

Hegelians on the Slopes of Vesuvius:

A Transnational Study in the Intellectual History of Naples, 1799-1861

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I, Alessandro De Arcangelis, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Making Italy understand Hegel would mean regenerating the country. I, for myself, believe that should you begin, you will witness elements of a new life, which you were not expecting, emerging along the way.

- Pasquale Villari, *Lettera a Bertrando Spaventa*, 1850

If philosophy is not a mere intellectual exercise driven by vanity, but that true form of human life in which all earlier moments of spirit are epitomised and find their true meaning, it is natural to think that a true people may recognise and acquire true consciousness of itself when looking at its philosophers. Where this acknowledgment is missing, foreign importation is useless; this is because consciousness of oneself is not a commodity, which can be bought, should it be missing; it is consciousness of our true selves, our *true* selves.

- Bertrando Spaventa, *Della nazionalità della filosofia*, 1861

Vesuvius, are you a ghost, or the symbols of light, or a fantasy host?
In your breast, I carry the form, the heart of the Earth and the weapons of warmth.

- Sufjan Stevens, *Vesuvius*, 2010

Abstract

This thesis examines the reception, circulation and revision of Hegel's thought, most notably his philosophy of history, in Neapolitan intellectual history during the Risorgimento, approached from a transnational perspective. In particular, attention will focus on five inter-related themes: (i) the complex set of intellectual exchanges and encounters enabling the penetration and popularisation of Hegel's philosophy in Naples; (ii) the ongoing revision, taking place during the early decades of the nineteenth century, of Giambattista Vico's historicism via debates that ultimately deployed an image of the Neapolitan thinker as a theorist of historical time, on the one hand, and the proponent of an idealist account of it, on the other; (iii) the amalgamation of a Hegelian notion of absolute historical development and Vichian historicism taking place in the southern capital's private schools of philosophy, enabling historians to view Neapolitan Hegelianism as the result of a broad transnational encounter, yet closely rooted in local contexts and debates; (iv) the ways in which, in response to ongoing experiences of political change, most notably the 1848 Revolution and the emancipation of the Italian peninsula, Neapolitan Hegelianism was systematically deployed in support of – and in opposition to – different strands of Risorgimento political thought: it came to support, in fact, a form of democratic constitutionalism reminiscent of the Jacobin ideas informing the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799, in direct opposition to moderate Piedmontese liberalism; and (v) the shaping of a transnational cosmopolitan sensitivity among Neapolitan Hegelians, ultimately merging the political ambitions connected with the emancipation and unification of Italy with the negotiation of a vantage point for the country in the intellectual and philosophical lives of modern European nations.

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INTRODUCTION

i. Hegelians on the Slopes of Vesuvius

This thesis examines the reception, circulation and revision of Hegel's thought, most notably his philosophy of history, in Neapolitan intellectual history during the Risorgimento, approached from a transnational perspective. How these issues are addressed in the individual chapters of this thesis is identified in section four of this introduction.

During the nineteenth century, the southern Italian city of Naples, capital of the Kingdom of Naples until 1816 and of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies until 1861, could pride itself on having a cultural, artistic and philosophical landscape able to compete with – and, in many respects, outdo – most other European capitals. Especially within the realm of philosophical speculation, Neapolitan intellectuals managed to produce truly remarkable innovations, attracting the attention of local and foreign observers alike.¹ In 1864, Theodor Sträter, professor of philosophy at the University of Bonn and correspondent of the Berlin-based periodical *Der Gedanke*, penned a letter from Naples, emphasising how the philosophical sensitivities present in the “splendid” city of Naples exhibited an exquisitely “modern” spirit.² He enthusiastically reported:

If modern philosophy is to ever have a future and be characterised by a more intense life and richer development, these innovations will not take place in Germany, France or England. Rather, they will occur in Italy and, in particular, on these marvellous southern shores, where Greek philosophers once laid their immortal thoughts. What elevates Neapolitans' way of doing philosophy above the suffocating and stale bookish erudition of the Germans is their inherent vitality, their intense energy, their lively temperament [...]: here philosophy has finally become what it has always been meant to be – life, action, personal character, a proper religion of the heart, rather than a mere occupation of the mind.³

¹ Calaresu, M. (1999) *Looking at Virgil's Tomb: The End of the Grand Tour and the Cosmopolitan Ideal in Europe*, pp. 138-61; Chorley, P. (1965) *Oil, Silk and Enlightenment: Economic Problems in Eighteenth-Century Naples*, pp. 150-51, 177-78; Davis, J. (2006) *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions, 1760-1860*, p. 15; Moe, N. (2002) *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*, pp. 37-52; Naddeo, B. A. (2005) *Cultural Capitals and Cosmopolitanism in Eighteenth-Century Italy: The Historiography and Italy on the Grand Tour*, pp. 183-99; Robertson, J. (2005) *The Case for the Enlightenment. Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760*, pp. 94-146

² Sträter, T. (5.12.1864) *Gli hegeliani di Napoli*, p. 11. *Der Gedanke* was published between 1860 and 1884, even if its issues appeared regularly only during the 1860s. For information on *Der Gedanke's* history and relationship with Naples, see: Carfagna, E. (2004) *Stato nazionale e filosofia della storia. La rivista 'Der Gedanke' negli anni sessanta dell'ottocento*, pp. 3-35

³ Sträter, T. (5.12.1864), pp. 11-12

For Sträter, the “historical relevance” of the Neapolitan philosophical “school” had to do with its ability to “formulate in the most acute manner the problems of modern thought” by establishing “a relationship between the Italian and European” philosophical landscapes.⁴ In summary, by engaging with European traditions of thought and devising thematic and methodological continuities with their own intellectual history, Neapolitan authors had succeeded not only in partaking in a fundamentally *modern* experience of philosophical life, but also in positioning themselves at the forefront of a transnational, European cultural movement.⁵ This operation, due to its sheer ambition and scope, was certainly no easy task. Yet, as noted by Sträter, southern thinkers could achieve this by relying on a precious instrument: Hegel’s philosophy. However, the presence of the German thinker’s ideas in the southern capital, coupled with its implications in the context of the Italian Risorgimento, was far from being unproblematic and, as such, it deserves the extensive examination offered by this study.

In particular, this thesis will direct its attention to five inter-related themes: (i) the complex set of intellectual exchanges and encounters enabling the penetration and popularisation of Hegel’s philosophy in the southern capital; (ii) the ongoing revision, taking place during the early decades of the nineteenth century, of Giambattista Vico’s historicism via debates that ultimately deployed an image of the Neapolitan thinker as a theorist of historical time, on the one hand, and the proponent of an idealist account of it, on the other; (iii) the amalgamation of a Hegelian notion of absolute historical development and Vichian historicism, promoted by the southern capital’s private schools of philosophy, enabling historians to view Neapolitan Hegelianism as the result of a broad transnational encounter, yet closely rooted in local contexts and debates; (iv) how, in response to ongoing experiences of political change, most notably the 1848 Revolution and the emancipation of the Italian peninsula, Neapolitan Hegelianism was systematically deployed in support of – and in opposition to – different strands of Risorgimento political thought: it came to support, in fact, a form of democratic constitutionalism reminiscent of the Jacobin ideas informing the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799, in direct opposition to moderate Piedmontese liberalism; and

⁴ Sträter, T. (3.2.1865) *Brief über die Italienische Philosophie*, pp. 70-71

⁵ Gallo, F. (2015) *Philosophical Revolution and the Shaping of European Consciousness: Bertrando Spaventa’s ‘La Filosofia Italiana nelle Sue Relazioni colla Filosofia Europea’*, pp. 213-22; Gallo, F. (2017) *Francesco De Sanctis interprete del rinascimento*, pp. 59-74

(v) the shaping of a transnational cosmopolitan sensitivity among Neapolitan Hegelians, merging the political ambitions connected with the emancipation and unification of Italy with the negotiation of a vantage point for the country in the intellectual and philosophical lives of modern Europe.

As the title of this thesis shows, the chronological extremes of the present research are represented by the years 1799 and 1861; this choice is not accidental. As will become clear in various sections of this work, the historical memory of the 1799 Revolution was crucial in the definition of Neapolitan intellectuals' philosophical sensibility and political agenda during the nineteenth century. In particular, chapter two will examine how, reflecting on the historical significance of 1799, the southern émigré Vincenzo Cuoco provided a substantial revision of Giambattista Vico's philosophy of history; chapter four will then detail how the historical memory of the 1799 Revolution was central to Neapolitan Hegelians' political reflections on the experience of 1848 and to their support for the cause of the Unification.

The choice of 1861 as the chronological endpoint of the thesis has both a symbolic, as well as a practical nature: this year is conventionally adopted to mark the fulfillment of the Risorgimento, with the creation of the Kingdom of Italy being formally declared on 18 February 1861. At the same time, as chapter five will show, Bertrando Spaventa's theory of European thought's "circularity" saw the light of day in the final months of 1861: this contribution, while summarising several themes theorised by his fellow Hegelian thinkers during the 1830s, '40s and '50s, also represented the thematic and, to a large extent, ideological endpoint of southern idealists' speculation. Lastly, the year 1861 witnessed important changes in Neapolitan Hegelians' lives, with some of them, such as Francesco De Sanctis and Silvio Spaventa, fully embarking on a political career and consequently leaving active philosophical speculation behind.

Although this thesis is significantly indebted to a transnational approach, it is also important to mention its geographical coordinates. While the city of Naples will systematically remain the central focus of this thesis, it will often hover among transnational, national and local levels of analysis: in particular, a transnational approach will be the dominant one in chapters one and five, with the former detailing the complex intellectual encounters enabling Hegelianism's penetration in Naples from Germany via France, and the latter discussing Neapolitan Hegelians' engagement with a fundamentally European dimension of philosophy, in response to the progressive marginalisation of Italy in the continent's intellectual life. A

national perspective will then be useful in interrogating, in chapters two and four, the ways in which the reception of Hegel's ideas stood in relation to local debates on philosophy of history, on the one hand, and Risorgimento political thought, on the other. Chapter three, instead, will draw attention to the often-neglected context of Neapolitan 'private' schools of philosophy, highlighting their contribution to the amalgamation of Hegelianism and Vichian historicism.

ii. Background and Existing Research

Given the range of topics explored, and the presence of different levels of analysis, this thesis will engage with a wide variety of historiographical trends and debates. Generally speaking, this work is an attempt to encourage the study of Hegel and his receptions within the context of anglophone intellectual history, which has notoriously focused little attention on him. Some philosophy researchers, as highlighted by Frederick Beiser in his 2002 study *Hegel*, treated the German philosopher "as a historical figure" and tried to examine him "in his historical context".⁶ Their attempts to understand philosophy historically, however, are quite distinct from a well-defined intellectual history approach. The study of Hegel and his reception is therefore also an opportunity, for historians of ideas, to grant greater methodological rigour to the existing body of knowledge on Hegel's contribution to European thought and history.

Hegel's philosophy of history, however, whose reception is the central theme of this thesis, remains an often-neglected subject even among philosophy researchers: as part of a movement spearheaded by Charles Taylor's popular 1975 volume *Hegel*, scholars' attention has systematically left the metaphysical themes characterising Hegel's philosophy – and very prominent in his views on historical development – behind.⁷ Writing under the spell of positivism, pragmatism, political philosophy or philosophy of language, scholars have

⁶ Beiser, F. (2002) *Hegel*, pp. 3-4. Beiser, in particular, referred to: Dilthey, W. (1912) *Die Jugendgeschichte Hegels*; Haering, T. (1929) *Hegel, sein Wollen und sein Werk*; Haym, R. (1857) *Hegel und Seine Zeit*

⁷ Taylor, C. (1975) *Hegel*, pp. 363-462; Beiser, F. (2007) *Dark Days: Anglophone Scholarship since the 1960s*, p. 70

generally championed a markedly anti-metaphysical attitude.⁸ As a result, traditional approaches to Hegel have usually revolved around attempts to render his ideas more palatable to sensitivities accustomed to an analytical approach. Works by John McDowell and Robert Brandom, in this sense, concentrated on Hegel's relevance with regards to philosophy of mind and epistemology.⁹ In a similar manner, scholarly attention on the German thinker has often been characterised by attempts to interpret his political philosophy through the lens of contemporary political theory, as a means to liberate it from its perceived abstract or metaphysical tendencies.¹⁰

Only in recent years, the "traditional interpretations that have dominated the reception of Hegel" have been "increasingly recognised as inadequate to his thought".¹¹ Yet, anglophone scholarship on several aspects of his philosophy still remains limited in extent and riddled with a number of problems. Henry Silton Harris' volume *Hegel's Ladder*, for example, operated a genuine attempt to bring Hegel's philosophy of history to English-speaking researchers' attention. At the same time, while correctly illustrating the relationship between history and Reason discussed in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, it consistently overlooked the relevance of the philosopher's lectures held in Berlin in 1820, 1822 and 1830, and published in 1837 as *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*.¹² More recent studies, however, succeeded in addressing these imbalances: Eric M. Dale's 2014 book *Hegel, the End of History and the Future*, for instance, rehabilitated the metaphysical connotations of the thinker's philosophy of history, drawing particular attention to how this stood in relation to Herder's and Fichte's views on the same matter.¹³ Similarly, a 2017 volume edited by Rachel Zuckert and James Kreines, *Hegel on Philosophy in History*, could rely on a plurality of contributions examining Hegel's tendency to "understand philosophy historically".¹⁴

⁸ See, for example: Engelhardt, T. & Pinkard, T. (1994) *Hegel Reconsidered: Beyond Metaphysics and the Authoritarian State*; Hartmann, K. (1972) *Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View*, pp. 101-24; Pinkard, T. (1988) *Hegel's Dialectic: The Explanation of Possibility*; Pippin, R. (1989) *Hegel's Idealism*; White, A. (1983) *Absolute Knowledge: Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics*; Wood, A. (1990) *Hegel's Ethical Thought*

⁹ Brandom, R. (1994) *Making it Explicit: Reasoning, Representing and Discursive Commitment*, pp. 85-116; McDowell, J. (1994) *Mind and World*, pp. 43-54, 83

¹⁰ Franco, P. (1999) *Hegel's Philosophy of Freedom*; Neuhouser, F. (2000) *Foundations of Hegel's Social Theory*

¹¹ Redding, P. (1996) *Hegel's Hermeneutics*, p. 246

¹² Harris, H. S. (1997) *Hegel's Ladder: The Pilgrimage of Reason and the Odyssey of Spirit*, I, pp. 39-47, 63-70

¹³ Dale, E. M. (2014) *Hegel, the End of History and the Future*, pp. 111-60

¹⁴ Zuckert, R. & Kreines, J. (2017) *Introduction*, p. 5; see, for example: Redding, P. (2017) *Aristotelian Master and Stoic Slave: From Epistemic Assimilation to Cognitive Transformation*, p. 72; Sidgwick, S. (2017) *Remarks on History, Contingency and Necessity in Hegel's Logic*, p. 48

If research on Hegel's philosophy of history in the English-speaking world can be deemed to have developed only slightly past its infancy, the study of its receptions appears to be an even less charted territory.¹⁵ This is primarily due to the fact that the only substantial attempt to provide a broader illustration of Hegel's European receptions is represented by a 2013 volume edited by Lisa Herzog, *Hegel's Thought in Europe: Currents, Crosscurrents and Undercurrents*. Adopting a comparative approach, this book claimed to be "the first to offer a broad perspective on different European non-Marxist receptions of Hegel's philosophy in their different social and cultural contexts".¹⁶ While providing interesting insights regarding some of the lesser-known aspects of Hegel's receptions, such as the Russian and Danish ones, this book did not direct its focus to the thinker's philosophy of history, restricting its discussion to its influence on Collingwood's recognition of "the affinity between philosophy and history".¹⁷

Plotted against other scholarly traditions, English-speaking researchers' lack of attention to Hegel's philosophy of history and its receptions, despite being understandable on the basis of anglophone countries' markedly analytical traditions that made them less keen on engaging with the abstract nature of Hegel's historicism, appears problematic. German scholarship, for example, can conveniently rely on a broader array of works reflecting on the philosopher's receptions. Two issues of the *Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung*, for example, engaged with Hegel's presence in nineteenth- and twentieth-century French philosophy, while a third one enlarged the scope of the analysis so as to include the far East.¹⁸ Similarly, several articles published in *Hegel-Studien* concentrated on commonly neglected contexts, such as the Netherlands, Spain and Scandinavia.¹⁹ Another notable example is represented

¹⁵ The only notable exception being Hegel's reception by Marx and later Marxists. An overview of the historiography concerned with Marx's reception of Hegel can be found in: Levine, N. (2006) *Divergent Paths: the Hegelian Foundations of Marx's Method*, pp. 1-88; see also: Levine, N. (2012) *Marx's Discourse with Hegel*, pp. 278-97; Stedman Jones, G. (2011) *The Young Hegelians, Marx and Engels*, pp. 556-66

¹⁶ This publication collected contributions initially presented at the conference "The Many Colours in Hegelianism – Hegel's Philosophy and its International Reception", taking place in Oxford on June 4 and 5, 2010. See: Herzog, L. (2010) *The Many Colours in Hegelianism – Hegel's Philosophy and its International Reception*, pp. 120-23; Herzog, L. (2013) *Hegel's Thought in Europe: Currents, Crosscurrents and Undercurrents*, p. 3

¹⁷ Browning, G. (2013) *Rethinking Collingwood's Hegel*, p. 177

¹⁸ see Schneider, H. (ed.) (2000) *Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung*, VI; Schneider, H. (ed.) (2001) *Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung*, VII; Schneider, H. (ed.) (2006) *Jahrbuch für Hegelforschung*, X

¹⁹ Alvarez-Gómez, M. (1971) *Zur gegenwärtigen Hegel-Rezeption in Spanien*, pp. 279-94; de Folter, R. J. (1979) *Van Ghert und der Hegelianismus in der Politik der Niederlande*, pp. 243-77; Manninen, J. (2007) *Staat und Bildung. Folgen und Folgerungen aus der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie in Finnland im Jahre 1830-1831*, pp. 31-50; Stewart, J. (2004) *Johan Ludvig Heiberg and the Beginnings of the Hegel Reception in Denmark*, pp. 141-81

by a 2011 volume edited by Thomas Wyrwich, *Hegel in der neueren Philosophie*, investigating Hegel's reception in Germany and France in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, focusing on four thematic areas: neokantianism, phenomenology and ontology, Marxism, and postmodern philosophy.²⁰ Ulrich Schneider, then, provided an interesting discussion of the "idiosyncratic" and often "improper" receptions enjoyed by Hegel in France, drawing particular attention to the ways in which French intellectuals' initial engagement with the German thinker's theories revolved around the systematic appropriation of his philosophy of history.²¹ In discussing Victor Cousin's reception of Hegel's *Geschichtsphilosophie* and the impact this process had among Neapolitan Hegelians, chapter one of this thesis is substantially indebted to this perspective.

Important contributions to the study of Hegel's reception were also provided by French scholars.²² The most substantial of these is represented by Alexandre Koyré's 1961 Parisian lectures on Hegel, which help to clarify Schneider's characterisation of Hegel's French reception as "idiosyncratic". In his lectures, Koyré drew attention to the early nineteenth-century French intellectual context, arguing that debates taking place in the country widely encouraged reliance on scientific thought, rather than the appropriation of idealist argumentation, or Hegel's notorious anti-mathematicism.²³ When discussing aspects of Hegel's French reception, chapter one of this thesis will endorse Koyré's arguments in order to illustrate how Victor Cousin amalgamated Hegel's philosophy of history with his own psychologist tendencies.

German-speaking researchers engaging with Hegel's reception occasionally touched upon its Italian example. Dina Edmundts, for instance, invited an illustration of the intellectual encounter of Vichianism and Hegelianism, pointing out that it was on the basis of their

²⁰ Wyrwich, T. (ed.) (2011) *Hegel in der neueren Philosophie*; see also: Biemel, W. (1974) *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes und die Hegel-Renaissance in Frankreich*, pp. 643-55; Fetscher, I. (1953) *Hegel in Frankreich*, pp. 3-15

²¹ Schneider, U. J. (2009) *Der französische Hegel*, p. 8; see also: d'Hondt, J. (2009) *Die populäre Hegel-Rezeption in Frankreich*, pp. 19-31; Kelly, M. (1992) *Hegel in France*; Pillen, A. (2003) *Hegel in Frankreich: vom unglücklichen Bewusstsein zur Unvernunft*; Vermeren, P. (2009) *Victor Cousins Hegel*, pp. 33-48

²² See, for example: Canguilhem, G. (1948) *Hegel en France*, pp. 282-97; Descombes, V. (1979) *Le Meme et l'Autre: Quarante-cinq Ans de la Philosophie Française*; d'Hondt, J. (1968) *Hegel et son Temps: Berlin, 1818-31*; d'Hondt, J. (1982) *Hegel et l'Hegelianisme*; Doz, A. (1986) *Véra Traducteur et Interprète de Hegel*, pp. 1265-77; Hyppolite, J. (1957) *La Phénoménologie de Hegel et la Pensée Française Contemporaine*, pp. 230-41; Hyppolite, J. (1969) *Études sur Marx et Hegel*

²³ Koyré, A. (1961) *Histoire de la Pensée Philosophique*, p. 207; see also: Koyré, A. (1930) *Rapport sur l'État des Études Hégéliennes en France*, pp. 214-15

respective attempts to devise a “uniform historical reality” that Italian intellectuals regarded the two thinkers as compatible with one another during the nineteenth century.²⁴ This issue will be discussed in chapters two and three. Patrizia Hucke, then, adopted a comparative perspective to investigate the relationship between Karl Rosenkranz and Augusto Vera’s receptions of Hegel’s *Logic*, with which this thesis will take issue in chapter one.²⁵ Maryam Mameghaian-Prenzlow further expanded on the intellectual encounter between Hegel’s thought and Italian intellectuals in her discussion of Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa’s Hegelianism, viewing the two brothers as the chief exponents of an idealist sensitivity in the peninsula.²⁶ This topic will be discussed at various stages throughout this thesis: in particular, while the characterisation of Bertrando Spaventa as the leading figurehead of Neapolitan Hegelianism will be repeatedly endorsed, chapter four will contest the characterisation of Silvio as a Hegelian thinker after 1848. Further, Francesco De Sanctis’ “critical Hegelianism”, which this thesis will examine in chapter three, was the subject of an article by Marcello Poci, who interrogated how De Sanctis’ version of Hegelianism came about as a result of several layers of revision.²⁷ This thesis, however, will attempt to move beyond these works’ rather uncritical accounts of the intellectual developments they describe, placing greater emphasis on their transnational nature, on the one hand, and their relationship with the experience of changing socio-political contexts, such as the revolutionary turmoil of 1799 and 1848, the unification of Italy and the definition of Italy’s relation to Europe, on the other.

The most substantial scholarly attempts to explore Hegel’s Italian reception have unsurprisingly been provided by Italian researchers. The most notable contributions were penned by the two best-known commentators of the Risorgimento, Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile. The former reflected on Hegel’s reception, especially among Neapolitan intellectuals, in a series of publications written during the first half of the twentieth century.²⁸ While he shared an evident intellectual affinity with nineteenth-century Neapolitan idealist

²⁴ Edmundts, D. (2004) *Die Ordnung der Geschichte. Gemeinsamkeiten in den Geschichtsphilosophien von Vico und Hegel*, pp. 37-71

²⁵ Hucke, P. (2004) “Reform” und “consequentes Festhalten” des Hegelschen Systems. Zu Karl Rosenkranz’ und Augusto Veras Bearbeitungen von Hegels Logik, pp. 125-45

²⁶ Mameghaian-Prenzlow, M. (2004) *Das europäische Denken in der Philosophie der Brüder Spaventa*, pp. 147-61

²⁷ Poci, M. (2004) *Der “kritische Hegelianismus” Francesco de Sanctis’*, pp. 163-79

²⁸ See, for example: Croce, B. (1898) *Silvio Spaventa. Dal 1848 al 1861. Lettere, scritti, documenti*; Croce, B. (1907) *Ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto della filosofia di Hegel*; Croce, B. (1913) *Saggio sullo Hegel*; Croce, B. (1921) *Storia della storiografia italiana nel secolo decimonono*; Croce, B. (1949a) *Una pagina sconosciuta degli ultimi mesi della vita di Hegel*; see also: Croce, E. (1949) *Silvio Spaventa*

thinkers, Croce also had another reason to sympathise with them: his uncles were Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa. When a devastating earthquake hit the town of Casamicciola on July 28, 1883, Croce's home was completely destroyed and his entire family killed. As a result, Silvio, who, at the time was serving as Undersecretary for Internal Affairs among the ranks of the liberal *Destra storica*, invited his nephew to move into his home in Rome, where he spent three years, representing an important moment in his intellectual formation.²⁹

The influence of Silvio Spaventa had a profound effect on Croce's discussion of Neapolitan Hegelianism and, broadly speaking, his interpretation of the Risorgimento.³⁰ The tone of Croce's argumentation was exceptionally teleological and, as it described Hegelianism as characteristically connected to the Piedmontese liberal ideology and the experience of the moderate Right in the years following the 1861 Unification. His verdict on Hegel's Italian reception, in this sense, hinged on the acknowledgment that it was precisely thanks to Italian patriots' contribution to the political history of the Risorgimento that the "conception, development and perfecting of liberty" theorised by Hegel had been turned into practice and active political life.³¹

The discussion of Hegelianism from the standpoint of liberalism was not mere conjecture on the part of Croce. Rather, it was a consequence of his dialectic interpretation of history, which he termed "absolute historicism".³² Already with his 1902 *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale*, Croce began articulating a historicist vision centered upon the dialectics of Spirit and the synthetic unity of its historical realisations.³³ He insisted on this theme in the 1906 essay *Ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto della filosofia di Hegel*, whose 1913 edition, published with the title *Saggio sullo Hegel*, quickly became a best-seller, maintaining that Hegel's greatest accomplishment had been the theorisation of historical dialectics.³⁴ Moreover, because the German philosopher had been "largely misunderstood" for decades, Croce claimed that Hegel's canonical characterisation as an advocate of "pure idealism" was mistaken, suggesting that he should instead be regarded as a theorist of a

²⁹ Savorelli, A. (2003) *Croce e Spaventa*, pp. 42-58; Maggi, M. (2003) *La formazione della classe dirigente. Studi sulla filosofia italiana del novecento*, pp. 183-86

³⁰ Croce, B. (1927) *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915*, pp. 3-27; Croce, B. (1934) *Storia d'Europa nel secolo decimonono*, pp. 210-13; 236-42

³¹ Croce, B. (1949b) *Parità degli uomini nella libertà*, p. 74; see also: Croce, B. (1934), p. 236

³² Croce, B. (1941) *Il carattere della filosofia moderna*, p. 112

³³ Croce, B. (1902) *Estetica come scienza dell'espressione e linguistica generale*, pp. 76-77; see also: Bellamy, R. (2013) *Croce, Gramsci, Bobbio and the Italian Political Tradition*, pp. 83-92

³⁴ Croce, B. (1907) *Ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto della filosofia di Hegel*, p. 8

historicist understanding of reality. This, by positing the absolute identity of ideas and facts, resembled Neapolitan Hegelians' amalgamation of Hegelianism and Vichianism discussed in chapters two and three of this thesis.³⁵ This perspective, central to the making of Croce's own historicism, was maintained, once again, in the 1909 volumes *Logica come scienza del concetto puro* and *Filosofia della pratica*, as well as the 1916 *Teoria e storia della storiografia*, which, in a markedly Hegelian fashion, reasoned around the postulation of philosophy (understood as Spirit's self-generating activity) and history's absolute identity.³⁶

History, according to Croce, seen as Spirit's progressive self-realisation, was synonymous with the history of freedom, labelled "the explanatory principle of historical course" and "the moral ideal of humanity".³⁷ This ideal acquired a meta-political connotation in the opening pages of Croce's *Storia d'Europa nel secolo decimonono*, discussing the emergence of a "religion of freedom" ("religione della libertà") that found, after the Napoleonic age, its realisation in liberal political forms.³⁸ Alongside the characterisation of the nineteenth century and, in consequence, of the Risorgimento as the progressive unfolding of liberty came a powerful indictment of present-day "antidemocratic" forces opposing liberal regimes.³⁹ Similarly, in *Storia d'Italia*, a text written while witnessing the "destruction of all that we held dear and sacred in the world" during the inter-war years, the illiberal, antidemocratic and nationalist tendencies promoted by D'Annunzio, socialists and Mussolini were seen as liberal Italy's chief enemies.⁴⁰ Thus imagined, Hegel's works did not merely represent, for Croce, a source of philosophical inspiration: rather, they informed his reading of Italian and European history that championed liberalism as a historically necessary alternative to nationalisms, socialism and fascism.

Giovanni Gentile's articles published in 1912 in the periodical *La Critica* also constitute a precious source of information concerning Hegel's Italian reception.⁴¹ Yet, while these writings provide valuable insights concerning the emergence of a Hegelian movement in

³⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 55-60; 67-75

³⁶ Croce, B. (1909a) *Logica come scienza del concetto puro*, pp. 215-27; 340-41; Croce, B. (1909b) *Filosofia della pratica*, pp. 46-54; 112-13; 189-97; Croce, B. (1916) *Teoria e storia della storiografia*, pp. 50-52; 100-10

³⁷ Croce, B. (1938) *La storia come pensiero e azione*, p. 46

³⁸ Croce, B. (1934), pp. 1-16

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 187; 328-38

⁴⁰ Croce, B. (1927), pp. 265-67; Croce, B. (1941) *Intorno al mio lavoro filosofico*, p. 11

⁴¹ Gentile, G. (1912a) *La filosofia in Italia dopo il 1850. Gli hegeliani. I. Introduzione*, pp. 24-40; Gentile, G. (1912b) *La filosofia in Italia dopo il 1850. Gli hegeliani. II. I primordii dell'hegelismo in Italia*, pp. 103-25, 183-95, 264-80; Gentile, G. (1912c) *La filosofia in Italia dopo il 1850. Gli hegeliani. III. Augusto Vera*, pp. 335-56, 431-48; see also: Gentile, G. (1935) *Storia della filosofia italiana. Dal Genovesi al Galluppi*

Naples, they appear to be inspired by a teleological approach akin to Croce's, albeit informed by a radically different ideological and political inclination. While Croce had reflected on the perceived connection between Hegelianism and liberalism, Gentile drew attention to the alleged anti-liberal use of Hegel's philosophy among Neapolitan Hegelians, especially after 1848 and in the works of Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa. In Bertrando's political writings of the 1850s, for instance, Gentile found a theorisation of an ethical State, which he identified with the fascist project.⁴² Following Spaventa in believing that the ethical purpose of the State was to reconcile the inner divisions of the national community in a common will, the Sicilian philosopher maintained that an authoritarian state was especially able to accomplish this goal, even if doing so meant resorting to extreme forms of coercion.⁴³ Broadly speaking, this attitude reflected Gentile's own political allegiances and, in particular, his interpretation of the Risorgimento, famously understood as the antechamber of the fascist experience.⁴⁴

Being inseparable from their proponents' political sympathies, Croce and Gentile's verdicts on the presence of Hegel's philosophy among Italian intellectuals, reflecting broader considerations on the historical significance of the Risorgimento, understandably resulted in later historiography's attempts to disentangle the analysis of Hegel's reception from the ideological superstructures imposed by Croce and Gentile.⁴⁵ Central to historians' attempt to move beyond their predecessors' interpretations was a tendency to examine in greater detail the intellectual exchanges that led to the emergence of a Hegelian school of thought in the southern capital and the rest of the peninsula. Mario Rossi's *Sviluppi dello hegelismo in Italia*, for instance, was the first to examine closely the encounter of Italian and German intellectuals, looking, especially in the first sections of the book, at the contexts enabling Italian thinkers to engage with Hegel's works in their original language.⁴⁶ Later studies by Luciano Aguzzi and Piero Di Giovanni expanded on Rossi's arguments, ultimately underlining the centrality of Ottavio Colecchi, Domenico Mazzoni and Giambattista Passerini in the initial reception of Hegel in Italy, applauding these authors for establishing a direct avenue of

⁴² Licitra, C. (1925) *La storiografia idealistica. Dal "Programma" di B. Spaventa alla scuola di G. Gentile*, pp. 55-116; Sbarberi, F. (1990) *Gentile politico: un mistico dell'onnipotenza dello stato*, pp. 831-50

⁴³ Gentile, G. (1916) *I fondamenti della filosofia del diritto*, pp. 74-75

⁴⁴ Gentile, G. (1931) *Risorgimento e fascismo*, p. 964

⁴⁵ The most notable examples of this attitude can be found in: Arfé, G. (1952) *L'hegelismo napoletano e Bertrando Spaventa*, pp. 45-62; Berti, G. (1954) *Bertrando Spaventa, Antonio Labriola e l'hegelismo napoletano*, pp. 764-91; Bortot, R. (1968) *L'hegelismo di Bertrando Spaventa*; Losurdo, D. (1997) *Dai fratelli Spaventa a Gramsci. Per una storia politico-sociale della fortuna di Hegel in Italia*

⁴⁶ Rossi, M. (1957) *Sviluppi dello hegelismo in Italia*, pp. 6-61

exchange between Italian and German intellectuals.⁴⁷ Chapter one of this thesis will take issue with these interpretations, challenging the idea that those thinkers could rely on a substantial knowledge of Hegel's works, due to their allegiance to different philosophical agendas, on the one hand, and contextual factors, on the other. As a result, chapter one will argue that Hegelianism made its way to the southern capital thanks to a more complex intellectual exchange, connecting Germany to Naples via France.

The name of Augusto Vera was also commonly referenced in connection with the popularisation of Hegel's ideas in Italy, primarily thanks to his translations from German to French of Hegel's *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* and *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*.⁴⁸ Chapter one will contest the alleged centrality of Vera's contribution, suggesting that, due to his superficial, and often erratic, knowledge of Hegel's thought, as well as contextual factors, his importance in the dissemination of idealist philosophy in the Italian peninsula was ultimately exaggerated by later commentators.

Research on Hegel's reception in Italy, then, often highlighted the presence of historicist motives borrowed from Giambattista Vico's historicism in Neapolitan Hegelians' written output.⁴⁹ Expanding on this tradition, chapter two will concentrate on the early nineteenth-century re-discovery of Vico's philosophy of history, focusing on debates concerned with the nature of historical development, representing the intellectual context informing Hegel's reception. More importantly, drawing upon historiographical insights by Isaiah Berlin, Arnaldo Momigliano and Joseph Mali, chapter two will attempt to view nineteenth-century debates on Vico from a transnational perspective, ultimately suggesting that Vichianism and Hegelianism's encounter in the Mezzogiorno was enabled by a broader, European, re-imagining of the Neapolitan thinker's historicism consistent with the emerging idealist worldview.⁵⁰ By reflecting on how Neapolitan Hegelians wove aspects of Hegel's

⁴⁷ Di Giovanni, P. (1996) *Kant e Hegel in Italia. Alle origini del neoidealismo*, pp. 12-24; Aguzzi, L. (1985) *Riforma religiosa, hegelismo, comunismo e il problema del Risorgimento in Italia nel pensiero e nell'opera di Giambattista Passerini*; Aguzzi, L. (1987) *Giambattista Passerini e la penetrazione dell'hegelismo in Italia*, pp. 73-98

⁴⁸ Gentile, G. (1912c), pp. 335-56; Oldrini, G. (1964a) *Gli hegeliani di Napoli: Augusto Vera e la corrente ortodossa*, pp. 240-89; Oldrini, G. (1964b) *La genesi dello hegelismo napoletano*, pp. 425-61; Rosenkranz, K. (1868) *Hegels Naturphilosophie*, p. 5

⁴⁹ Caianiello, S. (2011) *Vico e lo storicismo tedesco*, pp. 72-95; Croce, B. (1922a) *La filosofia di Giambattista Vico*, pp. 115-26; Croce, B. (1922b) *La fortuna del Vico*; Gentile, G. (1915) *Studi vichiani*, pp. 99-138; Origo, G. (2011) *Bertrando Spaventa interprete di Bruno, Vico ed Hegel*, pp. 74-101; Tessitore, F. (1968) *Vico tra due storicismi*, pp. 211-27; Tessitore, F. (1979) *Vico nelle origini dello storicismo tedesco*, pp. 5-34

⁵⁰ Berlin, I. (1976) *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, pp. xvi-xxvi; Berlin, I. (2000) *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann and Herder*, pp. 120-48; Mali, J. (2003) *Mythistory: The Making of a Modern*

Geschichtsphilosophie into the fabric of Vico's historicism, these observations will be useful, in chapters two and three, in characterising Hegel's Neapolitan reception as a process of systematic amalgamation with the local tradition of thought, rather than mere appropriation or passive absorption.

Italian scholarship on Hegelianism's local reception, then, often concentrated almost univocally on the main writings by a select number of authors, primarily Francesco De Sanctis and Bertrando Spaventa. In *La cultura filosofica napoletana dell'ottocento*, for example, Guido Oldrini reflected on the emergence of a philosophical sensitivity encouraging a greater engagement with foreign forms of thought, but his analysis revolved chiefly around a discussion of Francesco De Sanctis' lectures on the history of literature and Bertrando Spaventa's 1850 work *Pensieri sull'insegnamento della filosofia*.⁵¹ In a similar manner, Nicola Caputo, in his 2006 monograph *Bertrando Spaventa e la sua scuola. Saggio storico-teoretico*, aimed at reconstructing the philosopher's intellectual development, but ultimately provided only a detailed analysis of his relationship to Ottavio Colecchi.⁵² Additionally, studies by Gaetano Origo and Giovanni Rota singled out Bertrando's theory of European thought's circularity, initially appeared in his university lectures of 1860-61, as illustrative of his broader philosophical outlook, hence largely overlooking the importance of texts written during the previous two decades, let alone of other authors.⁵³

While the textual analysis operated by these contributions is remarkable, especially in the case of the often-referenced volume by Oldrini, this thesis will attempt to provide a wider and richer understanding of Neapolitan Hegelianism, concentrating more closely on contributions by often neglected authors and interrogating commonly overlooked contexts. In particular, chapters one and three will detail the process by which southern Italian thinkers, mainly Stefano Cusani and Stanislao Gatti, attempted to disaggregate Hegel's philosophy of history from Victor Cousin's composite philosophical approach, known as "eclecticism". Moreover, chapter three will discuss the teaching of Hegel in Naples' private schools of philosophy, whose examination is of prime importance in articulating a convincing definition

Historiography, p. 85; Mali, J. (2012) *The Legacy of Vico in Modern Cultural History*, pp. 12-70; Momigliano, A. (1966) *Vico's Scienza Nuova: Roman "Bestioni" and Roman "Eroi"*, pp. 253-77

⁵¹ Oldrini, G. (1973) *La cultura filosofica napoletana dell'ottocento*, pp. 136-48; 241-46; 484-501; see also: Cione, E. (1960) *Francesco De Sanctis ed i suoi tempi*; Omodeo, A. (1951) *La cultura meridionale nel Risorgimento*

⁵² Caputo, N. (2006) *Bertrando Spaventa e la sua scuola. Saggio storico-teoretico*

⁵³ Origo, G. (2011), pp. 143-67; Rota, G. (2005) *La circolazione del pensiero secondo Bertrando Spaventa*, pp. 655-86

of Neapolitan Hegelianism's character and intellectual agenda. Chapter four will concentrate on both Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa's writings for the periodical *Il Nazionale*, whose use of Hegel's philosophy of history in support of the Revolution of 1848 has been analysed by only a very limited number of studies.⁵⁴ Chapter five, instead, will supplement historians' reading of Bertrando Spaventa's theory of European thought's circularity, illustrated in the volume *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*, by viewing this text in relation to its intellectual context, represented by the transnational sensitivities being developed in Naples during the late 1830s and '40s, broader Italian debates concerned with the relationship between Italian philosophy and its modern European counterpart, as well as Bertrando's own writings of the 1850s.

Furthermore, it must be noted how Italian scholarship on Hegelianism's presence in the peninsula endeavoured to address the often-problematic relationship between Neapolitan Hegelian thinkers and the political history of Italy during the Risorgimento. These attempts placed very little emphasis on the profound theoretical and political differences emerging between Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa after the defeat of the 1848 Revolution. These studies almost exclusively focused on Silvio, underlining his use of Hegelianism, particularly the German thinker's notion of *Rechtsstaat*, as a means to provide an ideological and philosophical backbone to Piedmontese liberalism.⁵⁵ Chapter four of this thesis will take a strong stance against these scholarly verdicts, suggesting that the characterisation of Silvio Spaventa as a Hegelian thinker after 1848 is untenable.

It may also come as a surprise to notice that only a small number of studies approached Bertrando Spaventa's writings from the same perspective, interrogating their relevance to the political history of the Risorgimento, despite the significant attention paid by historians to his philosophical reflections.⁵⁶ Many of these studies, however, especially the often-cited works by Sergio Landucci and Giuseppe Vacca, investigated Spaventa's Hegelianism via the study of its influence on Antonio Labriola and Antonio Gramsci's Marxism

⁵⁴ Cubeddu, I. (1963) *Bertrando Spaventa pubblicista*, pp. 46-93; Serra, T. (1988) *L'hegelismo di Silvio Spaventa*, pp. 23-40; Valitutti, S. (1989) *L'hegelismo di Silvio Spaventa*, pp. 99-138

⁵⁵ See, for example: Bazzoli, M. (1988) *Silvio Spaventa nella storiografia dello stato liberale*, pp. 117-32; Chiodi, G. M. (1989) *Sull'idea di stato di Silvio Spaventa*, pp. 217-66; Ghisalberti, C. (1972) *Silvio Spaventa teorico dello stato liberale*, pp. 249-312; Ghisalberti, C. (1991) *Silvio Spaventa e Hegel: unità nazionale e stato*, pp. 9-18; Nigro, M. (1988) *Silvio Spaventa e il Rechtsstaat*, pp. 109-16; Silvestri, G. (1988) *Politica, amministrazione e divisione dei poteri nel pensiero di Silvio Spaventa*, pp. 41-61

⁵⁶ Gallo, F. (2015) *Dalla patria allo stato: Bertrando Spaventa. Una biografia intellettuale*; Garin, E. (1983) *Filosofia e politica in Bertrando Spaventa*; Serra, T. (1974) *Bertrando Spaventa. Etica e politica*

and, in this sense, did not provide an exhaustive illustration of Bertrando's own relationship with political debates and experiences taking place before 1861.⁵⁷ In response to these problems, chapter four will reflect on Spaventa's involvement in the revolutionary turmoil of 1848, via an analysis of his writings for *Il Nazionale*. In this thesis, the discussion of these texts, while showing how the author defended a democratic form of constitutionalism, will remain disconnected from its reception among later thinkers. Furthermore, the examination of Bertrando's written output published during the 1850s will reveal the extent to which the democratic orientation resulting from his involvement with *Il Nazionale* in 1848 remained central to his political vision even during the following decade, reflecting an attitude often overlooked by historians. This will ultimately enable chapter four to rethink the broader relationship between Hegelianism and Risorgimento political thought.

Re-defining the links between Neapolitan Hegelianism and the experience of the Risorgimento will then inevitably urge this thesis to come to terms with larger scholarly debates on this period of Italian history. Crucially, the role of southern idealist thinkers was often ignored by recent studies. In *La nazione del Risorgimento*, for instance, Alberto Mario Banti's discussion of the period relied extensively on a historically debatable notion of "Risorgimento canon", which has been contested, primarily on methodological grounds, by later commentators.⁵⁸ Additionally, Banti's study largely neglected the Mezzogiorno's philosophical input in the process of Italian emancipation and unification. Christopher Duggan, in his well-known 2007 volume *The Force of Destiny*, managed to disentangle the study of the Risorgimento from Banti's approach, disclosing a deeper relationship between political ideals and the experience of this period. While Duggan's book traced the genealogy of Risorgimento political thought back to European romantic ideals, an intuition that chapters

⁵⁷ Landucci, S. (1963) *Il giovane Spaventa tra hegelismo e socialismo*, pp. 647-707; Vacca, G. (1967) *Politica e filosofia in Bertrando Spaventa*

⁵⁸ Banti, A. M. (2000) *La nazione del Risorgimento*, pp. 3-55; see also: Banti, A. M. & Bizzocchi, R. (eds.) (2002) *Immagini della nazione nell'Italia del Risorgimento*; Banti, A. M. (2004) *Il Risorgimento Italiano*; Banti, A. M., Chiavistelli, A., Mannori, L. & Meriggi, M. (eds.) (2011) *Atlante culturale del Risorgimento: lessico del linguaggio politico dal settecento all'unità*. For a critique of Banti's work, see *Alberto Banti's Interpretation of Risorgimento Nationalism: A Debate* in the July 2009 issue of "Nations and Nationalism". In particular: Isabella, M. (2009a) *Emotions, Rationality and Political Intentionality in Patriotic Discourse*, pp. 427-33; Körner, A. (2009) *The Risorgimento Literary Canon and the Aesthetics of Reception: Some Methodological Considerations*, pp. 410-18; Laven, D. (2009) *Why Patriots Wrote and What Reactionaries Read: Reflections on Alberto Banti's "La Nazione del Risorgimento"*, pp. 419-26

two and four of this thesis will be indebted to, German idealism, as well as its various receptions, remained extraneous to his analysis.⁵⁹

In her 2010 study *Italian Vices*, Silvana Patriarca concentrated on the definition of an Italian national character hinging on the internalisation of a number of foreign stereotypes of Italian attitudes.⁶⁰ Her emphasis on European imagination's impact on Italy, however, left little room for the discussion of those contributions, such as Neapolitan Hegelians', operating a positive re-evaluation of the country's national character *vis-à-vis* a transnational, European experience of modernity. Chapter five of this thesis, therefore, will attempt to address this imbalance. Lastly, in a series of works, most notably *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification* in 1994, *Risorgimento: The History of Italy from Napoleon to the Nation State* in 2009 and *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in 19th Century Italy*, edited with Silvana Patriarca in 2012, Lucy Riall attempted to mediate among competing interpretations of the Risorgimento, while, at the same time, rehabilitating some of the most commonly underrepresented narratives, such as the intersection of gender norms and military ideals or the history of emotions, but failed, despite her emphasis on the Mezzogiorno, to turn her attention to Neapolitan Hegelians' role in the cultural and political emancipation of Italy, a topic that will be amply discussed in chapters four and five of this thesis.⁶¹

This research will be particularly sensitive to recent scholarly developments encouraging a transnational approach to the study of Italian history. In a recent special issue of *Modern Italy*, Oliver Janz and Lucy Riall drew attention to the need, for historians, to challenge "the sense of exceptionality that has been such a dominant feature of Risorgimento historiography", urging to view the process of Italian emancipation and unification as characterised by an ongoing engagement with a European dimension of political and intellectual life.⁶² As a result, historical research has interrogated the articulation of Italy's

⁵⁹ Duggan, C. (2007) *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796*, pp. 71-198; a response to Duggan's analysis can be found in Carlo Capra's 2014 volume *Gli italiani prima dell'Italia*, in which the connection between the Risorgimento and the Enlightenment is explored, ultimately hinting at "the elaboration of a platform for unification and constitutionalism long before Bonaparte's Italian campaign" (Capra, C. (2014) *Gli italiani prima dell'Italia. Un lungo settecento, dalla fine della controriforma a Napoleone*, p. 118)

⁶⁰ Patriarca, S. (2010) *Italian Vices. Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*

⁶¹ Patriarca, S. & Riall, L. (eds.) (2012) *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in 19th Century Italy*, pp. 1-17, 134-169; Riall, L. (1994) *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification*, pp. 1-10; 28-47; Riall, L. (2009) *Risorgimento: The History of Italy from Napoleon to the Nation State*

⁶² Janz, O. & Riall, L. (2014) *The Italian Risorgimento: Transnational Perspectives. Introduction*, p. 2

national character and the development of political ideals during the nineteenth century beyond a national framework. David Laven and Laura Parker, for example, located Venetians' relationship with the Habsburg empire within a transnational cultural space, suggesting that an indiscriminate reliance on national categories of analysis within the "multinational" empire might "distort" researchers' perception of its history.⁶³

In *Risorgimento in Exile*, Maurizio Isabella provided an analysis of this period from the perspective of patriots in exile, examining the latter's impact on the period's political thought and imagination, and hinging on "forms of intellectual transnationalism" pointing to "multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation states".⁶⁴ Hovering skilfully between intellectual and cultural history, Axel Körner explored the internationalisation of Italian opera theatres during the nineteenth century and, in his most recent book, *America in Italy*, he investigated the ways in which Risorgimento political thought was shaped by debates on the American Revolution and the US constitution, seen under the light of a European intellectual tradition, ranging from Giambattista Vico to Voltaire and Montesquieu.⁶⁵ This thesis will be greatly indebted to the transnational approach taken by these works, as it will consider not only how Hegelianism influenced Italian philosophy, but also how southern intellectuals employed concepts borrowed from the local tradition to interpret and, to a large extent, revise Hegel's ideas.

A transnational understanding of the Risorgimento, in this sense, revolves around the investigation of the ongoing dialogue between the endogenous and exogenous forces acting upon the process of Italian unification, the articulation of the peninsula's national character and, broadly speaking, Italians' imagination. This entails the need to take issue with historiographical traditions understanding Italian intellectuals' engagement with foreign ideas as a passive process of reception and demonstrate, instead, how these were systematically amalgamated with Italy's own past and cultural traditions. This approach is by no means confined to the study of the Risorgimento. In a recent study entitled *Italien in Europa. Die Zirkulation der Ideen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, for instance, Thomas Kroll and

⁶³ Laven, D. & Parker, L. (2014) *Foreign Rule? Transnational, National, and Local Perspectives on Venice and Venetia within the "Multinational" Empire*, pp. 5-19

⁶⁴ Isabella, M. (2009b) *Risorgimento in Exile. Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era*, p. 6

⁶⁵ Körner, A. (2011) *Music of the Future: Italian Theatres and the European Experience of Modernity Between the Unification and World War One*, pp. 189-212; Körner, A. (2017) *America in Italy. The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763-1865*

Frank Jung expanded on a historiographical approach initiated by Franco Venturi and Carlo Capra, and proceeded to highlight the centrality of Italian eighteenth-century intellectual history within an increasingly transnational picture of the European Enlightenment.⁶⁶

Moreover, in his 2005 study *The Case for the Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760*, John Robertson argued against John Pocock's fragmentation of the Enlightenment into a multiplicity of separate traditions, and, adopting a comparative methodology, he investigated "similarity amid difference: the presence of a common Enlightenment in the two very different 'national' contexts of Scotland and Naples".⁶⁷ Central to Robertson's volume was the thesis that intellectuals in Naples and Scotland, such as Giambattista Vico, Antonio Genovesi and David Hume, even if writing in geographically different contexts, "saw themselves as members of a wider, European intellectual movement".⁶⁸ As such, they shared common intellectual preoccupations and contributed in equal measure to the emergence of "one Enlightenment", defining "the cause of human betterment on earth" in terms of political economy.⁶⁹ The views presented in these works, especially Robertson's framing of Vichianism in a European context, will be of prime importance for this thesis: for instance, as chapter two will demonstrate, debates on Giambattista Vico's historicism during the early decades of the nineteenth century went well beyond the Italian context, and acquired an unquestionably European dimension, representing the context for Hegelianism's revision in Italy and, to a large extent, France.

Other studies adopted a transnational framework in order to view the Risorgimento as part of a Mediterranean experience of modern political and intellectual life, following and, in many respects, reacting to Fernand Braudel's discussion of the sea as a category of historical analysis.⁷⁰ Gilles Pécout, for example, characterised the Risorgimento as a narrative of the

⁶⁶ Kroll, T. & Jung, F. (2014) *Italien in Europa. Die Zirkulation der Ideen im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, pp. 7-12; Capra, C. (1978) *L'età rivoluzionaria e napoleonica in Italia 1796-1815*; Capra, C. (1987) *La Lombardia austriaca nell'età delle riforme*; Capra, C. (2005) *Habsburg Italy in the Age of Reform*, pp. 218-33; Venturi, F. (1972) *Italy and the Enlightenment: Studies in a Cosmopolitan Century*, pp. 1-32, 129-56; Venturi, F. (1973) *L'Italia fuori dall'Italia*

⁶⁷ Pocock, J. G. A. (1985) *Clergy and Commerce: The Conservative Enlightenment in England*, pp. 523-62; Pocock, J. G. A. (1999) *Barbarism and Religion. Volume One: The Enlightenments of Edward Gibbon, 1737-1764*, pp. 13, 5-10, 292-308; Robertson, J. (2005), p. 47

⁶⁸ Robertson, J. (2005), p. 377

⁶⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰ Braudel, F. (1949) *La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'Époque de Philippe II*; Questioning the Braudelian treatment of its history, historians challenged notions of the sea's "unity" and "fragmentation", in an attempt to perfect a "new thalassology" of the Mediterranean. See, for example: Horden, P. & Purcell, N. (2006) *The Mediterranean and the 'New Thalassology'*, pp. 722-40

Mediterranean regions, rather than one merely taking place *in* them.⁷¹ In a similar manner, Marta Petrusiewicz explored the “Mediterranean dimension” of southern Italy, highlighting the presence of relational networks and commercial practices giving the Mezzogiorno an idiosyncratic status, on the one hand, but emphasising its centrality, on the other, within a context understood as a “fragmented topography of micro-regions”, a splintered world nonetheless united by its very interconnectedness.⁷²

Lastly, a recent volume edited by Maurizio Isabella and Konstantina Zanou further insisted on the use of the Mediterranean as a category of historical analysis. By providing an image of nineteenth-century Mediterranean Europe “much larger than its geographical boundaries”, “a malleable space of contact, encounter, entanglement and interaction among its diverse and heterogeneous people”, the two authors challenged traditional views portraying this region as a backward periphery of a more advanced and progressive European North.⁷³ This thesis will make use of transnational historiographical approaches slotting the study of nineteenth-century Italy within the narrative of Europe’s alleged “peripheries”, as it will discuss, in chapter five, how, by engaging with a purely European dimension of philosophical life, Neapolitan Hegelians directly responded to idiosyncratic characterisations of Italy’s tradition of thought, on the one hand, and, more importantly, to its systematic marginalisation, on the other.

These observations on centres and peripheries intuitively lead to another set of considerations. Because this thesis will chiefly concentrate on the intellectual history of Naples, it will inevitably engage with historiographical debates concerned with the analysis of that which has too often been seen as the most marginal region of Europe’s southernmost periphery: the Mezzogiorno. Since the late 1980s, historians have been questioning with ever-increasing frequency the dualistic division between an advanced northern Italy and its perceived unruly, backward, southern counterpart, suggesting that, far from being just a “question” or a “problem”, the South was a “piece of the world” demanding analysis in its own terms.⁷⁴ This rapidly led to the proliferation of new ways of writing the history of

⁷¹ Pécout, G. (2012) *Pour une lecture méditerranéenne et transnationale du Risorgimento*, p. 30

⁷² Petrusiewicz, M. (2007) *Il Mediterraneo dopo Braudel: é possibile una nuova storiografia?*, pp. 117-28; see also: Horden, P. & Purcell, N. (2000) *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, p. 5

⁷³ Isabella, M. & Zanou, K. (eds.) (2015) *The Sea, Its People and Their Ideas in the Long Nineteenth Century*, pp. 1-24

⁷⁴ Donzelli, C. (2000) *Pezzo di mondo*, pp. 3-5

Southern Italy.⁷⁵ In his study *Darkest Italy*, for instance, John Dickie investigated “the role that representations of the South played in forming notions of an Italian national identity”, in order to explore the thematisation of the South as “an Other to Italy”.⁷⁶ In a similar manner, Nelson Moe, in his book *The View from Vesuvius*, interrogated the progressive orientalisation of the Mezzogiorno in the Italian cultural context, plotting it against the broader dichotomy between a European centre and its Mediterranean periphery. According to Moe, Eurocentric Northern Italian élites attempted to rethink the indiscriminate characterisation of Italy as Europe’s South, insisting that the Mezzogiorno was, in many ways, more prominently “southern” than the rest of the peninsula.⁷⁷

These studies will provide, in chapter five, the framework not only for a discussion of the perceived alterity of Italy’s intellectual tradition in the context of a European experience of modernity, but also its internalisation by those, such as the northern author Vincenzo Gioberti, who strongly rejected any form of engagement with foreign philosophical landscapes.⁷⁸ Moreover, in *Naples and Napoleon*, John Davis contested the definition of the Mezzogiorno as “a recognisable metaphor of pre-modernity”, investigating how local experiences of political change would project the region “at the centre of the political storms that swept through Europe”.⁷⁹ Deploying a similar line of argumentation, chapter four will show how the historical memory of Neapolitans’ revolutionary experiences was fully projected onto national debates on Italy’s emancipation and unification, while chapter five will discuss how intellectuals in the South saw themselves as fully engaged with a European dimension of cultural and philosophical life.

A new history of the Mezzogiorno is by no means confined to the realms of intellectual and cultural history alone. In her seminal work *Latifondo*, for example, Marta Petrusiewicz

⁷⁵ See, for example: Davis, J. (1998) *Casting off the Southern Problem: Or the Peculiarities of the South Reconsidered*, pp. 205-24; Lumley, R. & Morris, J. (eds.) (1997) *The New History of the Italian South: The Mezzogiorno Revisited*; Morris, J. (1997) *Challenging Meridionalismo: Constructing a New History for Southern Italy*, pp. 1-19

⁷⁶ Dickie, J. (1999) *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900*, pp. 1-2, 148; see also: Dickie, J. (1997) *Stereotypes of the Italian South, 1860-1900*, pp. 114-47; Petrusiewicz, M. (1998) *Come il meridione divenne una questione. Rappresentazioni del sud prima e dopo il quarantotto*

⁷⁷ Moe, N. (2002), pp. 13-81

⁷⁸ The discussion of Italy’s “oriental” character in European thought will also be indebted to: Dainotto, R. (2007) *Europe (in Theory)*, pp. 172-217; Ruehl, M. (2015) *The Italian Renaissance in the German Historical Imagination, 1860-1930*

⁷⁹ Davis, J. (2006), pp. 6, 12; see also: Chorley, P. (1965), p. 11; Davis, J. (1996) *Changing Perspectives on Italy’s Southern Problems*, pp. 53-68; Venturi, F. (1972), pp. 129-56

challenged traditional Marxist and liberal views focusing on the economic backwardness and political disorganisation as the chief characteristics of the South during the nineteenth century. Her analysis concentrated on the Calabrian big landed estate, the *latifundium*, described as a hybrid of modern capitalist and non-capitalist models, which, by reflecting a distinctive modern economic mentality, would project local markets to a European dimension of economic life, while still retaining idiosyncratic, semi-feudal traits.⁸⁰

In a similar manner, Paolo Pezzino's study *Local Power in Southern Italy* challenged traditional understandings of local élites, emphasising how historians generally neglected the issues connected with the emergence of new classes.⁸¹ Reflecting these studies' attempts to draw attention to underrepresented power relations and socio-economic contexts, chapter three will discuss Hegel's reception and amalgamation with Vico in the often-neglected context of Neapolitan private schools of philosophy. As this chapter will demonstrate, the study of private schools' contribution to the intellectual history of the Mezzogiorno is crucial not only in articulating an understanding of the dynamics of education in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, but also in unveiling how local authors encouraged intellectual innovation via a systematic engagement with European thought at large. This chapter will thus challenge historiographical verdicts suggesting that the allegedly peripheral status of the Mezzogiorno *vis-à-vis* a European dimension of cultural production could be explained on the basis of repressive educational policies promoted by the Bourbons, severely discouraging any form of engagement with foreign cultural landscapes.⁸² There is evidence that foreign philosophy was very much thriving in the Neapolitan cultural landscape and this thesis is also an attempt to interrogate its centrality in the region's intellectual history.

⁸⁰ Petruszewicz, M. (1989) *Latifondo. Economia morale e vita materiale in una periferia dell'ottocento*; see also: Petruszewicz, M. (1997) *The Demise of Latifondismo*, pp. 20-41

⁸¹ Pezzino, P. (1997) *Local Power in Southern Italy*, pp. 42-58

⁸² Agresta, S. (1992) *L'istruzione nel mezzogiorno d'Italia: 1806-1860*, pp. 27-29; Iesu, F. (2007) *Istruzione e salute pubblica in provincia di Terra di Lavoro del Regno di Napoli dai Borbone al Regno d'Italia*; Lupo, M. (2013) *Il sistema scolastico nel Mezzogiorno continentale*, pp. 283-310; Zazo, A. (1924) *L'ultimo periodo borbonico*, pp. 467-75; Zazo, A. (1927) *L'istruzione pubblica e privata nel napoletano*, pp. 103-10

iii. *A Transnational Study in Intellectual History: Methodology*

Given the range of topics explored, the diversity of the contexts illustrated and the plurality of the cultural and political experiences discussed, this thesis will adopt a composite methodological approach, able to mediate among several, often competing, perspectives in the study of intellectual history, chiefly transnational history, the contextual methodology popularised by the Cambridge School, Reinhart Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte*, and *Rezeptionstheorie*. First of all, it must be noted that the actual notion of "Neapolitan Hegelianism" already hints at the dual nature of this school of thought, emerging as the result of an interplay between exogenous forces borrowed from the German idealist tradition and endogenous ones, namely the local, Neapolitan, tradition.

A transnational approach, in this sense, able to account for Hegelianism's "movement" towards the Mezzogiorno, as well as its local reception, constitutes the general framework for this research. In his discussion of transnational history, Akira Iriye described it as "the study of movements and forces that have cut across national boundaries", a definition that conveniently lends itself to the discussion of the intellectual encounters and exchanges among Italian and European intellectuals presented in this work.⁸³ A transnational approach is therefore distinct from a merely comparative one.⁸⁴ As highlighted by several among its advocates, transnationalism is a means of avoiding the reification of ideas stemming from the oversimplified analysis of transnational encounters on the basis of comparative perspectives alone, which ultimately fail to "transcend the boundaries of nationalist historiography".⁸⁵ As such, it places greater attention on the the study of ideas' movement, transfer and circulation in terms of "border-crossing".⁸⁶ The adoption of a transnational methodology, however,

⁸³ Iriye, A. (2004) *Transnational History*, p. 213

⁸⁴ Bayly, C., Beckert, S., Connelly, M., Hofmeyr, I., Kozol, W. & Seed, P. (2006) *AHR Conversation: On Transnational History*, pp. 1443, 1452; Grew, R. (1990) *On the Current State of Comparative Studies*, p. 331; Kocka, J. (2003) *Comparison and Beyond*, p. 41; Rusen, J. (1996) *Some Theoretical Approaches to Intercultural Comparative Historiography*, pp. 7, 10-11; Saunier, P. (2006) *Going Transnational? News from Down Under*, p. 127

⁸⁵ Tyrrell, I. (1991) *American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History*, p. 1033.

⁸⁶ Armitage, D. (2014) *The International Turn in Intellectual History*, pp. 232-52; Bourdieu, P. (1990) *Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées*, pp. 3-8; Conrad, S. (2012) *Enlightenment in Global History: A Historiographical Critique*, pp. 999-1017; Gänger, S. & Lewis, S. L. (2013) *Forum: A World of Ideas: New Pathways in Global Intellectual History, 1890-1930*, pp. 347-51; Greenblatt, S. (2010) *A Mobility Studies Manifesto*, pp. 250-51; Iriye, A. (1989) *The Internationalisation of History*, p. 5; Isabella, M. (2009), pp. 6-7; Isabella, M. & Zanou, K. (eds.) (2015), pp. 3-4; Laqua, D. (ed.) (2011) *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars*; MacMahon, D. M. & Moyn, S. (eds.) (2014)

comes with a *caveat*: historians often highlighted how placing ideas' within supra- and transnational contexts might reify and relativise their significance. In consequence, they urged to reflect on how those exchanges and encounters, which transnational history engages with, are themselves generative of meaning.⁸⁷

Given historians' exhortations to distance transnational history from national perspectives by examining dynamics of transmission and circulation occurring across national borders, the image of transnational history emerging from their observations is one characterised by remarkable conceptual flexibility. At the same time, scholars repeatedly warned that transnationalism's openness as a historical concept could be seen as a lack of methodological rigour or conceptual looseness.⁸⁸ Rather than being a limitation, however, this represents an important resource, able to avoid the risk of teleological explanations and ensure pluralism.⁸⁹ Transnationalism's plasticity opens up a range of possibilities, most notably that of relying on *Histoire Croisée's* focus on the historical interconnectedness of different communicative spaces, such as cultures, nation-states, linguistic communities and political languages. In particular, being able to illuminate the ways in which the intersection of historically constituted formations is generative of meaning in different contexts, *Histoire Croisée* can conveniently direct historians' analysis of circulation and transmission dynamics that transnational history must engage with.⁹⁰

These considerations will significantly inform the characterisation of Neapolitan Hegelianism proposed in this thesis. In particular, this philosophy's emergence will be discussed, in chapter one, in relation to a polycentric understanding of idealist philosophy, whose dissemination in Europe will be said to have stemmed not only from mechanisms of

Rethinking Modern Intellectual History; Moyn, S. & Sartori, A. (eds.) (2015) *Global Intellectual History*, pp. 9-16; Sartori, A. (2008) *Bengal in Global Concept History: Culturalism in the Age of Capital*; Thelen, D. (1999) *The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History*, p. 968

⁸⁷ Bayly, C. et al. (2006), pp. 1449, 1452; Conrad, S. (2003) *Circulation, "National Work" and Identity. Debates about the Mobility of Work in Germany and Japan, 1890-1914*, p. 260; Janz, O. & Riall, L. (2014), p. 1; Tyrrell, I. (1999) *Making Nations/Making States: American Historians in the Context of Empire*, pp. 1035-36

⁸⁸ Clavin, P. (2005) *Defining Transnationalism*, pp. 434, 438; Haupt, H. G. (2011) *Une nouvelle sensibilité: la perspective "transnationale". Une note critique*, p. 174; Tyrrell, I. (2009) *Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History: Theory and Practice*, pp. 460-61

⁸⁹ Saunier, P. (2006), pp. 130-31

⁹⁰ Werner, M. & Zimmermann, B. (2004) *De la comparaison à l'histoire croisée*, pp. 15-49; Werner, M. & Zimmermann, B. (2006) *Beyond Comparison: Histoire Croisée and the Challenge of Reflexivity*, pp. 30-50. A blueprint for the application of *Histoire Croisée* to transnational history can be found in: Werner, M. & Zimmermann, B. (2002) *Vergleich, Transfer, Verflechtung: Der Ansatz der Histoire croisée und die Herausforderung des Transnationalen*, pp. 607-36

exchange and transmission, but also by distinct layers of often competing interpretations and revisions. Southern thinkers' reflections on Victor Cousin's use of Hegelian categories, in this sense, will be adopted as evidence of the many ramifications of Hegel's ideas, on the one hand, and of the inherently pluralistic nature of their receptions, on the other. Moreover, the amalgamation of Hegelian and Vichian concepts explored in chapters two and three will further contribute to a transnational characterisation of Neapolitan Hegelianism, whose emergence and development will thus be rescued from the restrictive framework of a national narrative only, on the one hand, and from a merely comparative perspective, on the other.

As a result, because the idiosyncratic character of Hegelianism in the southern capital will be defined as the outcome of the encounter between an idealist account of historical development and historicist motives borrowed from Giambattista Vico's *Scienza nuova*, it will be necessary for this thesis to pay close attention to local contexts and debates, for the purpose of interrogating the emergence of the historicist intellectual fabric within which the Hegelian *Weltgeschichte* was woven. A transnational approach, in short, ought to be complemented with the detailed analysis of how Neapolitan Hegelians' ways of engaging with the German thinker's ideas – as well as their own written output – can also be redescribed as responses to local intellectual and political contexts.

The contextual methodology of analysis perfected by what is often referred to as “the Cambridge school” will be an important tool in interrogating authors' philosophical inclinations and intentions in relation to their historical contexts.⁹¹ This will not be limited to the examination of Hegelian philosophy of history's amalgamation with Vichian historicism. Chapter four, for example, will investigate Neapolitan Hegelians' political language on the basis of their ideological standpoint, ultimately providing a characterisation of their use – and revision – of the Hegelian concepts of freedom and State informed by the historical memory of the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution, the experience of the 1848 Revolution, and debates on Italian Unification. In a similar manner, an attempt to read Bertrando Spaventa's theory of

⁹¹ Skinner, Q. (1969) *Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas*, pp. 39-48; Skinner, Q. (2002) *Visions of Politics*, I, pp. 79-89, 91-102; see also: Arnold, T. C. (1993) *Thoughts and Deeds: Language and the Practice of Political Theory*; Boucher, D. (1985) *Texts in Contexts: Revisionist Methods for Studying the History of Ideas*; Gunn, J. A. W. (1989) *After Sabine, After Lovejoy: The Languages of Political Thought*, pp. 1-45; King, P. (1995) *Historical Contextualism: The New Historicism?*, pp. 209-33; Turner, S. (1983) “Contextualism” and the Interpretation of the Classical Sociological Texts, pp. 273-91

European thought's circularity in the context of ongoing debates on Italy's cultural emancipation will enable chapter five to provide a clearer definition of the author's intention: this entailed not only defending Italian philosophy's authority *vis-à-vis* foreign forms of thought, but also championing its centrality in the making of a distinctly modern and European intellectual tradition.

The way in which contextual analysis has traditionally been carried out, however, will often be at odds with the themes and the scope of the present research, mainly for two reasons: first, the adoption of a transnational framework of analysis inevitably complicates the definition of the intellectual contexts that the Cambridge school would concentrate on; second, the debates on Hegel and Vico's philosophies of history illustrated in this thesis, when understood as attempts to negotiate perceptions of change in historical time, signal conceptual shifts going beyond the linguistic contextualism chiefly proposed by Quentin Skinner and John Pocock. The latter problem, in particular, is effectively addressed by Reinhart Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte*, which understands itself as a form of social history, and believes it impossible to comprehend a given society's politics without examining the concepts through which this is conceived and practiced: simply put, in order to make sense of societies' political life, one must understand the *Begriffe* with which they think and speak about themselves.

Begriffsgeschichte is useful to overcome some of the limitations characterising works by Cambridge-trained intellectual historians. These scholars, in fact, have rarely ventured beyond the early modern period. In contrast, according to Koselleck, the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a period labelled "Sattelzeit" ("saddle-time"), brought about the emergence of distinctly modern *Begriffe*, giving socio-political languages a new meaning on the basis of conceptual shifts occurring at an increasingly accelerated pace.⁹² An approach explaining conceptual changes, as well as the consequent modifications in political, social and philosophical languages on the basis of shifting experiences of historical time easily lends itself to the examination, in chapters four and five, of the ways in which the characteristically modern, Hegelian and Vichian, *Begriffe* of time and history were consistently used by

⁹² Koselleck, R. (1967) *Richtlinien für das Lexikon politisch-sozialer Begriffe der Neuzeit*, p. 81; Koselleck, R. (1972) *Einleitung*, p. xiv; see also: Koselleck, R. (1989a) *Social History and Conceptual History*, p. 313; Koselleck, R. (1989b) *Linguistic Change and the History of Events*, pp. 649-66; Koselleck, R. (1991) *Erfahrungswandel und Methodenwechsel: Eine historische-anthropologische Skizze*, pp. 13-61; Koselleck, R. (2000) *Zeitschichten: Studien zur Historik*, pp. 97-118

Neapolitan Hegelians as the philosophical backbone of their intellectual and political agendas, ultimately informing the political language and argumentation that Cambridge-trained historians of ideas would focus on. For example, it was on the basis of their reflections on – and experience of – a modern understanding of temporality that southern thinkers upheld democratic constitutionalism against the Bourbon monarchy in 1848, as illustrated in the articles appearing in the periodical *Il Nazionale*.

These observations point at another limitation of Cambridge contextualism, which seldom went beyond the analysis of political languages. Yet, chapters one, two and three of this thesis, by investigating the reception of Hegel's philosophy of history and its amalgamation with Vichian historicism, will concentrate, consistent with the aims of *Begriffsgeschichte*, on broader shifts occurring beyond political vocabularies. For example, the definition of historical time in Neapolitan Hegelians' imagination will be illustrated on the basis of changing conceptualisations of historical development, following a diachronic, transnational pattern connecting Victor Cousin's use of rational psychology alongside a Hegelian notion of development with Francesco De Sanctis' definition of a "dual", bi-directional, historiographical method, via Vincenzo Cuoco's problematisation of the two kinds of history presented in Vico's *Scienza nuova*. In a similar manner, chapter five will argue that a compelling understanding of Bertrando Spaventa's theory of European thought's circularity can be obtained not only by assessing the author's intention via contextual analysis, but also, and much more prominently, by viewing its formulation in connection with competing experiences of temporality and concepts of modernity emerging in a broader, European, intellectual space.

These examples highlight the need to take into account the temporal dimension of ideas and their use, hence going beyond the perspective of linguistic action and the synchronic analysis of languages, authorial intention and contexts. The Cambridge school would undoubtedly disagree with this agenda: already in 1985, for instance, Quentin Skinner took issue with the analysis of ideas beyond their "uses in arguments".⁹³ This objection appeared with even greater force in a 1988 work, stating that "in spite of the long continuities that have undoubtedly marked our inherent patterns of thought, [...] there can be no histories of concepts; there can only be histories of their uses in argument".⁹⁴ John Pocock would not

⁹³ Collini, S. (1985) *What Is Intellectual History?*, p. 51

⁹⁴ Skinner, Q. (1988) *Reply to My Critics*, p. 283

be sympathetic to the exploration of the temporal dimension of ideas, either, as he found himself in agreement with Skinner in conceiving intellectual history as “a history of things done with language”.⁹⁵

In this thesis, therefore, Koselleck’s *Begriffsgeschichte* will represent a formidable means of addressing how the dynamics of Hegel’s reception, as well as his philosophy of history’s merging with Vichian historicism, reflected deeper diachronic shifts in the conceptual morphology of notions of “time”, “history”, “progress” and “historical development”, going beyond their mere use in language. This is by no means a subtlety, as it demands, as highlighted by Koselleck himself, the inclusion of a broader array of sources in the definition of intellectual context.⁹⁶ Nowhere will this intuition be as evident as in chapter two: this, in fact, will point at the difficulties in identifying a continuity between Vichian historicism and Hegel’s *Geschichtsphilosophie* on the basis of a stringent contextual analysis alone. Rather, it will view their amalgamation in Naples in light of broader debates, taking place in Italy with Vincenzo Cuoco, Giandomenico Romagnosi and Carlo Cattaneo, and in France with Jules Michelet. These authors, by signalling diachronic conceptual shifts connected with notions of progress and historical development, paved the way for an increasingly idealist interpretation of *La scienza nuova*, ultimately enabling Neapolitan intellectuals to regard Vico’s masterpiece as fully complementary to Hegel’s idea of *Weltgeschichte*. As a result, the characterisation of Neapolitan Hegelianism provided in this thesis will be informed not only by the deployment of Hegel and Vico’s ideas in southern thinkers’ language and argumentation, but also by broader conceptual changes in the Koselleckian *Temporalgestalten*, namely the temporal categories adopted to interpret their ideas in the first place.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Pocock, J. G. A. (1996) *Concepts and Discourses: A Difference in Culture?*, p. 53

⁹⁶ Koselleck, R. (1987) *Sozialgeschichte und Begriffsgeschichte*, pp. 89-109; Koselleck, R. (1985) *Futures Past: on the Semantics of Historical Time*, pp. 107-29

⁹⁷ Koselleck, R. (2002) *The Practice of Conceptual History: Timing, History, Spacing Concepts*, p. 165

iv. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis will discuss Hegelianism's reception, circulation and revision among Neapolitan authors, as well as their contributions to the political thought of the Risorgimento and the definition of Italy's position in the cultural and political geography of modern Europe, over the course of five chapters. It will provide, in chapter one, an analysis of the intellectual exchanges that enabled Hegel's philosophy of history to access the Neapolitan intellectual context. More specifically, this section will begin by problematising and ultimately refuting the notion of a direct encounter between southern Italian and German thinkers during the early decades of the nineteenth century, consequently suggesting that idealist philosophy's dissemination in the Mezzogiorno took place via indirect avenues. It will then move on to illustrate the mediation of French intellectuals, particularly visible in Victor Cousin's *Fragments philosophiques*, in which the Frenchman's so-called "eclectic" method consisted of the use of a Hegelian notion of historical development alongside rational psychology. Lastly, drawing extensively on essays by Ottavio Colecchi and Pasquale Galluppi, as well as articles appearing in Neapolitan periodicals during the 1830s, penned by Stefano Cusani, Stanislao Gatti and Luigi Blanch, this chapter will examine how southern intellectuals matured a substantial knowledge of Hegelian philosophy of history, particularly an absolute understanding of historical development, by reflecting on Cousin's *Fragments*, dissecting his eclectic method and ultimately isolating its constitutive elements.

Chapter two, instead, will focus on the ongoing re-discovery of Giambattista Vico's philosophy of history during the early decades of the 1800s, as well as its systematic re-imagining in increasingly idealist terms. It will begin by problematising the presence of Vico's thought in the German intellectual landscape, claiming that a direct continuity between these two traditions of thought cannot be inferred on the basis of textual or contextual analysis alone. As a result, it will be necessary to view the idealist revision of Vichian history in light of broader debates, taking place both in Italy and abroad. Drawing extensively upon contributions by Jules Michelet in France, and Vincenzo Cuoco, Giandomenico Romangosi and Carlo Cattaneo in Italy, this chapter will examine a growing interest in concepts of progress, perfectibility and historical development, contributing to the emergence of an increasingly linear and teleological understanding of historical time, ultimately paving the way for a new

understanding of Vico's *Scienza nuova* that resonated well with the emerging European idealist sensitivities.

Chapter three will focus more closely on the phenomenon of Neapolitan private schools, seen as the context in which the amalgamation of Vico and Hegel's philosophies of history finally took place. It will begin with an account of these institutions' dissemination during the first half of the nineteenth century, and will posit, contrary to historiographical verdicts emphasising the Bourbons' allegedly repressive and illiberal attitude in educational matters, that their popularity was indeed the result of the crown's rather liberal approach to education in the Kingdom. This was revealed by their promotion of private initiatives, denoting an outlook that was indeed remarkably progressive, if plotted against other Italian states and European nations' reactions to the revolutionary events of 1820-23. The chapter will then discuss the presence of foreign, particularly German, philosophy in Neapolitan private schools: in their institutes, in fact, Pasquale Galluppi and Ottavio Colecchi engaged with Kantianism. Their use of Kantian categories, however, did not stem from a mere process of absorption. Rather, it was indebted to the systematic amalgamation of the German thinker's ideas with, unsurprisingly, Giambattista Vico's, enabling them to articulate a markedly anti-metaphysical reading of Kant's ideas, on the one hand, and further corroborating southern intellectuals' theorisation of thematic and methodological continuities between present-day German thought and the Neapolitan Enlightenment tradition, on the other.

Lastly, this chapter will move on to examine how Galluppi and Colecchi's attempts to merge local and foreign thought were perpetuated by members of the Hegelian Neapolitan generation in their private schools: while Stefano Cusani and Stanislao Gatti encouraged an encounter of Hegelianism and Vichianism along the anti-metaphysical lines theorised by their mentors, it was in Francesco De Sanctis' private school that the full merging of these two traditions ultimately took place. In an attempt to craft "an intimate union of philosophy and history, of the idea and the fact", by empowering Vichian historicism with a distinctly modern account of progress and liberating Hegel's *Weltgeschichte* from "pure abstraction", De Sanctis elaborated a bi-directional historiographical model, revolving around the dialectics of a

“historical method” (“metodo storico”) and a “logical method” (“metodo logico”), borrowed from Vico and Hegel, respectively.⁹⁸

Following this characterisation of Neapolitan Hegelianism, chapter four will discuss how these ideas were deployed in the context of the Italian Risorgimento, focusing, in particular, on the experience of the 1848 Revolution and debates on the Italian Unification. This section of the thesis will begin by examining the ways in which the historical memory of the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution permeated the definition and characterisation of an Italian national character in 1848. More importantly, the events of 1799 were slotted in a markedly Hegelian historical teleology, viewing revolutionary experiences as necessary steps in the progressive realisation of liberty in history. Neapolitan Hegelians’ contributions, appearing in the pages of the short-lived periodical *Il Nazionale*, aptly reflected the encounter of Hegelian and Vichian themes, as they viewed the movement of Hegel’s *Weltgeist* to depend on the realisation of tangible pre-conditions for political emancipation. This is why the writers of *Il Nazionale* believed it necessary for absolute freedom to latch onto man-made (in a Vichian sense) institutions and forms of social organisation. These were promptly identified, contrary to the prevailing political agendas of other 1848 revolutionaries, with the consolidation of an Italian nation-state and the strengthening of the Italian national character.

Having Neapolitan Hegelians thus established a direct ideological and philosophical link between the local experience of the Revolution and the broader issue of Italian emancipation and Unification, this chapter will then move on to discuss their reflections on these topics after 1848, focusing, in particular, on Silvio and Bertrando Spaventa’s historicised understanding of Hegelian freedom. Drawing attention to the emergence of profound discrepancies between Silvio and Bertrando’s use of Hegelian categories after the defeat of the 1848 Revolution, the aim of this chapter is to take issue with historiographical verdicts hinting at the use of Hegel’s ideas in support of liberal politics during the Risorgimento, concluding, instead, that they represented the philosophical backbone of a form of democratic constitutionalism initially embraced by Neapolitan revolutionaries in 1848.

Lastly, chapter five will investigate Neapolitan Hegelians’ engagement with competing narratives of European modernity and the mental geographies of the continent embedded therein. It will begin with an overview of European debates on the semantics of modern

⁹⁸ De Sanctis, F. (1975) *Purismo, illuminismo, storicismo. Scritti giovanili e frammenti di scuola. Lezioni*, I, pp. 70-71

historical time, leading to the progressive marginalisation and orientalisation of the Italian peninsula, following an intellectual tradition ranging from the French Enlightenment, Sismondi and Guizot, to De Stäel and Hegel. Italian reactions to these images of modernity varied: while intellectuals like Cesare Balbo, Giuseppe Ferrari and Giacomo Leopardi endorsed an orientalising reading of Italian history, Vincenzo Cuoco and Vincenzo Gioberti attempted to challenge the asymmetrical encounter of Italy and Europe, by invoking the notion of Italy's "historical primacy": the one associating it with the "ancient genius" of Italic populations, the other with the historical pre-eminence of the church in the country's history.

Neapolitan Hegelians' response to these debates was forceful: already in the 1830s, Stefano Cusani, Stanislao Gatti and Francesco De Sanctis had begun developing a transnational understanding of Europe's intellectual history, devising thematic and methodological continuities between local and foreign traditions of thought, in an attempt to negotiate a vantage point for Italy in the definition of a European philosophical modernity, and challenge the former's perceived peripheral status. Yet, it was in Bertrando Spaventa's theory of European thought's *circularity*, initially formulated in his 1860-61 lectures and later published with the title *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*, that the implications of this approach were most consistently drawn out. In *La filosofia italiana*, a formidable response to Gioberti's 1843 essay *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani*, Spaventa offered a historicised narrative of modern European philosophy: this, he believed, originated in Italy with Giordano Bruno and Tommaso Campanella; primarily thanks to the European dissemination of Giambattista Vico's ideas, then, Italian philosophy "went on to develop in freer lands and among freer intellects".⁹⁹ Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and, more importantly, Hegel, were thus seen as the "disciples" of sixteenth- and eighteenth-century Italian philosophers. Crucially, Spaventa's characterisation of modern thought as inherently "circular" entailed that the "return" of European philosophy to the Italian peninsula was already well underway: evidence of this, for Spaventa, was contemporary Italian thinkers' growing interest in Kantianism and Hegelianism.

By means of his powerful argument, Bertrando Spaventa succeeded not only in de-provincialising debates on the status of Italian philosophy *vis-à-vis* a European vision of modern thought, but also in re-imagining the encounter of Italian and European traditions in

⁹⁹ Spaventa, B. (1867) *Principii di filosofia*, p. 21

ways that did not invoke historically debatable notions of intellectual primacy, on the one hand, or viewed the relationship between the peninsula and the continent as an asymmetrical one, on the other. According to Bertrando, European philosophy was a constellation of traditions nonetheless brought together by their interdependence. Thanks to these groundbreaking reflections, that modern philosophy became, in Spaventa's Hegelian imagination, fully transnational and Naples a modern, European centre.

v. *Reimagining Naples' Past to Rethink its Present*

By the end of this thesis, it will hopefully be clear why Theodor Sträter spoke so enthusiastically of Neapolitan Hegelianism in 1864 and how this school of thought spearheaded a process of innovation in Italian, as well as in European intellectual history: thinkers in the southern capital saw themselves at the forefront of a philosophical movement hinging on ongoing transnational encounters and able to imbue the political history of the nineteenth century with a dramatic sense of historical necessity. Viewed from such a broad angle, this thesis is an attempt to disclose the historical, intellectual, philosophical and ideological forces that made Naples a centre of modernity during the Risorgimento, rather than a periphery in the moral geography of Europe and in response to an accelerated experience of historical time.

It is, however, impossible to discuss Neapolitan intellectual history without casting one's gaze on the present, too. Even in the twenty-first century, the image of Naples is still too often reduced to misgovernment, corruption, unemployment and criminality; its inhabitants frequently seen as lazy and unfit for civic and political life. This thesis is by no means an attempt to deny the socio-political problems riddling Naples today. It is, however, an encouragement to reflect critically on how much Neapolitan intellectuals' imagination has contributed to making sense of who we are, both as Italians and as Europeans. At a time when Naples and the South are too often cast off as a dead weight being carried around by the industrious, progressive, North, and when political language is still too frequently imbued by

a distinct anti-southern rhetoric, this is not only a desirable thing to do, but an urgent one, too.

1. The Making of Neapolitan Hegelians: Polycentric Idealism between the Local and the Transnational

1.1. Introduction

Have you read Hegel? This question, amusing and intimidating philosophy enthusiasts in equal measure, bears an extraordinary significance if seen in the context of nineteenth-century European intellectual history. As claimed by the French scholar Frederick Beiser, engaging with an author whose written output was nothing short of colossal, characterised by a dense language and a strikingly intricate argumentation, is “a trying and exhausting experience, the intellectual equivalent of chewing gravel”.¹ Reading Hegel was clearly no easy task for the intellectuals of the 1800s and the variety of interpretations that emerged is evident proof of this. Italy was no exception to this logic. In the peninsula, several, often conflicting readings on aspects of the German philosopher’s works were proposed. The Neapolitan philosopher Stefano Cusani, for example, who had engaged with his ideas via the French philosopher Victor Cousin’s writings, published, in 1839, an article entitled *Del metodo filosofico e d’una sua storia*, in which, reflecting on Hegel’s identification “of Idea and being, of thought and reality”, he understood his logic to consist of a “subjective” and an “objective” element.² By consequence, he argued, it was only via a composite account of empirically observable circumstances and ontological principles that Hegel came to set forth the blueprint of a new “general method”, aiming at “investigating the only universal truth”.³ Indeed, he reported that many of his contemporaries believed that the new philosophical method ought to be based on “psychological analysis”, seen as “the only base of the immense structure of philosophy, its only solid foundation”.⁴

Another interpretation could be found in the works of Giambattista Passerini, who, one year later, during his exile in Zurich, was the first to translate Hegel’s *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* into Italian. He supplemented the text with a rich introduction,

¹ Beiser, F. (2002) *Hegel*, p. 1

² Cusani, S. (1839a) *Del metodo filosofico e d’una sua storia infino agli ultimi sistemi di filosofia che sonosi venuti uscir fuori in Germania e Francia*, p. 211

³ *Ibid.*, p. 176

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 181

aiming to illustrate the place of the German thinker's philosophy of history within his broader idealist system of thought. In this introduction, Passerini highlighted how Hegel's logic underpinned virtually every single aspect of his thought, merging "with his metaphysics and ontology" and ultimately suggesting that "the logical motion of the Idea" could become "the reality itself of things" thanks to dialectical development.⁵

In 1845, then, the Italian philosopher Augusto Vera, who, at the time, was completing his doctoral dissertation in Paris, published an essay entitled *Problème de la certitude*, in which he provided a comprehensive illustration of how Hegel's logic and epistemology owed much to philosophical concerns originating among ancient Greek thinkers. His interpretation of Hegelianism, however, was largely tainted with elements of Platonism: positing a fundamental difference between the "idea-nature" ("Idée-nature") and the "idea-logic" ("Idée-logique"), Vera concluded that Hegel had indeed proposed the subordination of the "real nature" ("nature réelle") to the "ideal nature" ("nature idéale"), reflecting the tension between an "ideal spirit" ("esprit idéale") and a "real and personal spirit" ("esprit réelle et personnel").⁶

These three examples, which appear to bear little relation to one another, illustrate how, within the short span of six years, one could identify a striking variety of readings of Hegel among Italian authors. Cusani's interpretation bore traces of the French eclecticism of the 1820s and '30s, drawing Hegelian logic close – perhaps too close – to Kantian psychology. Passerini's example, instead, portrayed Hegel's logic as essentially based on the absolute identity of the ideal and the real, while Vera's interpretation went in the opposite direction, highlighting the fundamental dichotomy between the sphere of the ideal and the objective, on the one hand, and that of the real and the subjective, on the other.

A purely philosophical reading of these three interpretations would immediately identify their pitfalls, drawing attention to the misunderstanding of the German philosopher's dialectics they shared. Such an answer, however, would not be satisfactory for intellectual historians, whose work is concerned with decoding how local contexts, debates and forms of thought inform how ideas enter the public sphere, circulate, and come to be debated. Hegel's philosophy was illustrated, from the 1830s onwards, in so many different and often conflicting ways primarily because of the inhomogeneity of its local receptions. Yet, there is a significant

⁵ Passerini, G. (1840) *Filosofia della storia di Federico Hegel*, p. xxvi

⁶ Vera, A. (1845) *Problème de la certitude*, p. 133

risk connected to the notion of “local reception” itself, namely that this might be uncritically adopted and act as a very limiting framework of enquiry, forcing historians to view intellectual exchanges through the lens of a regional or a national narrative only.⁷ This is particularly problematic when it comes to the study of Hegel, a philosopher whose impact and popularity in the nineteenth century clearly transcended any local or national boundary.

A more comprehensive approach to the study of Hegel’s receptions is thus required: specifically, one able to establish a dialogue between its local and transnational dimensions. This, in turn, would be part of a broader effort, aiming at encouraging a closer integration of transnational paradigms in intellectual history. Returning for a moment to the example of Cusani may be helpful to better illustrate this intuition: his was not merely a misreading of Hegelian dialectics, as it clearly reflected precise dynamics of intellectual exchange between Naples, Germany and the rest of Europe, particularly France, where Victor Cousin’s works represented, for many years, the main source of information on Hegel. Tracing the intellectual history of Italian and, in particular, Neapolitan, Hegelianism requires an approach that, while insisting on the relationship between ideas and contexts, may be equally sensitive to cultural encounters taking place across national boundaries. It ought, therefore, to account for the polycentric nature of nineteenth-century European idealism, interrogating dynamics of transnational intellectual exchange, wider patterns of circulation, as well as the amalgamation of the local and the foreign.

Hegel’s Southern Italian reception can unquestionably provide the springboard for such methodological adjustments, given the growing interest in the German philosopher’s works throughout the 1840s and ‘50s in the capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, coupled with the variety of the ways in which these were interpreted. These ranged from Giambattista Ajello’s definition of idealism as an alternative to positivism, to Stanislao Gatti’s analysis of dialectics in connection with aesthetic theory; from Bertrando Spaventa’s use of Hegel’s philosophy of history in support of the unification of the country, to Silvio Spaventa’s reflections on the *ethical state*, to name only a few.

Reflecting on the very notion of “Neapolitan Hegelians”, therefore, a definition consisting, in a self-explanatory manner, of a “Neapolitan” and a “Hegelian” element,

⁷ Examples of this tendency can be found in: Oldrini, G. (1964a) *Gli hegeliani di Napoli: Augusto Vera e la corrente ortodossa*; Oldrini, G. (1973) *La cultura filosofica napoletana nell’ottocento*; Rossi, M. (1957) *Sviluppi dello hegelismo in Italia*

mirroring both the local and the transnational dimensions of this school of thought, ought to begin with the analysis of how Southern Italian idealism stood in relation to broader currents of European philosophy, showing the dynamics of encounter that enabled the penetration of German idealism in Naples. A direct exchange between Italian and German intellectuals is not sufficient to justify the emergence of a Southern idealist school, with debates taking place during the 1830s and '40s, especially in the southern capital, revealing a degree of hostility towards German philosophy and advocating the closure to foreign thought. These debates contributed to preventing the establishment of a direct channel of exchange between Naples and Germany. This chapter will therefore explain that, after an initial hesitation to discuss German philosophy, Neapolitans engaged with Hegel following the mediation of French authors, most notably Victor Cousin's, whose reading of the German thinker informed an extensive number of works written in the southern capital in the 1840s and generally published in local periodicals.

Another important feature of Hegel's Neapolitan reception is its dependence on the progressive attempts to disentangle his ideas from Cousin's interpretation, enabling local authors to come to see him as a theorist of historical time, on the one hand, and as the chief exponent of a modern and European philosophical sensitivity, on the other. Such an understanding of Hegelianism had important implications, with Neapolitan authors positing the need to complement the analysis of history's absolute and general conditions proposed by Hegel with the observation of its particular embodiments. In other words: while, by disaggregating Hegel from Cousin, intellectuals in Naples had become acquainted with modern idealism, their reflections on this philosophy soon paved the way for its revision, encouraging its amalgamation with the local tradition of thought.

Because Hegel's Neapolitan reception hinged on complex dynamics of encounter, transmission and circulation across national borders, and because it was connected with a revision of pure idealism, this chapter will also provide some methodological considerations: the emergence of a Hegelian school of philosophy in the capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies cannot be viewed only through the lens of local or national narratives. Rather, it must be slotted within the broader picture of a transnational history of ideas, accounting for a tri-polar relationship among Germany, France and Naples, and further reinforcing a polycentric understanding of nineteenth-century European idealism's nature.

Lastly, it is important to point out that this chapter, and this thesis in general, will not attempt to operate a systematic analysis of Hegel's philosophy, nor will it try to advance verdicts on his ideas: rather, by concentrating on the reception of some elements of his system of thought, it will keep the present inquiry firmly anchored within the framework of intellectual history; in consequence, the present discussion will not be concerned with Hegel *per se*, but only with certain interpretations of the philosopher, emerging from the various dynamics of reception and the debates connected to the latter.

1.2. *From Germany to Italy: The Exchange that Did Not Happen*

Recent scholarship on the Italian Risorgimento has frequently overlooked the role played by Neapolitan Hegelians in the cultural regeneration of the country, especially in connection with political debates taking place on the eve and during the years immediately following Unification.⁸ Studies that reflected more attentively on the presence of a fully-fledged Hegelian school in the Mezzogiorno, instead, especially the often-referenced monographs by Eugenio Garin, Guido Oldrini and Giuseppe Vacca, did not provide an adequate analysis of the intellectual exchanges determining its emergence.⁹ New developments in the study of Italian intellectual history, however, have drawn attention to the transnational dimension of cultural, philosophical and political debates taking place in the peninsula during the nineteenth century.¹⁰ Yet, an approach of this kind is yet to be adopted in connection with the study of Hegel's presence in the peninsula, especially in the South. This should not come as a surprise: elaborating a compelling account of Hegelianism's Italian reception is no simple

⁸ On this point, see "Background and Existing Literature" in the introduction of this thesis, especially pp. 25-27

⁹ Garin, E. (1983) *Filosofia e politica in Bertrando Spaventa*; Oldrini, G. (1989) *Gli hegeliani di Napoli e la costruzione dello stato unitario*; Vacca, G. (1967) *Politica e filosofia in Bertrando Spaventa*; see also: Arfé, G. (1952) *L'hegelismo napoletano e Bertrando Spaventa*; Berti, G. (1954) *Bertrando Spaventa, Antonio Labriola e l'hegelismo napoletano*; Landucci, S. (1963) *Il giovane Spaventa tra hegelismo e socialismo*, pp. 647-707

¹⁰ Davis, J. (2006) *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions, 1760-1860*; Isabella, M. (2009) *Risorgimento in Exile. Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era*; Kroll, T. & Jung, F. (2014) *Italien in Europa: Die Zirkulation der Ideen im Zeitalter Aufklärung*; Pécoult, G. (2012) *Pour une lecture méditerranéenne et transnationale du Risorgimento*; Petruszewicz, M. (2007) *Il Mediterraneo dopo Braudel: é possibile una nuova storiografia?*

task, given not only its remarkably complex and occasionally obscure dynamics, but also the presence of several contextual factors significantly undermining the circulation of German philosophy by and large.

A first obstacle to the reception and dissemination of Hegel's ideas in Italy was represented, it can be argued, by the different chronologies characterising the development and spread of idealism in Europe. In 1831, the year of Hegel's death, while his philosophy was beginning to appear in different parts of Europe, Hegelians in Germany were beginning to split along political battle-lines.¹¹ Proposing diverging readings of the philosopher's politics and metaphysics, they questioned the extent to which conditions in present-day Prussia fulfilled Hegel's ideals, with the Left maintaining that few, if any, did, and the Right believing that most, if not all, did.¹² Simply put, while Hegelianism was transforming into post-Hegelian critique in Germany, it was still in its infancy elsewhere in Europe. In fact, beginning in the same year, one can also observe the flourishing, especially among French and Italian intellectuals, of a more pronounced interest in the German thinker's writings.

A second issue was the fact that Italian intellectuals' initial efforts to engage with German philosophy, especially with Hegel, were not homogeneous, despite the remarkable circulation of foreign texts, in various parts of the Italian peninsula. In the early- and mid-nineteenth-century, for example, German authors were undoubtedly very present in Lombard cultural landscape. August Wilhelm Schlegel's 1809 *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur*, whose 1814 French edition had been read and admired by Alessandro Manzoni, were translated by Giovanni Gherardini in 1817 and studied by Giuseppe Verdi.¹³ An Italian translation of Friedrich Schlegel's *Geschichte der alten und neuen Literatur*, penned by Francesco Ambrosoli, appeared in 1828.¹⁴ In Milan, Andrea Maffei, who frequently collaborated with Verdi, translated and published several plays by Friedrich von Schiller and contributed to the composer's 1847 opera *I masnadieri* with a libretto based on *Die Räuber*.¹⁵

¹¹ Toews, J. E. (1980) *Hegelianism: The Path Towards Dialectical Humanism, 1805-1841*, pp. 203-23; 232-34; McLellan, D. (1969) *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*, pp. 15-16, 22-25

¹² Beiser, F. (2002), pp. 307-11; Beiser, F. (2011) *Hegel and Hegelianism*, pp. 140-46; Toews, J. E. (1993) *Transformation of Hegelianism*, pp. 387-91

¹³ Schlegel, A. W. (1817) *Corso di letteratura drammatica del signor A. W. Schlegel*. Gherardini, G. (ed., trans.); Körner, A. (2013) *Masked Faces. Verdi, Uncle Tom and the Unification of Italy*, p. 184; Körner, A. (2017) *America in Italy. The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763-1865*, p. 186

¹⁴ Schlegel, F. (1828) *Storia della letteratura antica e moderna*. (Ambrosoli, F., trans.)

¹⁵ Two more plays by Verdi were based on plays by Schiller, too: *Luisa Miller*, premiered in December 1849 in Naples, was based on *Kabale und Liebe*, on a libretto by Salvatore Cammarano; *Don Carlos*, premiered in Paris in 1867, was composed to a French-language libretto by Joseph Méry and Camille du Locle, based on Schiller's

Giandomenico Romagnosi, whose articles and reviews appearing in *Annali universali di statistica* and *Biblioteca italiana* showed an interest in Kant's philosophy, contributed, in 1832, to the Italian translation of Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie*.¹⁶ Additionally, in his 1830 *Nuovo saggio sull'origine delle idee*, Antonio Rosmini spoke very critically of Kantianism, but, in directing his readers' attention to the perceived shortcomings of this philosophy, he nonetheless brought it into circulation.¹⁷

Despite these Germanophile attitudes, Hegelianism never took centre stage in the Lombard intellectual context of the early- and mid-nineteenth century, with the first systematic illustration of this school of thought appearing only in Rosmini's posthumous *Teosofia* in 1859.¹⁸ Romagnosi's observations on Hegel, for example, presented in the 1832 essay *Alcuni pensieri sopra un'altra metafisica filosofia della storia*, remained limited to a few derogatory remarks on the 1820 *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* and signalled, according to Martin Thom "only a second-hand knowledge" of this text.¹⁹ In a similar manner, Cattaneo's observations on the German philosopher remained limited to the postulation of a direct continuity between Vichian historicism and Hegel's philosophy of history, and, as chapter two of this thesis will show, they were more relevant to Vico's nineteenth-century re-discovery than Hegel's reception in Milan.

In Tuscany, the periodical *Antologia* was founded in 1821 by Gian Pietro Vieusseux and Gino Capponi on the model of the Parisian *Revue encyclopédique*.²⁰ The journal championed a cosmopolitan orientation and, as Vieusseux's correspondence with local and foreign intellectuals revealed, it directly aimed at giving special visibility to English, French, American and German literary and political debates.²¹ In addition, Giuseppe Montanelli, who

Don Carlos, Infant von Spanien. On Schlegel and Schiller's reception in Italy, see: Kostka, E. (1997) *Schiller in Italy: Schiller's Reception in Italy: 19th and 20th Centuries*; Unfer Lukoschik, R. (2004) *Friedrich Schiller in Italien (1785-1861): Eine quellengeschichtliche Studie*

¹⁶ Romagnosi, G. D. (1828) *Esposizione storico-critica del kantismo e delle consecutive dottrine*, I, pp. 575-605; Tennemann, W. G. (1832) *Manuale della storia della filosofia*. Poli, B. & Romagnosi, G. D. (eds.) (Longhena, F., trans.)

¹⁷ Rosmini, A. (1830) *Nuovo saggio sull'origine delle idee*, I, pp. 317-403

¹⁸ Rosmini, A. (1859) *Teosofia*, I, pp. 14-15, 117-30; II, pp. 19-48; 113-128; III, pp. 230-41

¹⁹ Thom, M. (1995) *Republics, Nations and Tribes*, p. 297; Romagnosi, G.D. (1832) *Alcuni pensieri sopra un'altra metafisica filosofia della storia*, pp. 61-76; see also: Croce, B. (1921) *Storia della storiografia italiana nel secolo decimonono*, I, p. 23

²⁰ On the fortune of *Antologia*, see: Carpi, U. (1974) *Letteratura e società nella Toscana del Risorgimento. Gli intellettuali dell'"Antologia"*; Prunas, P. (1906) *L'"Antologia" di Gian Pietro Vieusseux. Storia di una rivista italiana*; Zazo, E. (1945) *Antologia della "Antologia" (1821-1832)*

²¹ Isabella, M. (2009), p. 24; see, for example: Frénes, A. (1888) *Jean Pierre Vieusseux d'après sa correspondance avec J.C.L. De Sismondi*, pp. 34-36; Rossi, P. (4.3.1821) *Lettera a Gian Pietro Vieusseux*, IV, p. 255

frequently collaborated with *Antologia* and was a great admirer of Friedrich Schiller and the Schlegels, taught civil and commercial law at the University of Pisa together with Giovanni Carmignani, adopting an approach derived from Kant and Savigny.²² As it was the case in Milan, however, German idealist philosophy was not quite central to Tuscan intellectuals' preoccupations, with the only substantial attempt to bring this tradition into circulation being limited to Giovanni Battista Niccolini's anonymously published translation of Schelling's 1802 *Über Dante in philosophischer Beziehung* in 1844.²³ Commenting on the relative lack of interest in Hegel among Tuscan authors, Bertrando Spaventa reported that he could not find a single book discussing idealist philosophy in Florence, where he spent "ten months yawning" between 1848 and 1849.²⁴

In Piedmont, the periodical *Il subalpino*, on which numerous works by the Tuscan Montanelli appeared, published an anonymous translation of Schlegel's 1808 essay *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* in 1838.²⁵ Additionally, it featured several articles reflecting on Schlegel and Schiller's contributions to contemporary European literature.²⁶ In Turin, Vincenzo Gioberti frequently engaged with German philosophy. His 1838 *Teorica del sovrannaturale*, for example, applauded Kant's proposition of synthetic, *a priori* judgments for mediating "with clarity and precision" between the sensible and the intelligible.²⁷ Furthermore, in *Introduzione allo studio della filosofia*, published between 1839 and 1840, Gioberti discussed his own "ontologism" as an alternative to the psychologist tendencies of Kantianism.²⁸ Interestingly, in attempting to overcome this philosophy's perceived limits, Gioberti also warned against a reliance on the "squandered and abstract metaphysics" invoked by German idealists to solve the problems posited by Kant.²⁹ Lastly, Gioberti's best-

²² Körner, A. (2017), p. 145; see, for example: Carmignani, G. (1841) *Prodrómo d'un insegnamento della filosofia del diritto*, pp. 1-26; Montanelli, G. (1841) *Prolusione alle lezioni di diritto patrio*, pp. 43-60; on Montanelli's interest in Schiller, see: Luseroni, G. (1996) *Giuseppe Montanelli e il Risorgimento: la formazione e l'impegno civile e politico prima del '48*, pp. 45-52, 104; on his interest in the Schlegels, instead, see: Rosselli, N. (1946) *Giuseppe Montanelli*, p. 101

²³ Niccolini, G. B. (1844) *Considerazioni filosofiche di F.G.G. Schelling sopra Dante*, pp. 263-72

²⁴ Spaventa, B. (1851) *Studii sopra la filosofia di Hegel*, p. 10

²⁵ *Il Subalpino* (1838) *Essai sur la langue et la philosophie des Indiens par Frederic Schlegel*, pp. 78-80

²⁶ see, for example: Grassi, G. (1837a) *Dell'arte tragica*, pp. 29-38; Grassi, G. (1837b) *Della esterior forma e dei soggetti della tragedia*, pp. 116-30; Grassi, G. (1837c) *Dello stile*, pp. 209-18

²⁷ Gioberti, V. (1838) *Teorica del sovrannaturale*, pp. 57, 360-70

²⁸ Gioberti, V. (1840) *Introduzione allo studio della filosofia*, III, p. 62, 100-02

²⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 240-45

known work, the 1843 essay *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani*, sought to elaborate an almost deterministic philosophy of history that incorporated elements of Hegel's dialectics.³⁰

The Turinese philosopher's use of Hegel, however, remained quite problematic, for three reasons: first, references to the German thinker were not accompanied by a systematic discussion of his ideas, which significantly undermined their circulation in the northern Italian context. Second, Gioberti reduced Hegelianism to a form of "pantheism", a position which Hegel himself had repeatedly rejected in his own works.³¹ Third, by positing that "Italy features within itself, mainly thanks to religion, all the necessary conditions for its national and political Risorgimento, without resorting to inner turmoil, or foreign imitation or intervention", Gioberti's *Primato* made it clear that preference ought to be given to internal rather than external forces in the promotion of Italy's unification and cultural regeneration, *de facto* discouraging any form of openness toward foreign thought, including German idealism.³²

By the late 1830s and early '40s, idealist philosophers, especially Hegel, were at the margins of debates taking place in many parts of the Italian peninsula and their ideas were not enjoying significant circulation. Naples, however, constituted a different scenario, where local intellectuals were already beginning, during the same years, to reflect much more consistently on German idealism, particularly on Fichte and Schelling.³³ Hegel, however, was not yet receiving the attention he deserved, at least according to Bertrando Spaventa, who, in 1851, recounted that Neapolitan intellectuals' interest in "Kant's works, Fichte's *doctrine of science* and Schelling's transcendental idealism" during the late 1830s and early '40s did not correspond to an equal fascination for "Hegel's most fundamental works".³⁴ This naturally raises the questions of how the ideas of the best-known exponent of German idealism

³⁰ Gioberti, V. (1843a) *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani*, I, pp. 410-53

³¹ *ibid.*, pp. 9, 419, 448; see also: Gioberti, V. (1843b) *Degli errori filosofici di Antonio Rosmini*, pp. 12-13; Hegel rejected pantheism on the basis of its incompatibility with the notion of Spirit and two perceived fallacies: that it regarded existence "as a nullity" and that it entailed the absence of "dialectical development". See: Hegel, G. W. F. (1829) *Vorlesungen über die Beweise vom Dasein Gottes*, pp. 487-501

³² Gioberti, V. (1843a), II, p. 50

³³ Among these texts, published in Naples, one can mention: Galluppi, P. (1841a) *Mémoire sur le système de Fichte ou considérations philosophiques sur l'idéalisme transcendantal et sur le rationalisme absolu*, pp. 31-155; Galluppi, P. (1841b) *Risultamenti del criticismo di Kant in Germania – dottrina di Fichte*, pp. 23-28; Galluppi, P. (1841c) *Panteismo di Schelling e di Hegel*, pp. 29-39; Galluppi, P. (1842) *Considerazioni filosofiche su l'idealismo trascendentale e sul razionalismo assoluto*, pp. 9-32; Blanch, L. (1836) *Destination de l'homme de Fichte. Traduit de l'allemand par Barchou de Penhoen*, pp. 3-24.

³⁴ Spaventa, B. (1851), p. 9

managed to enter the philosophical landscape of nineteenth-century Naples and, more specifically, what the channels of this transnational intellectual encounter were.

The most obvious challenge to nineteenth-century Italian authors' engagement with Hegel was language. Regardless of the sheer complexity and occasional obscurity of the philosopher's vocabulary, very few Italian intellectuals could read his works in German. Moreover, these thinkers usually approached various aspects of Hegel's thought using concepts borrowed from their own pre-existing philosophical beliefs. In consequence, they artificially forced their own intellectual preoccupations onto Hegel's ideas, in ways that led to frequent mis-representations of the latter. Examining Hegel's reception in connection with the mentalities that initially informed it can counter certain scholarly verdicts, which adopt a 'history of philosophy' approach and are relatively insensitive to how the emergence of Neapolitan Hegelianism was directly shaped by local contexts and debates. For example: historians of philosophy have often argued that the Calabrian philosopher Pasquale Galluppi played a central role in the development of Neapolitan Hegelianism, given that he repeatedly referred to the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* in his works.³⁵ However, as will be explained shortly, Galluppi approached Hegel's philosophy from the perspective of Kantianism and, as a result, he did not substantially contribute to debates on idealist *Geschichtsphilosophie* that would later become Neapolitan Hegelians' main concern.

Galluppi, who was the first southern author to engage with Hegel's ideas in their original language, was born in the Calabrian town of Tropea, and was appointed professor of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Naples in 1831. His appointment was, in itself, a rather ground-breaking event: his chair had been left vacant since 1826. The minister of Internal Affairs in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Nicola Santangelo, believed that public education ought to contemplate the latest developments in European modern thought, and suggested that Galluppi, whose interest in Kant's philosophy was well-known in academic circles, would indeed be the most apposite candidate.³⁶ This choice marked a significant shift in the intellectual orientation of the university, clearly willing to engage with present-day Italian, as well as foreign, philosophical debates. However, Galluppi's appointment, formally

³⁵ Di Giovanni, P. (1996) *Kant e Hegel in Italia. Alle origini del neoidealismo*, pp. 12-24; Rossi, M. (1957), pp. 6-61

³⁶ Archivio di Stato di Napoli (ASN), Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (1806-1865), *Professori della R. Università (1830-1833)*, f. 559, "Domanda inoltrata da Pasquale Galluppi a Nomina di Professore di Logica e Metafisica dell'Università"; f. 560, "Richiesta di Sovrana Approvazione per la Nomina di Pasquale Galluppi a Professore di Logica e Metafisica della R. Università"

made by the university council and endorsed by the king was greeted with hostility by Francesco Colangelo, the president of the Public Education Council of the Kingdom. In a letter to the French philosopher Victor Cousin written in June 1839, Galluppi described Colangelo as his “gratuitous persecutor”, having labelled his philosophy and his teaching “pantheistic and enemies of the Revelation”.³⁷ Colangelo’s opposition greatly limited the dissemination of Galluppi’s views on European thought and, in consequence, it partly undermined local intellectuals’ discovery of German philosophy: the Calabrian philosopher’s professorship was indefinitely suspended in 1833 and his lectures were subject to tight censorship, being only published in 1845 with the title *Lezioni di logica e metafisica*.

These lectures revealed a first genuine, yet rather timid, attempt to engage with the problem sitting at the core of German idealism. When reflecting on Kant, for instance, Galluppi suggested that the latter, due to the very nature of his own system of thought, had failed to recognise the existence of a “primitive truth” independent from the logic of his rational psychology and from *a priori* cognition.³⁸ What Galluppi called for, was a new “experimental philosophy” of “exterior causes”, an attempt to amend the shortcomings of Kantianism, by selectively appropriating notions borrowed from idealist philosophy.³⁹ Despite the difficulties encountered by Galluppi in engaging with Hegelianism in his university lectures, local periodicals, whose activities fell beyond Colangelo’s jurisdiction, offered him a platform to reflect on this philosophical system.

The 1842 article *Considerazioni filosofiche su l’idealismo trascendentale e sul razionalismo assoluto* and two *Lettere on Fichte, Schelling ed Hegel*, published in the periodical *Museo di letteratura e filosofia*, revealed a certain degree of acquaintance with the idealist doctrine, albeit one that portrayed Hegelianism as a revised form of Kantianism.⁴⁰ In the second *Lettera*, Galluppi wrote:

The starting point, for Hegel, is the Idea. The Idea, according to him, encompasses Being and, at the same time, identifies itself with Being. In other words: *that which is rational is real*. This is how Hegel expresses himself [...]. Logic – as generally adopted – teaches that judgment is a combination of ideas and that Reason a combination of judgments. Human thought at large, therefore, is a

³⁷ Galluppi, P. (1839) *Lettera a Cousin del 4 Giugno 1839*, p. 69

³⁸ Galluppi, P. (1845) *Lezioni di logica e metafisica*, p. 286. Galluppi believed Kant’s account of *a priori* cognition to be limited to the inference of the conditions of possible experiences, hence still requiring an empirical content to result in actual knowledge. This, for Galluppi, meant that Kant’s system was fundamentally unable to access those “fundamental, primitive truths” on which philosophy must reflect.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 206

⁴⁰ Galluppi, P. (1842), pp. 9-32; Galluppi, P. (1841b), pp. 23-28; Galluppi, P. (1841c), pp. 29-39

combination of ideas. Judgment, Reason and ideas are to be regarded as various modifications of the thinking subject. Abstract from the thinking subject: you will be left with ideas. Grant unity to this constellation of ideas: you will be left with the One Idea. Call, then, the different combinations of ideas *movements* or *movements of the One Idea*. Grant this Idea absolute existence. Consider this Idea in its objective value, just like vulgar Idealism considers the agglomeration of all ideas. Thus you will come to Hegel's idealist pantheism.⁴¹

Galluppi clearly did not reflect on the 1817 *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* in great depth, and remained anchored to a rather nebulous definition of idealism, unsupported by a concrete effort to disaggregate Fichte and Schelling's philosophies from Hegel's. Something even more problematic, however, was that Galluppi's interpretation appears to have been greatly informed by his notorious interest in Kant, revealed by the definition of ideas as "abstraction" stemming from the "thinking subject", hinting not only at the alterity of the ideal and the real, but also at the subordination of the former to the latter. This, therefore, reflected a reading of the *Enzyklopädie* largely informed by the critic's Kantian inclination. In short, while Galluppi was undoubtedly one of the first Italian intellectuals to engage with Hegel's works and, even more remarkably, was able to do so without resorting to translations, he ultimately offered little more than a misrepresentation of the philosopher's ideas, due to an uncritical equation of Hegelianism and Kantianism.

Galluppi was not, however, the only intellectual able to engage with German idealism in its original language: his contemporary Ottavio Colecchi, whose private school of philosophy, as chapter three of this thesis will show, forged the bulk of the Neapolitan Hegelian generation, must also be mentioned. The most notable among Colecchi's students, Bertrando Spaventa, remembered his teacher in Turin in 1851, three years after the latter's death, highlighting that:

In the last years of his life, [Colecchi] had already started examining some aspects of Hegel's philosophy, and he held them very dearly, despite the fact that, in some earlier writings, he had labelled the entire philosophical movement taking place in Germany after Kant *ephemeral* and *inconsistent*.⁴²

Spaventa's testimony already identified Kant's philosophy, rather than Hegel's, as Colecchi's chief concern and so it is possible to draw an interesting parallel between the two earliest interpreters of the German idealist thinker in Naples. In the same way as Galluppi lamented the need to move beyond Kant by overcoming the limitations of *a priori* cognition, Colecchi

⁴¹ Galluppi, P. (1841c), p. 39

⁴² Spaventa, B. (1851), p. 9

believed that philosophy ought to depart from “reflections on the phenomena of consciousness”, investigating analytic truths before accounting for synthetic judgments.⁴³ In Hegel, Colecchi argued, one could find a compelling amalgamation of the two natures of knowledge, accounting for both its synthetic and its analytic nature.⁴⁴ It is possible, at this point, to notice how Colecchi’s discussion relied on characteristically Kantian concepts. It is therefore clear that, far from being motivated by a genuine interest in German idealism, let alone in Hegel’s philosophy of history, Colecchi’s approach to Hegelianism was entirely functional to his own revision of Kant. It is no surprise, in this sense, that Giovanni Gentile, in 1912, argued that, despite attempting to overcome Kantian dualism by means of Hegel’s logic, Colecchi did not manage to move beyond the problems that had riddled the philosopher from Königsberg:

The epistemological problem – relating to that particular kind of epistemology that, if appropriately explored in its historical development, had already emerged as a problem in Germany and, emerging as a new metaphysics, in Italy, too – remained, in Galluppi’s thought, the fundamental philosophical problem.⁴⁵

At any rate, problematising the extent to which Galluppi and Colecchi assisted Hegel’s Neapolitan reception does not mean that these two thinkers should be relegated to the margins of the local intellectual landscape. Rather, as chapter three of this thesis will explain, their anti-metaphysical reading of Kantianism established links between German philosophy and the local tradition. This perspective, which emphasised continuities between Kant and Vico’s ideas, would later serve as a model for a number of authors, such as Stefano Cusani, Stanislao Gatti and Bertrando Spaventa, who sought to merge Vichian historicism and Hegelian *Geschichtsphilosophie*.

Kant’s philosophy was not the only framework within which Italian authors initially engaged with Hegel’s thought. Domenico Mazzoni travelled from his hometown of Prato to Berlin in 1835, where he acquainted himself with the local debates on idealism and met some

⁴³ Colecchi, O. (1837a) *Sull’analisi e sulla sintesi teorica di Vittorio Cousin. Suo esame*, p. 190

⁴⁴ Colecchi almost certainly derived this intuition from a particular passage of *Wissenschaft der Logik*: “The method of absolute cognition is to this extent analytic. That it finds the further determination of its initial universal simply and solely in that universal, is the absolute objectivity of the Notion, of which objectivity the method is the certainty. But the method is no less synthetic, since its subject matter, determined immediately as a simple universal, by virtue of the determinateness which it possesses in its very immediacy and universality, exhibits itself as an other”. (Hegel, G. W. F. (1816) *Wissenschaft der Logik*, p. 194).

⁴⁵ Gentile, G. (1912a) *I primordii dell’hegelismo in Italia*, p. 184

of Hegel's own students, most notably exponents of the growing Hegelian Right. Upon returning to Italy in 1837, he began working on the translation of the *Wissenschaft der Logik*, but the volume remained unfinished. Yet, some of his manuscripts also featured some references to Hegel's *Enzyklopädie* and the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*.⁴⁶ It is interesting to note how a close friend and biographer of Mazzoni's, Carlo Gatti, pointed out that the former, "upon departing from Germany, began adopting a historical method of inquiry much more consistently".⁴⁷ Mazzoni's reading of Hegel, it can be argued, had a significant impact on his understanding of knowledge as the result of an unchangeable historical process, based on the very Hegelian identity of philosophy and its history. In an 1841 letter to the founder of *Antologia* Gian Pietro Vieusseux, in fact, Mazzoni wrote that "philosophical science is a process and is a form of development".⁴⁸

This intuition lay at the core of his most ambitious project: writing a history of modern philosophy that would also include the most recent debates taking place in Germany. He clarified his intention in an 1843 letter to Marquis Gino Capponi, claiming that his observation of "various philosophical systems from a purely scientific point of view" had urged him to attempt to put together "a critical history of modern philosophy, in which systems would be regarded as intimately connected, so as to form a proper treatise of the science itself".⁴⁹ This would enable him to "demonstrate how, across these various systems, thought develops itself and runs through its various stages", ultimately showing that "one philosophical system relates to another, and that the history of philosophy features, within itself, an account of its own development".⁵⁰

It is possible to notice how Mazzoni appears to have engaged with Hegel's thought much more extensively than Galluppi and Colecchi had, given his interest in the convergence of history and philosophy. Mazzoni's philosophical understanding of history therefore signalled a certain awareness of the German thinker's *Vorlesungen*. In spite of that, a brief analysis of his intellectual agenda would inevitably reveal a fundamental flaw in his interpretation. Mazzoni, in fact, consistently misrepresented Hegel, as he tried to describe medieval Italian scholastic philosophers as forerunners of the great German thinker. His

⁴⁶ Quoted in: Losacco, M. (1911a) *D. Mazzoni lettore di filosofia nel Collegio Forteguerra*, p. 32

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 52

⁴⁸ Quoted in: Losacco, M. (1911b) *Educazione e pensiero*, p. 179

⁴⁹ Quoted in: Capponi, G. (1890) *Lettere di Gino Capponi e di altri a lui*, VI, p. 213

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

overall intellectual project admittedly aimed at drawing idealism closer to Italian thought, by “resuscitating the ancient Italian science of St Anselm, St Thomas and the Divine Poet Alighieri, as they all held Hegel’s thought in its full force”. In Anselm’s *Monologium* and *Proslogium*, Mazzoni believed to have found a very Hegelian proposition, namely that “faith is Reason presenting itself as instinct, albeit not yet unfolded; and even at this stage it knows it holds the truth and it is not mistaken in believing so; however, after this initial step, it wants to fully and clearly contemplate that truth which constitutes its postulated content; in doing so, it deifies itself: it elevates and conjoins itself to God”.⁵¹

In Mazzoni’s analysis, Anselm’s discussion of Reason mirrored Hegel’s idea that, in order to create knowledge, “it is imperative to begin with an immediately perceivable element, since one can only begin this way and then, via a logical and rationally unfolding reasoning, it is necessary to demonstrate and explain this element, hence returning to the starting point”.⁵² It can be said, therefore, that, despite Mazzoni’s evident recognition of the self-reflective character of Hegelian Reason, his reading of the German philosopher forced notions borrowed from scholastic philosophy onto contemporary idealism, as noticeable in the analysis of the intellect’s relationship with faith. His attempt to establish a direct connection between the Italian scholastic tradition and nineteenth-century idealism was arbitrary and problematic, as it led to the systematic distortion and misrepresentation of many important Hegelian concepts. Moreover, his ideas cannot be said to have significantly enabled the circulation of Hegel’s ideas: just as his translation of the *Wissenschaft der Logik* remained unfinished, the history of philosophy he had planned to write never saw the light of day. As Giovanni Gentile observed, Mazzoni’s understanding of idealism can only be inferred from his correspondence with Gino Capponi, with his general intellectual profile being labelled “of no interest for the history of philosophy”.⁵³

A last Italian intellectual who engaged with Hegel’s works in German was Giambattista Passerini. Even in his case, the author’s discussion of nineteenth-century idealist philosophy did not entail an accurate representation of this school of thought. Having travelled to Germany between 1824 and 1827, Passerini was able to meet Hegel himself, as well as well as Friedrich Schleiermacher and the group known as the “Young Hegelians”. Passerini’s

⁵¹ Ibid., pp. 215-16

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Gentile, G. (1912a), p. 103

engagement with members of the Hegelian Left reverberated in his exegesis of Hegel's works. His most notable initiative, in this sense, was the 1840 translation – the very first from German to Italian – of the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, which, thanks to the inclusion of an introduction, also published separately as *Sulla filosofia della storia*, can provide an accurate understanding of Passerini's interpretation. This translation, as argued by Guido Oldrini, had an extremely limited circulation in the peninsula and was read only by Neapolitan Hegelians during the second half of the 1840s, at a time when Hegel's ideas were already being widely discussed in the southern capital.⁵⁴ It also reflected a particular reading of Hegelian historicism that signalled how the context of Berlin in the mid-1820s, especially the relationship with the Young Hegelians, had paved the way for a very specific reception of Hegel's thought. By 1840, Passerini had not only matured a rather substantial knowledge of the *Vorlesungen*, but also attempted to overcome some of its perceived limitations. In the introduction, he stated:

Philosophy of history is a part of philosophy that is not yet fully understood by many; it still finds many opponents among those who only hold some confused and indeterminate notions of it. According to some, philosophy of history is nothing but a series of political and moral reflections backed by historical accounts, while, according to others, it consists of the mere application of a psychological approach to the history of nations; these two positions do not quite capture that which is necessary and divine in history: the progressive manifestation of Spirit, and the invariable laws governing it, in its course, toward a determined goal. Individual nations' history ought not to be part of philosophy of history, unless one considers how said nations have contributed to the overall progress and to the development of an Idea. Generally speaking, there are three ways to consider history: a theological one, considering humanity in its perceived perpetual decadence; a political one, viewing humanity as entangled in a neverending and constantly uniform cycle of progress and decadence [...]; the third one, instead, is the sole true and philosophical way, as it considers humanity as progressive, and striving for an absolutely determined perfection and goal.⁵⁵

This introduction, however, also featured Passerini's critique of Hegel's notion of a *philosophical history*, reflecting, in turn, Young Hegelians' influence on his formation: echoing August Cieszkowski's objections of the philosopher, Passerini pointed out that, due to the actual nature of his views of history, Hegel "fails to see progress in the future", and ultimately "regarded his own philosophy, as well as the Prussian monarchy, as the endpoint and realisation of everything".⁵⁶ More specifically, he reported that:

⁵⁴ Oldrini, G. (1964b) *La genesi dello hegelismo napoletano*, p. 431

⁵⁵ Passerini, G. (1840), p. v

⁵⁶ Passerini, G. (1840), p. xx

The main problem with Hegel, as highlighted by one of his disciples, Cieszkowski, is that he did not take the future into account. Humanity's history is, however, ongoing, and our time is far from being the ultimate expression and endpoint we can reach. As a result, if one wants to provide a substantial partition of history, the future must be included in it.⁵⁷

Passerini would then further illustrate his positions and concomitantly depart from Hegel in later writings, but, already in his introduction to the 1840 translation of Hegel's *Vorlesungen*, it is possible to obtain clear indications regarding the coordinates of his reception.⁵⁸ This was evidently informed by the context of the Young Hegelians with whom he liaised in Berlin: their agenda, in fact, appears to have been at the very centre of Passerini's intellectual concerns.

Once again, it is difficult to see Passerini as a channel of direct exchange between Hegel and Italy, partly due to the very limited circulation of his 1840 book and partly due to the extent to which his representation of German idealism stemmed from a speculative inclination that did not disaggregate Hegel's ideas from those of his critics in Berlin. Galluppi, Colecchi, Mazzoni and Passerini, at this point, seem to have shared some common traits, as their readings of Hegel were generally selective, being systematically filtered through the lens of various philosophical agendas: Kantianism, Scholasticism and the Young Hegelians' critique. In addition, their written output, being very limited in size and circulation, cannot justify the pervasiveness of debates on Hegel that would take place during the Risorgimento, let alone their emphasis on his *Geschichtsphilosophie*, as well as the range of the latter's interpretations. The direct engagement of some of the peninsula's intellectuals with their German counterparts seems, in this sense, to be only marginal as regards Hegelianism's fortune in the peninsula. This, in turn, entails the need to examine indirect patterns of

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. xxvii-xxviii; Cieszkowski lamented, in his *Prolegomena to Historiosophy*, the inadequate consideration of the future in Hegel's *Vorlesungen*. (Cieszkowski, F. (1838) *Prolegomena to Historiosophy*, p. 52). The critique of the Prussian State as the endpoint of history, instead, was notoriously common to the entire circle of the Young Hegelians. See, on this point: Russ, A. R. (2013) *The Illusion of History: Time and the Radical Political Imagination*, pp. 121-22; Stedman Jones, G. (2018) *The Young Hegelians, Marx and Engels*, pp. 556-66

⁵⁸ In the 1863 *Pensieri filosofici*, for example he re-stated: "The philosophical partition of history must be able to accommodate the future, too. [...] Hegel's mistake is not to take that into account. The Prussian government was, for him the *non plus ultra* of perfection, just like his system the coronation and completion of philosophy" (Passerini, G. (1863) *Pensieri filosofici*, p.138). He also supplemented this critique with a rejection of Hegelian dialectics: "Hegel's trichotomous system of opposites and a medium is artificial, because one can pick two extremes in any series and find the middle point between them" (ibid., p. 68); Passerini's departure from Hegel appeared now imminent, as his critique began targeting the most basic aspect of the German philosopher's logic. Commenting on the Hegelian equation of the real and the rational, in fact, Passerini argued that "that which exists is rational; but there is nothing in his System that can be said to truly exist; moreover, the only rational thing is the process of becoming, namely that which develops and goes" (ibid., p. 193). This was strikingly similar to Engels' critique on the same topic presented in his 1886 *Feuerbach* (see Engels, F. (1866) *Ludwig Feuerbach und der Ausgang der klassischen deutschen Philosophie*, p. 5)

circulation and dissect whatever process of mediation enabled the penetration of Hegel's ideas in Italy. In consequence, in order to gain a more substantial understanding of this process of exchange, one ought to enlarge the scope of the inquiry and come to investigate indirect trajectories and avenues, too. One of these, in fact, holds the answers to these questions and it is a very precise one indeed, connecting Germany to Naples, via France.

1.3. The Grand Tour of Idealism: From Germany to France

It should be clear, at this point, that, in order to construct a convincing account of Hegel's Italian – and in particular Neapolitan – reception, it is necessary to take into account the way in which French intellectuals of the nineteenth century engaged with his works, ultimately providing the particular specific representation of absolute idealism that was received in the peninsula. The dissemination of Hegel's ideas in France, however, was far more complex than traditional historiographical accounts hold. Twentieth-century intellectual historians often argued, in fact, that a substantial knowledge of Hegel was not observable in France prior to the publication of Jean Hyppolite's 1946 volume *Genèse et structure de la phénoménologie de Hegel*, or Kojève's 1947 *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*.⁵⁹ The main problem with these verdicts, as pointed out by Andrea Bellantone in his book *Hegel en France*, is that they placed excessive emphasis on the immediate contexts of Hegel's French reception, his "marginalisation" in academia and, in general, the negative responses to his ideas.⁶⁰ As a result, Bellantone urged historians to re-examine the history of Hegelianism in France, adapting their enquiries in order to engage with broader definitions of contexts and contemplate a wider range of views. Researchers' focus, in this sense, ought to be particularly

⁵⁹ See, for example, Canguilhem, G. (1948) *Hegel en France*, pp. 282-97; Descombes, V. (1979) *Le mème et l'autre: quarante-cinq ans de la philosophie française*; d'Hondt, J. (1982) *Hegel et l'hegélianisme*

⁶⁰ Bellantone, A. (2011) *Hegel en France*, p. 11; Several factors stood in the way of a complete flourishing of debates on Hegel: during the 1840s, for example, his philosophy was commonly associated with the spectre of a socialist revolution. This was further problematized by the progressive appropriation of Hegelianism by German exiled intellectuals who resided in Paris, such as Marx, Engels, Ruge and Heine; Quinet's review of David Strauss' 1835 book *Leben Jesu* enormously contributed to the popularisation of the German theologian's text, primarily concerned with the potentially subversive theological implications characterising Hegelianism

directed towards not only Hegelianism's local reception, but also its revision, informed by the intellectual agendas of the authors who took part in this transnational exchange of ideas.

Viewing this French-German exchange within the broader framework of a polycentric understanding of European idealism can clarify how it stood in relation to other examples of transnational intellectual encounters. Hegel's French and Italian receptions exhibited an interesting array of similarities, as well as differences. A common feature was how local intellectual contexts represented a significant obstacle to the penetration of Hegel's ideas and their interpretation. The reasons for this were already hinted at in 1868 by Karl Rosenkranz. In his introduction to *Hegels Naturphilosophie*, he argued that, before 1848, German idealism was entangled in a multitude of conflicting interpretations, and urged French intellectuals to commit to a process of systematic organisation and liberation from error.⁶¹

These considerations were further amplified almost a hundred years later by Alexandre Koyré, who, in his 1961 series of Parisian lectures on the German thinker, connected the problematic nature of his reception to the wider context of nineteenth-century French philosophical life. Just as Hegel's British reception was complicated by the overwhelming popularity of Locke and Hume's empiricism, Koyré argued, France was, at the time, attempting to return to its Cartesian tradition, with the *idéologues'* formulation of a *science of ideas* constituting a prime example of this inclination. Consequently, local debates encouraged reliance on scientific thought, rather than the appropriation of idealist argumentation, or Hegel's notorious anti-mathematicism.⁶²

Not only, then, did the re-discovery of Cartesian philosophy prevent French intellectuals from reflecting extensively on Hegel's logic, but it also represented an obstacle to the penetration of the German philosopher's theory of history. An idealist account of historical development, being fundamentally independent from empirically observable conditions, could not easily be picked up by the emerging *école historique nouvelle*. Nineteenth-century French philosophy of history, in fact, was characterised by the progressive association of history and science. Beginning with Condorcet's idea of progress

⁶¹ Rosenkranz, K. (1868) *Hegels Naturphilosophie*, p. 3; the same is also stated in Rosenkranz, K. (1870) *Hegel als Deutscher Nationalphilosoph*, p. 227

⁶² Koyré, A. (1961) *Histoire de la pensée philosophique*, p. 207; The first British commentators on Hegel, in fact, T. H. Green and E. Caird, adopted the vocabulary and argumentation of absolute idealism in order to challenge empiricist philosophy

outlined in his 1795 *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, via Guizot's subordination of history to political philosophy, until Fustel de Colange's definition of history as a science, French thinkers progressively conceptualised history as a very concrete, scientific discipline, in ways that radically differed from Hegel's later account.⁶³

A map of this context is important in order to obtain a precise understanding of Hegel's French reception, as these debates converged in the formulation of a specific intellectual agenda, revolving around the assimilation of philosophical and scientific knowledge. In particular, it was precisely within this framework that the philosopher Victor Cousin, nineteenth-century France's most notable interpreter of German idealism, engaged with Hegel's writings. His philosophy, commonly referred to as "eclecticism" ("*éclectisme*"), was by definition concerned with the elaboration of a composite approach via the unorthodox juxtaposition of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century speculative positions, mainly sensualism, rational psychology, idealism, scepticism and mysticism.⁶⁴ According to Cousin, each of these was able to interpret specific aspects of reality and man's experience of them, and only when used in combination did they amount to what he regarded as the philosophical science *par excellence*.⁶⁵

The adoption of an "eclectic" approach reflected Cousin's endeavour to imbue abstract philosophical reasoning with scientific depth and to amalgamate various forms of thought, including Hegelianism, in a coherent whole. Born in Paris in 1792, Cousin was also educated in the French Capital and his studies at the *École Normale Supérieure* brought him in contact with various philosophical approaches. In the introduction to the second edition of his most famous work, *Fragments philosophiques*, he recounted:

⁶³ In his 1888 work *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France: la monarchie franque*, for example, de Coulange maintained that "History is not an art; rather, it is pure science [...] It consists, just like every other science, of recording facts, analysing them, bringing them together, devising links among them [...] The historian has no ambition other than seeing facts with clarity and understanding them with certainty. It is not in his imagination, but in his logic that he seeks to do so; he tries to do so via a careful and detailed analysis of texts, just like the chemist finds his own truths in meticulously conducted experiments" (de Coulange, F. (1888) *Histoire des institutions politiques de l'ancienne France*, pp. 32-33)

⁶⁴ Cousin's unconventional eclectic approach was often criticised, primarily on the basis of its perceived methodological inconsistencies. For an overview of these debates, see: Macherey, P. (1991) *Les débuts philosophiques de Victor Cousin*, pp. 29-49

⁶⁵ Cousin, V. (1861) *Histoire générale de la philosophie*, pp. 87-115; this argument was initially formulated in an essay written in 1818 and published in 1836: Cousin, V. (1836) *Du vrai, du beau et du bien*, pp. 455-84

The day, - in which for the first time in 1811, a pupil of the Normal School, destined to teach in the department of Literature, I heard M. Laromiguière, - remains and will always remain in my memory, with grateful emotions. That day decided my whole life.⁶⁶

Laromiguière was here credited for having introduced young Cousin to “the philosophy of Locke and Condillac, happily modified on some points, with a clearness, and grace which removed every appearance of difficulty, and with the charm of an intellectual benevolence which won all hearts”.⁶⁷

Hovering between Locke and Condillac, Cousin’s thought was subject to further evolution upon his appointment, in 1815, as assistant to Pierre Paul Royer-Collard, professor of history of philosophy at the Sorbonne. Cousin extensively praised the colleague, highlighting how his influence brought him closer to a previously uncharted branch of philosophical speculation:

M. Royer-Collard, by the severity of his logic, by to the gravity and severity of his discourse, gradually turned us away, and not without resistance, from the beaten way of Condillac, to the path which has since become so easy, but then rugged and solitary, of the Scottish philosophy.⁶⁸

Locke-via-Condillac’s psychologism and Scottish empiricism were not, however, the sole influences characterising Cousin’s intellectual formation. The “talent of internal observations” and the “refinement and depth in psychological research” of Maine de Biran were also described as crucial in the making of his system of ideas.⁶⁹ Cousin’s philosophical interests, in the years preceding 1817, therefore, were much in agreement with the context of the growing post-Cartesian French intellectual landscape and revolved around a tri-partite inclination, contemplating the absolute, as well as the relative, conditions of knowledge. At the same time, they remained fundamentally anchored to a psychological framework of inquiry. He mentioned, in this sense, “the art of decomposing thought”, in order to “descend from the most abstract and general ideas” to “the most common sensations which are their primary origin”, providing an awareness of the “action of faculties, elementary or compound, that successively intervene in the formation of these ideas”. Secondly, he referred to the study of “certain inner conditions”, “certain laws” and “certain principles”, constituting the “natural patrimony of the human mind” and regulating these psychological processes. Lastly,

⁶⁶ Cousin, V. (1833) *Préface de la deuxième édition*, p. xxx

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. xxx-xxx1

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xxxiv

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

he mentioned an interest in investigating “the phenomena of the will” as a means to “disengage in all our knowledge, and even in the simplest facts of conscience, the element of voluntary activity, of that activity in which our personality is manifested”.⁷⁰

Cousin moved on to engage with German idealism through the conceptual framework of this composite psychologism, constituting the true essence of his eclecticism. Having learned German between 1815 and 1817, he was immediately struck by how Kantian psychology resonated with his own views. He therefore decided to travel to Germany in order to deepen his acquaintance with local thought. One of his initial destinations, which would later turn out to be crucial to the development of his own ideas, was Heidelberg, where he met, among others, Hegel himself. Hegel and Cousin’s relationship was one of mutual admiration and respect, to such an extent that the Frenchman was one of the first to receive an early copy of Hegel’s *Enzyklopädie*. Shortly thereafter, Cousin moved to Munich, where he spent one month with Schelling and Jacobi, further expanding his knowledge of German idealism. A second trip to Germany, from 1824 onwards, featured a prolonged stay in Berlin, where he met again with Hegel and attended his lectures on philosophy of history, history of philosophy and aesthetics.

Cousin’s reading of idealism was ostensibly informed by the “triple discipline” characterising his intellectual formation. This was already very clear in the second edition of the *Fragments philosophiques*, where the author recounted how Hegelian ontology represented an alternative to the “subjective character of the inductions which proceed from an imperfect psychology”. Hegel, he believed, had succeeded in overcoming the pitfalls of “scepticism” and “conjectures” thanks to an extensive reliance on synthetic deductions deriving from “abstractions that are foundations and types of all reality”.⁷¹ This did not mean, however, that Cousin wholeheartedly embraced his absolute idealism.⁷² After all, his intellectual agenda admittedly revolved around the analysis of both the external and the inner conditions of knowledge, as well as the “phenomena of volition” regulating it. Rather, Cousin’s reading of Hegel as an alternative to his complex psychologism did not prevent the author from amalgamating the two, articulating a multi-faceted and unique understanding of

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. xxxv

⁷¹ Ibid., p. xlii

⁷² He did, in fact, criticise Hegel on the lack of consideration given to the psychological processes informing the construction of knowledge; “he nowhere indicates or describes the process by which he obtains these abstractions”. (ibid., p. xlii)

intellect. This was ultimately defined as “a fact of consciousness” that (i) revolved around its *synthetic* activity; (ii) “without being personal and subjective, intellectual intuition attains to the knowledge of being from the bosom of consciousness” and (iii) was “no less real than the notions of reflection, only more difficult to grasp, but still not beyond one’s reach”.⁷³

The combination of Hegelianism and psychology had very important implications as regards the development of Cousin’s thought, leading to an even greater interest in Hegel’s ideas. His lectures on the history of philosophy held in Paris in 1828-29 revealed a growing fascination for Hegel’s account of history, revolving around the equation of the latter with the history of philosophy, the postulation of a historical teleology centred upon the progressive development of civilisation, as well as the historical realisation of absolute unity.⁷⁴ At the same time, Cousin’s emphasis on rational psychology led to its merging with Hegelian history. He maintained, in fact, that the most common mistake characterising modern historiographical perspectives was the tendency to render the tension between the unity of history and the multiplicity of its manifestations exceedingly problematic.⁷⁵ He therefore sought to identify a solution to this issue. It was precisely via the analysis of the facts of human consciousness, he argued, that inferences can be made with regards to the wider motion of history, due to fundamental identity of the two. In other words, Cousin aimed at establishing an equation between the facts of consciousness and the facts of history by claiming that:

Variety in unity is the element of history. The power of variety in the hands of time, and upon the theatre of history, produces on a large scale that which happens on a small one in the limited theatre of individual consciousness. The human race sustains, in the course of its destiny, the same differences which the individual sustains relative to himself within the limits of his own. The human race, which has always in permanence the three fundamental elements of consciousness, admits also differences in the degree of clarity with which it recognises them, and in the degree of attention which it directs sometimes upon one and sometimes upon the other. The characteristic differences dividing the development of the individual’s consciousness are the different epochs of his life; the differences which the human race undergoes in its development are the epochs of the human race’s life, that is, the distinct epochs of history.⁷⁶

⁷³ Ibid., p. xliii

⁷⁴ Cousin, V. (1840) *Introduction à l’histoire de la philosophie*, pp. 23, 34; see also Cousin, V. (1828) *Cours de l’histoire de la philosophie*, pp. 31-32, 64, 108-11

⁷⁵ Cousin, V. (1840), p. 112

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 146. Here Cousin was elaborating on a point already presented in his second lecture, where he argued that “The unity of civilisation is in the unity of human nature; its varieties, in the variety of the elements of humanity. [...] In a word, history is the representation on a great scale of human nature, and that which is scarcely perceptible in consciousness shines forth in history in brilliant characters” (ibid., p. 32).

Cousin's reception of Hegel can therefore be said to have been informed by his intellectual formation, deepening its roots in the philosophies of Locke, Condillac and Kant. At the same time, he aimed to overcome the limitations of both rational psychology, on the one hand, deemed to be susceptible to scepticism, and absolute idealism, on the other, seen as unable to account for the intelligibility of historical development. This view ultimately led him to interpret Hegel's metaphysics on the basis of psychology and rational ontology. More importantly, it was thanks to this approach that he came to view Hegelian history as the abstract reflection of a "collective psychology" directed by Reason, hence elaborating a precise methodology of the *eclectic* philosophical enquiry, which he aptly defined as "the identity of psychology and history".⁷⁷

This reading of Hegel, despite being limited to a select few works, was nonetheless of critical importance in the context of idealism's dissemination in nineteenth-century Europe. Italy was no exception to this logic and, in this case, Victor Cousin's mediation can be seen to have widely informed the way in which Italian authors engaged with Hegel's texts. An example can clarify this idea: this chapter previously highlighted the variety of interpretive keys characterising Italian – particularly Neapolitan – intellectuals' readings of Hegel. One of the most interesting ones, shared by Pasquale Galluppi, Ottavio Colecchi and Stefano Cusani, was Kantianism. All three thinkers had an extensive knowledge of Cousin, especially thanks to Galluppi's 1831 translation of the Frenchman's *Fragments*, published with the title *Frammenti*. This book enjoyed wide circulation among Neapolitan intellectuals, and the tendency initially to read Hegel in the context of Kantianism was evidence of this.

Initial approaches to Hegel from the perspective of Kant-via-Cousin can also help dispel a common misconception, namely the centrality of Augusto Vera's contribution in the dynamics of Hegelianism's transmission.⁷⁸ Vera, who was born in Italy, but spent most of his life in France and England, translated Hegel's *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* and *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Religion* into French. Neither enjoyed a circulation comparable to that of Cousin's *Fragments*. Additionally, Vera also

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 61

⁷⁸ This argument was originally advanced by Karl Rosenkranz, who suggested that "Vera is a very philosophical mind, who via a very comprehensive study of the history of philosophy and of the exact sciences, has prepared himself for the accomplishment of this difficult task: rendering Hegel accessible to the Roman people". (Rosenkranz, K. (1868), p. 5). See also: Gentile, G. (1912b) *La filosofia italiana dopo il 1850. Gli hegeliani. III. Augusto Vera*, pp. 335-56, 431-38; Oldrini, G. (1964a)

presented his own reflections on Hegelianism in two essays, *Problème de la certitude* (1840) and *Platonis, Aristotelis et Hegelii: de medio termino doctrina* (1845), as well as an article published in the *Revue du Lyonnais* in 1843, *Philosophie allemande: doctrine de Hegel*. These texts showed a very cursory and often erratic knowledge of the German philosopher's views, certainly not as substantial as Cousin's. Moreover, it was Vera's own intention to view Hegel's absolute idealism as a revised version of Platonism, as pointed out by Giovanni Gentile in 1912.⁷⁹ This was because Vera saw ideas as inherently external to the world and not as an internal and absolute principle.⁸⁰ Furthermore, his translations were often criticised for being incompetent and hardly consistent with the original.⁸¹

With the *Fragments philosophiques*, then, German idealism had appeared in France. Later on, thanks to Galluppi's translation, Hegelianism reached Naples. The inquiry on the local reception of Hegel, therefore, ought now to develop in two directions. On the one hand, it must account for the ways in which Southern intellectuals reflected on Hegel-via-Cousin, revealing their sensitivity for the Hegelian philosophy of history woven into the fabric of Cousin's eclecticism. On the other, it must interrogate how Neapolitan thinkers endeavoured to disaggregate Hegel's ideas from Cousin's, and liberate his philosophy from the eclectics' methodology.

1.4. *The Grand Tour of Idealism: ...From France to Naples. A Problem of Method*

Thanks to Cousin, Hegel truly came to be known, read and debated in Italy, particularly in Naples. Already in 1898, the importance of Victor Cousin's ideas in Italian intellectual history was recognised by Giovanni Gentile, who dedicated an entire section of his *Albori della nuova Italia* to Cousin's presence in the peninsula. Gentile's analysis, however, focused entirely on northern Italy, placing particular attention on Alessandro Manzoni's friendship with Cousin, or the latter's correspondence with Massimo d'Azeglio.⁸² In 1955, Salvo Mastellone published

⁷⁹ Gentile, G. (1912b), p. 348

⁸⁰ Vera, A. (1845), p. 133

⁸¹ Koyré, A. (1930) *Rapport sur l'état des études hegeliennes en France*

⁸² Gentile, G. (1898) *Vittorio Cousin e l'Italia*, pp. 200-13

a volume entitled *V. Cousin e il Risorgimento italiano*, in which he significantly enlarged the scope of Gentile's inquiry by dissecting the exchange of letters between the Frenchman and other Italian intellectuals, including Giuseppe Ferrari, Cesare Balbo and, in Naples, Pasquale Galluppi.⁸³

Mastellone's work pointed at the capillary dissemination of French eclecticism in the southern capital, suggesting that, within a mere few years, a large number of intellectuals declared their allegiance to this school of thought, such as Stanislao Gatti, Stefano Cusani, Luigi Blanch and Ottavio Colecchi.⁸⁴ At any rate, Mastellone's analysis remained somewhat limited with regard to how Cousin's Neapolitan reception served as the gateway into Hegel's philosophy, with this intuition being reduced to the simple idea that, by 1841, local sensitivities had abandoned their eclectic sympathies and consequently veered towards either Hegelianism or a revival of scholastic philosophy.⁸⁵ This shortcoming in Mastellone's analysis calls for a more substantial illustration of Hegel's reception in Naples via local debates on Cousin's eclecticism, positing the question of the extent to which intellectuals in the southern capital attempted to disaggregate the Frenchman's own philosophical inquiries from Hegel's.

Neapolitans' engagement with Cousin's ideas was minimal in academic contexts: as pointed out earlier, Francesco Colangelo, the president of the Public Education Council of the Kingdom, was very critical of Pasquale Galluppi's openness toward foreign forms of thought and greatly discouraged their inclusion in university programmes. Yet, even though the Calabrian philosopher's 1831-32 university lectures, published for the first time in 1845, contained only a handful of references to Hegel, they drew attention, as part of their discussion of Cousin's eclecticism, to themes that were central to German idealists' preoccupations. One can mention, for example, the fact that the Frenchman's methodology was often mentioned in connection with the quest for a "true method" of philosophical inquiry.⁸⁶ Dissecting this "method", Galluppi praised the Frenchman's eclecticism for overcoming the limitations of Empiricism and rationalism, by making individual psychology fully subordinate to absolute Reason:

⁸³ Mastellone, S. (1955) *V. Cousin e il Risorgimento italiano*, pp. 76-89; 112-36; 143-171

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 146

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 168-69

⁸⁶ Galluppi, P. (1845), p. 38

Cousin's *criterium* of truth is neither man's testimony, which cannot be accepted unless subject to close scrutiny, nor individual opinion, unable to account for any absolute thing: rather, this is Reason in its own essence and primitive purity. This *criterium* should not be sought outside ourselves and in others, nor should it be sought in a relative, variable and personal sentiment; it is neither here, not there; rather, it is in a superior, primitive principle.⁸⁷

This passage does not support a hypothetical claim that, by engaging with Cousin, Galluppi – and, consequently, the students in his course – directly reflected on Hegel and perhaps even his interpretation of French eclecticism may not be perfectly accurate. It can, at any rate, be certainly argued that the Southern professor had matured an awareness of the need, for modern philosophy, to define a new approach, able to go beyond empiricism and rational psychology and come to supplement them with a science of pure ideas. In other words, Galluppi may have not yet come to a Hegelian solution, but, by positing that “ontology is part of the science of man's thought”, he underlined the urgency of questions that certainly moved philosophical inquiry a step further in the direction of pure idealism.⁸⁸

At the same time, the concern for Cousin's elaboration of a new philosophical methodology was consistent with debates taking place outside the university context. In particular, Neapolitan intellectuals' reflections on the French philosopher were frequent in the pages of local periodicals. More specifically, *Rivista napoletana* (1839-48), *Il progresso delle scienze, delle lettere e delle arti* (1832-47) and *Museo di letteratura e filosofia* (1841-60), renamed *Museo di scienza e letteratura* in 1843, acted as the chief platforms for local thinkers to debate contemporary European philosophy. The first substantial illustration of Cousin's thought, in this sense, appeared in 1835, when Giuseppe Devincenzi published an article in *Il progresso* entitled *Dell'eclettismo in Francia, ovvero della nuova scuola filosofica del Royer-Collard e del Cousin*. In this article, the author commended the French eclectic method, deemed able to amalgamate various strands of contemporary European philosophy.⁸⁹ In particular, Devincenzi noted how, thanks to his interest in German thought, particularly Schelling and Hegel, Cousin had managed to strike a balance between two competing strands of inquiry, namely “psychological observation” and “historical observation”.⁹⁰ Devincenzi's contribution was consistent with Galluppi's interpretation of Cousin articulated in his university lectures during the early 1830s. At the same time, his analysis went one step

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 277

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 20

⁸⁹ Devincenzi, G. (1835) *Dell'eclettismo in Francia*, p. 7

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 15

further, too, as it explained how the Frenchman's interest in German idealism had paved the way for a sensible overhaul of his intellectual context's psychologist tendencies. In other words, not only did Devincenzi's article succeed in providing an extensive illustration of the eclectic method, but also constituted a first genuine attempt to disaggregate its theoretical foundations. In 1835, therefore, Neapolitan intellectuals were already beginning to reflect critically on Hegel's presence in Cousin's writings.

The mid-1830s can be considered a decisive turning point in Hegel's Neapolitan reception, as local authors had matured, by that time, a significant awareness of an ongoing transnational exchange among Italy, Germany and France. An 1836 article by Luigi Blanch published in *Il progresso*, for instance, spoke of a new, modern, "philosophical movement", deepening its roots in German idealism and arriving to Naples via "the study of that German philosophy which had been transported to France".⁹¹ Similarly, an 1837 article penned by Ottavio Colecchi spoke of the need for Italian intellectuals to engage with "true philosophy". This was described as a form of rationalism based on two kinds of *abstraction*: the one, particularly visible in Cousin's works, "coming from experience", the other, pertinent to German idealism, that "abstracts a general element from a single object" and "elevates itself to pure form".⁹² Not only did Blanch and Colecchi's articles serve as timely commentaries on the presence of French eclecticism in Naples, but they also correctly identified the role played by Hegel's philosophy in it. Consequently, critical works on German thought began appearing at an increasingly frequent rate in the pages of *Il progresso*, as part of substantial attempts to deconstruct Cousin's thought and proceed to investigate the individual tendencies of his eclecticism.⁹³

At this stage, however, Neapolitans' interest in Hegel was still functional to the solution of a problem posited by Cousin, namely the connection between a rational psychology and an absolute idea of history. This mentality was particularly prominent in the writings of Stefano Cusani, whose decisive contribution to the development of a Hegelian movement in Naples has generally been given little weight by later commentators.⁹⁴ Born in

⁹¹ Blanch, L. (1836) *Destination de l'homme de Fichte, traduit de l'allemand par Barchou de Penhoen*, p. 24

⁹² Colecchi, O. (1837a), p. 192

⁹³ See, for example Blanch, L. (1837) *Sull'istoria della filosofia antica di Enrico Ritter, tradotta in francese da Tissot*, pp. 3-29; Colecchi, O. (1837b) *Saggio sulle leggi del pensiero*, pp. 161-92

⁹⁴ Cione, E. (1960) *Francesco De Sanctis ed i suoi tempi*; Oldrini, G. (1969) *Il primo hegelismo italiano*; Oldrini, G. (1973); Oldrini, G. (1989); Losurdo, D. (1997) *Dai fratelli Spaventa a Gramsci. Per una storia politico-sociale della fortuna di Hegel in Italia*

the village of Solopaca, some thirty miles north of Naples, Cusani met other soon-to-be Hegelians in Basilio Puoti's private school, including Francesco De Sanctis and Stanislao Gatti, with whom he founded the periodical *Museo di letteratura e filosofia* in 1841.

Cusani's 1838 work *Gli arabi in Italia* urged to investigate a notion of "human understanding" in order to understand the "immortal part of history", since their relationship was deemed able to account for "the linkage of causes and effects, reasons, general facts, and ultimately the ideas in themselves, moving beyond their external nature".⁹⁵ In the following article, *Del metodo filosofico e d'una sua storia*, Cusani further expanded on this intuition, arguing that the articulation of a "general method, informing the investigation of the sole universal truth" ought to begin with "psychological analysis, which marks the starting point of our reasoning, and represents the sole basis of the great philosophical edifice, the only solid fundament, the atrium and vestibule of science".⁹⁶ In *Del reale oggetto d'ogni filosofia*, he also claimed that "the study of human nature's facts, or – if you will – psychological phenomena, would turn out to be vacuous, if, rather than regarding it as the basis for further investigation, one considered it to be the actual end of science".⁹⁷ This was because "the subject's science cannot be said to be complete, unless another goal of the human Spirit is accomplished, namely making one's way towards the true origin of phenomena, ultimately investigating them – so to speak – at their starting point".⁹⁸

The most interesting aspect of Cusani's articles was that they revealed a certain critique of Cousin's eclectic method. The rather nebulous and, to some extent, uncritical amalgamation of empiricism, rational psychology and absolute idealism developed in the *Fragments* was criticised on the basis of a precise historiographic argument. The author believed, in fact, that the historical separation of the science of subjectivity and that of objectivity, namely psychology and ontology, deepening their roots in ancient Greek philosophy, had been dramatically problematized by Descartes, who paved the way for the unquestioned primacy of the subjective in philosophical speculation throughout the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. As a result, the nineteenth century ought to turn

⁹⁵ Cusani, S. (1838) *Gli arabi in Italia*, p. 108

⁹⁶ Cusani, S. (1839a), p. 178

⁹⁷ Cusani, S. (1839b) *Del reale oggetto d'ogni filosofia e del solo procedimento a poterlo raggiungere*, p. 33

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51

its attention toward different strands of philosophical inquiry, namely the ones that had been neglected in the previous decades:

What should the nineteenth century do, following all these works, and having witnessed the completion of all these questions pertinent to Psychology and Logic? It was left – above all – with two questions: first of all, examining the ontological problems left untouched during the previous century and, after examining beings and particular existences in themselves, reprising the question concerned with the issue of legitimacy, in order to understand the ways in which the Human Spirit comes to the understanding of those beings and existences.⁹⁹

Unsurprisingly, nineteenth-century German philosophy was hailed as the forerunner of this new philosophical inclination. A substantial departure from Cousin's thought was, therefore, clearly visible. Based on the assumption that the goal of philosophy was to "declare how the Human Spirit legitimately comes to the cognition of the objective", Cusani applauded French eclecticism's understanding of psychological mechanisms, but criticised it in relation to its alleged failure to render it functional to the true goal of philosophy, namely the analysis of objective, absolute, truths.¹⁰⁰ This was seen as a quintessentially modern research area for philosophy, an intuition that, as chapter five of this thesis will explain, was absolutely crucial in the definition of Neapolitan Hegelians' philosophical agenda. Nineteenth-century speculation, by and large, ought therefore to follow the example of German idealism in exploring this largely uncharted field. As aptly put in another 1840 article, "it was necessary to start feeling the need for new problems, and for Ontology to reappear within the domain of speculative sciences".¹⁰¹

The rupture with Cousin's eclecticism, coupled with a greater emphasis on German – specifically Hegelian – ontology was, then, complete in 1842, when, in an article published in *Rivista napoletana*, Cusani pointed out that:

We accept that it is not possible to proceed to the cognition of beings, unless our means of knowing them are examined first, or how human intelligence legitimately moves from the subjective to the objective. Yet, having declared that we are indeed able to hold absolute knowledge with regard to beings' existence, and that, consequently, the science of Being is not an impossible point to reach, it is necessary to undertake its construction, and that we start from the Absolute in order to descend to the World and man. Should, therefore, psychological analysis come before, as the fundament of Ontology, it was first and foremost important to make clear that, once sufficient knowledge of this was matured, it was also necessary to reproduce this order in the broader order and generation of things. We accept the French eclectic school's works with regards to psychology, but we must distance ourselves from it for what concerns Ontology, thus coming closer to

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 60

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 32

¹⁰¹ Cusani, S. (1840a) *Saggio su la realtà della scienza umana di Vincenzo de Grazia*, p. 227

Germany. Indeed, we are not afraid to claim that this is precisely why we reject the theories by the French philosopher Cousin.¹⁰²

In this passage, the critique of Cousin's eclectic method was visible in its most articulate form. Using a very Hegelian vocabulary, Cusani argued that, having investigated nature and particular phenomena, philosophical inquiry "returned upon itself" and proceeded to interrogate its own ontological status, namely the absolute conditions of the "Human Spirit".¹⁰³ This, in short, was the central intuition that Cusani borrowed from Hegel, constituting a crucial node in the German philosopher's Neapolitan reception. Having highlighted the limitations of French eclecticism in accounting for the self-reflective character of knowledge, Hegelian ontology suddenly appeared as the most apposite means of coming to its understanding.

Such an intellectual trajectory, revolving around the extrapolation of Hegel's ideas from the shell of Cousin's philosophy, was also present in the writings of Stanislao Gatti. His hostility to the psychologist tendencies observable in Cousin and, to some extent, in Galluppi was clearly expressed: a philosophy that "condemns itself to remain within the sphere of purely psychological questions, should not deserve the magnificent name it strives for; rather, it should take on that of *school logomachy*".¹⁰⁴ This critique was already visible in an 1838 article published in *Il progresso*, entitled *Di una risposta di Vittore Cousin ad alcuni dubbi intorno alla sua filosofia*, in which Gatti reflected on the French philosopher's attempt to selectively appropriate diverse elements from various philosophies. In particular, while this approach was deemed laudable in principle, a cogent objection was raised in relation to the impossibility, for eclectic philosophers, of articulating a substantial ontological view against which to plot their analysis of individual psychology.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, just like his close friend Cusani, Gatti declared his full allegiance to Hegelianism in a series of articles published in *Museo*, and suggested that the problems highlighted by Cousin were only part of a much wider issue: the identification of a *historical law of universal Reason*. This problem, Gatti argued, had been only cursorily touched upon by the eclectics, who saw its resolution as completely hinging upon debatable psychologist tendencies.¹⁰⁶ Gatti's speculation, at this

¹⁰² Cusani, S. (1842) *Del metodo di trattare la scienza degli esseri. Disegno di una metafisica*, p. 20

¹⁰³ Cusani, S. (1839b), p. 29

¹⁰⁴ Gatti, S. (1846a) *Della filosofia in Italia*, p. 208

¹⁰⁵ Gatti, S. (1838) *Di una risposta di Vittore Cousin ad alcuni dubbi Intorno alla sua filosofia*, p. 41

¹⁰⁶ Gatti, S. (1841) *Del progressivo svolgimento dell'idea filosofica nella storia*, p. 104

point, acquired a remarkably Hegelian overtone, as he pointed out that this law was observable in the progressive deployment of “the history of the philosophical Idea within mankind’s history”, a proposition fully consistent with Hegel’s notorious equation of history and the history of philosophy. Consequently, modern philosophy, as a “general science of existence”, ought to turn its attention to the study of absolute historical development, rather than restrict its analysis to the investigation of history’s particular embodiments¹⁰⁷.

The dynamics of Hegel’s reception in Naples via Cousin’s philosophy ought, at this point, to be already quite clear: thanks to the *Fragments philosophiques*, local intellectuals rightly understood that the eclectic method consisted of an amalgamation of empirical observation and a broader account of historical development. Yet, Cousin’s understanding of Hegelian history as an abstract reflection of a “collective psychology” lay at the very core of Neapolitan commentators’ concerns, who endeavoured to partition the Frenchman’s philosophy and proceeded to dissect its individual inspirations, looking closely at its constitutive elements. Consequently, the process of disaggregating rational psychology from an idealist account of history took the form of a critique. This highlighted the need to reformulate the relationship between particular observations and the absolute conditions of history, placing greater emphasis on ontological notions borrowed from German idealism, as Cusani and Gatti’s contributions clearly showed. As a result, this critique allowed Neapolitan thinkers to move beyond Cousin’s eclecticism, on the one hand, and engage much more closely with Hegel’s own philosophy, on the other.

Limiting an account of Hegel’s immediate reception in Naples to such a brief account, however, would tell only part of the story, because the implications of this attempt to move beyond the initial Cousinian allegiances remain still unexplored. Chapter two of this thesis will illustrate how, having rescued Hegelianism from the shell of French eclecticism, Neapolitan intellectuals viewed it from the perspective of a newfound interest in Giambattista Vico’s historicism. By the early 1840s, the group of soon-to-be Neapolitan Hegelians had come to the articulation of a philosophical problem, which, by disentangling Hegelian ontology from Cousin’s psychologist tendencies, demanded the identification of absolute historical laws. These were to be viewed, as Cusani himself put it, as “constitutive elements of a specific faculty, which may be both subjective and objective, which, therefore, may proceed from the

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., pp. 98-105; Gatti, S. (1846b) *Schelling e l’idealismo trascendentale*, pp. 84-87

object and manifest itself in the subject, stemming from an absolute and impersonal idea of Reason".¹⁰⁸ In consequence, a proliferation of works addressing this topic could be observed at the dawn of the new decade: in *Della logica trascendentale*, Cusani aimed at exploring the absolute and objective notion of Reason, borrowed from Hegel, and, as hinted two years prior, in order to demonstrate its centrality in organising and directing individual experiences.¹⁰⁹ Similarly, in another article published in the same year, he argued that such an account of Reason, understood as an "impersonal and objective faculty, which does not belong to any man more than anyone else, which [...] is identified with Absolute itself, being detached from the contingent", was able to resist the threat of relativism and scepticism, despite being observable in virtually the totality of individual experiences.¹¹⁰

An inquiry into a notion of Absolute, highlighting its relational nature in connection with individual experiences was, therefore, exactly the road not taken by Cousin's eclecticism and the entry point, for Neapolitan thinkers, to the study of Hegel's philosophy:

It is exactly in this sense, precisely from necessary and universal truths, that we aim at singling out that opinion held by Hegel, that the Idea is Being [...] and discover the laws of Reason to be nothing more than the operations and manifestations of an absolute intelligence.¹¹¹

This allegiance to Hegel was symptomatic of a broader re-alignment of Cusani's thought, which, as pointed out by Giovanni Gentile almost a hundred years later, revolved around an absolute ideal of history no longer understood as "the integration of psychology, but the actual configuration of philosophy itself".¹¹² Human experience, therefore, ought not to be seen in the light of its individual, rational and psychological character, but as a historical reflection of an absolute human Spirit. Stanislao Gatti argued in the very same direction when, in 1844, he claimed that history "is not situated in certain names, nor in certain facts devoid of movement and life; rather, it is situated in the most intimate representation of an Idea, which, in any given era, truly manifested itself and gave birth to an entire century, informing people and things with itself".¹¹³

¹⁰⁸ Cusani, S. (1840a), p. 233

¹⁰⁹ Cusani, S. (1840b) *Della logica trascendentale*, pp. 162-87

¹¹⁰ Cusani, S. (1840c) *Di un'obbiezione dell'Hamilton intorno alla filosofia dell'assoluto*, p. 25

¹¹¹ Cusani, S. (1840b), p. 187

¹¹² Gentile, G. (1935) *Storia della filosofia italiana. Dal Genovesi al Galluppi*, I, p. 639

¹¹³ Gatti, S. (1844) *Il teatro moderno in Italia*, p. 90

This attempt to historicise the particular conditions of human experience and view them in the light of broader notions of historical development and historical time, however, automatically poses a question, connected with the actual method of inquiry. Because Cousinian, eclectic approach was fundamentally untenable, Neapolitan philosophers were confronted with the issue of how to connect the observation of history's empirically observable conditions with their absolute counterparts. This problem was already illustrated by Stefano Cusani in 1839, when he lamented the need to adopt "convincing and safe methods" in order to demonstrate how "the universal history of Humanity [...] features within itself the entire intellectual development of our species".¹¹⁴ In other words, a methodology able to account for an absolute historical law informing all individual circumstances of man, the "historical subject *par excellence*".¹¹⁵

In the tradition of Vico, and as illustrated in the following chapter, placing man at the centre of history was the key to understanding Neapolitan intellectuals' complete departure from Cousin and, more broadly speaking, to illuminating the coordinates of Hegelianism's local reception. Due to psychological observation's inability to fuel an inquiry in an ontologically absolute notion of human experience, embedded in the idealist conception of history borrowed from Hegel, Neapolitan thinkers understood they ought to direct their gaze elsewhere. Yet, one of Cousin's most significant intuitions, located at the core of the eclectic method articulated in the *Fragments philosophiques*, still echoed in their minds: that any metaphysics, in order to be intelligible, must be aided by the analysis of empirically observable circumstances. Consequently, as explained earlier, intellectuals in Naples discussed, in the pages of local periodicals, how the psychologist tendencies of the eclectic method had arguably failed to be functional to any metaphysics. The problem, in their view, lay in a certain imbalance characterising Cousin's methodology, whose chief shortcoming was an alleged lack of ontological depth. A compelling account of history, however, was clearly present in Hegel, but intellectuals in Naples soon found themselves engaging with the same question that had puzzled Victor Cousin several years previously, namely how to mediate between the subjective and the objective, albeit from the exact opposite angle. The Frenchman striving for a metaphysics in order to validate his psychological observations, on

¹¹⁴ Cusani, S. (1839c) *Elementi di fisica sperimentale e di meteorologia di M. Pouillet, terza edizione*, p. 272

¹¹⁵ Cusani, S. (1841) *Della lirica considerata nel suo svolgimento storico e del suo predominio sugli altri generi di poesia nei tempi moderni*, p. 33

the one hand; Hegel, on the other, whose compelling account of history required empirical observation in order to be intelligible.

What one could witness, at this point, was the complete reversal of the question that had foxed French eclectics twenty years earlier: if these were essentially asking “what can empirical observations reveal about history?”, Neapolitan Hegelians were now wondering “how does man’s absolute historical existence come to be realised in particular circumstances?”. The subject these two schools of thought were dealing with was indeed quite similar in nature, but the overall philosophical inclinations and approaches could not possibly be more different, as they perfectly embodied the chasm separating Kantian rational psychology from Hegel’s pure idealism. Modern philosophy should operate a fundamental re-orientation of its aims. Rather than attempting to provide inferences on a notion of history seen as the product of man’s intellect, it was now crucial to study how history itself, in its totality and absolute force, was able to inform, shape and direct man’s existence. A new horizon of concerns was within the reach of Neapolitan Hegelians’ imagination.

What individual aspects of human history are able to reflect its universality? What particular aspects of man’s historical existence are particularly illustrative of its totality? What are the mechanisms connecting the universal and the particular? These seem to have been the questions at the forefront of Neapolitan intellectuals’ philosophical agenda in the early 1840s. Instead of looking at individual psychology and reason, therefore, they felt they ought to interrogate different aspects of mankind’s historical life. While the formulation of such problems stemmed from a complex, multi-layered, transnational exchange, their answer revealed itself almost immediately. To solve these questions, the Hegelians of Naples had to look no further than their own backyard. Thanks to their sensitivity for Hegel’s philosophy of history, they had brought, perhaps inadvertently, the German philosopher exceptionally close to a Neapolitan thinker of the previous century, Giambattista Vico. Yet, if Hegel could easily be understood in Vichian terms, could Vico himself be re-discovered as Hegelian?

1.5. Neapolitan Hegelianism and a European History of Ideas

While Hegel did not take centre stage in intellectual debates taking place in most parts of Italy during the first half of the nineteenth century, it was in Naples that aspects of his works were discussed and brought into circulation in a much more systematic manner. This chapter therefore has attempted to provide a substantial illustration of Hegel's Neapolitan reception during the 1830s and '40s, drawing attention to several inter-related aspects, ranging from its inherently transnational nature to its implications in terms of local philosophical debates. As a subject of inquiry for intellectual historians, Hegelianism's reception in the Southern capital can provide several insights, both from an empirical and a methodological point of view. These can be briefly summarised as having to do with: (i) the mechanisms of intellectual exchange across national borders, enabling the circulation of Hegel's ideas from Germany to Naples via France, vs. historiographical accounts reflecting on an alleged direct encounter of German and Italian authors;¹¹⁶ (ii) the need to slot Neapolitan Hegelianism within the picture a transnational history of ideas, and (iii) the consequent implications for what concerns historians' understanding of European idealism in its polycentric ramifications during the nineteenth century; (iv) the actual periodisation of Hegel's Neapolitan reception; and (v) the need to consider Hegelianism's reception in the southern capital in terms of revision and amalgamation with local forms of thought, in contrast to verdicts, primarily presented by Italian scholarship of the twentieth century, uncritically speaking of passive appropriation.¹¹⁷

The emergence of a Hegelian school of philosophy in Naples during the 1830s and '40s was an extremely complex affair, more complex than traditional accounts would hold. The proposition that this came about as a result of a direct, bi-lateral, exchange between Neapolitan and German intellectuals is hard to maintain. As explained in the first section of this chapter, local authors who were able to engage with Hegel's works in their original language were very few and their interpretations, consistently filtered through the lens of

¹¹⁶ Aguzzi, L. (1985) *Riforma religiosa, hegelismo, comunismo e il problema del Risorgimento in Italia nel pensiero e nell'opera di Giambattista Passerini*; Aguzzi, L. (1987) *Giambattista Passerini e la penetrazione dell'hegelismo in Italia*, pp. 73-98; Di Giovanni, P. (1996), pp. 12-24; Oldrini, G. (1964a), pp. 240-89; Oldrini, G. (1964b), pp. 425-61; Rossi, M. (1957), pp. 6-61

¹¹⁷ Giovanni Gentile, for instance, while correctly acknowledging the centrality of Victor Cousin's works in Hegel's Neapolitan reception, did not interrogate how the French Eclectic's thought was systematically challenged and deconstructed by southern thinkers (Gentile, G. (1935), II, pp. 118-20; Gentile, G. (1898), pp. 200-04). See also: Mastellone, S. (1955), pp. 168-69; Oldrini, G. (1964a), p. 25; Oldrini, G. (1969), p. 323; Vacca, G. (1967), p. 50

these thinker's pre-existing philosophical beliefs, did not enjoy a wide circulation. In other words, Galluppi and Colecchi's understanding of absolute Idealism as a form of post-Kantian thought was not sufficient to explain the fact that later authors reflected on Hegel as a theorist of historical time, let alone the range and variety of debates on his philosophy emerging from the early 1840s onwards. A compelling account of Hegel's reception in the Southern capital ought therefore to consider indirect avenues of exchange and, in this sense, the mediation of French intellectuals, most notably Victor Cousin, appears to have played a crucial role. In consequence, it is hard to see how the study of Hegel's reception may be slotted into any framework other than that of a transnational history of ideas.

Viewing Hegel-via-Cousin's reception in Naples through the lens of transnationalism may provide meaningful insights with regard to the character of European idealism and its circulation across national boundaries. This chapter illustrated the presence of at least three different ways of engaging with the German philosopher during the nineteenth century: (i) in Germany, he was synonymous with pure idealism, while (ii) in France, mainly thanks to Cousin's reading, his philosophy was understood as functional to the resolution of problems in rational psychology; (iii) in Italy, instead, one can notice a much greater emphasis on philosophy of history, coupled with a more extensive interest in absolute ontology. Within a timespan of little more than twenty years, then, different contexts produced various understandings of German idealism's character, reflecting a plurality of philosophical concerns. These observations can be understood as evidence of the fact that, as a result of transnational exchanges, concepts may take on a life of their own and, from a methodological perspective, they suggest that a transnational approach to the study of European idealism ought to be sensitive to its ramifications and relationship with different contexts. As a result, it is ultimately necessary to challenge a reified definition of this philosophy that remains insensitive to the extent to which circulation across national borders is in itself generative of meaning. One ought, instead, to engage more closely with the polycentric nature of German idealism: Hegelianism in Germany, post-Kantianism in France and absolute philosophy of history in Italy stemmed from the very same idealist doctrine, but they reflected diverging intellectual agendas and, more importantly, they were informed by sensibly different contextual factors.

Investigating how local contexts intersected with broader dynamics of transnational exchange ultimately reveals that Hegel's Neapolitan reception, far from representing a mere

process of passive *absorption*, constituted an opportunity not only to draw German idealism closer to the local tradition, but progressively to come to their *amalgamation*. This operation was carried along the lines of subsequent interpretations and revisions, which provide useful information in relation to the actual periodization of Hegel's Neapolitan reception. One can identify a "first group" of authors, whose most notable members were Pasquale Galluppi and Ottavio Colecchi. The importance of their tentative contributions lies in the fact that, by reading Hegelianism as, to use Galluppi's own words, an "experimental philosophy" of "exterior causes", they provided the backbone of local thinkers' later attempts to disaggregate Hegel from Cousin.¹¹⁸ This reading, which became a rather popular one mainly thanks to Colecchi's teaching in his private philosophy school in the late 1830, whose centrality in forming the Hegelian generation of southern thinkers will be examined in chapter three, emphasises the need to move beyond the investigation of the facts of consciousness and direct one's gaze toward *a priori* metaphysical truths.

Galluppi and Colecchi's reception of Hegel loudly reverberated in the intellectual agendas characterising the "second group" of the German philosopher's southern interpreters. Cusani and Gatti, whose names are only seldom mentioned by traditional studies on Neapolitan Hegelianism, were the most prominent members of this group. Their readings of the German philosopher, while appearing *prima facie* as a critique of Victor Cousin's eclecticism, reflected, during the early 1840s, a substantial and deliberate attempt to embrace pure idealism. This operation, however, by virtue of its own nature, entailed the need to replace Cousin's emphasis on psychological observation with some other empirically observable phenomenon, hence paving the way for an understanding of Hegel as a theorist of historical time, on the one hand, and the amalgamation of his philosophy with Giambattista Vico's, on the other. This goal, representing a recurring *leitmotif* in the next chapters of this thesis, can be seen as the prime concern of the "third group" of Neapolitan Hegelians, namely those authors, such as Bertrando Spaventa and Francesco De Sanctis, who, having developed a convincing acquaintance with Hegel's philosophy, proceeded, from the mid-1840s onwards, to systematically project it onto notions borrowed from *La scienza nuova*.

Soon after its appearance in Naples, then, Hegelianism underwent critical examination, initially aimed at isolating it from the vessel that had transported it to Southern

¹¹⁸ Galluppi, P. (1845), p. 206

Italy, namely Cousin's eclectic method. The account of these complex dynamics, offered in the present chapter via a close examination of the German philosopher's reception, may already begin, at this point, to render the actual definition of "Neapolitan Hegelianism" increasingly layered and complex. This, however, was only the beginning of the full story. The very same critical attitude shared by local thinkers during the mid- and late 1830s immediately signalled the need to revise Hegel's ideas, too. This is where the next episode in Neapolitan Hegelianism's history began. This is where the full amalgamation with Giambattista Vico's philosophy took place, where Hegel became part of Naples' tradition and where the southern capital itself finally emerged as a European centre of the nineteenth-century intellectual landscape.

2. Un Incontro Mancato? Giambattista Vico and German Idealism in Context¹

2.1. Introduction

As hinted in the previous chapter, Hegel's reception in Europe was a complex one, characterized by remarkable variety in different regions of the continent. This can be explained in terms of the different philosophical landscapes and intellectual contexts existing in various countries. It is no surprise, therefore, that, during the first half of the 1800s, in a region like Britain, where empiricism was on the rise, Hegel's idealism could not enjoy significant popularity – at least until the advent of Marxism triggered its re-discovery. France, because of its ongoing efforts aiming at re-habilitating scientific thought and renovating the Cartesian tradition, was also not exceptionally sensitive to the impact of the German philosopher's ideas. With a brief exception for the very early reception among the eclectics, France saw Hegel's reception largely limited to his logic, partially leaving aside, among other things, his *Geschichtsphilosophie*, which remained a subject of enquiry for a small number of intellectuals only.

Italy, instead, represented a different scenario, with Hegel's philosophy of history enjoying a particularly fortunate reception. This can be partly explained by the fact that, in the North of the peninsula, Giandomenico Romagnosi, Carlo Cattaneo and Vincenzo Gioberti frequently engaged in debates concerned with the historical nature of society and its institutions, the idea of progress and moral and civic improvement of the people, as well as the goals of history itself. These debates created a conceptual horizon bounding Italian intellectuals' reading of Hegel, who was consequently welcomed as the leading exponent of a new historicism, able to inform numerous spheres of political and social life. Yet, equating the German philosopher's Italian reception to a process of appropriation of his philosophy of history would be an oversimplification and would ultimately fail to provide a convincing account of Hegelianism's appearance in the peninsula, particularly in the Mezzogiorno.

¹ Sections of this chapter will be included in: De Arcangelis, A. (2018) "Towards a New Philosophy of History. European Vichianism and Neapolitan Hegelianism (1804-48)" *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* (forthcoming)

As suggested in the previous chapter, the dynamics of this encounter were more complex and hinged on the systematic amalgamation of Hegel with the local tradition of thought, informed by ongoing debates on history and the broader socio-political context. Some nineteenth- and twentieth-century commentators who examined the popularity of Hegel's philosophy of history, saw the latter as the most elaborate and extensive expression of a historicist tradition initiated by Vico's famous book *La scienza nuova*, which was perceived as the manifesto of a philosophy of historical time and commonly seen as a forerunner of German idealism.²

At the same time, while this intuition already hints at a certain relationship between Hegelianism and Vichianism, the connection between these two schools of thought was not straightforward, due to conceptual and contextual factors. Hegel and Vico's philosophies of history were characterised by fundamental differences in terms of their premises, focus, and definitions of historical development, among other things. Additionally, the lack of evidence suggesting that the German philosopher may have reflected on Vico when writing his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* renders the intellectual continuity between the two authors even more uncertain and problematic. During the 1800s, however, Hegel's philosophy of history was almost univocally treated as complementary to Vico's: as a result, especially in the context of this thesis, the analysis of the German thinker's reception ought to consistently engage with the often-problematic issue of Vico's re-discovery in the early nineteenth century and only subsequently attempt to provide a full account of this connection.

This chapter, therefore, will address the problem of Vico's relation to Hegel, drawing attention to the re-discovery of Neapolitan philosopher in the context of nineteenth-century European and Italian debates on philosophy of history. In particular, it will be suggested that, while there is no significant textual evidence to identify Vico as a forerunner of German idealist philosophy of history, he was nonetheless being read as such in the early decades of the nineteenth century, due to contextual factors, including dynamics of reception and intra- and transnational cultural transfers. This, in turn, may explain how Vico's legacy made nineteenth-century readers more sensitive to the ideas proposed by Hegel, most notably to Hegel's *Geschichtsphilosophie*.

² Croce, B. (1913) *Saggio sullo Hegel*, p. 51; Gans, E. (1837) *Vorrede*, p. ix; Gentile, G. (1915) *Studi vichiani*, pp. 103, 134; Spaventa, B. (1862) *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*, p. 31

Viewing this chapter in the broader context of a study of Hegelianism's presence in the Mezzogiorno, the need to supplement the analysis of this philosophy's reception with the study of the local historicist tradition's re-discovery appears critical: the previous chapter of this thesis maintained that Neapolitan thinkers' attempts to disaggregate Hegel's thought from Victor Cousin's eclecticism ultimately confronted them with a convincing account of absolute historical development, devoid, however, of a compelling explanation of the ways in which this can be imagined as part of a direct, tangible experience of history. This issue, the previous chapter concluded, could conveniently be resolved by plotting a Hegelian account of *Weltgeschichte* against Vico's views on history. In a nutshell, just as chapter one explained how *Hegelian* Neapolitan Hegelianism was, the present one will display what was *Neapolitan* about it.

This chapter will therefore attempt to provide an explanation of how the encounter of Hegelianism and Vichianism took place. It will be suggested that: (i) the re-discovery of Vico's ideas must be slotted into the context of European romanticism: as suggested by Isaiah Berlin in his book *Vico and Herder, La scienza nuova* deployed a number of "time-defying notions", constituting a conceptual framework that made the text appeal to the emerging romantic imaginations, on the one hand, and to advocates of idealist conceptions of time and history, on the other;³ (ii) consistent with the illustration of French intellectuals' contribution developed in chapter one, the dynamics of circulation of Vico's ideas were affected by Jules Michelet, who, influenced by Victor Cousin, selectively borrowed notions from Vico and Hegel, systematically adapting them to his own conception of history; (iii) Vincenzo Cuoco and other Southern émigrés' contribution to the popularization of *La scienza nuova* paved the way for the problematisation of the tension between two notions: "ideal eternal history" ("storia ideale eterna") and the empirical conditions of history. This division, regarded by the Neapolitan exile to have been underdeveloped in Vico, entailed a dichotomy between a philosophical vision of historical time and the study of the most concrete and practical circumstances in which the latter comes to be embodied. In consequence, while expounding and praising Vico's historiographical methods, Cuoco's reading of the eighteenth-century Neapolitan philosopher highlighted the need to amalgamate the study of human knowledge and societies with the elaboration of a universal philosophy of historical time, which was

³ Berlin, I. (1976) *Vico and Herder: Two Studies in the History of Ideas*, p. xvi

reckoned to be only a peripheral concern of *La scienza nuova*, but later found in Hegel; (iv) nineteenth-century Italian debates on Vico, especially thanks to the contribution of Gian Domenico Romagnosi and Carlo Cattaneo, brought about a concern for a concept of *progress*, which Vico's philosophy could not convincingly account for. Consequently, intellectuals turned to German idealists to resolve these questions, finding satisfactory propositions in some aspects of Hegel's *Geschichtsphilosophie*.

2.2. Giambattista Vico: der Unbekannte Philosoph

Born roughly one century after Vico, Hegel never explicitly referred to him and no significant textual evidence can be provided to support a hypothetical claim that he reflected upon the Neapolitan philosopher's ideas. There are, in fact, important differences between Vico's philosophy of history, articulated in *La scienza nuova*, and the German idealist tradition, especially Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. Vico wrote *La scienza nuova* on the basis of the equation of "verum" and "factum" elaborated in *De antiquissima italorum sapientia* of 1710. In plain opposition to eighteenth-century Cartesian rationalism and the reigning Galilean scientific worldview, he argued that, unlike nature, which is created by the omnipotent God, only that which is made by man (*factum*) is accessible to the human mind and can, therefore, be the subject of true knowledge (*verum*).⁴ By consequence, Vico aimed at rehabilitating all subjects dealing with man's experience of reality, most notably history, which Descartes had notoriously labelled a pseudoscience.⁵ He then adopted this association as the basis for the creation of a *new science*, trying to reconcile the rational divine order with the sphere of human affairs. In *La scienza nuova*, therefore, the ways in which history could reflect – and be subject to – the divine laws of Providence were given special consideration.

Vico's theory stemmed from a basic assumption: that history moved from mankind's desire to overcome man's primitive state in order to participate in the divine order to which

⁴ Vico, G. (1710) *De antiquissima italorum sapientia*, pp. 14-37

⁵ Descartes, R. (1637) *Discours de la méthode*, p. 7

it feels it belongs.⁶ More specifically, the elaboration of a *new science* represented an attempt to investigate how mankind's experience of history, reflecting the progressive articulation of its civic and intellectual life, coincided with the ongoing enactment of a divine order ("Ordine Eterno").⁷ In particular:

Our Science must therefore be a demonstration, so to speak, of the historical fact of Providence, for it must be a history of the forms of order which, without human discernment or intent, and often against the design of men, Providence has given to this great city of the human race. For though this world has been created in time and particular, the orders established therein by Providence are universal and eternal. In contemplation of this infinite and eternal Providence our Science finds certain divine proofs by which it is confirmed and demonstrated.⁸

This was why Vico spoke of an "ideal eternal history" ("storia ideale eterna"), corresponding to the realisation "in time" of the "histories of all Nations" ("storie di tutte le Nazioni").⁹ As this chapter shall explain, the juxtaposition of these two concepts was critical in the context of early nineteenth-century debates on *La scienza nuova*, as well as Neapolitan Hegelians' later use of it.

Crucially, for the Neapolitan philosopher, man's agency was central to the experience and the development of history.¹⁰ Yet it was also constantly subject to the regulatory force of Providence, the "divine law-making mind" guiding people's actions beyond the mere fulfilment of their "passions" and "private utility", and towards the contemplation of "this world of Nations, in the totality of its places, times and varieties, within Divine Ideas".¹¹ For Vico, while being quite separate from the material world, Providence worked through the normal course of human affairs and was solely concerned with what happened in the world: as John Robertson put it, this was "what gives human affairs the degree of order they possess".¹²

⁶ Vico, G. (1744) *La scienza nuova*, I, p. 29

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ *ibid.*, I, p. 184

⁹ *ibid.*, I, p. 21

¹⁰ *ibid.*, I, p. 145

¹¹ *ibid.*, I, pp. 119, 185; According to Vico, man, if left alone, was profoundly threatened by his own selfishness and driven only by personal gain, to such an extent that the latter would end up destroying his social and historical life if left unregulated. Providence aimed at amending this and, by consequence, could be seen as an instrument for the *civic happiness* of man. Additionally, despite its divine origin, Vico's Providence acted in such a natural way – and in concert with man's free will – that it could be identified with the natural laws of historical process. Consequently, it did not have the transcendent and miraculous character characterizing, for example, Augustine's idea of Providence.

¹² Robertson, J. (2005) *The Case for the Enlightenment. Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760*, pp. 320-21

Vico's views on the character of history were supported by a number of key-concepts: alongside Providence, for instance, he frequently spoke of a tri-partite division of the "histories of all Nations", reflecting, in a broader sense, three distinct moments in the development of the "ideal, eternal history".¹³ In particular, he listed an "age of the Gods" ("età degli Dei"), during which people "believed they lived under divine governments, and everything was commanded them by auspices and oracles"; an "age of Heroes" ("età degli Eroi"), during which "they reigned everywhere in aristocratic commonwealths, on account of a certain superiority which they held themselves to have over the plebs"; an "age of Men" ("età degli Uomini"), in which "all men recognised themselves as equal in human nature, and therefore there were established first the popular commonwealths and then the monarchies, both of which are forms of human government".¹⁴

Accordingly, while Vico's insistence on man's agency in history, coupled with Providence's regulatory force, allowed him to escape any form of determinism, his understanding of historical development was by no means linear. The three epochs of history were said to cyclically follow one another, according to the principle of "corsi e ricorsi" developed only in the second and third editions of *La scienza nuova*.¹⁵ Put simply, this theory suggested that the history of nations was characterised by periods of development, followed by periods of decadence and corruption, ultimately precipitating mankind into an early stage of barbarism.¹⁶

Some of the differences between Vico and Hegel's philosophies of history should already be evident: first of all, while the Neapolitan philosopher's analysis remained anchored to a concrete, empirical and historical, sphere, Hegel's preference was for the meta-historical and that which he called "philosophical history", concerned with theoretical concepts and entities, ultimately making his philosophy of history subordinate to his metaphysics of Spirit.¹⁷ Additionally, while Vico and Hegel shared an interest in Reason, it is possible to see how different their accounts of this notion were: for Vico, Reason was synonymous with *understanding*, while, for Hegel, it had a much wider meaning, representing the true

¹³ Vico, G. (1744), I, p. 40

¹⁴ *ibid.*, I, pp. 40-41

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, V, pp. 974-1021

¹⁶ *ibid.*; Robertson, J. (2005), pp. 254-55

¹⁷ In *La scienza nuova*, even an apparently abstract theory, such as that of the tripartite division of history, reflected the three stages of development of the human mind (Vico, G. (1744), I, pp. 181-92); Hegel, G. W. F. (1837) *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, pp. 3-75.

substance of history.¹⁸ By contrast, one can see a parallel between Vico's idea of Providence and Hegel's notion of Reason, as some later commentators postulated.¹⁹ After all, both concepts were seen as the engine propelling history, but here another significant difference between the two authors can be identified. This has to do with how the two come to occupy their respective spaces in history: dialectics, through which, according to Hegel, Reason is realized, was entirely absent in the writings of Vico, who saw God's Providence as working *alongside* human agency. In this sense, it is difficult to disagree with Meinecke's description of Vico's philosophy of history as an attempt to "without weakening them, [pull] God's hands a little further away from history", giving "to this its natural freedom of movement", and granting "the contingency of history and the freedom of its protagonist".²⁰

Lastly, another fundamental difference lay in the trajectory followed by historical development: the Vichian theory of "corsi e ricorsi storici" described the cyclical succession of three distinct historical periods, following subsequent stages of acute social, political, cultural and intellectual crisis. This was the exact opposite of German idealist philosophy of history, whose exponents, instead, saw history as linear and directional. In particular, Hegel's view was notoriously teleological and revolved around the progressive realization of freedom in it.²¹

Despite these evident conceptual differences, the dynamics of Hegel's European reception, especially in the 1830s and '40s, were inextricably linked with those of Vico's re-discovery in many parts of the continent during the first decades of the 1800s, and it is possible to mention a significant number of commentaries arguing in favour of a certain continuity between the two authors. Eduard Gans, who attended Hegel's lectures in Heidelberg and whose written output was imbued with the principles of Hegel's philosophy of history, established, in his *Introduction* to the 1837 edition of the philosopher's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, a connection between *La scienza nuova* and the ideas of German idealists, arguing that the formulation of a philosophy of history akin to Hegel's had previously been attempted by Herder, Friedrich von Schlegel, and by Giambattista

¹⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. (1837), pp. 13-14

¹⁹ See, for example Croce, B. (1913), p. 51, or Croce, B. (1922a) *La filosofia di Giambattista Vico*, pp. 115-126

²⁰ Meinecke, F. (1936) *Die Entstehung des Historismus*, p. 42

²¹ Beiser, F. (2002) *Hegel*, pp. 261-66

Vico, whose most notable achievement was to have elaborated a conception of history as ruled by “original laws and Reason” (“ursprünglicher Gesetze und Vernunft”).²²

This view was further consolidated, in the Italian peninsula, by commentaries appearing during the second half of the nineteenth and in the twentieth century: Bertrando Spaventa, for example, in his 1862 essay *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*, described Vico as “the true precursor of all Germany”, positing that the eighteenth-century Neapolitan philosopher should be recognized as the first – and most notable – theorist of a historical time informed by a new metaphysics of ideas and by a groundbreaking intuition, namely that of Spirit.²³ In 1922, Benedetto Croce wrote *La filosofia di Giambattista Vico*, in which the Neapolitan philosopher was not only seen as a precursor of German historicism, but more broadly defined as “the seed of the nineteenth century”.²⁴ This is particularly interesting if one considers that Croce knew that Hegel was not directly acquainted with any of Vico’s writings.²⁵

A parallel between the two authors was already developed in Croce’s 1900 essay *Ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto della filosofia di Hegel*, where the Neapolitan philosopher was credited with being the first to formulate a dialectical view of history, and in which comparisons between Vico’s notion of Providence and Hegel’s “cunning of Reason”, were proposed.²⁶ In his most mature reflection on Hegelianism, the often overlooked 1949 imaginary dialogue *Una pagina sconosciuta degli ultimi mesi della vita di Hegel*, Croce recounted a fictitious encounter taking place in Berlin between the great German idealist and the young Neapolitan Francesco di Sanseverino, *de facto* a spokesperson for Croce himself, presenting Vico not only as a “precursor” of idealist philosophy, but also as a thinker deemed able to resolve some of the perceived shortcomings of Hegel’s own thought²⁷.

Croce’s verdict on Vico, which acquired an increasingly Hegelian connotation over a time span of fifty years, was echoed by the words of another influential historian of nineteenth-century Italy, Giovanni Gentile. He authored, in 1915, the *Studi vichiani*,

²² Gans, E. (1837), p. ix

²³ Spaventa, B. (1862), p. 31

²⁴ Croce, B. (1922a) p. 257; Croce’s interest in Vico led him to compile the well-known *Bibliografia vichiana*, initially conceived in 1904 and published in 1911. Croce’s *Bibliografia* details all works written on Vico and his influence on others. A revised and updated edition was published by Fausto Nicolini in 1948.

²⁵ Croce, B. (1922b) *La fortuna del Vico*, p. 291

²⁶ Croce, B. (1900) *Ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto della filosofia di Hegel*, pp. 42, 70, 72-74

²⁷ Croce, B. (1949) *Una pagina sconosciuta degli ultimi mesi della vita di Hegel*, p. 12

suggesting that Vico's idea of Providence ought to be seen as a precursor of Hegel's intuition of a rationality embedded in historical development. Gentile, in fact, highlighted how "the notion of reality discussed in *La scienza nuova* is not only mind, but mind understood as self-consciousness", later adding that the eighteenth-century Neapolitan philosopher had been the first to postulate, like Hegel a century later, "that concrete universality representing the subject positing itself, and realising itself via self-consciousness".²⁸

In recent years, a historiographical tradition initiated by the volume *Die Entstehung des Historismus* by Friedrich Meinecke resulted in efforts to disaggregate Vico's historicism from subsequent iteration of the same principle.²⁹ Pietro Piovani, for example, in his book *Vico senza Hegel*, suggested that, while the two authors undoubtedly shared a common concern with the problem of history, they nonetheless diverged insofar as the Neapolitan philosopher's elaboration of historical time exhibited some undeniable anti-metaphysical traits.³⁰ A similar line of argumentation was adopted by Friedrich Jäger and Jörn Rüsen, who, while failing to regard historicism as a subject matter in itself for intellectual historians, believed that it nonetheless constituted an ubiquitous methodological approach in western philosophy. In their *Geschichte des Historismus*, in fact, they maintained that European historicisms stemmed from a common problem, but developed along different trajectories and ultimately differed quite substantially with regard to metaphysical assumptions, the subject of analysis and the conclusions reached.³¹

The tension between early and late twentieth-century inquiries on Vico and German idealism may suggest that the truth with regards to their connection lay somewhere in the middle; it is therefore possible to argue that later commentaries on this topic seem to have defended a markedly philosophical reading of both Vico and German historicists, leaving little, if any, room for the analysis of the different authors' receptions. This issue is one that intellectual historians can conveniently resolve: while there is little textual continuity between Vico and later authors, a contextual analysis can reveal how German philosophers of history were essentially deemed to have reflected on Vico's historicism, due to ongoing debates on history and the overall orientation of the European intellectual landscape. In other

²⁸ Gentile, G. (1915), pp. 103, 134

²⁹ A good overview of these scholarly interpretations is available in: Tessitore, F. (1968) *Vico tra due storicismi*, pp. 217-27; Tessitore, F. (1979) *Vico nelle origini dello storicismo tedesco*, pp. 5-34

³⁰ Piovani, P. (1968) *Vico senza Hegel*, pp. 553-86

³¹ Jäger, F. & Rüsen, J. (1992) *Geschichte des Historismus*, pp. 144-48

words, it can show that a connection was *perceived* to exist even if there actually was none. Having rejected the possibility of a direct textual link, the possibility of a contextual connection still remains. Despite the significant differences between *La scienza nuova* and the *Vorlesungen*, one may legitimately wonder to what extent Vico's historicism penetrated the German intellectual landscape, influencing, more or less indirectly, the group of authors who ultimately constituted the idealist school of philosophy. A contextual analysis of this kind, essentially concerned with Vico's reception in nineteenth-century Germany, however, further consolidates the need to disaggregate Vico's philosophy from Hegel's.

During the eighteenth century, Vico did not enjoy a favorable reception, either in Italy, or abroad. The first two editions of *La scienza nuova*, originally published in 1725 and 1730, initially had a very limited circulation in the peninsula, and they barely succeeded in crossing the Alps, hence providing little evidence in support of any direct continuity between Vichian and idealist historicism.³² The first German translation of *La scienza nuova* appeared only in 1822, penned by Wilhelm Ernst Weber.³³ This translation was generally regarded as a very accurate one; moreover, as indicated by Croce, later commentators also praised Weber's efforts to render Vico's language clearer to German speakers and his detailed reconstruction of the original text's sources.³⁴ Despite these facts, this work went almost completely unnoticed, being mentioned only in an 1851 article published in the periodical *Deutsches Museum* and in Karl Heinrich Müller's 1854 translation of Vico's 1720 *De universi juris principio et fine uno*.³⁵ Prior to 1822, evidence of Vico's presence in Germany was also limited. The periodical *Acta eruditorum lipsiensia*, appearing in Leipzig, which Vico himself knew well, produced a harsh review of *La scienza nuova* upon the initial publication of the 1725 edition, drawing attention to several alleged inconsistencies in its historiographical methodology.³⁶

Individual authors failed to engage systematically with Vico's work, too: Hamann, for instance, confessed in a letter written in 1777, that he was eagerly waiting to receive a copy

³² Becchi, P. (1986) *Vico e Filangieri in Germania*, pp. 8-9; Tessitore, F. (1979) pp. 7-8

³³ Weber's translation, made between 1817 and 1821, appeared with the title *Grundzüge einer Neuen Wissenschaft über die gemeinschaftliche Natur der Völker, Aus dem Italienischen* and was based on the third (1744) edition of *La Scienza Nuova*.

³⁴ Croce, B. (1911) *Bibliografia vichiana*, p. 6; Weber, W. E. (1822) *Vorwort*, I, pp. xxii-iii

³⁵ Cauer, E. (1851) *G.B.V. und seine Stellung zur modernen Wissenschaft*, p. 261; Müller, K. H. (1854) *Einleitung*, p. 31; Croce, B. (1911), pp. 6, 73; it is interesting to note that Müller's translation was meant as the first entry in a series entitled *Des Johann Baptista Vico kleine Schriften*, discontinued after the first volume's publication

³⁶ Anonymous (1727) *Baptistae Vici notae*; Croce, B. (1911), pp. 223-24

of *La scienza nuova*.³⁷ In it, he explained, he was hoping to discover fresh insights into economics and history, but later admitted his disappointment in exclusively coming across notions of philology.³⁸ This verdict proved to be quite puzzling for later commentators on Hamann, who found it peculiar – to say the least – that he had failed to see the evident similarities between Vico’s thought and his own.³⁹

Johann Gottfried Herder was another author whose relationship with Vico was extensively dissected by later commentators. Isaiah Berlin, for example, examined the alleged convergence of their philosophical sensibilities, highlighting how Herder sought to articulate a philosophy of history able to “embrace the entire province of knowledge of his time”, and followed Vico in maintaining the need for historians to investigate the intersection of time, place and national character.⁴⁰ Yet, despite Herder’s philosophical interest in Vichian historicism, which Berlin saw as a fundamental step in the definition of “human history” not as a “linear progression, but a succession of distinct and heterogeneous civilisations” that “could be seen to possess an inner unity”, the dynamics of the intellectual transfer from one author to the other make their affinity much more problematic.⁴¹

When, in fact, Herder travelled to Italy in 1797 and gathered materials for his philosophy of history, the main source of information on Vico’s ideas was the latter’s autobiography and not *La scienza nuova*.⁴² Additionally, it has also been suggested that Herder may have reflected on Vico without even being fully aware of his ideas.⁴³ Specifically, the German intellectual’s acquaintance with the Neapolitan thinker seems to have been ‘filtered’ through the reading of Melchiorre Cesarotti’s footnotes to the German edition of

³⁷ Hamann, J. G. (1777) *Lettere: 1770-77*, p. 413

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Marienberg, S. (2006) *Zeichenhandeln: Sprachdenken bei Giambattista Vico und Johann Georg Hamann*, p. 8. The similarity between Vico and Hamann’s analysis of poetry is indeed quite striking: the former, on the one hand, argued that human life begins in the realm of the particular, characteristic of the poetic; the latter, on the other, defined poetry as “the mother tongue of the human race” (Hamann, J. G. (1949-57) *Sämtliche Werke*, p. 197). Other similarities extend to wider discussions of the origins of language and writing. See also: Croce, B. (1911), pp. 364-71; Berlin, I. (1976) and Berlin, I. (2000) *Three Critics of the Enlightenment: Vico, Hamann and Herder*

⁴⁰ Berlin, I. (1976), p. xxi; Herder’s ideas ought to be read as antithetical to those of the philosophers-historians of the Enlightenment, such as Voltaire and Hume, insofar as he argued in favor of the historical nature of human consciousness, postulating fundamental differences among different historical periods. This intuition was presented relying upon Vichian categories, such as that of *national character* and the mental powers of a people, constituting important elements of historical laws. See: Herder, J. G. (1784-91) *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, p. 348

⁴¹ Berlin, I. (1976), pp. xxv-xxvi

⁴² Herder, J. G. (1797) *Briefe zu Beförderung der Humanität*, X, pp. 67-69

⁴³ Clark, R. T. (1947) *Herder, Cesarotti and Vico*, pp. 645-71

Macpherson's *Ossian*⁴⁴. While, therefore, some similarities between Vico and Herder are undeniable, these considerations ultimately made their attribution to a direct acquaintance or, at least, clear dynamics of reception, difficult, if not unsustainable.

A similar trajectory can be drawn with regard to the intellectual development of Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi: the connection between him and Vico was already questioned by Victor Cousin in 1827, when he pointed out how both Goethe and Jacobi's knowledge of Vico was limited to the most superficial aspects of the latter's system of ideas and generally inherent to political pronouncements only.⁴⁵ Upon introducing Jacobi to the study of Vico in 1787, Goethe had described him as a "Neapolitan man of politics".⁴⁶ Moreover, it is undeniable that Jacobi did not attempt to connect Vico with the German tradition of idealism. Rather, he saw him as a precursor of Immanuel Kant's transcendental method. In this respect, he did not turn his attention to the philosophy of history elaborated in *La scienza nuova*, but to Vico's emphasis on mathematical sciences and the idea of *verum factum* illustrated in *De antiquissima italorum sapientia*. This appears particularly evident by looking at the 1811 work *Von den Göttlichen Dingen und Ihrer Offenbarung*, where Kant's ideas on sensibility and metaphysics were directly plotted against Vico's *De antiquissima*.⁴⁷

While these considerations revealed traces of Vico's ideas in the German cultural landscape of the time, they did not provide significant evidence regarding the reception of the Italian philosopher's views on history, hence making the issue of the connection between *La scienza nuova* and idealist historicism all the more uncertain. In this sense, the notion of a "meeting that never happened" ("incontro mai avvenuto") between Vico and Hegel, aptly coined by Silvia Caianiello, appears quite apposite: on the one hand, it draws attention to the lack of Vichian elements in Hegel's works, while highlighting, on the other, how a connection between the two authors can nonetheless be postulated.⁴⁸

If, however, this link could not be clearly seen by looking at the works of German philosophers, nor could it be inferred via an analysis of their contexts, the presence of so

⁴⁴ Macpherson, J. (1768) *Die Gedichte Ossians, eines altern celtischen Dichter*; Herder, J. G. (1789) *Brief an Caroline Herder vom 12.1.1789*, p. 308

⁴⁵ Cousin, V. (1828) *Cours de l'histoire de la philosophie*, p. 221

⁴⁶ "In dem kleinern Paquet findest du Vico den neapolitanischer Politiker, viele französische, einige italienische Schauspiele" (Goethe, J. W. (31.12.1792) *Brief an Jacobi*, p. 143)

⁴⁷ Jacobi, F. H. (1811) *Von den Göttlichen Dingen und Ihrer Offenbarung*, pp. 121-23; Jacobi directly quoted Vico, G. (1710), pp. 51-52

⁴⁸ Caianiello, S. (2011) *Vico e lo storicismo tedesco*, p. 73

many later commentaries stretching their analysis so far as to describe Vico as a precursor of Hegel still remains puzzling. An effective explanation of this, however, can be obtained when considering these matters from a transnational point of view: with local contexts yielding meagre results in relation to the characterisation of the Vichian/Hegelian nexus discussed in this chapter, it becomes necessary to enlarge the scope of this inquiry, by slotting it within the broader picture of a European history of ideas. In a nutshell, due to its transnational character, the relation between Vico and Hegel must be deemed a European phenomenon, not exclusively connected to the experience of local or national contexts and intellectual debates.

2.3. Re-discovering Vico in Europe and France

The reasons why Vico's popularity rose only in the nineteenth century have often been addressed by historians.⁴⁹ Generally speaking, the re-orientation of European culture marking the appearance of romanticism and idealism can be seen as a determining factor. A first, rather sophisticated, yet quite abstract, position was advocated by Isaiah Berlin, who posited that the presence of several elements in Vico's philosophy that "defy time" made his ideas appealing in the context of European romanticism.⁵⁰ Claiming that Vico's greatest accomplishment was the proposition of the study of the past as a form of self-understanding, Berlin proceeded to list seven key-areas of his thought: (i) the intuition that human nature was not static, but continuously adapted to the environment; (ii) that historical facts were easier to grasp, and make sense of, than natural ones, since they were man-made; (iii) his preference for humanist versus natural studies; (iv) the assumption that all epochs and cultures seem to have been driven by a dominant idea; (v) that human creations were natural forms of expression; (vi) the proposition that works of art ought to be judged in relation to

⁴⁹ Robertson, J. (2005), pp. 206-10; see also: Tagliacozzo, G. (1973) *Introductory Remarks*, pp. 1-8; Tagliacozzo, G. (1993) *The 'Arbor Scientiae' Reconceived and the History of Vico's Resurrection*

⁵⁰ Berlin, I. (1976) p. xvi

the historical time to which they belong; and (vii) the idea that reproductive imagination supplemented deductive and empirical knowledge.⁵¹

These seven points, while making Vico a peripheral figure in the Enlightenment culture in which he moved, resonated well with the new nineteenth-century sensibilities, hence corroborating, albeit in a generalist way, the intuition that his name was largely unknown prior to the 1800s. Point two, in particular, is especially relevant: Arnaldo Momigliano drew attention to Vico's distinction between "sacred" and "profane" history, a tension stemming out of the dichotomy of "verum" and "factum", arguing that all those romantics, anti-clericals and pantheists who were not concerned with such a division and accepted Vico's view of profane history as the true history, were ready to turn his historicism into a pre-hegelian philosophy of history.⁵² Momigliano's verdict also underlined how rapidly a dialogue between the Neapolitan philosopher's ideas and those of the German idealist school was established. Once again, addressing the question of why this was the case is a very urgent goal if one is to acquire a more precise understanding of Hegelianism's fortune and reception in nineteenth-century southern Italy.

The romantic orientation of much of early nineteenth-century European culture makes it easy to infer why Vico must have been an appealing thinker. France, in this respect, was no exception. Even though illustrating the full range of nineteenth-century French debates on the Neapolitan philosopher is definitely beyond the scope of this thesis, some authors and contexts nonetheless require closer examination. This is because these thinkers, such as Jules Michelet and his mentor Victor Cousin, consistently re-described Vichian historicism from the standpoint of an idealist concept of historical development. More importantly, they did so in a number of works, such as Michelet's 1827 *Principes de la philosophie de l'histoire*, that were widely read both in northern and southern Italy and represented important sources of information on Vico for numerous thinkers, including Giandomenico Romagnosi and Carlo Cattaneo. The image of Vico's philosophy of history developed in these French works, as this chapter will explain, significantly reverberated in Italian intellectuals' idealist reading of *La scienza nuova* and their tendency to see the latter as complementary to Hegel's *Geschichtsphilosophie*.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Momigliano, A. (1966) *Vico's Scienza Nuova: Roman "Bestioni" and Roman "Eroi"*, pp. 259-60

Together with other historians of the romantic generation, Michelet, who had become acquainted both with Vico and with Hegel via Cousin, sought to elaborate a conception of history different from the one proposed by idealist philosophers: authors like Francois Guizot, Henri Martin and Prosper de Barante perfected an approach closely connected with notions of cultural history, in contrast to the German school, which focused, instead, on the link between history and political events. These French historians differed insofar as they proposed different interpretive keys accounting for the mechanisms through which man carved out his place in history.

Michelet, in particular, committed to the elaboration of a new philosophy of history. This rested on the proposition of a single principle able to account for all forms of social life observable in a plurality of contemporary European nations, and in concert with a homogeneous process of civilization. In other words, unlike idealist philosophy that saw unity as the goal of the nations' lives, Michelet, loyal to the Jacobin ideal of an undivided nation, searched for unity in their origin, namely in their mythical, spiritualized foundations.⁵³ In the case of France, he argued, this ideal was embodied in the image of the "mère patrie".⁵⁴ More specifically, while fascinated by Hegel's teleological idea that history was an objective and collective process, featuring a linear progression anchored to a solid dialectics, he disagreed with the German philosopher with regard to the idea that this proceeded towards a clear-cut goal, namely that universal history, to use Hegel's own words, acted in such a way as to make possible that "all that is rational is real and all that is real is rational".⁵⁵

This disagreement was quite significant, insofar as it mirrored the different cultural and philosophical orientations of the two authors: Hegel, the champion of a highly philosophical understanding of historical processes; Michelet, an exponent of a school of cultural historians trying to challenge the centrality of philosophical contemplation and aiming at explaining history in the context of a romantic worldview, according to which history originated from – and developed in accordance with – the mythic traditions of the nations

⁵³ Michelet re-worked Vico's theory of myth in his *Histoire de la France*, showing how foundational myths, such as the martyrdom of Saint Denis, the conversion of Clovis, the Christian monarchy of Saint Louis and the life of Joan of Arc contributed to creating a collective imagination crystalized in an idealised image of the French nation (Mali, J. (2012) *The Legacy of Vico in Modern Cultural History*, p. 64; see also Crossley, C. (1993) *French Historians and Romanticism: Thierry, Guizot, the Saint-Simonians, Quinet, Michelet*, pp. 183-250)

⁵⁴ Michelet, J. (1839) *Histoire romaine*, pp. 334-44

⁵⁵ "Was vernünftig ist, das ist Wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig" (Hegel, G. W. F. (1820) *Grundlinien der Philosophie der Rechts*, "Vorrede", p. 24)

and their cultural production: “humanity”, for Michelet, “is its own creation”, an intuition resonating with Vico’s equation of *verum* and *factum* in his *De antiquissima*.⁵⁶

The clash of these views had significant methodological implications, too: arguing that historical laws ought to be found in the origin and development of nations naturally implied the rejection of the idealist assumption that history can only be investigated post-factually and retrospectively, namely from the vantage point of philosophical contemplation of the past. Yet, despite these significant differences with the champion of German idealism, Michelet’s reading of Vico forced typically idealist philosophical preoccupations onto *La scienza nuova*. The image of the Neapolitan philosopher proposed by the French author, then, was not particularly faithful to the original.

As Joseph Mali’s book *The Legacy of Vico in Modern Cultural History* showed, Michelet’s emphasis on the life of nations, as well as on the study of the cultural productions of the past, undoubtedly echoed elements of Vico’s *Scienza nuova*.⁵⁷ After all, it was Michelet himself who recognized the impact of Vico’s ideas upon his own, highlighting how they had brought about a novel understanding that history ought to be seen as a spiritual process of self-creation of the people.⁵⁸ Michelet’s relation to Vico, a “fury, an incredible intoxication with his great historical principle”, can then be understood by looking at the Frenchman’s 1827 translation of *La scienza nuova*, for many years the most influential work on Vico.⁵⁹ The author himself gave, in 1830, an account of the popularity of his book. In his candidature letter to the Collège de France, in fact, he wrote:

Those who are familiar with the confusion and the obscurity of the original text know what such a work must have cost. The Italians themselves, in Turin, in Florence and in Rome, have repeatedly told me that they prefer to use the French translation; I have received the same testimonies in Germany.⁶⁰

This view was confirmed by Gian Domenico Romagnosi, who, in 1832, pointed out how Vico’s popularity in Italy was remarkably indebted to Michelet’s translation.⁶¹ Yet, Michelet’s

⁵⁶ Michelet, J. (1839) p. 341; On this point, see also: Mali, J. (2003) *Mythistory: The Making of a Modern Historiography*, p. 85

⁵⁷ Mali, J. (2012), pp. 12-70

⁵⁸ Berlin, I. (2000), pp. 143-44

⁵⁹ Michelet, J. (1869) *Unpublished Note*, p. 215

⁶⁰ Michelet, J. (1994) *Correspondance générale*, I, p. 702

⁶¹ Romagnosi, G. D. (1832a) *Dell’indole e dei fattori dell’incivilimento con esempio del suo Risorgimento in Italia*, p. 250

exegesis of Vico was far from being unproblematic. The 1827 translation was a largely edited one: the extent of the editing was so large that the title of the book was not *La science nouvelle*, as one would expect, but *Principes de la philosophie de l'histoire de Vico*. Clearly, Michelet's intention was to render Vico's theory more accessible and less obscure to contemporary readers, but, in doing so, he largely altered sections of it, making them much more consistent with his own pre-existing philosophical beliefs.⁶²

For example, the theory of "corsi e ricorsi storici", Vico's own interpretation of history as cyclical, was removed from the text.⁶³ Other sections, especially those dealing with philological enquiries on the origin of modern languages, were heavily downsized and often relegated to footnotes. These considerations, in combination with the change of titles, seem to support the idea that Michelet engaged with Vico with the intention of 'merely' elaborating an account of the philosophical principles informing historical development and not with the goal, characterizing Vico's enterprise, of articulating a wider *new science*, amalgamating similar speculations on the character of history with detailed notions of anthropology, philology and linguistics.

What stood out in Michelet's *Principes* was therefore an undeniable interest for history, which clearly lay at the core of Vico's book, but here ended up being separated from the framework of the Italian author's wider cultural preoccupations, which were deemed by the Frenchman to be marginal and too obscure for his contemporaries. It is legitimate, at this point, to wonder: how consistent with Vico's was Michelet's philosophical history, once it was deprived of most of its empirical – and methodological – underpinnings? Only to some extent; and this was because of Michelet's intellectual agenda of the years leading to the translation of 1827. First of all, one ought to keep in mind how, in 1824, Michelet had joined the circle of Victor Cousin, whose lectures on Hegel he had attended in Paris in the same year and had triggered a newfound interest in German idealist philosophers; second, despite being largely in disagreement with these authors, Michelet still retained some points of similarity with them, especially with Hegel, as illustrated earlier, most notably a general interest in history

⁶² Mali, J. (2012), pp. 33-34

⁶³ Michelet, J. (1827) *Principes de la philosophie de l'histoire de Vico*, I, pp. 70-84; See also: Michelet, J. (1840) *Introduction à l'histoire universelle*, pp. 9-28; As noted in his *Journal*, Michelet was well-aware of Vico's cyclical conception of history, which makes its omission in the *Principes* seem even more deliberate (Michelet, J. (1984) *Journal*, I, p. 384); For a discussion of the philosophical background to Michelet's discussion of Vico, see: Kippur, S. A. (1981) *Jules Michelet: A Study of Mind and Sensibility*, pp. 26-38

as a collective process, as well as its linearity, an idea which Vico would have undoubtedly abhorred.

This is not to say that Michelet proposed a reading of the Neapolitan philosopher along the lines of German idealism, but operated a selective one, clearly denoting intellectual concerns and a philosophical inclination that had much more in common with Hegel's philosophy of history, rather than Vico's. Michelet's work was an attempt to slot *La scienza nuova* into his very "own treatise on the philosophy of history", as he told Cousin in 1824, namely one that was driven by the quest for unity in history: unity that did not lie in the overall goal of world history, as Hegel would hold, but in the mythical foundations of nations.⁶⁴ And this intuition represented a striking similarity with Hegel, insofar as Michelet reworked the German philosopher's idea of *Aufhebung*, namely the notion of *sublation* stemming out of self-negotiation in history, suggesting that modern nations were the result of a continuous honing of a mythical image.

Not surprisingly, in his most famous work, *Histoire de la France*, Michelet fully embraced this framework, suggesting that the tension between local and private interests and the voluntary bonds required for the well-being of society was resolved thanks to the idea of "a great homeland, by which he [man] imagines himself in the destinities of the world. The idea of this homeland, an abstract idea that owes very little to the senses, will lead him to a renewed effort to realise the idea of a universal fatherland, of the city of Providence".⁶⁵ It was not the Hegelian Spirit at work here, via the "cunning of Reason", but the mythical image of the French nation: in any case, these two mechanisms were not dissimilar and worked in comparable ways. Consequently, it should not come as a surprise to note that, in the 1831 *Introduction à l'histoire universelle*, Michelet posited France at the very forefront of history, attributing to it a centrality similar to that of Germany in Hegel's *Weltgeschichte*.⁶⁶

Michelet, therefore, could be credited for having amalgamated the most basic and important Vichian assumption, namely that only that which is made is true, the famous *verum = factum* motto, with a philosophical interest for history, of a kind that was simply absent in *La scienza nuova*, but fully present in the intellectual landscape of nineteenth-century German historicism. As a result, the image of Vico presented in Michelet's book embodied a

⁶⁴ Michelet, J. (1994), I, p. 703

⁶⁵ Michelet, J. (1837) *Histoire de la France*, p. 129

⁶⁶ Michelet, J. (1840) *Introduction à l'histoire universelle*, pp. 9-28

certain distortion of his thought: one that certainly contributed, given the widespread popularity enjoyed by Michelet's book both within France and, more importantly, Italy, to the association of Vichian and Hegelian historicism.

2.4. The Italian Context: Vincenzo Cuoco and the Southern Exiles

The early nineteenth-century re-discovery of Giambattista Vico's philosophy in France was, as identified earlier, virtually monopolized by Jules Michelet and, to some extent, Victor Cousin, thus remaining somewhat limited in scope, despite the exceptional popularity of Michelet's book. Italy, instead, constituted a different scenario, where the presence of history and of debates connected with its character and functions were much more pervasive. In his 1995 study *Republics, Nations and Tribes*, Martin Thom viewed this tendency as symptomatic of a general re-orientation of European culture, whereby early romantic historical imaginations theorised "other tableaux of collective origin" in contrast to eighteenth-century historiography, in ways that "testify to the yielding of a world of cities to a world of nations".⁶⁷ Placing itself in opposition to the worldviews of the 1700s, the romantic understanding of history sought to decode the spiritual development of nations on the basis of a broader notion of historical progress.⁶⁸ The works of Walter Scott are of special importance here, with his *Ivanhoe* being often seen as dismissive of the "stadial theory" of history characteristic of the Scottish Enlightenment.⁶⁹

These books' rapid proliferation in the Italian peninsula exemplified Italians' growing interest in this new way of thinking about history and evaluating the past.⁷⁰ Opera, in

⁶⁷ Thom, M. (1995) *Republics, Nations and Tribes*, pp. 1-2, 271-305

⁶⁸ Croce, B. (1921) *Storia della storiografia italiana nel secolo decimonono*, pp. 243-64; Thom, M. (1995), pp. 192-94; on Enlightenment historiography, see: Pocock, J. G. A. (1999) *Barbarism and Religion. Volume One: The Enlightenment of Edward Gibbon, 1737-1764*, pp. 1-11; Pocock, J. G. A. (2008) *Historiography and Enlightenment: A View of their History*, pp. 83-96

⁶⁹ Thom, M. (1995), p. 194

⁷⁰ Banti, A. M. (2000) *La nazione del Risorgimento*, pp. 3-53; Ginsborg, P. (2007) *Romanticismo e Risorgimento: l'io, l'amore, la nazione*, pp. 5-67; On Scott's reception in Italy, see: Ruggieri Punzo, F. (1975) *Walter Scott in Italia*

particular, introduced large swathes of the Italian public to romantic history.⁷¹ Already in 1819, for instance, Gioacchino Rossini performed his *Donna del lago*, based on Scott's poem *The Lady of the Lake*, at the San Carlo theatre in Naples. Stendhal, who attended one of the first performances, described it as a "delight".⁷² He also claimed that *Trancredi* made ample use of a stylistic device "invented by Walter Scott", drawing a parallel between Rossini's use of orchestral harmony to reinforce vocal music passages with Scott's adoption of description as a means to enhance passages of dialogue.⁷³ Subsequently, Donizetti produced *Elisabetta al castello di Kenilworth* in 1829 and Bellini crafted *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 1838.

The fascination for this new romantic vision of history was so widespread that several *librettisti*, such as Andrea Leone Tottola and Gaetano Rossi, worked almost exclusively on the Scottish author's works. One of these, Gaetano Barbieri, who, in 1829, wrote the libretti for Giovanni Pacini's *Il talismano, ovvero la terza crociata in Palestina* after the 1825 book *The Talisman*, as well as *Giovanna D'Arco* in 1830, was famous for having translated Scott's novels *Kenilworth* in 1821, *Ivanhoe* in 1822, and *The Bride of Lammermoor* in 1824. With *Kenilworth*, the Milanese publisher Vincenzo Ferrario, who was well aware of the rising popularity of Scott and of his literary genre in a wider sense, initiated the publication of a long series of historical novels.⁷⁴

Between 1821 and 1840, 318 editions of various works by Walter Scott appeared in Italy, most notably in Milan, Florence and Naples.⁷⁵ Francesco De Sanctis recounted, in his posthumously published autobiography, how extraordinary the impact of Scott's novels had been upon his generation:

As we were being infected by that early reading fever, we stumbled upon Walter Scott's novels. We read them in secret, as if that were a crime. Giovannino read *Leicester* to us: to me, some friends and other students who lived with us, such as Carlo Bosco, Amadauri. To us, that felt like the revelation of a whole new world! Oh, how much did I cry for that poor Tressilian!⁷⁶

⁷¹ Körner, A. (2017) *America in Italy. The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763-1865*, p. 180

⁷² Stendhal (1824) *Vie de Rossini*, p. 291

⁷³ *ibid.*, pp. 46-47; see also: Sorba, C. (2015) *Il melodramma della nazione: politica e sentimenti nell'età del Risorgimento*, pp. 100-07

⁷⁴ The most popular of these were: Giambattista Bazzoni's *Falco della rupe, o la guerra di Musso* (1824), Angelica Palli's *Alessio o gli ultimi giorni di Psara* (1827), Vincenzo Lancetti's *Cabrino fondulo* (1827)

⁷⁵ Various works were also read in French translations and abbreviated versions called "riduzioni". See: Ruggieri Punzo, F. (1975), pp. 19-28

⁷⁶ De Sanctis, F. (1889) *La giovinezza. Memorie postume seguite da testimonianze biografiche di amici e discepoli*, p. 7

In a context marked by the emergence of new ways of reflecting on history, Giambattista Vico's works captured Italian intellectuals' attention. As explained by Benedetto Croce, the romantics unexpectedly found in the eighteenth-century philosopher a "very rich and organic anticipation" of their own thought. This was because:

Vico opposed to the superficial contempt for the past in the name of abstract Reason the unfolding of the human mind in history, as sense, imagination, and intellect, as the divine or animal age, the heroic age, and the human age. He held further that no human age was in the wrong, for each had its own strength and beauty, and each was the effect of its predecessor and the necessary preparation for the one to follow, aristocracy for democracy, democracy for monarchy, each one appearing at the right moment, or as the justice of that moment.⁷⁷

The extent to which Vico's ideas on history reverberated in the poetics of the Italian romantic generation should therefore not come as a surprise: Ugo Foscolo, for example, in his 1825 *Discorso sul testo della commedia di Dante*, as well as his later *Lezioni di eloquenza* (1834), proposed an interpretation of literature as deeply rooted in the historical process, in a manner akin to Vico's reflections on the historical character of language and cultural production.⁷⁸ Furthermore, Alessandro Manzoni, whose *Promessi sposi* is the best-known historical novel ever written in Italy, repeatedly referred to Vico's centrality in the development of a new historiographical approach. In his 1830 essay *Del romanzo storico e in genere de' componimenti misti di storia e di invenzione*, he famously defined the emerging genre as a "mixed composition of history and invention", highlighting how the writer's duty was to report "history, [...] history according to people's opinions": in other words, history as a Vichian man-made *factum*.⁷⁹

Vico's re-discovery in the context of nineteenth-century Italian intellectuals' growing attention to new ways of interpreting history did not, however, occur in a vacuum. A very important catalyst for this process was represented by the contributions of southern exiles who travelled to various regions of the peninsula, most notably Milan and Florence, following the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution. Manzoni recounted that Vico's name was "hardly" known in Lombardy prior to 1799 and that commentators' attention came to be directed towards

⁷⁷ Croce, B. (1921), p. 248

⁷⁸ Foscolo, U. (1825) *Discorso sul testo della commedia di Dante*; Foscolo, U. (1834) *Lezioni di eloquenza e di letteratura italiana*, pp. 71-73.

⁷⁹ Manzoni, A. (1830) *Del romanzo storico e in genere de' componimenti misti di storia e di invenzione*, pp. 1, 4

his philosophy of history only after that date.⁸⁰ What struck Lombard observers, and Manzoni in particular, was how Vico “sought to find very general principles regarding the common nature of nations. He did not aim at illustrating any specific epoch of history, but attempted to devise a universal pattern for societies across their darkest epochs”.⁸¹

Neapolitan exiles played an important role in the re-discovery of Vico’s philosophy outside the boundaries of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Francesco Lomonaco, for example, who had actively taken part in the Revolution and subsequently moved to France and then Milan, published, in 1802, *Vite degli eccellenti italiani* in Milan, in which Vico, one of the central characters of the book, was described as “the most philosophical among all philosophers. This is because this character, who shines in all his fame, rather than limiting the scope of his thought to the one or the other science, hovered, with his great and divine mind, above all of human knowledge”.⁸² Having been appointed professor of history in Pavia, Lomonaco produced a passionate praise of *La scienza nuova* in the inaugural address of 1806, emphasizing how Vico’s methodology ought to be adopted as a means to disentangle the study of history from Cartesianism and the emerging clericalism.⁸³

Francesco Saverio Salvi then reflected extensively on history in his 1807 volume *Dell’uso dell’istoria*, in which, frequently referencing *La scienza nuova*, he engaged with the problem of progress, drawing attention to how the correct application of a scientific method to the study of political and moral subjects could not be separated from the adoption of history as platform of observation and verification of the said analysis.⁸⁴ In other words, adopting a methodology that had much in common with Vico’s, Salvi firmly believed in the possibility of tracing human progress by looking at past and present events.

The importance of history as a discipline was further emphasized in Salvi’s 1815 essay *Dell’influenza della storia*, targeting all those, such as Melchiorre Delfico, who had defined

⁸⁰ The word “hardly” requires clarifications: some northern intellectuals had started reading Vico before 1799 (Gianrinaldo Carli, Pietro Custodi and, more importantly, Giandomenico Romagnosi in 1781); *La scienza nuova* enjoyed a brief circulation at the university of Pavia during the early 1790s, as reported by Pietro Custodi (quoted in: Croce, B. (1911), p. 47), but there is no significant evidence pointing at a systematic and more consistent engagement with the Neapolitan philosopher’s ideas prior to the early 1800s; It is also important to underline, at this point, that Manzoni established a long-lasting friendship with the most notorious of all Neapolitan exiles, Vincenzo Cuoco (Tessitore, F. (1995) *Contributi alla storia e alla teoria dello storicismo*, p. 10)

⁸¹ Manzoni, A. (1822) *Discorso sopra alcuni punti della storia longobardica in Italia*, p. 63

⁸² Lomonaco, F. (1802) *Vite degli eccellenti italiani*, p. 102

⁸³ Lomonaco, F. (1806) *Discorso augurale di Francesco Lomonaco, professore di storia*

⁸⁴ Salvi, F. S. (1807) *Dell’uso dell’istoria*, pp. 7-14

history as a “useless” and “potentially dangerous”.⁸⁵ Salfi’s diatribe, including several of the arguments adopted, with natural law theorists bore a striking resemblance to Vico’s vehement attacks against Cartesian philosophy, deemed guilty of having likewise defined history as a useless pseudoscience. In particular, Salfi applauded how, despite the efforts of all those “who consider history a repository of lies or illusions” and consequently “regard it as a despicable thing”, history “had re-acquired its reputation and authority” thanks to his generation’s efforts, being not only “elevated to the status of science”, but also – and more importantly – “considered the purest source of human knowledge”.⁸⁶

In Florence, instead, the patriot Gabriele Pepe, who had famously fought in defence of the Neapolitan Republic in 1799, frequently collaborated with the local periodical *Antologia*, and his articles offered an elaborate exposition of Vico’s methodology. He repeatedly suggested that the greatest accomplishment of “the most original maker of a novel and sublime historical critique” was to have provided guidelines to regulate historical inquiry, making it able to illuminate the present and offer a blueprint for the future, namely the idea of an “eternal history” (“un’istoria eterna”), able to explain that of both past and future peoples”.⁸⁷ It is quite interesting, in this context, to note how Pepe’s contribution was consistent with Manzoni and Salfi’s testimonies, insofar as they all applauded Vico for articulating an idea of *universal history*, rather than acknowledging his broader effort to slot in the latter as part of a *new science*. Almost certainly due to a rather superficial knowledge of the Neapolitan thinker’s text, these intellectuals’ (mis-)reading of *La scienza nuova* excluded the Vichian focus on the history’s most tangible and concrete dynamics, which Vico himself had labelled “storie di tutte le Nazioni”, consequently proposing an understanding of the author as a theorist of historical time, rather than as the proponent of a more complex and layered historiographical approach, namely his *new science*.

Another illustrious Neapolitan émigré, however, was much more sensitive to Vico’s notion of “storie di tutte le Nazioni”, to such an extent that the perceived tension between the latter and a notion of “ideal, eternal History” lay at the very core of his reading of *La scienza nuova*. The most compelling contribution to the popularization of Vico’s ideas, in fact, was made by Vincenzo Cuoco, who, during the early years of the nineteenth century,

⁸⁵ Delfico, M. (1806) *Pensieri su l’istoria e sull’incertezza ed inutilità della medesima*, p. 101

⁸⁶ Salfi, F. S. (1815) *Dell’influenza della storia*, pp. 44-45

⁸⁷ Pepe, G. (1824) *Necrologia. Vincenzo Cuoco*, p. 2

presented the Neapolitan philosopher as being representative of a cohesive national philosophical tradition. According to Cuoco, only by “shaping the public spirit of the nation” and “beginning to engage, at least with the power of thought, with other nations, hence getting accustomed to regard the glory of all corners of Italy as a shared one”, Italy may stand tall in the contemporary philosophical landscape of Europe.⁸⁸ After the Revolution of 1799, Cuoco had initially moved to Paris and subsequently settled in Milan in 1800.⁸⁹ His best-known work, *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione napoletana*, published in 1801, played a double role in the re-discovery of Vico, prompting, on the one hand, a renewed interest in the latter’s philosophy, as well as its civic and political functions, and paving the way, on the other, for a reading of the philosopher that drew him closer to German idealism.⁹⁰

Cuoco’s writings played an important role in the cultural and political debates of the Risorgimento and were widely read even after his death in 1823. His often-neglected essay *Platone in Italia* went through six editions between that year and 1860, and, as chapter five of this thesis will explain, it was particularly well-received in Piedmont, informing Vincenzo Gioberti’s political thought.⁹¹ The *Saggio storico* was quickly translated into German and French.⁹² A second edition of the book was published in Milan in 1806 and was widely read both in northern and southern Italy, where counterfeit versions appeared in 1820 and 1832. As chapter four of this thesis will explain, Neapolitan readers were especially interested in Cuoco’s account of the 1799 Revolution and read it as a source of inspiration for their own participation in the events of 1848.⁹³

Cuoco’s *Saggio* reconstructed the events of the Neapolitan Revolution within the framework of Vico’s *new science*, bearing the trace of a very philosophical interest for history. This interest was then carefully discussed and illustrated in the 1804 essays *Gli*

⁸⁸ Cuoco, V. (1804) *Programma del Giornale Italiano*, pp. 3, 5

⁸⁹ Cuoco’s biography is detailed in: De Francesco, A. (1997) *Vincenzo Cuoco. Una vita politica*

⁹⁰ An English translation of Cuoco’s *Saggio Storico* by David Gibbons, edited by Bruce Haddock and Filippo Sabetti was published in 2014 (Cuoco, V. (2014) *Historical Essay on the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799*. Haddock, B. & Sabetti, F. (eds.) (Gibbons, D., trans.))

⁹¹ Casini, P. (1998) *L’antica sapienza italiana. Cronistoria di un mito*, pp. 269-96; Romano, M. (1933) *Vincenzo Cuoco nella storia del pensiero e dell’unità d’Italia*, pp. 159-60

⁹² The German edition, a translation by B. Mylius, appeared in 1805, with the title *Historischer Versuch über die Revolution in Neapel*; the French edition, a translation by B. Barère, in 1807 and was entitled *Histoire de la Révolution de Naples*

⁹³ Biscardi, L. & De Francesco, A. (2002) *Vincenzo Cuoco nella cultura di due secoli*, pp. 33-52; De Francesco, A. (1998) *La fortuna editoriale del ‘Saggio storico’ nel secolo XIX*, pp. 621-56; Haddock, B. & Sabetti, F. (2014) *Introduction: Vincenzo Cuoco and the Nature of Revolution and Constitutionalism*, p. xi

scrittori politici italiani and *Giambattista Vico e lo studio delle lingue come documento storico*, two texts that distinguished themselves both for empirical brilliance and methodological clarity, in which every aspect of human knowledge was framed within a historicist perspective, losing its isolated character and perceived as part of a greater whole:

He [Vico] was the first to realise that all laws had to be imbued with a Reason, and that this Reason ought to be situated in the general order of things: he realised that even civic institutions must to be subject to this order and consequently traced the orbit around along all societies gravitated at all times. Laws, governments, customs, religions: everything became a consequence of the general proposition expressing this eternal order; concepts, uses, the laws of all epochs became many distinct anomalies, which, however, could be accounted for thanks to the force of the principles he kept on asserting.⁹⁴

Echoing *La scienza nuova*, Cuoco proceeded to discuss how notions of anthropology, philosophy and history were characterized by the presence of a historical rationale, labelled “Reason posited in the order of things”.⁹⁵ The intuitions advanced by Vico, “the first maker of this *new science*”, were therefore seen as fundamental interpretive tools to make sense of man’s life as a “historical document” (“documento storico”).⁹⁶ The Southern émigré appropriated in particular those elements of Vico’s philosophy that appeared to be generally concerned with late eighteenth-century debates on the nexus of language, history and anthropology:

At the time when Locke was discovering via reason the relationships between ideas and words, those relationships that, being developed by Condillac, du Marsais and Beccaria, should have provided us with a new grammar and a new rhetoric [...]. During the same period, Vico, via the examination of *facts*, projected the study of languages onto the study of nations and the analysis of mankind’s mind. Vico was the first in Europe able to discover, starting with the words of a people, the latter’s ideas and, starting with its language, its philosophy. Vico, through words, came to know customs, governments, affairs, history. Vico is the first author of this *new science*.⁹⁷

When arguing that “the principles and the method of his philosophy are platonic, [which means that] that which is true is always ideal, and analogous to the nature of our own mind, which he believes to be unchangeable”, Cuoco asserted that “his notion of truth refers exclusively to that which is ideal. Those things theorised by the German school in the last few

⁹⁴ Cuoco, V. (1804a) *Gli scrittori politici italiani*, pp. 128-29

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Cuoco, V. (1804b) *Giambattista Vico e lo studio delle lingue come documento storico.*, pp. 78, 80

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 80

years, have already been thought of – and executed – by Vico roughly one century earlier”.⁹⁸ Vico’s methodology, in fact, “the idea of a man preceding his contemporaries by a century”, “ended up flourishing in Germany more than in Italy”.⁹⁹

This statement, thanks to the emphasis on the universal rationale of history, already hinted, on the one hand, at an image of Vico as a theorist of historical time and, on the other, at his link with German philosophy. Later on, this connection was rendered much more explicit. Cuoco’s reading of Vico was, in fact, largely concerned with the distinction between two types of history: an ideal, philosophical and universal one, labelled “ideal eternal history” (“*storia ideale eterna*”) and the concrete circumstances reflecting the trajectory of the former, which the southern exile termed “nations’ historical-empirical course” (“*corso storico-empirico delle nazioni*”).¹⁰⁰ This division was indeed present in the pages of *La scienza nuova*, but was not particularly accentuated, certainly not as much as in Cuoco’s work.

The importance of the Neapolitan émigré’s problematisation of this tension is crucial in understanding how his reading greatly contributed to the association of Vico and Hegelianism. The fundamental traits of nineteenth-century historical critique were fully present in Cuoco’s reading of Vico. This entailed the need to rethink the relationship between the unity of universal history and the multiplicity of the forms in which it was realized. In *La scienza nuova*, Vico avoided this tension by simply positing that the study of cultural productions of nations in history was the key to reconstruct their mythical foundations.¹⁰¹ Cuoco, instead, faithful to nineteenth-century speculation, found himself unwilling to accept the subordination of the “ideal eternal history” to its material conditions, of ideas to actions. Unity should not be present only in the foundation of nations, but in the historical process as a whole. He was, therefore, forced to accommodate the Vichian focus on facts, particulars and individual circumstances within a unifying principle of universality. This, in short, was the issue at the root of his problematisation of the two forms of history.

Cuoco wrote: “There exists, according to Vico, an eternal ideal of truth independent from the opinions of men. This truth is in the hands (allow me to use this expression) of

⁹⁸ Cuoco, V. (1806) *La filosofia di Giambattista Vico*, p. 306; on this particular point of Cuoco’s interpretation of Vico, see: Casini, P. (1998), pp. 238-62

⁹⁹ Cuoco, V. (1804b), p. 80

¹⁰⁰ Cuoco, V. (1806), pp. 317-20

¹⁰¹ Vico, G. (1744), I, pp. 31-32, 117

Providence, and it comprises the entire range of possibilities”.¹⁰² And this fundamental truth was said not to belong to the sphere of individual circumstances or the specific life of a given people, but to the broader realm of ideas alone. The fundamental principle of Vico’s philosophy, Cuoco asserted, was that “that which is true is always ideal”, or, conversely, that ideas are the only true reality.¹⁰³ These ideas were thus seen as the driving forces behind human actions.

Therefore, with human circumstances fully subject to this universal unifying truth, it was necessary for them “despite their extraordinary variety”, to accept “the guidance of Providence, the true conductor of the Universe”, which ensured that all human actions remained “within the limits of the absolute truth, that eternal universal truth, that is positioned in the mind of Providence”.¹⁰⁴ This was where, by completely turning Vico’s statement that “the order of ideas must proceed according the order of things” on its head, Cuoco transformed the ideal of history presented in *La scienza nuova* into a process directed by a universal force.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, by investigating the “only absolute and universal truth, which exists before things come into existence”, Cuoco believed it possible to understand things at an individual, empirically observable level.¹⁰⁶

The consequences of Cuoco’s problematisation of the tension between universal and particular history, as well as his undeniable preference for the former, were very important. Just like Michelet, the southern exile proposed an image of Vico as a theorist of historical time, fully concerned with the problem of unity in history. However, while the French author did so via a selective reading of *La scienza nuova*, voluntarily removing and altering certain sections in order to better match his own ideas, Cuoco remained comparatively more faithful to the original, nonetheless opting for a striking distortion of his views. Establishing the dichotomy between the “ideal eternal history” and the conditions in which this would concretely be embodied, the southern exile ultimately depicted Vico not only as a philosopher of history, but also as the proponent of a universal conception of it, to which individual circumstances, contexts and events, namely the true focus of *La scienza nuova*

¹⁰² Cuoco, V. (1806), p. 317

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 306

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Vico, G. (1744), I, p. 144

¹⁰⁶ Cuoco, V. (1806), p. 317

were entirely subordinated. This was not an especially Vichian view of history, but was certainly a very Hegelian one.

2.5. From Vico to Hegel: Debates after Cuoco

Following the analysis of Vico's reception and re-discovery, as well as the contribution of French and, more notably, Italian intellectuals, it is now possible to obtain a clearer characterisation of the encounter between Vico and Hegel's philosophies. Despite striking textual differences, the two thinkers were seen, during the first half of the nineteenth century, as exponents of the same historicist tradition and, even more importantly, the latter was deemed to have reflected on the former's ideas. This can be partly explained by looking at the circulation of Vico's ideas and their reception in a context that witnessed the rapid proliferation of German idealist philosophy of history: proceeding chronologically, a first, significant, contribution was that of Vincenzo Cuoco, who problematized the tension between an ideal universal history and the empirical set of circumstances in which this would come to be embodied, greatly magnifying the former, hence bringing Vico much closer to the idealist intellectual agenda. Secondly, the role of Jules Michelet in France can be deemed to have triggered a similar effect, given the latter's reading of Vico not only as a theorist of historical time, but also as the proponent of a linear, progressive account of history in which the notion of mythical foundations of a nation was deployed in a very Hegelian fashion.

As illustrated earlier in this chapter, and as chapter three of this thesis will further clarify with regard to the Neapolitan context of the 1830s and '40s, the presence of history in Italian cultural life became much more pervasive and increasingly characterized by greater attention to the illustrious Neapolitan thinker's ideas, following Cuoco's contribution: monographs on Vico, for instance, began appearing and circulating widely.¹⁰⁷ Yet, there was more to this: debates taking place during the first half of the 1800s in the north of Italy paid

¹⁰⁷ See, for example, L. Tonti's *Saggio sopra la scienza nuova di Vico* (1835); Francesco Predari published, in 1836 a collection of edited works by Vico; Giuseppe Ferrari's *La mente di Giambattista Vico* (1837) and *Vico et l'Italie* (1839); Tommaseo, N. (1843) *Giambattista Vico e il suo secolo*; Marini, C. (1852) *Giambattista Vico al cospetto del secolo XIX*; Colecchi, O. (1843) *Giambattista Vico*, pp. 335-97; Fagnani, E. (1857) *Della necessità e dell'uso della divinazione testimoniati nella Scienza Nuova di G. B. Vico*

special attention to contemporary critiques of the eighteenth-century philosopher. They focused, among other things, on the idea of progress and ultimately posited the need to elaborate a philosophy of history able to account for concrete historical instances according to a Vichian methodology, but still remaining anchored, to a linear, progressive trajectory. In other words, it is now essential to recognize how these debates highlighted the existence of a vacuum in Vico's philosophy: a vacuum that, arguably, only certain elements of Hegel's *Geschichtsphilosophie* could fill.

The origin of these debates is easy to trace: together with the contribution of Cuoco, who had already stressed in 1806 the need to investigate "the idea of mankind's perfectibility", the 1830s witnessed the rapid proliferation of works dealing with a concept of progress, often re-described from the standpoint of Vico's new science.¹⁰⁸ While Antonio Rosmini's 1830 *Nuovo saggio sull'origine delle idee* explained how urgent the regeneration of Italy's cultural and philosophical landscape *vis-à-vis* its European counterparts, Gian Domenico Romagnosi's 1832 book *Dell'indole e dei fattori dell'incivilimento con esempio del suo Risorgimento in Italia*, coupled with several articles published in periodicals, reflected on notions of civic and political development from a markedly Vichian perspective. In his book on Italy's *Incivilimento*, Romagnosi, drawing extensively upon the concepts of moral and civic perfectibility theorized by Guizot and Cousin, firmly stated the need to "historicise" the notion of progress, analysing it, on the one hand, in connection with the changing nature of society, and framing it, on the other, within a certain ideal of historical development.¹⁰⁹ Romagnosi's book *de facto* made Vico part of Risorgimento political thought and, in doing so, it highlighted the need, for contemporary debates on civic and political progress, to engage with the Neapolitan philosopher's ideas.

Carlo Cattaneo's views on Vico are particularly relevant, too: he read him in the early 1830s, following his mentor Gian Domenico Romagnosi's recommendation.¹¹⁰ His use of Vico was initially functional to the defense of his *maître à penser* against the criticisms levelled by

¹⁰⁸ Cuoco, V. (1806) *La provvidenzialità della storia*, pp. 217-18

¹⁰⁹ Romagnosi, G.D. (1832a), pp. 246-52; see also: Romagnosi, G.D. (1822) *Osservazioni su la scienza nuova di Vico*, pp.19-49; Romagnosi, G.D. (1832b) *Alcuni pensieri sopra un'altra metafisica filosofia della storia*, pp. 61-76; on Romagnosi's concept of "civic philosophy", see Moravia, S. (1974) "Introduzione". *Scritti filosofici*, pp. 49-52

¹¹⁰ Cattaneo's library contained an 1801 edition of *La scienza nuova*, together with three editions of collected works, including *La scienza nuova*: one in French, edited by Jules Michelet in 1835 and two in Italian, edited by Francesco Predari in 1835 and Giuseppe Ferrari in 1837, respectively. See: Lacaita, C. G, Gobbo, R. & Turiel, A. (2003) *La biblioteca di Carlo Cattaneo*, pp. 334-35

Antonio Rosmini. In fact in 1832, following the publication of Romagnosi's *Dell'indole e dei fattori dell'incivilimento*, Rosmini accused him of a dramatic lack of intellectual rigour and transparency: in particular, he attacked the notions of Providence and "incivilimento", deemed, due to their interdisciplinary nature, to be extremely vague and systematically at odds with Christian ontology.¹¹¹ Cattaneo, in 1833, used Vico's authority to defend his mentor from these attacks, suggesting that Romagnosi's work was indeed visibly consistent with the views of the great Neapolitan thinker, who, at the time, was particularly popular:

We recommend to the contemporary studious youth, so excellent and large among us, Romagnosi's essay on the idea of *Incivilimento*, recently published here. It is a splendid expansion of the Science promoted by Vico, by Stellini, by Mario Pagano and Jannelli.¹¹²

Cattaneo further praised Romagnosi for maintaining that Vico's philosophy of history easily lent itself to the formulation of a civic ideology. While Vico, in fact, had proposed "a science of all histories, a universal law leading all peoples, an ideal, eternal history common to all nations [...], an ideal history which almost becomes a comparative physiology, by means of which the history of individual peoples' civilisation can be reconstructed", he noted how "the study of individuals at the core of mankind" paves the way for a "social and civic ideology".¹¹³

This quotation is particularly interesting for two reasons: first of all, because it further consolidated the political implications of Vichian historicism and its relevance in the context of the Risorgimento; secondly, because it reflected an idealist reading of Vico, strongly reminiscent of Cuoco's emphasis on the notion of "ideal eternal history". Cuoco's influence was particularly visible when Cattaneo described both Vico and idealist philosophers as concerned with the tension between "the progressive manifestation of the Absolute in history" and the "temporary necessity and transitory sanctity" of its deployment.¹¹⁴ This reading, according to Cattaneo, would ultimately draw attention on a process of self-negotiation informed by a necessary, universal principle, "the progressive triumph of morals and Right, via the ongoing contrast of human freedom and the necessity of things".¹¹⁵

This interpretation was further fuelled by Cattaneo's considerations on idealism: he believed, in fact, that it should not come as a surprise that Vico did not enjoy significant

¹¹¹ Rosmini, A. (1836) *Il rinnovamento della filosofia in Italia*, p. 79

¹¹² Cattaneo, C. (1833) *Manifesto della società degli annali*, p. 147

¹¹³ Cattaneo, C. (1839) *Su la scienza nuova di Vico*, p. 50

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 66

popularity before the nineteenth century, since it was first of all necessary for other authors to create an intellectual context that may be receptive to the Neapolitan thinker's theories.¹¹⁶ Moreover, Cattaneo identified the presence of a dialectical understanding of historical time in *La scienza nuova*, based on the continuous tension between human freedom and the constraints imposed by history's material conditions. Put simply, he further exasperated Cuoco's problematisation of the dichotomy of the "ideal eternal history" and its concrete, epoch- and context-bound, historical circumstances. Cuoco's idealist reading of Vico was brought to an extreme when Cattaneo explicitly referred to Hegel as following the trail previously laid by the Neapolitan philosopher:

With other, very abstract, pronouncements, Hegel developed a variation on the same motive. He too says that history is the progressive development of ideal justice and, to use his own formula, history is the objectivation of the Idea, that is, of the mind, which, being realised, becomes an external fact, an object.¹¹⁷

This reading of Hegel was perhaps not entirely accurate, insofar as it proposed a rather courageous identification of the Hegelian notions of Idea and Mind. Cattaneo, however, who was not particularly fond of the philosopher from Stuttgart, certainly captured the importance of his dialectics, by which the Idea would move out of itself and return to itself as part of a process of self-realisation.¹¹⁸ It is therefore now possible to see how, just like Michelet had described Vico's account of the tension between local interests and voluntary social bonds as a form of dialectics, resolvable in the unity of a nation's mythical image, Cattaneo understood Vico's philosophy of history as centred upon the notions of justice and morality, continuously perfected via a dialectic of the mind.

Vico, however, was not immune from Cattaneo's criticism and understanding this critique is fundamental in order to gain an even more compelling understanding of why Hegel was said to have reflected upon Vico. The theory of *corsi e ricorsi storici*, for example, famously labelled "dreary returns of decadence" ("tristi ritorni di decadimento"), was deemed to be too mechanistic, but Cattaneo also provided an explanation for this problem.¹¹⁹ This was because, according to the author, Vico "had studied Plato and therefore regarded

¹¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 45-49

¹¹⁷ Ibid., p. 67

¹¹⁸ Sabetti, F. (2010) *Civilization and Self-Government. The Political Thought of Carlo Cattaneo*, pp. 86-89

¹¹⁹ Archivio delle civiche raccolte storiche di Milano (ACMil), *Fondo Carlo Cattaneo*, f. 15(4), p. 21

man as a being in decadence, ultimately failing to grasp the idea of perpetual progress”.¹²⁰ In other words, Cattaneo came to propose a double-faced verdict on Vico. On the one hand, he praised him for laying down the coordinates of a universal history, revolving around the progressive refinement of justice, highlighting how his contemporary philosophical systems had drawn extensively from this idea:

Once we make an exception of the two principles of Progress and Variety, we are confronted with a truly admirable similarity between recent human systems and Vico’s fundamental idea, namely that Providence, by working through people’s interests succeeds in extrapolating justice from iniquitous passions, later coming to progressively realise it within the world of nations; this sublime doctrine is, for us, a foreboding and a prediction of the future.¹²¹

This quotation, on the other hand – and this is where the influence of Cuoco and Romagnosi revealed itself in its full force – detailed Cattaneo’s hostility towards Vico’s cyclical theory of history, which was deemed to be at odds with the theorisation of a progressive form of civic and intellectual development. Put simply, for Cattaneo, only a *linear* notion of progress, rather than a cyclical one, could accommodate Vico’s notion of Providence. This, in Cattaneo’s view, was partly due to the Neapolitan philosopher’s own intellectual formation and partly to his having lived in a context that had not yet witnessed the emergence of strong, linear ideals of progress, such as Condorcet’s.

The concept of progress was the pivotal point of Cattaneo’s critique. An account of this notion able to direct the development of Vico’s “world of nations”, however, could be found, according to northern Italian commentators, in the constellation of ideas characterizing German idealism:

While Vico’s synthesis had devised a general law of nations, Fichte’s analysis, by entering deeper into the realm of experience, managed to understand every nation’s particular law [...] Moreover, Fichte relied on the idea of Progress, which Condorcet, only a few years earlier, had discussed in the midst of the Revolution, and which Romagnosi, during the very same period, was adopting as the basis for a new Right of nations.¹²²

Just like Michelet’s Vico reflected his mentor Victor Cousin’s interest in idealism, Cattaneo’s Vico bore a strong trace of Romagnosi’s intellectual sensibility, applauded here for having finally managed to overcome the main limit of Vichian historicism and amalgamated his

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 22

¹²¹ Cattaneo, C. (1839), p. 66; it is also interesting to notice how Cattaneo draws Vico even closer to idealism here, by postulating that justice stems out of a dialectics of passions, namely the conflict of individual interests.

¹²² ACMil, f. 15(4), p. 22

universal principle of history with a convincing account of progress. What remained of Vico, therefore, was the image of a theorist of historical time whose intellectual agenda was different from that of the one who had initially authored *La scienza nuova* in 1725. Just like Michelet, Cattaneo seems to have deliberately mis-read the eighteenth-century Neapolitan philosopher, perceiving him as a proponent of a universal history, casting aside all the philological and anthropological considerations appearing in the original book.

Yet Cattaneo went one step further, explicitly pointing out how Vico had failed to account for progress, but strongly maintained that his philosophy of history could nonetheless be rescued, albeit in an amended form. In consequence, it suddenly appeared necessary to abandon his cyclical conception of history, while retaining his methodological apparatus and the scope of his inquiry, and supplementing his ideas with a more convincing and systematic account of progress.¹²³ This operation, according to Cattaneo, had been successfully accomplished by Romagnosi, in Italy and, more importantly, by the German idealists, most notably Fichte and Hegel. By the mid-1830s, therefore, the trajectory of Vico's re-discovery had reached a critical turning point. Following decades of often conflicting interpretations, his philosophy of history was still perceived as methodologically sound, but dramatically deficient in one major aspect: being unable to explain how societies develop, flourish and perfect themselves. Yet, for Italian intellectuals, this was not enough to abandon Vico's ideas altogether: after all, he was still seen as an exceptional theorist of historical time and the proponent of a universal history that resonated well with nineteenth-century philosophical imaginations, especially German idealists'. What was needed, therefore, was someone who could fill the gap left open by Vico. Neapolitan Hegelians, as the next chapter will discuss, were prompt in rising to the occasion.

¹²³ Sabetti, F. (2006) *A Quiet Revolution. Rethinking the Foundations of Human Society*, pp. 11-14; Sabetti, F. (2010), pp. 62-70

2.6. Giambattista Vico in a Transnational Intellectual History of Europe

The study of Vico's relation to Hegel, as presented in this chapter, has significant methodological implications. This part of the thesis, in particular, has sought to reconstruct the dynamics of intellectual transfer, reception and circulation ultimately converging in nineteenth- and twentieth-century commentaries' positing that Hegel reflected on the philosophy of *La scienza nuova*. In doing so, however, it resorted to a methodology extending well beyond a textual/philosophical reading of Vico and the German idealists' texts. As explained in section two of the present chapter, the textual differences between Vico and Hegel were simply too great to support the inference of a direct intellectual continuity between the two authors. The presence of the great Neapolitan philosopher in the context of nineteenth-century German idealism, therefore, may be decoded as a topic in the history of ideas and, as a result, methodological approaches ought to be adjusted accordingly.

A canonical, strictly contextual approach produced similar results, as the section on Vico's reception in Germany evidently showed: in that country, the Southern thinker was hardly read and references to *La scienza nuova* present in the works of the idealist school were very limited in number. Moreover, Hegel himself never explicitly referred to Vico. Complicating things even further, the analysis of the latter's reception in Germany paved the way for a number of inter-connected problems, most notably with regard to the process of circulation of his ideas. In other words, a reconstruction of the relevant aspects of the intellectual context of early nineteenth-century Germany is ultimately unable to answer the question of why Vico and Hegel were seen as representative of the same philosophy of history.

This chapter, therefore, attempted to provide an explanation by viewing debates on Vico as part of a transnational, European history of ideas. In particular, it sought to articulate a more inclusive characterisation of intellectual contexts, granting the overall analysis a much wider scope. Contexts ought to stretch both geographically and chronologically. In the first instance, it can be intuitively seen how the inherently transnational nature of the connection between Vico and Hegel posited a significant problem for intellectual historians relying too heavily on rigid definitions of context. The simple assumption that ideas may travel across borders naturally implies dynamics of circulation and cultural mediation acting as 'filters': the

study of the context in which ideas are received, therefore, does not sufficiently account for the alterations, modifications and often conflicting readings that marked their journey. As an example of this intuition, this chapter drew attention to the role played by French historians, most notably Jules Michelet and Victor Cousin, whose mediation between Vico and Hegel appears to have taken the form of a selective appropriation of Vichian and Hegelian elements. Michelet's *Principes de la philosophie de l'histoire de Vico*, then, played a very important role in subsequent Italian debates and, as explained by Romagnosi, was very popular among those intellectuals, such as himself and Carlo Cattaneo, who went on to equate Vico's historicism with Hegel's.

At the same time, a more inclusive definition of context ought to take into account debates and topics that may not be strictly connected to the reception of a given author, but nonetheless reflect significant inclinations and concerns of a specific historical domain. Lucien Febvre's analytical category of "mental tools" ("outillage mental"), in this sense, seems to be especially apposite in capturing the mechanics of the 'collective psychology' informing cultural landscapes.¹²⁴ This perspective invites intellectual historians to include a broader array of sources in their inquiries, in ways that venture beyond the traditional emphasis on linguistic structures and authorial intention. The purpose of this approach is to show how the emergence and negotiation of new concepts may shift researchers' understanding of the relationship between authors and their contexts and lead to a novel conceptualisation of the intellectual production of a particular time. As shown in this chapter, for example, an understanding of the debates concerned with the concepts of progress and society's perfectibility in 1830s Italy is crucial in making sense of subsequent verdicts on Vico, especially those that aim at drawing him closer to Hegel.

Contexts, however, ought to stretch chronologically, too: this chapter, in particular, showed how reducing the analysis of Vico's relation to Hegel to the study of *La scienza nuova's* presence in the context of nineteenth-century German culture is an unsustainable solution. The genealogy of Vico's re-discovery in the 1800s, despite being strongly anchored to the views on history presented in his masterpiece, was also profoundly affected by ideas and topics presented in earlier works, most notably *De antiquissima italorum sapientia*. The

¹²⁴ Febvre, L. (1942) *La probl me de l'incroyance au XVIIe si cle: la religion de Rabelais*, pp. 355-69

Vichian equation of *verum* and *factum* was at the very core of any idealist reading of *La scienza nuova*, both in France and in Italy.

In a similar manner, contexts should not be bound to chronologically static definitions, but ought to be more sensitive to the progressive layering of various interpretations: the relevance of Cuoco's analysis, for instance, was enormous for virtually every subsequent reading of Vico. It is precisely thanks to his problematisation of the tension between the "ideal eternal history" and its concrete, material and empirically observable conditions, that the association of Vichian and Hegelian historicism was so evident in the 1830s, more than 30 years after the Neapolitan exile had expressed his verdict. This is because Cuoco's revision of Vichian history marked an important shift in the conceptual lexicon of Risorgimento Italy, popularising a notion of history understood as linear and directed by ideal principles. A contextual analysis, therefore, should not only be enriched by the study of the *ouillage mentale* of a given time, but also come to contemplate the analysis of the Koselleckian category of "space of experience", prompting an understanding of a history of ideas as the amalgamation of several layers of interpretation put together in the present, as the past made present.¹²⁵ This approach, which encourages a closer integration of intellectual history and *Begriffsgeschichte*, explains how the diachronic evolution of conceptual vocabularies may "sharpen the appreciation" of the ways in which the forms of linguistic action commonly examined by intellectual historians "depends upon the concepts with which it works".¹²⁶

The dynamics of Vico's re-discovery during the nineteenth century, as illustrated in this chapter, reflected those of Hegel's reception described in the previous one, both from a methodological and a thematic point of view: *methodologically*, because of the need for historians of ideas to slot in their study as part of a transnational understanding of their philosophies' encounter; *thematically*, because of European thinkers' insistence on their philosophies of history. And it was precisely thanks to their fundamentally European sensitivity and fascination with history, deepening its roots in the local tradition of thought, that Neapolitan Hegelians ultimately proceeded to fully synthesise them in one cohesive idealist historicism. This, as the next chapter will explain, took place in a context often overlooked by historians: Neapolitan private schools of philosophy.

¹²⁵ Koselleck, R. (1985) *Futures Past: on the Semantics of Historical Time*, pp. 255-75

¹²⁶ Tribe, K. (2016) *Intellectual History as Begriffsgeschichte*, p. 67

3. European Thinkers and *Maestri Privati*: German Philosophy in Neapolitan Private Schools

3.1. Introduction

In 1835, the Tuscan writer Giuseppe Montanelli, who would later become one of the most vocal proponents of an Italian federalist project and fight against the Austrians in 1848, published an open letter in the Neapolitan periodical *Il progresso*. The letter was both a commentary on the mentalities shaping the cultural and institutional discourse in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and a dart of criticism directed against its perceived parochialism. Montanelli spoke very critically of a “national mission” that local education systems had embarked on. Their mentality, revolving around the exaltation of local traditions of thought and the complete closure to foreign ideas, was plotted against a “human mission”, namely the free and unconstrained development of culture and philosophy, based on ongoing exchanges with other countries’ thinkers. The premises of Montanelli’s argument were simple: that while “every individual of the human species features a set of characters that distinguish him from others, every people has a character that sets it apart from other peoples”, and that every national community “stems from the union of beings belonging to the great family of mankind, and consequently featuring those general qualities that are common to all people, regardless of their country’s climate or the diversity of their habits”.¹

As a result, Montanelli strongly encouraged the institutions of the Kingdom, mainly education systems, to merge their “national mission” with the broader “human mission”, and engage much more extensively with foreign ideas, suggesting that these were – by their own nature – not only compatible with any particular local tradition of thought, but also fundamentally complementary to them. An optimal strategy, he continued, was represented not only by the absorption of contemporary European, particularly German, philosophical landscapes, but also by their merging with the local tradition.²

¹ Montanelli, G. (1835) *Biblioteca dell’intelletto*, p. 65

² *ibid.*, pp. 71-72

Montanelli's contribution, appearing in Naples in a very timely manner, when Italian intellectuals were beginning to engage not only in a transnational exchange ultimately facilitating Hegelianism's penetration in the peninsula, as described in the previous chapter of this thesis, but also with a process of revision enabling the amalgamation of Hegel's philosophy of history with Vico's. It highlighted the perceived parochialism and intellectual isolationism characterising public debates, drawing particular attention to the extent to which education channels were chiefly responsible for this bleak scenario.

More than thirty years later, Francesco De Sanctis, who greatly contributed to the dissemination and revision of Hegel's ideas in Naples, remembered how the form of engagement with German philosophy hoped for by Montanelli had indeed taken place within the context of Neapolitan private schools and had been accompanied by a newfound interest for Giambattista Vico's thought. The private schools that De Sanctis drew attention to were an important element in Naples' intellectual life during the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth. Roughly speaking, any school whose activity took place parallel to, and independently from, that of the institutes directly regulated by the government, would qualify as *private*. Private schools usually enjoyed unrestricted freedom with regard to the adoption of their teaching methods, the definition of the programmes and the actual length of teaching. Moreover, their students would pay a fee directly to their teacher, but, in some cases, wealthier families would directly fund private instructors, especially when the quality of their public counterparts was particularly low.

Didactic freedom was the central characteristic of the private schools of the Mezzogiorno and the extent to which these encouraged an engagement with foreign culture aptly reflected it: in private schools, De Sanctis recounted, "Cousin arrived, and then Hegel: what a revolution within a mere few years! Its symbol was Vico, who was read, admired and cited everywhere".³ He then illustrated the reasons for private schools' popularity:

At the time, private schools were uncontested masters in their field, since all that was alive and new in national culture had found shelter there: the youth were attracted by the fact that the quality of studies was higher and the principles broader... teachers were not allowed to indulge in the past and repeat themselves, as they were constantly spurred by a never-ending wave of imitators and by a very enthusiastic youth, that financed them, on the one hand, and was very hard to please, on the other.⁴

³ De Sanctis, F. (1868) *L'ultimo dei puristi*, p. 534

⁴ *ibid.*, p. 514

Both Montanelli and De Sanctis' testimonies drew attention to the peculiar dynamics of education in the Kingdom, underlining public channels' reticence to enable transnational exchanges of ideas, and the propensity, characterising their private counterparts, to do so. If slotted within the broader picture of a transnational history of ideas, these two contributions acquire an even deeper significance. While they urge contemporary historians to interrogate the encounter of local and foreign traditions of philosophy, they problematise the definition of the contexts in which this took place. As such, they posit a tension between public and private education, whose implications for the Neapolitan intellectual landscape's openness toward foreign ideas demand clarification.

From a historiographical point of view, an attempt to view private schools as the theatre of transnational intellectual exchanges entails the need to articulate a more substantive understanding of the dynamics of education in the Kingdom, focusing particular attention on the interplay of public and private initiatives. This, in turn, may provide a new perspective on the intellectual history of the Mezzogiorno, calling into question those verdicts univocally emphasising the link between the alleged failure of the reforms operated by the Bourbon monarchy in matters of public education and the perceived backwardness of the region, commonly thematised as part of the emergence of the Southern Question.⁵ More specifically, while these studies rightly drew attention to the problems of public education channels and their implications with regard to the economic modernisation of the Mezzogiorno, they did not place adequate attention on the competitive relationship between public and private schools, which, as this chapter will argue, constituted an extraordinary force driving intellectual innovation. Put simply, while a great portion of twentieth-century scholarship focused on the perceived failure of reforms and initiatives directed *from above*, this chapter will instead focus on the success and importance of those coming *from below*.

The lack of attention generally placed on private teaching is partially understandable on the basis of the interplay of three reasons: first and foremost, the significant scarcity of sources available, hindering the reconstruction of private schools' operations; second, the

⁵ see, for example: Broccoli, A. (1968) *Educazione e politica nel mezzogiorno d'Italia*, pp. 176-77; Coppola, D. (2004) *Scuola e istituzioni pubbliche in età borbonica*; Croce, B. (1925) *Storia del Regno di Napoli*, p. 276; Davis, J. (2006) *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions, 1760-1860*, pp. 184-85; Gramsci, A. (1977) *Quaderni dal carcere*, I, §43-46, pp. 30-56; Lupo, M. (1998) *Istruzione, economia e società nel mezzogiorno preunitario: note per una ricerca*; Pappalardo, F. (1989) *La coscienza e il lavoro: l'istruzione pubblica*, p. 561; Petruszewicz, M. (1998) *Come il meridione divenne una questione. Rappresentazioni del sud prima e dopo il quarantotto*, p. 78

presence of a discrete number of private teachers operating without an official licence, able therefore to escape the mechanisms of control imposed by the crown; and third, the lack of attention generally paid by historians to the Bourbon's initiatives to regulate and, in many cases, encourage private schools' operations.

A more critical discussion of private education in nineteenth-century Naples is necessary to address some of the limitations of contemporary scholarship on Neapolitan Hegelianism. A first problem, for example, has to do with the fact that a great number of studies rest on a purely philosophical approach to the study of Hegel's reception in the Mezzogiorno and consequently do not provide convincing answers as to how the German thinker's reception was directly informed by local contexts and debates.⁶ A second problem, instead, pertains to the fact that, while some studies did indeed attempt to articulate a contextual understanding of Neapolitan Hegelianism's emergence and development, they neglected or downplayed the importance of the Kingdom's private schools.⁷ As a result, this chapter will attempt to fill these historiographical *lacunae* by not only adopting a contextual approach to the study of Hegel's fortune in Naples, but also, given the emphasis on private schools and the debates among their protagonists, by calling for a substantial re-definition of the contexts in which Hegelianism initially came to be discussed.

This will enable the present chapter to provide a much more precise characterisation of Neapolitan Hegelianism, viewed neither in its philosophical depth, nor in its speculative originality. Rather, given private teachers' efforts consistently to draw German philosophy closer to the local tradition, and devise thematic and speculative continuities between the two, it will be considered in its purely transnational nature, stemming from the amalgamation of Hegel and Vico's philosophies of history. This, in turn, will allow for another revision of certain historiographical verdicts: first, those that understand Hegel's reception in nineteenth-century Naples as a process of mere absorption, as indicated in the first chapter of this thesis.⁸ Second, those that neglect the significance of Giambattista Vico's historicism

⁶ Bortot, R. (1968) *L'hegelismo di Bertrando Spaventa*; Garin, E. (1983) *Filosofia e politica in Bertrando Spaventa*; Oldrini, G. (1989) *Gli hegeliani di Napoli e la costruzione dello stato unitario*; Rossi, M. (1957) *Sviluppi dello hegelismo in Italia*; Tessitore, F. (1995) *Contributi alla storia e alla teoria dello storicismo*; Vacca, G. (1967) *Politica e filosofia in Bertrando Spaventa*

⁷ Cione, E. (1960) *Francesco De Sanctis ed i suoi tempi*; Gallo, F. (2015) *Dalla patria allo stato. Bertrando Spaventa, una biografia intellettuale*

⁸ De Giovanni, P. (1996) *Kant e Hegel in Italia*; Losurdo, D. (1997) *Dai fratelli Spaventa a Gramsci. Per una storia politico-sociale della fortuna di Hegel in Italia*

within the context of the emerging Neapolitan idealist sensitivities, already introduced in chapter two.⁹

With these considerations in mind, the present chapter will attempt to elucidate the role played by private schools in encouraging transnational intellectual exchanges and shaping Hegel's reception. In particular, section two will examine the context in which private schools found their fortune, characterising their relationship with their public counterparts as an inherently competitive one, whereby the former essentially made up for the latter's shortcomings, such as parochialism, government neglect, scarcity of resources and, more importantly, a lack of engagement with foreign ideas. Additionally, the analysis of legislation promoted by the crown and inquiries commissioned by the administration will also reveal the extent to which private initiatives were not only tolerated, but also, in many cases, concretely supported by the Bourbons, thus contributing to a broader rethinking of those historiographical verdicts describing the local administration as unquestionably repressive and judging its policies in matters of education as a complete failure.

Arguing, as twentieth-century historians often did, that the status of education in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was, as a commonly-quoted monograph by Ferdinando Pappalardo maintained, "simply disastrous" due to the Bourbons' failure to implement effective reforms of public channels, is, in itself, an oversimplification of the Kingdom's education systems and an empirically incorrect one.¹⁰ This verdict ought to be reconsidered in light of the Bourbons' promotion of private schools alongside public ones, hence viewing the dynamics of education in the Mezzogiorno as more progressive, and informed by a more liberal governmental attitude than historians were generally ready to admit.

Being a remedy for the ills riddling public schools was not, however, the sole function performed by private institutes. Section three will proceed to position their contribution within a transnational view of the Mezzogiorno's intellectual history, illustrating how they attempted to promote a substantial engagement with foreign ideas. This could be observed both for what concerns the teaching methods adopted and also with regard to the subjects being taught. More importantly, looking at the study of German philosophy promoted by

⁹ Cospito, G. (2002) *Il gran Vico: presenza, immagini e suggestioni vichiane nei testi della cultura italiana pre-riorgimentale, 1799-1839*; Mali, J. (2012) *The Legacy of Vico in Modern Cultural History*, pp. 12-70; Rubini, R. (2014) *The Other Renaissance: Italian Humanism between Hegel and Heidegger*

¹⁰ Pappalardo, F. (1989), p. 569

private schools, it will be argued that foreign ideas were not simply absorbed, but were often amalgamated with the local tradition of thought. The examples set by Pasquale Galluppi and Ottavio Colecchi's schools, commonly regarded as extremely influential in the making of a Neapolitan Hegelian generation, for example, can reveal how German philosophy was increasingly seen as conducive to the renewal of the local philosophical landscape, most notably the historicist tendencies of eighteenth-century Neapolitan Enlightenment.

Lastly, section four will discuss how the transnational sensibility and approaches developed in private schools can yield interesting results for what concerns the understanding of Neapolitan Hegelianism. This section will focus on some of the best-known students of Galluppi and Colecchi: Stefano Cusani, Stanislao Gatti and, more importantly, Francesco De Sanctis, who proposed a markedly anti-metaphysical revision of Hegel's philosophy, via its encounter with Vico's "metodo storico". It will be argued that Cusani and Gatti, closely following their mentors' approach to the study of German philosophy, encouraged the merging of Hegel and Vico's philosophies of history in their own private schools, by closely reflecting on the perceived tension, as well as the continuities, between their historicisms. Finally, it will be contended that it was in Francesco De Sanctis' private school that the full amalgamation of Hegel and Vico was finally carried out, via the elaboration of a composite historicism revolving around the dialectical interplay of a Hegelian "logical method" ("metodo logico") and a Vichian "historical method" ("metodo storico").

3.2. Public and Private Education in the Kingdom

In nineteenth-century Naples, private schools were far more inclined to engage with Hegel's philosophy than their public counterparts. As it remains surprisingly under-represented in studies concentrating on Neapolitan Hegelianism, this perspective can be explained on the basis of traditional Risorgimento historiography's ideological foundations. As indicated by David Laven, a feature of twentieth-century inquiries on this period was to interpret it in a teleological fashion, and view it as a pre-figuration of Italy's unification. This mentality encouraged an "undue emphasis on political opposition and a negative judgment" on regional

and local idiosyncrasies, which were univocally treated as expressions of backwardness.¹¹ In consequence, it fuelled derogatory viewpoints on the status of education under the Bourbons, in ways that completely neglected private schools' achievements.

Illustrating how private teaching contributed to Naples' intellectual landscape during the Risorgimento is a very ambitious task, which extends well beyond the scope of this thesis. As this chapter explains, however, examining how these initiatives encouraged the circulation of foreign ideas is necessary to understand some important aspects of Hegel's Neapolitan reception. As a result, the discussion of private schools' engagement with German idealism ought to be approached from a different perspective, namely one that rescues their contributions from uncritically derogatory verdicts on the status of education in the Mezzogiorno during the Risorgimento.

During the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth, private teaching in the Mezzogiorno engaged in an ongoing competition with its public counterpart, whereby the former systematically made up for the latter's deficiencies. Testimonies of the agonal relationship between the two branches of education could be found in various parts of the Kingdom and featured very prominently in later historiography, too.¹² It was commonly believed that private institutes' operations were a direct response to a series of markedly conservative policies promoted by an increasingly repressive and authoritarian Bourbon administration.¹³ This verdict, initially formulated by Benedetto Croce, informed virtually all subsequent studies by historians investigating the dynamics of education in the Mezzogiorno during the pre-Unification years. While correctly acknowledging the agonal relationship between the two spheres of education, these works almost univocally argued that the flourishing of private initiatives ought to be understood as a direct response to reactionary and illiberal cultural policies promoted by the crown.¹⁴

These verdicts relied on different sets of arguments: among these, the public sector's bigotry caused by the tightening of censorship and the imposition of religious teaching was

¹¹ Laven, D. (2002) *Venice and Venetia under the Habsburgs: 1815-1835*, pp. 1-14

¹² On the encounter of private and public schools in Sicily, see: Tosti, M. (1921) *Felice Bisazza e il movimento intellettuale in Messina*, pp. 72, 100; in Naples: Settembrini, L. (1879) *Ricordanze della mia vita*, p. 72

¹³ Croce, B. (1925), pp. 9-11

¹⁴ See, for example: Moe, N. (2002) *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and Southern Question*; Pagano, A. (2004) *Scuola e maestri nel sud: dal 1816 al 1860*; Vigo, G. (1971) *Istruzione e sviluppo economico in Italia nel secolo XIX*

the most commonly invoked factor.¹⁵ Additionally, other studies have drawn attention to the extent to which hostility to foreign ideas played an important role in rendering the provision of a liberal education along the lines of models imported from abroad an exclusive prerogative of private schools.¹⁶ Lastly, some historians have examined how these attitudes were not observable in Naples only, but were present in the rest of the Kingdom, too.¹⁷ These views deserve closer scrutiny, because, by uncritically viewing the phenomenon of private teaching as a response to the Bourbons' mechanisms of censorship and maintenance of public order, they encourage an ideologically charged characterisation of their politics of culture and education by and large as a complete failure, driven by a repressive and illiberal orientation. They can consequently be reviewed by pointing out that private schools did not acquire their popularity *because of* – and *in response to* – the Bourbons' allegedly regressive and reactionary orientation. On the contrary, their actual existence, especially if considered in the context of Restoration Italy and Europe, can be seen as the sign of a rather permissive and liberal attitude on the part of the crown.

The Bourbons' stance towards private teaching, especially with regard to how a synergy of the public and private branches was actively promoted, should be understood as a response to the institutional, financial and intellectual problems that were a feature of public education, reflecting a mentality that one simply would not encounter elsewhere in the continent, let alone in the Italian peninsula, and that remained consistently unacknowledged by twentieth-century historiography. This argument, however, does not aim to be a full rehabilitation of the Bourbon administration. Rather, it represents a rather provocative encouragement to rethink some assumptions taken too often for granted by traditional Risorgimento historiography, univocally claiming, for instance, that, in 1861, the Kingdom of Italy "inherited" from the Bourbon experience a "disastrous" system of education, ultimately making Italy lag behind the rest of Europe.¹⁸

¹⁵ Agresta, S. (1992) *L'istruzione nel mezzogiorno d'Italia: 1806-1860*, pp. 27-29; Corbi, E. & Strollo, M. R. (1999) *L'istruzione a Napoli dal 1806 al 1860. Politica scolastica e organizzazione didattica*, pp. 11-40; Zazo, A. (1924) *L'ultimo periodo borbonico*, pp. 467-75; Zazo, A. (1927) *L'istruzione pubblica e privata nel napoletano*, pp. 103-10

¹⁶ Del Giudice, F. (1860) *Le piaghe dell'istruzione pubblica napoletana*, pp. 11-56; Gragnaniello, R. (2006) *Didattica e istruzione nel mezzogiorno preunitario*, pp. 41-42

¹⁷ Bonetta, G. (1981) *Istruzione e società nella Sicilia dell'ottocento*; Iesu, F. (2007) *Istruzione e salute pubblica in provincia di Terra di Lavoro del Regno di Napoli dai Borbone al Regno d'Italia*; Omodeo, A. (1951) *La cultura meridionale nel Risorgimento*

¹⁸ Pappalardo, F. (1989), p. 569; see also: Lupo, M. (2013), pp. 283-310

While most European powers were effectively encouraging mass public schooling via an increase expenditure, leading to higher enrolment rates in both schools and universities, the Bourbons devoted increasingly smaller shares of the Kingdom's total spending to public education from 1820 onwards.¹⁹ Problems, however, were not limited to a financial and administrative sphere alone. A widespread hostility to foreign cultures, for example, played a crucial role in restricting the circulation of Hegel's ideas to the sole context of private schools. Believing that present-day foreign ideas "had no other purpose than corrupting students' minds", professors of the Federico II university refused to approach the latest scientific and literary innovations produced in France, Germany and England.²⁰ This lack of engagement with European ideas in public education channels was frequently reported by local and foreign observers alike.²¹ Hostility towards European, particularly French, ideas had been a characteristic of the Federico II university's administration since the reaction to the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution. The Cappellano Maggiore Agostino Gervasio, for instance, called for a reform of institution in 1800, being this "particularly infected" with political dissidence inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution.²²

This led to a series of initiatives on part of the public administration that contrasted the presence of revolutionary ideals in places of education, by suspending certain university chairs, closing schools, or imposing restrictions on students.²³ After the French decade, the

¹⁹ On the Bourbons, see: Lupo, M. (2013) *Il sistema scolastico nel mezzogiorno continentale*, pp. 301-309; on other European powers, especially France, Switzerland, Norway, Denmark, the German States, Belgium, Prussia and the Netherlands, see: Lindert, P. (2004) *Growing Public. Social Spending and Economic Growth Since the Eighteenth Century*, II, pp. 153-57; Mitchell, B. R. (1992) *International Historical Statistics: Europe 1750-1988*, pp. 796-805, 889-911

²⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 216, 367

²¹ see, for example: Colletta, P. (1834) *Storia del reame di Napoli dal 1734 sino al 1825*, X, p. 244; Corcia, N. (1836) *Progressi della stampa in Francia*, p. 309; De Grazia, V. (1841) *Saggio su la realtà della scienza umana*, I, p. 171; De Luca, F. (1838) *Pensieri sul progetto di riforme*, pp. 166-167, 101-71; 182-88; De Sanctis, F. (1889) *La giovinezza. Memorie postume seguite da testimonianze biografiche di amici e discepoli*, p. 319; Orloff, G. (1819) *Storia del Regno delle Due Sicilie*, p. 71; von Savigny, F. C. (1828) *Über den juristischen Unterricht in Italien*, p. 221

²² ASN, Segreteria di Stato dell'Ecclesiastico (1737-1806), *Espedienti del consiglio ecclesiastico (1799-1806)*, f. 9, "Rapporto del Cappellano Maggiore su le presenti condizioni della R. Università degli studi"; the Cappellano Maggiore was a member of the clergy responsible for several administrative functions within the University, including the appointment of professors.

²³ ASN, Ministero degli Affari Interni, I inv. (1766-1861), *Università degli studi, licei e collegi (1799-1806)*, f. 41, "Istruzioni generali su la condotta dei giovani studenti della R. Università degli studi"; f. 43, "Permesso di addirsi un ispettore di polizia per la disciplina degli studenti"; f. 46, "Decreto per la disciplina di tutti gli studenti i quali appartengono a' diversi comuni del Regno"; ASN, Ministero degli Affari Interni, II inv. (1806-1857), *Università (1800-1806)*, f. 2033, "Real decreto del 2 Maggio 1802"; ASN, Ministero delle Finanze (1777-1830), *Decreti. Ripartimento di pubblica istruzione (1802-03)*, f. 2554, "Decreto col quale si dispone la chiusura di tre scuole secondarie in Napoli"; ASN, Segreteria di Stato dell'Ecclesiastico (1737-1806), *Espedienti del Consiglio*

Bourbons' return to power was marked by a series of decrees aiming at reforming public schools, as well as the university's organisation and cultural orientation. A royal document circulated in September 1815, for instance, marked the creation of a special commission, the *Commissione per l'Istruzione Pubblica*, whose efforts aimed at countering the legacy of the French principles that had characterised public education, as well as wider debates in the public sphere, during the previous decade.²⁴ Among these, the reform of public education proposed in 1818 directly hoped to "dismantle dangerous foreign ideologies".²⁵

The mentalities informing the Restoration government's actions were illustrated in a statement by the Minister of Police in Naples. While criticising the "indulgent" policies of the earlier years, this document explained that a more effective system of censorship and tighter control over the press would be crucial for the government's survival.²⁶ Moreover, the inauguration speech of the 1816 academic year, held by the professor of sacred history Domenico Sarno, praised the *Commissione's* efforts to erode the French "evil doctrines deriving from the looseness and delirium of unhappy times".²⁷ He then applauded how recent decrees had eroded "the plagues and the mortal ills riddling good customs and religion".²⁸

This picture was further exacerbated in the wake of the events of 1820-21, leading to a new wave of decrees imposing even greater restrictions upon students in the Kingdom. Believing that "vice proliferates among the students", the president of the commission banned the circulation of books coming from abroad at the university and forbade students from purchasing them anywhere in the capital, fearing that engaging with those ideas may lure the youth into revolutionary activities²⁹. A royal document circulated in the spring of that year, in this sense, stated that:

Ecclesiastico (1779-1806), f. 96, "Sulle scuole secondarie e primarie di Napoli. Compensi, sospensioni e nomine di maestri"

²⁴ *Rapporto della Commissione di Pubblica Istruzione al Ministro dell'Interno tendente ad estendere le attribuzioni di essa Commissione* (1815), p. 331

²⁵ ASN, Ministero degli Affari Interni, I inv. (1766-1861), *Università degli studi, licei e collegi (1816-1822)*, f. 82, "Progetto di riforma elaborato dalla Commissione per l'Istruzione Pubblica"; see also: *Real decreto de' 2 Giugno 1821*, p. 248

²⁶ ASN, Ministero di Polizia Generale (1792-61), *Diversi (1824-25)*, f. 2912, "Revisione dei libri, opuscoli, fogli volanti e periodici di attribuzione della polizia"

²⁷ ASN, Ministero degli Affari Interni, II inv. (1786-1886), *Università (1816-1824)*, f. 2168, "Orazione inaugurale per la riapertura della R. Università da tenersi nel Gennaio 1816"

²⁸ *ibid.*; In particular, Sarno seems to refer to the ministerial decrees issued on May 26 and July 24, 1815, banning the use of foreign books and marking the expulsion of two professors who were not originally from the Kingdom, Francesco Capaccini and Carlo Gismondi.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, f. 2149, "Trasmissione di libri, memorie e oggetti"

Experience has shown that the gravest wounds to public morality were caused by the reading of dangerous books, and that these, when put in the inexperienced hands of superficially educated youngsters, became fatal to the well-being and honour of many cultured nations [...]. The prohibited and obscene ones, contrary to religion and morals, coming from abroad, will therefore be arrested in spite of any transit pretext.³⁰

It is certainly possible to ascribe some of the perceived shortcomings of public education to the Bourbon government's intention to prevent the dissemination those foreign ideas that were deemed conducive to political dissidence and revolutionary activity and, in this respect, the dynamics of censorship and surveillance observable in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies were not dissimilar from those adopted elsewhere in Italy and in Europe, especially after 1815. John Davis, for example, illustrated the similarities between the mechanisms of control adopted during the Restoration in the Mezzogiorno and those present in Piedmont, Lombardy and Tuscany, maintaining that, in some cases, such as restrictions in the circulation of books under Austrian rule and censorship of the press in the Kingdom of Sardinia, these were even stricter than in southern Italy.³¹

Moreover, the Bourbons' initiatives were consistent with other European powers' response to the revolutionary turmoil of 1820-23 and, as such, they ought not to be seen as evidence supporting the idiosyncratic characterisation of their administration as illiberal and repressive, but in line with attitudes prevailing in the rest of Europe. Metternich, for instance, was particularly disturbed by how the early decades of the nineteenth century had been marked by the swift growth of nationalisms, liberalism and constitutionalism. He was especially distressed by the military nature of the Revolutions, which reminded him of the rise of Bonaparte, therefore demanding a swift and effective reaction.³² Additionally, he was greatly concerned with the republican character of the 1820 Revolution in the Mezzogiorno and directed his diplomatic efforts towards not only the characterisation of the 1820 constitution as illegitimate, but also warning other European powers against the threat represented by the rapidly spreading democratic and liberal ideals.³³

Just as Metternich readily applauded king Ferdinand's counter-revolutionary initiatives on the basis of their effort to preserve the Kingdom's internal security, Prussia and

³⁰ *Real decreto de' 2 Giugno 1821*, p. 248

³¹ Davis, J. (2000) *Italy*, pp. 81-124

³² Siemann, W. (2016) *Metternich: Stratege und Visionär. Eine Biographie*, pp. 643-44

³³ Späth, J. (2012) *Revolution in Europa 1820-23: Verfassung und Verfassungskultur in den Königreich Spanien, beider Sizilien und Sardinien-Piemont*, pp. 420-21

Russia soon came to see restrictions of the freedom of the press and association as a means to thwart the democratic outlooks perpetuated by the Revolution.³⁴ Britain followed suit in vehemently condemning the restrictions of royal power invoked by southern European constitutional movements, warning that these might cause discord and anarchy in southern Italy and the rest of the continent.³⁵ Unsurprisingly, newspapers were identified as the prime platform for the propagation of political dissidence and, in the aftermath of the revolutions in Italy, Spain and Portugal, as the idea that freedom of the press would lead to increasing demands for political power began gaining traction, the British home secretary maintained that, for the sake of public order, the Bourbon king's model ought to be followed and freedom of the press be limited.³⁶ At the same time, academic freedom was restricted in most parts of Europe from the mid-1820s onwards.³⁷ These observations make the Bourbons' reaction to the revolutionary events of 1820 less suggestive of Ferdinand's distinctively illiberal outlook, by revealing not only how they intersected, but also how consistent they were with broader Italian and European mentalities. Plotted against this context, the very existence of private schools in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies seems to be at odds with the prevailing attitudes of European Restoration governments: their examination may therefore be conducive to a general re-assessment of historiographical verdicts on the Bourbons' education policies.

Private teaching had already begun growing between 1800 and 1806: within a timespan of six years only, 72 new teaching licences were granted to private instructors by the government, leading to the opening of roughly one new school every month.³⁸ Upon returning to power in 1816, the Bourbon king Ferdinand became convinced that the French had indeed significantly improved the status of education in the Kingdom, especially via the promotion of its private branch, consequently recognising that opposition to the latter would be not only fruitless, but also counterproductive. John Davis noted that, as it was the case elsewhere in Italy, the process of Restoration in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies relied on maintaining Napoleonic institutions: virtually all administrative and political changes

³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 418-33; see also: Siemann, W. (2016), pp. 643-52

³⁵ Späth, K. (2012), p. 421

³⁶ Aspinall, A (1949) *Politics and the Press c. 1750-1850*, p. 42

³⁷ Goldstein, R. J. (1983) *Political Repression in 19th Century Europe*, pp. 74-79

³⁸ ASN, Ministero degli Affari Interni, l inv. (1766-1861), *Università degli studi, licei e collegi (1799-1806)*, f. 26, "Licenze accordate onde tenere scuole private"

introduced by the French were kept in place.³⁹ Education policies were no exception and, in this sense, the reforms undertaken by the head of the *Direzione Generale per l'Istruzione Pubblica* under the French rulers, Matteo Galdi, remained untouched by the Restoration government. Galdi's initiatives, which aimed at eroding the "stubborn, haughty and resentful" orientation of public education, encouraged a closer partnership with private institutes, applauded for their openness towards cultural and pedagogical innovations produced in foreign European countries. In addition, they granted all university teachers the possibility of opening their own private schools and enjoy unrestricted didactic freedom.⁴⁰ In 1816, the crown approved the *Regolamento per le scuole private e i pensionati*, extending the authority of the *Commissione dell'Istruzione Pubblica* on both private and public education, in an effort to further homogenise the two. This decision was particularly illustrative of king Ferdinand's approach: aware of private institutes' success under the French administration, he attempted to challenge a dichotomous separation between public and private, turning their agonal relationship into a public-private partnership.

Particularly noteworthy were the Bourbons' initiatives aiming at promoting women's education in private schools, too. Attempting to combat the emphasis on the "womanly arts" characterising girls' public education, an 1816 decree ruled that "it will not be permitted to open a private school for girls, if teachers are not proficient in reading, writing, practical arithmetics, religious catechism and social duties, because all these things must necessarily be taught".⁴¹ More importantly, the king was constantly reminded of the problems affecting public education systems, which were particularly dramatic in the countryside and the least urbanised provinces. Reports and inquiries commissioned by the administration, in fact, clearly drew attention to several inter-connected problems, ranging from absentee or unprepared teachers to truancy, from the lack of resources to the complete absence of textbooks⁴².

³⁹ Davis, J. (2006), pp. 276-77; on the legacy of Napoleonic reforms elsewhere in Restoration Italy, see: Laven, D. (2002), pp. 53-74; Meriggi, M. (1983) *Amministrazione e classi sociali nel Lombardo-Veneto (1814-48)*, pp. 29-86

⁴⁰ ASN, Ministero degli Affari Interni, I inv. (1766-1861), *Università degli studi, licei e collegi (1816-1822)* f. 80, "Progetto di legge di S.E. il Presidente della Giunta Superiore d'Istruzione Pubblica M. Galdi"

⁴¹ *Regolamento per le scuole private e per gli pensionati* (1816), p. 10

⁴² ASN, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (1806-1865), *Ordini, notizie e rapporti da e per il Ministero (1816-1841)*, f. 298, "Istruzione e pubblica educazione nelle province", "Istruzione primaria e secondaria nelle province"

In contrast to these, surveys on private initiatives commissioned by the crown in various regions of the Kingdom exhibited a very positive tone: the teachers in Calabria were said to make up for the deficiencies of the public sector, appearing “very well trained” and doing a “truly excellent” job in educating the local population;⁴³ private schools in Salerno were “flourishing with such a degree of industry”, that they were able to mitigate “the misery threatening this province”;⁴⁴ in Abruzzo, private teachers were said to be able to effectively counter the “decadence” of public education, causing “the whole Kingdom’s great admiration”;⁴⁵ lastly, private schools in Puglia were deemed able to overcome the ills of a public education seen as “frail and uncertain”, rendering the population “strong and cohesive, and less prone to error”.⁴⁶ These reports can be seen as evidence of the extent to which the government did not see private schools as a threat to their public counterparts or as a source of dangerous opposition. Instead, they suggest a genuine appreciation of their existence and operations.

As a result, especially from the late 1830s onwards, teachers’ requests for a licence to open a private school were commonly granted very rapidly, due to the increasing awareness, among the ranks of the central administration, of their utility in compensating for the public sector’s inadequacies.⁴⁷ The presence of an official licensing procedure for private instructors, coupled with the growing number of successful applications, further corroborates the hypothesis that the government would see private schools as a useful resource for the education of the Kingdom’s youth. Unsurprisingly – and this, once again, reflected the crown’s remarkably liberal stance towards the phenomenon of private education – a system of incentives would make it even easier for private teachers to open a school in the countryside, where fewer public institutes could be found, such as tax relief, exemption or monetary subsidies.⁴⁸

⁴³ ASN, Ministero degli Affari Interni, I inv. (1766-1861), *Affari politici e rapporti sullo spirito pubblico* (1823), f. 648, “Stato delle scuole private nelle province di Calabria Citeriore e Calabria Ulteriore”

⁴⁴ ASN, Consiglio Generale della Pubblica Istruzione (1812-1859), *Scuole private (1830-1857)*, f. 778, “Maestri privati della città e provincia di Salerno”

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, f. 814, “Rapporto intorno a gli istituti privati delle province di Abruzzo Citra e Ultra I e II”

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, f. 941, “Capitanata e Terra di Bari”

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, f. 986, “Richieste di autorizzazione all’insegnamento”; f. 988, “Patentiglie de’ maestri privati”; f. 996, “Norme da tenersi per il rilascio delle carte autorizzanti a tener scuola privata”; f. 1002, “Conto delle patentiglie”, “Stato del fondo delle patentiglie dei maestri privati”

⁴⁸ ASN, Ministero degli Affari Interni, II inv. (1786-1886), *Amministrazione civile (1824-25)* f. 724, “Sussidio di quaranta ducati annui sul fondo delle patentiglie dei maestri privati”; f. 726, “Gratificazioni e soccorsi straordinari”, “Agevolazioni per il pagamento dei diritti dei maestri privati” f. 728, “Maestri privati. Esenzione

Thus imagined, the Bourbons' promotion of private initiatives makes it difficult to agree with historiographical verdicts condemning their education policies as a complete failure, informed by an illiberal and reactionary mentality alone. A more accurate interpretation may therefore suggest that the government, while largely neglecting the public branch of education and subjecting the Kingdom's public life to mechanisms of censorship and control, as it was the case in other parts of Italy and Europe after the 1820-23 Revolutions, nonetheless allowed for a thriving intellectual life outside the public domain. This served as a crucial stimulus in fostering a climate of competition between the two education branches, ultimately enabling private schools to perform pedagogical and intellectual functions that remained simply inaccessible to their public counterparts. This agonal relationship had profound implications for what concerns the dynamics of transnational exchanges between Naples and the rest of Europe. Private channels served not only as progressive alternatives, but also as an engine propelling cultural innovation in the Mezzogiorno, via an unprecedented openness toward foreign ideas. Unsurprisingly, it was thanks to private schools that a strong interest for German thought came to imbue Naples' philosophical landscape.

3.3. *From Reception to Revision: Neapolitan Private Schools in a Transnational History of Ideas*

Private schools did not simply "make up" for their public counterparts' shortcomings. Rather, they also acted as a valid engine propelling cultural innovation in the Mezzogiorno. Plotted against the public sphere's lack of engagement with foreign ideas, their most interesting contribution during the first four decades of the 1800s was the fact that they clearly aimed at encouraging transnational intellectual exchanges, as regards both the methods adopted and the actual topics being taught.

The pedagogical innovations they brought about are easy to identify. The French decade had witnessed the introduction, in public education channels, of the *normal method*

dal pagamento dei relativi diritti"; ASN, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (1806-1865) *Consiglio Superiore della Pubblica Istruzione: scuole private (1816-1840)*, f. 1148, "Stato de' soldi, gratificazioni e esenzioni dei maestri privati"; f. 1151, "Agevolazioni ed esenzioni dal pagamento dei diritti dovuti dai maestri privati"

(*metodo normale*), an approach proposing the standardisation of teaching and the provision of the same notions to all students. The years following the Restoration, instead, were characterized by a lack of experimentation, accentuated by a widespread regression to “a uniform teaching method, to be observed in all colleges and schools”, inspired by the principles of Catholic religion and mirroring that of the Jesuits, believing that “not only discipline, religious belief and students’ behaviour ought to be informed by uniform principles, but also that this actual uniformity may be extended to one’s literary or scientific career”.⁴⁹ In an attempt to overcome the limitations imposed by old-fashioned pedagogical methods, private schools aimed at engaging much more closely with foreign approaches. Already in the 1820s, local observers highlighted how, among private schools, “there was no known method that teachers would not attempt to try out”.⁵⁰ This was promptly recognised by the authorities, too: the *Rapporto* for the year 1819-20, penned by the minister of Interior Zurlo, noted how the adoption of new methods, “to be used as a guideline for progressive improvements”, had come about as a result of transnational exchanges, having private teachers established “a fruitful correspondence with foreign scholars”.⁵¹

The method known as *mutual teaching*, perfected by Andrew Bell and Joseph Lancaster in Britain, for example, would delegate part of the teaching to older, more experienced students. It rapidly became one of the most popular ones in Neapolitan private schools, having been introduced in Francesco Mastroti’s literature school, founded in 1828. This method was illustrated in his volume *Manuale sul sistema di Bell e Lancaster*, initially published in Naples in 1819, which was rapidly adopted in a multitude of private institutes, including Basilio Puoti’s grammar and literature school, perhaps the single most successful private institute of the 1820s.⁵² Moreover, the German educator Georg Franz Hoffmann, who had travelled to Naples in 1811, greatly contributed to the popularisation of the method elaborated by the Swiss pedagogue Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. Born in Mannheim, Hoffmann received his education in Switzerland, before moving to Bergerac and Yverdon in France, and collaborated with the Prussian government before settling down in Naples, hence allowing for the penetration, in the Mezzogiorno, of a wide variety of European pedagogical ideas.

⁴⁹ *Decreto con cui s’incarica la Giunta di Scrutinio per la Pubblica Istruzione a proporre un metodo uniforme d’insegnamento da osservarsi in tutti i collegi e licei e nelle scuole private* (1821), p. 23

⁵⁰ Nisio, G. (1871) *Della istruzione pubblica e privata a Napoli dal 1806 sino al 1871*, p. 44

⁵¹ Zurlo, G. (1820) *Rapporto al parlamento per l’anno 1819-20*, pp. 95, 101

⁵² Mastroti, F. (1819) *Manuale del sistema di Bell e Lancaster o mutuo e simultaneo insegnamento*

Foreign commentators promptly noticed the popularity of Hoffmann's school, averaging approximately sixty students every year and praised it for its innovative approach.⁵³ The British periodical *Literary Panorama*, for example, applauded Hoffmann's "ideas on the development of the human mind", able to produce "such sound, such indestructible knowledge" and his intention to "teach a child to think and reason and by these means to become his own instructor".⁵⁴ Similar views also appeared in the pages of French press.⁵⁵ Private schools in Naples began rapidly adopting Pestalozzi's method from 1812 onwards.⁵⁶

At the same time, Hoffmann's correspondence would reveal attempts to innovate not only pedagogical methods, but also the topics covered in his courses. Worried about the allegedly static cultural landscape of the Southern capital and the lack of engagement with foreign ideas in public education channels, he believed that the intellectual regeneration of the region ought to begin by enriching the local tradition with notions borrowed from abroad. He endeavoured to provide "an introduction to learning German philosophy and Schelling" in his Neapolitan school, in order to supplement the study of "Bruno and other books of similar content".⁵⁷

The transnational exchanges taking place in the context of Neapolitan private schools went well beyond the mere internationalisation of teaching methods, largely contributing to the characterisation of the local intellectual landscape as a melting pot of cultural and scientific innovations imported from various regions of Europe. Many teachers who had been exiled in the wake of the 1799 Revolution returned to the capital during and after the French decade, and rapidly proceeded to open their own private schools. These dealt with an impressive variety of subjects and encouraged the penetration of foreign ideas, as well as their amalgamation with local debates. Francesco Saverio Correr, for example, opened his private school of law in 1838.⁵⁸ He taught French, Spanish, German and Dutch jurisprudence, and his views made a significant contribution to local debates on the modernization and internationalisation of the law.⁵⁹ Within the field of medical sciences, Giovanni Semmola

⁵³ Horlacher, R. (2013) *Do Educational Models Impose Standardization?*, p. 145

⁵⁴ Anonymous (1819) *Pestalozzian Schools*, p. 792

⁵⁵ Julien, M. A. (1812) *Esprit de la méthode d'éducation de Pestalozzi*, pp. 389-90

⁵⁶ Nisio, G. (1871), p. 44

⁵⁷ Hofmann, J. H. (1812) *Letter to Schneider*, p. 211

⁵⁸ ASN, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (1806-1865) *Consiglio Superiore della Pubblica Istruzione: scuole private (1816-1840)*, f. 891, "Decreto dato in Napoli il 16 Maggio 1838 con il quale si accorda a ventuno aspiranti il permesso di tenere scuola privata nei rispettivi comuni"

⁵⁹ Pessina, E. (1895) *Francesco Saverio Correr*, pp. 10-12

opened a private school in 1831.⁶⁰ He gave lectures on modern French physiology, pioneering pharmacological approaches that would later be widely adopted by the hospitals of the Kingdom from the late 1850s onwards. Similarly, Antonio De Martini began his private teaching in 1841 and taught, for the first time in Italy, ground-breaking medical techniques, which he had learned in Vienna and Paris.⁶¹ Lastly, Matteo Tondi, who had studied in Germany and France, opened a private school of geology in 1817, in which he illustrated new theories that shaped local debates on volcanology.⁶²

Within the context of literature schools, the appropriation of foreign ideas was even more explicit: Domenico Anselmi opened a private school of literature in 1836 and taught foreign literature, focusing, in particular, on French and English novels, of which he highlighted the exquisitely modern character, in stark contrast to the parochialism of the programmes taught at the university.⁶³ More importantly, Anselmi believed in the common origin of all literary traditions: it was imperative for teachers, therefore, not to promote among students a static notion of literature, but one characterised by ongoing exchanges among the various national traditions.⁶⁴ It was in philosophy schools, however, that intellectual innovation was pursued most consistently. This should not come as a surprise, given how this discipline occupied a place of absolute prominence in nineteenth-century Neapolitan culture. Its popularity, in turn, deepened its roots in the experience of the local Enlightenment. From the early eighteenth-century onwards, in fact, Neapolitans' interest in history and law had been met by an even greater fascination for philosophical studies.⁶⁵ Philosophical reasoning was consistently deployed in support of other areas of knowledge, ranging from jurisprudence and economics to politics and natural sciences.⁶⁶ Simply put, philosophy was assigned a practical significance that went well beyond its purely speculative

⁶⁰ ASN, Consiglio Generale della Pubblica Istruzione (1812-1859), *Scuole private (1830-1857)*, f. 656, "Richiesta di autorizzazione ad aprire scuola privata di arte medica avanzata dal dottore Giovanni Semmola"

⁶¹ ASN, Consiglio Generale della Pubblica Istruzione (1812-1859), *Scuole private (1830-1857)* f. 671, "Decreto dato in Napoli il 29 Marzo 1841 col quale si accorda a dodici aspiranti il permesso di tenere scuola privata nei propri comuni"

⁶² ASN, Consiglio Generale della Pubblica Istruzione (1812-1859), *Scuole private (1830-1857)*, f. 649, "Decreto dato in Napoli il 3 Settembre 1817 col quale si accorda a venti aspiranti il permesso di tenere scuola privata nei propri comuni"

⁶³ ASN, Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione (1806-1865) *Consiglio Superiore della Pubblica Istruzione: Scuole private (1816-1840)*, f. 884b, "Decreto dato in Napoli il 2 Febbraio 1836 con il quale si accorda a otto aspiranti il permesso di tenere scuola privata"

⁶⁴ Anselmi, D. (1842) *Prose diverse*, pp. 252-53

⁶⁵ Robertson, J. (2005) *The Case for the Enlightenment. Scotland and Naples, 1680-1760*, pp. 121-34

⁶⁶ Imbruglia, G. (2000) *Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Naples*, pp. 70-94

horizon and permeated, instead, virtually every other domain of Neapolitans' intellectual and political life.

Perpetuating the local tradition was therefore synonymous, in nineteenth-century Naples, with sustaining this characteristic commitment to philosophical studies. This inclination was common to an impressive number of students, who resorted to private tuition in great numbers. Lorenzo Fazzini's school, for example, active between 1830 and 1848, was attended by more than four hundred pupils every year, including Francesco De Sanctis and Luigi Settembrini. In Fazzini's institute, foreign ideas were widely discussed. De Sanctis, in particular, spoke very enthusiastically of how his teacher had stood out as a true innovator, at a time when public education was shrouded in "theological darkness".⁶⁷ Fazzini's school dealt very extensively with foreign philosophers, including Locke, Condillac, Tracy, Voltaire, Diderot and Rousseau. More importantly, it stimulated a rather unorthodox amalgamation of Locke and Hume's sensualism with the ongoing re-discovery of scholastic philosophy operated by Italian thinkers and very popular at the local university.⁶⁸

Fazzini's approach reflected an interesting attitude toward transnational exchanges, common to many Neapolitan private schools: put simply, teachers would engage with foreign philosophy for the purpose of regenerating the local tradition of thought, by not only absorbing notions coming from abroad, but also by fully merging them with local thinkers' ideas. As indicated in chapter one, two private institutes were particularly illustrative of this tendency: those run by Pasquale Galluppi and Ottavio Colecchi, who spearheaded a process of intellectual exchange introducing, in their private schools, the study of German philosophy among the Neapolitan youth.

Later commentators regarded the opening of Galluppi's private school, taking place on November 7, 1831, as an event breathing new life in the Neapolitan philosophical landscape, inaugurating "a new speculative period", thanks to the popularisation of German philosophy via Victor Cousin's works, mainly his *Fragments philosophiques*.⁶⁹ Bertrando Spaventa, who, from the mid-1840s onwards, would tower above his contemporaries as the leading exponent of the local Hegelian school, often emphasised Galluppi's primacy in enhancing a sensitivity for foreign ideas, perfecting a composite, anti-metaphysical,

⁶⁷ De Sanctis, F. (1889) p. 28

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 30

⁶⁹ Gentile, G. (1935) *Storia della filosofia italiana. Dal Genovesi al Galluppi*, II, p. 149

philosophical orientation that, by deploying Kant's "transcendental psychologism", ultimately provided answers to queries that could be traced back to Giambattista Vico's *Scienza nuova*.⁷⁰ Additionally, in an 1868 letter to the philosopher and patriot Angelo Camillo De Meis, Bertrando recalled how his own approach to the study of Hegel had been greatly influenced by Galluppi's postulation of a "certain relationship" between German and Italian philosophy, between Kant and Vico.⁷¹ The novelty of Galluppi's approach lay in the fact that he had attempted to rethink the coordinates of Vico's text from the perspective of Cousin's eclecticism. He viewed, in fact, *La scienza nuova* as the proposition of "a new metaphysics: the metaphysics of the human mind, which moves from the history of human ideas [...] that metaphysics that is not pure ontology, or the old metaphysics of being, but psychology: transcendental psychology".⁷² Unsurprisingly, in articulating a vision of metaphysics firmly anchored to psychology, rather than pure ontology, Galluppi's reading of Vico made the latter seemingly compatible with Kant's ideas.

Galluppi's engagement with foreign thought also reflected the competitive interplay of public and private education in the Kingdom, further enforcing the idea that private teaching remained alien to the mechanisms of control imposed by the administration: while he held a chair at the university of Naples between 1831 and 1833, his lessons were subject, as mentioned in chapter one, to attentive scrutiny from the Giunta della Pubblica Istruzione. The president of this board, Francesco Colangelo, repeatedly accused Galluppi not only of disseminating atheism among the ranks of university students, but also of tainting the integrity of the local tradition of thought, via his revision of Vico's *Scienza nuova*.⁷³ This ultimately led to the suspension of Galluppi's university appointment in 1833, following the first appearance of a text on Kant, later included in the Cousinian *Frammenti di filosofia*. As a result, Galluppi's written output was at all times significantly affected by Colangelo's opposition, with manuscripts remaining unpublished for several years, suffering from very limited circulation, or written for the sole purpose of shaking off Colangelo's accusations.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Spaventa, B. (1862) *La filosofia Italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*, pp. 136-37

⁷¹ Spaventa, B. (1868) *Paolottismo, positivismo, razionalismo. Lettera al prof. A.C. De Meis*, p. 435

⁷² Spaventa, B. (1862) p. 118

⁷³ Oldrini, G. (1974) *La cultura filosofica napoletana dell'ottocento*, p. 101

⁷⁴ One of Galluppi's main contributions, his *Lezioni di logica e metafisica*, did not enjoy a large readership. Additionally, the article *Alcune osservazioni sullo spinozismo*, published in Messina in 1843, seems to be of little relevance from a speculative point of view, but nonetheless revealed Galluppi's attempt to liberate his own philosophy from the label of "pantheist" attributed by Colangelo.

These considerations challenge historians' understanding of Galluppi's thought, rendering its reconstruction quite problematic, especially for what concerns the extent to which he fostered a genuine transnational sensitivity among his students and with regard to the possibility of disaggregating his university teaching from the lessons he held in his private institute. Their legacy, however, was later celebrated by one of his students, Luigi Settembrini, who, in his *Ricordanze*, recounted how his mentor had dealt, in his private study, with topics he would have not otherwise been able to address at the university. When reconstructing the events that led to Galluppi's university appointment, Settembrini highlighted the difficulties he had encountered and the severe limitations imposed by the administration. At the same time, however, he highlighted how these restrictions did not deter the teacher from dealing with certain topics, most notably foreign philosophy, in his own private study.⁷⁵ This, in turn, further reinforces the idea that the Bourbons' attitude toward private schools was, contrary to many twentieth-century historiographical verdicts, rather liberal and permissive: while the public sphere remained neglected by the crown and subject to censorship and close control by the administration, independent institutions were nonetheless allowed to pursue their pedagogical and intellectual mission with a truly remarkable degree of freedom.

In this sense, Settembrini drew particular attention to how this stood in direct contrast to the predominant institutional arrangements: "the government may well persecute me", the author remembered his mentor saying, "as long as it allows me to teach, because by teaching I raise you, and you will one day be cultured, honest and generous".⁷⁶ Galluppi also presented these views in a small pamphlet, whose circulation remained, however, extremely limited, in which his opposition to the Bourbon's system of control and censorship was clearly outlined. The goal of his philosophical and civic inclination, he pointed out, revolved around an intense intellectual resistance to the central power and its functionaries, with the purpose of "casting a light upon their conduct, unmasking their intrigues, warning society of the risks it is currently exposed to".⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Settembrini, L. (1879) pp. 74-76

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 71-72

⁷⁷ Galluppi, P. (1820) *Opuscolo in cui si esamina la legge provvisoria de' 26 Luglio 1820 su la libertà di stampa*, p. 27

These brief indications regarding Galluppi's school are particularly significant, for two reasons: first, they clearly framed it within the broader, competitive, interplay of public and private education illustrated in the previous section of this chapter, further corroborating the idea that the latter emerged in the Kingdom as a much more liberal and progressive alternative to the former; second, they drew attention, once again, on the very unorthodox dynamics of education in the Kingdom, characterised by tight control on public channels and a largely permissive attitude towards private ones.

What is even more important about Galluppi's contribution, however, has to do with the extent to which this stimulated a transnational exchange of ideas ultimately leading to the amalgamation of local and foreign philosophical landscapes. Reconstructing, in this sense, the contents of his private lessons is indeed a particularly hard task, given the scarcity of sources available. Settembrini, however, provided a valuable hint as he explained that most of the topics discussed by the teacher in his private study eventually came to be featured in a "critical essay on human knowledge", later appearing in Messina with the title of *Saggio filosofico sulla critica della conoscenza*.⁷⁸ This hypothesis was also confirmed by Bertrando Spaventa, who noted how this text fully revealed the extent of its author's Kantian formation, adding that the rational psychologist approach elaborated by the philosopher from Königsberg had been deployed by Galluppi for the purpose of a significant revision of Vico's thought.⁷⁹

Galluppi's new reading of *La scienza nuova* revolved around the projection of a Kantian transcendental subjectivity onto the Vichian equation of *verum* and *factum*, suggesting that only the analysis of a rational process of self-consciousness may lead to the understanding of a broader notion of "human spirit" in its progressive development:

That which cannot be produced cannot be posited. Inner experience, upon which all philosophy must be based, teaches me that the human spirit is an agent, an active being; it therefore has the capacity to modify itself and produce something: modifications are the things which it produces; following this line of reasoning, one can correctly proceed towards truth.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Settembrini, L. (1879) p. 72

⁷⁹ Spaventa, B. (1862) pp. 136-37

⁸⁰ Galluppi, P. (1847) *Saggio filosofico sulla critica della conoscenza, ossia analisi distinta del pensiero umano con un esame delle più importanti quistioni dell'ideologia, del kantismo e della filosofia trascendentale*, VI, p. 63

This position naturally led Galluppi to embrace a view on history that, while largely resonating with Victor Cousin's psychologist eclecticism, entailed a vision of historical development understood as the concatenation of "the thoughts and the will of everyone".⁸¹ In other words, via the deployment of what he labelled Kant's "transcendental psychology", Galluppi proposed a new form of historicism: one that, emphasising the centrality of man's imagination and rational thinking in making sense of the experience of historical time, ultimately challenged the very idea of absolute historical laws, reduced, instead, to a "synthetic and empirical judgment", a rational inference informed by the thinking subjects' mental powers.⁸²

If viewed from another perspective, namely that of the early nineteenth-century re-discovery of Vico, examined in chapter two, the amalgamation of Kantianism and Vichian historicism operated by Galluppi becomes even clearer. The tension between an "ideal eternal history" and the latter's concrete, empirically observable realisations, initially problematised by Vincenzo Cuoco and deepening its roots in the identification of *verum* and *factum* as the pivotal points of Vico's historicism, was resolved by Galluppi via an uncompromising, anti-metaphysical, rejection of any kind of ideal history, or any notion of *a priori* historical mechanisms. The definition of historical laws, in fact, was said to depend entirely on the rational inferences made by the thinking subjects with regard to the relationship among "past, present and future".⁸³ As a result, historical laws were said to correspond to an "experimental truth, not a metaphysical one", a "synthetic, rather than analytic truth", a "contingent, rather than necessary truth".⁸⁴ Based on these premises, it should not be surprising that Galluppi sided with Vico in arguing that the succession of different historical epochs could be discerned via the examination of "language among the various peoples" and "the study of poets and orators".⁸⁵ Yet, by rescuing the ideas of progress and development from any metaphysical account of historical laws, Galluppi crafted a view on history as fully man-made and experimental and, more importantly, devoid of the

⁸¹ *ibid.*, p. 258

⁸² *ibid.*, p. 273

⁸³ *ibid.*, p. 124

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, V, p. 216; it should also be noted, at this point, how this particular use of Kant reflects a certain inaccuracy in the interpretation of his thought: Galluppi, in fact, seems to have failed to notice how Kant had defined space and time as the *a priori* forms of man's reason and, instead, regarded them as an extension of man's own rational thinking.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 255-56

philosophical problems identified in Vico's *Scienza nuova* by its early nineteenth-century commentators.

Galluppi, however, was not the only Southern thinker who actively endeavoured, in his private study, to establish a dialogue between the local and foreign traditions of thought. Ottavio Colecchi, for example, can be credited for further perfecting the blueprint for the amalgamation of Italian and German philosophy with equal accuracy and effectiveness, and according to the same anti-metaphysical tendencies exhibited by Galluppi. His school was fundamental for what concerns the development of a transnational sensitivity among those thinkers who later came to constitute the bulk of the Neapolitan Hegelian generation. Among Colecchi's students, in fact, one can list Bertrando Spaventa and his brother Silvio, Francesco De Sanctis, Stanislao Gatti, Stefano Cusani and Luigi Settembrini. Many of these personalities offered significant testimonies of their mentor's intellectual inclinations, as well as his school's orientation: Bertrando Spaventa, for instance, openly credited it for disseminating a new philosophical consciousness among the Neapolitan youth, marking "the new principle of our age".⁸⁶

It is easy to situate Colecchi's school within the broader competitive interplay of public and private education channels discussed earlier. Spaventa recounted how his mentor's study was often targeted by the authorities, via "police's suspicion", or "threats and persecutions".⁸⁷ Moreover, just as Galluppi's interest in Kant and his exploration of the perceived Kantian overtones of Vico's *Scienza nuova* were met with hostility by public education authorities, Colecchi's contribution too was severely limited by censorship. Several manuscripts, for example, engaging with Kant and, more importantly, with Hegel, whom Colecchi had begun exploring during the final months of his private school, were not published during the 1830s and '40s, due to Giuseppe Maria Mazzarella's intervention.⁸⁸ Mazzarella, a professor of philosophy at the university and general inspector of Public Education, accused Colecchi, adopting a similar approach to that of Colangelo towards Galluppi, of disseminating atheism. He subsequently urged the philosopher to profoundly alter the contents of his magnum opus' third volume, *Sopra alcune quistioni le più importanti*

⁸⁶ Spaventa, B. (1851) *Studii sopra la filosofia di hegel*, p. 11

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 2-3

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

della filosofia.⁸⁹ The sections dealing with German idealism, particularly with the allegedly pernicious Hegelian philosophy then appeared only posthumously – and in a largely edited form – in the periodical *Il Giambattista Vico*.⁹⁰ Once again, however, just like Galluppi's written output, despite being censored or having its circulation limited in the public sphere, was nonetheless widely discussed in his private school, Colecchi's *Quistioni*, despite remaining partially unpublished during the author's life, were hugely indebted to the study of foreign philosophy taking place in his private institute, as reported by his students.⁹¹

Colecchi's philosophical orientation closely followed Galluppi's. Once again, his reading of Vico reflected contemporary debates on the eighteenth-century Neapolitan philosopher, particularly Cuoco's identification of two kinds of history in *La scienza nuova*: commenting on the contents of this book, in fact, the author regarded it to be a "civic theology of Providence, according to Reason", able to resolve the perceived tension between "divine" and "human things".⁹² And, just like Galluppi had sided with Vico in encouraging the analysis of languages and cultural production in order to examine the "human spirit" ("spirito umano"), Colecchi exhibited a clear predilection for "the examination of facts above these absolute ideas".⁹³ While, however, Galluppi had deployed the ideas of Kant in order to solve problems which contemporaries were identifying in Vico, Colecchi used Vico to overcome the perceived limitations of Kant's philosophy.

Colecchi, who had travelled to Königsberg in 1817 in order to be acquainted with Kant's works and read them in their original language, promptly identified a significant problem with the German thinker's system of thought: Kant's method, in fact, was regarded by Colecchi as "absurd", because "it situated itself beyond experience, in order to interrogate that which is offered by experience itself".⁹⁴ As a result, "there is a great difference between our way of doing philosophy and Kant's, namely that Kant moves from the universal towards the particular, while we, via a completely antithetical procedure, move from the particular to the universal".⁹⁵ At the core of Colecchi's philosophical speculation, therefore, was the search

⁸⁹ see Zazo, A. (1925) *Un'accusa di ateismo a Ottavio Colecchi*, pp. 110-115

⁹⁰ Colecchi, O. (1857) *Sopra alcune quistioni le più importanti della filosofia. Osservazioni critiche*, I, pp. 335-92, II, pp. 123-36, III, pp. 68-96

⁹¹ De Sanctis, F. (1889) p. 31; *Settembrini*, L. (1879) p. 76

⁹² Colecchi, O. (1843) *Sopra alcune quistioni le più importanti della filosofia*, II, p. 231

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 119

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, III, p. 127

⁹⁵ *ibid.*

for a logically tenable philosophical principle allowing to “move from concrete judgment in order to ascend toward the universal”.⁹⁶ Solutions postulated by German idealist philosophers were said to be unsustainable. Notions of “transcendental idealism” and “absolute unity”, according to the author, “dishonour philosophy”, because, by attempting to bypass the sphere of experience, “they demand not only to know that which exists, but also to construct beings, too, illustrating how these are created and derived from absolute existence”.⁹⁷

Vico’s *new science*, then, was identified as the optimal blueprint to address these problems.⁹⁸ This was because it was able, via “philological and philosophical proof” to demonstrate the immanence of Providence in the world, hence rendering the knowledge of this universal principle accessible via the examination of the man-made “civic world of nations”.⁹⁹ More specifically, Colecchi’s attempt to render Vico’s philosophy into the language of Kantian critical rationalism and ethical formalism revolved around a revision of Kant’s moral law: this, it must be granted, still remained an absolute and immutable concept, but – and here lay the novelty of Colecchi’s amalgamation of Kant and Vico – its *factuality* was said to hinge upon man’s rational judgment:

For Vico, all this is the result of Providence’s actions. It is true, it comes from Providence. Providence’s blacksmith, however, is man’s Will, whose chief rule is popular knowledge, which, then, is constituted by the common sense of every people or nation, directing our actions in society, so that this may act in accordance with a nation’s belief. Nations have come to know one another via commerce, peace agreements and alliances and these are able to disclose what Vico regarded to be the knowledge of mankind. Now, the common sense of all peoples and all nations, which ought to realise our actions in societies, so that these many be consistent with what mankind, as a whole, believes: what can this be, if not the moral law?¹⁰⁰

Thus imagined, Colecchi’s merging of Kant and Vico appears to have been carried out in order to bypass the perceived limitations of the German philosopher’s thought, namely his transcendental rationalism’s position fundamentally outside the realm of human experience, rendering the knowledge of anything beyond the latter logically impossible. Thanks to Vico’s idea of an immanent Providence, coupled with the definition of man’s judgment as its catalyst, Colecchi managed to weave a purely theoretical and immutable account of Reason

⁹⁶ *ibid.*

⁹⁷ *ibid.*, II, p. 46

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, III, p. 127

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, II, p. 235

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 298

into the fabric of a lived experience of history. In a nutshell, the absolute normativity of Kantian Reason became finally accessible via the study of its historical individuation, namely the Vichian “natural right of the people”, stemming from “nations’ customs”¹⁰¹.

Private schools in nineteenth-century Naples, therefore, did not simply constitute a progressive alternative to the stale public education channels. Rather, they were evidently at the forefront of an intellectual movement popularising the study of foreign thought among the Neapolitan youth. More importantly, philosophy schools, particularly those run by Galluppi and Colecchi, ought to be credited for elaborating a new, markedly anti-metaphysical, approach to the study of German philosophy: one that emphasised its thematic continuity with the tradition of Neapolitan Enlightenment and that actively attempted to deploy the one in order to address philosophical problems identified in the other, and vice versa. Such an inclination was noteworthy, especially if plotted against the closure to foreign ideas characterising the public sphere. This transnational sensitivity was rapidly picked up by Galluppi and Colecchi’s students. It was only a matter of time, therefore, before it was adopted not only to engage with Hegel’s ideas, but also to revise them.

3.4. Verum esse Ipsum vernünftig: Vico, Hegel and a New Historicism

The most immediate implication of the examples set by Pasquale Galluppi and Ottavio Colecchi in their private schools was the sudden dissemination of their approach to the study of German philosophy among their students. Just as they had themselves sought to investigate the continuities between Kant and Vico, their students endeavoured, as chapter five will illustrate in detail, to trace a new intellectual history of the Mezzogiorno, emphasising the transnational encounters the region had continuously engaged in. Unsurprisingly, Vico and Hegel emerged as the chief figureheads of this new view.

One of Colecchi’s students, for example, Stefano Cusani, whose importance this thesis introduced in chapter one, had a short-lived private school of philosophy operating between 1845 and his premature death in 1846. In his teaching, as reported by his biographer Panfilo

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 277

Serafini, Cusani included the study of Hegel's philosophy, having previously disaggregated it from Victor Cousin's, "triggering local intellectuals' praise".¹⁰² Having correctly identified the German philosopher's concern as the analysis of the "immortal part of history", namely "the linkage among causes and effects, reasons, general facts, the ideas which they ultimately conceal under the cloak of their exteriority", Cusani underlined the need not to restrict philosophical speculation to the investigation of history's "premature generalities" alone, via an unconditional reliance upon "metaphysical formulae".¹⁰³ These reflections represented the entry point to Cusani's exhortation to craft a new philosophy of history able to accommodate both Hegel and Vico, albeit in a markedly anti-metaphysical vein. Central to this process was the identification of history's dual nature: "the material and the spiritual parts of all visible events".¹⁰⁴ While Hegel appeared to have provided a convincing account of the latter, the analysis of the former was deemed by Cusani to be viable only within the coordinates of the *new science* forged by Giambattista Vico, namely via the examination of people's languages and cultural production.¹⁰⁵

At the forefront of Cusani's philosophical speculation, therefore, lay an investigation into the intersection of history's absolute mechanisms and its concrete, tangible, conditions. This, in turn, was informed by the need to amalgamate two competing traditions of thought: the one, which, due to its idealist emphasis on history's absolute external principles, mistakenly rendered man's experience of history "passive and fatal";¹⁰⁶ the other, which, as exemplified by Vico, "sought within man the principle and the law informing mankind's development", but failed to recognise "exterior nature's influence" on man's historical existence.¹⁰⁷ In other words, Cusani's proposition of a merging of Vichian historicism and a Hegelian account of absolute history was significantly informed by the need to mediate between two opposite understandings of man's experience of history: the one, championed by Hegel and the other German idealist thinkers, portraying it as an *effect*, the other, articulated by the local tradition and most visible in *La scienza nuova*, viewing it as a *cause*.

¹⁰² Serafini, P. (1846) *Necrologia, Stefano Cusani*, p. 147

¹⁰³ Cusani, S. (1838) *Gli arabi in Italia*, p. 108

¹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 107

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Cusani, S. (1842) *Idea d'una storia compendiata della filosofia*, p. 100

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

In Cusani, the merging of Vico and Hegel remained somewhat tentative, primarily due to his rather superficial knowledge of the latter's *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*. Yet, his concerns were common to other Neapolitan Hegelian thinkers, significantly reverberating in the content of their private teaching, too. Stanislao Gatti, for example, who ran a private institute of philosophy between 1843 and 1848, published, in 1861, a volume of *Scritti vari*, in which he collected notes, manuscripts and testimonies initially put together during the 1840s, positing particular attention on the lectures he had held in his private school. Gatti's teaching ought to be credited for further encouraging the amalgamation of Vico and Hegel, by illustrating the continuities between their historicisms: as explained in a lesson on philosophy of history dating back to 1843, modern historicism was born "in Vico's great mind", but later took on different forms in other regions of Europe.¹⁰⁸

In particular, the tripartite division of history imagined by the eighteenth-century Neapolitan author was said to have then been rethought by German philosophers. Schelling, for instance, described it as the dialectical interplay of "the age of the infinite" and "that of the finite", resolving itself in "a third one, namely that of the one's relationship to the other";¹⁰⁹ Fichte, too, forged his philosophy of history on the basis of the progress from three distinct epochs: "the first one is that of the *not-I*, the second one that of the *I*, the third one that of the fusion of the *not-I* and of the *I*";¹¹⁰ finally, Hegel managed to fully abstract this tripartite structure, translating it into a dialectic of unmediated ideas. His account of history, postulating the resolution of "unity" and "variety" into "unity *in* variety", was thus seen as an abstract reflection of the Vichian interplay among "the people, individuality, the individuality of a people".¹¹¹ In summary, Gatti's composite Vichian Hegelianism revolved around the possibility of contemplating the progressive development of Spirit via the analysis of its "clearest manifestations", such as language, in an attempt to replace Hegel's logical-metaphysical reasoning with a mechanism of philological validation borrowed from *La scienza nuova*.¹¹²

While the reconstruction of Gatti and Cusani's contributions is rendered problematic by the scarcity of sources available, especially with regard to their engagement with Hegel

¹⁰⁸ Gatti, S. (1843) *La filosofia della storia*, p. 140

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*, p. 163

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 164

¹¹² *ibid.*, p. 157

and Vico as part of their private teaching, it is nevertheless possible to paint a much clearer picture of how these two thinkers were discussed – and merged into one composite historicism – in Francesco De Sanctis’ private school of literature and philosophy. This institute, nicknamed “la scuola al Vicolo Bisi” and active between 1839 and 1848, exemplified the role played by private schools in enabling a transnational exchange of ideas, highlighting how this revolved around the establishment of an ongoing dialogue between the local tradition and contemporary German idealist philosophy. Reconstructing the content of De Sanctis’ lectures is no hard task, primarily thanks to Benedetto Croce, who, between 1912 and 1917, collected and later published notes and autobiographical fragments dating back to the *Vicolo Bisi* school years, written by De Sanctis himself and his students Eduardo de Ruggiero and Felice Nisio.¹¹³ An even larger collection of the lessons held at the Vicolo Bisi was then published in 1975 by Attilio Marinari with the title of *Purismo, illuminismo, storicismo: lezioni*.

Francesco De Sanctis’ intellectual orientation unquestionably emerged as a reaction to both the hostility towards foreign ideas prevailing in the public sphere of the Kingdom, as well as to the literary *purism* championed by his mentor Basilio Puoti in his private school. Literary purists aimed at rescuing the integrity of the Italian language from foreign, notably French, contaminations. This made Puoti’s school, in its students’ eyes, fundamentally stale and anti-modern. Commenting on his experience of Puoti’s school, De Sanctis pointed out that “this school’s basis was the orderly reading of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century authors [...]. Modern ones, then, were completely banned”.¹¹⁴ It was only a matter of time before De Sanctis departed from Puoti’s principles. Dissatisfied with his mentor’s excessive emphasis on the form over content, ultimately encouraging an understanding of literary production as a mere “imitation according to certain preconceptions and archetypes”, De Sanctis sought, in his own private school, to encourage a much more dynamic ideal of literature.¹¹⁵ This revolved around the acknowledgment of the fundamentally historical character of linguistic expression and cultural production. His 1840 class on historiography and the 1843-44 lectures *Sui generi letterari*, for instance, highlighted how literary criticism ought to be framed within

¹¹³ Croce, B. (1926) *Preambolo*, p. 15

¹¹⁴ De Sanctis, F. (1889) p. 48

¹¹⁵ De Sanctis, F. (1868), p. 530

a purely historicist perspective, informed by its conceptual and formal identity with philosophy of history:¹¹⁶

Criticism followed the same trajectory as history. This was initially nothing more than the mere narration of human actions; and criticism was equally nothing more than the aesthetic contemplation of works of arts. History then became an investigation of the proximal and remote causes of man's actions; criticism, then, became the search for artistic masterpieces' causes. And the eighteenth century, which created philosophy of history, also created, by the same token, the philosophy of criticism.¹¹⁷

There is little doubt, at this point, that De Sanctis's private teaching aimed at upholding a historicised understanding of literature against Puoti's ideal of immutable, a-historical, linguistic standards. The question was no longer limited to the context of literary criticism alone; rather, it came to include a speculative dimension pertaining to the sphere of philosophy of history. More specifically, as he tried to erode Puoti's idea that "rules are invariable", De Sanctis began complementing his lectures on Italian and foreign literature with the study of French and Neapolitan Enlightenment, as well as German Idealism, hoping to demonstrate, on the one hand, the fundamentally historical nature of cultural production, and add a markedly historico-philosophical dimension to his literary teaching, on the other.¹¹⁸ The success of De Sanctis' ambition consequently depended on the validity of the historicist model he would deploy in support of his revised understanding of aesthetics.

Central to the thinker's speculation was the examination of what he termed "historical school" ("scuola storica"), a strand of literary criticism proposing not only an increasingly historicised notion of cultural production, but also one stemming from transnational exchanges. Unsurprisingly, Giambattista Vico was identified as its founder. Vico, with whom De Sanctis had become acquainted thanks to his friendship with Enrico Amante in 1837, was credited for articulating an understanding of a people's culture as a collective phenomenon dictated by unchangeable historical mechanisms: "Vico swapped the life of authors with the life of a people, biography with history".¹¹⁹ Put simply, according to De Sanctis, by concentrating on the historical significance of cultural production, understood as a chronologically determined reflection of a people's historical existence, Vico had introduced the need, for critics, to go beyond the contemplation and judgment of intellectual production

¹¹⁶ De Sanctis, F. (1926a) *La storia e gli storici*, II, pp. 12-13

¹¹⁷ De Sanctis, F. (1926b) *Vico e la scuola storica*, p. 73

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, De Sanctis, F. (1962) *Memorie e scritti giovanili*, p. 70

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*

and supplement it with an accurate analysis of the mechanisms able to translate man's experience of history into specific aesthetic forms. This was how, according to the author, thanks to Vico's contribution, "criticism" had become "fully historical".¹²⁰

De Sanctis' verdict on Vico, however, was not univocally positive. The eighteenth-century philosopher, on the one hand, was praised for the elaboration of a markedly anti-metaphysical speculative method, able to account for a "Providence able to regulate human events" on the basis of philological proof alone. Philology, "the science of the real and of languages' historical facts [...] enabled him to devise the laws informing nations' development, as well as an awareness of the various conditions under which the human spirit has appeared".¹²¹ Vico's historicism, on the other hand, was deemed "stationary", insofar as it was unable to provide a convincing account of progress:

Vico speaks of mankind's laws, but these are formal laws, according to which societies manifest themselves; yet, societies, as well as a humanity as a whole, manifest themselves, at all times and in all places, in accordance with the same forms, imagination, sentiment and Reason. And those who investigate the history of an individual do not limit themselves to the observation of the main moments in his or her life, but account for his or her intelligence and ideas' development across several years; similarly, even when it comes to the study of societies, it is necessary to describe the progression of ideas across various epochs: an epoch of imagination, one of sentiment and one of reason. The forms are the same at all times, but ideas change and are inherently progressive [...]. As a result, Vico is stationary, and while he sees societies following one another, he does not see the continuities among them, the heritage that one leaves behind, its influence on new societies, or the overall progress that takes place. Now, this idea that dead societies leave living ideas behind, which are then cultivated in a different form, is completely absent in Vico.¹²²

It was by looking at European philosophy, De Sanctis believed, that one could identify solutions to Vico's perceived shortcomings: in France, Voltaire had contributed to a first revision of his thought, by reflecting more closely on the relationship between developing social contexts and man's experience of history, while Victor Cousin had begun to explore a notion of historical development understood as the progressive realisation of an absolute principle;¹²³ yet, De Sanctis argued, an absolute, universal view on history was proposed only in Germany, with idealist philosophers subverting Vichian historicism, as they "cancel the individual out, and regard him as posited on Earth for the sole purpose of representing an

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ De Sanctis, F. (1975) *Purismo, illuminismo, storicismo. Scritti giovanili e frammenti di scuola. Lezioni*, III, p. 928

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 1640

¹²³ De Sanctis, F. (1926b) pp. 23-24

idea”.¹²⁴ Viewed from another perspective, then, the development of the “scuola storica” presented by De Sanctis reflected an ongoing transition toward an idealised understanding of aesthetics: one that, by challenging a notion of cultural production as the mere work of an individual, suggested that art ought to be viewed historically, and imagined as the reflection of historical laws, rather than the product of the individual artist’s imagination.

This, however, did not mean that De Sanctis wholeheartedly embraced Hegel’s views on history and aesthetics. Closely following the examples of Gatti and Cusani, who had attempted to provide an anti-metaphysical revision of Hegelianism, by encouraging its amalgamation with Vichian historicism, De Sanctis subjected Hegel’s ideas to close scrutiny, ultimately warning against the risks connected with a purely ideal notion of history, aided by logical, a priori reasoning alone. “Pure abstraction”, in this sense, “is not given to man”, but can only be contemplated “by descending within the realm of the real” and engaging with its most tangible realisations.¹²⁵ From this, De Sanctis derived the need to revise Hegel’s philosophy, by – unsurprisingly – attempting its amalgamation with Vico’s, and elaborating a composite speculative method: one able to be both “logical” and “historical” at the same time.

At the core of this lay the need to craft “an intimate union of philosophy and history, of the idea and the fact”.¹²⁶ This is because “the Idea without the fact is a utopia; the fact without the Idea relegates civil life to a stationary and merely material existence”.¹²⁷ In the final lessons of his school, then, dealing with *Filosofia della storia hegeliana*, De Sanctis further elucidated these observations, by adding that “every idea, before being manifested, is present in everyone’s consciousness; there can be no Idea without consciousness; and no fact without the Idea”.¹²⁸ These observations conveniently reflected the problems which De Sanctis had found in both Hegel and Vico’s philosophies, identifying, at the same time, the elaboration of a new, composite, historicist method as the optimal means of overcoming them: “the path we will follow is going to be a dual one, historical or chronological and logical. By means of a historical method we will proceed from that which is concrete and come to

¹²⁴ *ibid.*

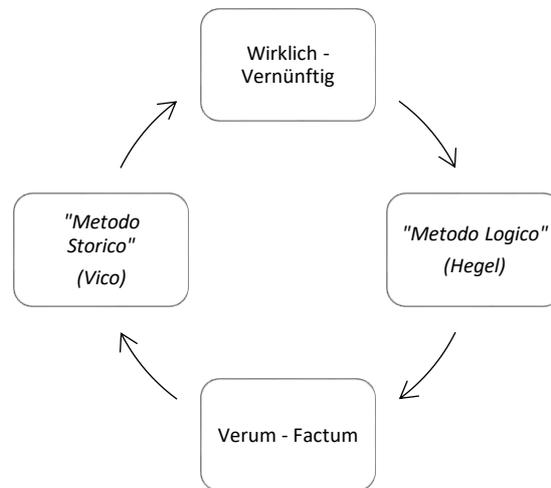
¹²⁵ De Sanctis, F. (1975), III, pp. 756-57

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 70-71

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 1645

that which is abstract; by means of the logical method, instead, we will proceed in the opposite direction”.¹²⁹



A particularly interesting aspect of De Sanctis’ amalgamation of Hegelianism and Vichianism, then, was the proposition of a notion of history stemming out of the dialectical interplay of the two most fundamental intuitions advanced by the two philosophers: that “that which is rational is real; and that which is real is the rational” (“Was vernünftig ist, das ist Wirklich; und was wirklich ist, das ist vernünftig”) and that “that which is made is true” (“verum esse ipsum factum”).¹³⁰

Logical reasoning, according to De Sanctis, must allow for the individuation of the rational within man’s direct experience of history, with this consequently coming to be seen as the direct realisation of broader, necessary historical mechanisms; via historical observation, instead, the Hegelian “reality” (“Wirklich”) could be rescued from an exclusively metaphysical view and be conceived as the pure abstraction of a Vichian man-made “factum”. Crucially, by presenting the relationship of the real and the ideal as a dialectical one, De Sanctis could still embrace the Hegelian concept of “becoming” (“Werden”), regarding it as the force driving historical progress, and still uphold an ideal of “sublation” (“Aufhebung”) as a means to ensure the synthetic unity of reality.¹³¹ Thus imagined, the encounter of Vico and

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 756

¹³⁰ Hegel, G. W. F. (1820) *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, “Vorrede”, p. 24; Vico, G. (1710) *De antiquissima italorum sapientia*, p. 37

¹³¹ Hegel, G. W. F. (1816) *Wissenschaft der Logik*, pp. 83-113; Hegel, G. W. F. (1817) *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften im Grundrisse*, pp. 172-76; a good analysis of the notions of *Werden* and

Hegel operated by De Sanctis in his private school encapsulated a revision of the German philosopher's dialectics of Spirit in history, re-imagined within the framework of the Neapolitan thinker's historicism, and along the lines of the anti-metaphysical readings of German philosophy popularised both by his mentors Galluppi and Colecchi, as well as his contemporaries Gatti and Cusani.

As explained earlier, De Sanctis' articulation of a Vichian-Hegelian historicism was functional to the elaboration of his views on aesthetics and literary criticism. Upholding a very Hegelian definition of art, understood as "the harmony of Idea and Form", the historical dialectics of the real and the ideal were said to correspond to the interplay of the two.¹³² Artistic production was thus understood as a bi-directional process: the synthetic unity of "the rational developed within the real, the Idea embodied in form" and the elevation of the real to the ideal, via its liberation from any "transitory external fact".¹³³

In essence, De Sanctis' final lectures on literary genres promulgated an ideal of cultural production able to reflect universal historical dynamics, on the one hand, but deeply anchored to concrete, observable contexts, on the other: "Literature", he taught in the first lecture of the year 1845-46, "must be universal in the Idea, since this embraces the entirety of the universe, past and present altogether, but social or present in its form".¹³⁴ De Sanctis' lessons, in open contrast to Puoti's teaching and to the parochialism of public education channels, encouraged the study of literary forms' interconnectedness, rather than their perceived idiosyncrasies, stimulating a dialogue among Italian and foreign cultures, informed by the recognition of their common, universal nature. National literatures, he believed, deepened their roots in the same shared principles.¹³⁵ This was not mere conjecture on the part of De Sanctis. Rather, it was the logical implication of a complex philosophical speculation. As he put it at the end of his very last private lesson, it was impossible to conceive "a history of pleasant literary narrations separately from philosophy. It is impossible, nowadays, to separate these two things, which have come to be intrinsically connected".¹³⁶ Vico and Hegel would certainly have agreed.

Aufhebung in Hegel's thought can be found in: Kaufmann, W. A. (1965) *Hegel: Reinterpretation, Texts and Commentary*, p. 144

¹³² De Sanctis, F. (1917) *Lezioni sulla storia della critica dal 1839 al 1848*, p. 173

¹³³ *ibid.*, pp. 176, 172

¹³⁴ De Sanctis, F. (1926b) p. 24

¹³⁵ De Sanctis, F. (1975), II, pp. 540-41

¹³⁶ De Sanctis, F. (1917) *Lezioni di letteratura dal 1839 al 1848*, p. 365

3.5. Neapolitan Hegelianism beyond National Exceptionalism

Hegelianism's fortune in Naples during the first half of the nineteenth century owed much to complex dynamics of transnational exchanges. As chapter one of this thesis illustrated, it was thanks to the mediation of Victor Cousin that Hegel's ideas came to be discussed in the Southern capital. Additionally, endeavours to disaggregate Hegel's philosophy from Cousin's encouraged an understanding of the German thinker as a theorist of historical time and a proponent of an absolute ideal of history, which, according to his earliest commentators in Naples, demanded further clarification. At the same time, the ongoing re-discovery of Giambattista Vico's philosophy, primarily thanks to the contribution of Southern exiles who had fled Naples in the wake of the 1799 Revolution, further fuelled debates on history, its nature, mechanisms and civic uses, as illustrated in chapter two. Vincenzo Cuoco's problematisation of the tension between an "ideal eternal history" and the tangible, concrete experience of it, observed in the pages of *La scienza nuova*, provided early nineteenth-century critics with an image of Vico as the founder of a new historiographical method, yet unable to produce a convincing account of progress and of history's broader mechanisms.

Based on these premises, the current chapter sought to illustrate how Hegel and Vico's philosophies of history came to be amalgamated in Naples during the 1830s and '40s. Doing so required taking issue with some aspects of the current literature on Hegelianism's fortune in the Mezzogiorno. A compelling understanding of Naples' intellectual history during the nineteenth century cannot be separated from the examination of the often-neglected context of the capital's private schools, where the encounter of Vico and Hegel occurred. Plotted against their public counterparts' lack of engagement with foreign ideas, private initiatives were not only a more progressive and liberal alternative, but also the main bearers of a transnational sensibility ultimately enabling the dissemination of Hegel's ideas in Naples. This, in turn, is a particularly useful intuition in order to address another, rather problematic, historiographical verdict on the intellectual history of the Kingdom, often univocally denouncing the alleged intellectual immobility of the region on the basis of the perceived failures of the Bourbon administration's policies for what concerns public education.

Challenging such verdicts by underlining the centrality of private channels is not, however, important in an empirical sense only; rather, from a methodological point of view,

it helps avoiding what David Laven termed a “teleological trap”, namely the tendency to re-describe the history of the Risorgimento from the perspective of the Kingdom of Italy’s creation.¹³⁷ Such a stance encourages largely denigratory (mis)representations of the Bourbon monarchy, which a revisionist approach ought to examine instead “on its own terms, and for its own sake”.¹³⁸ In consequence, it is important to detect and address the ideological bias common to much of twentieth-century Risorgimento historiography, writing in an intellectual climate that created patriotic myths by shaping a markedly anti-Bourbon propaganda.

With regard to the dynamics of education in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, one-sided verdicts on the Neapolitan cultural landscape stemming from an overview of the problems within public education can therefore be perceived as myopic and methodologically inaccurate, as they do not place adequate emphasis on those initiatives developing independently from the crown’s administration and systematically neglect the extent to which the latter encouraged them. Looking at the Bourbons’ involvement in both public and private education, therefore, this chapter sought to partially challenge its often-invoked characterisation as repressive, suggesting that it was, instead, rather liberal and progressive, especially in light of the administration’s remarkably permissive attitude as regards to its efforts to promote private teaching.

These considerations were particularly important in order better to illustrate the competitive interplay of public and private schools, focusing in particular on how the latter actively encouraged the engagement with foreign ideas. More specifically, *apropos* of German philosophy, the private institutes run by Pasquale Galluppi and Ottavio Colecchi were credited for the amalgamation of Kant and Vico: Galluppi, on the one hand, used notions borrowed from Kant’s philosophy to address problems identified by contemporary commentators in the pages of *La scienza nuova*; Colecchi, on the other, deployed Vico’s ideas to amend some perceived contradictions characterising the German philosopher’s thought. The blueprint for the study of German philosophy elaborated by the two thus stood out thanks to its exquisite sensitivity, attempting to dissect the continuities between the local and foreign traditions of thought, rather than their idiosyncrasies.

¹³⁷ Laven, D. (2002), pp. 8-9; see also: Isabella, M. (2009) *Risorgimento in Exile. Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era*, p. 3

¹³⁸ Breuilly, J. (1994) *Labour and Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, p. 276

From a methodological point of view, Galluppi and Colecchi's contributions are significant for what concerns historians' approach to a transnational history of ideas: their Kantian tendencies, in fact, were not an end in themselves (pardon the pun), but were fully functional to both a revision of the German thinker's ideas, as well as the regeneration of the local tradition. Given the difficulties, lamented by contemporary historians, to fully disaggregate a transnational approach from a merely comparative one, which may ultimately "end up reiterating" categories of national exceptionalism, it seems evident that the study of an author's reception and, more importantly, revision – as it was the case for Galluppi and Colecchi's Kant – may well be crucial in avoiding the "pitfalls of reification" associated with intercultural exchanges.¹³⁹

Based on these premises, the final section of this chapter finally turned its attention to Hegel's amalgamation with Vico's historicism, encouraging historians to place adequate attention on commonly-neglected authors. Championing an anti-metaphysical attitude that well resonated both with Galluppi and Colecchi's approach to German philosophy and with early nineteenth-century perspectives on *La scienza nuova*, Stefano Cusani and Stanislao Gatti drew upon the ongoing debates on Vico and Hegel illustrated in the preceding chapters of this thesis, and ultimately concluded that Vichian historicism and Hegelian *Geschichtsphilosophie* ought to be merged. A historicist reduction of Hegel's account of history, then, was fully operated by Francesco De Sanctis' school, active between 1839 and 1848, by establishing a dialectical interplay between a Hegelian *Wirklich* and a Vichian *factum*. Thus imagined, De Sanctis' Vichian Hegelianism can, once again, draw attention, on the one hand, to the transnational sensibilities permeating Neapolitan intellectual history in the middle decades of the century, and rescue our understanding of it, on the other, from categories of national exceptionalism. Neapolitan Hegelianism was, indeed, a quintessentially European current of thought.

¹³⁹ MacDonald, S. (2013) *Transnational History: A Review of Past and Present Scholarship*; Iriye, A. (1989) *The Internationalisation of History*, p. 5; Tyrrell, I. (2009) *Reflections on the Transnational Turn in United States History. Theory and Practice*, p. 457; Bayly, C. et al. (2006) *AHR Conversation: On Transnational History*, p. 1452; Rusen, J. (1996) *Some Theoretical Approaches to Intercultural Comparative Historiography*, pp. 7-11

4. From Revolution to Unification: Neapolitan Hegelianism and Risorgimento

Political Thought

4.1. Introduction

Hegel's political philosophy, due to its "systematic ambitions and syncretic intentions", easily lends itself to conflicting interpretations, which, by stressing "one aspect of his system at the expense of another", regard his politics as either radical or reactionary.¹ As introduced in chapter one of this thesis, Hegel's death in 1831 marked the emergence of profound disagreements among his readers. Some of his students, known as "Right Hegelians" ("Rechtshegelians") saw his philosophy as a rationalisation of the Prussian Reform Movement and were sympathetic to the political tradition of the Prussian state. Believing that, thanks to its association of a people's ethical life with the constitutions of modern states, Hegelianism represented a "via media" between reactionaries' appeal to tradition and romantic revolutionaries' sentimental patriotic ideals, they praised the virtues of constitutional monarchy and reform directed from above.² In contrast to them, the "Left Hegelians" ("Linkshegelians"), disagreed with the claim that Hegel's dialectics of history had found its synthesis in contemporary Prussian society, pointing at the relative lack of political and religious freedoms in it.³

In 1840, the accession to the throne of Friederich Wilhelm IV, upon whom both Right and Left Hegelians, initially gathering around the journal *Hallischer Jahrbücher*, had placed their hopes of political reform, dealt a hard blow to the former's position and greatly radicalised the latter's. The new king thought of government from the standpoint of the old aristocratic estates, defended the divine right of kings and was very critical of contemporary debates on a new constitution. He also ostracised Hegel's ideas: via censorship, he forced the *Hallischer Jahrbücher* to relocate outside Prussia, while the newly appointed Minister of

¹ Beiser, F. (2011) *Hegel and Hegelianism*, p. 111

² Beiser, F. (2011), p. 141; McLellan, D. (1969) *The Young Hegelians and Karl Marx*, pp. 15-16, 22-25; Toews, J. E. (1980) *Hegelianism: The Path Towards Dialectical Humanism, 1805-1841*, pp. 232-34

³ Stedman Jones, G. (2011) *The Young Hegelians, Marx and Engels*, pp. 556-66

Culture summoned Schelling to Berlin in order to pursue a conservative intellectual agenda, and contrast “the dragon seed of Hegelianism, the flat arrogance of know-alls and the dissolution by law of domestic discipline”.⁴ These events, according to Left Hegelians, contradicted Hegel’s fundamental assumptions that Reason is inherent in history and that this teleologically realises freedom. His philosophical system therefore required a profound rethinking.

The split between these diverging interpretations of Hegel’s views on history and politics reverberated in scholarly debates. Ever since the initial publication of the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* in 1820, where the German thinker’s political vision was most clearly outlined, commentators have been passionately questioning the extent to which this work served as a philosophical backbone to the spread of European liberalism.⁵ Studies have been divided into two camps: in one camp were those who, following a tradition initiated by Rudolf Haym’s 1857 text *Hegel und seine Zeit*, read Hegel’s political philosophy placing particular emphasis on his defence of a strong Prussian state. This perspective would then be understood as anti-liberal.⁶ In the other were those identifying, in the pages of the *Grundlinien*, the presence of communitarian elements, such as participation and representation, consequently arguing that Hegel’s political thought ought to be understood as a theorisation of the modern, liberal constitutional state.⁷

There is little doubt that a conclusive verdict on the ideological continuity between Hegelianism and liberalism – or lack thereof – is yet to be provided. The lack of such a framework of reference complicates the analysis of the political implications of Hegel’s reception by problematising the extent to which his ideas allegedly came to be deployed in support of certain emerging political sensitivities and in contexts marked by important political changes. Neapolitan Hegelians’ contribution to debates concerned with the Revolutions of 1848 and the broader narrative of the Italian Unification remains, even today,

⁴ Beiser, F. (2011), pp. 144-45

⁵ For an overview of these debates, see: Beiser, F. (2002) *Hegel*, pp. 195-223; Horstmann, R. (2004) *The Role of Civil Society in Hegel’s Political Philosophy*, pp. 208-38

⁶ Haym, R. (1857) *Hegel und seine Zeit*, pp. 357-91; see also: Popper, K. (1962) *The Open Society and its Enemies*, II, ch. 12; Smith, S. (1989) *Hegel’s Critique of Liberalism*, p. 4; Wood, A. (1990) *Hegel’s Ethical Thought*, p. xi

⁷ Avineri, S. (1972) *Hegel’s Theory of the Modern State*; Bosanquet, B. (1951) *The Philosophical Theory of the State*, pp. 229-74; d’Hondt, J. (1968) *Hegel et son temps: Berlin, 1818-31*; Ritter, J. (1982) *Hegel and the French Revolution*; Smith, S. (1989) *Hegel’s Critique of Liberalism: Rights in Context*; Stewart, J. (1996) *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, pp. 10-11, 53-130

largely uncharted territory for historians whose work concentrates on the political history of the Risorgimento.⁸

Imbalances in the discussion of Neapolitan Hegelians' relationship to political debates taking place during the Risorgimento can frequently be encountered in studies focusing more closely on southern thinkers' use of Hegelian ideas, systematically adopting their writings as a means to provide a philosophical justification – and a historical antecedent – to later political experiences and ideological beliefs.⁹ The two best-known commentators on the period, for instance, Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, provided an analysis of Neapolitan Hegelians' political views marked by a strongly teleological inclination and a visible ideological bias. Croce concentrated on Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa's alleged use of Hegelianism as the philosophical backbone of Piedmontese liberalism, in direct connection with the experience of the moderate Right in the years following the Unification. His understanding of Hegel's Italian reception was part of his broader verdict on the Risorgimento, seen as the process by which the "conception, development and perfecting of liberty" theorised by the German philosopher had come to be translated into active political life after 1861.¹⁰

Gentile, too, exhibited a teleological approach similar to Croce's, as he concentrated on the presence of an elements in Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa's writings that stood opposite to a liberal dimension of politics. However, Gentile did more than merely contesting the relationship between Neapolitan Hegelianism and the Piedmontese liberal government: he drew a connection between nineteenth-century anti-liberal critiques and the experience of fascism during the twentieth.¹¹ In contrast, the often-cited works by Sergio Landucci,

⁸ See, for example: Banti, A. M. (2004) *Risorgimento italiano*; Duggan, C. (2007) *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796*; Patriarca, S. (2010) *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*; Riall, L. (1994) *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification*

⁹ Bellamy, R. (2013) *Croce, Gramsci, Bobbio and the Italian Political Tradition*, p. 114

¹⁰ Croce, B. (1949) *Parità degli uomini nella libertà*, p. 74; see also: Croce, B. (1898) *Silvio Spaventa. Dal 1848 al 1861. Lettere, scritti, documenti*; Croce, B. (1907) *Ciò che è vivo e ciò che è morto della filosofia di Hegel*; Croce, B. (1913) *Saggio sullo Hegel*; Croce, B. (1921) *Storia della storiografia italiana nel secolo decimonono*; Croce, B. (1927) *Storia d'Italia dal 1871 al 1915*, p. 68; Croce, B. (1949) *Una pagina sconosciuta degli ultimi mesi della vita di Hegel*

¹¹ Gentile, G. (1931) *Risorgimento e fascismo*, p. 964; Gentile, G. (1925) *Che cosa è il fascismo*, pp. 33-35; see also: Gentile, G. (1912a) *La filosofia in Italia dopo il 1850. Gli hegeliani. I. Introduzione*, pp. 24-40; Gentile, G. (1912b) *La filosofia in Italia dopo il 1850. Gli hegeliani. II. I primordii dell'hegelismo in Italia*, pp. 103-25, 183-95, 264-80; Gentile, G. (1912c) *La filosofia in Italia dopo il 1850. Gli hegeliani. III. Augusto Vera*, pp. 335-56, 431-48; Gentile, G. (1924) *Francesco Fiorentino: Lo stato moderno e le polemiche liberali*, pp. 14ff.; Gentile, G. (1927) *Guerra e fede*, p. 63; see also: Gentile, G. (1935) *Storia della filosofia Italiana. Dal Genovesi al Galluppi*

Domenico Losurdo and Giuseppe Vacca, concentrated on Bertrando Spaventa's Hegelianism via the analysis of his relationship to Antonio Labriola and Antonio Gramsci's Marxism, thus failing to place adequate attention on Spaventa's involvement in political experiences taking place before the Unification.¹²

Little attention, therefore, has traditionally been paid to Neapolitan Hegelians' contribution to political debates taking place *during* the Risorgimento. This chapter aims to fill this historiographical *lacuna* by investigating the progressive politicisation of Hegelianism in Naples, as well as its relationship to broader debates on the revolutionary experiences of 1848 and the peninsula's Unification, placing particular attention on its relationship with the moderate liberal politics of the Piedmontese government.

Section two of the chapter will explore how Hegel's thought was deployed by Neapolitan intellectuals as a means of providing a philosophical rationale for their involvement in the Revolution of 1848, viewed as a historically necessary step in the realisation of a Hegelian notion of freedom.¹³ It will be argued that Southern thinkers' contributions cannot be separated from the articulation of a historical memory teleologically connecting the failure of the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution to the events of 1848. Further, special attention will be placed on newspaper sources, particularly the short-lived periodical *Il Nazionale*. This paper represented Neapolitan Hegelians' platform of choice to comment on current political issues. More importantly, their views relied on a conceptual lexicon stemming from the ongoing encounter between Hegel's philosophy of history and historicist motifs borrowed from the Neapolitan Enlightenment, filtered through the lens of early nineteenth-century debates.

Just as the previous chapters of this thesis described local Hegelianism as revolving around the amalgamation of an absolute notion of historical development, and the observation of history's most concrete and tangible dynamics, this section will claim that, while the *rationality* and *necessity* of the Revolution were invoked from the standpoint of Hegel's philosophy of history, it was thanks to Vincenzo Cuoco and Pietro Colletta's verdicts

¹² Landucci, S. (1963) *Il giovane Spaventa tra hegelismo e socialismo*, pp. 647-707; Losurdo, D. (1997) *Dai fratelli Spaventa a Gramsci. Per una storia politico-sociale della fortuna di Hegel in Italia*; Vacca, G. (1967) *Politica e filosofia in Bertrando Spaventa*; see also: Labriola, A. (3.4.1890) *Lettera a Friedrich Engels*, p. 287; Gramsci, A. (1916) *La consolata e i cattolici*, p. 392

¹³ On the connection between Hegelianism and the 1848 Revolutions in Europe, see: Moggach, D. & Stedman Jones, G. (2018) *Introduction*, pp. 1-13; Moggach, D. (2018) *German Republicans and Socialists in the Prelude to 1848*, pp. 216-35

on 1799 that Southern intellectuals veered toward a position roughly identifiable with a democratic constitutionalism reminiscent of the Jacobin ideas of the Neapolitan Revolution.¹⁴ Moreover, as a consequence of their reading of Cuoco and Colletta, the idea of *nationality* quickly imposed itself at the forefront of Southern Hegelians' philosophical orientation and political allegiances. The implications of this were far-reaching, primarily because they already hinted at a certain ideological continuity between the local dimension of the Revolution and the broader cause of the peninsula's emancipation. According to *Il Nazionale's* anonymous and notoriously anti-Bourbon articles, the ultimate goal of the Revolution was the establishment of a fully-fledged *national state*, whose realisation was said inevitably to depend on the complete emancipation from foreign influences and Piedmontese leadership. This put the periodical's politics at odds with mentalities prevailing elsewhere in the Kingdom, such as in Sicily, where revolutionaries were far more sympathetic to a federalist programme.¹⁵ Investigating Neapolitan Hegelians' involvement in the events of 1848 in Naples, therefore, becomes synonymous with the analysis of the ways in which they imagined a unified Italy, the organisation of the Italian state and the functions of its institutions.

The defeat of 1848 revolutionary enthusiasms marked the formal dissolution of *Il Nazionale* and the diaspora of those intellectuals who had contributed to it: Silvio Spaventa was imprisoned in 1849 and his brother Bertrando fled to Florence and then to Turin. Yet, by the dawn of the new decade, not only was their support for the cause of the Unification still strong, but their belief in Piedmont's role in spearheading this process would present itself with even greater force. Section three of this chapter will examine how Silvio and Bertrando, undoubtedly the most prolific representatives of the Neapolitan Hegelian school, imagined, following the defeat of the 1848 Revolution, the political configuration of a unified Italy.

More specifically, section three will begin by focusing on Silvio Spaventa's prison writings, regarded by later commentators as the earliest examples of the moderate liberal politics he embraced during his parliamentary activity between 1861 and 1889. It will address

¹⁴ It is important to note that Neapolitan Jacobins were different from their French counterparts of the 1790s. While both groups passionately invoked republican values, Neapolitan patriots were very critical of how the French Jacobin experience had led to the infamous terror. Vincenzo Cuoco, for example, identified a paradox inherent to Jacobin involvement in the French revolution, as these revolutionaries would "displace liberty as they seek to establish it" (Cuoco, V. (1801) *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione napoletana del 1799*, p. 104). More specifically, he denounced how French Jacobins' attempts to promote democratic and republican values via unrestrained violence and terror had led exclusively to despotism and tyranny. (ibid., p. 103)

¹⁵ Körner, A. (2017) *America in Italy. The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763-1865*, pp. 146-60

a particularly intricate historiographical debate concerned with the identification of the philosophical and ideological continuity between Silvio's Hegelianism and the liberal politics he began articulating during the 1850s. Carlo Ghisalberti's proposition that, during Silvio's prison years, "Hegel became liberal" served to support verdicts emphasising his use of the German thinker's ideas in support of Piedmontese liberalism and, as a result, later historians contributed to piecing together an image of Silvio as a theorist of a liberal Hegelian *Rechtsstaat*.¹⁶ Furthermore, Silvio's liberalism of the 1850s was undoubtedly consistent with the fundamental principles of Cavourian politics and Cesare Balbo's reflections on liberty. Yet, contrary to these views, this chapter will argue that while the definition of Silvio as a liberal is accurate, his characterisation as a *Hegelian* thinker after 1848 is probably misleading. Doing so challenges the historiographical tradition initiated by Croce, who regarded the advocacy of liberal politics as an important aspect of Neapolitan Hegelians' contribution. Reflecting on Silvio's manuscripts from prison, as well as his correspondence, this section will argue that the notions of liberty, its political implications, as well as the very concept of State embraced by Silvio Spaventa in the 1850s, were fundamentally different not only from Hegel's, but also the principles of democratic constitutionalism championed, in a very Hegelian fashion, by *Il Nazionale* in Naples in 1848.

Such a revision of Silvio Spaventa's political thought, currently regarded by many as crucial in the identification of the liberal state's character, and just as important for what concerns the fortune, in a philosophical sense, of Hegel's ideas during the nineteenth century, inevitably complicates to a significant extent the identification of Neapolitan Hegelianism's role in the context of Risorgimento political thought. If, however, Silvio's contribution further problematises, rather than illuminates, the relationship between Hegelianism and Risorgimento political thought, the same cannot be said about his brother Bertrando's, as identified in the last section of this chapter. Once settled in Turin, in fact, the older of the Spaventas began a prolific career as a journalist, which he adopted as a means to provide sharp commentaries on contemporary political events and debates. One of these, concerned with the problem of freedom of teaching, enabled him to launch a passionate critique of the liberal principles informing the Piedmontese moderates' position.

¹⁶ Ghisalberti, C. (1991) *Silvio Spaventa e Hegel: unità nazionale e stato*, p. 9

In fact, Bertrando's writings on freedom of teaching published during 1850s revealed not only a significant degree of similarity with *Il Nazionale's* advocacy of democratic constitutionalism in 1848, but were also supported by a philosophical reasoning whose overtones were unmistakably Hegelian. Plotting the notion of liberty outlined in the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, as well as that illustrated in the *Rechtssphilosophie*, against the ideal of freedom invoked by Cavour and Balbo in parliamentary debates, Bertrando succeeded in advancing a particular vision of the State, along the line of the Hegelian *ethical state*: this, consistent with *Il Nazionale's* orientation, was not only based on the principle of nationality, but was also an active catalyst in the political and social emancipation of Italy.

While these observations should contribute to a precise characterisation of Neapolitan Hegelianism's political ramifications, they also allow for the re-definition of its relationship to moderate Piedmontese liberalism. Contrary to verdicts emphasising its ideological connection with the experience of Cavourian politics before 1861 and of the *Destra storica* after that year, this chapter will maintain that the Piedmontese government and Bertrando, a thinker whose orientation was unquestionably much more Hegelian than his brother's, articulated two radically different conceptions of politics: the one claiming that the size of the State had to be *limited* in order for *individual* liberty to flourish; the other positing that the extent of state intervention had to be *maximised* in order for *collective* freedom to fully triumph.

4.2. From 1799 to 1848: The Historical Memory of the Revolution and Il Nazionale

In 1899, exactly one century after the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799, Benedetto Croce published a volume entitled *La rivoluzione napoletana del 1799*, in which he aimed at rehabilitating the Southern patriots who had taken part in the revolutionary activities, and at denouncing the efforts by the Bourbon monarchy to suppress the historical memory of those events. Croce's tone was undoubtedly sympathetic with the principles and the protagonists of the Revolution and very harsh as to the extent of the counter-revolutionary measures

undertaken by the crown, ultimately drawing attention to the widespread opinion that “the condemnation of the Bourbons’ reaction to the events of 1799 is one of the fiercest moral condemnations that history has ever advanced”.¹⁷ Croce’s verdict was later endorsed by Giovanni Gentile, who, in 1911, emphasised how the experience of the Neapolitan Republic, despite the repression of its historical memory by the Bourbons during the Risorgimento – and further promoted by the Savoy after 1861, played a central role in the earliest debates about the national unity of Italy.¹⁸

Later historians agreed with these views, generally regarding the revolutionary turmoil of 1799 as conducive to the emergence of Italian nationalism: the “tragedy of 1799”, according to Antonino De Francesco, “made an indelible mark on the political experience of Italian patriotism”.¹⁹ John Davis claimed that, during the Risorgimento, “the events of 1799 were brilliantly transformed into one of the great founding myths of the new Italian nation”.²⁰ Similarly, Rocco Rubini pointed out how the failure of the Neapolitan Republic “became a storehouse from which a significant number of Risorgimento thinkers drew as they attempted to articulate, relentlessly, the outlines of the Italian man and his nation”.²¹ While there is little doubt, then, as regards the importance of the experience of the 1799 Revolution for what concerns later instances of Italian patriotism and nationalism, the contribution of Neapolitan Hegelians in articulating a historical memory able to dialectically connect past revolutionary experiences and the future cultural and political configuration of a unified Italy remains largely underrepresented, especially in anglophone scholarship.²²

It must be conceded that for the Hegelian youth of Naples, whose cultural and political outlook was significantly affected by the Bourbon’s prevention and repression of revolutionary activities, engaging with the historical memory of 1799 was no easy task. In a cultural climate characterised by hostility towards foreign ideas in the public sphere, coupled with the downright condemnation of the experience of the Neapolitan Republic, the only reliable testimonies were those provided by two of the most notable protagonists of 1799, forced into exile by the Bourbon counter-revolutionary initiatives: Vincenzo Cuoco, whose

¹⁷ Croce, B. (1899) *La rivoluzione napoletana del 1799*, p. xiv

¹⁸ Gentile, G. (1911) *La révolution française et les lettres italiennes, 1789-1815*, pp. 454-56

¹⁹ De Francesco, A. (2013) *The Antiquity of the Italian Nation*, p. 3

²⁰ Davis, J. (2006) *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions, 1780-1860*, p. 94

²¹ Rubini, R. (2014) *The Other Renaissance: Italian Humanism Between Hegel and Heidegger*, p. 47

²² see n. 8

popularity among Neapolitan Hegelians was already introduced in chapters two and three, and Pietro Colletta. On the eve of the 1848 Revolution, it was to the former's *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione napoletana del 1799* and to the latter's *Storia del reame di Napoli* that local intellectuals turned their attention.

Cuoco and Colletta found themselves in agreement regarding several aspects of the perceived defeat of 1799. In particular, Cuoco's *Essay* brought forward a view on 1799 as a *passive revolution*.²³ A prominent Jacobin and greatly indebted to the tradition of Neapolitan Enlightenment, Cuoco was convinced that political revolutions could not possibly succeed unless backed by a systematic process of cultural and social regeneration of the contexts in which they occur. These views, to a large extent, gained traction in 1848 thanks to the actual aims of the *Saggio storico*: Cuoco's intention, in fact, was to "write the history of a revolution which intended to bring about the happiness of a nation, but in fact caused its ruin". This hinted at the possibility of reading his book both as a commentary on the events of 1799, and as a set of recommendations useful for the success of future revolutions.²⁴

Put simply, the failure of 1799, according to the Neapolitan émigré, had been caused not only by time constraints or the republican government's failure to implement valid policies providing stability and cohesiveness, but also by the inability of the revolution itself to overcome factionalism and inner divisions among the local population, a concern that ought to be at the forefront of any future revolutionary agenda. In his analysis, Cuoco targeted two groups with particular force: the leaders of the Republic, and the self-proclaimed "republican patriots". While republicanism was generally associated with the distortion of patriotic ideals, the architects of the Neapolitan Republic were accused of failing to implement policies truly reflecting the will of the people, especially with regard to land reform, taxation and the abolition of feudal privileges.²⁵ Despite the fact that "the abolition of feudalism reflected the nation's general preference", "widespread feudal practices still relied on a large number of advocates", ultimately stalling the discussion of a new law marking

²³ Antonio Gramsci famously adopted Cuoco's notion of "passive revolution" as an analytical concept able to describe political change: in particular, he referred to the emergence of a bourgeois class in the Italian peninsula as a "passive" process, unaided by a revolutionary process, as opposed to the example of France, where the bourgeoisie came to the fore of the nation's political life via direct revolutionary action. (Gramsci, A. (1977) *Quaderni dal carcere*, I, §44, p. 41, VIII, §25, p. 957)

²⁴ Haddock, B. & Sabetti, F. (2014) *Introduction: Vincenzo Cuoco and the Nature of Revolution and Constitutionalism*, pp. xxii-xxiii

²⁵ Cuoco, V. (1801), p. 48

their full eradication and greatly antagonising the population.²⁶ As a result, “the fear of alienating ten thousand powerful individuals made the French and the Republic miss the occasion of capturing the favour of five million souls”.²⁷

Cuoco’s definition of the Neapolitan Revolution as a passive one, however, was not exclusively linked to a socio-economic discourse. Even harsher was his condemnation of those patriots who had blindly appropriated “foreign models”, championing a cultural inclination “different to that which the entire nation was in need of”, a topic that, as chapter five of this thesis will explain, would then become a major point of debate among nineteenth-century Italian intellectuals, especially Neapolitan Hegelians.²⁸ Cuoco expressed his distaste for the unconditional application of French Jacobin ideas, which, instead, required being adapted to better suit the socio-economic and cultural conditions of Naples:

The ideas of Naples’ revolution may have been very popular, if they had been derived from the actual spirit of the nation. As they were derived from a foreign constitution, however, they were exceptionally far from our own; they were based on very abstract principles, very far from our senses and, even more importantly, many more things came together with them and imposed themselves as laws: all sorts of customs, whims and often flaws belonging to another people, extremely far from our own faults, our whims and our traditions.²⁹

It was due to the combination of policy mismanagement and the unchecked adoption of foreign ideas that the Revolution had been a *passive* one, deemed to fail as not based on legitimate national sovereignty and the true will of the people:

If the republic had ever been created by ourselves, if the constitution, informed and directed by eternal principles of justice, had been based on the needs and customs of the people; if the authorities, which the people regarded as legitimate and national, rather than speaking with them in an abstruse language that they would not understand, had provided real goods and freed the people from those ills they were suffering from [...], we would not be mourning now, as we witness the wretched remains of a desolate homeland and worthy of a better fate [...]. Our revolution, because it was a passive revolution, in order to be a successful one, should have aimed at obtaining the people’s general sympathy and opinion. Yet, patriots’ views were not aligned with those of the people: they had different ideas, different customs and even two different languages.³⁰

Similar views were expressed by Pietro Colletta, too, who had taken up arms under the Neapolitan Republic. Despite his support for the republican government and his

²⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 122, 133

²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 134

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 97

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 89

³⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 93-97

sympathies for the Jacobin ideals of liberty and equality characterising the spirit of 1799, his support for the revolutionary initiatives was much more moderate than Cuoco's. Central to his position was the acknowledgment of the inherent ideological weakness of the local revolutionary movement, whose shortcomings appeared evident if plotted against the experience of the French Revolution, by which Neapolitan patriots were inspired. Commenting on the arrival of the general Jean Étienne Championnet in the Southern capital, Colletta recounted how the "political freedom" championed by the revolutionaries was transformed, in Naples, into a "ideal philosophy that remained unapplied to society", being essentially incompatible with the socio-economic texture of the Mezzogiorno.³¹ As a result, he argued, "the greatest achievements of the French revolution, liberty and equality, were neither valuable for our people, nor contemplated by them".³²

This inevitably resulted in an extremely unstable constitution: unable to find its legitimacy in popular sovereignty, this was overly concerned with "a balance of abstract powers that left little room for the balance of concrete forces, namely those elements representing the true strength of a free state: people's customs, opinions and virtues".³³ Colletta's verdict, in this sense, closely resembled Cuoco's. Unsurprisingly, just like the latter had defined the 1799 Revolution a passive one, Colletta famously stated that while French revolutionaries had "engineered and operated their upheaval", Naples "had suffered it".³⁴ Thus imagined, the historical memory of the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799, as seen through the eyes of some of its protagonists, had dramatically unveiled the need to tailor any revolutionary experience and constitutional effort on the basis of a precise characterisation of the socio-political context in which it took place, in order to ensure the popular legitimacy of political organisation, on the one hand, and the stability of the new government, on the other. For Neapolitan Hegelians, who reasoned from the standpoint of the composite, Hegelian and Vichian philosophical outlook illustrated in the preceding chapters of this thesis, these observations highlighted the need to view experiences of political change from a perspective able to amalgamate the absolute rationality of history theorised by Hegel with

³¹ Colletta, P. (1834) *Storia del reame di Napoli dal 1734 sino al 1825*, I, p. 200

³² *ibid.*, p. 201

³³ *ibid.*, p. 208

³⁴ *ibid.*, p. 201

the principle of *popular sovereignty*, seen as the main pre-condition for political emancipation and development.

Cuoco and Colletta's verdicts therefore provided arguments that resonated with Neapolitan Hegelians' Vichian inclinations. Their legacy in Italian cultural and political debates during the first half of the nineteenth century was indeed remarkable, with their being views systematically reprised by commentators in various other parts of the peninsula.³⁵ In Lombardy, for instance, Alessandro Manzoni incorporated Cuoco's observations on popular sovereignty and national cohesion in the broader picture of his liberal revision of revolutionary democratism.³⁶ Giandomenico Romagnosi, echoing Cuoco's denunciation of the lack of popular participation in the Neapolitan Republic's politics, embraced the ideal of a constitution understood as a covenant between the people and the sovereign, leading to the establishment of a fully-fledged national state in the 1815 volume *Della costituzione di una monarchia nazionale rappresentativa*.³⁷ More importantly, Cuoco's views were reprised by both by progressive and conservative voices: Giuseppe Mazzini, in his manuscript *Sulla rivoluzione napoletana del 1799*, fully endorsed the Southern thinker's condemnation of the revolutionaries' appropriation of French ideals and understood the struggle of the Neapolitan *lazzaroni* and the Calabrian *sanfedisti* as a popular, patriotic, insurrection informed by the hatred of foreigners, consequently suggesting that the events of 1799 could conveniently be interpreted as a national uprising.³⁸ At the same time, the conservative Piedmontese Carlo Botta echoed Cuoco's verdict on the failure of the Republic, coming to argue, in his *Storia d'Italia*, that any endeavour to introduce French ideals of liberty in Italy were inevitably destined to fail.³⁹ In a similar manner, Botta encouraged local patriots not to look up to the the American Revolution, or political reforms undertaken overseas, as a model to import in order to further the cause of Italian emancipation.⁴⁰

³⁵ Isabella, M. (2009) *Risorgimento in Exile. Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era*, p. 10; see also: De Francesco, A. (2006) *Costruire la nazione: il dibattito politico negli anni della repubblica*, pp. 611-27

³⁶ Piovani, P. (1981) *Manzoni e Napoli*, p. 31

³⁷ Romagnosi, G. (1815) *Della costituzione di una monarchia nazionale rappresentativa*, pp. 14-15

³⁸ Mazzini, G. (1846) *Riflessioni sulla rivoluzione napoletana del 1799*, pp. 146-81; see also: Mazzini, G. (28.7.1841) *Alla madre a Genova*, pp. 259-60; Mazzini, G. (1854) *Il sud d'Italia rispetto alla causa nazionale*, p. 245; Mazzini, G. (21.10.1857) *To Emile A. Hawkes, Newcastle*, p. 341

³⁹ Botta, C. (1824) *Storia d'Italia dal 1789 al 1814*, IV, pp. 501-2

⁴⁰ Botta, C. (1840) *History of the American War of Independence*, I, pp. 20, 25; II, p. 561; see also: Körner, A. (2017), pp. 42-66

With the memory of 1799 – and of its failure – constituting the historical backbone of early nineteenth-century democratic sensibilities, and an important element in the emerging debates on the consolidation of Italy’s national character *vis-à-vis* its foreign counterparts, it is no surprise that, on the eve of the 1848 Revolutions, Neapolitan Hegelians were widely engaging with Cuoco and Colletta’s texts. The latter’s book, in particular, appeared in Naples in a very timely manner: originally published in the Swiss town of Capolago in 1834, it was printed again in the Southern capital in 1848 and served, according to Croce, “to instruct and ignite the new generations”, as it “presented the protagonists of 1848 the ideas and the examples of 1799 and 1821”.⁴¹ Neapolitan revolutionaries’ approach to their predecessors’ works, however, was not driven by general ideological or philosophical concerns. What the young Southern thinkers sought to derive from these volumes was, in fact, not only a set of principles able to inform their own revolutionary commitment; rather, they examined these verdicts on the Neapolitan Republic with the hope of also finding a precise analysis of the problems that had ultimately led to its failure, thus attempting not to replicate them in 1848. Connecting the historical memory of 1799 to the experience of 1848, in this sense, was extremely important in order to secure the latter’s success.

Central to this operation, which also reflected the increasingly politicised tendencies of the Hegelian generation in the Southern capital, was the contribution of Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa. Born five years apart in the Abruzzo town of Bomba, the two moved to Naples in 1843, where they followed Ottavio Colecchi’s private lectures on European philosophy and became very close to Francesco De Sanctis, Luigi Settembrini, Stanislao Gatti, Stefano Cusani, Camillo De Meis, and the rest of Hegel’s local followers. The concession of a constitution in February 1848 by the king significantly fuelled their political sentiments and the Spaventas began voicing, in the pages of *Il Nazionale*, their anti-Bourbon, pro-unification sentiments.⁴²

Even though it dealt with a wide range of political and cultural issues, this paper mainly concentrated on the theme of revolution. This is because Silvio and Bertrando Spaventa admittedly founded *Il Nazionale* on March 1, 1848, to educate the public opinion to the revolutionary agenda.⁴³ Unsurprisingly, the periodical frequently published articles written by

⁴¹ Croce, B. (1925b) *Storia del Regno di Napoli*, p. 224; see also: Croce, B. (1921) *Storia della storiografia italiana nel secolo decimonono*, I, p. 84

⁴² Croce, E. (1949) *Silvio Spaventa*, p. 43

⁴³ Alatri, P. (1942) *Silvio Spaventa. Biografia Politica*, pp. 11-16

Naples' most prominent anti-Bourbon patriots and intellectuals, who greatly contributed to advancing the cause of 1848, such as Luigi Settembrini, Angelo Camillo De Meis, and Luigi La Vista. As indicated by Giuseppe Vacca – and as confirmed by the correspondence between the Spaventas –, however, the vast majority of the content published was written by either Silvio or Bertrando.⁴⁴ The two brothers' centrality in leading the journal exemplified their prominence among Neapolitan Hegelians and consequently established them as the most prolific writers in their milieu.⁴⁵ This was the case with regard to not only advancing their philosophical viewpoints, but also employing them in support of the revolutionary cause. It is for these reasons that the present chapter will almost exclusively concentrate on Silvio and Bertrando Spaventa's ideas.

The life of *Il Nazionale* was short and tumultuous. The publication of its articles, appearing, with no exception, anonymously, was repeatedly halted.⁴⁶ This occurred in 1848 between May 23 and June 21, except for a single issue published on June 5, and between July 2 and 14, due to the "usual abuses by the police", as reported in its last issue, the 66th, appearing on July 17.⁴⁷

At the core of *Il Nazionale's* advocacy of the revolution lay a message that well resonated with Cuoco's analysis of 1799. The very first article of the periodical clearly identified its ideological inclinations:

Il Nazionale is created by us for the chief purpose of encouraging and promoting Italian nationality on the basis of independence, which ought to free all peoples of the peninsula from foreign influences, as well as a means to promote a representative system able to ensure their freedom and unite them in a political entity under the legal hegemony of the public opinion's spiritual force.⁴⁸

And also:

The people's sovereignty is our most fundamental maxim, yet we believe, at the same time, that delegated powers ought to be freely executed in order for them to be strong, and that

⁴⁴ Vacca, G. (1967), pp. 16-17

⁴⁵ By 1848, only the Spaventas were able to maintain a consistent written output and ongoing philosophical speculation: Pasquale Galluppi and Stefano Cusani, in fact, had died in 1846 and Ottavio Colecchi in 1847. In the same year, Stanislao Gatti interrupted his philosophical writing to concentrate on managing his periodical *Museo di Letteratura e Filosofia*; Francesco De Sanctis, instead, would not write anything before his exile in November 1848.

⁴⁶ Because *Il Nazionale's* articles were published anonymously, they will be referenced, from now on, simply as "Il Nazionale (date of publication) Title, Issue, page number"

⁴⁷ Il Nazionale (17.7.1848) *Napoli*, 15 *Luglio 1848*, LXVI, p. 1

⁴⁸ Il Nazionale (1.3.1848) *Programma*, I, p. 1

their use ought not to be limited by any force other than the Law and public opinion, as formulated by its legitimate platforms: free press and free association.⁴⁹

The consolidation of a national identity via independence from foreign influences, coupled with a form of political organisation based on popular participation and direct representation: what, according to Cuoco, the revolutionaries of 1799 had failed to realise was evidently at the forefront of *Il Nazionale's* concerns in 1848.

These observations are crucial in identifying the origin of the political language employed by the revolutionary periodical. The concept of “popular sovereignty”, as explained earlier, was directly shaped by the historical memory of 1799 conveyed by Cuoco and Colletta, who had warned that any form of political change should not be arbitrarily imposed from above, but be truly consistent with the people’s will and socio-economic conditions. Ongoing debates on the Kingdom’s constitution presented *Il Nazionale* with the possibility to plot these viewpoints against the context of 1848. It should not be a surprise, in this sense, that on May 2, less than two weeks before king Ferdinand was supposed to swear his allegiance to the constitution promulgated on February 11, the periodical spoke very harshly of the latter, accusing it of being at odds with Neapolitans’ true inclinations.⁵⁰ Thus imagined, therefore, *Il Nazionale's* advocacy of popular sovereignty had to do with unpholding a specific concept of constitution, understood not as a “concession” on part of the crown, but a genuine reflection of people’s will, aided by a system of direct representation.

At the same time, viewing the periodical’s contribution through the sole lens of nineteenth-century debates on revolution and constitutionalism is, in itself, an oversimplification of the philosophical agenda its writers advocated. More specifically, the ongoing reception of Hegel’s philosophy of history and its systematic amalgamation with Vichian historicism, as illustrated in the previous chapters of this thesis, had a profound impact on how *Il Nazionale* imagined not only the political value of 1848 in the context of Italy’s emancipation, but also – and more importantly – its *historical* significance. Croce’s famous statement that the Neapolitan journal succeeded in establishing a link between the local revolutionary activities and “the Italian question” via its observations on “the war of

⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 4

⁵⁰ *Il Nazionale* (2.5.1848) *La necessità della rivoluzione*, XLVIII, p. 5

independence” reflected Southern intellectuals’ efforts to advocate the inseparability of the Italian question and the political emancipation of the Mezzogiorno.⁵¹

Following the withdrawal of Neapolitan troops from Lombardy and the suppression of the revolts in the Southern capital, coupled with the dissolution of the local parliament, the journal’s writers, such as its founders Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa, and the patriots Angelo Camillo De Meis, Luigi Settembrini, Alessandro Poerio, Nicola Nisco and Diomedede Marvasi, proceeded to rethink the coordinates and the goals of the revolution, by fully slotting it within the broader picture of the Italian national struggle. One can observe, in this sense, a number of shifts in the perceived political dimension of the Revolution. In the first article, in fact, the writers of *Il Nazionale* declared themselves “undefeated proponents of municipal liberties”.⁵² Later on, instead, given “the actual impossibility of enacting our Revolution within the mere narrow limits of our Neapolitan land”, they acknowledged “the need for a broader State, which, however, is not represented by any of the currently existing governments”.⁵³

The reasons for this shift can be found in the context surrounding the journal’s activities, which urged its writers to translate their commitment to the local revolutionary cause into passionate advocacy of an Italian national state. This eventually took on the form of vocal support for the Piedmontese monarchy’s efforts in the independence war. In response to the battle of Goito on May 30, 1848, in which the Piedmontese troops defeated those of the Austrian Empire led by field marshal Radetzky, *Il Nazionale* proclaimed that Carlo Alberto’s operations were realising “the final and complete liberation of our peninsula from foreign forces”.⁵⁴ This, if seen in the context of the history of the Risorgimento, was a rather striking position, since the support for Piedmontese hegemony in the process of Italian emancipation was not shared by the majority of Italian patriots, who were growing increasingly wary of Piedmont’s anti-liberal past and desire to dominate.⁵⁵ Moreover, *Il Nazionale*’s position was also a rather unorthodox one in the Neapolitan context, where, in addition to Mazzinian republicanism and democratic constitutionalism, Gioberti’s federalism had been exceptionally well received, especially in the wake of the election of pope Pius IX,

⁵¹ Croce, B. (1898) *Silvio Spaventa. Dal 1848 al 1861. Lettere, scritti, documenti*, p. 22

⁵² *Il Nazionale* (1.3.1848), p. 3

⁵³ *Il Nazionale* (18.4.1848) *L’Italianità*, XXXVIII, p. 2

⁵⁴ *Il Nazionale* (17.7.1848), p. 5

⁵⁵ Mack Smith, D. (1988) *The Making of Italy, 1796-1866*, p.115

who repeatedly encouraged the creation of a confederation of Italian states.⁵⁶ Even more striking were the differences between the Neapolitan periodical's politics and Sicilian revolutionaries', who had sparked the Revolution in Palermo on January 12 and advanced separatist claims, with the hope of joining a federation of Italian states as an independent Sicily.

This context made Ferdinand's decision to withdraw his troops from Lombardy on May 21, 1848, a particularly appalling one for *Il Nazionale*, which identified its consequences not only with the suspension of the constitution conceded on May 15, but also – and even more dramatically – the severance of the connection between the local revolutionary cause and the broader project of Italian unification. The tone of the periodical's commentary on these events, however, was an optimistic one: “despite all its internal and external enemies, regardless of all the tenebrous machinations engineered by a decrepit diplomacy, notwithstanding the artifices and frauds operated by the existing factions, Italy will be made”, an article exclaimed in July 1848.⁵⁷ Neapolitan patriots were encouraged, despite all adversities, to find solace in the idea that “Italy seeks to realise its nationality, independence and freedom”.⁵⁸ This intuition stemmed from the acknowledgment of the profound socio-economic and political divide existing between the North and the South of the peninsula, whose conditions were termed “an intolerable anachronism”:

The dichotomy between northern and southern Italy is exceedingly evident: those who do not see it, must have no eyes to see, nor sufficient understanding to discern it. Now, is it possible that such a dichotomy may last for a long time, and that underneath the same sky, in the same land, two elements may exist and plotted against each other? Two elements that are so conflicting and so openly opposite to one another?⁵⁹

The resolution of this tension, according to Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa, hinged not only on the South's participation in Italian emancipation, but also on the historical necessity of overcoming this fracture. This perspective, in particular, fully revealed the Spaventas' attempts to re-describe experiences of political change from the standpoint of a Hegelian vision of dialectical historical development. “In the political world”, the article suggested, “as well as the physical one, forces in opposition to one another cannot exist within the same

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 115-17

⁵⁷ *Il Nazionale* (17.7.1848), p. 3

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, p. 4

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 5

sphere of action”.⁶⁰ The overall tone of the argumentation, historicist and teleological in equal measure, reflected how the reasons for the journal’s association of the 1848 revolutionary cause in the Mezzogiorno and the broader Italian Unification project ought to be sought not only in the immediate context in which *Il Nazionale* was published, but also in the composite philosophical speculation, Hegelian and Vichian, underpinning its articles.

These observations also contribute to illuminating Benedetto Croce’s emphasis on the periodical’s philosophical, historicist, tendencies championing “the rational necessity of Revolution, which is not destined to succeed thanks to exogenous forces, but thanks to its inner power”.⁶¹ Commenting on “the ultimate goal of revolutions”, for instance, Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa believed that:

Three things can be distinguished in any revolution: its Idea, its men and its form. The idea constitutes the revolution’s rationality: it is thanks to this that the Revolution sees the light of day and is alive, it acquires power and dignity, it overcomes any obstacle, it conquers people’s minds, it captures people’s hearts, it subverts existing states of affairs, it replaces them and is realised organically: this is because Reason alone governs the world and has an infinite right to existence. Reason is directed towards an end and this end is freedom. Hence the Idea of any Revolution is necessarily the idea of freedom.⁶²

This passage exemplified the Hegelian inclinations of *Il Nazionale*’s writers and revealed, at the same time, an attempt to historicise the revolutionary experience by viewing it as part of a necessary, teleological ideal of historical development, corresponding to the progressive realisation of liberty. Later commentators, in this sense, were absolutely correct in viewing *Il Nazionale*’s politics as part of the broader narrative of Hegel’s fortune in the Mezzogiorno.⁶³ What these studies appear to have overlooked, however, is the extent to which Neapolitan Hegelianism, thanks to its characteristically Vichian character, often re-imagined some of Hegel’s own ideas. For example, while *Il Nazionale* certainly embraced a notion of history understood as the progressive realisation of freedom, it did not consider political change exclusively as the reflection of an abstract Hegelian *Weltgeist*’s inner motion. Rather, consistent with Vico’s emphasis on a tangible, man-made notion of history, as well as Cuoco and Colletta’s verdicts on the 1799 Revolution, the periodical viewed it as anchored to

⁶⁰ *ibid.*

⁶¹ Croce, B. (1898), p. 24

⁶² *Il Nazionale* (22.4.1848) *Il fine ultimo delle rivoluzioni e il fine primario della rivoluzione italiana*, XLIV, p. 2

⁶³ see, for example: Bellamy, R. (2013), p. 114; Croce, B. (1898) *Silvio Spaventa*; Garin, E. (1983) *Filosofia e politica in Bertrando Spaventa*; Vacca, G. (1967) *Politica e filosofia in Bertrando Spaventa*

concrete pre-conditions for political emancipation. This position was clearly illustrated via a certain revision of Hegelian freedom:

This idea constitutes a completely abstract representation, that requires a directly sensible element to latch onto, in order to acquire its concreteness. As long as this sensible element does not exist, freedom is merely a thought, which may well lead to generous and noble actions, on the one hand, yet incomplete ones, on the other, and this is the cause of much suffering, many sacrifices and martyrdoms, with little to no visible and long-lasting effect. Now, this directly sensible element is nationality, determined on the basis of independence, common origin, common language, religion and traditions... Where national independence is absent, there can be no true freedom.⁶⁴

These observations have great significance both for what concerns the precise characterisation of *Il Nazionale's* politics and, more importantly, the revised nature of the Hegelianism the periodical relied upon. The latter's emphasis on nationality, in fact, may appear puzzling, if one considers that this is entirely absent in Hegel's writings.⁶⁵ It is, however, fully consistent with Vico's discussion of this concept, as re-interpreted in early nineteenth-century Italian debates. *Il Nazionale's* politics therefore reflected the complex dynamics of Hegel's reception in the Southern capital: Vico's emphasis on a shared language and traditions as the basis of national unity, Cuoco's problematisation of an "ideal eternal history" and the empirical conditions in which this is realised, coupled with the need to mediate between the two, as illustrated in chapter two of this thesis, the anti-metaphysical approach to the study of German philosophy, perfected in Neapolitan private schools of the 1830s and early '40s, discussed in chapter three, as well as the definition of a composite, Vichian and Hegelian in equal measure, historicist approach, championed most notably by Francesco De Sanctis' school in the mid-1840s. Political emancipation, in this sense, was both *logically* and *historically* necessary, as it depended not only on the realisation of a Hegelian ideal of freedom, but also, following the example of Cuoco's Vico, on the consolidation of a strong national identity.

These reflections prominently featured in many other articles published during the summer of 1848: the "philosophical movement" underpinning the revolution, aiming at "the

⁶⁴ *Il Nazionale* (22.4.1848), p. 5

⁶⁵ Hegel notoriously employs the word "Volk", rather than "Nation" both in his philosophy of history, as well as political philosophy. Being a specific manifestation of the world-Spirit, Hegel's *Volk* is not determined on the basis of cultural or moral affiliation and belonging. As such, *Volk* lacks the self-reflective character that is, instead, central to the concept of nation.

unity of the human spirit” was said inevitably to require a “public form and organisation”.⁶⁶ Similarly, the success of the revolution was seen as depending on the possibility of “the translation of this new life [...] currently enclosed in thought alone [...] into society’s universal consciousness”.⁶⁷ Additionally, because “the indeclinable law of human nature is represented by perpetual progress” and “the course and development of ideas is irresistible”, “all ideas conceived and developed in the mind must inevitably be translated into facts”.⁶⁸

Thus imagined, at this point, *Il Nazionale*’s contribution to the revolutionary experience of 1848 appears to have incorporated Cuoco and Colletta’s analysis of 1799’s failure; yet, by closely engaging with the need for the Revolution to acquire a purely national character, Neapolitan Hegelians succeeded in moving beyond political particularisms, fully embracing the cause of Italy’s emancipation and unification. This naturally paves the way for the question of what kind of political organisation may be conducive to the strengthening of the peninsula’s national character. Put simply: if Italy’s political future is necessarily a national one, what institutions can contribute to its realisation?

The answer to this question was a passionate advocacy of a democratic, Italian, nation-state. “Naples has discovered beneath the fallen Government an empty coffin, because the union of Neapolitan society with eternity does not and will not take place here [...]. The State that we were looking for does not exist within Neapolitans’ conscience, but in a broader and more substantial domain, namely Italian conscience”.⁶⁹ Crucially, the State was regarded a *condicio sine qua non* for the complete flourishing of the principle of nationality: “nationality is not enough to bring a man glory”.⁷⁰ This was because “it is the State that accomplishes and perfects nationality”.⁷¹ The implications of this premise are, at this point, easy to discern: consistent with Cuoco’s verdict on the political failure of the Neapolitan Republic, the authors of *Il Nazionale* believed that, in order to be a fully national one, the State must be based on the principle of popular sovereignty and participation. “The State”, in this sense, must not be “an arbitrary institution, depending on the will of a given individual, may that be the Prince, or someone else”: it ought to configure itself as “something higher

⁶⁶ *Il Nazionale* (1.3.1848), p. 2

⁶⁷ *Il Nazionale* (2.3.1848) *Idea del movimento italiano*, II, p. 1

⁶⁸ *Il Nazionale* (18.4.1848), p. 3

⁶⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1

⁷⁰ *Il Nazionale* (21.4.1848) *La guerra di Lombardia*, XL, p. 5

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 4

and more absolute, elevating itself above particular wills and able to reflect the will embedded in the citizens' general will. As a result, should it ever be at odds with society's inclinations, their opposition cannot last long and it suddenly appears necessary for the State to reconcile itself with society, in order not to be in disagreement with its own most fundamental principle".⁷²

Il Nazionale's focus on the creation of an Italian national state was, as explained earlier in this chapter, a preoccupation that other revolutionaries in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies simply did not share. Moreover, if seen in the broader Italian context, the periodical's position further underlines the original and idiosyncratic character of its contribution to the political history of the Risorgimento. Despite the fact that the national idea had gained remarkable traction among 1848 revolutionaries, in fact, few viewed themselves as part of a fully-fledged national state beyond the idea of a confederate union under the existing rulers.⁷³ Additionally, *Il Nazionale's* reflections articulated a vision of the State that was far more progressive and more deeply grounded in popular sovereignty than that advocated by other patriots who put their hopes into Piedmont. Cesare Balbo, for example, investigated the connection between representative institutions and the public spirit in his volume *Della monarchia rappresentativa*, written between 1849 and 1853.⁷⁴ This text constituted a passionate advocacy of Piedmontese hegemony in the context of the Risorgimento: unlike other inhabitants of the peninsula, in fact, only the Piedmontese were said to be ready for the attainment of liberty.⁷⁵ Balbo's volume also featured a discussion of the ways in which the experience of 1848 had allegedly revealed a deficiency in Italians' "political education".⁷⁶ According to the author, this implied that the extension of political participation to all segments of the population was an undesirable solution. Rather, Balbo believed, it was only thanks to the contribution of the more progressive elements of the aristocracy, whose taxes

⁷² *Il Nazionale* (2.3.1848), p. 3

⁷³ Isabella, M. (2018) *The Political Thought of a New Constitutional Monarchy. Piedmont after 1848*, p. 397; Körner, A. (2018) *National Movements against Nation States. Bohemia and Lombardy between the Habsburg Monarchy, the German Confederation, and Piedmont-Sardinia*, p. 371; Meriggi, M. (1997) *Centralismo e federalismo in Italia. Le aspettative preunitarie*, pp. 21-46

⁷⁴ Isabella, M. (2013) *Aristocratic Liberalism and Risorgimento: Cesare Balbo and Piedmontese Political Thought after 1848*, pp. 835-57; Isabella, M. (2018), pp. 386-94; Romani, R. (2012a) *Political Thought in Action: The Moderates in 1859*, pp. 593-607; Romani, R. (2012b) *Reluctant Revolutionaries: Moderate Liberalism in the Kingdom of Sardinia, 1849-1859*, pp. 45-73

⁷⁵ Balbo, C. (1857) *Della monarchia rappresentativa*, pp. 167-68, 388; see also: Balbo, C. (1832) *Del naturale de' piemontesi*, pp. 238-62

⁷⁶ Balbo, C. (1857), pp. 32-35, 59-62, 69-70, 81-82, 157-59, 387

were crucial in the maintenance of political institutions in a financial sense, that the State could implement sustainable and effective liberal reforms.⁷⁷

Domenico Carutti, who worked closely with Cavour and served as Foreign Affairs Minister in the Kingdom of Sardinia from 1859 onwards, later retaining that position in the newly founded Kingdom of Italy, presented similar views in his 1852 treatise *Dei principii del governo libero*. In this text, he warned against the risks connected with an unchecked application of democratic ideals, maintaining that masses ought to be excluded from political participation, because they lacked civic virtues.⁷⁸ Lastly, Terenzio Mamiani echoed Carutti's arguments, further adding that the large majority of the population, being driven by ignorance in political matters and unchecked passions, was unable to interpret the moral law. As a result, the duty of government ought to be firmly in the hands of an enlightened élite.⁷⁹

The kind of State advocated by *Il Nazionale*, instead, must, by definition, be able to engage in a functional relationship with civil society, aiming at promoting the realisation of the principle of nationality via the establishment of institutions and policies firmly grounded in popular sovereignty and aiming at fostering mass democratic participation.⁸⁰ This was deemed necessary both on logical and historical grounds: *logically*, because of the actual definition of the State adopted by *Il Nazionale*, understood as "the true image of the people" and, at the same time, "the perfection of its model", in which every individual "finds himself, as a person and as a moral being" and "comes to acquire that which is located above its individuality".⁸¹ *Historically*, because the principle of popular sovereignty championed by revolutionary experiences – both in France in 1789 and, more importantly, in Naples ten years later – had revealed the need to align political organisation with a people's social emancipation: a State unable to reflect the absolute authority of the people, in this sense, was doomed to be demolished by the irresistible tide of history, being fundamentally disconnected "from ideas and from reality".⁸²

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 43-45, 49-51, 156-58

⁷⁸ Carutti, D. (1852) *Dei principii del governo libero*, pp. 105-09, 112-17, 164-67

⁷⁹ Mamiani, T. (1853) *Discorso sulla origine, natura e costituzione della sovranità*, pp. xlv-vi, lxiii

⁸⁰ Unsurprisingly, *Il Nazionale* frequently called for the implementation of very progressive policies, such as: minimum wage for all workers (*Il Nazionale* (18.3.1848) *Sulla quistione della organizzazione del lavoro*, XIII, p. 6), freedom of strike and free association (*Il Nazionale* (26.4.1848) *I lavoratori*, XLII, p. 3), the abolition of a tax on salt, to be replaced with greater taxation on luxury goods among the landed élites (*Il Nazionale* (18.3.1848), p. 4), as well as initiatives aiming at improving mass education (*Il Nazionale* (15.3.1848) *L'istruzione nel regno*, X, p. 2)

⁸¹ *Il Nazionale* (15.4.1848) *Lo stato e il popolo*, XXXVI, p. 3

⁸² *Il Nazionale* (13.4.1848) *Della società civile*, XXXIV, p. 2

Especially in the light of the composite historicist approach embraced by Neapolitan Hegelians discussed in the earlier chapters of this thesis, these intuitions optimally embodied the two-fold understanding of the State articulated by *Il Nazionale*: the discussion of its ideal, universal substance, on the one hand, closely mirrored the position advanced by Hegel in the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, where the State was defined as the chief means for the progressive self-realization of a people and the embodiment of freedom.⁸³ Yet, it was from the direct experience of history, on the other hand, conveyed by the historical memory of 1799, that the formal character of political organisation ought to be derived, as indicated by Vico-via-Cuoco. And with the spectre of the dramatic divisions that had peppered the previous revolutionary experiments, coupled with the horrors perpetrated by the Neapolitan *lazzaroni* and the Calabrian *sanfedisti*, still haunting Neapolitan revolutionary sensitivities, it was evident that the elevation of people's political conscience toward a cohesive national unity could only be operated within a fundamentally democratic dimension of political life.

4.3. Freiheit contra Libertà: Hegelianism in the Political History of the Risorgimento

4.3.1. Silvio Spaventa's non-Hegelian Liberalism

The defeat of 1848 marked the end of *Il Nazionale*'s publication, due to the involvement of its writers with revolutionary activities. One of its founders, Silvio Spaventa, was described as "the most enthusiastic" among the members of the Neapolitan parliament who had incited the construction of the barricades on May 15, having inflamed the crowds both from the

⁸³ "In the history of the World, only those peoples can come under our notice which form a State. For it must be understood that this latter is the realization of Freedom, i.e., of the absolute final aim, and that it exists for its own sake. It must further be understood that all the worth which the human being possesses — all spiritual reality, he possesses only through the State. For his spiritual reality consists in this, that his own essence — Reason — is objectively present to him, that it possesses objective immediate existence for him. Thus only is he fully conscious; thus only is he a partaker of morality — of a just and moral social and political life. For Truth is the Unity of the universal and subjective Will; and the Universal is to be found in the State, in its laws, its universal and rational arrangements" (Hegel, G. W. F. (1837) *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 56)

parliament balcony in and in the congested via Toledo.⁸⁴ On March 19 of the following year, while strolling with his brother Bertrando and three other friends in the streets of Naples, Silvio was arrested and tried for “conspiring against the State’s internal security, for the purpose of destroying and altering the current form of government and exhorting the citizens and inhabitants of the Kingdom to take up arms against the royal authority, as well as concretely encouraging civil war among members of the population itself”.⁸⁵ These accusations, whose validity was sometimes questioned by later historiography, were very grave and resulted into a death sentence, promptly turned, as it was customary in the Kingdom, into lifetime imprisonment on the island of S. Stefano.⁸⁶

The experience of prison was crucial for Silvio’s intellectual development. According to later historians, it was in the Bourbons’ prisons that “Hegel became liberal”. This perspective suggests that German thinker’s ideas became increasingly projected on Italy’s political context and deployed in support of Piedmontese liberal politics.⁸⁷ There is little doubt that Silvio, often regarded as one of the greatest theorists of liberal thought that would later inspire both Cavourian politics and the experience of the *Destra storica*, reiterated, during his imprisonment, several positions championed by the very Hegelian *Il Nazionale* in 1848.⁸⁸ As explained earlier, however, the relationship between Neapolitan Hegelianism and Piedmontese politics was far more complicated than traditional historiographical accounts, which adopted a teleological view of the Risorgimento, would hold. Despite proclaiming its allegiance to Carlo Alberto and Piedmont, *Il Nazionale* believed in achieving the Italian emancipation and unification via the promotion of democratic constitutionalism, hence advocating policies that were much more progressive than those advocated by Piedmontese liberals and their supporters. On this basis, Silvio Spaventa’s alleged use of Hegel’s philosophy in support of a liberal ideology, as well as his original theorisation of the latter, require closer scrutiny. This operation is luckily aided by the range of sources available: Silvio’s correspondence from prison, especially the letters he exchanged with his brother Bertrando,

⁸⁴ ASN, Archivio Borbone (1713-1877), *Causa del 15 Maggio 1848* (1848-1850), f. 1045b, “Rapporto letto in pubblica discussione il giorno 12 Dicembre 1851 nella causa de’ criminosi avvenimenti del 15 Maggio 1848 dal consigliere residente della Gran Corte Speciale di Napoli Domenicantonio Navarra qual commissario della causa”
⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Romano, P. (1943) *Silvio Spaventa. Biografia politica*, p. 53; Gallo, F. (2015) *Dalla patria allo stato: Bertrando Spaventa, una biografia intellettuale*, p. 25

⁸⁷ Ghisalberti, C. (1991), p. 3

⁸⁸ Ghisalberti, C. (1972) *Silvio Spaventa teorico dello stato liberale*, p. 249; Sordi, B. (1985) *Giustizia e amministrazione nello stato liberale. La formazione della nozione di interesse legittimo*, p. 132

later collected and published by his nephew Benedetto Croce, represents a precious resource to clarify the nexus between Neapolitan Hegelianism and Risorgimento political thought.

The first feature of these letters that stands out is the postulation of a continuity between the experience of 1848 and the cause of Italian Unification, consistent with the propositions presented by *Il Nazionale* just a few years earlier. An 1854 manuscript entitled *L'esercito napoletano e la riazione* revealed how the defeat of revolutionary enthusiasms in the Southern capital would further encourage Neapolitan patriots to fight for Unification.⁸⁹ As this chapter shall demonstrate, similar views were also held by Bertrando himself, as well as Francesco De Sanctis: according to the latter, the chief effect of the crown's anti-revolutionary measures was an even greater consolidation of revolutionary ideals. Revolutions, even those labelled "failed ones", he claimed, "find new blood, force and power in the experience of loss and martyrdom".⁹⁰ Moreover, just like *Il Nazionale* had argued in 1848, Silvio Spaventa believed that the perpetuation of a revolutionary programme would still entail the endorsement of Piedmontese politics and support for the same form of constitutionalism that the Bourbons had violently suffocated.⁹¹ In response to the growth of the Muratist movement in Naples in the 1850s, he labelled Murat "completely unable to undertake any serious project" and vehemently stated that he would rather die in prison than compromise his support for Carlo Alberto: the "Northern Star" of the Risorgimento, he claimed was "the king of Piedmont".⁹²

At the same time, while it revealed the permanence of pre-1848 political motives during his prison years, Silvio's correspondence also featured the earliest articulations of a new concept of the political, which he would later retain throughout his entire parliamentary career after the Unification.⁹³ Silvio's position was unsurprisingly close to moderate

⁸⁹ Spaventa, S. (1854) *L'esercito napoletano e la riazione*, p. 130; see also: Spaventa, S. (1854) *La riazione e il progresso*, pp. 146-48

⁹⁰ De Sanctis, F. (1855) *La quistione napoletana*, p. 197

⁹¹ *Il Nazionale* (2.5.1848), p. 5; Spaventa, S. (5.2.1857) *Lettera a Bertrando*, pp. 189-90; Spaventa, S. (12.4.1859) *Lettera a Bertrando*, pp. 244-46

⁹² Croce, E. (1949), p. 98; The Muratist movement was inspired by Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état* in 1851, which re-ignited French sympathies in Naples, heavily relying on people's nostalgia for Joachim Murat's rule between 1808 and 1815. When Joachim's second son, Lucien Murat, came under the spotlight of the political scene under the Second Republic and – even more significantly – under the new Bonapartist regime after 1852, a group of Neapolitan patriots, especially exiles in Paris, pushed for his ascent to the throne of the Kingdom. On the experience of the Muratist movement, see: Gavotti, M. V. (1927) *Il movimento murattiano dal 1850 al 1860*

⁹³ The continuity between Silvio's pre- and post-Unification political thought was amply discussed in: Bazzoli, M. (1988) *Silvio Spaventa nella storiografia dello 'stato liberale'*, pp. 117-32; Chiodi, G. M. (1989) *Sull'idea di stato*

Piedmontese liberals', being based on the same emphasis on individual liberty, strong constitutionalism, gradualism, political representation and separation of State and Church characterising Cavourian politics.⁹⁴ This, especially if plotted against the backdrop of Spaventa's experience with the Hegelian *Il Nazionale*, would clearly support the idea of a moderate liberal evolution of Neapolitan Hegelianism.

Benedetto Croce, however, in an introduction to an edited collection of Silvio's *Lettere politiche*, emphasised how the conception of politics developed during the years of imprisonment was characterised by the absence of the speculative sensibility featured in his prior writings.⁹⁵ Similarly, Antonio Labriola, who had attended Bertrando's philosophy lectures in Naples in 1861, highlighted, in an 1898 letter to Croce, how Silvio's politics were not supported by reliable philosophical insights.⁹⁶ A closer look at the sources corroborates Croce and Labriola's verdicts and reveals, on the one hand, several problems connected with Silvio's characterisation as a *Hegelian* thinker after 1848, while greatly challenging, on the other, the notion of a certain degree of continuity between Neapolitan Hegelianism and moderate liberalism.

It must be noted, first of all, that Silvio's attempts to engage with Hegel's texts remained largely unsuccessful. As is evident from his correspondence with his brother, Hegel's philosophy presented itself as a system "dubious and formal" and every attempt to penetrate its perceived intricacies was consistently frustrated.⁹⁷ Spaventa felt completely defeated by the complexity of the German thinker's works: "I understand them one way, but then I realise I am mistaken: I understand them another way, but then I am once again mistaken. I am wrapped in a thousand difficulties, a thousand doubts and am ultimately lost in a maze with no way out".⁹⁸ In particular, Silvio had begun reading the *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften* in 1856, but abandoned it after a mere few days, being admittedly unable to understand it: the more he attempted to access "the soul" of the text, the more this appeared "impenetrable".⁹⁹ Silvio had also hoped to translate the

di Silvio Spaventa, pp. 217-66; Romano, P. (1943), pp. 94-292; Serra, T. (1988) *L'hegelismo di Silvio Spaventa*, pp. 32-40; Valitutti, S. (1989) *L'hegelismo di Silvio Spaventa*, pp. 99-138

⁹⁴ Mack Smith, D. (1985) *Cavour: a Biography*, p. 26, 35, 55, 101-05, 121, 254

⁹⁵ Croce, B. (1925a) *Prefazione*, pp. v, 318

⁹⁶ Labriola, A. (1898) *Lettera a Benedetto Croce*, p. 858

⁹⁷ Spaventa, S. (22.12.1856) *Lettera a Bertrando*, p. 185

⁹⁸ *ibid.*; In his testimony, Spaventa evoked a feeling often experienced by the author of the present thesis, too.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*

Phenomenologie des Geistes into Italian, but he quickly gave up on this project, having only collected ninety-two pages of handwritten notes, mostly concerned with the *Preface* and *Introduction* to the original text, later published with the title *Frammenti di studi* by Benedetto Croce.¹⁰⁰

Spaventa's notes on the *Phenomenologie* can fully reveal the extent of his departure from Hegel, as well as the failure to adopt the German thinker's ideas as the philosophical backbone of his own political views, hence challenging several twentieth-century historiographical verdicts. Most importantly, the notion of liberty discussed in these manuscripts was significantly different from Hegel's. An obvious example of this would be the statement that:

True freedom is objective and subjective at the same time: what I mean is that for this to be truly experienced, its content ought to be objective Reason and its form the subjectivity of Spirit. I am free if I want and do that which is reasonable, I must make the law, and I must will the law. The law must be my own will.¹⁰¹

The intuition that individual freedom may acquire its objectivity in the law, a view which Spaventa reiterated in later writings and parliamentary speeches lay at the core of historiographical verdicts regarding him as an advocate of a Hegelian *Rechtsstaat*.¹⁰² Hegel, however, in his *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, had warned precisely against such a conception of freedom, highlighting its logical inconsistency:

When we hear it said that freedom in general consists in being able to do as one pleases, such an idea can only be taken to indicate a complete lack of intellectual culture; for it shows not the least awareness of what constitutes the will which is free in and for itself, of rights, ethics, etc.¹⁰³

Right (*Recht*), for Hegel, was by definition "the existence of the absolute concept, of self-conscious freedom".¹⁰⁴ In order for freedom to acquire its absolute character, a process of

¹⁰⁰ Spaventa, S. (1857) *Frammenti di studii*, pp. 166-73

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, pp. 166-67

¹⁰² see, for instance: Spaventa, S. (1880) *La giustizia nell'amministrazione*, pp. 53-105; Spaventa, S. (1889) *Del consiglio di stato*, pp. 289-311; Nigro, M. (1989) *Silvio Spaventa e lo stato di diritto*, pp. 109-22; Silvestri, G. (1988) *Politica, amministrazione e divisione dei poteri nel pensiero di Silvio Spaventa*, pp. 41-61; Nigro, M. (1988) *Silvio Spaventa e il Rechtsstaat*, pp. 109-16

¹⁰³ Hegel, G. W. F. (1820) *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, §15, pp. 66-67; see also: Beiser, F. (2002) *Hegel*, pp. 239-40

¹⁰⁴ Hegel, G. W. F. (1820), §30, p. 83

mediation among its individual determinations, through which objective freedom “develops out of itself”, was required: “Dialectics”.¹⁰⁵

The notion of freedom that, according to Hegel, served as the foundation of right and political organization, by virtue of the dialectics it ceaselessly engaged in, was characterised by an inherently relational, reflective and self-generative nature. Such a conception was clearly missing in Spaventa’s political writings. When interrogating how liberty was to be embodied in the State, he claimed, consistent with Hegel, that “the State is freedom’s truth”, but adopted a concept of freedom corresponding to an unmediated “subjective freedom”.¹⁰⁶ And it was, in his view, only via a representative system that individual freedom could ultimately be part of the State’s political life.¹⁰⁷ As a result, Silvio’s reflections on the goals of politics aptly reflected his complete departure from Hegel: by positing “subjective freedom”, corresponding to “individual will”, as the “origin of Right” and “principle of all public powers”, he ultimately embraced a precise ideal of the State, whose chief aim was the preservation of individual liberties via the authority of the law.¹⁰⁸

Silvio Spaventa’s views on politics, commonly mistaken for an advocacy of the Hegelian *Rechtsstaat*, were not, therefore, as Hegelian as many historians suggested. They were, however, very much in agreement with the principles of Piedmontese moderate liberalism. Maurizio Isabella, for example, highlighted how, particularly in the writings of Cesare Balbo, these revolved around “a liberal commitment to the protection of individual rights under a constitution” and “political freedom based on individual capacity by virtue of representative institutions”.¹⁰⁹ It is certainly hard not to see Silvio’s position as anything other than fully consistent with Balbo’s.

While it is difficult to disagree with historiographical verdicts praising Silvio Spaventa’s contribution to moderate liberal thinking, it is just as hard to endorse those underlying the philosophical and ideological continuity between his alleged Hegelianism and liberal tendencies. Rather, it seems now evident that the proposition that “Hegel became liberal” via the experience of the Bourbon prisons, is simply untenable. At the same time, challenging the very characterisation of Silvio Spaventa as a Hegelian thinker after the defeat of the 1848

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, §31, p. 84

¹⁰⁶ Spaventa, S. (1857), p. 167

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ Isabella, M. (2013), p. 856

Revolutions only addresses part of the issue connected with a precise account of Neapolitan Hegelianism's role in the political history of the Risorgimento. It is precisely for this reason that this chapter will attempt to clarify this problem by shifting the focus of its analysis: if Hegel's ideas were not deployed in support of moderate liberalism, what kind of political life could they inform? The answer can only be found in the writings of someone who did not leave Hegel behind, as Silvio did, and ceaselessly engaged with his works: his brother Bertrando.

4.3.2. Bertrando Spaventa's non-liberal Hegelianism

While Silvio Spaventa was gestating his political thought in prison, his brother Bertrando was understandably devastated by his brother's predicament, further exacerbating the grief caused by the loss of his younger brother Tito, who had died of typhus only a few months earlier. Under the encouragement of a few close friends, and worried that the ongoing police inquiries might eventually result in his own arrest, Bertrando decided to flee Naples in October 1849, hoping to reach Genova.¹¹⁰ Having initially arrived in Livorno, however, he settled in Florence where he worked as a private mentor for the Pignatelli family. The Tuscan city was Bertrando's home for ten months, during which he led "a solitary life, a very isolated one".¹¹¹ In "ten yawning months", his philosophical and political commitment came to a sudden halt, due to the difficulty he encountered in getting hold of German philosophy texts, particularly Hegel and Kant's.¹¹² As a result, he decided to move to Turin, because, he believed "here can one find the Idea of our country, here is Italy, here is freedom".¹¹³

Bertrando's enthusiasm for the cultural and political environment he encountered in the Piedmontese city was often regarded by later historians as an endorsement of the liberal views generally invoked by, and associated with, the Piedmontese government. In an attempt to challenge Gentile's discussion of the Southern thinker as part of his broader proposition of

¹¹⁰ Gallo, F. (2015), p. 31

¹¹¹ Spaventa, B. (18.1.1850) *Lettera a Silvio*, p. 70

¹¹² Spaventa, B. (1851a) *Principii di etica*, p. xx

¹¹³ *ibid.*

an ideological continuity between the philosophy of the Risorgimento and the fascist political experience, researchers proceeded to view Bertrando's political sensibility in line with Piedmontese liberalism, on the one hand, and the policies of the post-Unification *Destra storica*, on the other. Nicola Caputo's 2006 *Bertrando Spaventa e la sua scuola*, for example, sought to identify the ideological connections between Spaventa's works and Benedetto Croce's defense of liberalism.¹¹⁴ Similarly, Renato Bortot, Giovanni Rota and Gaetano Origo provided an accurate analysis of Bertrando's critical Hegelianism, proposing an image of the philosopher that resonated with the principles of Piedmontese liberal politics.¹¹⁵ Even more clearly, works by Teresa Serra and Eugenio Garin concentrated on Bertrando's alleged revision of the Hegelian "ethical state", drawing particular attention to the role played by the notion of *liberty* in it, consequently viewing the author's reflection on the state and its functions as a hint at his liberal sympathies.¹¹⁶

Common to these works on Spaventa was the postulation of a rupture between his pre-1848 speculation and his political pronouncements articulated in the years spent in Turin, presented in the articles written for the local periodicals *Il progresso*, *Il cimento* and *Rivista italiana*. Plotting some of the arguments developed in the Turinese writings against those presented in the Neapolitan *Il Nazionale*, in fact, historians concluded that, by 1852, Bertrando had abandoned the democratic positions advocated before 1848 and allegedly embraced a conservative stance.¹¹⁷

A more careful look at Spaventa's Piedmontese journalistic output, however, supplementing the revision of *Il Nazionale's* political stance offered in the previous section of

¹¹⁴ Caputo, N. (2006) *Bertrando Spaventa e la sua scuola. Saggio storico-teoretico*

¹¹⁵ In *L'hegelismo di Bertrando Spaventa*, Renato Bortot sought to disentangle the analysis of Bertrando's theory of European thought's circularity from Gentile's interpretation. As a means to this end, he believed it necessary to underline the centrality of the concept of *nationality* among the author's philosophical preoccupations. This, according to Bortot, was informed by the need to theorise a national state under the governance of Piedmontese moderates (Bortot, R. (1968) *L'hegelismo di Bertrando Spaventa*, pp. 2-12); Giovanni Rota, then, expanded on Bortot's observations, devising a continuity between Spaventa's theory of circularity and his previous journalistic output: in Rota's analysis, the philosopher's discussion of the principle of nationality was conducive to the theorisation of a national State able to enhance and promote individual liberties (Rota, G. (2005) *La circolazione del pensiero secondo Bertrando Spaventa*, pp. 655-86); In *Bertrando Spaventa interprete di Bruno, Vico ed Hegel*, instead, Gaetano Origo provided an analysis of Spaventa's thought that emphasised the author's observations on individual freedom, hinting, in this sense, at a certain affinity between Piedmontese moderates' and his own understanding of the relationship between individual liberties and the principle of nationality (Origo, G. (2011) *Bertrando Spaventa interprete di Bruno, Vico ed Hegel*, pp. 7-15, 89-96, 107-11).

¹¹⁶ Garin, E. (1983) *Filosofia e politica in Bertrando Spaventa*; Serra, T. (1974) *Bertrando Spaventa. Etica e politica*

¹¹⁷ Cubeddu, I (1963) *Bertrando Spaventa pubblicista*, pp. 62-65; Landucci, S. (1963) *Il giovane Spaventa fra hegelismo e socialismo*, pp. 656-58

this chapter, can challenge these verdicts, drawing attention to the thematic and speculative continuities characterising these two moments of Bertrando's intellectual and political formation. It was earlier suggested that the theme of Italian Unification was systematically interwoven in the texture of *Il Nazionale's* revolutionary inclinations: just as the periodical had believed in the need to commit to a revolutionary programme beyond "the mere narrow limits of our Neapolitan land" and embrace, via a very Hegelian reasoning, a purely national dimension of politics, an article penned by Spaventa in 1850, appearing in *Rivista italiana* and later published in a much expanded form with the title *Studii sopra la filosofia di Hegel*, underlined the possibility of achieving these goals under Piedmontese leadership.¹¹⁸ Spaventa insisted on the same juxtaposition of cultural and political emancipation championed by the Neapolitan periodical two years earlier: "the Italian philosophical movement", he claimed, "thwarted in Naples, where it initially began, must begin again, as a political movement, in Piedmont [...]. While our homeland mourns its noble children, who are either in prison or exile, may Piedmont proceed to re-awaken Italy's philosophical consciousness".¹¹⁹

Thus conceived, Spaventa's Turinese attitude not only was consistent with the ideological orientation of his Neapolitan periodical, but also underlined how any kind of political unification was linked to the consolidation of the peninsula's national character, via the reinforcement of its cultural and philosophical tradition. Philosophy, he stated, "rather than being at odds with political history, as some may well believe, understands its results and achievements, and empowers them with a necessary and universal significance".¹²⁰ Even more clearly, in a compelling – yet often overlooked – article published in *Il progresso*, Spaventa further illustrated his ideal, speculative, sensibility underpinning support for Italian unification: the true unity of a nation and the freedom of its people, he argued "cannot be obtained without great ideas. And among these I do not regard philosophy as having a marginal role, especially in Italy, were, because every purely external connection is largely ineffective with regard to the immense endeavour of national unity, it is necessary, first of all,

¹¹⁸ *Il Nazionale* (17.7.1848), p. 5

¹¹⁹ Spaventa, B. (1851) *Studii sopra la filosofia di Hegel*, p. 69

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 540

to create an inner connection in order to resurrect the ancient genius of the nation, currently toned down by divisions and fragmentation".¹²¹

These considerations represented an important stepping stone in the identification of the ideological continuity between the defeat of the 1848 Revolution in Naples and the struggle for Italian Unification. For Bertrando, the significance of 1848 went well beyond its perceived *political* failure. While it had been impossible to articulate a form of political organisation based on popular sovereignty, and able to reflect people's acquired consciousness of their national identity, it was within the intellectual sphere that a major change had taken place.¹²² The dissemination of the principle of nationality, in fact, had effectively contrasted a "power that is an enemy of any sort of intellectual development", namely that very same factionalism and set of inner divisions lamented by Cuoco and Colletta in their verdicts on the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution.¹²³ As a result:

Our Revolution of 1848 succeeded in severing the roots of this power. This is now nothing more than a dead weight, a corpse, and all that is left to do is burying it. It is now up to us Italians to accomplish what our revolution has started: it is necessary that the consciousness of man's absolute right, Reason and thought become universal, i.e. national: it's necessary for this consciousness to penetrate every single manifestation of our life; for it to be in our minds, in art, religious sentiment, in all and everyone.¹²⁴

It should be already evident, at this point, how Spaventa's engagement with the topic of Italian unification was largely supported by his analysis of the historical significance of European revolutions: he envisioned, in fact, the initial emergence of principles of equality and popular sovereignty in the "marvellous drama" of the 1789 French Revolution.¹²⁵ More importantly, it was against a teleological, Hegelian, account of historical development that revolutionary experiences were plotted, as *Il Nazionale* had already suggested in 1848 and as Bertrando repeatedly confirmed in his Turinese articles.¹²⁶ So, if history moved toward the

¹²¹ Spaventa, B. (1851b) *False accuse contro l'hegelismo*, p. 319

¹²² Spaventa's verdict on the Neapolitan experience of 1848 closely reflected Hegel's views on the French Revolution expressed in the *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, where the ideal preconditions of the events of 1789 were emphasised in a chapter entitled *Die Aufklärung und Revolution* (Hegel, G. W. F. (1837), pp. 52-42)

¹²³ Spaventa, B. (1851c) *Diritto della rivoluzione*, p. 27

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 32

¹²⁵ Spaventa, B. (1851d) *Le conquiste della rivoluzione*, p. 41

¹²⁶ In *Le conquiste della rivoluzione*, for instance, he claimed that history was directional and progressive, aiming at "the eternal conquest of freedom" (*ibid.*, p. 40); in *Le utopie*, then, he spoke of a "novel form of progress in the history of the people", marked by the triumph of "the principle of freedom and the absolute independence of thought among individuals" (Spaventa, B. (1851e) *Le utopie*, p. 65)

embodiment of a Hegelian absolute freedom, realised, in a political sense, in the ideal of popular sovereignty, what kind of initiatives could lead to the latter's concrete implementation?

According to Spaventa, the answer was a straightforward one: the realisation of freedom, he argued, rested on two interconnected pillars: the *political* and the *social* emancipation of a people. In an attempt to link the history of Europe with the immediate context of the present, Bertrando suggested that the French Revolution had highlighted how any "revolution must first and foremost be a political one".¹²⁷ This was because, by combating a political organisation whose legitimacy stemmed from "a will believed to exist above and beyond the law and people's will", namely birth rights and privileges, French revolutionaries had initiated a process of democratisation establishing the people's will as the sole "will of the State".¹²⁸

This view was very significant for a number of reasons: first of all, it already hinted at a certain conception of the State, consistent with that championed by both Spaventas in the pages of *Il Nazionale* in 1848, underlining its role in reproducing and perpetuating the ideal preconditions on which it rested.¹²⁹ Put simply, it was only via the establishment of a democratic state, corresponding to the political emancipation of society, that its social emancipation, namely the consolidation of a people's national identity, could be achieved. Second, these observations also reflected another important influence on Spaventa's intellectual formation during the years he spent in Turin: Lorenz von Stein's 1842 book *Sozialismus und Kommunismus des heutigen Frankreichs*, whose translation into Italian he had begun in 1850.¹³⁰ Spaventa's advocacy of a State able to mould its institutions on the basis of civil society's inclinations, that is to say, a state whose authority, "does not stem any longer from the Government, but from the nation, because the Government is nothing more than the executor of public reason's deliberations", in this sense, reflected a specific understanding of history, whereby political change is intrinsically connected to the dialectical interplay of State and civil society, as postulated by von Stein.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Spaventa, B. (1851c), p. 34

¹²⁸ *ibid.*

¹²⁹ see n. 69-72

¹³⁰ Landucci, S. (1963), pp. 693-95

¹³¹ Spaventa, B. (1851f) *Lo stato moderno e la libertà d'insegnamento*, p. 82; see, for example: von Stein, L. (1842) *Sozialismus und Kommunismus des heutigen Frankreichs*, pp. 20ff; On von Stein's influence on Spaventa, see: De Sanctis, F. M. (1989) *Lorenz von Stein e il giovane Bertrando Spaventa*, pp. 169-78; on von Stein's political

Central to Spaventa's political vision was, once again, a very precise characterisation of historical development that deepened, unsurprisingly, its roots in the amalgamation of Vico and Hegel operated in the Neapolitan intellectual context, most notably private schools of philosophy, during the late 1830s and early '40s. More specifically, the composite method illustrated in chapter three of this thesis, according to which the Hegelian "rationality" ("Vernünftigkeit") of history was disclosed via "logical" reasoning and the Vichian definition of history as a "factum" could acquire a universal character via "historical" observation, was deployed by Spaventa in order to support a largely historicised understanding of a nation's political life. The author's emphasis on past experiences of political change, in this sense, was connected to the need to correctly act in the present in order to tailor the future according to necessity. Put simply, while Spaventa had understood, via logical reasoning, the motion of history to be the progressive realisation of freedom, it was via an accurate understanding of past experiences of political change, namely the 1789 French Revolution, the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799 and the events of 1848, that the need for a democratic state had become evident.¹³²

Spaventa clarified these thoughts, as he explained how "the principle of human societies' movement and progress" was represented by the dialectical interplay of the "reality" and the "ideal destination" of their historical life.¹³³ A more speculative explanation was then provided by the argument that, while "philosophical speculation [...] has posited the true determination of the idea of freedom", "freedom and equality are absolute and have no limit or distinction other than those necessarily stemming from Reason itself" only "when man himself is posited as the principle and origin of any right and duty".¹³⁴

These testimonies are important in various ways: first, they allow for a revision of Spaventa's political outlook during the years he spent in Turin, in contrast to historiographical verdicts suggesting that he had moved toward a much more conservative position; second, they confirm the ideological continuity between *Il Nazionale* in 1848 and Bertrando's views

thought, see: Quesel, C. (1989) *Soziologie und Soziale Frage: Lorenz von Stein und die Entstehung der Gesellschaftswissenschaft in Deutschland*, pp. 12-19; Siclován, D. (2018) *1848 and German Socialism*, pp. 257-60
¹³² He wrote, for example, that "the principle that, in our century, informs all spiritual manifestations of our life, and is destined to triumph and exist in the real world, is that of absolute freedom, namely freedom with no foundation or limit other than reason and the essence of human personality". (Spaventa, B. (1851g) *La libertà e la rivoluzione*, p. 94)

¹³³ Spaventa, B. (1851c), p. 55

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 55-56

in the early 1850s, challenging, once again, views emphasising the differences between these two moments; third, they further corroborate a transnational understanding of Spaventa's Hegelianism, clearly indebted to the German philosopher's notion of absolute history, as well as early nineteenth-century debates on Vico's historicism, in equal measure.

The most salient feature of Bertrando's political thought in the 1850s, therefore, had to do with a democratic actualisation of the Hegelian concept of liberty. This, in turn, put his politics at odds with Piedmontese liberal thinking. The trigger for Spaventa's critique of his immediate political context was represented by the emergence of parliamentary discussions on the freedom of teaching in 1851. These debates, indebted to those that had taken place in France in the 1830s, were amply documented by Giovanni Gentile, who also emphasised how Bertrando's position in relation to them revolved around the upholding of a notion of liberty different to that embraced by the government in Turin.¹³⁵ During the parliamentary session of May 13, 1851, Domenico Berti proposed the closure of all those schools, both public ones and those run by the clergy, rejecting governmental appointment of teachers. This proposition was met with enthusiasm by the Education Minister Pietro Gioia, but, in response to it, Cavour, who, at the time, was serving as Minister for agriculture and commerce, strongly condemned the prospected extension of government influence on any education channel other than public ones. Cavour's position was harshly criticised by an article published in *Il progresso* the following day, to such an extent that the Minister himself opted to clarify his position, claiming that the notion of liberty on which the state itself rested could be promoted only via the contraction of government interference.¹³⁶

Cavour's views were enthusiastically endorsed by Cesare Balbo, who not only underlined that granting unrestricted freedom of teaching was the only viable solution, but also claimed that limiting state interference in educational matters represented a crucial step in the moral and cultural emancipation of Italy.¹³⁷ A *prima facie* reading of this position may support a characterisation of Balbo's politics as particularly liberal and progressive, in line with recent historiographical verdicts on Piedmontese moderates.¹³⁸ Seen in the context of

¹³⁵ The Guizot-Cousin law of 1833, as well as the reform proposed by the Interior Minister Carnot, addressing the issues of freedom of teaching in primary schools, its secularisation, and the dichotomy between public and private education; see: Gentile, G. (1920) *Introduzione*, p. 7

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 26-28

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 29-30

¹³⁸ Isabella, M. (2018), p. 391; Romani, R. (2012a), pp. 600-01; Romani, R. (2012b), pp. 54-55

his aristocratic definition of the state, however, Balbo's views appear less forward-thinking. Rather than reflecting a genuine concern for the preparation of a wider public, his was an attempt to delegate the provision of education to third parties. For the Turinese statesman, the exercise of state functions depended on taxes paid by the élites. In consequence, he believed that the government should not be concerned with fostering mass education among those strata of the population that did not directly maintain it. His attitude went also against the trend of many other European countries, which, as mentioned in chapter three, were encouraging "mass public schooling" via a consistent increase in public education spending during the middle decades of the nineteenth-century.¹³⁹

The debate on freedom of teaching acquired an increasingly inflamed tone, ultimately leading to the Education Minister Gioia's resignation, followed, shortly thereafter, by the appointment of Luigi Carlo Farini, who, as indicated by Gentile, had strongly opposed Gioia's views on freedom of teaching.¹⁴⁰ Farini's designation marked a shift in the ministry's policies, increasingly veering towards a Cavourian line. On November 21, 1851, Cavour himself detailed the guiding principles of the government's new educational policies, disclosing an intention to gradually shift from a "monopoly regime" to one of "absolute freedom", by introducing unrestricted freedom of teaching "in the sphere of higher education" and extending it, later on, "to that of middle and primary teaching".¹⁴¹

As hinted earlier, Turinese periodicals, most notably *Il progresso*, were extremely critical of Cavour's advocacy of unrestricted liberty. From the pages of this paper, Bertrando Spaventa launched a devastating critique of the government's new educational policies. This was ostensibly counter-intuitive: after all, was Spaventa not an advocate of an absolute ideal of freedom? In theory. Liberty, he believed, in order to have its emancipatory value fully realised, had to be subject to certain restrictions, dictated by the context in which it is to be implemented. As a result, Cavour, Balbo and Farini's unconditional reliance on an unchecked notion of liberty was regarded a dangerous strategy. More specifically, Bertrando condemned the abstract nature of the policies promoted by the government, underlining the need for them to be driven by a principle other than individual liberty:

¹³⁹ Lindert, P. (2004) *Growing Public. Social Spending and Economic Growth Since the Eighteenth Century*, I, pp. 87-89, 97

¹⁴⁰ Gentile, G. (1920), p. 31

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 32

If it is upon a universal and abstract idea of individual right that one bases their reasoning, it will be necessary, since it is impossible to derive any positive or determinate element from such an abstraction, to posit as the foundation of sovereignty something other than individual right, in order not to end up with a chimerical state of affairs. This is precisely what those who rely on such an abstract and unstable principle end up with: while they discuss freedom as the basis of all authority, they actually build an entire edifice upon its ruins, as they elect individual will, interests, birth privileges or religious status as its foundation.¹⁴²

Bertrando was not against freedom of teaching, and repeatedly underlined that “all those who love liberty, and want its implementation to be a full one, cannot deny that teaching ought to be free”.¹⁴³ He also underlined, however, that “if we approach this issue from a much more pragmatic perspective”, things ought to be somewhat different.¹⁴⁴ Religious belief in Italy, according to Spaventa’s analysis, still depended on the indications of the Church, which had historically adopted its spiritual authority in order to legitimise its political power. This, in turn, had resulted in the perpetuation of a system of privileges and a conception of political authority, which eighteenth-century speculation and revolutionary experiences had successfully eroded, in a philosophical and political sense, respectively. Bertrando therefore believed that, by unconditionally granting freedom of teaching, the government would essentially give the Church *carte blanche* to keep on enforcing privileges, divisions, and a political theory regarded not only unviable in a political sense, but also – and more importantly – anti-historical.

Spaventa clarified these intuitions by disclosing the agenda allegedly hidden behind clergymen’s appeal for freedom of teaching: the Church, he argued, would invoke liberty “as a means to benefit from the limited set of advantages it is left with”, represented by its spiritual authority; central to this analysis was the intuition that “books, schools, newspapers: these are the weapons that the clergy wants to use in order to restore its kingdom”.¹⁴⁵ He then concluded:

Should teaching be free? It is the same as asking: does thought have a right to freely manifest itself in words? [...] In a State, where no religious freedom exists and where the full separation of spiritual and secular power is yet to take place; in a state where the dynamics of belief are imposed by a single privileged authority; in a state that was actually governed for a long time by this authority, which also happened to be the supreme master of educational matters; [...] in such a state, under such circumstances, would it be useful to implement the absolute principle of freedom of teaching? We frankly answer: no.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴² Spaventa, B. (1851h) *La libertà d’insegnamento*, p. 97

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 44

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 54

¹⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 50

From these observations, Spaventa derived the need to rethink the coordinates of the fundamental question of politics, namely the relationship between freedom and authority, urging the creation of a system able to regulate the former, on the one hand, and grant legitimacy to the latter, on the other. In contrast to a moderate liberal understanding of freedom that relied on an atomistic conception of the individual, Spaventa therefore embraced a Hegelian definition of this concept, as detailed in the German philosopher's *Grundlinien*. In this monumental work, Hegel had insisted on the distinction between an "abstract" and a "concrete" ideal of freedom, pointing out that the former could be resolved into the latter only via the process of mediation among all members of society.¹⁴⁷ Being the State, then, the chief means for the *compenetration* ("Durchdringung") of the substantial and the particular ("des Substantiellen und des Besonderen"), Hegel could conclude that "the State is the reality of concrete freedom".¹⁴⁸ In a similar vein, Bertrando deployed an ideal of freedom understood as the synthetic unity of individual freedoms, invested with an absolute character by virtue of its inherently *relational*, rather than discrete, character. In this sense, especially when compared to his brother Silvio's misunderstanding of the Hegelian relationship between freedom and the State, Bertrando's views suddenly appear much consistent with the German thinker's ideas.

"The State", Spaventa wrote on the basis of these observations, "constitutes individuals' absolute ethical subjectivity. It is absolute, because it presents itself as substance; it is a subjectivity, because it is reasoned upon and willed for by individuals".¹⁴⁹ More importantly, this did not rely on "a simple, subjective notion of liberty": rather, "this is objectified as universal and absolute rational will"; the State "is substance, i.e. necessary and absolute unity of individuals, of subjects, of people [...]. It is free and freely self-aware substance [...]. It is substance configuring itself as subject".¹⁵⁰ The stage, at this point, was fully set for the final thrust of Bertrando's powerful argument. With an unregulated exercise of liberty threatening the synthetic unity of society, potentially leading to the political manifestation of fragmentation and the triumph of particular interests, "who can prevent

¹⁴⁷ Hegel, G. W. F. (1820), §15, pp. 66-67, §30, p. 83, §31, p. 84; Beiser, F. (2002), pp. 195-233; Löwith, K. (1941) *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche: Der revolutionäre Bruch im Denken des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, pp. 44-49

¹⁴⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. (1820), §261, p. 408

¹⁴⁹ Spaventa, B. (1851a), p. 157

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 139

such dissolution?”.¹⁵¹ The answer, unsurprisingly, was disarmingly clear: “only that which, by virtue of not being the representative of any particular interest, but of the common one, makes everyone’s interests its own, when these are threatened by other interests’ opposition: the State”.¹⁵²

Spaventa’s State, by virtue of its own nature and functions, closely resembled Hegel’s definition of “ethical state”: a form of political organisation actively enabling the rational mediation among particular interests present in society, in order to fully realise a substantive notion of freedom going beyond its discrete individuations.¹⁵³ The modern State, for Bertrando, would constitute itself as absolute ethical substance *vis-à-vis* individual subjectivities, yet acquiring its rational, unconditional and unconditioned, character on the basis of the necessary *sublation* (“Aufhebung”) of its parts. This, in ultimate analysis, was the philosophical backbone of Bertrando’s argument against unregulated freedom of teaching, revealing, at the same time, the extent of his ideological distance from moderate liberal political theory: should the Piedmontese state restrict its influence on educational matters, it would cease to exercise its chief function, as it would enable private interests to triumph over their collective counterpart, hence undermining the ideal synthetic unity of society. In debates on freedom of teaching, Piedmontese liberals, such as Cavour, Balbo and Farini, had advocated a vision of politics that encouraged reducing the size of the state in order for individual freedom to be enhanced. For Spaventa, instead, it was necessary to *maximise* the extent of state action in order for concrete, collective freedom, to triumph. And on this basis, it is certainly quite difficult not only to imagine Bertrando as an advocate of moderate liberal politics, but also to regard him as anything other than a theorist, during the 1850s, of the very same democratic outlook that his generation had endorsed in 1848.

¹⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 158

¹⁵² *ibid.*

¹⁵³ Bertrando’s pointed this out as he claimed that “The State must gather and concentrate in itself, in its universal substance, the splintered and various individualities, and unite in a single shared ambition the spirit and activities of all. And this does not mean that the State ought to act like a force pulling individuals to itself, while remaining extraneous to those who are being pulled. The State is substance, ethical substance. As such, it brings people together, because it is immanent in all individuals’ understanding and activities. A State different to this, or one that did not even configure itself, as they often say, as the full understanding and total inner activity of the people, would be a purely artificial and mechanical institution”. (*ibid.*, p. 159)

4.4. Vico, Hegel and Historicised Freedom

This chapter demonstrated how Neapolitan Hegelians' contribution to the history of political thought of the Risorgimento, a topic often overlooked by historians whose work focuses on the events leading to the unification of the Italian peninsula, deserves more systematic illustration, in ways that may rectify some issues characterising current historiographical verdicts. Central to a more compelling account of Southern Hegelianism's political ramifications was the postulation of a philosophical and ideological *continuum* able to connect the historical memory of the Neapolitan Revolution of 1799, the events of 1848 and the broader cause of the Italian Unification. This perspective is further proof of southern intellectuals' amalgamation of Hegel's idealist historicism with Vico-via-Cuoco's emphasis on a man-made, empirical history: while embracing a Hegelian account of historical development highlighting the rationality and logical necessity of the Revolution, Neapolitan Hegelians searched for the principles guiding their revolutionary agenda in Cuoco and Colletta's commentaries on the failure of 1799. The upholding of popular sovereignty, the promotion of democratic participation and, more importantly, the definition of the *nation* as the fundamental unity of political life thus became central to their politics.

Identifying the extent to which Neapolitan Hegelians' political attitude stemmed from their philosophical understanding of history is here very important from a methodological perspective, too. It demonstrates, in fact, the effectiveness of Reinhart Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte* in explaining how political languages and practices are shaped by the concepts through which a culture understands itself. For *Il Nazionale's* writers, participating in the 1848 Revolution was not just a matter of directing Italy's political future. Rather, it represented a response to shifting perceptions of change in historical time.

Rehabilitating Neapolitan Hegelians' contribution to Risorgimento political thought also goes hand-in-hand with an acknowledgment of how unique this was, if seen in context. Their interpretation of 1848 as a historically necessary step in the creation of an Italian nation-state was markedly different from the political mentalities prevailing in Naples and other parts of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, on the one hand, and the rest of the Italian peninsula, on the other. First, in contrast to thinkers, both in northern and especially southern Italy, who believed in a rather loose notion of a league of Italian states under the existing rulers, they

deployed a dialectical understanding of political change to demonstrate the historical necessity of a unified national state. Second, in opposition to Tuscany, the Papal States and king Ferdinand's decision to renounce their initial allegiances to Piedmont, Neapolitan Hegelians remained convinced that the destiny of the Italian Risorgimento lay in Carlo Alberto's hands. Third, upholding an understanding of political life that resonated with principles of democratic constitutionalism borrowed from the experience of the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution, they invoked an understanding of political life that was far more progressive than the anti-democratic tendencies of Piedmontese liberalism and its advocates.

This last point directly challenges traditional interpretations of Neapolitan Hegelianism's relationship with the politics of Piedmont, too often uncritically reduced to the idea that, especially after the defeat of the 1848 Revolutions, Hegelian philosophy was consistently adopted as the philosophical backbone of liberal politics. This chapter took issue with these views and, in doing so, it attempted to offer a different perspective, suggesting that disentangling Silvio and Bertrando Spaventa's political ideas is key to addressing this issue. While evidence suggested that Silvio's thought was in line with the principles of Piedmontese liberalism, it must be conceded that Hegel's presence in his post-1848 manuscripts was exceptionally hard to identify. Moreover, his intuition that freedom ought to be realised in the law, informing later historiographical verdicts depicting him as an advocate of a Hegelian *Rechtsstaat*, was based on a definition of freedom profoundly antithetical to the one embraced by the German thinker in the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*. So, while there is little doubt that, during his prison years, Silvio affirmed himself as one of the leading theoreticians of moderate liberalism, articulating a vision of politics that he would later champion in his parliamentary activity after 1861, one must be ready to admit that his political outlook developed hand-in-hand with his departure from the principles of Hegel's philosophy.

Bertrando Spaventa's Hegelian tendencies, instead, remained untouched by the defeat of the 1848 Revolution. In fact, when in Turin, he deployed his idealist views in support of the cause of Italian unification by closely engaging with the topics of State formation and the definition of its institutions and its functions, thus further expanding on the project he had initiated with *Il Nazionale* in 1848. Historians' work on Spaventa's Turinese years, however, often drew attention to a perceived rupture with the agenda promoted by the revolutionary periodical, suggesting that Bertrando's post-1848 political sensitivity veered

toward a much more conservative position, informing his alleged promotion of Piedmontese moderate liberalism. Once again, this chapter challenged such views, by focusing on one of the most contentious debates Spaventa engaged in: that on freedom of teaching.

Bertrando's writings on this topic perpetuated the historicist reading of political change underpinning *Il Nazionale's* 1848 articles. The author's insistence on the *logical* and *historical* necessity of creating a State able to promote the principle of nationality, on the one hand, and collective freedom, on the other, can be cited as evidence against those historiographical verdicts regarding, instead, 1848 and the 1850s as two separate moments in his intellectual and political formation. The same reasoning can be extended to the political implications of Bertrando's philosophical sensitivity and, in this sense, his views on freedom of teaching can provide the necessary evidence: central to his writings on this topic was a discussion of freedom that closely reflected its Hegelian formulation.

Unlike his brother Silvio, who had championed an ideal of *unmediated* freedom, Bertrando regarded it as stemming from the dialectical interplay of its particular individuations. In other words, consistent with Hegel's *Grundlinien*, and on the basis of the historical observation of past political change, he did believe that a State's activity had to necessarily revolve around the promotion of collective freedom, warning, at the same time, against an indiscriminate adoption of its individual counterpart, deemed to ultimately threaten the synthetic unity of society. Crucially, for Spaventa, the State, via the extension of its policies and institutions, had to take upon itself the duty of enabling the rational mediation among the particular interests present in society.

This vision of politics lay at the core of Spaventa's contribution to the debate on freedom of teaching: while the Piedmontese government had opted to diminish the extent of its intervention, as a means to promote individual freedom, Bertrando believed that such a solution might be conducive to the fragmentation of state authority and to a conflict of interest which the State was supposed to prevent, let alone resolve. As a result, far from being compatible with the conservative stance associated to it by later commentators, Spaventa's political thought positioned itself in antithesis to moderate liberalism: for the Piedmontese government, the extent of State action had to be limited for the promotion of individual liberties; for Spaventa, instead, it was for the sake of collective freedom, that which Hegel had famously labelled "konkrete Freiheit" in the *Grundlinien*, that it had to be maximised.

5. Italian Philosophy Returns Home: Italy as a Centre of European Modernity in Neapolitan Hegelians' Imagination¹

5.1. Introduction

Il Nazionale's discussion of the 1848 political events, as explained in the previous chapter, acknowledged the Revolution's historical necessity, seen through the lens of a composite Vichian-Hegelian philosophy of history. For the periodical's founders, Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa, the Revolution's "inner power", as defined by Benedetto Croce, stemmed from the force of "the new ideas that direct Europe today".² This exemplified how, in Neapolitan Hegelians' imagination, the consolidation of Italy's national character was not only fuelled by endogenous forces and initiatives, but also determined on the basis of the country's participation in a new, modern, European dimension of political and intellectual life. At a time when a federation of the existing states remained the preferred option for many thinkers in various parts of the peninsula and especially in the South, Hegelians in Naples not only saw the creation of a national state as historically necessary, but also gave the Italian question a broader, European resonance. Obtaining a vantage point for Italy in the life of modern European nations was, in their view, just as important as unifying it.

The intersection of nationalist and cosmopolitan motives proposed by Neapolitan Hegelians was a response to European and Italian debates negotiating a definition of modernity on the basis of an asymmetrical relationship between the hegemony of a modern "light from the North" and its deviant, anti-modern opposite.³ In Europeans' imagination, the dichotomy between a progressive, modern centre and a backward periphery led to the

¹ Sections of this chapter will be included in: De Arcangelis, A. (2018) *The Cosmopolitan Morphology of the National Discourse: Italy as a European Centre of Intellectual Modernity*, to be featured in Hauswedell, T., Körner, A. & Tiedau, U. (eds.) *Remapping Centre and Periphery: Asymmetrical Encounters in European and Global Contexts*. London: UCL Press. Volume in preparation

² *Il Nazionale* (2.5.1848) *La necessità della rivoluzione*, XLVIII, p. 2; Croce, B. (1898) *Silvio Spaventa. Dal 1848 al 1861. Lettere, scritti, documenti*, p. 24

³ Hazard, P. (1953) *The European Mind: the Critical Years, 1680-1715*, pp. 53-59; see also: Dainotto, R. (2007) *Europe (in Theory)*, p. 4

systematic association of Italy with the mental category of a “European south”.⁴ Seen in this context, southern Hegelians’ contribution has often been neglected by historians proposing an increasingly transnational understanding of Italian national character-building during the 1800s, despite their successful efforts to highlight the South’s contribution to the Risorgimento and, more generally, to ideas of Italian modernity.⁵ Addressing this scholarly imbalance is the prime objective of the current chapter. It will begin, in section two, with an overview of the debates leading to a new articulation of modern Europe’s intellectual geography, placing particular attention on Italians’ responses, especially those deploying an orientalist image of the country to bolster a nationalist discourse, such as the works of Cesare Balbo, Giuseppe Ferrari and Giacomo Leopardi. The goal of this section is to illustrate how certain notions, such as the perceived decadence of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian political and cultural landscapes, or the lack of participation in the protestant Reformation, were adopted, both in the peninsula and abroad, to diagnose Italy’s alleged anti-modern character and its “otherness” in present-day Europe.

Section three will focus on Italian thinkers’ attempts to respond to the indiscriminate characterisation of the country as peripheral. An analysis of these is particularly relevant to the study of Neapolitan Hegelianism, as they constituted the proximal context for Southern thinkers’ responses. Two authors will be considered in detail: Vincenzo Cuoco, whose relevance to southern Hegelians was already introduced in chapters two and four of this thesis, and Vincenzo Gioberti. The former’s *Platone in Italia*, published in 1806, and the latter’s *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani*, published in 1843, will be seen as attempts to subvert the notion of Italian alterity, by invoking the principle of Italy’s “historical primacy”, a notion that clearly did not sit well with southern intellectual’s sensibilities.

Their reaction to these debates will be the central concern of section four. This will begin with a discussion of the intellectual outlook common among southern thinkers, who aimed at championing not only the centrality of Italian philosophy in the making of modern

⁴ Moe, N. (2002) *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and Southern Question*, pp. 13-36; see also Chabod, F. (1961) *Storia dell’idea d’Europa*, pp. 45-46; Landes, D. (1996) *Radici sociali e culturali dello sviluppo europeo*, pp. 117-44; Petraccone, C. (2000) *Le due civiltà: settentrionali e meridionali*, pp. 11-23; Salvatorelli, L. (1959) *Pensiero e azione del Risorgimento*, pp. 123-24

⁵ see, for example: Davis, J. (2006) *Naples and Napoleon: Southern Italy and the European Revolutions, 1760-1860*; Duggan, C. (2007) *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796*; Isabella, M. (2009) *Risorgimento in Exile. Italian Émigrés and the Liberal International in the Post-Napoleonic Era*; Patriarca, S. (2010) *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*; Riall, L. (1994) *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification*

European thought, but also the interconnectedness of the various national traditions. Among southern authors' contributions, particular attention will be focused on Stefano Cusani and Stanislao Gatti, whose articles written in Neapolitan periodicals during the late 1830s and early '40s focused on the perceived thematic and methodological continuities among the various national traditions of the continent. Their observations and attempted to challenge the idea that modern philosophy ought to be categorised along national lines. As it was the case in the previous chapters, the emphasis on Cusani and Gatti's journalistic output represents an attempt to draw historians' attention to generally overlooked authors and contexts: not only are their names completely absent in anglophone studies engaging with the intellectual history of the Risorgimento, but they are also too often ignored by Italian scholarship univocally singling out Bertrando Spaventa's most famous text, *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*, composed in 1860-61, as Neapolitan Hegelians' only attempt to engage with the idea of Europe.⁶

This does not mean, however, that the importance of Spaventa's best-known contribution ought to be reconsidered. On the contrary, this chapter will maintain that an even more compelling understanding of *La filosofia italiana* can be obtained by viewing the genesis of this text in relation to commonly overlooked contexts. Among these, Bertrando's Turinese years in the 1850s were no less important – and, unfortunately, no less neglected by historians – than the Neapolitan intellectual landscape of the 1830s and '40s. Spaventa built upon Gatti and Cusani's views in articles published in Turin, further contributing to the identification of fifteenth-, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy as the birthplace of modern European philosophy.

Plotted against Bertrando's earlier writings, *La filosofia italiana* can then be appreciated in its originality: first, by perpetuating Neapolitan Hegelians' broader outlook, this text further expanded on the author's earlier identification of the Italian Renaissance as the cradle of modern thought. Second, it drew attention to how, thanks to thematic and methodological affinities between nineteenth-century Italian and European intellectuals, Italian philosophy could be said to be "returning" to its birthplace, albeit in a mature, more

⁶ Gallo, F. (2012) *Philosophical Revolution and the Shaping of European Consciousness: Bertrando Spaventa's 'La Filosofia Italiana nelle Sue Relazioni colla Filosofia Europea'*, pp. 213-22; Origo, G. (2011) *Bertrando Spaventa interprete di Bruno, Vico ed Hegel*, pp. 143-67; Rota, G. (2005) *La circolazione del pensiero secondo Bertrando Spaventa*, pp. 655-86

developed, form. Additionally, when seen as a response to Gioberti's *Primato, La filosofia italiana* represented Spaventa's most passionate effort to challenge an understanding of modernity that emphasised the hegemonic positions of certain nations over others, underlining, instead, how the making modern European thought rested on the ongoing dialogue and non-competitive encounter of the various national traditions. Simply put, according to Spaventa and the other Neapolitan Hegelians, the development of modern philosophy depended on what one may call, even if in a rather anachronistic manner, transnational intellectual exchanges.

Lastly, by showing how the idea of Europe was at the forefront of southern Hegelians' preoccupations, this chapter will reveal another use of the Vichian-Hegelian historicism developed in the context of Neapolitan private schools, initially discussed in chapter three of this thesis. While chapter four discussed how these ideas were used in connection with Risorgimento political thought, the present one will show how southern thinkers, by articulating a deeply historicised account of European thought, succeeded in reimagining the relationship among the national traditions that constituted it. Understanding European thought as inherently "circular" ultimately enabled Spaventa and his fellow Hegelians not only to make Italian philosophy an integral part of the intellectual space of experience of the continent, but also effectively to negotiate a vantage point for their country among modern European nations.

5.2. Italy as a European "Other"

Italy's systematic marginalisation in the definition of modernity did not stem from a distinct anti-Italian bias, but from European intellectuals' efforts to present their own countries as the epitome of the continent's social, cultural and political achievements. Rather than signalling a denigratory attitude towards Italy, therefore, these views should be regarded as self-referential attempts to construct an image of modernity that gradually minimised the contributions of other countries. Italy was perhaps the most illustrious victim of this logic and the range of arguments invoked was remarkably diversified: the peninsula's climate, its

“southern character”, its having remained untouched by the Protestant Reformation, as well as the perceived lack of civil liberties were frequently referenced to support the idea that, despite the widely acknowledged achievements of Italian humanism and Renaissance, as well as early modern science, present-day Italy was distinctly “less modern” than other regions of the continent. These tendencies were already visible in the French Enlightenment tradition: in 1721, Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* described Italy as a periphery of the continent, a country “empty and depopulated”, presenting itself as the mere “debris of that ancient Italy that was so famous in the past”.⁷ Later on, the 1748 treatise *De l’esprit des lois* translated these considerations into a broader thematisation of a “northern” and a “southern” European character, marking southern populations as savage, backward and violent, as opposed to the civilised Northerners’ natural inclination towards the attainment of liberty.⁸

Contributions to Diderot’s *Encyclopédie*, then, often acted as an echo chamber to Montesquieu’s verdicts, ranging from Louis de Jaucourt’s explanation of Italy’s present backwardness on the basis of its historical decadence, to Voltaire’s proposition of a Francocentric vision of European modernity. These perspectives contributed to the progressive orientalisation of northern Europe’s perceived opposite, most prominently identified with the continent’s southern periphery.⁹ These debates provided the context for increasingly politicised arguments during the nineteenth century: Charles-Victor de Bonstetten’s 1824 text *L’homme du midi et l’homme du nord*, for example, traced a sociocultural history of the dichotomy between northern and southern characters, arguing against the latter’s capacity to sustain effective reforms and enjoy political and economic stability, due to its emphasis on passions and emotions, lack of organisation, culture and reason.¹⁰

Between 1807 and 1818, the Genevan Jean-Charles-Léonard Simonde Sismondi published his monumental *Histoire des républiques Italiennes du moyen-âge*, one of the best-known accounts of nineteenth-century Italy’s allegedly anti-modern character. Tracing the

⁷ Montesquieu, C. L. (1721) *Lettres Persanes*, pp. 149, 183

⁸ Montesquieu, C. L. (1748) *De l’Esprit des Lois*, p. 355

⁹ de Jaucourt, L. (1765) *Italie*, VIII, p. 932; Voltaire (1765) *Histoire*, VIII, pp. 222-23; already in his 1751 work *Siècle de Louis XIV*, then, Voltaire had discussed a process of cultural and political modernisation initially spearheaded by France, famously defined “legislator of Europe”, and later extended to Britain and Germany, while Italy, a “divided” country, was left to “languish”. (Voltaire (1751) *Siècle de Louis XIV*, pp. 14, 32-35)

¹⁰ de Bonstetten, C. (1824) *L’homme du midi et l’homme du nord, ou, l’influence du climat*, pp. 34-41, 132-38, 145-51

origin of modern European civic liberty back to fourteenth-century Italian city-states, Sismondi praised the “energy of liberty” (“*énergie de liberté*”) informing the political history of the peninsula’s *comuni*, viewing them as the birthplace of modern civic virtues.¹¹ Yet, according to Sismondi, things changed from the fifteenth century onwards: tyrannical forms of government emerged in northern Italy and the absence of a Protestant Reformation granted Catholicism a hegemonic power. These factors ultimately eroded Italy’s “*énergie*”, corrupted the country’s national character and paved the way for its progressive marginalisation in the continental context.¹²

In 1828, François Guizot’s *Cours d’histoire moderne*, placed special attention on the significance of the Protestant Reformation in European history, suggesting that this had produced “a prodigious advancement to the activity and liberty of thought” and “a grand tendency to the emancipation of government”, and marked a decisive turning point in the emergence of a distinctly European, modern conception of political and intellectual life.¹³ Guizot’s verdict on the southern peripheries of the continent, particularly Italy and Spain, regarded as prime examples of “countries where the religious revolution did not penetrate, or was early stifled, or was unable to gain any development” was wholeheartedly negative: in these countries, he claimed, “the human mind was not enfranchised”, and would inevitably fall into “weakness and inertness”.¹⁴

These views were not, in any case, exclusively featured in historiographical verdicts emphasising France’s importance in the definition of European modernity. Especially in the nineteenth century, these debates were frequently approached from a Germanocentric perspective. Even in these cases, however, Italy and the Southern regions by and large were ultimately relegated to a position of subordination. Mme de Staël was among the first proponents of this new imaginary geography of the continent.¹⁵ Having already rejected the notion of French hegemony in the making of modern Europe in her 1799 essay *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*, de Staël traced, in her

¹¹ Ruehl, M. (2015) *The Italian Renaissance in German Historical Imagination, 1860-1930*, p. 63; see also Ferguson, W. K. (1948) *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, pp. 127, 145-46

¹² Simonde de Sismondi, J. C. L. (1840) *Histoire des républiques italiennes du moyen-âge*, IV, pp. 70-73; VII, p. 394; VIII, p. 2; see also: Patriarca, S. (2010) *Italian Vices. Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic*, pp. 37-39, 69

¹³ Guizot, F. (1828) *Cours d’histoire moderne. Histoire générale de la civilisation en Europe depuis la chute de l’empire romain jusqu’à la révolution française*, XII, pp. 205-06

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 206

¹⁵ Dainotto, R. (2007), p. 143-46

1810 work *De l'Allemagne*, a socio-cultural anthropology of Germany functional to her notorious hostility to Napoleonic France.¹⁶ A product of De Staël's years in exile, *De l'Allemagne* was initially conceived following Bonaparte's victory over Prussian troops at Jena in October 1806.¹⁷ It erected a largely idealised and romanticised image of the German "spirit" ("esprit") that served to challenge Napoleonic France's hegemonic self-understanding.¹⁸ The author's cultural observations lent themselves to political implications: "Germany", she wrote, "can be considered the heart of Europe, and the great continental association will never be able to recover its freedom if not through the freedom of this country".¹⁹

According to De Staël, thanks to the strength of its virtues, civic spirit and cultural heritage, Germany had imposed itself, particularly in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, as the leading force in the process of European modernisation.²⁰ Unsurprisingly, Italy was described as fundamentally alien to this process. This argument was developed in both essays: in *De la littérature*, the peninsula, due to its political fragmentation, the presence of despotism and superstition, was regarded to be fated to emulate foreign models.²¹ In *De l'Allemagne*, the country's intellectual parochialism was then deemed to have been the chief cause of Italy's inability to engage in a "universal" dimension of cultural life.²²

In 1820, Hegel concluded his *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* with an illustration of four "world-historical realms" ("welthistorischen Reiche"), corresponding to the stages of Spirit's self-realisation in history.²³ These realms, whose discussion would later constitute the bulk of his lectures on philosophy of history, established Spirit's movement as proceeding from East to West: beginning in the "Oriental" realm, it then developed into the "Greek" and "Roman" ones, before fully realising itself in the "Germanic" world.²⁴ Hegel's

¹⁶ de Staël, G. (1799) *De la littérature considérée dans ses rapports avec les institutions sociales*, II, pp. 368-70

¹⁷ Clairborne Isbell, J. (1994) *The Birth of European Romanticism: Truth and Propaganda in Staël's 'De l'Allemagne'*, p. 11

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 15

¹⁹ de Staël, G. (1810) *De l'Allemagne*, p. 22

²⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 23, 67, 170-74

²¹ de Staël, G. (1799), I, pp. 116, 122-23

²² de Staël, G. (1810), p. 354; see also: Thom, M. (1995) *Republics, Nations and Tribes*, p. 273

²³ Hegel, G. W. F. (1820) *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, §341-60, pp. 503-12; on Hegel's "welthistorischen Reiche", see: Dale, E. M. (2014) *Hegel, the End of History, and the Future*, pp. 161-84

²⁴ Hegel, G. W. F. (1820), §358-60, pp. 511-12

depiction of the “germanische Reich” as the result of history’s inner dialectics was an attempt to place protestant Europe at the centre of the modern world.²⁵

In a section of his *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte* entitled *die Neue Zeit*, he then insisted on Germany’s centrality in the development of world history. His focus was on the experience of the Protestant Reformation.²⁶ This event was described as an “all-enlightening sun” leading to the objective actualisation of “the subjective Spirit in truth” and the realisation of freedom.²⁷ The philosopher then identified the Reformation’s “essence” with the emancipatory intuition that “man is destined to be free”.²⁸ This event, however, despite its universal significance, was described as a product of German genius.²⁹ Applauding the “pure inwardness of the German spirit” as “the proper soil for the emancipation of Spirit”, Hegel portrayed a vision of modern Europe whereby all the countries (such as Italy, Greece, Spain and Portugal) that had not experienced the emancipatory value of the Reformation maintained “in the very depth of their soul the principle of disharmony”, thereby suddenly acquiring a peripheral status.³⁰ The Reformation, in this sense, had a dual significance in Hegel’s *Vorlesungen*: on the one hand, it enabled the full emancipation of the *Weltgeist* and the objective realisation of freedom in history; on the other, being a fundamentally German phenomenon, it granted Germany a hegemonic status in the latest stage of world history.³¹ Countries excluded from this picture, most notably those belonging to the continent’s southern periphery, were not only regarded as backward, but also anti-historical.

European intellectuals’ reflections on Italy’s alterity *vis-à-vis* other continental powers soon attracted Italians’ attention, triggering a wide variety of responses. Broadly speaking, these could be grouped into three categories: the first category comprised verdicts endorsing an orientalist image of Italy in the European context, often deploying this intuition as a means to encourage the proliferation of a nationalist discourse over a cosmopolitan one; the second encompassed verdicts attempting to rethink the general co-ordinates of the

²⁵ Beiser, F. (1993) *Hegel’s Historicism*, pp. 293-97; Dickey, L. (1993) *Hegel on Religion and Philosophy*, pp. 331-34; Löwith, K. (1941) *Von Hegel zu Nietzsche: Der revolutionäre Bruch im Denken des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, pp. 354-60

²⁶ Beiser, F. (2002) *Hegel*, pp. 124-31; Löwith, K. (1941), pp. 20, 31-38; Moyer, D. (2011) *Hegel’s Conscience*, pp. 23-27

²⁷ Hegel, G. W. F. (1837) *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, p. 430

²⁸ *ibid.*, p. 436

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 438

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 439

³¹ Moyer, D. (2011), p. 24

continent's imaginary geography; among these, the third category contained verdicts that operated a downright rejection of Italy's perceived marginality, by attempting to illustrate the peninsula's historical centrality in the political and cultural landscape of the continent.

Especially during the nineteenth century, the negotiation of a vantage point for Italy in the life of modern European nations often intersected with the narrative of the country's unification, sometimes contributing to a problematic juxtaposition of cosmopolitan and nationalist tendencies, as underlined by several twentieth-century commentators.³² A clear example of these two motives' confluence was represented by views advanced by Cesare Balbo, whose vocal support for the cause of the unification was informed, to a large extent, by the recognition of Italy's inherent "otherness" and marginality in the European context. In the 1843 text *Delle speranze d'Italia*, he identified, championing a markedly iconoclastic stance, the cause of Italy's perceived alterity *vis-à-vis* the other European power with the fragmentation of political liberties and the presence of foreign domination during the Renaissance.³³

According to Balbo, the sixteenth century, had been "nothing more than a splendid and happy-go-lucky free fall". In his view, two symptoms were particularly concerning: first, Balbo mentioned divisions caused by the lack of a political culture encouraging national unification initiatives and emancipation from foreign powers; second, he reported an overall cultural decadence, explaining that this was due to repeated failures to organise cultural production along the lines of a genuine, national and autochthonous, heritage.³⁴ Balbo was certainly aware that the Italian national character being shaped and negotiated during the Risorgimento rested on an extremely unstable basis and believed that the country's idiosyncratic, difficult path towards a European dimension of political modernity in the nineteenth century ought to be attributed to its past, which was marked by political and cultural fragmentation.³⁵

³² Chabod, F. (1961), pp. 44-80, 143; Croce, B. (1934) *Storia d'Europa nel secolo decimonono*, pp. 1-16; Gramsci, A. (1977) *Quaderni dal carcere*, XIX, §2, p. 1963

³³ Balbo, C. (1843) *Delle speranze d'Italia*, pp. 419-53; Similar arguments were also advanced by Cavour. See, for example: Benso, C. (5.3.1829) *Da Torino allo zio Sillon*, pp. 59-65; On Balbo's analysis of the Renaissance, see: Ciliberto, M. (1987) *Interpretazioni del Rinascimento: Balbo e Romagnosi*, pp. 65-91; Rubini, R. (2014) *The Other Renaissance: Italian Humanism between Hegel and Heidegger*, pp. 57-61

³⁴ Balbo, C. (1856) *Della storia d'Italia dalle origini fino ai nostri tempi*, pp. 93, 306, 372-74, 390-93

³⁵ Balbo, C. (1843), pp. 209-42

The republican Giuseppe Ferrari advanced similar views. In 1837, he defined the sixteenth century an “enigma”, marked by the experience of “a splendid crisis”, and characterised by fundamental political and cultural divisions.³⁶ While other powers of the continent were embarking on their emancipatory enterprises by undertaking a series of “centralising” initiatives, Italy “remained motionless in its past”, and fundamentally alien to the experience of “the great European passions, ideas and struggles”.³⁷ Crucially, for Ferrari, the definition of Italy as “a motionless nation, which, pulled along by Europe, witnessed the great spectacle of the modern era, albeit without understanding it” reflected the acknowledgment of other nations’ hegemonic position from the sixteenth century onwards: more specifically, France was believed to be destined, in the wake of the Napoleonic experience, to act as a guide to all other nations of the continent.³⁸

The poet Giacomo Leopardi, then, reprised, during the early 1820s, Winckelmann’s inquiries on the Mediterranean character of southern European cultural production, amalgamating them with de Staël’s geopolitical arguments, in his 1824 *Discorso sopra lo stato presente dei costumi degl’Italiani*. In this text, the “ancient” character of the Italian peninsula was contrasted with the “modern spirit” of northern European nations, concluding that one can find a genuine “image of modernity” only among the latter.³⁹ As a result, Leopardi resolutely claimed that “the North’s time has come”.⁴⁰ Similar views were expressed in the posthumously published *Zibaldone di pensieri*, in which he repeatedly referenced Montesquieu’s observations alongside de Staël’s, in order to support the notion of “modern northerners’ superiority”, or in one of his *Operette morali*, where the definition of “modern civil nations” went hand-in-hand with the illustration of northern European bourgeois society.⁴¹

Italy’s perceived alterity in the context of European modernity, however, was often re-imagined by authors of the peninsula, in ways that questioned this imaginary geography, on the one hand, and sometimes restricted notions of “backwardness” and “ancient character” to the sole context of southern Italy, on the other. It is important to notice that

³⁶ Ferrari, G. (1837) *La mente di Giambattista Vico*, pp. 3-6, 49

³⁷ *ibid.*

³⁸ *ibid.*; Ferrari, G. (1867) *La Chine et l’Europe: leur histoires et leur traditions comparées*, pp. 597-98

³⁹ Leopardi, G. (1824) *Discorso sopra lo stato presente dei costumi degl’italiani*, pp. 36-38

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Leopardi, G. (1898) *Zibaldone di pensieri*, pp. 670, 755-56; Leopardi, G. (1827) *Detti memorabili di Filippo Ottonieri*, pp. 142-43

many of these contributions, by relying on the growing popularity of the press, succeeded in shaping the views of a wider public, both in southern and, even more noticeably, northern Italy.⁴² While Neapolitan periodicals such as *Omnibus* and, even more prominently, *Poliorama pittoresco* frequently drew comparisons between northern Europe's technological and economic advancements and the Greco-Roman heritage of the Italian peninsula, northern periodicals, predominantly the Milan-based *Cosmorama pittorico*, adopted a noticeably different stance.⁴³ Already in 1836, *Cosmorama* had begun adopting geopolitical and anthropological observations as the basis for derogatory judgments on the "barbarous" Mezzogiorno. This was especially evident in the way the asymmetry between northern and southern Italy was imagined in relation to the wider fracture between northern and southern Europe. Lombardy, in fact, was often described as a prime embodiment of the modern European spirit, inhabited by "the most cultured people in the world" and its socio-economic organisation and technological advancement usually equated to an inherently European notion of progress.⁴⁴ This was often described using very emphatic language: the "great industry", "excellent infrastructure", "clean architecture" and "optimal economy" of Milan and the neighbouring regions were frequently compared to those of the "great" European capitals: London, Paris and Amsterdam; the Mezzogiorno, then, was systematically described as untouched by these signs of progress. An article, in particular, while highlighting the "European character" of northern cities, pointed at the impossibility to observe the same in those of the Mezzogiorno, characterised by a "primitive" degree of civilisation.⁴⁵

It was accordingly against an indiscriminate characterisation of Italy as the peripheral, Southern country *par excellence* that many Italian authors often directed their efforts. The most notable of these was by the Lombard economist Melchiorre Gioia. In 1825, his *Reflections on Charles-Victor de Bonstetten's The Man of the South and the Man of the North* openly attempted to rethink the notion of European "southernness" by restricting it to the

⁴² Dickie, J. (1999) *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno, 1860-1900*, pp. 83-119; Moe, N. (2002) *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*, pp. 85-87

⁴³ see, for instance: Cirelli, F. (1836) *La chiesa di S. Stefano a Vienna*, pp. 208-10; De Simone, G. (1836) *La cattedrale di Burgos*, pp. 57-58; Fazzini, A. (1836) *Niccolo' Fergola*, pp. 305-07; Lauria, G. A. (1838) *Basilea nella diligenza di Basilea*, pp. 402-04; Liberatore, R. (1836) *Porta Capuana*, pp. 6-7; Malpica, C. (1839) *L'impero ottomano*, pp. 41-43; Malpica, C. (1840) *Storia di Napoleone*, pp. 333-35; Malpica, C. (1840) *I pastori arcadi*, pp. 341-42; Morcigni Novella, V. (1836) *Occhiata su talune principali invenzioni e scoperte*, pp. 210-12; Sacchi, D. (1836) *Antonio Canova*, pp. 18-20; Scrugli, F. (1837) *Una occhiata a Napoli*, pp. 67-70

⁴⁴ Sacchi, G. (1836) *Gli antipodi*, p. 1

⁴⁵ Fremy, A. (1846) *Impressioni di un viaggio in Italia*, pp. 406-08

sole context of the Mezzogiorno. He challenged several sections of the Swiss writer's text, arguing that "the author attributes to all of Italy a custom which he observed in the noble houses of Rome and Naples".⁴⁶ He then claimed that northern Italy, thanks to the presence of successful economic institutions and progressive forms of social life similar to those observable in northern European capitals, exhibited a kind of behaviour and social organisation consistent with the idea of a northern, modern bourgeois society. Gioia consequently urged to rethink the conventional North-South dichotomy, conceding that southern Italy was, in many respects, more prominently "southern" than any other region of the continent.⁴⁷

In spite of the variety of notions invoked to support it and of the numerous attempts made to rethink its coordinates, the idea of Italian alterity still remained present in many contributions to nineteenth-century cultural imagination, greatly contributing to the earliest thematisation of that which would later come to be labelled "Southern Question" ("Questione Meridionale"). Yet, what appears evident on the basis of the evidence presented above is the emphasis on the temporal dimension of these debates. Alongside notions of climate and geography, intellectuals in Italy and abroad began articulating a mental geography of the continent that resulted from an increasingly teleological understanding of its history: modernity was consistently imagined in connection with a "northern" space of experience. To borrow Reinhart Koselleck's vocabulary, it was precisely within the chasm between their space of experience and horizon of expectations that the ideal of modernity embodied by other nations, such as Italy, came to be seen as defective, marking their alterity in a European context.⁴⁸

For Italians, challenging their country's perceived peripheral status required an operation going well beyond its positive re-evaluation in the context of present-day Europe: for Italy to be seen as truly *modern*, in fact, it was first and foremost necessary to rethink the relationship between its past and its future, showing how the former, if "made present", was able to disclose a future from which the present derived its expectations. Unsurprisingly, Italian reactions to the country's characterisation as peripheral often took the form of re-writings of its history, aiming at demonstrating how its relationship to other European

⁴⁶ Gioia, M. (1824) *Riflessioni in difesa degli italiani su l'opera del sig. di Bonstetten*, p. 10

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 14-15

⁴⁸ Koselleck, R. (1985) *Futures Past: on the Semantics of Historical Time*, p. 276

powers was not one teleologically leading to its marginalisation. Among nineteenth-century contributors to these debates, two authors stood out due to the impact of their ideas: Vincenzo Cuoco and Vincenzo Gioberti.

5.3. Challenging the Asymmetry, Re-imagining History: National Primacy and European Hegemony

With European and Italian debates on national identity-building *vis-à-vis* transnational images of modernity, coupled with the systematic acknowledgment of certain nations' hegemonic position in the nineteenth century, constituting the broader intellectual context for Italian intellectuals' negotiation of their *patria's* position within a new, modern, experience of temporality, the early decades of the 1800s witnessed the increasing juxtaposition of nationalist tendencies and cosmopolitan sensibilities. In a nutshell, intellectuals' observations on the construction and consolidation of an Italian national character were plotted against broader considerations on how this ought to stand in relation to other European nations.⁴⁹

The earliest example of a re-writing of the Italian past able to illuminate the country's relation to other European powers in the present and direct it in the future can be found in an often-overlooked text by Vincenzo Cuoco, published between 1804 and 1806: the epistolary novel *Platone in Italia*, with which, as this chapter shall explain in the next section, Neapolitan Hegelians would repeatedly take issue during the 1840s and '50s. Cuoco, who fled Naples following King Ferdinand IV's retaliation against the supporters of the Neapolitan Republic briefly established in 1799 by the French, devoted this work to the pursuit of a clear goal: championing the need for Italy to acquire a unified national cultural and philosophical character in order to stand tall in the contemporary philosophical landscape of Europe. This intention was easily discernible in his intellectual preoccupations during those years. Already in 1804, for instance, Cuoco highlighted the need to shape "the public spirit of the nation",

⁴⁹ Venturi, F. (1973) *L'Italia fuori dall'Italia*, pp. 6-11; see also: Banti, A. M. (2000) *La nazione del Risorgimento*, pp. 4-5

and “engage, at least with our thought, with other nations, growing accustomed to considering the glory of Italy as a shared one”.⁵⁰

Platone in Italia was presented as a translation of an imaginary ancient Greek manuscript, detailing Plato’s fictional trip to Southern Italy. In the book, the philosopher visited a number of small communities, displaying strikingly progressive customs, such as the complete emancipation of women among the Sannites, excellent organization skills, a very creative language, a peaceful behaviour and sheer brilliance in the scientific and intellectual domains. These talents were associated to an obscure “Pythagorean genius”, which Cuoco’s Plato, following Giambattista Vico’s notion of *Antiquissima italarum sapientia*, saw as central in the making of Italy’s national character: “I venture to say”, he pointed out, “that Pythagoras never existed; he is rather an idea conjured up by people to denote a system of cognitions whose origins are very ancient, and that has been conserved and handed down through a board of wise men who were born and raised in Italy”, whom Cuoco identified with the Etruscans, the true bearers of the Vichian “most ancient wisdom of the Italians”.⁵¹

This intuition led Plato to acknowledge the Italians’ superiority over the Greeks, as “these nations that we deem barbaric have been cultured long before us”.⁵² Cuoco’s *Platone in Italia* can be read as a metaphor for the encounter, in the nineteenth century, of the Italian and the French nations: the Greeks’ boastfulness and overinflated sense of pride was dramatically challenged by the contemplation of Italians’ “Pythagorean genius”. Therefore, just as Cuoco’s Plato was forced to admit Italy’s cultural superiority over Greece, foreign observers in the present, especially the French, must acknowledge the uniqueness of the peninsula’s tradition and its historical intellectual primacy over Europe, informed by a notion of an “ancient Italian genius” borrowed from Vico.

An investigation of the notion of *primacy* is, in this context, crucial in order to make sense of Italy’s relationship with the European intellectual landscape of the nineteenth

⁵⁰ It is important, at this point, to point out that, while the concept of *nation* was generally adopted by the Cuoco as a signifier for the Mezzogiorno alone, recent historiography highlighted how his works featured the earliest theorisation of the *nazione del Risorgimento* discussed, among others, by Alberto Banti. See: De Francesco, A. (2013) *The Antiquity of the Italian Nation*, p. 46; Cuoco, V. (1804) *Programma del Giornale Italiano*, p.3; Cuoco was particularly sensitive to the ways in which Italy was lagging behind other European powers with regards to cultural and political unification endeavours. See, for instance: Cuoco, V. (1801) *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione Napoletana del 1799*, pp. 39-40, 90; Cuoco, V. (1804), pp. 3-4; Cuoco, V. (1807) *Idea di un libro necessario all’Italia*, pp. 164-66

⁵¹ Cuoco, V. (1806) *Platone in Italia*, p. 101

⁵² *ibid.*, p. 103

century, but any analysis of this concept is complicated by the fact that it served a dual purpose: on the one hand, it allowed Italian thinkers to appeal to their tradition to challenge their marginalisation in the continental context; on the other, it often erected a wall around the country's cultural heritage, rendering it untouchable and fundamentally hostile to foreign influences. While the transnational implications of the concept of primacy remain an open question, the relevance of this concept to the discourse of the Unification cannot be in doubt: projecting this idea onto debates concerned with Italy's cultural emancipation, Cuoco contributed to defining Italians as a cohesive and organic unit, thereby popularizing the belief, which he had borrowed from Vico, in unified nations as reflections of shared cultural heritages and traditions.

Following Cuoco's exhortation to embrace Italy's great tradition, one could observe the proliferation of works adopting a similar line of argumentation: Ugo Foscolo's 1807 poem *I sepolcri* praised the resilience of the Italian national character, positing that a newfound cultural cohesion ought to be established on the example of the men of genius of the past, whom the author referred to as "Itale glorie", ultimately inciting Italians to action and urging them to take a stronger stance against French hegemony in the peninsula and the rest of the continent.⁵³ Giuseppe Micali's 1810 book *L'Italia avanti il dominio de'romani* went even further back, connecting the efforts of the present with the shared pre-Roman origin of the Italian people, and presented, in a manner similar to Cuoco's, a depiction of Etruscans' superiority over the Romans as a metaphor for Italy's primacy over other nineteenth-century European nations.⁵⁴ Lastly, Angelo Mazzoldi's 1840 *Delle origini italiche e della diffusione dell'incivilimento italiano* linked the historical origin of the Italian nation with Plato's allegory of Atlantis, the fictitious embodiment of the ideal city-state detailed in the *Republic*, to symbolize the historical intellectual superiority of Italy over its continental counterparts.⁵⁵

In any case, while these works differed insofar as they tended to locate the origin of an Italian national culture in different areas and historical periods, their most striking shared features were a passionate cult of the past, on the one hand, and the tendency to positively

⁵³ Foscolo, U. (1807) *I sepolcri*, p. 18; Duggan, C. (2007) *The Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796*, p. 35

⁵⁴ Micali, G. (1810) *L'Italia avanti il dominio de'romani*, I, pp. 14-24, 56-61, II, pp. 195, 222-240, 263-66; see also: Calaresu, M. (1997) *Images of Ancient Rome in Late Eighteenth-Century Neapolitan Historiography*, pp. 641-61; Körner, A. (2009) *Politics of Culture in Liberal Italy. From Unification to Fascism*, pp. 128-60; Mascioli, F. (1942) *Anti-Roman and Pro-Italic Sentiment in Italian Historiography*, pp. 366-82

⁵⁵ Mazzoldi, A. (1840) *Delle origini italiche e della diffusione dell'incivilimento italiano*, pp. 172-76

re-evaluate Italian history in order to gain a position of prominence within nineteenth-century Europe, on the other. It is difficult, however, to see how the primacy of Italy, which, according to Foscolo, was still observable with Machiavelli and Galileo, could be rescued from a sterile cult of the past and be fully projected onto the context of the nineteenth century, especially given the presence of debates, both in Italy and abroad, emphasising the fundamentally peripheral character of present-day Italy.⁵⁶ New questions emerged: is Italy's primacy still observable in the present? How would it inform the country's relation to other European powers?

An answer to these questions appeared in 1843, when Vincenzo Gioberti's essay *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani* proposed a solution to the problem of the Unification that indicated, at the same time, how the country was to stand in relation to its European peers. Gioberti's book invoked a reprise of Guelph federalism, arguing in favour of the full liberation from foreign influences and the transformation of Italy into a confederation of the existing states, with the Pope acting as a symbolic head of the union.⁵⁷ As explained in chapter four of this thesis, Gioberti's political programme was not well-received among Neapolitan Hegelians, whose theorisation of a unitary national state was fundamentally at odds with the neo-guelph views common in much of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies and the rest of Italy. At the same time, their opposition went beyond a strictly political domain and targeted, in particular, the book's reading of Italian history within that of Europe. Gioberti's project, in fact, stemmed from wider considerations on the historical character of the Italian nation, labelled "the religious nation *par excellence*" and the ways in which the Church had granted its historical primacy over its European counterparts. The Turinese philosopher saw the Church as an inherently national institution, and as the chief source of Italy's cultural unity and prosperity in the past, as well as a guide to follow if the country was to carve out prominence for itself in contemporary European politics.⁵⁸

Ever since Roman times, Gioberti argued, the historical development of Italian culture was inextricably linked with Rome's position at the core of Christian Europe, granting a favourable position over the rest of the continent. Even after the end of the Roman Empire, the Church managed to preserve unity and cohesion, at least in terms of shared tradition and

⁵⁶ Foscolo, U. (1807), pp. 17-18; see also: Foscolo, U. (1817) *Stato politico delle isole jonie*, pp. 11-13

⁵⁷ Gioberti, V. (1843) *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani*, I, pp. 37-38

⁵⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 31, 311-15

customs, among the people of the peninsula. Divisions emerged concomitantly with the Protestant Reformation, not only in terms of the immediate challenge posited to the unity of Christianity, but also, and, in Gioberti's view, even more dramatically, because of the introduction of foreign "barbarian", subjectivist and empiricist, ideas into the philosophical landscape of the peninsula.⁵⁹

For these reasons, Italy found itself in a position of subordination to the emerging European powers such as France, England and Prussia. France, in particular, was targeted with remarkable force: the actions of Charles VIII, Louis XIV and, later on, Napoleon, were accused of having challenged Italy's aspirations to independence and contributed to spreading a tendency to "corrupt, maim and uproot" the principles of Revelation, by encouraging a blind obedience to the ideas of Renée Descartes.⁶⁰ As a result, Italian culture, tainted with a servile imitation of foreign ideas, ideologies and institutions, engaged with the rest of Europe in a relationship of dependence, strongly hindering, on the one hand, the country's unique spiritual status and, on the other, preventing the flourishing of the local, native culture.

The acknowledgment of the asymmetrical nature characterizing Italy's relationship with the rest of Europe from the Reformation onwards did not prevent Gioberti from offering a positive evaluation of the country's historical primacy in the context of the Risorgimento. He boldly stated, in fact, that "Italy features within itself, mainly thanks to religion, all the necessary conditions for its national and political Risorgimento", arguing against Mazzinian revolutionary ideals and the dependence on foreign intervention.⁶¹ Key to this goal, he suggested, was the consolidation of national culture, along the principles informing the historical pre-eminence of the Church in the intellectual life of Italy, as well as the perpetuation of its centrality in politics, a programme seen as unquestionably consistent with the country's history.⁶² However, while both in its historical analysis and its propositions for the Risorgimento, the book revealed an interest for the cultural and political dynamics of the wider continent, it did not adopt a cosmopolitan perspective, but a nationalist one. More specifically, Gioberti's argument rested on the idea that the relationship between Italian and

⁵⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 186-88

⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 205-16

⁶¹ *ibid.*, p. 116

⁶² *ibid.*, pp. 117-21, 273-75

foreign culture must be radically altered, with preference given to native forces over external ones.

This hostility towards foreign influences, already visible in Antonio Rosmini's 1830 essay *Nuovo saggio sull'origine delle idee*, achieved wide popularity thanks to the dissemination of Gioberti's *Primato*, circulated in virtually all regions of Italy and especially well-received in Naples.⁶³ Francesco De Sanctis recounted, in his autobiography *La giovinezza*, how, upon reading the book, he immediately identified it as the ideological forerunner of a new, rapidly growing, school of thought that championed the absolute primacy of the Italian language, rhetoric, style and culture at large, rejecting any engagement with its European counterparts.⁶⁴ This was not an uncommon tendency in Neapolitan Hegelians' immediate context: De Sanctis himself, for instance, had been a student of Basilio Puoti's, whose private school of literature had emerged, from the 1820s onwards, as the most vocal proponent of literary purism, a current upholding the imitation of Italian language and literature of the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, in direct opposition to the French inflections perceivable in various other regions of the peninsula.

Similarly, Luigi Palmieri, appointed professor of philosophy and logic at the University of Naples in 1847, believed in the need to prevent the spread of the dangerous "German pantheism" in national culture. He encouraged, instead, the systematic re-discovery of the local tradition: "In declaring myself openly to be a loyal follower of our native thought", he claimed in the introductory lecture of his course, "I cannot but reprove the repeated attempts to enable certain foreign doctrines to take root among us. Today we are infested with German encroachments because there are some teachers who would indoctrinate our youth with German pantheism, especially with that brand which is rigged out in the imposing and grandiose cloak of George Frederick Hegel".⁶⁵

Gioberti and Palmieri's examples of hostility towards foreign ideas taking root in Italy could hardly represent an encouraging background for what concerns the projection of the country toward a European dimension of modernity, let alone the attainment of a vantage

⁶³ Rosmini, A. (1830) *Nuovo saggio sull'origine delle idee*, I, pp. x-xii. On Gioberti's popularity in Naples, see: Mack-Smith, D. (1988) *The Making of Italy, 1796-1866*, p.117

⁶⁴ De Sanctis, F. (1889) *La giovinezza. Memorie postume seguite da testimonianze biografiche di amici e discepoli*, p. 338

⁶⁵ Palmieri, L. (1847) *Prolusione alle lezioni di logica e metafisica nella cattedra della R. Università degli studi*, pp. 21-22

point in the intellectual landscape of the continent. Especially in Gioberti's *Primato*, one can identify the same logic characterising Piedmontese debates during the 1830s and '40s: because Italy had been acquiring an increasingly peripheral status from the sixteenth century onwards, promoting a nationalist perspective was seen as fundamentally antithetical to encouraging a cosmopolitan one. As a result, while Gioberti and his peers' arguments attempted to strengthen national identity and cultural unity via a positive re-evaluation of the country's history, they remained ambiguous with regard to the relevance of its past primacy in the present, thus failing to articulate the progressive character of the country's intellectual forces in the nineteenth-century European intellectual landscape.

Even more importantly, their attempts to champion Italy's cultural primacy, being grounded (to borrow, once again, Reinhart Koselleck's vocabulary), on the positive re-evaluation of a fundamentally idiosyncratic space of experience, ultimately resulted in the conceptualisation of a horizon of expectations characteristically disconnected from a European experience of modernity. In other words, Gioberti and, to a large extent, Cuoco's nationalist attempts to "make the past present", while genuinely animated by a desire to rehabilitate Italy's national character in a European context, ultimately did little more than perpetuate the notion of Italian *alterity*. For this asymmetrical relationship to be truly challenged, then, a much more cosmopolitan intellectual sensitivity was required. Neapolitan Hegelians did not fail to live up to this challenge.

5.4. Neapolitan Hegelians and the Transnational Making of European Philosophy

The lack of attention placed on Neapolitan Hegelians by anglophone studies proposing an increasingly transnational understanding of the Risorgimento is problematised by the extent to which twentieth-century Italian commentators have drawn attention to their attempts to slot the study of the country's philosophy within the broader picture of a European intellectual geography. The figure of Bertrando Spaventa was usually central to these studies. Commenting on his writings of the early 1860s, Benedetto Croce pointed out how, by carrying "the torch of idealist philosophy", the Southern philosopher had fully managed to negotiate

Italy's position in the European cultural landscape.⁶⁶ Similarly, Giovanni Gentile, who edited and published several works by Spaventa, praised Bertrando's idealist, Hegelian attempts to close the gap between Italian Renaissance tradition and modern European philosophy.⁶⁷ Lastly, Antonio Gramsci claimed, in his *Prison notebooks*, that Bertrando's characteristically Europhile philosophical sensitivity, coupled with his direct participation in Risorgimento political history, had succeeded in teaching Italians how to think "globally" ("mondialmente").⁶⁸

For Bertrando, as well as the rest of the Hegelian youth, rehabilitating Italy's national character in a European context was fundamentally linked with a primarily philosophical, historiographic and speculative, endeavour, rather than one grounded in direct political action. Neapolitan Hegelians' passionate emphasis on consolidating Italy's national character via the regeneration of its philosophical tradition, discussed in chapter four of the present thesis, was, in this sense, already clear in 1848. Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa's involvement with the revolutionary periodical *Il Nazionale* had fully unveiled their determination to translate the emerging "philosophical movement" into an experience of social and political change, by "recuperating the lost ranks of our tradition and develop them into a doctrine able to cast a light upon our uncertain future", and by embracing the consequences of this operation as "a social manifestation of the desired outcomes".⁶⁹ For Spaventa and the writers of *Il Nazionale*, the historical necessity of the Revolution was informed by the "irresistible" spread of "new ideas, ruling today over Europe" and demanding a political realisation.⁷⁰ Bertrando clarified these observations in an often-overlooked article penned in Turin in 1851, entitled *False accuse contro l'hegelismo*, in which he maintained that the genuine emancipation of a people depended on the cultural and philosophical regeneration of the local intellectual tradition: the unity and freedom of a nation, the author pointed out, could only be obtained thanks to "great ideas. And among these, I do not regard philosophy as having a marginal role, especially in Italy, were, being every purely external connection largely ineffective with regards to the immense endeavour of national unity, it is necessary, first of

⁶⁶ Croce, B. (1921) *Storia della storiografia italiana nel secolo decimonono*, II, pp. 103-05, 107

⁶⁷ Gentile, G. (1908) *Prefazione*, p. ix

⁶⁸ Gramsci, A. (1977) *Quaderni dal carcere*, IV, §56 p. 504

⁶⁹ see: *Il Nazionale* (1.3.1848) *Programma*, I, pp. 1-4; *Il Nazionale* (2.3.1848) *Idea del movimento italiano*, II, pp. 1-6

⁷⁰ *Il Nazionale* (18.4.1848) *L'italianità*, XXXVIII, p. 3; see also: *Il Nazionale* (2.5.1848) *Necessita della rivoluzione*, XLVIII, pp. 3-6

all, to create an inner connection in order to resuscitate the ancient genius of the nation, currently toned down by present-day divisions".⁷¹

The events of 1848 enabled Southern Italy not only to challenge the coordinates of an imaginary geography relegating Italy to a peripheral position, but also, and more importantly, to present itself as a European vanguard. Sicilians, for example, found pride in the fact that the continent's Revolutions had started in Palermo and in the extent to which local revolutionaries had set an example for other Italians and Europeans.⁷² In the same year, *Il Nazionale* conveyed Neapolitan Hegelians' ongoing attempts to place themselves at the centre of the continent's intellectual geography, by showing that the relationship between the Italian and foreign traditions was one of systematic interdependence, rather than separation. Despite its political focus, therefore, the journal's articles reflected Neapolitan Hegelians' broader reflections on the history of modern philosophy. The development of this outlook was indebted to the writings of Stefano Cusani, Stanislao Gatti and Francesco De Sanctis, whose private schools' contribution to the amalgamation of Vichianism and Hegelianism, as well as their attempts to de-provincialise present-day philosophical sensibilities by encouraging the study of German idealism among the local youth, were discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis.

As illustrated in chapter one, for example, Cusani's articles written in the 1830s for *Il progresso* and *Museo* had been extremely important in disentangling Hegel's philosophy of history from Victor Cousin's eclecticism. Yet, in attempting to show the thematic and methodological continuity between the emerging German idealist current and the French eclectic school, he hinted, already in the late 1830s, at an unmistakably transnational understanding of modern European thought. Furthermore, focusing especially on Cusani and Gatti's reflections modern philosophy also serves another purpose: drawing historians' attention to authors too often neglected by studies singling out Bertrando Spaventa's theory of European thought's circularity as Neapolitan Hegelians' only attempt to engage with the idea of Europe.⁷³

⁷¹ Spaventa, B. (1851) *False accuse contro l'hegelismo*, p. 319

⁷² Körner, A. (2017) *America in Italy. The United States in the Political Thought and Imagination of the Risorgimento, 1763-1865*, pp. 154-60

⁷³ see n.6; Cione, E. (1960) *Francesco De Sanctis ed i suoi tempi*; Oldrini, G. (1969) *Il primo hegelismo italiano*; Oldrini, G. (1973) *La cultura filosofica napoletana nell'ottocento*; Oldrini, G. (1989) *Gli hegeliani di Napoli e la costruzione dello stato unitario*; Losurdo, D. (1997) *Dai fratelli Spaventa a Gramsci. Per una storia politico-sociale della fortuna di Hegel in Italia*

Already in the late 1830s, Neapolitan Hegelians were beginning to think in increasingly European terms: an article by Cusani entitled *Del reale obietto d'ogni filosofia e del solo procedimento a poterlo raggiungere*, published in 1839 in *Il progresso*, for instance, identified speculative links among various national traditions, suggesting that, while these had provided diverging outcomes, they all shared the same preoccupation with Descartes' theorisation of a tension between subjectivity and objectivity.⁷⁴ For Cusani, this operation had marked the beginning of modernity, seen as a distinct epoch in the history of philosophy. In contrast to previous inquiries in the "external world", namely nature and metaphysics, modern thought ("il pensiero moderno") "folded itself inwards" to contemplate the "inner world" of man's knowledge and consciousness.⁷⁵ Cusani further developed these intuitions in a later article entitled *Della scienza assoluta*, in which he discussed the continuities among Locke, Condillac, Malebranche and Hume, claiming that their philosophies constituted different attempts to come to terms with the form of scepticism embedded in Descartes' ideas.⁷⁶

Yet, it was in *Del metodo filosofico e d'una sua storia* that Cusani invited a much more detailed characterisation of the intellectual exchanges illustrated in his earlier articles, and hailed Immanuel Kant as the theorist of a new philosophical mentality able not only to mediate among competing national traditions, but to amalgamate them into a cohesive whole, too. Cusani's engagement with Kantianism, despite being quite superficial, was nonetheless a genuine attempt to view the emergence and development of this school of thought as part of a broader movement of ideas, which, depending on exchanges occurring across national boundaries, ought to be deemed European, rather than tied to specific, nation-centered parameters. Cusani's own language made this intuition very clear: his account of modern philosophy emphasised how "national philosophies" ("le filosofie nazionali") "addressed", "reprised", "completed", "reflected on", or "responded to" one another. As a result, the author explained that the development of modern philosophy depended to not only national traditions, but also – and more importantly – their merging into "European schools" ("scuole europee").⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Cusani, S. (1839a) *Del reale obietto d'ogni filosofia e del solo procedimento a poterlo raggiungere*, pp. 47-48

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 28

⁷⁶ Cusani, S. (1842) *Della scienza assoluta*, p. 111

⁷⁷ Cusani, S. (1839a), p. 60

The main novelty of Cusani's contribution lay in the postulation of thematic and methodological links between modern German philosophy and its European predecessors: French sensualism, David Hume's "universal scepticism" and the emerging idealist school in Germany had all been synthesised by Kant's transcendental psychologism, which consequently imposed itself as the full amalgamation of "the leading principles of all philosophies".⁷⁸

The vision of Europe's philosophical modernity imagined by Cusani, however, while attempting to demonstrate the interdependence of various local traditions, systematically excluded Italians' contributions: the Italian genius, he argued, had been severely thwarted, from the fifteenth century onwards, by the local "lack of erudition", as well as the "external forces opposing freedom of thought".⁷⁹ Among these, special consideration was given to the Protestant Reformation, which, by "unsettling the political and the intellectual world", marked the birthplace of "modern philosophy".⁸⁰ Italy, having remained fundamentally alien to this process, was relegated to a peripheral position in relation to other European powers, ultimately causing the philosophical sensibilities of the peninsula to remain dormant. As a result, particularly due to his passionate praise of Kantianism, Cusani's vision of modern European thought remained a Germanocentric one, with Fichte, Schelling and, to an even greater extent, Hegel being praised for having rescued Kant's ideas from their psychologist tendencies and translated them into a philosophy of absolute Spirit.⁸¹

If Cusani, then, succeeded in theorising links among various national philosophical traditions, but failed to rehabilitate Italy's position in the context of modern European thought, his contemporary Stanislao Gatti took his reasoning to an extreme. His 1841 article *Del progressivo svolgimento dell'idea filosofica nella storia* attempted to reject the very categorisation of philosophy as "national". While conceding that national distinctions were indeed valid as regards political organisation and social forms, Gatti claimed, adopting a very

⁷⁸ Cusani, S. (1839b) *Del metodo filosofico e d'una sua storia infino agli ultimi sistemi che sonosi veduti uscir fuori in Germania e in Francia*, p. 200; Cusani believed that Kant had borrowed notions from French sensualism, as he regarded sensible experience as the "point of contact" between the subjective principle of formal representation and objective reality; from Hume, then, Kant was said to have inherited the intuition that Pure Reason, being inherently and exclusively "formal", could not "prove any existence, or objective reality; it did not attempt in any way to penetrate the most intimate nature of things"; lastly, Kantianism was said to be consistent with German Idealism on the basis that it relied on an absolute and necessary notion of Reason, directed by categories "that must be taken *a priori*" (ibid., pp. 204-07).

⁷⁹ ibid., p. 192

⁸⁰ ibid.

⁸¹ ibid., p. 211-12

Hegelian tone, that “the life of mankind lies in its ideas, unfolding and developing by themselves, being later embodied into facts, which are nothing more than ideas turned into action”.⁸² Tracing “the history of facts”, according to the author, was synonymous with interrogating “the sensible, external history of ideas”.⁸³ Being the “principles guiding humanity’s speculative progress”, then, regarded as “universal”, and being “the absolute identity of human nature and abstract thought” independent “from any particular determination”, Gatti could conveniently conclude that the concept of “national philosophy” was logically and historically untenable.⁸⁴

There is little doubt that Cusani and Gatti’s contributions aimed at deprovincialising Italian culture by encouraging the study of foreign, especially German philosophy, on the one hand, and at viewing its emergence and development as part of an account of European thought that seemed to escape national categorisations, on the other. The implications of this mentality went well beyond the realm of philosophy alone. Francesco De Sanctis, for example, who, as explained in chapter three of this thesis, contributed to the popularisation of Hegel’s thought in his private school and its amalgamation with Vichian historicism, applied, in his 1845-46 lectures, Gatti and Cusani’s arguments to the sphere of literary criticism.

De Sanctis, adopting a clear Hegelian approach, identified three stages in the development of a new approach to aesthetics, realised in that which he labelled “scuola storica”. Initially, he argued, literary criticism had attempted to interrogate the remote causes informing works of art; subsequently, it proceeded to investigate “art’s immediate causes”, consequently focusing on individuals’ contribution to cultural production; lastly, he identified the third, final, moment with the dialectic synthesis of the previous two, namely the recognition that the source of artistic creation ought to be found in society, of which individuals are “an expression”.⁸⁵ As a result, by contemplating both an individual and a collective aesthetic dimension, modern criticism had succeeded in theorising an “objective” understanding of artistic production.⁸⁶ These observations reflected the extent to which De Sanctis was indebted to Gatti and Cusani, with whom he had been very well acquainted since

⁸² Gatti, S. (1841) *Del progressivo svolgimento dell’idea filosofica nella storia*, p. 20

⁸³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 23-26

⁸⁵ De Sanctis, F. (1917) *Lezioni sulla storia della critica*, p. 23

⁸⁶ *ibid.*

the early 1830s, as they understood that the central problem of modern philosophy had emerged with Descartes' discussion of the tension between subjectivity and objectivity.⁸⁷

Crucially, just like Cusani and Gatti, De Sanctis imagined the dialectics of various critical approaches as a matter of exchanges taking place beyond national contexts, leading, in a teleological manner, to a passionate advocacy of Hegelian aesthetics:

The social or historical principle, representing a new principle added to the individual principle popular in French criticism, had been discovered by Vico, later embraced by Voltaire and ultimately perpetuated by the German historical school. Vico's principle was: institutions constitute individuals. This was the exact opposite of France's approach: individuals constitute institutions. Vico's first principle, plotted against that of the French school, could not hold up [...], hence the need for modern German criticism.⁸⁸

De Sanctis' ideal of modern aesthetics, therefore, evidently rested on a dialectic of nations, whereby the tension between Italian and French worldviews had been resolved by German intellectuals. In particular, his attention concentrated on August Wilhelm Schlegel's *Vorlesungen über dramatische Kunst und Literatur* and his brother Friedrich's *Geschichte der alten und neueren Literatur*, of which he had read Italian translations published in Milan in 1817 and 1828, respectively.⁸⁹ Consistent with the nineteenth-century Italian debates on Vichian historicism detailed in chapter two of this thesis, De Sanctis read the Schlegels' tendency to consider literary production within the framework of a romantic conception of history as an attempt to plot a Vichian approach against the subjectivist tendencies of the French school, hence paving the way for "the greatest monument in art criticism available nowadays": Hegel's theorisation of a dialectical synthesis of a social and an individual principle.⁹⁰ Thanks to Cusani, Gatti and De Sanctis, therefore, Neapolitan Hegelians theorised a definition of modern philosophy linked to exchanges among national traditions, with Gatti going so far as to challenge the very categorisation of philosophy along national lines. These perspectives, especially if seen in the context of nineteenth-century debates on the relationship between Italy and Europe, offered a valuable set of indications, which may be

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 12; Cusani, S. (1839a), pp. 47-48; Cusani, S. (1839b), p. 198; Cusani, S. (1842), p. 112-15

⁸⁸ De Sanctis, F. (1975) *Purismo, illuminismo, storicismo. Scritti giovanili e frammenti di scuola. Lezioni*, III, pp. 1186-87

⁸⁹ Zappa, G. (1961) *La cultura tedesca nel pensiero di Francesco De Sanctis durante la prima scuola napoletana*, pp. 274-77; the translations mentioned are: Schlegel, A. W. (1817) *Corso di letteratura drammatica del signor A. W. Schlegel*. (Gherardini, G., trans.); Schlegel, F. (1828) *Storia della letteratura antica e moderna*. (Ambrosoli, F., trans.)

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p. 1188

able effectively to re-describe the country's contribution to the continent's intellectual history. Bertrando Spaventa promptly understood that and, especially from the 1850s onwards, he endeavoured to show how Italian and European philosophy were not only intrinsically connected, but also one and the same.

Spaventa's intellectual development was largely indebted to his close friendship with Cusani, Gatti and De Sanctis: they all attended Ottavio Colecchi's private lectures on European philosophy in 1843 and frequently contributed to local periodicals. During the years spent in Turin, Bertrando could therefore rely on a plurality of views advanced by his fellow Hegelian thinkers, especially the image of European thought as characterised by exchanges across national borders. Evidence of this can conveniently be found in Spaventa's preoccupation with the nature of modern ideas. Consistent with Gatti, in fact, he used the concept of "modernity" as a signifier for a profound re-orientation of philosophy's aims and methods: while "ancient philosophy" had attempted to disclose "the principle of all things" within the realm of "absolute objectivity, may this be ideal or material", its modern counterpart was concerned with "the absolute mind". This intuition, for Spaventa, reverberated into a new, distinctly modern, intellectual agenda, which would investigate "the emergence, opposition and ultimately unity of the absolute mind's two moments, namely infinite objectivity and subjectivity: the true reality of nature and the autonomy of man's conscience".⁹¹

Spaventa was convinced that these speculative developments could only be decoded from a European point of view: "those that appear to be national philosophies [...] are nothing other than stepping stones through which philosophical thought passes in its immortal course. Modern philosophy is therefore [...] European".⁹² At the same time, the southern philosopher was ready to acknowledge Germany's centrality in the making of modern worldviews, thanks to not only the experience of the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century, but also a "higher, wider and more vigorous philosophical sensibility" in the nineteenth.⁹³

The ongoing debates on Italy's allegedly marginal position in Europe represented, for Spaventa, an opportunity to clarify the relationship between modern philosophy and the principle of nationality, in ways that may contribute to re-thinking Italy's position in the

⁹¹ Spaventa, B. (1862) *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*, p. 28

⁹² *ibid.*, p. 11

⁹³ *ibid.*, p. 81

intellectual landscape of the continent.⁹⁴ Drawing extensively on Cusani, Gatti and De Sanctis' arguments, Spaventa quickly accepted how a more substantial engagement with German thought may be conducive to a series of inter-related achievements, most notably Italy's intellectual regeneration and, consequently, the erosion of those verdicts relegating the peninsula to a peripheral position in the European cultural geography. A letter penned by his friend Pasquale Villari while Spaventa was in Turin, in this sense, stimulated the latter to encourage Italy's philosophical reawakening via a closer study of Hegelianism:

Making Italy understand Hegel would mean regenerating the country [...]. Camillo [De Meis] will be able to tell you about the enthusiasm produced by De Sanctis' words, when he was illustrating some pages of Hegel's *Aesthetics* [...]. That is a system, which, once properly understood, takes hold of all of man's cognitions, his actions, his whole life! [...] Italy must find a system able to represent its nationality and gather its lively elements; yet, first of all, it must re-discover the consciousness of itself, and no system is more apposite to this end than Hegelianism.⁹⁵

Rehabilitating Italy's philosophical heritage by establishing a dialogue between the local tradition and Hegel's philosophy: this was one of the *leitmotifs* of Spaventa's speculation during the 1850s. While he initially attempted to do so via a translation of the *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, he soon understood the need to provide an image of Hegel that was consonant with the Italian intellectual tradition by making him "intelligible, but not superficial: *popular*, not *vulgar*".⁹⁶ This inclination was further elucidated in the introduction to his 1851 *Studii sopra la filosofia di Hegel*, where Italy's cultural regeneration was said to be connected with the identification of the continuities between sixteenth-century local tradition and present-day German thought:

I openly declare that we must perpetuate our philosophical tradition beginning with the position it has come to acquire by developing in German intellectuals' speculative movement; therefore, if we want to restore it in Italy as a more intimate part and as the supreme principle of our lives, it is mainly necessary to concentrate on two strands of study: that of sixteenth-century Italian philosophy and that of modern philosophy within the great German systems.⁹⁷

Spaventa's focus on sixteenth-century Italian philosophy might appear, at this stage, almost paradoxical: after all, both his filo-Hegelian predecessors in Naples, as well as other Italian authors, most notably Cuoco and Gioberti, had diagnosed a decline in Italy's

⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 6

⁹⁵ Villari, P. (7.10.1850) *Lettera a Bertrando Spaventa da Firenze*, p. 78

⁹⁶ Spaventa, B. (19.10.1850) *Lettera a Pasquale Villari*, pp. 85-86

⁹⁷ Spaventa, B. (1851) *Studii sopra la filosofia di Hegel*, p. 19

philosophical sensitivity occurring during that century, rather than its apex. To understand Bertrando's arguments better, however, it is necessary to view them as a direct response to Vincenzo Cuoco's exhortation to revitalise Italy's philosophical tradition – and claim the intellectual primacy of Italians over other Europeans – on the basis of Vico's "ancient Italian genius", as argued in *Platone in Italia*. This, according to Spaventa, was not only a fruitless operation, but also a historically inaccurate one, according to his university lectures held in 1860 and 1861, whose content was later published with the title *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*.⁹⁸

In *La filosofia italiana*, the pre-Roman Italian philosophical heritage discussed by Vico-via-Cuoco was regarded as little more than a fictitious construct: referencing Theodor Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte*, the author pointed at the Greek origin of the philosophical language associated by his predecessors with the Etruscan and Sannite cultures:

That which is commonly called "Italic philosophy of the antiquity" belongs to Greek philosophy, and constitutes little more than a rudiment of it. Renewing Pythagoreanism or Eleaticism today would be the same as returning to philosophy's infancy.⁹⁹

Additionally, while conceding that pre-Roman Italic populations had indeed produced significant cultural innovations, Spaventa claimed that it was impossible to speak of a systematic philosophical organisation of indigenous ideas, before these were amalgamated with the Greco-Roman speculative tendencies.¹⁰⁰

Bertrando's confutation of Vico's notion of an "ancient Italian genius", as re-imagined through the lens of Cuoco's nationalist programme, however, did not enable him to disprove the idea that "the latest results achieved by modern European speculation" were "fundamentally at odds with the latest results achieved by our own".¹⁰¹ It was to a later stage of Italy and Europe's philosophical life that his attention ought to turn: the making of modernity, explaining how fifteenth-, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italian thought, too

⁹⁸ This volume, from now on referred to as *La filosofia italiana*, is an edited version of the lectures he held at the university of Bologna, where he had been appointed professor of the history of philosophy in 1860, coupled with an introduction, called (*Prolusione*) given in Naples in 1861. Spaventa published a first version of his work in 1862 with the title *Prolusione e introduzione alle lezioni di filosofia*. The title *La filosofia italiana*, instead, was adopted only in the 1909 edition, edited by Giovanni Gentile.

⁹⁹ Spaventa, B. (1862), p. 52; see also: Mommsen, T. (1854) *Römische Geschichte*, pp.115-18, 164-65

¹⁰⁰ Spaventa, B. (1862), pp. 52-53

¹⁰¹ Spaventa, B. (1862), p. 48; on Spaventa's rejection of Vico-via-Cuoco, see: Casini, P. (1998) *L'antica sapienza italica. Cronistoria di un mito*, pp. 303-08

often regarded “an aberration of the Italian spirit” had actually contributed to “the greatest discoveries of the modern spirit”.¹⁰²

The identification of thematic and methodological continuities between what Spaventa labelled “filosofia del Risorgimento” and its present-day European counterpart, then, represented an important preoccupation for the Southern thinker during the 1850s.¹⁰³ In an 1855 article, for example, entitled *Del principio della riforma religiosa, politica e filosofica nel secolo XVI*, Bertrando explained, adopting a markedly historicist tone, how his approach to the study of sixteenth-century philosophical ideas went well beyond a mere attempt to dissect their meaning or logical consistency. Rather, it was their *historical* significance that Spaventa was keen to interrogate, with the intention of imagining systems of ideas as “discrete moments” in “philosophical thought’s progressive realisation in history”.¹⁰⁴ In other words, it appeared necessary to examine the ways in which Renaissance Italian philosophy had participated in the formulation of present-day attitudes and worldviews: “the essence of modern thought”.¹⁰⁵

Convinced that “all modern philosophy from Spinoza to Hegel was nothing more than the logical and necessary development of sixteenth-century Italian philosophy”, Bertrando demonstrated his intuition in a diverse series of works.¹⁰⁶ Already in the 1854 *Lettera sulla dottrina di Bruno*, for instance, the Southern thinker had reflected on the perceived continuities between Giordano Bruno and Hegel’s philosophies, believing that the former’s ideas “necessarily lead, as part of philosophy’s broader progress” to absolute idealism.¹⁰⁷ More specifically, while revealing a strongly Hegelian reading of Bruno, Spaventa’s contributions praised the latter’s postulation of an “absolute identity” of the human and the divine, via the intuition that, being man “the true image of God on Earth”, “God must be realised in man’s actions”.¹⁰⁸ This, in turn, signalled how Spaventa had understood Hegel’s

¹⁰² *ibid.*, p. 86

¹⁰³ By *Risorgimento*, Spaventa meant the Italian Renaissance. The words *Risorgimento* and *Rinascimento* were indeed often used interchangeably by most Neapolitan Hegelians (Tessitore, F. (2002) *Nuovi contributi alla storia e alla teoria dello storicismo*, p. 183)

¹⁰⁴ Spaventa, B. (1855) *Del principio della riforma religiosa, politica e filosofica nel secolo XVI*, p. 97

¹⁰⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ Spaventa, B. (11.3.1851) *Lettera a Pasquale Villari*, p. 97

¹⁰⁷ Spaventa, B. (1854) *Lettera sulla dottrina di Bruno*, p. 78

¹⁰⁸ Spaventa, B. (1852) *I principii della filosofia pratica di Giordano Bruno*, pp. 145-55; It is worth noting, at this point, that Hegel himself acknowledged, in his 1823/24 *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, how Bruno had initially theorised the absolute identity of thought and being, without, however, resolving their

notion of Spirit as analogous to Bruno's image of God. Crucially, it was precisely the emergence of this concept that, for Bertrando, had marked the true beginning of modern philosophy:

Bruno's natural philosophy situates God in the world and the world in God; he is thus the precursor of eighteenth-century philosophy, the first modern philosopher after the Risorgimento. Modern philosophy's goal is to understand God as absolute Spirit.¹⁰⁹

He then praised German idealist thinkers, particularly Hegel, for having re-worked Bruno's *identity* of the absolute and the discrete into a much more dynamic relationship, which, in Bertrando's analysis, was absent in the Italian thinker's system of ideas, deemed unable to contemplate the "return of Spirit to itself from its external individuation".¹¹⁰ In a word, *dialectics*.

Giordano Bruno was not, however, seen as the sole precursor of modern philosophy: a similar connection was said to have existed between Tommaso Campanella and Hegel. Applauding the Calabrian philosopher for positing "the concept of unity and liberty of spirit as the chief principle of thought and as a pivotal point of man's actions", Spaventa believed that, in doing so, Campanella had correctly identified the coordinates of "the modern world's essence".¹¹¹ While his verdict initially mirrored that advanced with regard to Bruno, by essentially revolving around the identification of *thematic* continuities between early modern Italian philosophy and its modern European counterpart, the author's correspondence in the mid-1850s also revealed attempts to decode these connections from a methodological perspective.¹¹² In particular, Spaventa referred to Campanella's observations, included in his *Metaphysica*, on the identity of "thought" and "being", suggesting that, by attempting "to unveil being in consciousness" and later "inferring consciousness and every other thing from being", Campanella had theorised a relationship of absolute interdependence between metaphysics and logic that one could also find at the very core of Hegel's philosophical

relationship into a dialectical synthesis (Hegel, G. W. F. (1824) *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, III, pp. 22-39)

¹⁰⁹ Spaventa, B. (1854), pp. 135-36

¹¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Spaventa, B. (1855) *Del principio della riforma religiosa, politica e filosofica nel secolo XVI*, p. 100

¹¹² Spaventa suggested, for example, that: "In Campanella's philosophy, the chief principle is represented by the identity of thought and being, but this comes to be expressed via the senses, immediacy and being [...]. Campanella anticipated Descartes and connecting these two iterations of these two principles embodied by these two thinkers is a necessary relation: one of progress, corresponding to the free development of Spirit" (Spaventa, B. (1854) *Tommaso Campanella*, p. 60)

system.¹¹³ A letter to his brother Silvio written in March 1855, in fact, revealed Bertrando's efforts to come to terms with the relationship between Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik* and *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, explaining that it was precisely thanks to Campanella's writings that he had come to understand how the latter represented the "foundation" of the former¹¹⁴.

In the 1850s, therefore, Bertrando Spaventa fully succeeded in perpetuating a philosophical inclination initiated by other exponents of the Neapolitan Hegelian youth in the late 1830s and early '40s, attempting to challenge verdicts on the marginality of Italy's philosophical tradition in the context of modern European thought, and by proposing a novel account of the latter's development. Drawing extensively on the examples put forth by his fellow intellectuals' contributions, Bertrando detailed how present-day German idealism deepened its roots in the local tradition of thought, too often associated with a notion of Italian "moral and intellectual decadence" and regarded as "antithetical" to modern philosophical sensitivities.¹¹⁵ More specifically, from Stanislao Gatti, Spaventa borrowed the intuition that challenging the categorisation of present-day intellectual traditions along national lines was central to any attempt to negotiate a vantage point for the peninsula in the cultural landscape of nineteenth-century Europe; Stefano Cusani and Francesco De Sanctis inspired Bertrando to do so by devising a history of European philosophy that considered present-day philosophy a development of early modern Italian contributions.

As the decade was coming to a close, however, Spaventa's views still featured that very same Germanocentric ideal of modernity featured in the Neapolitan context of the 1840s. In order to fully rehabilitate Italy's position as part of a European intellectual space of experience, therefore, it was necessary to demonstrate how the historical inter-dependence of the Italian and European philosophies was still observable in the present: in other words, challenging the assumption that the latter had teleologically developed along an imaginary trajectory connecting Italy and Germany, by showing, instead, its inherently *circular* nature; how, having reached its maturity under a different, idealist, guise, Italian thought was now ready to return to the peninsula.

¹¹³ Campanella, T. (1638) *Metaphysica. Universalis philosophiae seu metaphysicarum rerum iuxta propria dogmata*, II, p. 59

¹¹⁴ Spaventa, B. (30.6.1855) *Lettera a Silvio*, pp. 146-47, 164; see also: Spaventa, B. (13.7.1857) *Lettera a Silvio*, pp. 205-08

¹¹⁵ Spaventa, B. (11.3.1851) *Lettera a Pasquale Villari*, pp. 97-98

A lecture held at the University of Bologna on May 10, 1860, entitled *Carattere e sviluppo della filosofia italiana dal secolo XVI sino al nostro tempo*, perfectly summarised Bertrando's goal. According to the author, it was necessary to:

Recuperate the sacred thread of our philosophical tradition, revivify the consciousness of the freedom of our thought in the study of our greatest thinkers, seek in other nations' philosophies the seeds spread by the early fathers of our own philosophy and how these then returned among us in a new and more developed, systematic, form; understand this *circulation of Italian thought* [...] and be able to understand what we were, what we are and what we must be in modern philosophy's ceaseless motion [...], presenting ourselves as a free and equal nation in a community of nations.¹¹⁶

With the idea of European philosophy *returning* to the Italian peninsula, the stage was set for Spaventa's most significant intellectual contribution: the theory of "European thought's circularity" developed in *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*.

5.5. *From Europe to Italy: La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*

Seen in its own context, Spaventa's best-known work represented a dart of criticism directed against Gioberti's cultural nationalism, and an attempt to dismantle the widely popular view that Italian philosophy was fundamentally detached from modern European thought.¹¹⁷ In this sense, Gioberti's exaltation of the country's past tradition, via the definition of religion and the Church as inherently national institutions, informing a vague notion of the peninsula's primacy over the rest of the continent, was condemned as a deplorable solution and little more than a means of shielding oneself from the cultural and philosophical ideals of present-day Europe.¹¹⁸

Reprising his own verdicts of the 1850s, Spaventa suggested that Italian philosophy had not come to an end during the Renaissance; rather, it "went on to develop in freer lands and among freer intellects".¹¹⁹ In consequence, engaging with contemporary European ideas

¹¹⁶ Spaventa, B. (1860) *Carattere e sviluppo della filosofia italiana dal secolo XVI sino al nostro tempo*, p. 3

¹¹⁷ Spaventa, B. (1862) *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*, p. 49

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Spaventa, B. (1867) *Principii di filosofia*, p. 21

was synonymous with the discovery of a new chapter in the life of the local tradition, namely one that had taken place abroad:

Seeking Italian philosophical thought in its new fatherland does not entail a servile imitation of German nationality. Rather, it constitutes a recovery of something that belonged to us, of something that, under different guises, has become part of a universal Spirit, the essential condition of our civilisation, as well as other people's. It is not our philosophers of the last two centuries, but Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, Schelling and Hegel who are the true disciples of Bruno, of Vanini, of Campanella, of Vico and other illustrious authors.¹²⁰

Crucially, this passage did not only reiterate some of the views developed by Bertrando in Turin during the 1850s, deepening, in turn, their roots in Neapolitan Hegelians' contributions of the 1830s and '40s: it also fully revealed a genuine attempt to erode the Germanocentric view of modernity emerging in the very same contexts.

This intuition becomes even clearer if one notices how, in *La filosofia italiana*, Spaventa proposed a very elastic definition of philosophy, which, following Stanislao Gatti's indications, was not bound to specific national traditions, but emerged as an unquestionably European phenomenon, stemming from intergenerational exchanges among national traditions. His rejection of Cuoco's emphasis on Vico's definition of *Antiquissima italorum sapientia*, illustrated earlier in this chapter, can also be viewed from this perspective. Moreover, Bertrando believed that these exchanges had been even more evident from the Renaissance onwards, with their effects being clearly observable in the present: "modern philosophy", the author claimed, "is not the work of a single nation, but of all".¹²¹ Those that appeared to be "national philosophies", as a result, "are nothing more than stations through which thought, in its immortal course, passes. Modern philosophy, therefore, is neither exclusively English, nor French, nor Italian, nor German, but European".¹²²

La filosofia italiana then illustrated, with newfound force and following the reasoning already developed in the writings of the 1850s, how the Italian Renaissance represented the birthplace of modern ideas: particular attention was posited on the ongoing rejection of Scholastic philosophy via the rehabilitation of inquiries on nature and subjectivity.¹²³ Later on, it illustrated how these innovations ought to be seen as conducive to the encounter of local and foreign philosophies: Giordano Bruno's definition of Nature as "Deus in rebus" was said

¹²⁰ *ibid.*

¹²¹ Spaventa, B. (1862), p. 21

¹²² *ibid.*

¹²³ *ibid.*, pp. 66-70

to have anticipated Baruch Spinoza's "Deus sive Natura", the manifesto of "modern immanentism"; Tommaso Campanella's emphasis on sensitivity and experience as the basis of all knowledge were described as forerunners of empiricism and Cartesian rationalism.¹²⁴ As Spinoza and Descartes' mature reflections were said to have revealed the magnitude of the dichotomy between the sensible and the intelligible, Spaventa's argument continued, man was still perceived exclusively as an "effect", namely a product of God's creation. An attempt to articulate an account of man as "cause", namely as the free maker of himself, was then identified with the critique of this mono-directional account of causation, emerging in England with Lockean empiricism and in Germany with Leibniz's *Monadology*.

While these ideas originally appeared abroad, it was only in Italy, according to Bertrando, that the tension between man as an *effect* and man as a *cause* was resolved. Consistently with Neapolitan Hegelians' fascination with his association of "verum" and "factum", the philosopher credited for this innovation was Giambattista Vico, who blurred the definition of these two concepts by amalgamating them into a wider notion of progress, believed to have anticipated Hegel's account of Spirit's perpetual process of self-negotiation. "Vico denies any parallel", Spaventa wrote: "nature is the phenomenon and the basis of Spirit, the premise that Spirit makes for itself, in order to be true unity. True unity, the true One, true development: development of itself, from itself, via itself, to itself: that is, completely itself".¹²⁵

In Spaventa's reading, Vico's principle had paved the way for the elaboration of a new metaphysics, introducing ideas of perpetual progress and self-negotiation, rather than immediate causation, in the European philosophical landscape. In a particularly poignant section of his text, Spaventa suggested that "Vico anticipates the problem of knowledge, demanding a new metaphysics anchored to human ideas; he is sensitive to the idea of Spirit, hence creating philosophy of history. Vico is the true precursor of Germany".¹²⁶ This was exactly where, according to the Southern thinker, the diaspora of Italian philosophy was most dramatically observable: after Vico, a meaningful intellectual and philosophical life was said to have taken place only elsewhere in Europe, particularly in Germany.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, p. 69, 138

¹²⁵ *ibid.*, p. 124

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 31

As a result, following a logic similar to that championed by Stefano Cusani in 1839, Immanuel Kant was to be credited for the elevation of the themes problematised by Vico into a transcendental psychologism, resolving the quandaries of knowledge and its intelligibility with the intuition of the former's synthetic unity.¹²⁷ Later on, Spaventa continued, another version of the same issue could be found in Fichte's idea of *Selbstbewußtsein*, the transcendental realism of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, and, more importantly, Hegel's idealism, positing the ultimate question as to how Spirit realises itself in history and in man's experience of it.¹²⁸ For Bertrando, these debates represented solutions to the fundamental problems of modern thought, initially emerging in the context of Italian Renaissance philosophy: the nature of history, of progress and historical development, as well as man's own experience of them. *La filosofia italiana* illustrated, in this sense, a well-defined trajectory linking Bruno and Campanella with present-day German thought, brought together by the persistent search for unity in history.

This intuition closely reflected the dynamics of Hegel's reception in Naples. As illustrated in chapters one to three of this thesis, Neapolitan Hegelians elaborated a composite historicism as a means of mediating between an absolute notion of historical development and Vico's philosophy of history, which emphasised man's direct, tangible, experience of it. This operation was exemplified by Francesco De Sanctis' "dual method", itself primarily understood as a response to Vincenzo Cuoco's problematisation, at the beginning of the 1800s, of the tension between an "ideal eternal history" and "nations' historical-empirical course". Once again, the extent to which Spaventa's *La filosofia italiana* was indebted to the Neapolitan context of the 1820s, '30s and '40s is evident, but a discussion of this connection is largely absent in current historiographical works on this text, which is too often considered in isolation.

The novelty of Spaventa's argument can now be disclosed on the basis of its relationship with the Neapolitan intellectual context. In order to restore its status of pre-

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 136-44

¹²⁸ see: Fichte, J. G. (1796) *Grundlagen des Naturrechts nach Prinzipien der Wissenschaftslehre*, I, pp. 62-87. On Fichte's concept of *self-consciousness* ("Selbstbewußtsein"), see: Düsing, E. (1986) *Intersubjektivität und Selbstbewußtsein. Behavioristische, phänomenologische und idealistische Begründungstheorie bei Mead, Schütz, Fichte und Hegel*; Düsing, E. (1988) *Anerkennung und Bildung des Selbstbewußtsein. Zum Problem der Intersubjektivität in Fichtes Idealismus der Freiheit*, pp. 131-51; Schelling, F. W. J. (1797) *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur als Einleitung in das Studium dieser Wissenschaft*; Schelling, F. W. J. (1798) *Von der Weltseele*; Schelling, F. W. J. (1799) *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*

eminence among the nations of Europe, Italy was urged, in the nineteenth century, to re-discover its own philosophy in its mature, cosmopolitan form: with the country's tradition having "developed in the motion of German intellects" it was necessary, for local thinkers, not to engage with foreign authors "in the same way as goods are imported", but via the recognition of their shared intellectual genealogy.¹²⁹ According to Bertrando, this process was already well underway. As evidence of this, Spaventa drew a parallel between Pasquale Galluppi and Immanuel Kant: both had reflected, "without necessarily being aware of this", upon the problem of knowledge as initially appearing in Vico.¹³⁰ Spaventa therefore saw Galluppi as "unknowingly Kantian", thanks to his empiricist philosophical inclination.¹³¹ Similarly, he believed that Antonio Rosmini, despite his well-known hostility towards foreign ideas, had theorised a notion of "primitive synthesis of Reason and perception", able to mirror Kant's notion of "transcendental imagination" and to mediate between sense and intellect:

That application of the idea of Being to the matter of sense is, generally speaking, Rosmini's concept of synthetic a priori judgment. This judgment is the unity of the original, pure, concept and of sensible intuition. Rosmini criticises Kant for grounding his verdict on the unity of two concepts: yet, he does not realise that he says the exact same things as Kant: unity of concept and intuition, which Kant had already postulated long before him. This is why Rosmini is Kantian. He regards himself as even more Kantian than Kant himself.¹³²

Another interesting comparison was the one drawn between German idealists, particularly Hegel, and Gioberti: just as the German thinker had moved beyond his predecessors by positing the absolute self-awareness of Reason as a token of the infinite possibility of knowledge, Gioberti had overcome the limits of Galluppi and Rosmini by theorising an "Absolute Mind", decreeing the infinite potentiality of knowledge via the dialectics of its creative force:

Gioberti [...] is Fichte, Schelling and Hegel altogether. When he speaks of mind, namely self-consciousness, he is Fichte. When he speaks of ideas or Reason, he is Schelling. When he says: idea or self-conscious Reason as absolute universal principle, he is Hegel. Gioberti therefore represents the true Unity of Spirit, the true concept of Development, the true absolute Psyche: an activity, which, as dual activity, becomes One; a cycle, which, as dual cycle, becomes One.

¹²⁹ Spaventa, B. (1862), pp. 200-02, 208

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 144

¹³¹ *ibid.*, p. 149; chapter three of this thesis, in particular, suggested that, in his private school of philosophy, Galluppi had attempted an anti-metaphysical revision of Kantianism, via its amalgamation with Vichian historicism.

¹³² Spaventa, B. (1862), pp. 161-62; Kant's discussion of "transcendental imagination" is available in: Kant, I. (1781) *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, p. 83

This is the true absolute Spirit. Gioberti's philosophy, then, is true contemplation of the absolute.¹³³

To paraphrase Spaventa's verdict on Galluppi, then, Gioberti could be seen as "unknowingly Hegelian" and much closer to German idealism than he was ready to admit himself. Only thanks to the recognition not only of the similarities, but also of the continuities between nineteenth-century German and Italian philosophies, Bertrando concluded, the peninsula could achieve the cultural unity and cohesiveness observable in other European countries, and create "a historical Italy, having its worthy place in the common life of modern nations".¹³⁴

Spaventa's theory of European thought's circularity was not only an attempt to challenge notions of primacy, seeing the centrality of the Italian tradition as limited to the sole context of the Renaissance, but also a means to de-provincialise nineteenth-century debates taking place in the country, showing how they reflected a much more modern, European, experience of historical time. As a result, it is easy to see *La filosofia italiana* as an effective response to Gioberti's *Primato*. Despite the fact that both texts stemmed from a shared recognition of Italian Renaissance's historical significance, Spaventa re-imagined the relationship between Italian and European thought: as the Turinese philosopher had countered the perceived asymmetry between Italy and Europe by completely turning it on its head, Bertrando suggested, as an implication of Cusani, Gatti and De Sanctis' views, that no imbalance had ever existed in the first place, considering that the history of European philosophy was one of constant and self-perpetuating exchanges; one of continuous dialogue among its parts and, more importantly, one of non-competitive encounters. This attempt to place Italy at the centre of the continent's intellectual history came from the leading exponent of a group of Southern thinkers. This, in itself, is a very charming idea.

¹³³ Spaventa, B. (1862), pp. 164, 175-83; Gioberti's discussion of the "Absolute Mind" is available in: Gioberti, V. (1857) *Della protologia*, I, p.303

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 202-03

5.6. Philosophical Modernity between the National and the Transnational

This chapter has illustrated the idea of Europe's centrality in Neapolitan Hegelians' imagination. This was by no means a mere epiphenomenon of their philosophical sensitivity: rather, their engagement with a transnational understanding of modernity occurred in response to specific debates and the thematisation of a distinctly European and characteristically modern dimension of temporality. Negotiating a vantage point for Italy *vis-à-vis* the other nations was no easy task for southern thinkers, especially bearing in mind the tendency, common to Italian and foreign thinkers alike, to articulate a mental geography of the continent that systematically relegated Italy to a peripheral status. An intellectual tradition extending from Montesquieu to Hegel's understanding of Europe as the "end of history" contributed to a definition of modernity that systematically portrayed the South as an "internal Other".¹³⁵ Italian intellectuals often accepted orientalist accounts of nineteenth-century Italy and the implications of this process were wide-ranging: from Cavour and Balbo's rejection of supra-national co-operation, based on their suspicions of foreign nations' hegemonic position, to Italian periodicals' emphasis on the "ancient" character of the peninsula, able to shape the opinion of a broad public, nineteenth-century debates on Italy's relation to the rest of the continent often made clear, to use Giacomo Leopardi's words, that the "the North's time has come".¹³⁶

Bertrando Spaventa's theory of European thought's "circularity" represented Neapolitan Hegelians' most forceful effort to re-imagine Italy's contribution to the continent's intellectual history, not only via the identification of the affinities between local and foreign philosophical traditions, but also via the recognition of their shared history. The present chapter maintained that one can obtain a better understanding of Spaventa's best-known thesis by tracing its origin back to the Neapolitan context of the 1830s and '40s, as well as Bertrando's own Turinese experience, in contrast to scholarly verdicts singling it out as southern thinkers' only attempt to engage with the idea of Europe.¹³⁷ It is possible, in this context, to follow the development of Neapolitan Hegelians' reflections on modern European philosophy across three distinct stages.

¹³⁵ Dainotto, R. (2007), p. 4

¹³⁶ Leopardi, G. (1824), p. 38

¹³⁷ see n.6

During the initial stage, taking place between the late 1830s and the early 1840s, Stefano Cusani, Stanislao Gatti and Francesco De Sanctis emphasised what one may view as the “transnational” nature of the continent’s intellectual history: reasoning around the assumption that, while the birthplace of modern thought could be identified with Descartes’ theorisation of the tension between subjectivity and objectivity, they proceeded to describe its evolution on the basis of the existing continuities among national traditions, ultimately challenging the extent to which philosophy itself may be categorised as “national” in the first place.

In its second stage, identifiable with Spaventa’s Turinese years, this outlook led to attempts to demonstrate the historical significance of Italian Renaissance philosophy in the making of its modern European counterpart. As a reaction to contemporary debates on Italy’s orientalisation, Bertrando’s articles of the 1850s attempted a reconciliation of the Italian space of experience with a modern dimension of philosophical life, pointing at the earliest theorisations, among thinkers in the peninsula, of problems, such as that of Spirit’s freedom, or the identity of the human and the divine, which would later represent prime concerns for nineteenth-century German Idealists, especially Hegel. Yet, while the 1850s articles revealed the extent to which Italian philosophers of the sixteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth centuries had contributed to the birth and development of the idealist school in Germany, Spaventa’s discussion of present-day European thought still relied heavily on a definition of modernity that posited Germany at its core, hailing Hegel’s idealism as its undisputed champion.

In order to effectively contrast Gioberti’s argument that Italy’s relationship with Europe in the present ought to be informed by the country’s past “primacy” over it, it was mandatory, for Spaventa, to go beyond the mere acknowledgment of the peninsula’s centrality in the continent’s intellectual history. Simply put, demonstrating how the historical interconnectedness of the Italian and the European dimensions of philosophy was still very much observable in the present remained an unsolved issue. With his 1860-61 university lectures, later published as *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*, Bertrando prompted a third – and final – stage in the characterisation of modern European philosophy: not only was this *transnational* and *Italian*, but also inherently *circular*. In the nineteenth century, Italian philosophy was returning home, albeit in a much more mature and developed form.

Neapolitan Hegelians' views on a European dimension of thought, as presented in this chapter, reflected yet another use of the Vichian/Hegelian amalgam emerging in Neapolitan private schools during the 1830s and '40s. Broadly speaking, this composite philosophy of history enabled them to advance a deeply historicised understanding of the world: as illustrated in chapter three, investigating cultural production through the lens of Hegelian and Vichian categories allowed Francesco De Sanctis to devise a new approach to aesthetics and literary criticism; as discussed in chapter four, it enabled *Il Nazionale's* contributors to invoke the notion of the Revolution's historical necessity, while Bertrando Spaventa deployed, a few years later, the same historicist categories in his discussion of the relationship between freedom and the State. Lastly, this chapter demonstrated how, viewing European philosophy within the very same conceptual horizon, Neapolitan Hegelians rehabilitated Italy's position in the continent.

Spaventa's theory of circularity relied on a Hegelian intuition, namely a markedly philosophical understanding of European history. Moreover, Bertrando's account of the latter's development was consistent with Hegel's, insofar as they both viewed it as a linear process, teleologically leading to the emergence of the questions as to how Spirit realises itself in history and how this can become intelligible for man. These concerns, as pointed out in Hegel's *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, deepened their roots in the tension between the "inwardness" of pure thought and self-consciousness, and the external "existent universe", hinting that the chief philosophical problem of the modern world had to do with the "dissolution of this opposition"¹³⁸. Both Spaventa and Hegel believed that nineteenth-century German idealism had offered the most effective set of answers to it, but they disagreed insofar as its origin was concerned: for Hegel, the birth of modernity, in a philosophical sense, could be traced back to Descartes and Spinoza.¹³⁹ For Spaventa, one ought to go back to Giordano Bruno and Tommaso Campanella, on whom Descartes and Spinoza had arguably reflected.

Hegel's account of European philosophy's history, however, was entirely functional to his discussion of the "end of history" in ways that excluded the contribution of the continent's perceived peripheries.¹⁴⁰ Despite deploying a Hegelian account of historical development,

¹³⁸ Hegel, G. W. F. (1824), pp. 159-61

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 220

¹⁴⁰ Hegel, G. W. F. (1837), p. 103

then, Spaventa managed to refute this implication by appealing to a Vichian concept of nationality, regarded as the most concrete, tangible, structure encircling thought's development. As explained in chapter four of this thesis, *Il Nazionale* had proposed the same argument in 1848, when realising a historically necessary notion of Hegelian freedom was said to rest on a very specific task: establishing nationality as the chief principle for political emancipation.¹⁴¹ In a particularly passionate section of *La filosofia italiana*, Spaventa levelled a powerful charge against Hegel:

I know way too well what is being said among some: "why should we care about Italian and non-Italian philosophy? We want the truth; and truth has nothing to do with nationality". Truth surely transcends nationality; but it is an abstraction without nationality. Transplant truth as much as you want; if this has no correspondence whatsoever with our national genius, it will be truth for itself, but not for us; to us, it will only be a dead, inert, thing. Demonstrating, therefore, that we have always lived in the arms of European thought, have always promoted it, and always partaken in it, that we have not merely been "us" and outside a shared dimension of life, is not an expedient, a diplomatic procedure, or simply a matter of respect: rather, it is a noble and rigorous duty for those who make philosophy.¹⁴²

For Spaventa, the fact that Hegel's philosophical account of history did not rely on national categorisations was not only problematic, but also conceptually untenable. Seen in the context of Vichianism and Hegelianism's amalgamation operated by southern intellectuals, this objection is particularly understandable. Thanks to nineteenth-century debates on Vico's *Scienza nuova*, as discussed in chapter two, Neapolitan Hegelians had come to terms with the impossibility of creating a historicist framework independent from national categories, on the one hand, and with the possibility, on the other, to merge Hegel's ideal of absolute historical development with Vico's emphasis on the most tangible structures of history: nations. Italian intellectuals of the early 1800s had re-imagined Vico's understanding of Providence's role in history in a way that resonated with Hegel's "cunning of Reason" ("List der Vernunft"), the idea that Reason directed people's self-interest in order to realise itself.¹⁴³ Carlo Cattaneo, for instance, believed that, by working through people's interests, Providence would ultimately be embodied in "the world of nations".¹⁴⁴ As such, nations, understood in a Vichian sense, namely as stemming from the diachronic layering of a shared culture, customs and traditions, represented not only the categories according to which philosophical traditions ought to be

¹⁴¹ *Il Nazionale* (22.4.1848) *Il fine ultimo delle rivoluzioni e il fine primario della rivoluzione italiana*, p. 5

¹⁴² Spaventa, B. (1862), p. 170

¹⁴³ Hegel, G. W. F. (1837), p. 49

¹⁴⁴ Cattaneo, C. (1839) *Su la scienza nuova di Vico*, p. 66

organised, but also the conceptual horizon bounding man's consciousness of the goals and the direction of history.

These observations thus disclose the full force of *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*: Bertrando's best-known text did not "only" represent the final achievement of the Neapolitan Hegelian school, nor was it "merely" a powerful critique of the historically debatable notion of Italian primacy invoked by Gioberti in 1843, or "solely" a (successful) means of rehabilitating Italy's contribution to the continent's intellectual history. Rather, it represented a sophisticated account of modern European philosophy's development through the lens of Europeans' evolving consciousness of history's inherent directionality: having fully matured this consciousness in the nineteenth century, Italy could unquestionably be regarded as a modern nation.

6. CONCLUSION

On September 7, 1860, Giuseppe Garibaldi entered Naples. Some Neapolitans greeted his arrival in the southern metropolis with enthusiasm and many among the local Hegelians regarded this event as marking the beginning of a new chapter in the city's history. Angelo Camillo De Meis, who had met Francesco De Sanctis in Basilio Puoti's private school and later established a close friendship with Bertrando and Silvio Spaventa was one of them. On August 17, 1860, in fact, he had written a letter to Bertrando, disclosing his hopes that Garibaldi's arrival might pave the way for radical changes and prosperity among Neapolitans: "if Garibaldi were not involved", he explained, "there would be no hope of success here. Yet, we will succeed, because he is there; it was he, who engineered such a transformation in people's spirits".¹

During his lieutenancy, Garibaldi appointed Silvio Spaventa as Police Minister and Francesco De Sanctis as Minister for Public Education in the provisional government: the latter, who, at the time, was in exile in Zürich, immediately set off for Naples, with the intention of bringing about profound changes in the cultural institutions of the city.² The first, and most extensive, project undertaken by De Sanctis was the reorganisation of the Federico II University: in particular, he hoped to be able to reunite some of the members of the Hegelian youth that had frantically left the city between 1848 and 1849, by assigning them to various academic positions. Among the southern patriots summoned by De Sanctis, Bertrando Spaventa was unquestionably the most notable one. On October 29, 1860, Bertrando was finally appointed professor of theoretical philosophy at the Neapolitan university, a post he had been chasing since the 1840s.

Spaventa's return to Naples was a joyful one. As his ship was drawing close to the bay, he exclaimed: "I see Vesuvius. After twelve years! I come back to Naples and I suddenly recognise it".³ Partly thanks to the encouragement of his friends and partly thanks to the birth of a daughter, the philosopher embarked upon his new professional and intellectual life with enthusiasm. By the beginning of the academic year, however, the context had once again

¹ De Meis, A. C. (17.8.1860) *Lettera a Bertrando Spaventa*, p. 341

² On De Sanctis' exile in Zürich, see: De Sanctis, F. (1913) *Lettere da Zurigo a Diomede Marvasi, 1856-60*; Cagliari, G. (1956) *L'arrivo e il soggiorno del De Sanctis a Zurigo*; Zoppi, G. (1932) *Francesco de Sanctis a Zurigo*

³ Quoted in: Gallo, F. (2015) *Dalla patria allo stato. Bertrando Spaventa, una biografia intellettuale*, p. 106

changed: the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies did not exist anymore and Naples was no longer a capital, the Bourbons were gone, Italy had been unified. Francesco De Sanctis, in the meantime, had become the Kingdom of Italy's Minister for Public Education. Bertrando's brother Silvio, instead, a member of the Chamber of Deputies, where he sat among the ranks of the liberal *Destra storica*.

Bertrando's first lecture, on November 23, 1861, insisted on the connection between the consolidation of the Italian national spirit, a theme dear to the Hegelian youth from the 1840s onwards, and an active philosophical life. In his speech, Spaventa recounted:

If philosophy is not a mere intellectual exercise driven by vanity, but that true form of human life in which all earlier moments of spirit are epitomised and find their true meaning, it is natural to think that a true people may recognise and acquire true consciousness of itself when looking at its philosophers. Where this acknowledgment is missing, foreign importation is useless; this is because consciousness of oneself is not a commodity, which can be bought, shout it be missing; it is consciousness of our true selves, our *true* selves.⁴

Bertrando then moved on to illustrate his theory of European philosophy's circularity. Observing that "the highest degree to which Italian speculation has elevated itself corresponds to the latest results obtained by German speculation", he incited his audience to engage with the study of European traditions of thought:

Let us study ourselves, the history of our own thought, without, however, fearing or despising another nation's thought, in which European speculation's patrimony is equally enclosed. If we study this patrimony, we will better study and understand ourselves; because that is, in substance, nothing more than our own thought in a different form. We will thus have two consciences in one, that is, a "greater consciousness".⁵

For Spaventa, the study of European forms of thought coincided with the most concrete goal of philosophical speculation, broadly conceived: negotiating "the autonomy of a people in the common life of all people".⁶ This, according to the author, depended on the definition of the most fundamental characteristic of philosophical modernity: its inherently transnational nature. Modern philosophy, according to the author, was, in its inception and development, the result of ongoing encounters and exchanges taking place across national borders, ultimately providing a characterisation of modern European thought as a constellation of

⁴ Spaventa, B. (1861) *Della nazionalità della filosofia. Prolusione*, pp. 1-2

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 21

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4

splintered traditions nonetheless united by their own interconnectedness and interdependence.

This understanding of modern thought, for Bertrando, as well as the other members of the Neapolitan Hegelian youth, was, both symbolically and intellectually, the endpoint of an intellectual project spanning four decades and whose narrative constituted the central focus of the present thesis. The present research has illustrated the reception, circulation and revision of Hegel's thought, particularly his philosophy of history, in Naples during the nineteenth century, discussed from a transnational perspective. More specifically, this thesis has sought to address a number of inter-related questions: what were the mechanisms of intellectual encounter and exchange enabling Hegelianism's penetration in Neapolitan intellectual history? How did its reception stand in relation to the local intellectual tradition? To what extent were Hegel's ideas subject to forms of revision by southern authors? How did the definition of Neapolitan Hegelianism reflect the experience of local contexts and debates? How did this philosophical tradition contribute to shaping debates on the Revolution of 1848? How did it inform southern intellectuals' engagement with the cause of Italian unification? How was it conducive to the making of a conceptual horizon able to illuminate the experience of a distinctly European dimension of modernity?

This thesis considered Hegelianism's presence in Naples from its initial appearance, and examined it in connection with a transnational avenue of exchange linking Germany to Naples via France, especially thanks to the mediation of Victor Cousin's *Fragments philosophiques*. As discussed in chapter one, mainly thanks to Stefano Cusani and Stanislao Gatti's reading of Cousin's best-known work, Neapolitan Hegelians developed a substantial knowledge of Hegel's philosophy of history, which they systematically proceeded to isolate from the French thinker's view known as "eclecticism". This was an unorthodox amalgamation of an absolute account of historical development, as reflected by the definition of history as a linear, rational process, and a rational psychologist sensitivity firmly grounded in empirical observation. That evidence allowed this thesis to provide a precise characterisation of Hegel's reception in Naples, especially with regards to three features. The first of these was the complex, indirect mechanism of intellectual exchange that introduced

Hegelianism in the Mezzogiorno, contrary to scholarly views that emphasised direct exchanges and the contributions of southern authors travelling to Germany.⁷

The second was Neapolitan Hegelianism's implications for historians' understanding of nineteenth-century European idealism's inherently polycentric nature: due to the idiosyncrasies of this philosophical movement's various receptions, different contexts produced, within a timespan of little more than twenty years, diverging interpretations of this philosophy, as formulated by its initial German theorists. In France, for example, it was seen as functional to the solution of problems in rational psychology; in Italy, instead, one could observe a much greater interest in its historicist elements, coupled with a broader sensitivity for absolute ontology. As a result, historians today should abandon a reified definition of idealism, given the plurality and diversity of its local receptions: Hegelianism in Germany, post-Kantianism in France and absolute historicism in Italy all stemmed from the same idealist doctrine, but reflected dissimilar philosophical agendas and concerns, as well as the experience of different contexts. These considerations intuitively call for methodological adjustments, in order to effectively engage with the transnational, polycentric nature of idealism, on the one hand, while remaining sensitive to how this philosophy was adapted to local contexts and intellectual inclinations, on the other. It is, consequently, necessary, as suggested by advocates of transnationalism, to avoid the danger of a reified understanding of ideas caused by their indiscriminate placement in supra- and transnational contexts, by acknowledging the extent to which ideas themselves are the products of those exchanges, encounters and patterns of circulation with which transnational history engages.⁸ Viewing Neapolitan Hegelianism as thematically connected to German idealism, yet formally distinct from it, and as characteristically informed by local contexts, debates and experiences, yet fully part of a European movement of ideas is a clear means of approaching a degree of equilibrium between transnational and local analyses. This operation is of crucial importance in order to

⁷ Aguzzi, L. (1985) *Riforma religiosa, hegelismo, comunismo e il problema del Risorgimento in Italia nel pensiero e nell'opera di Giambattista Passerini*; Aguzzi, L. (1987) *Giambattista Passerini e la penetrazione dell'hegelismo in Italia*, pp. 73-98; Di Giovanni, P. (1996) *Kant e Hegel in Italia. Alle origini del neoidealismo*, pp. 12-24; Oldrini, G. (1964a) *Gli hegeliani di Napoli: Augusto Vera e la corrente ortodossa*, pp. 240-89; Oldrini, G. (1964b) *La genesi dello hegelismo napoletano*, pp. 425-61; Rossi, M. (1957) *Sviluppi dello hegelismo in Italia*, pp. 6-61

⁸ Armitage, D. (2014) *The International Turn in Intellectual History*, pp. 232-52; Bourdieu, P. (1990) *Les conditions sociales de la circulation internationale des idées*, pp. 3-8; Conrad, S. (2003) *Circulation, "National Work" and Identity*, p. 260; Modern Italy (2014) *Special Issue: The Italian Risorgimento: Transnational Perspectives*

obtain a precise understanding and characterisation of Hegelianism's presence in the southern capital.

Thirdly, the initial discussion of Hegel's Neapolitan reception also highlighted the extent to which the German philosopher's ideas were subject to critical examination, reflecting how their reception was not a "passive" process of mere absorption, but one on which local intellectuals deliberately acted: having isolated the Hegelian philosophy of history from Cousin's eclecticism, southern thinkers nonetheless recognised the need to amalgamate it with a historicist view positing adequate attention on empirically observable conditions, thus paving the way for its merging with Giambattista Vico's historicism.

This thesis has consistently argued that the image of Giambattista Vico articulated by nineteenth-century intellectuals was different from the Neapolitan philosopher's actual intellectual profile in the 1700s. Chapter two sought therefore to investigate the extent to which Vichian historicism, as developed in *De antiquissima italorum sapientia* and, even more prominently, *La scienza nuova*, came to be re-imagined by nineteenth-century thinkers, in a way that supported the postulation of a direct continuity between Vichianism and modern idealism. This chapter posited that: (i) while a textual and contextual analysis ultimately problematises, rather than illuminates, the relationship between Vichianism and idealism, viewing it as part of a broader, European history of ideas may yield different results. More specifically, (ii) engaging with Vico's nineteenth-century re-discovery through the lens of transnationalism revealed the extent to which French intellectuals, mainly Victor Cousin and Jules Michelet, selectively appropriated Hegelian and Vichian elements. In particular, Michelet's 1827 volume *Principes de la philosophie de l'histoire de Vico* played an important role among Italian intellectuals, as reported by Giandomenico Romangosi, who, together with Carlo Cattaneo, went on to equate Vico's historicism with its German idealist counterpart.

Why, then, were Vico's ideas seen as kindred with Hegel's? Chapter two maintained that (iii) it was mainly thanks to Southern émigrés' contribution that the historicist themes developed in *La scienza nuova* were discussed in increasingly idealist terms. Among these views, Vincenzo Cuoco's were undoubtedly the most poignant and most widely discussed: Cuoco, in fact, problematised the tension between the Vichian notions of "ideal eternal history" and the latter's concrete, tangible embodiments, ultimately claiming that, according to Vico, "that which is true is always ideal" and that, as a result, "those things theorised by

the German school in the last few years, have already been thought of, and executed, by Vico roughly one century earlier".⁹

If this discussion of Vico's nineteenth-century re-discovery effectively illustrated the extent to which his ideas were increasingly regarded as compatible with German idealism, chapter three of this thesis drew attention to the contexts that enabled their full amalgamation: Neapolitan private schools of philosophy. Private schools' contribution to Neapolitan intellectual history was traditionally neglected by historians of the Mezzogiorno, who usually mentioned them only briefly as part of broader derogatory judgments on the dynamics of education in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies during the Risorgimento.¹⁰ Chapter three sought to address this scholarly imbalance, by maintaining that: (i) historians' verdicts denouncing the allegedly static cultural landscape of the southern capital on the basis of the Bourbon monarchy's failures in implementing effective education policies are myopic and empirically inaccurate. This is because, (ii) as observable in a wide range of sources available in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Public Education collections currently held at the Archivio di Stato in Naples, the Bourbons were very much aware of private institutes' ability to "make up" for public education's deficiencies and they consequently promoted them, both in the capital and the other regions of the Kingdom.

This intuition underlined, in a provocative fashion, the need for historians to shift their understanding of the dynamics of education in the Mezzogiorno from the denunciation of failed policies in the public sector to the recognition of a successful synergy of public and private branches. This, however, does not mean that a dichotomy between these two spheres did not exist: looking especially at the extent to which foreign ideas were discussed almost exclusively in education channels, this chapter concluded that (iii) private schools' progressive and liberal attitudes were the bearers of the transnational philosophical sensitivity enabling

⁹ Cuoco, V. (1806) *La filosofia di Giambattista Vico*, p. 306

¹⁰ Agresta, S. (1992) *L'istruzione nel mezzogiorno d'Italia: 1806-1860*, pp. 27-29; Bonetta, G. (1981) *Istruzione e società nella Sicilia dell'ottocento*; Corbi, E. & Stollo, M. R. (1999) *L'istruzione a Napoli dal 1806 al 1860. Politica scolastica e organizzazione didattica*, pp. 11-40; Del Giudice, F. (1860) *Le piaghe dell'istruzione pubblica napoletana*, pp. 11-56; Gragnaniello, R. (2006) *Didattica e istruzione nel mezzogiorno preunitario*, pp. 41-42; Iesu, F. (2007) *Istruzione e salute pubblica in provincia di Terra di Lavoro del Regno di Napoli dai Borbone al Regno d'Italia*; Omodeo, A. (1951) *La cultura meridionale nel Risorgimento*; Pagano, A. (2004) *Scuola e maestri nel sud: dal 1816 al 1860*; Vigo, G. (1971) *Istruzione e sviluppo economico in Italia nel secolo XIX*; Zazo, A. (1924) *L'ultimo periodo Borbonico*, pp. 467-75; Zazo, A. (1927) *L'istruzione pubblica e privata nel napoletano*, pp. 103-10

the dissemination of Hegel's ideas in Naples, on the one hand, and their amalgamation with Vico's, on the other.

A precedent, in this sense, had been set by Pasquale Galluppi and Ottavio Colecchi's private schools of philosophy. (iv) These schools played a central role not only in engaging with German philosophy, but also in its revision along markedly anti-metaphysical lines, by attempting, for instance, the merging of Kantianism and Vichianism. Colecchi's students, whose exploration and critique of Cousin's eclecticism had been conducive, as explained in chapter one, to their interest in Hegel's philosophy of history, were prompt to transpose their mentor's approach onto the study of German idealism. In their schools, (v) Stanislao Gatti and Stefano Cusani amalgamated Hegelianism and Vichianism, as they discussed the possibility to contemplate Spirit's progressive development via the analysis of its "clearest manifestations", such as languages, customs and traditions, in an attempt to replace Hegel's reliance on logical-metaphysical reasoning with a mechanism of philological and anthropological validation borrowed from *La scienza nuova*.¹¹

Lastly, (vi) it was in Francesco De Sanctis' school that the encounter of Vico and Hegel found its most sophisticated form, consisting of the formulation of a dual, bi-directional historicist method. Theorising a dialectic between the two most fundamental intuitions advanced by the two philosophers, namely that "that which is rational is real and that which is real is rational" (Hegel) and "that which is made is true" (Vico), De Sanctis understood man's experience of history to be an ongoing process of negotiation, discernible via the simultaneous application of logical reasoning and historical observation. The former was deemed able to allow for the individuation of the rational, directional, nature of history; the latter, instead, was understood as a means of rescuing the Hegelian "Wirklich" from a purely metaphysical view, consequently coming to view it as a Vichian man-made "factum".

If chapter three was an attempt to provide a characterisation of Neapolitan Hegelianism by engaging with often neglected authors, such as Gatti and Cusani, and contexts, such as that of Neapolitan private schools of philosophy, chapter four sought to illuminate the relationship between the Hegelian youth of Naples and the experiences that traditionally dominate historians' discussion of the Risorgimento: the 1848 Revolution and the Italian Unification. In particular, this chapter suggested that (i) the amalgamation of

¹¹ Gatti, S. (1843) *La filosofia della storia*, p. 157

Vichianism and Hegelianism provided southern thinkers, gathering around the short-lived revolutionary periodical *Il Nazionale*, with a conceptual horizon enabling them to interpret the experience of the Revolution, on the one hand, and direct their participation in it, on the other.

Embracing a Hegelian notion of historical development, *Il Nazionale* invoked the ideas of the Revolution's inherent rationality and historical necessity; from Vico, instead, it borrowed the intuition that political change had to necessarily result in the strengthening of Italy's national character. At the same time, (ii) the poignancy of *Il Nazionale's* contribution was visible in how the periodical postulated the inseparability of the 1848 Revolution and the promotion of Italian emancipation and unification. Seen in their own context, then, (iii) *Il Nazionale's* articles positioned themselves in contrast to Neapolitans' general political sympathies, as well as those of other Italian patriots who put their hopes in Carlo Alberto and Piedmont's hands. This was because, despite acknowledging the inevitability, for the Risorgimento, to be carried out by Piedmont, *Il Nazionale* plotted its experience of the 1848 Revolution and of the Italian war of Independence against the idealised reconstructions of the 1799 Neapolitan Revolution articulated in Vincenzo Cuoco's 1801 *Saggio storico sulla rivoluzione napoletana del 1799* and Pietro Colletta's *Storia del reame di Napoli*. As a result, the revolutionary periodical advocated a form of democratic constitutionalism reminiscent of the ideals that had animated the events of 1799, and fundamentally at odds with the anti-democratic tendencies exhibited by Piedmontese liberalism's theorists.

Neapolitan Hegelians' involvement in the Revolution of 1848, in this sense, complicates the understanding of their relationship with moderate liberal politics, a topic too often uncritically taken for granted by later studies.¹² This chapter therefore urged a re-examination of their relationship following the defeat of the 1848 Revolution, in an attempt to challenge the verdict that during the final years of the Risorgimento, "Hegel became

¹² Bazzoli, M. (1988) *Silvio Spaventa nella storiografia dello stato liberale*, pp. 117-32; Bortot, R. (1968) *L'hegelismo di Bertrando Spaventa*, pp. 2-12; Chiodi, G. M. (1989) *Sull'idea di stato di Silvio Spaventa*, pp. 217-66; Croce, B. (1898) *Silvio Spaventa. Dal 1848 al 1861. Lettere, scritti, documenti*; Croce, B. (1949) *Parità degli uomini nella libertà*, p. 74; Croce, E. (1949) *Silvio Spaventa*; Garin, E. (1983) *Filosofia e politica in Bertrando Spaventa*; Ghisalberti, C. (1972) *Silvio Spaventa teorico dello stato liberale*, pp. 249-312; Ghisalberti, C. (1991) *Silvio Spaventa e Hegel: unità nazionale e stato*, pp. 9-18; Nigro, M. (1988) *Silvio Spaventa e il Rechtsstaat*, pp. 109-16; Origo, G. (2011) *Bertrando Spaventa interprete di Bruno, Vico ed Hegel*, pp. 7-15, 89-96, 107-11; Rota, G. (2005) *La circolazione del pensiero secondo Bertrando Spaventa*, pp. 655-86; Serra, T. (1974) *Bertrando Spaventa. Etica e politica*; Silvestri, G. (1988) *Politica, amministrazione e divisione dei poteri nel pensiero di Silvio Spaventa*, pp. 41-61

liberal”.¹³ Looking at the post-1848 writings and correspondence of one of *Il Nazionale*'s founders, Silvio Spaventa, whose affiliation with Piedmontese liberalism and the “Destra storica” are well-documented, this chapter concluded that (iv) his contribution to liberal political thought signalled his progressive abandonment of Hegelian speculative positions, as demonstrated by his remarkably non-Hegelian discussion of the relationship between freedom and the State.

If, even after 1848, Neapolitan Hegelianism seemed to be at odds with Piedmontese moderate liberalism, what political views did it serve to support? To address this issue, this thesis turned its attention to Bertrando Spaventa's writings in Turin, appearing during the 1850s. It drew attention to (v) the presence, in these articles, of the very same historicist sensitivity, Vichian and Hegelian in equal measure, that had characterised his political reflections in 1848, appearing in *Il Nazionale*. This served to rectify another historiographical view, portraying 1848 and 1850 as separate moments in Bertrando's intellectual and political formation.¹⁴ More importantly, this chapter demonstrated (vi) how, by reflecting on a concept of State closely resembling Hegel's definition of “Ethical State”, Spaventa theorised a relationship between institutions and civil society geared towards the promotion of collective freedom, and a concept of State understood as the catalyst for the rational mediation among particular interests present in society. In consequence, and as visible in Spaventa's commentaries on ongoing debates on freedom of teaching, (vii) his idea of State, while being characteristically Hegelian, was more progressive than that advanced by Piedmontese liberals, and, as such, more in line with the principles of democratic constitutionalism championed in 1848.

For Neapolitan Hegelians, however, the composite, Hegelian and Vichian, historicism elaborated during the 1830s and '40s did not exclusively represent a means to provide a significant, yet too often overlooked, contribution to Risorgimento political thought. Rather, it disclosed a conceptual horizon bounding a distinctly modern and European experience of intellectual life. Bertrando Spaventa's famous statement that the Italian intellectual landscape always lived “in the arms of European thought”, in this sense, reflected the

¹³ Ghisalberty, C. (1991), p. 9

¹⁴ Cubeddu, I (1963) *Bertrando Spaventa pubblicista*, pp. 62-65; Garin, E. (1983) *Filosofia e politica in Bertrando Spaventa*; Landucci, S. (1963) *Il giovane Spaventa fra hegelismo e socialismo*, pp. 656-58; Serra, T. (1974) *Bertrando Spaventa. Etica e politica*

centrality of a European dimension of philosophical speculation in southern thinkers' agenda. Chapter five explored this theme, investigating how, in response to European debates on the definition of a modern temporality, and as a reaction to the progressive marginalisation of Italy in the mental geography of the continent, Neapolitan Hegelians deployed their markedly transnational outlook and their composite historicism in order to demonstrate not only (i) that Italy was fully engaged in a European dimension of modernity, but also (ii) how the emergence of modernity itself largely depended on Italian intellectuals' contributions.

In particular, this chapter illustrated (iii) the development of new theories of modernity, as well as their internalisation in Italian culture, representing the broad narrative that thinkers of the peninsula engaged with and reacted to. By proposing, to use the poet Giacomo Leopardi's words, that "the North's time has come", these accounts of modern Europe systematically relegated Italy to a peripheral position, suggesting that the ideal of modernity embodied by the country was unquestionably defective.¹⁵ Clearly, Italian intellectuals promptly reacted to this indiscriminate characterisation: (iv) because the peninsula's "otherness" was understood to reflect the misalignment of the Italian space of experience and a European horizon of expectations, their responses aimed at re-calibrating their relationship, via the systematic re-writing of Italian history.

Vincenzo Cuoco and Vincenzo Gioberti's advocacy of the notion of "Italian primacy" over the rest of the continent can be cited as a prime example of this tendency. Neapolitan Hegelians, however, took issue with Cuoco and Gioberti's views. Bertrando Spaventa, for instance, directly rejected Cuoco's reliance on a Vichian "ancient Italian genius" and advanced, in his best-known work, *La filosofia italiana nelle sue relazioni colla filosofia europea*, an incendiary critique of Gioberti's 1843 essay *Del primato morale e civile degli italiani*. *La filosofia italiana*, was correctly regarded by later commentators as Spaventa's most successful attempt to negotiate a vantage point for Italy in the intellectual life of modern European nations; it was, however, too often singled out as Neapolitan Hegelians' only attempt to engage with a European dimension of modernity, too.¹⁶

¹⁵ Leopardi, G. (1824) *Discorso sopra lo stato presente dei costumi degl'italiani*, p. 38

¹⁶ Gallo, F. (2012) *Philosophical Revolution and the Shaping of European Consciousness: Bertrando Spaventa's 'La Filosofia Italiana nelle Sue Relazioni colla Filosofia Europea'*, pp. 213-22; Origo, G. (2011) *Bertrando Spaventa interprete di Bruno, Vico ed Hegel*; Rota, G. (2005) *La circolazione del pensiero secondo Bertrando Spaventa*, pp. 655-86

Chapter five took issue with this interpretation, maintaining that (v) a more compelling appreciation of this text hinges on efforts to view it in connection with often overlooked authors, such as Stefano Cusani and Stanislao Gatti and (vi) with Spaventa's own writings of the 1850s. The characterisation of modernity proposed by Bertrando, in fact, owed much to Gatti and Cusani's reflections on the transnational, European, character of modern philosophy. Likewise, it relied heavily on Spaventa's earlier attempts to view Italian intellectual history within the framework elaborated by his fellow Hegelian thinkers, suggesting that it was among sixteenth-, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Italian philosophers, particularly Giordano Bruno and Tommaso Campanella, that one could find the earliest theorisations of problems, such as that of Spirit's freedom, or the identity of the human and the divine, which would later represent prime concerns for the most distinctly modern of all philosophies: German idealism.

Lastly, chapter five maintained (vii) that a distinct feature of *La filosofia italiana*, granting this text a status of absolute prominence in the cultural landscape of the Risorgimento, was represented by its characterisation of European modernity, in a philosophical sense, as inherently circular. This definition stemmed, once again, from the deployment of Hegelian and Vichian categories as the conceptual lexicon informing Bertrando Spaventa's interpretation of the continent's intellectual history: viewing the making of modern philosophy as the concerted effort of a constellation of splintered national traditions, nonetheless brought together by their interconnectedness and interdependence, the author succeeded not only in effectively proving the historical directionality of the emergence of modernity, but also in demonstrating that this trajectory was, in the nineteenth century, taking an unexpected turn, finally returning to its birthplace: the Italian nation.

This thesis was a study of the ways in which Neapolitan Hegelianism represented a powerful force not only in the intellectual history of the Risorgimento, but in the conceptualisation of modern Europe. As such, and given the transnational nature of the intellectual encounters that brought this school of thought to life, this research emphasised the importance of engaging with the study of ideas' meaning, reception, circulation and revision in ways that go beyond the simple analysis of texts and, to a large extent, of immediate contexts. Transnationalism was a useful means of interrogating the spatial dimension of these mechanisms: thanks to the adoption of a transnational framework of analysis, chapter one attempted to slot the emergence of Neapolitan Hegelianism into a

polycentric understanding of European idealism, highlighting the peculiarities of the latter's various receptions, yet viewing these as part of the same movement of ideas across national borders. In chapter two, transnationalism enabled the thesis to achieve something that stringent textual and contextual modes of analysis simply would not be able to accomplish: explaining why Vico and Hegel's theories of history were regarded as compatible by nineteenth-century intellectuals. Thinkers in the Italian peninsula reflected on *La scienza nuova*, and viewed it as the theorisation of an idealist, absolute, conception of historical development thanks to the mediation of French intellectuals. Lastly, chapter five focused on Neapolitan Hegelians' reflections on a distinctly European dimension of philosophical modernity, maintaining that it was on the basis of a transnational philosophical outlook that Stefano Cusani, Stanislao Gatti, Francesco De Sanctis and Bertrando Spaventa contributed to rehabilitating Italy's position in the continent's intellectual history.

This is not to say that other methodological approaches are not effective in illuminating Neapolitan Hegelianism's complexities: after all, large sections of chapters two, three and four relied on a rather canonical form of contextual analysis to illustrate Neapolitan Hegelians' responses to their experiences of political and intellectual landscapes. It is important, however, to emphasise how transnationalism proved to be, in this thesis, an indispensable tool to address traditional historiographical verdicts on Neapolitan Hegelianism, which are too often anchored to a national framework of analysis only.¹⁷

If transnationalism represented an effective means of engaging with the spatial dimension of the ideas investigated in this thesis, their temporal dimension deserved equal consideration. The two are intrinsically connected: chapters one, two and three demonstrated that the amalgamation of Hegel's philosophy of history and Vichian historicism resulted in a conceptualisation of temporality stemming from a diachronic series of intellectual encounters, connecting Victor Cousin's use of rational psychology alongside a Hegelian notion of development with Francesco De Sanctis' definition of a "dual", bi-directional, historiographical method, via Vincenzo Cuoco's problematisation of the two kinds of history presented in Vico's *Scienza nuova*. Similarly, chapter four explained that, as a theory of history, Neapolitan Hegelianism provided southern intellectuals with a conceptual horizon able to direct their understanding of, and participation in, ongoing experience of political

¹⁷ See, for example: Oldrini, G. (1964a) *Gli hegeliani di Napoli: Augusto Vera e la corrente ortodossa*; Oldrini, G. (1973) *La cultura filosofica napoletana nell'ottocento*; Rossi, M. (1957) *Sviluppi dello hegelismo in Italia*

change. Moreover, as discussed in chapter five, it was thanks to his reflections on modernity as a mode of temporality, that Bertrando Spaventa negotiated a vantage point for Italy *vis-à-vis* a distinctly European dimension of philosophical life. As a result, the characterisation of Neapolitan Hegelianism in this thesis was not exclusively concerned with the presence of Hegel and Vico's ideas in southern thinkers' language and argumentation, but also with how their adoption resulted in broader conceptual shifts in the temporal categories adopted to make sense of man's historical existence. The "dual historicist method" perfected by Francesco De Sanctis' in his private school, presented in chapter three, constitutes, in this sense, a prime example of Neapolitan Hegelianism's ability and tendency to interrogate historical time and man's experience of it. Moreover, as claimed in chapter five, Spaventa's use of Hegelian and Vichian notions to re-describe the intellectual history of modern Europe and that of Italy within it, can be seen as yet another example of the particularly pronounced temporal dimension characterising Neapolitan Hegelianism.

These observations on the importance of engaging with the study of ideas in ways that focus attention on their transnational nature and temporal dimension were very relevant to the present work. Relying on transnationalism and Koselleck's *Begriffsgeschichte* will hopefully enable it to contribute to historians' understanding of Neapolitan Hegelianism as a school of thought too often ignored by studies of the Italian Risorgimento, despite the recent proliferation of historiographical research on this period. By the time Italy became unified as a Kingdom in 1861, Neapolitan Hegelians ceased to exist as a unified group, as explained in the introduction of this thesis. Their lives took different directions, with Silvio Spaventa and Francesco De Sanctis fully committing to political careers, rather than active philosophical speculation. Stanislao Gatti struggled until 1861 to publish the periodical he had founded with Stefano Cusani in the early 1840s, *Museo di Letteratura e Filosofia*, and retired the following year.

Lastly, Bertrando Spaventa maintained his post at the University of Naples and sat in the Chamber of Deputies on two occasions: 1861-65 and 1867-74. He published a number of philosophical treatises before his death in 1883, including *Principii di filosofia* and *Studii sull'etica di Hegel*. These volumes expanded on the intuitions developed in *La filosofia italiana*, further reinforcing the description of modern philosophy as "circular", in ways that highlighted the connections between the Italian and foreign traditions. While they may represent an area for further study, these works lie beyond the scope of the present thesis,

as they do not provide a novel perspective on Hegel's Italian reception and are very consistent with Spaventa's previous writings.

In 1861, the Italian Risorgimento was formally fulfilled. This thesis sought to examine how Neapolitan Hegelians played an important role in the intellectual and political debates that characterised this period, how they encouraged Neapolitans to think as Italians, and Italians to think as a Europeans, embarking on a voyage of self-discovery fuelled by the sheer power of philosophical thought: "philosophy", as Bertrando put it, "is consciousness of ourselves, our true selves".¹⁸

¹⁸ Spaventa, B. (1861), pp. 1-2

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