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# PHILOSOPHICAL REVOLUTION AND THE SHAPING OF EUROPEAN CONSCIOUSNESS: BERTRANDO SPAVENTA'S LA FILOSOFIA ITALIANA NELLE SUE RELAZIONI CON LA FILOSOFIA EUROPEA

#### abstract

The relevance that Bertrando Spaventa gave to the role of philosophy in the construction of a moral and political Italian consciousness and, more in general, of a European one, is still useful to reflect on the relationship between philosophy and the future of Europe. In this paper I reviewed Spaventa's work La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni con la filosofia europea (1862), where the author recognized how important it was to rekindle in Italian citizens the ancient idea of moral liberty, conceptualized during the Renaissance, in order to provide the political input for the creation of Italians.

keywords

Bertrando Spaventa, Risorgimento, Civic Consciousness, Renaissance, European Identity

In his *History of the idea of Europe* (Chabod 2007), Federico Chabod underlines the influence of the moral dimension of the idea of Europe, both as a myth and as a historical conception, pointing out that the revolutionary tendencies of the 19<sup>th</sup> century contributed to link the idea of Europe with that of liberty and modernity. He analyzes how the idea of the *moral characteristic* of Europe, as the land of political liberty, interacted with the concept of *Nation* and *Religious sentiment* during the Italian Risorgimento, and focuses especially on Mazzini's and Gioberti's thought. Chabod, in my opinion, has forgotten the most pertinent and original interpretation, which was elaborated by one of the most neglected political thinkers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Bertrando Spaventa (1817-1883), who was, along with Francesco De Sanctis (1817-1883), a representative of the Italian Hegelian school.<sup>1</sup> Spaventa elaborated a particular interpretation of the Renaissance's philosophy as the core of the European philosophical revolution: in this work I first analyze Spaventa's understanding of the philosophy of the Renaissance and his *theory of the circulation of ideas* and then I consider how this interpretation influenced his theory of the State, differentiating it from Hegel's.

1. The Renaissance in Italian and European historiography of 19<sup>th</sup> century Recent critical studies on Risorgimento, both Italian and Anglophone, have completely neglected the relevant role of Italian Hegelians in the process of national political and cultural emancipation.<sup>2</sup> These works also fail to recognize the importance of interpretation of the Renaissance in order to understand the reconstruction of national history, which affected in a relevant way the formulation of the concept of nationality. I believe that it is not a case that the two topics are both missing in the recent studies, properly because they are strictly connected: thanks to authors such as Spaventa the principle of moral liberty elaborated by Italian philosophy of Renaissance, became the modern ideal to pursue in order to obtain

<sup>1</sup> For the most influential interpretation of Spaventa see the works of Giovanni Gentile (G. Gentile 1957; G. Gentile 1972). The only opponent to Gentile's interpretation during the postwar period was Felice Alderisio (Alderisio 1940). Within the studies influenced by the Marxist approach see Berti 1954; Landucci 1963; Arfé 1952. During the Sixteens Gentile's interpretation was proposed again by Italo Cubeddu (Cubeddu 1964), while the Marxist approach was presented again by Giuseppe Vacca (Vacca 1969; Vacca 1967). For recent critical studies, which criticized these interpretations that offered a homogenous and uniform understanding of Spaventa's thought see Garin 2007; Savorelli 1983; L. Gentile 2000; Gallo 2012.

<sup>2</sup> See for example Banti 2009; Patriarca 2010; Riall 2007; Duggan 2007.

## political freedom.<sup>3</sup>

On the contrary it is interesting to note that literature on the interpretations of the Renaissance during the 19<sup>th</sup> century highlights a widespread negative understanding of that period, which was considered as a pre-modern cultural movement, both in Italian and in European historiography, due to the lack in Italy of political liberty and the absence of the Protestant Reformation, which was conceived as the real beginning of the modern European spirit.<sup>4</sup> For example Hegel's interpretation of modernity, defined in the Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte (Hegel 1840), which was widely known all over Europe, maintains that European modernity begins with the Protestant Reformation and he excludes Catholic countries from the new idea of political liberty, because they did not go through religious reformation. The Calvinist François Guizot, in his course Histoire de la civilization en France (Guizot 1828), also argued that Italy, like other Catholic countries, could not know modernity and progress because they have no experience of the Protestant Reformation and its liberating consequences. The Genevean Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde Sismondi (Sismondi 1840) considers the origins of the Renaissance in the life of the Italian comuni, where individual virtues were developed, but the nation did not evolve with those virtues, because of the absence of the Reformation. So, despite their differences, some of the most influential authors of the time considered the Reformation as the beginning of modernity. However, this interpretation excluded from that process the countries where the Reformation was not widely felt.

During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the narration of another interpretation of modernity began to be spread: thanks to the work of Burckhardt *Die Kultur der Renaissance in Italien* (Burckhardt 1860) and the analysis of Italian Hegelians, such as Bertrando Spaventa, Francesco De Sanctis and Francesco Fiorentino,<sup>5</sup> the Italian Renaissance was considered as another focus of European modernity. The Reformation and the Renaissance were not only two historical concepts, but also two geographical notions, because the modernity founded on the Protestant Reformation was a phenomenon attributed especially to the countries of northern Europe, while the Renaissance was particularly an Italian phenomenon. The European culture considers the Renaissance as a pre-modern cultural movement because of the absence of any religious reformation, on the other hand the majority of the patriots of the Risorgimento also have a negative understanding of the period due to the lack of political liberty and the absence of unity and independence of the nation. In that sense it is true that the political aspirations of the Risorgimento affected most of the interpretations of the Renaissance during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> For instance, one of the most important political leaders of the Risorgimento, Cesare Balbo gives a negative interpretation of the Renaissance in 1844

<sup>3</sup> For a general understanding of "Neapolitan Hegelianism" within the context of Risorgimento see some of the most important studies such as Garin 1997; Oldrini 1973; Oldrini 1964; Tessitore 1972; Piovani 2006; Landucci 1965.
4 On the interpretations of the concept of Renaissance in the 19th century see for example Croce 1939; Russo 1983;

Canone 1998; Tessitore 2002; Buck and Vasoli 1989.

<sup>5</sup> Francesco Fiorentino's thought cannot be easily attributed to a specific philosophical school: he was first influenced by Gioberti's thought and then he approached Spaventa's philosophy, furthermore he was also fascinated by German neokantism. Literature has defined him as a "neokantian" (G. Gentile 1957), a "positivist" (Mondolfo 1935), or a "philosopher of the third school" (Berti 1954). It is indeed interesting to note that the same author, Giovanni Gentile, described Fiorentino's thought first as neokantian and then as one of the most important representative thinker of the Italian Hegelianism. In this work I refer to the period of the influence of Spaventa on Fiorentino's thought and for this reason I define him as an Hegelian. For a general understanding on the different interpretations of Fiorentino's thought see Manieri 2006; Savorelli 2005; Cacciapuoti 1998.

<sup>6</sup> As Croce maintains "La passione del Risorgimento [...] sorpassando e non curando di affisare le reali condizioni degli spiriti del cinquecento, tessé sugli eventi di allora romanzi e drammi e poemi nei quali adombrò i propri ideali, e allo stesso modo ne compose le storie" (Croce 1939, p. 2).

because of the absence of political liberty and the foreign invasions (Balbo 1962, 258–259). The most influential philosopher of the Risorgimento, Vincenzo Gioberti, also has a negative attitude to the Renaissance because of his catholic morality and he justifies, in a certain way, the persecution of the time of scandals and promiscuity. Of course he is persuaded that these problems were aggravated by the absence of national unity and independence. So the moderate and catholic Italian culture did not consider the Renaissance as the origin of Italian Modernity, nor as a period of cultural brightness. It is interesting to note that within the democratic and progressive area things were not very different. The patriot and political leader Giuseppe Mazzini maintains that from a moral, political and civil perspective the Renaissance has to be considered infertile for Italy because of the absence of political liberty and the diffusion of tyranny, while the Reformation was an advantageous renovation (Mazzini 1906, XXI, p. 347). Also the republican Giuseppe Ferrari highlights the problem, during the Renaissance, of political division and foreign invasions, and criticizes an epoch which was focused only on the arts and aesthetic life (Ferrari 1854, p. 3).

2. Spaventa's concept of philosophical revolution I argue that the interpretation of Spaventa conceived, differently from the rest of patriots and intellectuals of the Risorgimento, a positive meaning of Renaissance, which identifies that period with the beginning of Italian modernity. He insisted on the philosophical meaning of the Renaissance as the affirmation of the immanence of the divine nature in human nature, of the dignity and sanctity of the individual, of the autonomy of consciousness and moral liberty against all moral and political authorities. So it represents the demand of the autonomy of Italian modernity. Spaventa maintains that this principle is the base of the modern philosophical revolution, which defines the autonomy of consciousness as the foundation of moral and political life.

The relevance that Spaventa gave to the role of philosophy in the construction of a moral and political Italian consciousness and, more in general, of a European consciousness, is interesting if we want to reflect on the relationship between philosophy and the future of Europe. In his works, the Hegelian thinker usually refers to an invisible revolution that is a philosophical revolution, which aims to attain moral and political liberty. He is perfectly conscious that there is a *visible revolution*, that is the political one, which can return Italy to being a free and independent nation, and an *invisible revolution*, which is the cultural and philosophical one, that is probably even more necessary in Italy, in order to maintain political liberty; indeed, he wrote:

I'm not so out of the world as to believe that Italy should chase away the Austrian, the Pope, the King of Naples, the grand duke and the dukes, and become really free, by resorting only to speculative formulas, nor do I believe that the future war will be fought by troops of philosophers. I believe, more than the others, in the power of the arquebus, cannons and guns [...] but even if weapons are essential and powerful, it doesn't mean that ideas are ineffective and otiose. If arms are something in a national revolution, also the spirit and the mind are surely not a platitude. [...] If weapons are capable of destroying and, according to others, also of preserving States, the real unity of a nation, the liberty and greatness of a people is attained only through great ideas. Within these ideas philosophy is not the last, especially in Italy, where [...] an interior connection is needed in order to make the ancient character of the nation flourish once more (Spaventa 2009, p. 2392).

According to Spaventa the most important revolution is the invisible one, which is based on the ideas of the dignity and sanctity of the individual and of the autonomy of consciousness:

these ideas were received and developed by the modern European philosophy and this is the reason why he refers to a European philosophical revolution. Spaventa describes this revolution in his work *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni con la filosofia europea* (Spaventa 2003), where he elaborates his *theory of the circulation of ideas*, based on his interpretation of Renaissance's philosophy.

In this work, published in 1862, Spaventa collected the results of his studies on the philosophy of the Renaissance accomplished during his exile in Turin (1850-1859), where he maintained that the new idea of liberty that emerged from Giordano Bruno's works was a change that was much deeper than the Protestant Reformation, because it was not only a religious reform but also a philosophical and political revolution. He recognized how important it was to rekindle in Italian citizens the ancient idea of moral liberty which was conceptualized during the Renaissance. In particular, the idea of moral liberty, which emerges from Spaventa's interpretation of Bruno, was to provide the political input for the *creation* of Italians. Indeed Spaventa maintained that Bruno's idea of the fundamental principle of Christianity as the union of infinite divine nature and finite human nature implies that every human being has an inestimable value and dignity and that his conscience is untouchable by any authority. Spaventa insisted that this concept of moral liberty was the only viable idea to bring about the cultural and moral revolution that the Italian people needed in order to achieve political union.

Spaventa states that Bruno's idea was even more radical than the Reformation's idea of moral liberty and that the Renaissance was the "Italian version of the Protestant Reformation". He also demonstrates that the philosophical Italian revolution of the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> century affirmed the principle of the infinite reality of God, that is God's immanence, and liberty of thought. Bruno's idea of moral liberty is based on the belief that a human being has an infinite value. For Spaventa the new principle of modernity expressed by Bruno is the divine command: do not persecute people for their thoughts and their works, for their ideas and their words, let them be the owners of their consciousness. Bruno's thinking maintains the same principle as the Reformation, that is the absence of mediation between God and humans, and this was the principle that produced liberty of religion. The main character of the modern revolution, which the author called Modernity, was Giordano Bruno and for this reason Spaventa began a fruitful season of studies on his thought, in order to demonstrate that "by burning Bruno, Catholic Rome renounced modern life" (Spaventa 1995, I, p. 98). The other important philosopher of the Renaissance that Spaventa rediscovered was Tommaso Campanella, who, like Bruno, was a victim of persecution: while Bruno was burned because of his ideas, Campanella spent twenty-seven years of his life in jail. According to Spaventa, Campanella's thinking is divided between the Middle Ages and Modernity, or rather between magic and science. The modern aspect of Campanella's philosophy is the identification of the value of the senses and experience. This establishes the principle of the self-consciousness and the spontaneous activity of the spirit. Through this identification, Campanella lays as the first principle the subjectivity anticipating, according to Spaventa, Descartes' philosophical revolution which based modern philosophy on the autonomy of consciousness. Spaventa's study of Campanella and Bruno should not be considered for its historiographical accuracy nor for the methodology employed, which is based on the typical 19<sup>th</sup> century view of the philosophy of history, but it must be rather understood as part of his philosophical and political commitment. It was really important to Spaventa to recognize the same two principles – the autonomy of consciousness and the infinite value of human dignity – in the Renaissance and in the Reformation. These principles indeed allowed Italy to participate in the general philosophical European modernity.

## 3. Spaventa's theory

of the circulation of ideas In Spaventa's analysis, the cause of the end of the revolutionary cultural process in Italy was the Counter-Reformation, which was the power that prevented the moral and political Italian emancipation during the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Spaventa identified the Catholic Church as the cause of Italian moral and political decadence in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and recognized in its temporal power the first enemy of Italian emancipation of the time. On the other hand he recognizes religion as a form of the absolute spirit, the same role that Hegel identified. This contrast between his consideration of the Catholic Church and the concept of religion as a form of the absolute spirit, is caused by the difference he identifies between the revealed religion and the religious sentiment: while the religious sentiment is the idea of freedom based on the interior moral life and the autonomy of consciousness (Spaventa 2008b, p. 171), a specific religious form is an exterior cult, dogmatic and static. Therefore the first important consequence of Spaventa's study about Italian 16<sup>th</sup> century philosophy is the inclusion of Italy in the modern philosophical revolution, that is properly the autonomy of human consciousness implied in the conception of the unity of divine and human nature, because through this cultural programme he returns Italian philosophy as a full member of the European cultural milieu. This is the objective of Spaventa's theory of circulation of ideas, which states that modern philosophy, which began in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, "is no longer either British, nor French, nor Italian, nor German, but European" (Spaventa 2003, p. 8), and he describes that philosophical revolution. Spaventa's theory is founded on the firm belief that the modern philosophical revolution could be understood and interpreted only if it is conceived of as European, and no longer connected to the different cultural national traditions. In his essay, the author formulates a sort of Begriffsgeschichte of the concept of modern philosophical revolution and he connects Italian and European philosophy to produce a civic consciousness. Spaventa relates the philosophy of Bruno to Spinoza's thought in order to demonstrate how, despite the obvious differences, their metaphysical scheme was the same, and therefore Bruno can be considered the precursor of Spinozism.

More generally, the theory of the circulation of ideas is based on the analysis of the history of philosophy through the category of *forerunner*. Through this thesis, Spaventa identifies on the one hand the developments of the work of Descartes and Spinoza in the fundamental principles enucleated by Bruno and Campanella (the observation of nature and the autonomy of thought); on the other hand, the forerunner of the Kantian revolution in the New Science of Vico. Vico, however, is the last pioneer of Italian thought: Vico's belief, that is "a metaphysic of human mind, which proceeds on the history of human ideas" (Spaventa 2008a), will be embraced in "the free lands" where the thought will migrate, such as Germany. Kant is the founder of what Spaventa calls Metaphysics of the Mind: a new metaphysics that is based on Vico's concept of the unity of the spirit, in which the relationship between the natural and the human world is a "development as autogenesis" (Kant's synthetic a priori judgment). By tracing this itinerary of development of the history of philosophy, Spaventa does not lose sight of the ultimate goal: to demonstrate that the greatness of the national past has not completely disappeared in contemporary Italy. He is persuaded that Italians would have really understood the modern revolution of thought, and its implications, if they had only been able to filter it through a national contemporary philosophy. He needed to unite the philosophy of the Renaissance to present Italian thought and he is aware that the connection between Vico and Galluppi, Rosmini and Gioberti is Kant's synthetic a priori judgment. To understand Italian contemporary philosophy, Spaventa believes it is necessary to identify the role of Kant in European philosophy. He is convinced that, in the dimension of thought, a more intimate and deeper revolution than the French Revolution in 1789 took place in Germany. The author of this revolution was the Critique of Kant, which was so effective as to orient the new speculative mind. Spaventa's analysis of Kantian philosophy aims to show how the seeds of the

fundamental categories of German classical philosophy were already present in the criticism, which is, on the one hand, "the historical negation" (Spaventa 2003, p. 122) of intellectualism and empiricism, on the other hand the opening of German idealism, especially through the concept of the synthetic unity of opposites.

The second part of the theory of the circulation of ideas deals with the analysis of Galluppi, Rosmini and Gioberti's philosophy, with the intent to prove the convergence of their thoughts with the results of the European one and, in particular, with German classical philosophy. Spaventa gives the three Italian philosophers a prominent place in the *stations* of modern philosophy: he brings both Galluppi and Rosmini nearer to Kant, and Gioberti to Hegel, because he identifies in the definition of the spirit the new problem of modern philosophy. In this way, he tries to build a connection between the most important philosophical traditions for him: the philosophy of the Renaissance and German Idealism.

Defining this *excursus* of Italian philosophy, he defines Bruno as the pioneer of Spinoza, Campanella as the one of Cartesio and Giambattista Vico of Immanuel Kant. It might seem that Spaventa is proposing a *primato*, a supremacy, of Italian thought, alternative to the one of Gioberti, which was founded on the Catholic religion (Gioberti 1920), but it would be just a superficial analysis. Indeed he tries to demonstrate that the founding principle of the modern philosophical revolution was born in Italy but he immediately puts that concept into relief with European thought and he denounces the narrow-mindedness, backwardness and isolation of Italian culture. Furthermore he affirms that the Italian philosophical revolution was halted in Italy by the Counter-Reformation, through the torturing of Campanella and the sentencing of Bruno to the stake. So the modern revolution migrated to free foreign countries, where it flourished.

The *theory of the circulation of ideas* occupied a central place in the interpretation of Spaventa's philosophy. By changing the historiographical paradigm, however, the category of *forerunner*, as well as the philosophy of history as historiographical approach, became obsolete and the Hegelian philosopher became less interesting. However, I maintain that there is a deeper meaning of the *theory of circulation of ideas*: Spaventa synthesizes the categories required for the development of a philosophy of law capable of founding the construction of the nation-State and to go beyond the historical event of the unit.

I argue that the consequence of the theoretical turning point of the theory of the circulation of ideas is the analysis of Hegel's Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts, which Spaventa exposed in the course he taught at the University of Naples during the academic year 1862-1863 (Gallo 2011), and he only published it in 1869 with the title *Studii* sull'etica di Heael<sup>7</sup> (Spaventa 2007). This publication, indeed, coincides exactly with the Manuscript of his lectures: the backdating of Spaventa's studies on Hegel's ethics offers a new key of interpretation which related the thesis of the circulation of ideas and the philosophy of law both because they were formulated in the same years and because they have several features in common. For instance in his analysis of Italian philosophy, Spaventa identifies the new concept of modern philosophy in the synthetic *a priori* judgment, which is based on the phenomenological process of the dialectic, that is the basis of Hegel's philosophy of right. In fact, the ethical subject is the one who has made the transition from consciousness to the spirit as *mind*, which is the last stage reached in the analysis of his philosophy of history. The term *mind* refers to the infinite power of knowledge, the infinite dignity of human being, that is the principle tracked by 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian philosophy and that appears again as the basis of the moral world, because the "ethical subject" is one capable of this awareness.

4.

From the theory of the circulation of ideas to the State's theory

<sup>7</sup> Gentile changes the name of the book in *Principi di etica* for Spaventa's free critic towards the Hegelian model.

In the *Studii sull'etica di Hegel* Spaventa re-elaborates the Hegelian philosophy of law through his philosophical and political position. Unlike the philosopher of Stuttgart, he relates the philosophy of Italian Renaissance with the themes of modern German philosophy, thus demonstrating a deep stretch of originality both in the philosophy of law and in the philosophy of history. Through the conception of the subject as a free activity that can produce the object, and thanks to the logical categories of a synthetic unity *a priori*, Spaventa interprets the history of philosophy as a philosophy of history. Spaventa's interpretation of Renaissance's philosophy clarifies also how his political thought is different from Hegel's and proves the importance of the individuality towards the State. This difference derives especially from the relevance that Spaventa gives to the concept of human dignity and moral liberty: one of the most important differences between Spaventa and Hegel is, indeed, their position on the death penalty.

Spaventa doesn't acknowledge the possibility of the death penalty and life sentence because they contrast with the principle of human dignity elaborated during the Renaissance. Indeed the concept of penalty is based on the assumption that the criminal has a moral interior life and a definitive or permanent sentence is in contrast with this idea. Accepting this kind of penalty means accepting the idea that there are some people incapable of a moral life, so incapable of humanity. Instead Hegel believed in the death penalty and in his *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (§ 100) he criticizes Beccaria's stand against the death penalty:

It is well known that Beccaria questioned the right of the state to impose capital punishment, on the grounds that it could not be presumed that the social contract included the consent of individuals to allow themselves to be killed, and that we ought rather to assume the contrary. But the state is by no means a contract, and its substantial essence does not consist unconditionally in the *protection* and *safeguarding* of the lives and property of individuals as such. The state is rather that higher instance which may even itself lay claim to the lives and property of individuals and require their sacrifice (Hegel 1991, p. 126).

Even if Spaventa, like Hegel, doesn't consider the State as the product of a contract, he rejects the death penalty properly interpreting Hegelian logic through 16<sup>th</sup> century Italian philosophy. Spaventa underlines more than Hegel the importance of the single individual: he maintains that citizens depend on the community and that the community depends from citizens. The community exists only if citizens recognize its laws. The mission of the community is to educate individuals to be "citizens of a State with good laws" (Hegel 1991, p. 196), which guarantee people's security and common freedom. On the other hand he underlines that one of the most important characteristics of a modern State is that "the particular interest of citizens must not be put apart or suppressed" (Hegel 1991, p. 283). Like Hegel, Spaventa takes into account the problem of political power within constitutional guarantees, but he stresses more than Hegel that the interior moral life of the citizens is necessary to support political liberty. He maintains that constitutional guarantees can exist until citizens develop the idea of moral liberty as defined by the philosophers of Italian modern revolution. Indeed the Constitution is not simply an exterior artificial form of the organization of the State, which "we can adapt to a State as we can with a dress or a shirt" (Spaventa 2007, p. 161). The Constitution reflects the moral life of the people, which Spaventa identifies in the specific concept elaborated by Bruno. This is, for Spaventa, the kind of legitimization of political power that the modern State requires. Spaventa is also contrary to the idea that only the king, by birthright, can represent the State. Even if he was a monarchist, he maintains that the State can be represented by a king, a president or a committee: "the solution until now was a

constitutional and representative monarchy. Now it's also a republic or a pure democracy, and these also are good solutions" (Spaventa 2007, p. 160). The source of the difference between Hegel and Spaventa is, therefore, the interpretation of the modern philosophical revolution. Spaventa's interpretation underlines that every human being has an infinite value and dignity and that no political authority can constrain human conscience. Accordingly, he reinforces the role of the individual in relation to the State.

Spaventa was convinced of the close link between philosophy and revolution, and he believed that philosophy "must guide the process of national unity and the creation of the national State" (Spaventa 2008c, p. 18). Philosophy only could guarantee to the Italian people not to be separate from other European people because they are connected by the concept of the modern philosophical revolution. Spaventa's *theory of the circulation of ideas* is the description of the European philosophical revolution, and that idea allows Spaventa to theorize a particular concept of the State. While Hegel has always considered modernity as the time of the Reformation, Spaventa defines it as the concept of the European philosophical revolution and he is persuaded that this modern philosophical revolution is needed, especially in Italy because, as he wrote:

More than the Germans and the English, we Italians need an inner moral, religious, scientific and philosophical freedom in order to be free politically, externally, out in the open. We need this, because we have, in our home, the greatest enemy, the enemy of free spirit, an infallible spiritual authority (Spaventa 1972).

The solution offered by Spaventa to the Italian moral, philosophical and political problem is the European cultural and philosophical revolution. The importance and the role of philosophy recognized by intellectuals like Spaventa shows us a direction to follow also nowadays, reconsidering the role of philosophy in the building of a European civic consciousness.

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