



Vico and Naples: The Urban Origins of Modern Social Theory

Barbara Ann Naddeo

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Vico and Naples is an intellectual portrait of the Neapolitan philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) that reveals the politics and motivations of one of Europe's first scientists of society. According to the commonplaces of the literature on the Neapolitan, Vico was a solitary figure who, at a remove from the political life of his larger community, steeped himself in the recondite debates of classical scholarship to produce his magnum opus, the *New Science*. Barbara Ann Naddeo shows, however, that at the outset of his career Vico was deeply engaged in the often-tumultuous life of his great city and that his experiences of civic crises shaped his inquiry into the origins and development of human society. With its attention to Vico's historical, rhetorical, and jurisprudential texts, this book recovers a Vico who was keenly attuned to the social changes transforming the political culture of his native city. He understood the crisis of the city's corporate social order and described the new social groupings that would shape its future. In Naddeo's pages, Vico comes alive as a prescient judge of his city and the political conundrum of Europe's burgeoning metropolises. He was dedicated to the acknowledgment and juridical remedy of Naples' vexing social divisions and ills. Naddeo also presents biographical vignettes illuminating Vico's role as a Professor of Rhetoric at the University of Naples and his bid for the prestigious Morning Chair of Civil Law, which foundered on the directives of the Habsburgs and the politics of his native city. Rich with period detail, this book is a compelling and vivid reconstruction of Vico's life and times and of the origins of his powerful notion of the social.

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