The aim of Naddeo’s work is to counter the received view of Vico as a thinker whose ideas are independent of the social and political forces in Naples and his own time. This view of Vico as a politically disengaged, even naïve, thinker goes back at least as far as the interpretations of Benedetto Croce and Fausto Nicolini. Naddeo brings to bear an impressive analysis of archival and historical evidence to support her presentation of Vico as an engaged and informed thinker, reacting to the politics of Naples and to rising strains of Enlightenment social theory. She connects Vico’s pedagogical ideas in his university orations to a view of global citizenship based on Roman Stoicism, and she regards Vico’s historical reinterpretation of Roman law in the *Diritto universale* as forming an ideal of the *polis* to place against the Naples of his time. Naddeo views Vico’s interpretation of natural law as “a most sophisticated diagnosis of the wrongs inherent to the metropolitan community that was intended to rally the judiciary to the cause of social justice” (149). Naddeo credits Vico with a novel and early employment of “society” at the advent of modern social theory. Vico used the term only once in his third university oration, but in so doing, it introduced the idea of an all-inclusive collectivity of humanity.

Naddeo’s work is a welcome corrective to the view of Vico as a lone thinker completely out of his own time. It is a view to which Vico himself contributed when in his autobiography he claims he returned to Naples from his years of serving as tutor to the children of the Rocca family south of Naples as “a stranger in his own land” and that even after the publication of his *New Science* he remained quite unnoticed. Naddeo is clear that much of Vico’s presentation of his activity in Naples is not to be taken at face value, at least during the years her study covers. In large measure, Naddeo’s work is an intellectual biography, but one that does not offer any view of Vico’s development up to his appointment at the University. What were the factors in Vico’s early thought and education that led him into these political views? How did Vico pass from the deeply felt Lucretian sentiments of his first published work, the poem “Affetti di un disperato” (1692), to the Stoic conception of global citizenship of Naddeo’s account?

A question the reader may face is whether or not this corrective to the understanding of Vico is an over-corrective. Once Vico’s pedagogical philosophy and philosophy of law as well as his personal motivations and events of his professional career are interpreted solely in political terms, no other forms of explanation may seem significant. Vico comes forth just as a distinctive thinker of his own time and place. But what of the meaning of Vico’s views of human education and human nature as such? What of Vico’s views of the law as part of human wisdom—the knowledge of things divine and human—as such? As a philosopher, like all great philosophers, Vico is in his own time, but not fully of it. What motivates his thought is not simply a political agenda but the attempt to discover the nature and truth of things. It is this dimension of his thought that much accounts for why we keep reading and attempting to penetrate the meaning of his works. This is why Vico remains a figure not only in intellectual history but in the history of philosophy and philosophy itself.

Naddeo’s work gives us a much needed perspective on a fundamental aspect of Vico’s thought leading up to the *New Science*, the one work for which Vico claimed he wished to be remembered. But an understanding of the social and political contexts of Vico’s philosophy does not exhaust the full understanding of his ideas. If taken with this provision, however, the reader of Vico will find Naddeo’s work to be of great benefit.

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Nicholas Phillipson’s biography of Adam Smith was published just forty-five days before the second edition of Ian Simpson Ross’s definitive biography *The Life of Adam Smith* (Oxford, 2010). The contrast is telling. Ross’s is a book for scholars with ubiquitous in-text references...
to recent scholarship. Phillipson’s is a narrative intellectual biography for a wider audience that relegates recent work to the bibliography. Ross is reticent to make claims about Smith’s motivations, but Phillipson thrives on it. Ross is usually explicit when he takes positions on controversial issues, but Phillipson’s interpretations dominate the text. In short, it is easier to see how Ross’s work fits into contemporary debate, but it is easier to see Phillipson’s Smith as a person rather than a project. This last fact makes the latter book quite compelling.

Phillipson does the work of a biographer. He revisits original sources, provides new evidence and insights, and scoops Ross with his publication of a newly discovered portrait of Smith’s mother. The last is fitting, since Phillipson’s book spends significantly more time on their relationship than Ross’s does, suggesting that Smith’s mother’s death, more than his health and work schedule, was the likely reason that he did not continue publishing new work in the last years of his life. This is not anachronistic. Phillipson is heavily concerned with the relationships that sustained Smith and the cultural pressures that prodded over social obstacles like his hostile relationship with Samuel Johnson and his notorious temper. His long-standing feud with Adam Ferguson, his accusing Ferguson of plagiarism, and their reconciliation on his deathbed are completely ignored, but Smith’s success as a university administrator and mentor is not. In other words, Smith’s edges are smoother in Phillipson’s more popular, more readable work: the Scottish philosopher is destined for success and he deserves it all.

Phillipson presents Smith as a systematic philosopher \textit{par excellence} without any hint that some reject this approach. Thankfully, there is not a single mention of the Adam Smith Problem that plagues Smith studies today. Instead, we watch Smith develop a theory of language that forms the foundation of the rest of his work (71), and both his student lectures and books are presented as fully integrated into an overarching political, moral, and aesthetic theory (6, 101, 106). Phillipson also controversially describes Smith as Hume’s successor and equal. Smith was a “perfect Humean” to whom the elder philosopher was “ready to hand over the problem” of the science of man because it was “now as complete as it would ever be” (71, 141; see also 89, 206). Hume “provided the philosophical resources Smith needed to develop a theory” (237), but, Phillipson is clear, Smith was not derivative or unoriginal. Smith’s work was at a “distance” from Hume’s and their disagreements are discussed (116). In fact, Phillipson refers to \textit{The Wealth of Nations} as “the greatest and most enduring monument of the Scottish Enlightenment” (237), a claim some Hume scholars would take issue with.

Phillipson navigates well the tension between the Stoic and natural law interpretations of Smith (20–21, 43–47), highlights the tension between Kirk and university that commentators like Alasdair MacIntyre and Arthur Herman polemically ignore (29, 31, 33, 83–84), and emphasizes that Kirkaldy and Glasgow served as laboratories for Smith’s economics. Phillipson adroitly moderates Rousseau’s influence on Smith while still recognizing its importance, and even contrasts his own biographical approach to Stewarts’s first comments on Smith’s life (276). Overall, the book is nicely done.

It does have some shortcomings. Phillipson makes Smith to be more of a skeptic than is generally recognized and presents little evidence for this opinion. He treats Smith’s alleged atheism as a foregone conclusion, and his discussion of Smith’s essay on the history of astronomy is mistakenly relegated to the last two pages of the book (283–84); some scholars suggest that this essay is as foundational as Phillipson sees Smith’s work on language. Also, given the attention Phillipson pays to education, he might not have wanted to claim that “the only positive role that the sovereign might possibly play in the provision of popular education” is providing “public diversions” (234). Recent work on Smith has put this interpretation into serious doubt. Nevertheless, these are scholarly debates and none of Phillipson’s conclusions lead the less informed reader too far astray.

Phillipson compliments and cites Ross in his work; Ross, in this latest edition, thanks Phillipson for sending him two early drafts of his book. It would therefore be wrong to
describe the two as in competition when they have clearly shared in a division of labor. Whatever the case, Phillipson’s book is an excellent addition to the field that will reach an audience Ross’s will not. Smith scholars will want to read them both.

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This book promises to tell “the untold story of the principal historical path from Isaac Newton to Albert Einstein” (xii). It is an ambitious promise. In explaining the influence of Reid’s philosophy on how Scottish scientists addressed phenomena such as light, heat, electricity, etc., Wilson addresses the exquisitely “Scottish” flavor of the contributions of Joseph Black, John Anderson, John Robinson, Dugald Stewart, Joseph Boscovich, and several others. While the alleged goal is projected toward late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century discoveries, the discussion never loses sight of its historical context, by stressing the importance of theological consideration in scientific arguments (e.g. Robinson’s critique of Laplacian mechanics as an “atheistic perversion” of Newtonian gravity), and by tracing the influence of past philosophers on Scottish eighteenth-century science.

Wilson begins with a survey of major seventeenth-century philosophers, from Descartes to Leibniz, who influenced later developments. But some of his remarks are problematic. For example, he asserts that in Descartes’ discussion of empty space, “the implication was that even God could not conceive of void space” (11–12). Considering Descartes’ attitude toward divine omnipotence, and his position that God created “necessary truths” (e.g. in his correspondence with Mersenne), at the very least this claim needs to be argued for, rather than simply stated.

Likewise, Wilson’s attempt to trace each scientist’s attitude to a major figure from the past is not always successful. For example, in chapter 4 Wilson argues, persuasively, that Reidian epistemology influenced Robinson’s attitudes toward certain hypotheses. But then he claims that Black “represented the realism of Newton’s Query 31,” as opposed to Robinson’s “Reidian skepticism” (157). This claim is puzzling. Wilson nicely explains how Query 31 of Newton’s Opticks, with its defense of the notion of real attractive and repulsive forces and its sections on scientific reasoning, influenced Black. Wilson also shows that Robinson was somewhat critical of Newton. But the disagreements discussed do not concern issues of realism versus skepticism. Wilson himself shows that Robinson agreed with some of Black’s realist positions. In fact, Wilson writes that Robinson approved of Newton’s notion of attraction, which is argued for extensively in Newton’s Query 31.

One of the most important debates discussed by Wilson concerns the nature of heat and light. After Newton, scientists were supposed to avoid “wild hypotheses,” for fear of being derided as Descartes was for his theory of vortices. Merely describing experienced regularities, however, rather than finding explanatory causes, seemed insufficient. Wilson emphasizes Reid’s influence in restoring the epistemic status of inductive experimental knowledge in a post-Humean world, and shows the ambivalence of post-Reidian scientists toward hypotheses. A good example is his chapter 4 discussion of Robinson’s attitude toward heat. After rejecting the two main alternatives (heat as vibratory motion of the particles of bodies, and heat as a fluid whose particles are in continual vibratory motion) because both are inconsistent with experimental evidence, Robinson recommends considering heat as a “cause” in the “constant conjunction” sense, because its nature and mechanism are not known. However, Wilson quotes passages from notebooks in which Robinson endorses a form of the fluid theory of heat. Robinson also approved of Stahl’s phlogiston theory, and agreed with Black’s “negative weight” solution to the problem that bodies gain weight when