

La gauche utilise-t-elle l'argument par la peur ? Les discours de meeting de Jean-Luc Mélenchon pendant la campagne présidentielle de 2017

Does the Left use fear appeal arguments? A study of Jean-Luc Mélenchon's speeches during the 2017 presidential campaign

Ruth Amossy and Roselyne Koren

Abstract: The campaign discourses of Jean-Luc Mélenchon remarkably illustrate Christian Plantin's theorization of the argumentation of emotions. Reason and passion are here closely entangled. Mélenchon's target is either to "terrify/intimidate" or to "terrorize/scare" his audiences. Appealing to fear does not appear here as an irrational strategy, it activates on the contrary a specific, full-fledged regime of rationality. We thus show that the Right is not alone in employing arguments which appeal to fear: the candidate of the *France insoumise* party condemns the instrumentalization of fear by the Right and the institutions of the Fifth Republic, but makes extensive use of the strategy in order to promote a left-wing ideology. Mélenchon's argumentation is anchored in a humanistic universalism that gives priority to rational reasoning and debate, but simultaneously uses appeals to fear addressed to future voters and threats targeting his adversaries more or less explicitly. This contribution analyses the way these paradoxes manifest themselves linguistically.

Key words: reason and passion, emotion in argument, appeal to fear, threat tactics, argument from consequences, slippery slope argument.