

Summary

This book is divided into two parts, *Argumentation in Critical Discourse Analysis* and *Questions and Doubts about Visual Argumentation*, each part containing two chapters.

1

In the first chapter, *Topoi in Critical Discourse Analysis*, I am concerned with how topoi are used (and misused) in the Discourse-Historical Approach.

The Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA), pioneered by Ruth Wodak (see Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, Liebhart 1999; Wodak, van Dijk 2000; Wodak, Chilton 2005; Wodak, Meyer 2006; Wodak 2009), is one of the major branches of critical discourse analysis (CDA). In its own (programmatic) view, it embraces at least three interconnected aspects:

- (1) ‘Text or discourse immanent critique’ aims at discovering internal or discourse-internal structures.
- (2) The ‘socio-diagnostic critique’ is concerned with the demystifying exposure of the possibly persuasive or ‘manipulative’ character of discursive practices.
- (3) Prognostic critique contributes to the transformation and improvement of communication. (Wodak 2006: 65)

CDA, in Wodak’s view,

is not concerned with evaluating what is ‘right’ or ‘wrong’. CDA ... should try to make choices at each point in the research itself, *and should make these choices transparent.*¹ It should also justify theoretically why certain interpretations of discursive events seem more valid than others.

One of the methodical ways for critical discourse analysts to minimize the risk of being biased is to follow the principle of triangulation. Thus, one of the most salient distinguishing features of the DHA is its endeavour to work with different approaches, multi-methodically and on the basis of a variety of empirical data as well as background information. (Wodak *ibid.*)

One of the approaches DHA is using in its principle of triangulation is argumentation theory, more specifically the theory of *topoi*. In the first chapter, I am concerned with the following questions: how and in what way are *topoi* and, consequentially, argumentation theory, used in DHA as one of the most influential schools of CDA? Other approaches (e.g., Fairclough 1995, 2000, 2003, or van Leeuwen 2004, 2008; van Leeuwen, Kress 2006) do not use *topoi* at all. Does such a use actually minimize the risk of being biased, and, consequentially, does such a use of *topoi* in fact implement the principle of triangulation?

Judging from the works we analysed in the first chapter, there are no rules or criteria how to use *topoi* or how to detect *topoi* in the discourse/text; the only methodological precept seems to be, ‘anything goes’! If so, why does CDA need triangulation? And what happened to the principle stipulating that CDA ‘should try to make choices at each point in the research itself, *and should make these choices transparent?*’

We have seen identical and similar bundles of *topoi* for different purposes or occasions; we have seen different bundles of *topoi* for identical and similar purposes or occasions; we have seen different bundles of *topoi* for different occasion; and we have seen pretty exotic bundles of *topoi* for pretty particular and singular purposes. Which leads us to a key question: can *anything* be or become a *topos* within DHA? And, consequentially, what actually, that is, historically, *is a topos*?

If a *topos* is supposed to connect an argument with a conclusion, as all the relevant DHA publications claim, one would expect that at least a minimal reconstruction would follow, namely, what is the argument in the quoted fragment? What is the conclusion in the quoted fragment? How is

the detected *topos* connecting the two, and what is the argumentative analysis of the quoted fragment? Unfortunately, *all* these elements are missing; the definition and the quoted fragment are all that there is of the supposed argumentative analysis.

And this is the basic pattern of functioning for most of the DHA works. At the beginning, there would be a list of *topoi* and a short description for each of them: first, a conditional paraphrase of a particular *topos* would be given, followed by a short discourse fragment (usually from the media) illustrating this conditional paraphrase (*Discourse and Discrimination*, 75–80), *but without any explicit reconstruction of possible arguments, conclusions, or topoi connecting the two* in the chosen fragment. After this short ‘theoretical’ introduction, different *topoi* would just be referred to by names throughout the book, as if everything has already been explained in these few introductory pages.

It is quite surprising that none of the quoted DHA works even mention the origins of *topoi*, their extensive treatment in many works and the main authors of these works, namely Aristotle and Cicero. Even the definition, borrowed from Kienpointner (mostly on a copy-paste basis), does not stem from their work either: it is a hybrid product, with strong input from Stephen Toulmin’s work *The Uses of Argument*, published in 1958. All this is even more surprising because today it is almost a commonplace that for Aristotle a *topos* is a *place* to look for arguments (which is true), a heading or department where *a number of rhetoric arguments* can be easily found (which is true as well), and that those arguments are ready for use—which is a rather big misunderstanding. According to Aristotle, *topoi* are supposed to be of two kinds: general or common *topoi*, appropriate for use everywhere and anywhere, regardless of situation, and specific *topoi*, in their applicability limited mostly to the three genres of oratory (judicial, deliberative, and epideictic).

With the Romans, *topoi* became *loci*, and Cicero literally defines them as ‘the home of all proofs’ (*De or.* 2.166.2), ‘pigeonholes in which arguments are stored’ (*Part. Or.* 5.7–10), or simply ‘storehouses of arguments’ (*Part. Or.* 109.5–6). Also, their number was reduced from 300 in *Topics* or 29 in *Rhetoric* to up to 19 (depending on how we count them).

Although Cicero’s list correlates pretty much, though not completely, with Aristotle’s list from the *Rhetoric* B 23, there is a difference in use: Cicero’s list is considered to be *a list of concepts* that may trigger an *associative process* rather than a collection of implicit rules and precepts reducible

to rules, as the *topoi* in Aristotle's *Topics* are. In other words, Cicero's *loci* mostly function as *subject matter indicators* and *loci communes*.

Which brings us a bit closer to how *topoi* might be used in DHA. In the works analysed in the first chapter, the authors never construct or reconstruct arguments from the discourse fragments they analyse—despite the fact that they are repeatedly defining *topoi* as warrants connecting arguments with conclusions; they just hint at them with short glosses. And since there is no reconstruction of arguments from concrete discourse fragments under analysis, hinting at certain *topoi*, referring to them or simply just mentioning them, can only serve the purpose of 'putting the audience in a favourable frame of mind'. 'Favourable frame of mind' in our case—the use of *topoi* in DHA—would mean directing a reader's attention to a 'commonly known or discussed' topic, without explicitly phrasing or reconstructing possible arguments and conclusions. Thus, the reader can never really know what exactly the author had in mind and what exactly he/she wanted to say (in terms of (possible) arguments and (possible) conclusions).

In *Traité de l'argumentation: La nouvelle rhétorique*, published in 1958 by Ch. Perelman and L. Olbrechts-Tyteca, *topoi* are characterised by their extreme generality, which makes them usable in every situation. It is the degeneration of rhetoric and the lack of interest for the study of places that has led to these unexpected consequences where 'oratory developments', as Perelman ironically calls them, against fortune, sensuality, laziness, etc., which school exercises were repeating *ad nauseam*, became qualified as commonplaces (*loci, topoi*), despite their extremely particular character. By commonplaces, Perelman claims, we more and more understand what Giambattista Vico called 'oratory places', in order to distinguish them from the places treated in Aristotle's *Topics*. Nowadays, commonplaces are characterised by banality which does not exclude extreme specificity and particularity. These places are nothing more than *Aristotelian commonplaces applied to particular subjects*, concludes Perelman.

And this is exactly what seems to be happening to the DHA approach to *topoi* as well. Even more, the works quoted in the first part of the article give the impression that DHA is not using the Aristotelian or Ciceronian *topoi*, but the so-called 'literary *topoi*', conceptualized by Ernst Robert Curtius in his *Europäische Literatur und Lateinisches Mittelalter* (1990: 62–105, English translation). What is a literary *topos*? In a nutshell, oral histories passed down from pre-historic societies contain literary aspects, characters, or settings which appear again and again in stories from ancient

civilisations, religious texts, art, and even more modern stories. These *re-current and repetitive motifs* or *leitmotifs* would be then labelled literary *topoi*.

The same year that Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca published their *New Rhetoric*, Stephen Toulmin published his *Uses of Argument*, probably the most detailed study of how *topoi* work. Actually, he does not use the terms *topos* or *topoi*, but the somewhat judicial term ‘warrant’. The reason for that seems obvious: he is trying to cover different ‘fields of argument’, and not all fields of argument, according to him, use *topoi* as their argumentative principles or bases of their argumentation. According to Toulmin (1958/1995: 94–107), if we have an utterance of the form, ‘If D then C’—where D stands for data or evidence, and C for claim or conclusion—such a warrant would act as a bridge and authorize the step from D to C. But warrant may have a limited applicability, so Toulmin introduces qualifiers Q, indicating the strength conferred by the warrant, and conditions of rebuttal (or Reservation) R, indicating circumstances in which the general authority of the warrant would have to be set aside. And finally, in case the warrant is challenged in any way, we need some backing B as well.

If the DHA analysis would proceed in this way, applying all these steps to concrete pieces of discourse each time it wants to find the underlying *topoi*—their lists of *topoi* in the background would become unimportant, useless, and obsolete. Text mining, to borrow an expression from computational linguistics, would bring the text’s or discourse’s *own topoi* to the surface, not the prefabricated ones. And there is more: Toulmin’s scheme allows for possible exceptions or rebuttals, indicating where, when, and why a certain *topos* does not apply. Such a reconstruction can offer a much more complex account of a discourse (fragment) under investigation than enthymemes or static and rigid lists of *topoi*.

2

The second chapter, *Fallacies: do we ‘use’ them or ‘commit’ them*, is a follow up to the first chapter. In the first one, I was analysing the use of *topoi* in DHA, a branch of CDA, in the second one, I am looking at how fallacies are used by DHA. In view of this goal, I propose a rhetorical reading of Austin, an Austinian interpretation of Hamblin, and a hybrid Austino-Hamblinian perspective on fallacies.

I am asking three questions: what are fallacies? Are there obvious and unambiguous fallacies in natural languages? Aren’t we forced to commit

and live (in) fallacies? And, is it methodologically acceptable to use prefabricated lists of fallacies (constructed by DHA) as an analytical tool in such a dynamical enterprise as (critical) discourse analysis?

J. L. Austin is usually considered to be the ‘father’ of speech act theory, and the ‘inventor’ of performativity. In a very general framework this is both true, but historically and epistemologically speaking there is a narrow and intricate correlation, as well as a deep rupture between the two theories.

Performativity came about as a result of Austin’s deep dissatisfaction with classical philosophical (logical) division between statements/utterances that can be (and should be) either true or false (with no gradation in between), and only serve to describe the extra-linguistic reality.

Speech acts, on the other hand, came about as a result of Austin’s dissatisfaction with his own performative/constative distinction, a distinction that placed on the one side the utterances with which we can do (perform) something (and are neither true nor false), and the utterances with which we can only describe what is already there (and can be either true or false). After a careful consideration of what could be the criteria of performativity in the first part of his lectures, in the second part Austin comes to a conclusion that not only performatives do something (with words), but that every utterance does something (with words). ‘Something’ implying: not just describing reality. But between the two poles of the lectures, the performative one and the speech acts one, there is an important (I call it rhetorical) transitional passage that is usually overlooked, and in my examination of fallacies, I concentrate on this passage.

For Austin, in this passage, truth and falsity don’t have objective criteria, but depend on ‘good reasons and good evidence’ we have for stating something. And Austin’s conclusion concurs with Hamblin’s: it is easy to say what is true or false in logic, it is much more complicated and less evident in everyday life and in everyday language use.

Statements/utterances cannot just be either true or false, there is (or at least should be) a gradation between what is false and what is true, between 0 and 1. What we say can be more or less true, true up to a (certain) point, or more precisely: true for certain intents and purposes.

What we say can therefore not only be more or less true, true up to a point, or true for certain intents and purposes, it can also be true only in some contexts, but not in others.

If we sum up all Austin’s hedgings, we get the following:

- (1) What we say can only be more or less true (i.e., true up to a point);
- (3) it can only be true for certain intents and purposes;
- (4) it can only be true in some contexts, and
- (5) its truth (or falsity) depends on knowledge at the time of utterance.

is a real rhetorical perspective on communication (truth, logic, and philosophy) that was very often overlooked, mostly at the expense of classificatory madness that started with J. R. Searle. What Austin is proposing is that—outside logic, in the real world, in everyday communication, where we don't go around with propositions in our pockets and truth tables in our hands—the truth or falsity of what we say be replaced by *right or proper things to say, in these circumstances, to this audience, for these purposes and with these intentions*.

I claim that Hamblin followed the same enterprise 15 years later with his *Fallacies*. These two ground breaking works follow the same pat tern, run parallel, and I show why.

- (1) Real life, Hamblin claims, as opposed to the simple situations envisaged in logical theory, one cannot always answer in a simple manner whether something is true or false: we can speak of formal validity (which includes truth and falsity, and, consequently, fallacies) only in formal systems, but not in 'natural languages'. If we want any kind of formal validity in natural languages, which wouldn't involve only *la langue* (language) in de Saussure's conceptualization, but also his *la parole* (speech, (everyday) communication)—we need to bring it into relation with a formal language of a formal (logical) system. This 'bringing into relation' usually means: translating the very vast vocabulary (lexicon) of ordinary language, with its extremely ramified semantics and pragmatics, into a very limited vocabulary of logic with its even more limited semantics.

And we can do so, Hamblin argues, 'only at the expense of features essential to natural language.' (Hamblin *ibid.*: 213)

- (2) Reference depending on knowledge at the time of utterance, claims Hamblin.

Which implies that there is no perennial and universal truth, and consequently, no perennial and universal truth-conditions or criteria. The truth is relative, but we shouldn't understand 'relative' as a trivial stereotype that everything changes and everything can be different. 'Relative' should be

understood more in its etymological sense (*relativus* = having reference or relation to, from *relatus* = to refer), as a thing (concept, thought) having a relation to or being in a relation to another thing (concept, thought). In this particular relation, the truth is seen as such and such; in some other relation, the truth may be seen differently.

There are therefore no universal arguments or universal criteria for what an argument should look like to be (seen as) an argument. An argument should be adopted and/or constructed *relative* to the (particular) circumstances and the (particular) audience, as well as to the purposes and intentions we, as arguers, have. Consequently, there can be no universal fallacies or universal criteria for what is a fallacy in everyday communication (persuasion and argumentation).

In this light, Hamblin's claim from the beginning of his book that there has never yet been *a book* on fallacies becomes more understandable: Arthur Schopenhauer's *Art of Controversy* is, in his opinion, too short, Jeremy Bentham's *Book of Fallacies* is too specialized, the medieval treatises are mostly commentaries on Aristotle, and Aristotle's *Sophistical Refutations* are, in Hamblin's view, 'just the ninth book of his *Topics*' (Hamblin *ibid.*: 11).

So, the state of the art would be that nobody is particularly satisfied with this corner of logic, concludes Hamblin.

And, there may be a reason for that. Even if in almost every account from Aristotle onwards we can read that a fallacious argument is one that *seems to be valid*, but *it is not*, it is rather often argued that it is impossible to classify fallacies at all.

On the other hand, it seems that certain fallacies are unavoidable, which raises the question whether they are fallacies at all (and even much more important ones: How to classify fallacies? Are there any stable criteria for detecting fallacies? All the way to the obvious one: do fallacies exist at all?).

Hamblin, 200 years later, opens a new perspective on this problem: if some fallacies seem to be omnipresent and unavoidable, maybe we shouldn't treat them as fallacies: 'Fallacy of *Secundum Quid* [hasty generalization] is an ever-present and unavoidable possibility in practical situations, and any formal system that avoids it can do so only at the expense of features essential to natural language.' (Hamblin *ibid.*: 213) *Ignoratio Elenchi* [ignoring the issue, irrelevant conclusion] is another fallacy of this unavoidable kind.

And begging the question [Petitio Principii, circular reasoning] fits in the same category; already J.S. Mill (in his *System of Logic*, 1843) claims that all valid reasoning commits this fallacy. While Cohen and Nagel's affirm:

There is a sense in which all science is circular, for all proof rests upon assumptions which are not derived from others but are justified by the set of consequences which are deduced from them ... But there is a difference between a circle consisting of a small number of propositions, from which we can escape by denying them all, or setting up their contradictories, and the circle of theoretical science and human observation, which is so wide that we cannot set up any alternative to it. (Cohen, Nagel 1934: 379, in Hamblin *ibid.*: 35)

A possible conclusion we could draw from this observation: on the micro level, we can fuss about small things, everyday conversation and everyday reasoning, and pass our time in inventing numerous fallacies, but when it comes to the macro level, to big things (the big picture), fallacies are not objectionable any more—because there is no alternative.

All these epistemological and methodological objections, ambiguities and *caveats* on one side, as well as the practical, empirical multiplications of fallacies and their overlapping on the other, make the study of fallacies a thriving enterprise, a field of its own and in its own right. But, can we use fallacies or even a 'theory of fallacies' (singular) as an analytical tool (as one of the analytical tools) in another theoretical enterprise, within another theory, like DHA is doing it?

Here is the passage that introduces fallacies in *Discourse and Discrimination*:

If one wants to analyse the persuasive, manipulative, discursive legitimization of racist, ethnicist, nationalist, sexist and other forms of discrimination and the pseudo-argumentative backing and strengthening of negative, discriminatory prejudices, one encounters many *violations of these ten rules*. In rhetoric and argumentation theory, *these violations* are called 'fallacies' (among many others see Kienpointner 1996; van Eemeren, Grootendorst, Kruiger 1987: 78–94; van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1992; Lamham 1991: 77ff.; Ulrich 1992). (Reisigl, Wodak 2001: 71)

The ‘violations of these ten rules’ refer to pragma-dialectical ten rules for critical discussion that Reisigl and Wodak introduce on the previous page. But these ten rules for ‘rational arguing’ as Reisigl and Wodak call them are not valid just for ‘persuasive, manipulative, discursive legitimation of racist, ethnicist, sexist and other forms of discrimination’, but for every form of discussion that aims at resolving the difference of opinion in a rational way by means of critical discussion. Racist, ethnicist, sexist and other forms of discrimination usually don’t aim at resolving the difference of opinion in a rational way.

Besides that, ‘violations of these ten rules’ is the way fallacies are defined in pragma-dialectics, not in rhetoric and argumentation theory in general. In rhetoric and argumentation theory there are many different approaches to fallacies that don’t even mention those ten rules of critical discussion, even theories that are unfamiliar with those ten rules or refuse to use them.

In pragma-dialectics, fallacies are conceived and analysed from the dialectical perspective: they are incorrect, unreasonable moves *in a debate or in a discussion*. In DHA, on the contrary, a list of 14 fallacies is constructed (at least in *D&D*: 71–74), with a short description and an even shorter example of each one of them. On the following 200 pages occasional references would be made to this list, without any analysis or justification why the examples on these 200 pages (mostly taken from the press) would represent any of the 14 fallacies listed (on pages 71–74), and the ten rules for critical discussion are never mentioned again. This is the very same way DHA deals with *topoi* as I have shown in the first chapter.

3

The second part of the book is devoted to visual argumentation, more precisely to some methodological problems regarding the interpretation of visuals. In the first chapter, *Is there anything like visual argumentation: A short exercise in methodological doubt*, I am concerned with the very beginnings of visual argumentation back in 1996, the argumentative potential the first authors (Birdsell and Groarke) see in visuals, and the problem of framing in the first ‘visual argument’ to be analysed, the famous Smoking Fish.

If I sum up these first conceptualizations of visuals and their argumentative potential: visuals may have some argumentative or persuasive potential (there is a *possibility* of visual meaning, visuals can *forward* arguments,

and arguments can be *derived* from visuals), but they are usually (always?) still coupled with the verbal, and can achieve these argumentative effects only (?) in combination with the verbal. And the *pièce de resistance* Birdsell and Groarke are offering to illustrate the claims above (i.e., the possibility of visual argumentation) is an anti-smoking poster (Smoking Fish with a caption ‘Don’t you get hooked!’), published by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare in 1976.

The authors (Birdsell and Groarke) first admit that ‘visual images can, of course, be vague and ambiguous. But this alone does not distinguish them from words and sentences, which can also be vague and ambiguous’. (Birdsell, Groarke 1996: 2) Then they qualify the poster as ‘an amalgam of the verbal and the visual’ (*ibid.*), which, again, sounds quite acceptable. But then they conclude: ‘Here the argument that you should be wary of cigarettes because they can hook you and endanger your health *is forwarded by means of visual images ...*’ (Ibid.: 3) Which is obviously not the case. Without the verbal part, the caption ‘don’t you get hooked!’, the poster could be understood (framed) as a joke, as a cartoon, where, for example, smoking is presented as such a ubiquitous activity that even anglers use cigarettes to catch fish. *Only when we add the verbal part*, ‘don’t you get hooked!’—where ‘hooked’ activates a semantic frame of knowledge relating to this specific concept (Fillmore 1977: 76–138), which includes ‘get addicted’, and is, at the same time, coupled with a visual representation of a hook with a cigarette on it—is the appropriate (intended) frame set: the poster can now, and only now, be unequivocally understood as an anti-smoking ad, belonging to an anti-smoking campaign.

This is the reason, I emphasize, why visual argumentation should concentrate more on *different possible entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation of hypothetical visual arguments*. As a kind of a case study—exposing possible *caveats* as well as *cul-de-sacs* of visual argumentation—I then concentrate on Leo Groarke’s proposal of reconstructing visual arguments as presented and conceptualized in his 2013 article ‘The Elements of Argument: Six Steps to a Thick Theory’, published in the e-book *What do we know about the world?: Rhetorical and Argumentative perspectives*. The object of Groarke’s analysis is a photo of a fruit found on the Detroit River that he identified as a breadfruit. What I am objecting to in this chapter is methodological approach Groarke is using in identifying the fruit:

The argument that established this conclusion *compared my photographs to similar photographs found in encyclopaedia accounts of breadfruit*. One might summarize the reasoning as: ‘The fruit is breadfruit, for these photographs are like standard photographs of breadfruit.’ But this is just a verbal paraphrase. *The actual reasoning—what convinces one of the conclusion—is the seeing of the sets of photographs in question*. Using a variant of standard diagram techniques for argument analysis, we might map the structure of the argument as:

$$\begin{array}{ccc} I^1 & + & I^2 \\ \hline & \Downarrow & \\ & C & \end{array}$$

where C is the conclusion that the fruit is a piece of breadfruit, I^1 is the set of photographs I took, and I^2 is the iconic photographs of breadfruit to which they were compared.’

But should (and does) the reasoning really consist just of ‘*the seeing of the sets of photographs in question*’? Is just seeing and visually comparing photographs *from different sources* really enough for a reasoned, justified conclusion (in question)?

In order to answer these questions, I replicate Groarke’s procedure and prove that his breadfruit is not really a breadfruit, but much less exotic fruit (*Maclura pomifera*).

What can we learn from this? Above all that sayings like: ‘A picture tells a thousand words’ should be indeed taken seriously. *But*, to be (absolutely) sure *which of these thousand words* refer to that particular picture, we have in front of us in these particular circumstances, *we have to cut down (on) those words considerably*. On the other hand, *without any words at all, we can hardly identify the exact meaning of the picture*.

In other words, there seem to be no pure visual arguments (as there are, probably, very few purely verbal arguments; if any at all), and instead of visual argumentation (or purely verbal argumentation, for that matter we should be talking about multimodal argumentation and multimodal meaning (combining, in our case, at least visual and verbal, but other semiotic modes are involved as well, such as gesture and gaze). But multimodal meaning and multimodal argumentation require different analytical

framework, let us simply call it multimodal analysis. And in relation to that, I emphasize a few points.

In cases where just ‘seeing’ is not enough, and we have to consult verbal (or other) sources, and incorporate other types of signs, like gestures, gazes ..., we should be talking of *enchronic analysis* (Enfield 2009). What is enchronic analysis?

Enchronic analysis is concerned with *relations between data from neighbouring moments*, adjacent units of behaviour in locally coherent communicative sequences. (Enfield 2009: 10)

Enchronic analysis is therefore looking at *sequences of social interaction in which the moves that constitute social actions occur as responses to other such moves, and in turn these give rise to further moves*. The Detroit River fruit is exactly a case in point: from observation of the photos of the fruit taken on the river, we have to move to the observation of the photos in encyclopaedias. And to get more complete and accurate information, we have to switch from photos to text, and incorporate the textual information as well. And to fine-tune our findings (understanding), we have to switch to yet other photos (if necessary), and from them to yet another text(s) (if necessary), and finally compare all these again with the initial photo (of the fruit taken on the river).

If, when consulting encyclopaedias, *we don’t just check the photos, but the text as well*, and then go and (re)check other available texts and photos, and compare them with the initial photo(s), the final result we arrive at should be described as *composite meaning*, resulting in *composite utterances*, conceptualized as: ‘[...] a *communicative move that incorporates multiple signs of multiple types*’. (Enfield *ibid.*: 15)

4

The aim of the fourth chapter, *Perception, Inference, and Understanding in Visual Argumentation*, is to upgrade the theoretical (conclusions) from the previous chapter, and support them with empirical research and data. For the lack of funds, I opted for an experimental survey study, involving a pilot questionnaire.

This pilot questionnaire, titled *A Short Questionnaire on Understanding the Visuals (Drawings, Pictures, Photographs ...)* comprised three well-known visuals from Leo Groarke’s work on VA, namely:

- (1) The smoking fish (where all the text was removed from the picture);
- (2) The poster ‘UvA for Women’ (exactly as it was presented in Groarke 1996: 112) and
- (3) Jacques-Louis David’s painting *La Mort de Marat* (*Marat’s Death*).

Each visual was preceded with a necessary but short introduction—necessary for historically or chronologically framing the visual (but not explaining the context)—while following each visual there were two questions, constructed in as neutral way as possible, at the same time trying to avoid a very actual possibility in this kind of surveys that respondents wouldn’t understand what the goal (the intention) of these questions was.

The questionnaire was distributed/administered to three different age groups, with different educational and professional background, all European, with Slovenian citizenship: Group 1: STUDENTS, Group 2: RESEARCHERS, Group 3: SENIORS.

There is no place in the summary to comment on all the answers the three groups gave about the visuals (in the chapter they are discussed in detail), but this small pilot research (which is to be continued and upgraded) convincingly showed that direct—linear, uniform and ‘objective’—argumentative impact of ‘pure’ visuals on different audiences is rather small or none. In other words, *different audiences (different by age, education, cultural and social background ...) infer differently (or different ‘things’) and via these inferences come to different conclusions (if any at all)*.

That is why, to conclude, I tentatively propose a basic scheme, a model (in the making), or a grid, of how (and why) interpretations of visuals (but not just visuals, verbal arguments operate in the same way) may function, what may trigger the inferences leading to specific interpretations (and why), what these interpretations depend on (i.e., what are the necessary and/or sufficient conditions for such interpretations to unfold), and what may be their restrictions and limitations.