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## **The Idea of Argument in the Political Discourse: A Selective Overview**

**Abstract:** The present paper aims to underline a few aspects concerning the understanding and the use of arguments in political discourses. The link between rhetoric and political discourse is an old and strong one, Ancient Greece being one of the most interesting spaces in this respect. The democratic legacy of that period which is cherished today by the West remains deeply linked to the tradition of political oratory, the use of arguments playing nowadays an important role within democratic debates. Therefore, we intend to make a short selection of texts which could illustrate the understanding of the idea of argument in politics in different periods of time and in different social contexts.

**Keywords:** political discourse, argument, political ideology, persuasion.

The relationship between politics and rhetoric is a long and complex one, historically speaking. It seems to be quite natural for every potential leader in this world to try to influence the opinions of quite large groups of people, in order to consolidate his authority, to make him well accepted by population or even desirable as a ruler. Thus, at first, it seems quite trivial to analyze the relation between the politic discourse on one hand and the idea of argument on another hand. But, on a second look, the subject proves to be more complex, due to the temptation to use in politics all the tricks of manipulation, every political speaker having to choose between the rules of coherent argumentation and those of sheer propaganda. Therefore, the subject treated in the present work is mainly related to the quality of political discourse.

We are interested in underlining the way in which the idea of argument was understood as an ingredient of the political discourse, from

ancient times up to contemporary times (Salavastru 2010, 90). After all, the discourse remains the main tool for maintaining the politicians connected to the public. Using the discourse, the real or at least the claimed intentions of a politician can be expressed, while at the same time his political identity becomes easier recognizable for the public. Moreover, the actions of the politician, his merits and his virtues, as well as his weaknesses can be revealed to the public or partially guessed by the public using the discourse. At the same time, various aspects regarding the political reality could be emphasized using the same tool.

On one hand, people can be inspired or even transported to another level of understanding in what concerns the situation of their country, of their community, of themselves through an articulated and authentic discourse, while on the other hand the same people can be dastardly tricked and misguided by a fallacious sophistic discourse. In this respect, politicians can be classified in various categories. A good politician can express in his own words the most ardent wishes and needs of his listeners, while at the same time he can decide to be very cautious in giving them too many details about his real agenda, deliberately exploiting their tendency to imagine what he might do for them after the elections. It is difficult to evaluate the degree of sincerity that a politician puts at work within his campaign, his real commitment and his real intentions. Sometimes, a careful analysis of the argumentative structure of his discourses one can unveil at least a part of them.

For instance, political demagogy can be detected by observing the contrast between what is claimed within the discourse and the social and economic reality of the moment. The harsh words and the radical characterization of political adversaries could indicate the presence of a radical political discourse, while the presence of systematic contradictions could reveal the tendency to manipulate the public using simple or more sophisticated lies (Salavastru 1999, 65). We could give other examples as well, but the main idea is that political discourse can be considered a source of valuable information as regards the intellectual profile and ideological identity of a politician, in spite of the fact that usually in politics there is a great distance between what is claimed and what is actually believed and intended. Nevertheless, in this context both rationality and emotions play an important role in shaping the relation between the public speaker and his public. Depending which of the two are emphasized, we can decide what the real intention of the speaker is (Salavastru 2003, 33). In political discourse, which is mainly deliberative, in contrast with epideictic discourse for example, the goals are very

ambitious, namely the politician does not intend only to become popular, or to create a pleasant state of mind among his listeners. The goals refer mainly to actions, actions that can be capitalized within elections or in other various ways. For instance, the reactions of the citizens related to different sensitive administrative measures like reforms can be influenced through political discourse as well. As a result, quite often the politician intends to rally the huge variety of individual attitudes regarding his actions or his intentions around a few important common points that underline his vision about political and economical reality. Within such a process, rationality can play a more or less important role and the argumentative structure of political discourse varies in accordance to this parameter. At the same time, the temptation to express only a little part of his real intentions makes the politician use quite often a euphemistic manner of expressing his ideas regarding the future projects. In this context, the emotions play an important part in motivating the public: hope, fear, disgust, enthusiasm, vanity, pride, contempt or desperation are among the most used in this respect. The temptation to use emotions in order to achieve political goals throughout public discourse can be identified in any historical period of time, but the degree to which subjectivity is exploited and the preoccupation for respecting or crossing the boundaries of truth in public discourse makes the difference between manipulative politicians and the more honest ones.

In spite of the fact that most of the politicians cannot resist to cross the boundaries mentioned above, in the selection of the texts presented below we are preoccupied to emphasize the use of real arguments. As we will see, beyond the particularities of style and language, in every historical period of time argumentation was strongly related to the idea of rationality, which leads us to the fact that some universal features of Human Being are involved in elaborating and understanding a correct argumentation, an observation that Perelman had in his mind when he spoke about the so-called universal auditory, for example. Of course, other types of discourse, such as the juridical one, illustrate better this idea in comparison to the political discourse. The last one was always prone to different kinds of sophistry; but in spite of that, politicians always wanted to connect themselves to some universal characteristics of the public receptivity, which forced them to take into account the possibility that their discourse would be examined also from a rational perspective by their adversaries and by an important part of their public. Unfortunately, in many cases, this concern did not prevent a vast number of them from persuading their goals by means of seduction or, by

means of extreme forms of persuasion, at best. This particularity makes the political discourse to be often spectacular in language and stylistic technicalities while remaining fragile epistemologically, a profile which is easily detectable from an objective point of view, but remains usually opaque for the large public.

However, for many historians the idea of argument is an indispensable ingredient of political discourse in democratic societies, due to the fact that political debate is usually allowed only in democratic regimes and plays an important part in the process of distributing political power. In fact, this aspect guided much the selection of texts we are going to do below, because the Ancient Greece, the Modern Western Europe and the Modern North America can be considered the most illustrative spaces in this regard.

From another perspective, the idea of argument is often associated to that of a quarrel. From a political point of view, any such dispute could undermine the harmony, the reign of rule and the political authority of the tyrant or the king in an absolutist state. Even though, according to Longman Essential Activator (Campbell 1997, 36-37), one should make the distinction between the activity of giving an argument for something on one hand and the activity of having an argument with someone on the other hand, argumentation remains linked both with rationality and with the idea of conflict. In this context, one could ask himself about a possible explanation for such a double association, but undoubtedly it can be linked to the effort of surpassing personal subjectivism in treating the difference of opinions more objectively. Another interesting aspect that could be mentioned is the fact that the idea of argument, being associated to the idea of conflict, can be at the same time linked to the possibility of surpassing the difficulties raised by the differences of opinion in a rational manner. So, beyond the emotional tensions involved in such a process, the idea of argument can be associated to a veritable culture of debate, in which the difference of opinions can be assumed as a condition for healthy criticism of various actions, most of them political. Such a culture of debate implies the use of rationality to overcome the possible difficulties in obtaining a settlement. And one should not forget that for modern democracy the rational ingredient of political life is indispensable, because it represents a non-violent way of managing the difference, no matter what kind of differences we talk about.

There are four categories of thinkers, as far as the idea of argument in the political discourse is concerned. Those who discussed purely theoretically about argumentation, like Aristotle, those who

mastered argumentation and also reflected about it like Cicero, political thinkers and politicians who wrote about using arguments in politics like Machiavelli (Boucher 2008, 139), and politicians who mastered the art of using arguments in politics like Margaret Thatcher and many others. Obviously, the detailed presentation of the contributions given by such important personalities to the development of classical and modern rhetoric far exceeds the limits of the present paper, but we feel the need to mention briefly at least some of their most important achievements.

Among all the personalities that have something to do with the use of arguments in politics Plato is unique, for a number of reasons. He mastered argumentation in philosophy and wrote about the rules of using argumentation in philosophy and politics at a theoretical level. In this respect, he may be considered a special case, together with Cicero and Quintilian. He opened a series of crucial topics that later on were developed by other philosophers and were transformed into wide and remarkably complex domains.

Plato was among the most prominent authors of Antiquity who wrote about the importance of correct reasoning in the activity of composing a public discourse, in politics as well as in justice. In fact, inspired by Socrates, he developed a philosophical position opposed to that of sophists, several dialogs being focused on the issue of identifying and avoiding sophistic argumentation. Among these dialogues, the most well known are: *Gorgias*, *The Laws* and *The Sophist*, the last one discussing several acceptations of the term “sophism”. What is really interesting about Plato is the fact that he considered the logos as having a divine origin (Aristotel 2004, 12). In his view, the capacity of influencing the others, their thoughts and their mood by using words could be regarded as a divine gift. The words are addressed to human rationality, but also to human sensitivity, therefore the discourse has to be conceived as an endeavor having both these two components: the rational one and the emotional one. Depending on their proportionality, the types of discourse are different and the basic objective of the speaker could be different (to convince, to persuade, to seduce). The way in which the rational architecture of the discourse is built can reveal the real intentions of the speaker, the philosopher and the sophist being in fundamental opposition here (Plato 1989, 313).

For Plato, true dialectics should be conceived as an art of developing rigorous arguments, which means, at first, a sheer respect for the truth, and second, a continuous struggle for avoiding the sophistical manner of composing discourses. In fact, Plato makes a sharp distinction

between those who compose discourses in accordance to the principles of dialectics and those who use discourses, no matter how rigorous, with the only purpose of influencing the audience by all means (Salavastru 2003, 14). Actually, the first distinction made by Plato is based on another one, between the action of cultivating the truth in order to convince the audience, on one hand, and the action of cultivating only the appearance of truth, in order to make the audience accept the thesis of the discourse, on the other hand. In the first case, the correctness of argumentation is what matters, while in the second case the beauty of the discourse represents the main feature that influences the listeners, whilst the argumentative outline of the discourse may prove fallacious.

This way, Plato warned his contemporaries and his posterity about the hidden dangers of rhetoric, which becomes a tool that can be used in very different ways for gaining advantages in front of the large public (Salavastru 2010, 19). In this respect, beyond their philosophical content, the works of Plato can be hardly overestimated, because, in fact, he created a solid starting point for his pupil, Aristotle, as regards the further development of rigorous methodology for analyzing the correctness of reasoning in various situations, but most of all in its use within public discourse. Aristotle's contributions to the development of dialectics are so important, that one could see him as reinventing the entire domain, in spite of the fact that his systematic vision upon it was not opposed to that of Plato. In his *Topics* and in his *Rhetoric* Aristotle systematized the dialectics, analyzing carefully various categories of arguments and their use within different types of discourses. He also shaped various strategies of cultivating a certain relationship between the speaker and his public. The rigorous vision of Aristotle was so influential for classical rhetoric, that his *Topics* (Aristotel 1998, 242) were analyzed and interpreted by Cicero in his own *Topics* (Cicero 2010, 51) oriented mainly towards juridical discourse, whilst Aristotelian works remained the basic reference in rhetoric for another master, Quintilian (Quintilianus 1974, 6). Classical rhetoric was shaped around Aristotelian principles, its concern for the correctness of reasoning being equilibrated by the concern for the shape of the discourse.

In the case of contemporary rhetoric, with its complex argumentative developments in which backing the warrants represents a major preoccupation (Toulmin 2008, 95), with its refined philosophical account of the different types of auditory (Perelman 2012, 45) and, finally, with its problematological approach (Meyer 2010, 321) the Aristotelian classification of arguments and types of discourses continues to represent the undisputable ground for further developments. In spite of

the fact that contemporary society, through technological development, created new types of interactions among the speaker and its public, created a new type of receptivity and a new way of understanding the relation between information and the time interval in which such information can be delivered to the public and can be selected and analyzed by the public, the principles and values of classical rhetoric continue to play a crucial role. It is enough in this respect to refer to the triad *pathos*, *ethos*, and *logos* and to emphasize its role in shaping nowadays the relation between the speaker and its public.

As we already mentioned, we are going to select a few fragments of political discourse from certain geographical regions and certain periods of time. Classical rhetoric, developed first in Ancient Greece can be exemplified by Pericles (c.495-427 BC).

### **Pericles**

*“[...]Most of those who have spoken here before me have commended the lawgiver who added this oration to our other funeral customs; it seemed to them a worthy thing that such an honor should be given at their burial to the dead who have fallen on the field of battle. But I should have preferred that, when men’s deeds have been brave, they should be honored in deed only, and with such an honor as this public funeral, which you are now witnessing. [...] I will speak first of our ancestors, for it is right and seemly that now, when we are lamenting the dead, a tribute should be paid to their memory. There has never been a time when they did not inhabit this land, which by their valor they have handed down from generation to generation, and we have received from them a free state. But if they were worthy of praise, still more were our fathers, who added to their inheritance, and after many struggle transmitted to us their sons this great empire. [...] Such was the end of these men; they were worthy of Athens, and the living need not desire to have a more heroic spirit, although they may pray for a less fatal issue. The value of such a spirit is not to be expressed ... I would have you ... fix your eyes upon the greatness of Athens, until you become filled with the love of her; and when you are impressed by the spectacle of her glory, reflect that this empire has been acquired by men who knew their duty and had the courage to do it, who in the hour of conflict had the fear of dishonor always present to them, and who, if ever they failed in an enterprise, would not allow their virtues to be lost to their country, but freely gave their lives to her as the fairest offering which they could*

*present at her feast [...] To you who are the sons and brothers of the departed, I see that the struggle to emulate them will be an arduous one. For all men praise the dead, and, however pre-eminent your virtue may be, hardly will you be thought, I do not say to equal, but even to approach them.”* (Beare 2010, 10).

An emblematic personality for the Ancient political rhetoric, Pericles influenced a lot the social and military development of Athens within his lifetime, including some strategic decisions with important impact on the situation of citizens. The fragment presented above belongs to a funeral discourse pronounced in a difficult period of time for Athens, due to the ongoing war with its biggest rival, Sparta. As one could expect in the case of an epideictic discourse, the arguments based on values play a major part, being invoked quite often. In the present case, the sacrifice of the heroes is appreciated by analogy to that of their ancestors, the greatness of Athens being emphasized on this occasion, in order to motivate the listeners towards the same type of sacrifice. The patriotic values are invoked several times, but the real aim of the speaker is to persuade the listeners not only to appreciate the courage and dignity of those who already died, but to follow their example in sacrificing their own lives for defending the country, if necessary. In this regard, it is remarkable the fact that, in the last part of the fragment, the speaker is focused on the listeners' perspective upon the situation. They become a part of the discourse, the speaker being focused on their duty as citizens of Athens. The argumentation is developed in multiple stages. First, the ancestors are worthy of admiration because they sacrificed their lives in defending Athens. Second, Athens itself becomes a town that deserves to be defended by its contemporary citizens, since great heroes of the past gave their lives for it. Third, in the name of patriotic values, the example of the ancestors is worthy to be followed. The preoccupation for internal coherence and for the style of the discourse can be easily observed, due to the language used by Pericles. In the same time, the argument based on the analogy with the heroes is meant to overcome the difficulties of the present, suggesting to the listeners a specific type of behavior.

### **Giuseppe Garibaldi**

*„I offer neither pay, nor quarters, nor food; I offer only hunger, thirst, forced marches, battles and death. Let him who loves his country with his heart, and not merely with his lips, follow me.”* (Beare 2010, 444).



In this fragment the speaker uses an antithesis between patriotic values and material values, in order to underline the importance of the first for motivating the listeners to follow him. In this context, in the minds of the listeners, material shortcomings mentioned by the speaker ignite the pride of having the willingness to pursue a national ideal in spite of all difficulties. Thus, the affective field envisaged is unitary, stimulating especially those listeners with moral instinct, an aspect that increases the persuading power of the speech.

### **L. Trotsky**

*„You are pitiful isolated individuals; you are bankrupts; your role is played out. Go where you belong from now on – into the dustbin of history!”* (Beare 2010, 398).

This remark made by Trotsky in front of the ensuing Second Congress of the Soviets was addressed to the Mensheviks and to a large numbers of delegates from the Socialist Revolutionaries that decided to walk out on the grounds that Lenin and Trotsky had seized power illegally. The remark of Trotsky might have come from the frustration of losing such an important number of allies, but at the same time reveals a radical Machiavellian reasoning. Their decision of leaving was based on the argument that political power cannot be seized by true socialist politicians using extreme methods like political murder or political coup. On his turn, Trotsky is trying to develop a counter-argument, according to which socialists, in fact Bolsheviks, had the right to seize power by all means because they represent the interests of an entire social class, not just individual interests. The argument is Machiavellian because a collective interest is used to justify the ruthless behavior at the individual level. But if we analyze more carefully the real situation, we find that the objective of seizing power in the name of proletarians was not collectively accepted by the majority of population, nor sincerely assumed by Trotsky and his colleagues. As people of Russia will discover after seventy years of totalitarian regime, the Bolsheviks used the communist egalitarian propaganda to justify in fact personal dictatorship in U.S.S.R. Thus, the argument of Trotsky cannot be considered Machiavellian either, because the real purpose used for justifying ruthless political actions was not a generous one.

## Joseph Stalin

*“Comrades! Citizens! The perfidious military attack by Hitler’s Germany on our motherland, begun on June 22, is continuing. In spite of the heroic resistance of the Red Army and although the enemy’s finest divisions and finest air units have already been shattered and have met their doom on the battlefield, the enemy continues to push forward, hurling fresh forces into the fray.[...] History shows that there are no invincible armies and that there never have been. Napoleon’s army was considered invincible, but it was beaten successively by the troops of Russia, England and Germany. Kaiser Wilhelm’s German army in the period of the first imperialist war was also considered an invincible army, but it was defeated several times by Russian and Anglo-French troops, and was finally routed by the Anglo-French troops. The same must be said of Hitler’s German fascist army today. This army has not yet met with serious resistance on the continent of Europe. Only on our territory has it met with serious resistance. And if as a result of this the finest divisions of the German fascist army have been defeated by our Red Army, it shows that Hitler’s fascist army can also be and will be defeated as were the armies of Napoleon and Wilhelm.”* (Beare 2010, 110).

The fragment above indicates the fact that in the most extreme conditions arguments based on analogies and authority are preferred to ideological arguments, due to their effectiveness. In this case, one of the most ruthless leaders of the communist world, Iosif Vissarionovici Stalin, a man who used to exploit at the limit the communist ideology in order to make people accept his totalitarian regime, decided to use the analogy with the glorious period in which tsarist Russian army defeated Napoleon’s army and contributed decisively to the change of political regime in France. Stalin shares the option for this kind of arguments with Charles de Gaulle, who used a similar analogy, when remembering the victory in the First World War, in order to motivate the French people soon after the surprisingly categorical defeat of the French army by the German army. We couldn’t know for sure whether or not Stalin was inspired by the discourse delivered by de Gaulle just a few months before, but he proved to be quite pragmatic on this occasion. However, demagogy is still present in such a discourse, especially because of the lack of sincerity as regards the direct responsibility of Stalin for the poor

performance of the Red Army in the first part of the Second World War, especially due to the Great Purge of 1937.

### **Lin Baio**

*“Now we have found this form – it is the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. It is only by arousing the masses in their hundreds of millions to air their views freely, write bug-character posters and hold great debates that the renegades, enemy agents and capitalist-roaders in power who have wormed their way into the Party can be exposed and their plots to restore capitalism smashed. [...] Long live the great victory of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution! Long live the dictatorship of the proletariat! Long live the Ninth National Congress of the Party! Long live the great, glorious and correct Communist Party of China! Long live Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tsetung Thought! Long live our great leader Chairman Mao! A long, long life to Chairman Mao!”* (Beare 2010, 509).

One of the most important collaborators of Mao Tsetung, Lin Baio was considered by many, for a certain period of time, as being even a possible successor. In the terrible period of Cultural Revolution started by Mao's Red Guards, this type of demagogical discourse was used to justify the radical measures taken against the so-called “intellectuals” who were viewed as an important danger for the Communist Party. In spite of the claim that only by Cultural Revolution people are able to clean the Party, the discourse is full of false arguments, having very little to do with reality. One can easily observe this if one takes into account that the real purpose of the Cultural Revolution in China was to allow Mao to consolidate his position as authoritative dictator after a few years of disastrous agricultural and industrial reforms initiated by him, reforms that crippled not only the economy of China, but also its environment. The fragment above can be considered as a standard example of propaganda by which communist power tried to build its legitimacy in front of the masses. The final objective, the strengthening of control by Mao over the Party, was pursued further on by the use of slogans. In this case, the capacity of critical thinking is not at all taken into consideration, an imitative behavior being aimed instead. Seeing one of the Party's leaders expressing his own attitude towards the Party and its supreme leader in such a militant way, common people were supposed to rally behind this trend, by adopting a similar behavior. This way, the power of personal example is exploited, but in a manner that transforms the

propagandistic discourse into a veritable ritual of power. Unfortunately, Romania and other countries from the Eastern Europe experienced quite a similar type of public discourse in the communist period.

## **Enoch Powell**

*“We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material for the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre [...] For these dangerous and divisive elements the legislation proposed in the Race Relations Bill is the very pabulum they need to flourish.*

*Here is the means of showing that the immigrant communities can organize to consolidate their members, to agitate and campaign against their fellow citizens, and to overawe and dominate the rest with the legal weapons which the ignorant and the ill-informed have provided. As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding; like the Roman, I seem to see „the River Tiber foaming with much blood” (Beare 2010, 413).*

Enoch Powell paid with his political career the decision to pronounce the discourse from which we selected the words above. But his radical vision regarding the immigration problem in the United Kingdom can be easily recognized within his speech, especially due to the language he used. The discourse was meant to be very emotional, especially because the ideology on which it was grounded was pretty simplistic, therefore the arguments were expressed in a poetic language with genuine visual power. Such a strategy was meant to impress the public, exploiting the racist prejudices and fears of the public. Even though the discourse was pronounced in 1968 as a reaction to the introduction of a new law in Great Britain, for some categories of citizens it can be pretty seductive even today, in the new social context. Unfortunately, racism and xenophobia remain sensitive topics in present day European society, in spite of the advances of anthropology and genetics that exposed the theory of races as being simply false. What seems to be particularly disturbing is that the discursive mechanisms of seduction in a racist speech, the radical and narrow discursive schematization, the portraying of reality in black and white, the vehemence of the tone and the abuse of rhetoric means, remain pretty effective even today.

## Lloyd Bentsen

*„Senator, I served with Jack Kennedy: I knew Jack Kennedy; Jack Kennedy was a friend of mine. Senator, you’re no Jack Kennedy.” (Beare 2010, 458).*

The short fragment presented above contains an argument based on facts that were personally experienced, facts which are invoked in order to build the epistemic authority of the speaker. The last sentence of the fragment is not a simple observation, as one might think. It is more than that; it is a critical observation that represents the thesis supported by the facts invoked previously. As it is well known, in classical rhetoric the arguments based on facts are the most powerful and things are not at all different in contemporary rhetoric. Therefore, quite often when arguments based on facts are used, there is not much need for other types of arguments to be invoked, which shortens the length of the speech without diminishing its power of persuasion.

## Margaret Thatcher

*„I think we have gone through a period when too many children and people have been given to understand „I have a problem, it is the Government’s job to cope with it!” or “I have a problem, I will go and get a grant to cope with it!” “I am homeless, the Government must house me!” and so they are casting their problems on society and who is society? There is no such thing! There are individual men and women and there are families and no government can do anything except through people and people look to themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then also to help look after our neighbor and life is a reciprocal business and people have got the entitlements too much in mind without the obligations, because there is no such thing as an entitlement unless someone has first met an obligation and it is, I Think, one of the tragedies in which many of the benefits we give, which were meant to reassure people that if they were sick or ill there was a safety net and there was help, that many of the benefits which were meant to help people who were unfortunate – „It is all right, we joined together and we have these insurance schemes to look after it”. That was the objective, but somehow there are some people who have been manipulating the system [...] But it went too far. If children have a problem, it is society that is at*

*fault. There is no such thing as society. There is living tapestry of men and women and people and the beauty of that tapestry and the quality of our lives will depend upon how much each of us is prepared to take responsibility for ourselves and each of us prepared to turn round and help by our own efforts those who are unfortunate. And the worst things we have in life, in my view, are were children who are a great privilege and a trust – they are the fundamental great trust, but they do not ask to come into the world, we bring them into the world, they are a miracle, there is nothing like the miracle of life - we have these little innocents and the worst crime in life is when those children, who would naturally have the right to look to their parents for help, for comfort, not only just for the food and shelter but for the time, for the understanding, turn round, and not only is that help not forthcoming, but they get either neglect or worse than that, cruelty.” (Beare 2010, 393).*

Margaret Thatcher is one of the very few politicians that followed their political conviction throughout the entire career. Thus, the ideological identity of her discourses is easily recognizable. This allowed her to become a much respected partner of dialogue not only for her political adversaries at national level, but also for her international partners, as well. She systematically opposed to the socialists within the British Parliament, while at the same time was able to have a fruitful dialogue with an open minded socialist from USSR like Mikhail Gorbachev (Blundell 2012, 150). In the fragment above she expresses a conservatory point of view upon the relationship between common citizens and the state concerning the fundamental needs. The development of argumentation relies on the specific way in which Margaret Thatcher puts the problem, which is in fact reflected by the discursive schematization she develops. Her thesis is supported by a few arguments that enter in direct collision with the socialist perspective upon society. Criticizing that view, Margaret Thatcher builds a counter-argumentation to the socialist idea that people should be always helped by the state, whatever problem they have. Instead, she believes they should handle more situations on their own because there is no such a thing like society, because there is only a tapestry of men and women that depends on their capacity of helping themselves and helping the others, because the direct consequence of their socialist laziness is the lack of caring after the children together with many other bad consequences for the good functionality of that tapestry of individuals. In order to be more

convincing, Thatcher uses on a large scale the repetition, the rhetorical questions and the rhetorical dialogue.

In the fragment above the way in which Margaret Thatcher depicts the social reality of her country plays a fundamental role within the entire argumentation. The group of premises she asserts shape in a very clear manner a discursive schematization that reflects her ideological positioning. She makes a strong link between the idea of individual responsibility and the functionality of that “tapestry of men and women” as she calls it. In fact, her point of view can be easily invoked within the context of post-communist societies from the Eastern Europe, in order to explain their dysfunctional behavior after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. The lack of individual responsibility, which was inherited from the communist period, influences a lot the behavior of citizens and the situation of institutions in these societies. It is remarkable for Margaret Thatcher the fact that she was capable to overcome her ideological convictions in order to collaborate with the socialist Mikhail Gorbachev in order to stop the Cold War, as it clearly results from the following fragment:

*„I am cautiously optimistic. I like Mr. Gorbachev. We can do business together. We both believe in our own political systems. He firmly believes in his; I firmly believe in mine; we are never going to change one another. So that is not in doubt, but we have two great interests in common: that we should both do everything we can to see that war never starts again, and therefore we go into the disarmament talks determined to make them succeed. And secondly, I think we both believe that they are the more likely to succeed if we can build up confidence in one another and trust in one another about each other's approach, and therefore, we believe in cooperating on trade matters, on cultural matters, on quite a lot of contacts between politicians from the two sides of the divide.”* (Beare 2010, 456).

In this second fragment the opposition between two sets of values is obvious. The political values cultivated by each of the two partners play an important role in shaping their political identities. But peace represents a value shared by both of them; therefore, in the name of peace both of them are prepared for a settlement that may represent a possible solution for the crisis. Managing the difference for the sake of common values is a trademark for democratic societies and the present fragment reflects this through the antithesis between political ideology and universal values. As

a matter of fact, it must be underlined that Margaret Thatcher was the first Western politician that took seriously into account the collaboration offer made by Gorbachev, a detail well remembered by the former president of U.S.S.R. in his memoirs (Gorbaciov 2015, 329).

### **Vaclav Havel**

*„My dear fellow citizens, for 40 years you have heard from my predecessors on this day different variations of the same theme: how our country flourished, how many million tons of steel we produced, how happy we all were [...]*

*I assume you did not propose me for this office so that I, too, would lie to you...Our country is not flourishing [...]*

*But all this is still not the main problem. The worst thing is that we live in a contaminated moral environment. We fell morally ill because we became used to saying something different from what we thought. We learned not to believe in anything, to ignore each other, to care only about ourselves[...]*

*If we realize this, then all the horrors that the new Czechoslovak democracy inherited will cease to appear so terrible. If we realize this, hope will return to our hearts.”* (Beare 2010, 485).

The fragment above illustrates the opposition between demagogical discourse and the sincere one. The speaker chooses to get rid of unrealistic claims of his predecessors and proves that in front of the people, by admitting the difficult situation in which his country is. He identifies demagogy as the main cause for the decay of his country and proposes that his people surpass the moral crisis inherited from the communist regime. In his argument based on causality and antithesis between demagogy and morality, Havel points out the importance of honesty as a fundamental condition for the real progress of Czechoslovakia. At the root of the horrors inherited by the new democracy lies the generalized demagogy, which is considered by Havel the real problem within society. Using the well known formula “if...then...” he argues in front of the people the necessity of getting rid of demagogy. The entire reasoning is based on implication: the former rulers lied about the real situation of the country, which caused the worsening of the situation; we want to improve the situation of the country, therefore we must not lie any more. The antithesis exploited in the text is in fact based on the opposition between the moral conduct of



survival developed within the communist regime and the authentic moral conduct centered on responsibility towards citizens.

### **Instead of conclusion**

As one could observe from the above, there is a great variety of social contexts in which argumentation was used for achieving political goals. Stylistically, each period of time and each politician may be distinguished from another, but beyond that, the inner core of rules which governs the correct use of arguments in political public speaking remained unchanged from Aristotelian times. However, the genuine importance of knowing and cultivating those rules depend also on the degree of democracy encountered at a social level in different countries in different periods of time. The receptivity of the public towards demagogical discourse depends a lot on the degree of education and on the historical experience of that public. But the relation between argumentation and ideology varies very much in democratic political regimes as opposed to dictatorial ones. On one hand, political pluralism induces the need for preserving a certain balance between personal convictions of the politician, the ideology he embraces and the historical circumstances in which he pronounces his discourse. On the other hand, dictatorial regimes transform political oratory in a frightening ritual of power, the main goal of such a ritual being less informative and more manipulative. Thus, demagogy represents a risky temptation for politicians in democratic regimes, while being a basis for dictatorial discourses. Generally speaking, dictators and their collaborators feel obliged to use demagogy for manipulative purposes, due to the fact that they didn't attain power by free elections. As a consequence, political ideology represents in totalitarian regimes a convenient ground for a political discourse that has less and less to do with social reality, as we could see in the case of Lin Baio. But in certain circumstances, dictators themselves feel obliged to resort to non-ideological arguments in order to motivate their public, as was the case with Stalin before the battle for Moscow in World War Two. Therefore, we can conclude that argumentation continues to represent an indispensable tool for managing the relation between a politician and his public in a large variety of social contexts, even though its importance and its use may vary in accordance with historical circumstances.

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