, which is their united force of arms. For "common Pay is a faint Principle of Courage and Action, in Comparison of Religion, Liberty, Honour, Revenge or Necessity; which makes every Soldier [of the people] have as much at Heart as their Leaders, and seem to have spirited all the great Actions and Revolutions of the World."<sup>41</sup> James II should have considered these words of Temple's, for in ignoring them, he discovered to his loss that in the breach he had no army.

Temple defines natural right, an important concept, as the right of an eldest son to succeed his father as head of a patriarchal family or state. If the eldest son fails to maintain his natural political authority or else dies before he can succeed and leaves a child in his place, his father's children (now mature) collectively have a natural right to elect a successor. Sometimes, as when the father comes to lose his authority and many of the better sons increase theirs, the regime naturally turns into an aristocracy. But if such a government is contracted into the hands of a few who establish it in their families dynastically, the regime is correctly termed an oligarchy. If the sons and heirs are impoverished and the servants by industry and virtue arrive at riches and esteem, the nature of the government inclines to a democracy or popular state.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 101.

<sup>40</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 102.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*

Pure democracy is inherently unstable of itself and is nearest the condition of confusion or anarchy unless upheld or directed by the natural political authority of one or a few, though this may occur within republican forms without the designation of a king or nobility.

At last, Temple comes to the main problem (which I have suggested inheres in the third estate) of how to account for contract in the formation of regimes, once we have considered natural political authority. As Temple writes: "Governments founded upon Contracts, *may* have succeeded those founded on Authority. . . ." <sup>42</sup> But the model of contract, according to Temple, is not the Hobbesian contract of everyman with everyman in the state of nature, but between princes and subjects already living in civil society and already observing natural political authority. Accordingly, Temple founds contract on natural political authority, not the other way around, as with Hobbes. If natural political authority as a principle represents the teaching of the ancients and contract that of the moderns, Temple appeals always to the more basic, ancient teaching in his reflections on the origin of civil society. Thus he provides a way for his political Epicureanism to develop into his later Epicureanism as such, and shows how his political teaching can eventuate in his later philosophical teaching.

Temple observes, as we have noted, the importance of prescription in the evolution of rights. All custom, with length and force of time, grows to pass for a right. Temple avoids a natural law explanation of rights, and thus tends to be more Burkean than Lockean. He even qualifies the universal foundation of cities by the act of a prince or princes: When families adopt order and laws, they do so as "either invented by the Wisdom of some one, or some few Men; and from the Evidence of their publick Utility received by all; *or else introduced by Experience and Time.*" <sup>43</sup> Commonwealths were nothing more in their origin but free cities, adds Temple, though favorable circumstances have sometimes greatly increased such dominions. Such enlarged free cities "seem to be more Artificial, as those of a single Person the more Natural Government; being forced to supply the Want of Authority by Wise Inventions, Orders and Institutions." <sup>44</sup> The natural political authority of a prince would seem to correspond to what Machiavelli says of an old prince in an old state. One supposes that Temple has in mind here as the historical example of clever institutions the case of Rome.

Popular governments and aristocracies lack authority because the public opinion of those political qualities that inhere in rule can never be as great in several persons as in a single one. Popular governments and aristocracies seem to have been introduced by great legislators like Lycurgus or Solon, but Venice was founded by a confluence of refugees in a different fashion. Equally, the

<sup>42</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 103, emphasis added.

<sup>43</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 104, emphasis added.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

way to popular government is often facilitated by the regime throwing off some former tyranny or disliked form of government. Such popular regimes were Rome after the Tarquins and the United Provinces of the Netherlands after their revolt from Spain. Yet none of these regimes can long subsist without relying on natural political authority, as we see in the ascendancy of Decius Brutus in the former and William of Orange in the latter. Though monarchy is the regime with the most natural political authority, the form of government best for every nation is the one longest accepted and authorized by custom and use, and by means of which the humors and manners of the people find their easiest expression. Temple adds the following consideration: It may be that those are the best governments in which the best men govern. The forms of government are less important than the persons of the governors, "which may be the Sense of what was said of old (taking wise and good Men to be meant by Philosophers) that the best Governments were those where Kings were Philosophers, or Philosophers Kings."<sup>45</sup>

Finally, we come to Temple's discussion of the best method for stabilizing regimes and forestalling political instability. To begin with, Temple compares the best political structure to a pyramid, wide at the base and narrow at the apex. The ground of all government is the consent of the people or the majority of the people, which proceeds from reflection on the past, reverence of natural political authority, a sense of the present ease, plenty and safety, opinion of the future, fear of the present government, and hopes of another. Thus the broadest bottom is a popular majority, and the narrowest top of the pyramid is the authority of a single person. A government that alienates the affections, loses the opinions, and crosses the interests of the people narrows the natural bottom and enlarges the apex, so that stability is impaired and the government is almost certain to fall of itself. Monarchy of the best kind, i.e., where the prince governs by the affections, opinions, and interests of his people, makes more than any other the safest and firmest government. Monarchy of the worst kind, which is of an opposite nature to what we have just described, is the weakest and most unstable of governments. Likewise, a republic, the more it partakes of the general humor and bent of the people and spires up to a head by the authority of some one person, is the best. Conversely, a republic that is not founded on the general humors and interests of the people, but only on those of the governors, is the worst and most unstable.

A regime that is an inverted pyramid may stand for some time in propitious circumstances, but any negligence of the governors or domestic and foreign violence will severely shake it. The success of foreign conquest generally proceeds from the disesteem, dissatisfaction, and indifference of the people, or from their vicious or effeminate nature. Notable examples in history of the strength of well-structured regimes are the Athenian state during the Persian

<sup>45</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 105.

wars, Rome at the time of the Carthaginian wars, Venice's self-defense against the Turks, the recent republics of Switzerland, and others. Examples of the foreign conquest of badly structured regimes are Alexander's conquest of Persia, Rome's conquest of the great Asian and Egyptian kings, the fall of Rome to the barbarians, the conquest of Spain by the Moors, and of the ancient Britons by the Saxons. Temple cites especially the wars of religion in France as unrest caused by narrowing the popular consensus. More recent examples of the fall of badly structured regimes are the English Restoration of 1660 and the Dutch upheaval of 1672. Thus by dwelling on Dutch affairs, Temple concludes his essay with the implication (which is clearer elsewhere) that the English would do well to imitate the Dutch in certain of their policies.

This reflection brings to a close Temple's political teaching proper. Before we turn to his philosophical teaching, it is necessary to consider his statecraft and some implications of his political Epicureanism. A very characteristic aspect of Temple's political Epicureanism is its inherent tolerationism or spirit of toleration. This teaching is presented in Temple's earliest published work, "Observations Upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands." There Temple states in Chapter V, "Of their Religion," that forcible conversion or religious persecution "designs all Mischiefs to a Nation," namely, "Violence, Oppression, Cruelty, Rapine, Intemperance, Injustice, and, in short, the miserable Effusion of Human Blood, and the Confusion of all Laws, Orders, and Virtues among Men." Such, apparently, was the effect of the policy of forcible reconversion to Roman Catholicism, so hated by the Dutch at the hands of Spain. Furthermore, as Temple definitively explains: "Belief is no more in a Man's Power, than his Stature, or his Feature. . . ."46 Our religious beliefs according to Christian teaching are to be ascribed to God's grace and not to our own will, God having predestined some to the correct faith and others to an erroneous one. In either case, the choice of religious belief is not within one's own power. Accordingly, Temple makes a plea for religious toleration of beliefs, perhaps excluding from his scheme only the toleration of the intolerant, or, in his time, of Roman Catholicism.

A Man that tells me, my Opinions [in religious matters] are absurd or ridiculous, impertinent or unreasonable, because they differ from His, seems to intend a Quarrel instead of a Dispute. . . . Yet these are the common Civilities, in Religious Argument, of sufficient and conceited Men, who talk much of Right Reason, and mean always their own; and make their private Imagination the Measure of general Truth. But such Language determines all between us, and the Dispute comes to an end in three Words at last, which it might as well have ended in at first, That he is in the Right and I am in the Wrong.<sup>47</sup>

Mankind agrees upon the worldly end of religion, which is our happiness here and now, and has always supported the virtues that lead to felicity and

<sup>46</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 55.

<sup>47</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 56.

tranquillity in private life as well as the manners and dispositions that lead to the peace, order, and safety of all civil societies. Temple professes not to understand how men could have obtained the reputation of being religious, who “come to put so great a Weight upon those Points of Belief which Men never have agreed in, and so little upon those of Virtue and Morality, in which they have never disagreed.”<sup>48</sup> Temple shows the bias of his political Epicureanism here for, like Locke, and later, Jefferson, in his tolerationism he attenuates the metaphysical and supernatural aspect of Christianity in favor of the moral and civic aspect. This Locke himself does, for example, in *On the Reasonableness of Christianity*. Locke’s Arianism and Socinianism in this work make it clear that at best Locke in his popular teaching is a neo-Christian.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, Jefferson in his Lockean political Epicureanism or hedonism is a neo-Christian.<sup>50</sup> If we are forced to characterize Temple’s religion, we would also say that he was a neo-Christian, like Locke, retaining the moral and civic teaching of the Evangel at the expense of its metaphysical, supernatural teaching.<sup>51</sup>

We now turn to Temple’s statecraft, or the acme of Temple’s statecraft, in his intervention in partisan English politics with his attempt to alter permanently the English constitution. But before we turn to this, it is necessary first to consider the effect of Temple’s advocacy of the Dutch alliance on English domestic politics. Macaulay summed up this result as follows:

The ascendancy of France was inseparably connected with the prevalence of tyranny in domestic affairs. The ascendancy of Holland was as inseparably connected with the prevalence of political liberty and of mutual toleration among Protestant sects.<sup>52</sup>

In this somewhat indirect sense, Temple was a whig, a conservative liberal in the original meaning of being a lover of privacy. The Dutch alliance, for which he strove so long and so well, was a sign that Englishmen could enjoy their own properties at leisure, freed from undue interference in their affairs by the Court.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup>For Locke’s Socinianism, see C. A. Viano, *John Locke: Dal razionalismo all’illuminismo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1960), pp. 370, 376. On Viano, Peter H. Nidditch has this to say: “Viano’s book gives the most broadly erudite and instructive account, and is the most balanced and best organized in its coverage, among existing books on Locke’s thought as a whole.” (John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch [Oxford, 1975], p. ix.)

<sup>50</sup>As for Jefferson’s Epicureanism or political hedonism, we have only to remember the phrase in the Declaration of Independence, “the pursuit of happiness” coupled with Jefferson’s avowal to Adams: “I, too, am an Epicurean” (quoted in Harry V. Jaffa, *The Conditions of Freedom: Essays in Political Philosophy* [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975] at p. 108). Jefferson’s neo-Christianity is expressed in his religious work *The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth*.

<sup>51</sup>Hume writes (*The History of England* [Philadelphia, 1822] IV, 478–79): “The abuses, in the former age, arising from overstrained pretensions to piety had much propagated the spirit of irreligion; and many of the ingenious men, of this period, lie under the imputation of deism. Besides wits and scholars, by profession . . . Halifax [and] Temple are supposed to have adopted these principles.”

<sup>52</sup>Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, III, 186.

We next inquire into the significance of Temple's direct intervention in English domestic politics in his attempt to change the constitution and bring an end to the most severe crisis of the reign of Charles II, the Exclusion Bill crisis of 1679–81. Briefly, the background of this intervention was the following. In the beginning of 1679, in the midst of the Popish plot furor, Temple returned to England at the order of Charles II. The king, buffeted on all sides, especially by the election of a predominantly whig parliament, attempted to persuade Temple to take the post of secretary of state. Temple delayed and demurred at this step, and instead presented the king with a novel plan to avoid further misgovernment and allay the mounting grievances of parliament and people.

Temple's plan was to dissolve the presently existing fifty-member Privy Council and supplant it with a new Privy Council of thirty members, by whose advice alone the king should govern, no longer relying on a small cabinet of more or less secret advisors. Fifteen members of the new council were to be great officers of state, pledged by their immense property holdings to the support of the Crown. The other fifteen were to be equally wealthy independent noblemen and gentlemen of the greatest weight in the country. This plan follows from the structure described by Temple of the Dutch Council of thirty that mediated between the States General and the House of Orange.<sup>53</sup> This attempt, which was in effect a plan to moderate the unstable monarchy with a representative plutocratic aristocracy in the Dutch manner, was really a move to change the English constitution. As Macaulay suggests:

We are strongly inclined to suspect that the appointment of the new Privy Council was really a much more remarkable event than has generally been supposed, and that what Temple had in view was to effect, under colour of a change of administration, a permanent change in the Constitution. . . . Temple's plan was to give the Privy Council something of the constitution of a Parliament. Let the nation see that all the King's measures are directed by a Cabinet composed of representatives of every order in the State, by a Cabinet which contains, not placemen alone, but independent and popular noblemen and gentlemen who have large estates and no salaries, and who are not likely to sacrifice the public welfare in which they have a deep stake, and the credit which they have obtained with the country, to the pleasure of a Court from which they receive nothing.<sup>54</sup>

Temple naturally expected a certain nucleus within the council, of which he was a member, to direct the king's policy. Otherwise, a thirty-member body would be too unwieldy in partisan politics. The intervention of such a body between king and parliament meant, for one thing, that the influence of French money, directed through Charles II to the notables of the kingdom, would no longer have effect. As the French ambassador Barillon objected to Temple's plan: "Ce sont des États [an Assembly of Estates], non des conseils." As for the envisaged role of parliament, according to Temple, it would be only an extraor-

<sup>53</sup>See Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, III, 216.

<sup>54</sup>Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, III, 205–06, 215.

dinary check on the activities of the Crown and would tend to fulfill the kind of position it held during the reign of Elizabeth I. Unfortunately, Temple's scheme completely miscarried; if it had not, there is a likelihood that no revolution settlement would have occurred in 1688. Macaulay commented:

Had this plan, with some modifications, been tried at an earlier period, in a more composed state of the public mind, and by a better sovereign, we are by no means certain that it might not have effected the purpose for which it was designed. . . The perfidious levity of the King and the ambition of the chiefs of parties produced the instant, entire, and irremediable failure of a plan which nothing but firmness, public spirit, and self-denial, on the part of all concerned in it could conduct to a happy issue.<sup>55</sup>

It would hardly be useful, at this juncture, to go into further detail on how the new "Constitution," as Temple called it, happened to fail. The important thing to remember is that it received the initial support of Lord Halifax the "Trimmer," and so was in one sense at least nonpartisan as between whig and tory. This nonpartisanship again reflects something of Temple's political Epicureanism, a quality that links him in some ways to Halifax. Finally, as the last straw in this affair, the king prorogued parliament without even mentioning his intention to the new council, by whose advice he had pledged to conduct the government only a month before. Once again Temple was urged to accept the post of secretary of state, but ultimately to no avail. In the ensuing election for parliament, Temple was chosen member from the University of Cambridge, though there arose some possible objection to him on account of his espousal of tolerationism in his early essay on the Netherlands. In 1680 Temple took his seat for the first and last time in the House of Commons. But he refused to take sides in the Exclusion Bill controversy and absented himself from the House. He soon afterward renounced all public life for good.

Needless to say, Temple's "Constitution" was in full accord with his political teaching proper. Political society is a pyramid, and the altercation between king and parliament meant that there was too little weight near the apex. The creation of a political intermediary between king and parliament would have functioned as a second parliament, while at the same time allowing the monarchy to continue with some stability. Temple's advocacy of a kind of representative aristocracy would have shifted weight toward the top of the pyramid while balancing the whole. It eminently accords with his political teaching proper, especially as prefigured in "Observations," where Temple suggests implicitly that the English should imitate Dutch institutions.

It now remains to consider the Epicureanism *tout court* of Temple's long retirement from public life after 1680. It seems correct to say again that this retirement was principally motivated not only by Temple's philosophical bent, but also by the conspicuous failure of his one and only intervention in English partisan politics. We can also say that whereas Temple's projected revolution

<sup>55</sup>Macaulay, *Critical and Historical Essays*, III, 217, 219.

by administration failed because of its utter nonpartisanship, his friend's and political ally's later revolution in 1688—namely Halifax's—succeeded because it was less nonpartisan in succeeding to unite the aristocracy.<sup>56</sup> At any rate, it is significant that Sir William Temple at least made the attempt.

Returning to Temple's "Heads designed for an essay upon the Different Conditions of Life and Fortune," we find the following Epicurean opinions: "The greatest Advantage Men have by Riches are, to Give, to Build, to Plant, and make pleasant Scenes of which Pictures and Statues make the pleasantest Part"; "A good Man ought to be content, if he have nothing to reproach himself."<sup>57</sup> In addition, Temple never tires here of reiterating that a man never attains happiness unless he has learned to accept death and not fear it. But the chief work that makes Temple not only an Epicurean but also in a sense an ancient is "An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning." Temple rejects the characteristic claims of such moderns as Descartes and Hobbes to have surpassed the ancients in philosophy and political science, but as an Epicurean Temple also does not accept the claim that Plato and Aristotle represent the acme of philosophy and political science as such. That is his problem. As for natural philosophy, Temple even questions Epicurus on this point as well as Plato and Aristotle and all the moderns. An unkind critic might accuse Temple of misology and deliberate obscurantism on this point. But Temple's position here is still recognizably an ancient one—he embraces the view of the ancient skeptics, like Sextus Empiricus: "But all the different Schemes of Nature that have been drawn of old, or of late, by *Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Des Cartes, Hobb[er]s*, or any other that I know of, seem to agree but in one thing, which is the Want of Demonstration or Satisfaction, to any thinking and unpossessed Man. . . ."<sup>58</sup> Temple adds pertinently:

Yet in the Midst of these and many other such Disputes and Contentions in their Natural Philosophy, they seemed to agree much better in their Moral and upon their Enquiries after the Ultimate End of Man, which was his Happiness, their Contentions seem'd to be rather in Words, than in the Sense of their Opinions, or in the true Meaning of their several Authors or Masters of their Sects: All concluded that Happiness was the chief Good, and ought to be the Ultimate End of Man; that as this was the End of Wisdom, so Wisdom was the way to Happiness.<sup>59</sup>

From what follows we can here assume that Temple leaves out the modern philosophers as belonging to such a moral agreement among themselves as the ancient philosophers managed to manifest. He states that the conflict, for example, between the Epicureans and the Stoics was superficial and semantic,

<sup>56</sup>See Parsons, "Halifax: The Complete Trimmer Revisited," pp. 66–94.

<sup>57</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 306, 308.

<sup>58</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 173, emphasis in original. This and the following quotations occur in a work of 1685, "Upon the Gardens of Epicurus."

<sup>59</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 173.

rather than being one of substance. What this argument leads to is a praise of Epicurus as the chief moral philosopher to be credited with truth.

The *Epicureans* were . . . intelligible in their Notion, and fortunate in their Expression, when they placed a Man's Happiness in the Tranquillity of Mind, and Indolence of Body. I have often wondered how such sharp Invectives came to be made so generally against *Epicurus*, by the Ages that followed him, whose Admirable Wit, Felicity of Expression, Excellence of Nature, Sweetness of Conversation, Temperance of Life, and Constancy of Death, made him so beloved by his Friends, admired by his Scholars, and honored by the Athenians.<sup>60</sup>

Temple himself is not concerned about spreading the Epicurean teaching—in this he is nonmodern and non-Christian—for, apparently, Epicurus can take care of himself. “But *Epicurus* has found so great Advocates of his Virtue, as well as Learning and Inventions, that there need no more; and the Testimonies of *Diogenes Laertius* alone seem too sincere and impartial to be disputed or want the Assistance of Modern Authors. . . .”<sup>61</sup> It is evident that Temple does not depend on such modern Epicureans as Gassendi for his own moral doctrine; this is a further reason why Temple is genuinely an ancient.

In “An Essay upon the Ancient and Modern Learning,” Temple advocates the superiority of the ancients in poetry, political science (including ethics), and history. It should be noted that he does not necessarily invoke their superiority in natural science or metaphysics. Temple answers the modern objection that we see farther than the ancients by supposing “ancients” of the East before the Greek ancients, than whom they saw farther. Temple expends much effort to establish this point, which is not very interesting but is necessitated by the argument as he views it. It may be that the ancients are superior to the moderns because they did not always rely, as we do, on learned traditions of the past, but on their own great native abilities. Thus learning was less cluttered in the ancient world and more open to native genius. True, since the ancients there has been in astronomy the Copernican system and in medicine Harvey's discovery of the circulation of the blood, but these have not necessarily led to great changes, especially in the conduct of medicine. Most of the innovations of the modern world are due to the invention of the compass (and gunpowder). Temple even speculates that since the first bloom of the Renaissance 150 years before his time, there has been a certain decay of learning and genius:

So far have we been from improving upon those Advantages we have received from the Knowledge of the Ancients, that since the late Restoration of Learning and Arts among us, our first Flights seem to have been the highest, and a sudden Damp to have fallen upon our Wings, which has hindered us from rising above certain Heights.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 174, emphasis in original.

<sup>61</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 174, emphasis in original.

<sup>62</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 164.

Surely, there is a certain falling off in political philosophy from the undoubted genius of Machiavelli to the more mechanical solutions of the political problem advocated by Hobbes and Locke. That is to say, Temple's view here, if not altogether true across the board, is certainly defensible. (It is not "our" view or the American view because America has its roots in the Enlightenment.)

Next Temple evinces a preference for Greek and Latin over the modern European languages because Latin and Greek are not corruptible like the modern European languages and have no barbarisms in them. Among the eminent modern writers, Temple cites Machiavelli, Cervantes, Rabelais, Montaigne, and Bacon, most of whom belong to the first bloom of the Renaissance. He regards the present writers of France (such as Molière and Racine) to be of lesser stature than Montaigne, for example. A further reason that Temple assigns to the lapse of learning in his time is the quarrels and disputes by the various sects within Christendom and the lack of patronage of learning by great kings and princes. For thinkers and writers, says Temple, honor is or ought to be a much stronger principle than gain. Gain is the pay of common soldiers as honor is of their commanders. Here Temple displays his aristocratic bias, which is in full accord with his preference for the ancients. Finally, it is unsocial pedants who have most made inroads on the commonwealth of modern learning. The reverse of this is the vein of ridiculing everything that prevailed at the court of Charles II and makes it possible, as Temple says, for there to be ministers of state who would rather have said a witty thing than have done a wise one.

Temple concludes his traditionalism with the well-known aphorism of Alfonso the Wise, King of Aragon: "*That among so many Things as are by Men possessed or pursued in the course of their Lives, all the rest are Bawbles, besides Old Wood to burn, Old Wine to drink, Old Friends to converse with, and Old Books to read.*"<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup>Temple, *Works*, I, 169, emphasis in original.