

ISSA Proceedings 2010 - Re-presenting Argumentation In The Traditional Romanian Parliamentary Debate



1. Introduction

This paper [i] is tackling two of the four meta-theoretical principles of pragma-dialectics, that is, *socialization* and *externalization*, in the context of a specific activity type - the parliamentary debate. The paper focuses on some mechanisms used in the traditional Romanian parliamentary debate for *refutation* (section 2). An overview of the parliamentary debate as an activity type will be given in the first section of the paper, as well as some general historical information about the XIXth century Romanian political world.

Following the pragma-dialectical model of van Eemeren & Grootendorst (2004), van Eemeren et al. (2008), socialization is achieved by identifying which members of Parliament (henceforth MPs) take on the roles of protagonist and antagonist in the context of an argumentative discourse. Throughout the interactions, MPs place themselves on different positions which they support with arguments; as far as externalization is concerned, our approach focuses on disagreement, as a discursive activity - a dispreferred marked response to an arguable act.

In the parliamentary debate, the MPs often externalise the implicit discussion; as a result, they position themselves in explicit contrast with other MPs, protagonists of a counter-standpoint, and manoeuvre strategically, in order to obtain the most favourable presentation of the disagreement (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2002).

1.1. The parliamentary debate as an activity type

Van Eemeren & Houtlosser (2007) consider the communicative *activity types* as an analytic tool for substantiating the “*constraints* of the institutional context” parameter. There are many culturally established variants, some with a more clearly articulated format than others: “The institutional constraints of the

argumentative discourse can account for the conventional preconditions, the actual state of affairs in the discourse, the mutual commitment sets, all influencing the strategic maneuvering in a certain type of discourse” (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2007, p. 376). A political debate is considered one of the varieties with an articulated format. Van Eemeren & Houtlosser (2009, p. 8) speak about some prominent clusters of activity types, “adjudication”, “mediation”, “negotiation”, and “public debate”; for those clusters “the strategic maneuvering will be affected in different ways depending on the constraints and opportunities going with the argumentative activity type in which it takes place” (van Eemeren & Houtlosser 2009, p. 8). We cannot say in absolute certainty what kind of cluster the parliamentary debate is, as the communicative reality can vary, from adjudication to public debate or negotiation.

1.2. Political argumentation

In some views, the political discourse (the parliamentary debate included), is unregulated and often a free-form. Although this is true, political argumentation is neither random, nor unpredictable (Zarefsky 2009, p. 115).

For Zarefsky (2009, pp. 116-120) the characteristics of political argumentation are: a) the *lack of time limits* (the arguments are sometimes lengthy and indeterminate, the arguers often repeat the same standpoints regardless of the fact that other arguers have already tackled those standpoints); b) the *lack of clear terminus* (it could be very difficult to realize when an argument is closed or to pinpoint the stage the critical discussion has reached, as the arguers might be at different stages); c) the *heterogeneous audience* (the arguers are not in the position to easily attribute commitments to the audience); d) the *open access* (“extensive reconstruction of an argument may be needed before the parties all understand exactly what is at issue or before the argument can be appraised” - Zarefsky 2009, p. 120). We agree with Zarefsky’s valuable synthesis, but we would like to add Iețcu-Fairclough’s opinion (Iețcu-Fairclough 2009, p. 148), pointing out that the need for ‘closure’ in the decision-making political process imposes ways (nevertheless legitimate) of ending the debates “which have little to do with agreement” (for instance, voting). This observation would add to the second characteristic presented by Zarefsky for the political argumentation the idea of a partial/temporary terminus. Considering these characteristics of the political argumentation, we shall use these theoretical observations as a starting point for the analysis of the parliamentary debates, a subgenre of the political discourse.

1.3. The Romanian world and Parliament at the end of the XIXth century

In order to have a general picture concerning the background of the parliamentary activity, some general historical information should be provided. After the Crimean War, Russia's domination over the Romanian Principalities (Moldavia and Walachia) came to an end; the Principalities were placed under the collective tutelage of the western Powers. The political groupings formed two major political parties after 1859 (when the Union was accomplished) and 1866 (which marked the beginning of the reign of Charles of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen), the Liberal and the Conservative parties. The two parties dominated the political life until World War I: the important landowners, not many, exercised important political and economic power through the agency of the Conservative Party; in the cities, a middle class of industrialists, high finance, and professionals grew in political and economic status and challenged the great landowners for power, through the agency of the Liberal Party (Hitchins 1996).

The main features of the Romanian parliamentary system were defined during Charles's reign: the king himself was a prominent figure in both domestic and foreign policy, the Parliament had two chambers, elected by means of a suffrage on the basis of income. The mass of the population was excluded from direct participation within the political life. The legislative power was shared by the king and the Parliament, the MPs had the right to question the members of the government, but there was no stipulation concerning the ministers' obligation to answer in Parliament or a sanction if the response wouldn't come.

In the Parliament, the political polarization was evident; thus disagreement in the debates was frequent, and standpoints and counter-standpoints were (more often than not explicitly) formulated and modulated by the political ideology (that seems to have had a great importance at that time). Another characteristic of the XIXth century Parliament was the MPs'tendency to involve themselves in direct disagreement, the interventions and interruptions from the part of the audience were frequent and not overlooked by the speakers or sanctioned by a third party intervention (the Chairman of the Chamber). There was no parliamentary tradition in Romania before 1859 and no modern constitution until 1866. The Romanian Parliament in the late XIXth century created its own tradition and was constantly attentive to other European Parliaments (mostly French)

2. Refutation

Our approach focuses on the *refutatio*, which requires from the arguers "critical

thinking skills, strong purposefulness and genuine personal commitment” (Ilie 2007, p. 668), and which can be achieved by resorting to *logos*, *ethos* and *pathos*. Nevertheless, *refutatio* can sometimes be a fallacious manoeuvre (see below), diverting the audience’s and the antagonist’s attention from the main topic, a manoeuvre which is not based on experience (or authority), testimony, or on the reference to the *doxa*.

We will focus on certain types of *refutatio* mechanisms, namely: the strategical use of definitions/ dissociation (2.1), the comparative arguments (including some ludic devices) (2.2), and anticipating or responding to counter-arguments (2.3). These mechanisms were chosen as they are frequent and prominent in our corpus of debates. The fallacious use of some other types of arguments (*ad hominem*, *straw man*) is also frequent, but it will not be the focus of this paper. The data are selected from several parliamentary speeches, ranging from 1869 to 1905, belonging both to conservative (Al. Lahovari, N. Filipescu) and to liberal (I.C. Brătianu) prominent leaders.

2.1. Definitions/ dissociation

Definitions are some of the most frequently used means to refute arguments. As already stated by Ilie, “In political disputes the act of defining contributes to further polarisation between adversarial positions and can therefore become rhetorically persuasive or dissuasive” (2007, p. 667).

In the Romanian parliamentary debates of the late XIXth century, many definitions concern the parties, their public roles, and their ideology. Thus, the keywords are often the names of the parties and the ideology represented by that party (“In the process of argumentation, skilful speakers do not necessarily use commonly more or less acknowledged definitions, but they generate instead new context-related and ideologically based definitions” – Ilie 2007, p. 668), sometimes with paraphrases containing the metaphorical surnames (the reds/ the whites).

In the first example, Lahovari, a conservative MP, reacts to some previous liberal speeches, with a refutational two-sided message:

(1) Lahovari: And *no one is allowed to say that democrat and liberal represent one and the same thing. Not after 12 years of Brătianu’s regime* (my emphasis).

Yet, *Marat* (my emphasis), who asked for the heads of two million Frenchmen, on account of those heads thinking differently from his own, heads of which he

eventually got to a large extent, was he a Liberal? And what about *Robespierre* (my emphasis) (...)? Was he a Liberal?

All these pretended they were democrats, too (my emphasis). You might as well call them like that, although, *in my opinion, they are the people's worst enemies* (my emphasis). Such democrats have stained with blood the French revolution, which partly made one forget about its benefits, and darkened the memory of this movement throughout the history (applause).

Yet, to call *liberals* the people who used to punish by death, not only the spoken or written manifestations, but also the innermost thoughts of the human being, this means either not knowing the value of the words, or distorting their meaning. (Lahovari, 2.12.1888, pp. 28-29, my translation)

Al. Lahovari is an important MP, an excellent and highly educated speaker, a good organiser for the Conservative Party. His speech from December 1888 illustrates an agitated period in the Romanian political life. In 1888 the Liberals lose their power (I.C. Brătianu's mandate as Prime Minister ended after 12 years of office), in accusations of dictatorship and corruption. Al. Lahovari speaks as a member of the majority and supporter of the new government, while the antagonist is, after 12 years of majority, in the opposition's minority.

Lahovari mentions another MP's equivalence of *liberal* and *democrat*, refuting this idea by means of some counterexamples from the French Revolution (Marat and Robespierre), but he also attacks the liberal MPs with an *ad hominem* fallacy: after 12 years of liberal government, with Brătianu as a prime-minister, no liberal MP can say that the Liberals are also democrats (the MP tried to assign some general commitments to the audience). Is this a derailment or not? Is it a fallacious move from the part of Lahovari?

According to Kienpointner (2009, p. 61), "there is a continuum ranging from cases of strategic maneuvering which are rationally acceptable or at least plausible to a certain degree to other cases where strategic maneuvering is at least dubious or even clearly fallacious"; see also his final remarks: "Strategic maneuvering consisting in attempts to silence an opponent can be justified in exceptional cases, especially when limits to the freedom of speech are not (merely) established by legal sanctions, but (also) justified with reasonable arguments or with arguments which are at least plausible to a certain degree in a specific context" (Kienpointner 2009, p. 73); some attempts to silence the opponent are justifiable to differing degrees in the following contexts: (1) in highly exceptional cases,

“restrictions of the freedom of speech can be rationally justified” (Kienpointner 2009, p. 63); (2) dubious strategies, but plausible to a certain degree; (3) highly dubious strategies, exceeding rational techniques of argumentation; (4) clearly fallacious strategies, when the restrictions of the right of freedom of speech are not used only in exceptional cases (Kienpointner 2009, pp. 63-64).

Should a party be restrained from the freedom of speech because its past is considered undemocratic? It could be an ambiguous situation (between cases 2 and 3 from Kienpointner’s illustrations), but we tend to label it as a derailment. The phrase: “And no one is allowed to say that democrat and liberal represent one and the same thing. Not after 12 years of Brătianu’s regime”, implies that the former liberal regime was not a democratic one.

Lahovari’s reaction blends the appeal to logos with an ethical approach: there is historical evidence in support of his standpoint, and he presents himself, simultaneously, as a rational (*phronésis*) and moral (*arété*) human being: at the beginning of his intervention, he presents himself from the perspective of his political role as an MP, whilst, towards the end of the passage, he adopts a more general view, as a person who pays great attention to the metalinguistic use.

The most interesting thing is the way definitions are used: “All these [Marat, Robespierre] pretended they were democrats, too”. In Lahovari’s view, the Liberals were not democrats; this is the idea that the audience should accommodate, as the use of the presupposition-trigger, the non factive verb *to pretend*, shows. The speaker contests the attribution of the word *liberal* to the revolutionaries, in a metacommunicative approach: “this means either not knowing the value of the words, or distorting their meaning”. We should note that the accusations of a non-democratic liberal regime were not new in the Romanian Parliamentary debates; this topic had been frequently used since 1876 (when Brătianu became Prime Minister), illustrating the lack of time limits and the lack of clear terminus in the political debate (as Zarefsky 2009 has rightly argued).

The two examples that follow are definitions used to differentiate the Conservatives from the Liberals, but in a less ideological and more rhetorical manner:

(2) Filipescu: Gentlemen, here are some diverging points between you and us, as they reveal themselves within the discourses of your orators. Yet, *we also differ from each other by our whole conception with regard to what a conservative party*

should be like (my emphasis). As far as we are concerned, *a conservative party is supposed to govern with the worthiest, to administrate with the most capable, to legislate with the most independent and the most objective people. This elite is the very warrant of the success for a conservative party, since it is only through the agency of this elite that it can set as the basis of its politics the brightness of the real actions, rather than the instability of the artificial/ factious popularity* (my emphasis).

Certainly, Lascăr Catargiu wasn't a theorist of the conservative doctrine. Yet, he had the instinct of his duties as a conservative. He knew he had the double duty, *to provide the country and his party with great governments, and to keep under control the unhealthy trends within the public opinion* (my emphasis).

It is in this simple formula that lays the core of the conservative doctrine, with all its enriching/ uplifting side, which is a basic feature of the conservatism. Whereas the liberalism may have a broader basis, the conservatism embodies higher peaks (my emphasis). (Filipescu, 7.03.1905, p. 324, my translation)

(3) Filipescu: As I said, *the political parties are not mere fictions, but the result of the work of time; they are like those geological layers, created throughout centuries of accumulations* (my emphasis).

(...) because, in my opinion, *the conservatism reaches the climax into the national idea. A conservative party is the one which is faithful to the past, wishing that progress be introduced according to a country's tradition, one which is an obstacle only for those innovations meant to borrow elements that run counter to our national genius* (my emphasis) (applause). (Filipescu, 20.06.1899, p. 331, my translation)

Both definitions belong to N. Filipescu, (2) being uttered 6 years after (3), but shaped in a similar way. Both definitions are uttered while the Conservatives have the governmental power and the parliamentary majority. N. Filipescu is an important figure in the Conservative Party, descendent of two aristocratic families, a highly educated and skilful speaker. The MP creates a metaphorical construction, based on hyperbole (see the rhetoric of superlatives: "to govern with the worthiest, to administrate with the most capable, to legislate with the most independent and the most objective people", and "the brightness of the real actions"; "to provide the country and his party with great governments"; "all its uplifting side, which is a basic feature of the conservatism"; "the conservatism

reaches the climax into the national idea”) or the organic metaphor (“the political parties are not mere fictions, but the result of the work of time; they are like those geological layers, created throughout centuries of accumulations”). The metaphorical definition is inadequate, taking into account that Romania was a country with only 40 years of pluralistic regime; furthermore, the political groupings coalesced into parties years after the Union – the Liberals have the official status of a party from 1875, while the Conservatives organised their party in 1880. At the same time, there is ambiguity, vagueness in the expressions used for defining the conservative doctrine. We believe that this definition is used to enhance the party’s *arété* (the MP’s in-group is associated only with [positive] political values), but the MP is showing *eunoia* (trying to please the audience) and a tendency towards *pathos* (all the values attributed to the Conservatives have to be admired, adhered to, while the Liberals’ characteristics are to be blamed and disregarded).

There is also a refutational two-sided message here, as the Liberal views are briefly mentioned: “it is only through the agency of this elite that it can set as the basis of its politics the brightness of the real actions (referring to the Conservatives), rather than the instability of the artificial/ factious popularity (referring to the Liberals)”, or “A conservative party is the one which is faithful to the past, wishing that progress be introduced according to a country’s tradition, one which is an obstacle (introducing the Liberal Party) only for those innovations meant to borrow elements that run counter to our national genius”. The ideological difference is placed in a comparison with different domains of reference: the political supporters vs. “the political ideal”: “Whereas the liberalism may have a broader basis, the conservatism embodies higher peaks”. But there might be also a reference to the political supporters, those who have this political view, who embrace it, are/ represent an “elite”, a smaller group. The Conservatives are the representatives of the great landowners, an elite, while the Liberals have as supporter mostly the middle class. Some characteristics of the parliamentary debate (as part of the political (discourse and) argumentation) are evident: for long periods of time the same speaker can repeat his standpoint (lack of time limits); it is not clear what stage of the critical discussion the Conservatives and the Liberal MPs have reached in giving an ideological identity to their parties (lack of clear terminus), and also the extensive reconstruction needed (open access) (characteristics (a), (b) and (d) from Zarefsky 2009, pp. 116-120).

C. Ilie (2007, p. 669) states that three processes (*identification, categorisation and particularization*) are involved in the act of defining the topic that become important for dissociation/persuasion. Considering the examples given from the debates of the late XIXth century Romanian Parliament, we tend to say that in these cases the act of defining only implies the communicative act of “making something clear and tangible” or determining “the outline and boundaries of the entity or phenomenon to be defined” (Ilie 2007, p. 669). As we have seen, there are rhetorical devices that are sometimes used in order to give the impression of outlining, clarifying, or rendering tangible a certain topic, and nothing more. As they are “instrumental in the process of social construction of identities and ideological polarization” (Ilie 2007, p. 669), definitions are used to maneuver strategically.

As a dialogic and argumentative technique (van Rees 2005), we think that dissociation (see Gâță 2007) is being used in these examples in a *reactive* way, making explicit the conceptual basis of an argument that has been externalized.

2.2. Comparative arguments

We agree with Doury (2007) that Perelman’s distinction between *comparison arguments* (defined as a subtype of quasi-logic arguments) and *arguments by analogy* (a subtype of arguments establishing the structure of reality), intuitively acceptable, is in practice hard to operate. We shall use M. Doury’s proposal to consider this distinction as gradual, from arguments of comparison (bringing together two cases from overlapping domains of reference), to intermediate cases (a comparison involving two situations within the same cultural area, but temporally distant from one another), and to arguments of comparison implying cases issued from maximally distant areas (Doury 2007, p. 344).

We shall now consider only the negative function of comparison arguments – rebutting the adversary’s argument. For Doury (2007, p. 344), the refutation by logical analogy could be seen as a subtype of the *ad absurdum* argument.

Although vulnerable to refutation, as the comparative arguments “involve some kind of shift” (Doury 2007: 346) and the degree of factual similarity between the compared elements is sometimes low, we have seen in our corpus that there is not a rejection of this type of polemic arguments, especially if they were transmitted in a humorous way. The *eunoia* aspects of the *ethos*, often observed in the Romanian Parliamentary debates, is frequently achieved by means of wit (jokes, irony, sarcasm, and puns).

The comparative argument in a narrative form may consist of a parable or a fable. In example 4 we have a short fable aimed at political opponents:

(4) I.C. Brătianu: And here *they come to tell us today that, once the mantle is on the people's shoulders, no one can take it away? They ask us: "Who would dare again? Who is still against the liberties and the nation? Who?"* (my emphasis).

Well, gentlemen, listen to them come and say, in order to prove the freedom and the Constitution are not being jeopardized, that the very event of May the 2nd has consolidated our liberties. Such words remind me of a fable: *having noticed that mice are avoiding it, a cat put on a cassock and went to the mice saying that it had repented and stopped eating meat* (my emphasis). (applause, hilarity)

Yet, this is just a popular saying, which I don't believe M. Grădișteanu knows, as he has hardly lived among the people: *"Who has eaten (once), will eat again..."* (my emphasis)/ [fr. "Qui a bu, boira"] (applause) (Brătianu, February 1869, p. 106, my translation)

I.C. Brătianu is the leader of the Liberals, and one of the artisans of installing Prince Charles as ruler of Romania in 1866. The Conservatives are presented as a group with ambiguous political interests, only three years after the political change (the overthrow of Alexandru Ioan Cuza as prince of Romania and his replacement with Charles of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen). The Conservatives' attitude in 1869 is compared to that of the cat - as the cat is always supposed to eat mice, the Conservatives could jeopardize the liberties and the Constitution. This is an attack to their credibility (trustworthiness), highly dubious (to quote Kienpointner), implicating a comparison from maximally distant areas and evading the burden of proof by the endoxal justification: "Who has eaten (once), will eat again".

The following intervention also uses arguments of comparison, bringing together two cases from the same domain of reference (the economic crisis and the need for an external loan), with temporal proximity:

(5) N. Filipescu: (...) Mr. Panu's proposal reminds me of another solution, with the same simplicity, brought to our attention last year. While we were sighing for the loan, while we were waiting for the telegram, announcing that the loan has been settled, to arrive at any minute, some delegates of a commercial institution came to the Minister of Finance to suggest a solution.

The gentlemen were received by general Manu in his cabinet, and they shared the

following thoughts with the minister:

- Hon. Minister, we have found the solution to the crisis.
- And what would that be?
- To get a loan!! (Hilarity).

You may be tempted to answer these solutions as the French do: « Comment? Vous avez trouvé ça tout seul ? »

Gentlemen, if we put aside this only proof of M. Panu's friendly generosity, I have to state that ... (Filipescu, 30.11.1900, p. 425, my translation)

The speech is from November 1900, referring also to the previous year. 1899 and 1900 are illustrating a complicated political and economical situation in Romania. After a governmental crisis in the spring of 1899, the Conservative Party forms a new government facing one of the worst crises of that time, due to a severe drought (Romania's economy depended heavily on agriculture). Both Filipescu and Panu are conservatives, members of the majority, but Filipescu is an aristocrat, an important figure of the party, while Panu, after some former liberal views, is a MP with a delicate position in the party (the king rejected his nomination as a minister in the conservative government. One year later, in 1901, Panu appears as an independent MP in the Parliament).

The short conversational narratives represent one of the main strategies of creating solidarity within a group, and simultaneously ratifying the *self* of the teller (the *eunoia* aspect of the speaker). Connected by analogy, Panu's proposal and the suggestion from the short story are both a rejected anti-model. This time, the analogy brings together two aspects closely connected. Portraying the characters from the joke as stupid and making the analogy with the antagonist's proposal could be an indirect *ad hominem* attack (a surprising attitude among members of the same party; on the other hand, in the Conservative Party there are rivalries, the conservative MPs being less "disciplined" than the Liberals).

The appreciation of the humorous insertions (hilarity, applause) indicates the fact that this was a common practice in the XIXth century Romanian parliamentary debate (and it still is), and that they signal a certain intergroup and interpersonal relation. The funny insertions create the anti-models to be refuted, illustrating the polemic use. The argumentative role could be either to enhance the value of the arguer's own standpoint/argument (*probatio*), or to stress the previously used moves that refuted a counter-argument (*refutatio*).

2.3. Anticipating and responding to counter-arguments

The argumentative move assumed by the arguer in order to anticipate or respond to counter-arguments would be a two-faceted reality, having a justificatory and a refutatory potential. According to van Eemeren & Grootendorst (2004), the arguer succeeds to place himself in a situation in which he has the opportunity to demonstrate the strength of his argumentation (and the acceptability of his standpoint) by anticipating and refuting a countermove attributed to the opponent.

The last example is rather long, so we have decided to divide it into two relevant exchanges between the protagonist (N. Filipescu, a Conservative), the mayor of Bucharest at that time, and his antagonist (Delavrancea, a Liberal). The debate took place after a students' demonstration at the statue of an important historical figure (Michael the Brave), despite the official interdiction and the presence of the police at the scene:

(6)

(a). N. Filipescu: (...) You will not contest that, at the Liberal club, one/ people applauded as the students passed by, either while they were going to or coming back from the railway station. But you keep saying: Show us a person, an agent. Mr. Delavrancea, I think I'm not wrong when I say that Mr. Cezar Ionescu, who was arrested and brought in front of justice, was a student and a journalist, at the same time.

B. Ștefănescu Delavrancea: You are wrong.

N. Filipescu: I was just asking, not stating that. Nevertheless, it seems to me that that gentleman is a sub-editor at "The Romanian".

B. Ștefănescu Delavrancea: And is "The Romanian" a national-liberal publication?

N. Filipescu: So far, I thought it was.

B. Ștefănescu Delavrancea: Liberal-democrat, yes, but not national-liberal.

General Gh. Manu: "The Romanian" is no longer a national-liberal newspaper? I can't wait to see what the oldest liberal publication, that is "The Romanian", has to say about it (...) (Filipescu, 10.02.1894, p. 140, my translation)

In order to analyse the exchange, we have to clarify the chronology of the political discussion: the local power (represented here by Filipescu) had accused the opposition of being behind the students' manifestation. The opposition has reacted and asked for a proof, that is to name a member of the Liberal Party involved in the events. Filipescu gives the example of a well-known figure, who

was both a student and a journalist. As Delavrancea is firm in contradicting him (“You are wrong”), but without any piece of evidence (evading the burden of proof), Filipescu feigns to agree with him, but then he insists on saying that the gentleman he named, Cezar Ionescu, was a journalist for a publication, “The Romanian”, with liberal affiliation. Filipescu presents his argument with an attenuated degree of certitude (“I think I’m not wrong when I say that...”, “I was just asking, not stating that.”, “it seems to me that...”). After Filipescu’s affirmation that the young man is a journalist at “The Romanian”, Delavrancea contests the newspaper’s liberal affiliation (denying an unexpressed premise); although both Filipescu and Manu state the real newspaper’s liberal affiliation, Delavrancea contests that affiliation introducing political connotations: “Liberal-democrat, yes, but not national-liberal”, which does not stand against the fact that the newspaper was, after all, a paper of the opposition.

Delavrancea is, throughout the debate, an antagonist unwilling to respect the rules, unwilling to accept evidence and to admit that the protagonist has conclusively defended his standpoint (a situation that seems to be repeating in the Romanian political debate), as in (b). In order to conclusively refute counter-arguments, Filipescu chooses to anticipate different attacks by presenting the event through the viewpoint of liberal newspapers. The speaker quotes at length the development of the events, in order to prove that the police was not to blame, and that those producing damages in the centre were the students:

(b). N. Filipescu: Here is what “The Romanian” says, by the voice of its editor, who was an eyewitness to the events: „I was in the first lines; when we approached the statue, we came across a sergeants’ cordon, lead by inspector Dristorian.

- Walk on, gentlemen, walk on, the inspector tells us.”

“Yet, his notification was useless and badly timed, as the first lines, pushed by those in the back, could not resist the people’s movement and, after having broken through the sergeants’ cordons, conquered the statue, from where speeches began to be delivered.” Where did the provocation come from, Mr. Delavrancea?

B. Ștefănescu Delavrancea: The Police.

N. Filipescu: If you keep saying that the Police made the provocation, after all these pieces of evidence, then any discussion becomes useless.

B. Ștefănescu Delavrancea: Who put out the lamps? And who made the train break down?

N. Filipescu: You've been provided with all these explanations; now I want to prove how the things happened at the Statue of Michael the Brave, as they are presented in the opposition's newspapers. (...) (Filipescu, 10.02.1894, pp. 143-144, my translation)

After quoting from the newspaper, arriving at a key scene, when the advertisement of the police is transgressed and the students reach the statue, Filipescu asks Delavrancea to admit that the provocation came from the students (it is a strategy used to approach the concluding stage). Instead, Delavrancea considers that the police provoked the students; in his turn, Filipescu claims that the discussion could not continue (the critical discussion can no longer go on since the antagonist does not obey the rules): "If you keep saying that it was the Police who made the provocation, after all these proofs, then any discussion becomes useless". Delavrancea's questions aim at taking the discussion back to the confrontation stage, but Filipescu states that the response has already been given and he can return to the facts presented in the opposition's papers (argumentation stage); despite Delavrancea's non cooperative attitude, Filipescu goes on quoting from the opposition's papers, as the quotations are not rejected by the opponent. This is Filipescu's anticipating strategy to Delavrancea's countermoves aimed at maintaining a deep disagreement.

3. Conclusion

It has been argued in this paper that the mechanisms used to convey *refutatio* in the parliamentary practice reflect: the prominence of the ideological definitions (derived from the lack of political tradition and the need to create one); the use of wit; the (implicit) denial of the protagonist's successful defence of the standpoint. We assume that the way refutation is used in the XIXth century Romanian Parliament, as reflected in our corpus, is culturally influenced and is a result of the weak institutional constraints at that time.

The analysis of the corpus revealed that the discussion with the antagonist is only an "argumentative/communicative trope", as the real target is beyond the MP that has taken the role of antagonist, and beyond this one to one confrontation (protagonist/ antagonist). This situation involves interpersonal affiliation/delimitation (in-group affiliation and out-group delimitation) and the need to persuade the public, usually, though not always, a silent and neutral arbiter. This "argumentative/communicative trope" might be taken into account as one of the characteristics of the political argumentation, too.

The pragma-dialectical model of a critical discussion, as well as the strategic manoeuvring are important instruments in the analysis of the political discourse, in general, and of the parliamentary discourse, in particular. Considering the parliamentary debate as a critical discussion offers a coherent model of interpretation. Observing, on the one hand, the stages the critical discussion has reached, and, on the other hand, the way MPs manoeuvre strategically in order to illustrate an explicit disagreement and to attain the most favourable presentation of this disagreement, helps to understand the way this activity type works, and what are its basic characteristics.

NOTES

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