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***Platonism and Its Enemies in the Political Philosophy of the Italian
Renaissance***

Paper abstract and objectives:

The role of the Platonism in the political philosophy of the Italian Renaissance has attracted the attention of the international scholarship, while the study of its worst enemies (i.e. the sophists), is still almost completely neglected. This paper has a threefold aims: 1) to present some of the most relevant aspects of the political Platonism of Marsilio Ficino, who is the most important translator and interpreter of Plato in Western tradition; 2) to examine the rebirth of ancient sophists thanks to Ficino's work on Plato's dialogues, with particular attention to the political aspect of it; 3) to analyse Sperone Speroni's reevaluation of sophistic rhetoric in his works *Apologia dei dialoghi*, *In difesa dei sofisti* and *Contra Socrate*, in which Speroni carries on a defense of ancient sophists against their accusers Socrates and Plato, claims that they sophists served the city's interests as good rhetoricians and politics, and supports their anti-Platonic perspectives. This contribution combines the results of two research projects that I have pursued in the last years and focuses in particular on the most original outcomes of my Marie Skłodowska Curie research project "Sperone Speroni (1500-1588) and the Rebirth of Sophistry in the Italian Renaissance" (funded by the EU Program Horizon2020, Grant Agreement n. 659644) started in 2015 and hosted by the Department of Philosophy and Cultural Heritage, Ca' Foscari University Venice. A different version of this paper will be part of my forthcoming monograph that will be published in Brill Intellectual History Series within 2016.