Sergio Cotta, along with André Masson and Robert Shackleton, has been the most important interpreter of Montesquieu in the 20th century. Not only because he edited, although in Italian translation, the first complete critical edition of the *Esprit des lois* (Lo spirito delle leggi, Torino 1952), but for the first truly scientific monograph on the whole thought of Montesquieu (Montesquieu e la scienza della società, Torino 1953). Advocate of the “sociological” interpretation of Montesquieu (Montesquieu as founder of an empirical science of society), Cotta has brought original contributions in focusing some fundamental issues of the thought of the French philosopher, such as the conception of religion and of Christianity in particular — as elements that bring about social and political order and, at the same time, as a source of liberty; the dialectical vision of common good and liberty with the connected appraisal for the role of the parties and of the social-political pluralism; the idea of boundary as a key concept to access the analysis and the resolution of political and moral problems. No-one but Cotta could create a better image of Montesquieu as a “philosopher of the boundary”.

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