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Appeal to Pity in Visual Arguments

A semi-reductionist view

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Table of Contents

Introduction

A photograph of a frail starving polar bear seen in Norway captured the public interest in 2015. The photograph (fig. 1) appeared on news and social media outlets and fueled debates about climate change. Kerstin Langenberger, the photographer, made the case that we should take action against climate change to save polar bears because they have been suffering from the effects of climate change. She based her claims on her observations that female polar bears have become noticeably thinner and have decreased in number over the years. The changing conditions of polar bears were an indication of how serious climate change has become.[1]

Fig. 1. The photograph of a starving polar in Norway. Langerberger, Kerstin. Facebook, 20 Aug. 2015. Accessed via the link provided in footnote 1.

What is the role of this photograph in Langenberger's argument and why does it deserve the attention from argumentation theorists? First, the photograph adds credibility to

[1] See the following link for the photograph and the full argument:
https://www.facebook.com/429056113773001/photos/a.463697036975575/1045109095501030

Langenberger's argument by showing the real-life condition of a starving polar bear. In this sense, it provides (some) evidence for Langenberger's claims. Second, the photograph has a strong emotional appeal that increases its persuasiveness. It makes Langenberger's argument (more) rhetorically effective by evoking pity and empathy in the viewer. In this sense, Langenberger can further persuade the viewer to take action against climate change. Insofar as Langenberger's argument is supported by this photograph, it can be considered a visual argument. Broadly understood, visual arguments are arguments that contain a visual component that serves an essential argumentative role in the dialogical context. Insofar as this photograph persuades the viewer to accept Langenberger's argument, it can be regarded as a visual one. Considering that Langenberger's argument is a visual argument in which the photograph serves to evoke pity, I call it an instance of a 'visual appeal to pity'. Crudely, a visual appeal to pity can be characterized as a visual argument in which (one of the functions) of the visual component is to evoke pity and empathy in the viewer.

The study of visual arguments is both intriguing and challenging because pictures and other visual features seem qualitatively different from words. On one hand, photographs may be considered as more effective in providing a direct and holistic understanding of phenomena by depicting lived experiences. On the other hand, their propositional content is communicated less precisely than words. Given these (and other) differences between words and pictures, argumentation theorists have paid special attention to the question of whether visual arguments can be analyzed similarly to standard verbal arguments. My aim is to shed light on this issue by comparing appeal to pity in visual and verbal arguments; namely, by examining whether and to what extent visual appeals to pity, as defined above, can be analyzed the same way as standard

verbal ones. This analysis can be achieved by reconstructing and evaluating visual appeals to pity using the logical concepts and tools commonly applied to standard appeal to pity.

The analysis of visual arguments depends on their visual components. So comparing visual and verbal arguments bears on the question of how pictures can be compared to words from an argumentative perspective. Leo Groarke introduced the idea that visual arguments can be evaluated similarly to standard arguments because their logical structure can be made explicit in terms of conclusion and premises ("Logic, Art and Argument" 106, "Going Multimodal" 138). Groarke's view counters Ralph Johnson's and Eugen Popa's views that visual arguments do not exist and do not deserve attention from argumentation theorists (Johnson 2, Popa 80).[2] In the present paper, I argue that visual appeals to pity can be analyzed and evaluated similarly to standard appeals to pity. Insofar as the function of the photograph can be made explicit in the conclusion and premises, the visual appeal to pity can be evaluated using the logical concepts and tools applied to standard verbal cases. In this sense, my view aligns with Groarke and other proponents of visual arguments.

My approach to answering the question of whether visual appeals to pity can be analyzed similarly to verbal is the following: I first reconstruct verbal appeals to pity in terms of conclusion and premises and offer some rules and norms by which we may assess them (Section 1). Second, I discuss the notion of visual arguments and how their visual features can be reconstructed by making their function and/or propositional content explicit in the conclusion and premises (section 2). Third, I compare visual appeals to pity to standard cases by applying the same method of analysis and evaluation. By analyzing two examples, I show the extent to

[2] Johnson and Popa both criticize Groarke's account by arguing against the notion of visual argumentation. Johnson maintains that visual arguments are too interpretative and so cannot be correctly reconstructed. Popa also argues against the possibility of visual arguments by criticizing the verbal-visual distinction and the idea that visual features can be argumentative.

which we can use the same scheme and norms advanced in the first section (section 3). Finally, I conclude the paper by summarizing and discussing the upshots of my analysis, one of which is, visual appeals to pity may not be *fully* reducible to standard verbal cases because photographs cannot be fully translated into words. However, my analysis will also show that the uniqueness of visual appeal to pity does not automatically exclude it from the argumentative analysis.

1. Verbal appeal to pity [3]

1.1 The logical structure of verbal appeal to pity

Before proceeding to the main discussion of appeal to pity, I should clarify the scope of my inquiry and its underlying assumptions. First, I assume rhetorical visual arguments can be conceptualized as dialogical in the sense that they belong to a broader (online) debate. In my analysis, the proponent attempts to persuade an opponent, typically an audience, by some persuasive means.

Second, from the perspective of fallacy theory, my approach to appeal to pity is contextual. Namely, I assume that the acceptability of the appeal to pity should be determined on a case-to-case basis. While I do not delve into fallacy theories, I concur with Douglas Walton and Alan Brinton who take the contextual approach and maintain that that appeal to pity can be an acceptable strategy in some (pragmatic) contexts which contain normative claims (e.g. prescribes an action) (*Appeal to pity* 122-123, "A Plea For *Argumentum Ad Misericordiam*" 28).[4] In light of this assumption, I discuss pity also in connection to empathy. This use of language has a more

[3] Standard definitions mainly consider *verbal* appeals to pity which have historically been the focus of fallacy theorists. I only use the term 'verbal appeal to pity' in order to distinguish it from visual appeals to pity that have a visual component.

[4] This position can be contrasted to some authors' position that appeals to pity is almost always fallacious because is not argumentative and thus, not reason-giving. Copi and Cohen, van Eemeren and Kimball argue that all or most cases of appeals to pity are non-argumentative and fallacious.

positive connotation. For instance, it suggests the proponent of an argument can bring a sort of emotional understanding and that would allow the opponent to feel empathetic in a context where empathy is relevant.[5]

Third, my inquiry focuses on pragmatic argumentation because many examples of appeal to pity that I (and other scholars) discuss appear in public debates on mass media. These cases of appeal to pity are accompanied by normative claims such as which actions we should take and how the relevant consequences justify those actions. In this light, appeal to pity can be reason-giving and, in this sense, an argumentative strategy. This assumption allows me to formulate appeals to pity in terms of conclusion and premises using argumentation schemes.

Appeal to pity (*argumentum ad misericordiam*) is commonly understood as a strategic device that a proponent uses to convince the opponent of an acceptability of a standpoint by evoking pity. Consider the well-known example of a student demanding a higher grade from her professor. The student would be said to appeal to pity if, for instance, she claims that she will fail the course or suffer other adverse consequences if the professor does not raise her grade. By stating (or insinuating) that she will suffer from some bad consequence, she attempts to arouse pity in the professor and, in effect, tries to persuade the professor to take the demanded action of raising her grade. This example illustrates the common characterization of appeal to pity as a rhetorical, in this case, fallacious strategy.[6] On my account, appeal to pity is not merely rhetorical; rather, it can also adopt a logical structure and be evaluated using dialectical rules and

[5] The language fallacy theorists use to condemn appeal to pity has a strong negative ring to it. The idea of provoking pity portray it as a strategy that is commonly used to mislead and/or manipulate a person to accept a conclusion (this is as opposed to rationally persuade an opponent by giving reasons/premises for the conclusion)

[6] Some authors believe the appeal to pity to be a rhetorical non-rational strategy. Copi and Cohen hold that the appeal to pity relies on " generosity, altruism, or mercy, rather than on reason" (114). Similarly, Kimball argues that appeal to pity is "a manipulative arousal of pity [in the other party] " (Kimball 311). Kimball's position also assumes that the proponent manipulates, as opposed to, rationally persuades, the opponent by evoking pity.

other norms. In the first part of this section, I develop an argumentation scheme for a verbal appeal to pity to show its logical structure. I rely on Brinton and Walton's accounts to develop a scheme for common cases of appeal to pity in pragmatic arguments. In the second part of this section, I present dialectical rules and other normative criteria to assess standard appeals to pity. This section will show how appeals to pity can be formulated using an argumentation scheme and be evaluated using dialectical rules and other norms

There are two ways we may break down appeals to pity. As Brinton states, "...by 'argumentum ad misericordiam' we might mean either (1) the attempt to arouse (by the giving of reasons) the feeling, or (2) the attempt to get someone (by the giving of reasons) to act mercifully or beneficently" ("A Plea for Argumentum Ad Misericordiam" 31). From an argumentative perspective, (1) expresses a (normative) claim about how a person should feel about the subject (feel pity). Relatedly, (2) is a normative claim about how a person should act based on the pity she feels for the subject in question. I label (1) *reasoning to pity* and (2) *reasoning from pity*.

Following Brinton's two notions of appeal to pity, we can devise a simple logical theory. In reasoning to pity, the proponent claims the opponent should feel pity. That constitutes the main conclusion of the argument. In the reasoning from pity, the proponent argues for an action based on pity. So, the appeal to pity appears in the premises of an argument. These two cases can be constructed as follows:

Reasoning to pity [7]

Conclusion: Y merits **X**'s pity.
Premise: P is a reason for **Y** merits **X**'s pity.

[7] Brinton expresses this point when discussing appeal to pity as appeal to sympathy and gratitude: "If [evoking gratitude or sympathy] is reason-giving, then it treats the emotion (or the proposition that you ought to undergo the emotion) as a conclusion" ("Pathos and the 'Appeal to Emotion'" 212).

Reasoning from pity

> **Conclusion: X** should adopt standpoint **Z (**where **Z** specifies an action related to **Y**)
> **Premise: Y** merits **X**'s pity.

In many cases, it is clear that the proponent reasons from pity to establish her conclusion. In the student example, the student reasons *to* pity by insinuating that the professor should feel pity for her because she may get expelled. She also reasons *from* pity by claiming that the professor should raise her grade because she feels pity for the student. Similarly, in the polar bear example, Langenberger reasons from pity to convince the viewers to take the action of fighting climate change. However, in many cases, reasoning to pity is often implicit. Namely, the proponent does not explicitly claim that the opponent should feel pity and why feeling pity is justified in that context. She may only allude to it.[8] Nonetheless, both strategies of appealing to pity can be made explicit in the logical structure of the argument.

In public discourse, the proponent may *both* argue that the opponent should feel pity and use that conclusion to defend a final conclusion which contains the action-claim.[9] In this sense, she both reasons to and reasons from pity. For instance, Langenberger's claims that we should fight climate change to save polar bears rests on the implicit premise that we should pity polar

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[8] In the polar bear example, Langenberger alludes to the proposition that the viewer should feel pity for polar bears by drawing a direct link between fighting climate change and preventing polar bears from starving. In this sense, her argument rests on the presupposition that we would like to help polar bears as we feel sympathetic towards their struggle caused by climate change. The implicitness of appeal to pity may be responsible for the difference of opinion about whether appeal to pity is an argumentative strategy or a rhetorical device.

[9]Public discourse typically surrounds social-political issues such as climate change, refugee crisis which are inherently moral matters. Walton and Brinton both recognize the common use of appeal to pity and so discuss it in relation to moral action. Taking Callahan's perspective, emotions such as sympathy have a corrective power in the sense that they can correct immoral reasoning and when reasoning fails to lead to moral action. See "The Role of Emotion in Ethical Decisionmaking." pp. 12-14 the discussion of the connection between emotion to reasoning about moral action.

bears.[10] This premise can also be considered an intermediate conclusion that is grounded on the premise that polar bears are suffering from starvation, and so their poor condition merits our pity. We can construct a scheme for appeal to pity that represents this two-step process of reasoning both to and from pity as follows:

A scheme for verbal appeal to pity [11]

1 **X** should take action **A**. (final conclusion)
1.1 **Y** merits **X**'s pity. (intermediate conclusion)
1.1.1 **Y** is in a pitiable state.
Assumption: action **A** would help **Y**'s situation.

Consider Langenberger's argument again. Her argument draws on the (past and future) consequences of climate change in order to defend her conclusion that we should take action. In this sense, it has the structure of an argument from consequences in which the proponent argues for (or against) carrying out an action by referring to the consequences that are associated with (not) carrying out the action. As Walton states, many cases of appeal to pity are combined with arguments from negative consequences (*Appeal to Pity* 101).[12] In the latter, the proponent reasons that bad consequences would follow from the opponent not taking action. The student

[10] I maintain that the appeal to pity, in many cases, may be implicit. In these cases, the proponent alludes to, rather than explicitly states, the claim that the opponent should feel pity for the subject involved. In the example above, Langenberger alludes to the idea that we should feel pity for the polar bears by drawing a direct connection between fighting climate change and the poor condition of polar bears. However, the connection between these two claims relies on the implicit premise or presupposition that we should feel pity for the polar bears in considering their poor condition.

[11] This scheme is general as it can appear as part of many (verbal) arguments and so it is not limited to an argument from the consequences scheme. Also, it can also be considered a normative as the conclusion is an action-claim: e.g., 'we should fight climate change'. The notion of a normative appeal to pity also helps link it to moral argumentation and moral action which has been a major focus in discussions about appeal to pity. Walton, Brinton and Kimball discuss appeal to pity directly in relation to moral action.

[12] Walton proposes different characterizations of appeal to pity based on the following four schemes: (1) argument from need for help; (2) argument from distress; (3) plea for excuse; and (4) practical reasoning generally (*Appeal to pity* 155).

example is clearly characterized as an example of that because the student demonstratively capitalized on the bad consequences (failing the course) in order to persuade the professor. I propose the following scheme for verbal appeal to pity as an argument from negative consequence:

Verbal appeal to pity in argument from (negative) consequences

1 **X** should take action **A**.
- 1.1. If **X** does not take action **A**, **Y** will (continue to) suffer consequences **C**.
- 1.2 **C** is a bad consequence.
- 1.3 **Y** merits **X**'s pity.
  - 1.3.1 **Y** is in a pitiable state.

The above scheme assumes that taking action A would help the affected subject Y by alleviating or eliminating bad consequences. Importantly, it represents a scheme for appeal to pity that takes the form of argument from negative consequences. We can formulate the student example using this scheme:

1 The professor should raise the student's grade.
- 1.1 If the professor does not raise the student's grade, she will fail the course.
- 1.2 Failing the course is a bad consequence.
- 1.3 The student merits the professor's pity.
  - 1.3.1 The student is (may be) failing the course.

Argumentation scheme for verbal appeal to pity allows us to assess its components; namely, we may raise questions about the acceptability of its premises and whether they are sufficient and relevant for establishing the acceptability of the proponent's conclusion and

proposed action. Using the scheme for verbal appeal to pity, I move on to considering norms and rules for evaluation.

1.2 Evaluating verbal appeals to pity [13]

Evaluating verbal appeals to pity involves two steps. The first step is to determine the acceptability of the premises by examining the consequences (the first two premises of the scheme) in relation to the proposed action. Walton's critical questions help evaluate the premise(s) specifying the consequences ("Dialectical Shifts" 56). The second step is to determine whether and to what extent the appeal to pity (the third premise and sub-premise) is legitimate.[14] In this case, we would focus on the question whether pity and related emotions constitute relevant reasons for taking the proposed action. In order to evaluate the acceptability of the appeal to pity in the verbal scheme, we can use van Eemerens' pragma-dialectical rules of critical discussion.[15] I explore these criteria for evaluation below. [16]

Insofar as the appeal to pity appears in an argument from negative consequences, the former can be assessed using the norms that are generally applied to this argumentation scheme. As Walton argues, we can evaluate arguments from consequences by raising critical questions about the plausibility of the consequences ("Dialectical shifts" 56). In this manner, the opponent

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[13] I discuss the evaluation of appeals to pity that are expressed as part of the scheme for negative consequences. Other types of appeal to pity would depend partly on other norms for evaluation.

[14] Furthermore, it will become clear in my analysis that not all rules can be sufficiently applied to the premises containing the appeal to pity; rather, it applied more broadly to the whole scheme. Insofar as appeal to pity appears belongs to an argumentation scheme; its evaluation partly depends on the evaluation of the other premises in the scheme.

[15] Frans van Eemeren is the father of the school of Pragma-Dialectics. van Eemeren initially introduced pragma-dialectical rules that guide a dialogue in a critical discussion where one or more parties disagree over one or more claims and attempt to resolve the disagreement by engaging in dialogue. By conceptualizing appeal to pity as arguments that belong to a broader dialogue; I make, at least, some of these rules applicable to standard arguments.

[16] The dialectical rules are closely connected such that the proponent can violate more than one at the time.

can question whether the consequences that the proponent states are acceptable. Walton advances the following critical questions for evaluating consequences:

> CQ1. How strong is the probability or plausibility that these cited consequences will (may, might, must) occur?
> CQ2. What evidence, if any, supports the claim that these consequences will (may, might, must) occur if [action] A is brought about?
> CQ3. Are there consequences of the opposite value that ought to be taken into account? [17]

These critical questions constitute part of the assessment of the verbal appeal to pity insofar as they are part of the argument from negative consequences. These questions help assess whether the premises containing the stated consequences are acceptable.[18] If the consequences are far-fetched or unlikely to happen, that may indicate the proponent's argument is weak and the opponent should not undertake the proposed action. In short, critical questions can help evaluate verbal appeals to pity by examining the acceptability of the stated consequences and the extent to which they can support the proposed action and/or the appeal to pity.

A crucial part of assessment of appeal to pity is assessing whether the premises of containing the appeal to pity are legitimate. Taking Walton's approach, we may formulate further questions that would apply to premises containing the appeal to pity: namely, we may ask 'does (and to what extent) does Y merit X's pity?'. Crucially, pragma-dialectical rules can also help determine whether the use of pity in a specific argument is dialectically acceptable. They help in evaluating the third premise and sub-premise of the scheme above. Notably, the rules of critical

[17] Walton, "Dialectical Shifts Underlying Arguments from Consequences" p.56
[18] There may be other critical questions that can be raised, namely, questions about risks and opportunity costs associated with taking the proposed action. More can be said about determining the relevant/right critical questions as well as the conditions under which we can sufficiently answer them.

discussion are closely interconnected such that violating one more may amount to the violation of the other. [19]

Some authors believe an argument (or an argumentative move) to be fallacious if it restrains the opponent's ability to think critically about the proponent's standpoint. This criterion would commonly be violated in cases where the proponent attempts to manipulate rather than rationally persuade the opponent.[20] Van Eemeren and Snoeck Henkemans capture the same intuition by proposing the freedom rule which states, "parties must not prevent each other from putting forward standpoints or casting doubt on standpoints" (van Eemeren and Snoeck Henkemans 97). This rule can be applied to appeal to pity by taking into account the role pity plays in the proponent's strategy in persuading the opponent.[21] For instance, a proponent's use of pity would be fallacious if it prevents the opponent from doubting the proposed action and/or objecting to it. Accordingly, I apply the freedom rule as follows:

> **Freedom Rule*** The proponent should not prevent the opponent from casting doubt and/or rejecting the proponent's contribution *by evoking pity.*

Freedom rule can be used to determine whether the appeal to pity is acceptable in a certain case. Consider another student example in which the student argues: "how could you have given me a failing grade for the course? Now I will be expelled from the university. You

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[19] Aside from dialectical rules, informal logic also specifies norms that would help in identifying fallacies. Pragma-dialectical rules (van Eemeren) help identify fallacious argumentative moves in critical discussion by specifying rules for sound argumentation. Blair and Johnson specify standards of relevance, sufficiency and acceptability (RSA) for assessing the tenablity of the premises and their connection(s) to the proposed conclusion in arguments.

[20] As Kimball points out, in fallacious cases of appeal to pity, the proponent relies on "vulnerability" to manipulate and pressure the opponent into accepting the proposed standpoint (Kimball 312). Walton expresses a related point by arguing that appeal to pity is fallacious when it introduces bias in the opponent's views in a way that prevents them from raising critical questions (*Appeal to pity* 156).

[21] For instance, the proponent can provoke pity in the opponent, to the extent of manipulating her choice of action. In the student example, the student may state, 'how could you have given me a failing grade for the course? Now I'll be expelled from university.' In the latter case, the student exerts some pressure on the professor by making her feel excessive pity and a sense of responsibility for preventing the consequences.

should change my grade". The student arguably exerts pressure on the professor in the manner she seeks pity. The student's strategy can provoke pity in a manner that would pressure the professor into changing the student's grade, for instance, by emphasizing the terribleness of possible consequences, the professor may feel responsible for the possible consequences and so not be able to object to changing the student's grade.[22] In the latter case, the student may be said to violate the freedom rule by disrupting the professor's ability to think critically about her argument.

The second criterion for determining the legitimacy of appeal to pity is relevance.[23] Van Eemeren and Snoeck Henkemans propose the following relevance rule: "[a] party may defend his or her standpoint only by advancing argumentation related to that standpoint" (105). There are two ways in which we can discuss irrelevance in an appeal to pity: first, the extreme case in which appeal to pity provides no support for the proponent's conclusion; second, the more moderate case where pity serves some justificatory role but it is not the only relevant premise in supporting the proponent's conclusion. Many scholars agree that appeal to pity is always an unacceptable strategy if pity and related emotions are completely irrelevant to the proponent's argument. For instance, the well-known student examples may be considered as violations of the relevance rule. The student is said to engage in irrelevant argumentation by relying on pity to

[22] Exaggerating the appeal to pity (e.g. begging for a higher grade) may be considered a violation of freedom rule as well. All violations of dialectical rules are likely fallacious in contexts in which the proponent attempts to make the opponent commit a morally corrupt action. So, some argumentation theorists (Brinton and Walton), evaluate appeals to pity from a moral standpoint as well (e.g. they consider the proponent's conclusion to be implausible/unacceptable if it prescribes a morally problematic action).

[23] Copi and Cohen hold, appeal to pity is "[a] fallacy in which the argument relies on generosity, altruism, or mercy, rather than on reason." (114). They consider appeal to pity to be a kind of fallacy of (ir)relevance in which, "[t]he mistake arises when some emotive features of language are used to support the truth of a claim for which no objective reasons have been given." (112). Accordingly, pity and appeal to pity is taken to be irrelevant to the proponent's standpoint. In their view, the error is committed in all fallacies of irrelevance is that they do not ….include *ad populum*, ad hominem, straw man fallacy and the red herring.

earn a higher grade.[24] The student may also be considered as engaging in non-argumentation if she insinuates that she merits professor's pity by, for instance, using emotionally loaded language. Crucially, in moderate cases, appeal to pity may become fallacious *if* the proponent overstate it. For instance, in a crowdfunding ad, a proponent can legitimately claim that the audience should donate money to her cause by appealing to pity. However, she cannot legitimately do so by begging the audience to donate money to her cause. In the latter case, the proponent engages in non- argumentation as she does not justify why she merits *greater* pity. [25]

> **Relevance Rule*** The proponent should not engage in irrelevant argumentation or non-argumentation by *overstating the appeal to pity* or *evoking pity* where it cannot serve any justificatory role.

Relevance rule also relates to another dialectical role which concerns the use of an argumentation scheme in appealing to pity in defending a certain action. Van Eemeren and Snoeck Henkemans formulate this rule as follows: "[a] standpoint may not be regarded as conclusively defended if the defense does not take place by means of an appropriate argument scheme that is correctly applied" (116). The verbal appeal to pity can be considered as incorrectly applied if, for instance, it places too much emphasis on pity and forgo other (non-emotional) factors that should be considered. For instance, if the proposed action concerns policy measures about protection against Coronavirus, then pity and empathy may not be the only (relevant) factors in deciding which policies should be implemented. For instance, we may

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[24] Evidently, a professor determines a student's grade based on the student's academic performance and so she relies on hard facts. Considering that, emotional factors are deemed irrelevant in (all or most) cases. The student may be said to engage in non-argumentation if she insinuates that she deserves pity

[25] Begging, as opposed to, requesting help can be considered a violation of the freedom rule. As Kimball suggests,by appearing more vulnerable, the proponent attempts to provoke more pity and so pressure the opponent into taking the desired action (311). Since, begging has a coercive nature, it may prevent the opponent from critically assessing the proponent's claims including whether the proponent, in fact, merits the opponent's pity.

feel empathy towards the citizens for having to wear masks all day, but that should not constitute the sole or the main reason for imposing the mask-wearing policy. Importantly, this policy should *also* be evaluated by examining mortality rate, the rate of progression of disease and scientific data in the relevant policy context.

Relatedly, the verbal appeal to pity, as I have characterized it, would violate the argumentation scheme rule if it is formulated as part of an argument from negative consequences in a context where (certain) consequences do not support the proponent's conclusion (e.g. a proposed policy action). Considering the mask-wearing policy, a policy-maker may violate the argumentation scheme rule if the proponent defends this policy on the ground that she will be disappointed if the policy is not implemented. In this case, the policy-maker can be said to incorrectly use the argument from the negative consequences scheme as the stated consequences are irrelevant to whether a mask-wearing policy should be implemented.

> **Argumentation Scheme Rule*** The proponent should not defend her standpoint *by evoking pity* using an incorrect argumentation scheme and/or by incorrectly applying it.

To summarize this section, I first offered a logical theory of appeal to pity using Walton's scheme for argument from negative consequences. I used this scheme to make the logical structure of some cases of appeal to pity, such as Langenberger's argument for climate change and the student discussion, explicit. Using the scheme for verbal appeal to pity, I then introduced critical questions for assessing the acceptability of the premises speaking to the consequences. Moreover, I advanced three dialectical rules that could be used to postulate whether appealing to pity is a legitimate strategy in a particular dialogical context. Notably, other dialectical rules can be formulated and applied in normative assessment of appeals to pity. This analysis of appeal to pity equips me to explore visual appeals to pity and investigate the question of whether the latter

can be analyzed following the same method: namely, whether they can be analyzed and evaluated using argumentation schemes and evaluative norms applied to verbal appeals to pity.

2. Visual arguments

2.1 Appeal to pity in visual arguments

The term 'visual appeal to pity' denotes a type of visual argument in which the visual component has a strong emotional appeal that evokes pity and empathy in the viewer. For instance, photographs that depict the suffering of a person can evoke pity and empathy in the viewer. Reconstructing visual arguments is complicated by the fact that there is a photograph or another visual component that communicates a proposition non-verbally. Considering that, the reconstruction (and evaluation) of visual appeal to pity partly depends on how and to what extent we make the propositional content of the photograph explicit in conclusion and premises. In this section, I advance two methods of reconstructing visual arguments which would then help in reconstructing visual appeals to pity in the third section. I will show that visual appeals to pity cannot be reduced to their verbal counterparts. This point raises a crucial question: would the limitations in the reconstruction of visual appeals to pity pose a problem in their evaluation?

The distinctive feature of visual arguments is that they contain a non-verbal component such as a photograph or a picture. In visual arguments, photographs and other visual features are essential to the dialogical content as they provide some form of support for a proponent's conclusion. I consider photographs and pictures as having an argumentative function insofar as they can provide support for the main conclusion and, in this sense, increase make the argument stronger and/or more persuasive. A salient feature of visual arguments is that they can express a proposition which can, to a certain extent, be translated in words. Accordingly, their logical

structure of visual arguments can be made explicit in terms of conclusion and premises I endorse.[26] Blair's definition of a visual argument which as follows:

> A visual argument is [...] an argument *at least some of the essential elements (reasons or claims)* of which are not expressed or communicated in the words of a natural language, but instead *are expressed or communicated pictorially, by images and/or non-verbal signs or symbols.* (Blair 218, my emphasis)

Blair rightly points out that visual features can express a proposition(s) that can function as a premise(s) in an argument. In many cases, the visual component provides support for a conclusion that is verbally stated by the proponent. In some cases, the visual component expresses a proposition that can function as a conclusion of an argument in which the premises are left implicit. [27] I consider an example of such an argument below.

2.2 Two methods of reconstructing visual arguments

As I argue, we can analyze visual arguments by reconstructing them in terms of conclusion and premises. The verbal reconstruction may involve one or both of the following steps: 1. expressing the propositional content of the photograph in words, 2. making the argumentative role of the photograph explicit by referring to the photograph in the conclusion and the premises.[28] Depending on whether and to what extent we follow these steps; we can

[26] The logical structure of arguments is often made explicit by means of natural language. So by arguing that arguments can be expressed in conclusion and premises, I commit myself to the position that they can also be expressed using words and sentences. However, this is not the same as arguing verbal arguments are dependent on natural language. I maintain, as Blair does, language is only one the tools that can be used to make arguments' logical structure explicit.

[27] Argumentation theorists commonly label visual arguments of this type exclusively visual, because there is no verbal component as the premises are not expressed in words. These arguments are interpretative in nature and reconstructing them requires greater background knowledge of the broader dialogue to which they belong.

[28] This distinction will become clearer in the following paragraphs.

arrive at distinct reconstructions for any given visual argument. Accordingly, how we reconstruct visual arguments may have important implications for their analysis. [29] As I will soon show, the best approach for visual appeal to pity would be to incorporate the photograph into the argumentation scheme by referring to it in the premises.

Reconstructing arguments is generally risky because there is a chance that we may misunderstand and misrepresent a proponent's argument by expressing certain aspects that are left unexpressed in words. This issue applies to both verbal and visual arguments. In the verbal case, the issue may arise when the proponent leaves certain premises unexpressed or implicit. By attempting to make these premises explicit in words, we may accidentally add or leave a certain element that is essential to the overall meaning of the proponent's argument. Visual features are also comparable to implicit premises. As Groarke argues, "[t]he implicitness which we associate with visual persuasion has an analogue in implicit (or 'hidden') premises and conclusions that accompany many verbal claims ("Logic, Art and Argument" 107).[30] Since pictures and other visual representations' content is expressed nonverbally, they can be compared to implicit (unexpressed) premises in a verbal argument. Reconstructing visual arguments pose the problem that we may change the proponent's argument in some essential way by trying to make the proposition content of the photograph or picture explicit in the premises and./or the conclusion. This problem may be (more) prominent for pictures and other visual representations that do not appear in a verbal context but nonetheless express a proposition that can be expressed in words. The Banksy example I consider below illustrates this issue further.

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[29] There are various levels of reconstruction which can be understood from the least to most reductionist. Generally speaking, the reductionist approach makes the propositional content of the visual component fully explicit and so leave any direct reference to the photograph out of the reconstruction. The reductionist approach does the opposite by only making the function of the photograph explicit by directly referencing it in the conclusion and premises.

[30] Peach and Blair also regardi visual representations as comparable to implicit premises (enthymeme in Aristotilian terms). See "Picturing a thousand unspoken words: visual arguments and controlling force" p. 65, Blair, "Probative Norms for Multimodal Visual Arguments" p. 219.

Fig. 2. Banksy artwork at Southampton hospital: Painting of the child playing with a nurse figurine portrayed as a superheroine. 2020. BBC. https://www.bbc.com/news/entertainment-arts-52556544.

Intriguingly, the Banksy painting effectively communicates a proposition about the role of nurses in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.[31] The visual juxtaposition of a nurse figurine with famous superhero characters communicates the proposition that nurses are (in some way) similar to superheroes.[32] A precise formulation of the conclusion is that 'the role of nurses is analogous to the role of superheroes'.[33] How should we express the role of the Banksy painting in expressing this conclusion? I offer two reconstructions of the visual argument expressed by

[31] What makes this painting (figure 2) a visual argument is that it expresses a proposition that can be understood within an *implicit* dialogical context. We may reconstruct the visual argument in verbal terms by making the proposition and the logical structure of the painting explicit.

[32] It is common knowledge that nurses have been working extra hard to save the lives of Corona patients. This information places Banksy' painting in a dialogical context in which the role of health care workers is discussed from the perspective of challenges posed by the pandemic.

[33] Because the dialogical context is implicit, the main proposition expressed is open to interpretation. However, considering the context in which the painting appears in (e.g. online debates), it can plausibly be said to express the conclusion, 'nurses should be treated as superheroes'.

this painting focusing on how the Banksy painting should be incorporated in the logical structure of the argument. The semi-reductionist and reductionists reconstructions are as follows:

A semi-reductionist scheme for Banksy argument

1 *The Banksy painting* portrays the role of nurses as analogous to the role of superheroes. (visually-expressed conclusion)
  1.1 Superheroes risk their lives to help others. (implicit premise)
  1.2 Nurses risk their lives to help Corona patients. (implicit premise) [34]

In the above scheme, the function of Banksy painting is made clear in the conclusion by directly stating that the Banksy painting portrays nurses as analogous to superheroes in the humanitarian role they serve in society. This scheme can be considered a semi-reductionist reconstruction of Banksy's painting because it does not reduce the painting to its propositional content by excluding it from the verbal reconstruction of the argument. Thereby, it keeps the painting as a necessary component of the visual argument by specifying its argumentative role in the conclusion of the scheme. However, it is a semi-reductionist scheme because it does make the argumentative role of the photograph explicit by making it into a verbal claim. Compare the semi-reductionist reconstruction to the following reductionist scheme:

A reductionist scheme for Banksy argument

1 The role of nurses is analogous to the role of superheroes. (implicit conclusion)
  1.1 Superheroes risk their lives to help others. (implicit premise)
  1.2 Nurses risk their lives to help Corona patients. (implicit premise)

[34] I use Walton, Reed and Macagano's scheme for argument from analogy here. See Walton, Douglas, Christopher Reed, and Fabrizio Macagno. *Argumentation schemes*. p.315

This scheme is similar to the one presented above with a crucial difference that it does not specify the function of the painting in the conclusion. In this sense, it reduces the argument expressed by Banksy's painting to a verbal reconstruction of it. This method implies that visual arguments can be considered equivalent to standard verbal arguments because their propositional content can be made explicit in verbal terms and represented in the conclusion and premises.

Given the differences in reconstruction, which method should be applied to visual appeal to pity? To identify the best method of reconstruction, I consider which variable, if any, delineates visual appeals to pity from standard verbal ones. Namely, is there a defining difference between the two kinds of arguments that is due to the fact that one contains a visual component and the other does not? I offer an example featuring Alan Kurdi's photograph in section 3 which shows there is a key difference between visual appeal and verbal appeal to pity because the emotional appeal of the photograph cannot be exhaustively expressed in words. This will further show that the rhetorical effect of the visual appeal to pity cannot be exhaustively captured in a reductionist reconstruction and by explicating the propositional content in words.

To summarize this section, I first discussed the notion of a visual argument as containing a visual component which expresses a proposition. I then discussed two different methods of reconstructing visual arguments: the semi-reductionist reconstruction made the function of the visual component, e.g. Banksy painting, explicit by making it a key component of the conclusion. The reductionist reconstruction left the function of the Banksy painting implicit by only incorporating its propositional content in the conclusion.

3. Visual appeal to pity

In this section, I will show that visual appeals to pity can be verbally reconstructed and evaluated by the same norms commonly applied to verbal cases. To argue my case, I first propose a semi-reductionist theory of visual appeal to pity using an example to show why a semi-reductionist approach is preferable. I then show whether standard norms and rules can be used to evaluate the semi-reductionist scheme for visual appeal to pity.

I zoom in on normative cases of visual appeals to pity that can be expressed as part of an argument from negative consequences. So, the only (substantial) difference between the verbal and visual case is in how they evoke pity. This makes my study more focused on the mode of communication (visual versus verbal) and how it affects the analysis and evaluation of visual appeal to pity in the normative contexts in which they are commonly found. Some visual arguments that appear on mass media contain photographs that are persuasive both due to their emotional appeal and their potential to offer empirical evidence for normative claims.[35] So, they serve multiple functions in the dialogical context as well as the argumentation scheme for the visual arguments. In short, my characterization of visual appeal to pity has the following characteristics:

1. The visual component is a photograph.
2. The photograph can evoke pity and related emotions in the viewer.
3. It belongs to an argument from the negative consequences scheme.

[35] The domain of my inquiry is limited to visual appeals to pity that contain photographs as their sole visual component. So, my analysis is not representative of all cases of appeal to pity (and visual arguments).

3.1 A semi-reductionist theory of visual appeal to pity

Insofar as visual arguments can be expressed in conclusion and premises, they can be reconstructed using Walton's argument from the negative consequences scheme. However, the key question concerns the non-verbal component: how and to what extent the photograph can be incorporated in the conclusion and premises, particularly, in a visual appeal to pity. I use an example of an argument featuring the photograph of Alan Kurdi to explore the two methods of reconstruction and illustrate that a semi-reductionist approach is preferable as it better enables us to evaluate the visual appeal to pity using the norms and rules that are applied to the verbal case.

Pasquet/Kurdi Example featuring the photograph of Alan Kurdi [36]

Consider an example featuring the infamous photograph of Alan Kurdi (figure 3), a Syrian refugee kid who drowned on his journey to Europe in 2015. The argument appears in an online editorial where the author, Pasquet, defends the conclusion that we should help refugees.[37] Pasquet draws on the statements raised by Tima Kurdi (Alan's aunt) about the critical situation of refugees, namely "[refugees] all over the world continue to suffer and it's getting worse, not any better. And they are asking for help" (qtd. in Pasquet). Pasquet makes a visual argument by presenting the photograph of Alan Kurdi with Tima Kurdi's claims. The photograph of Alan Kurdi plays an essential role in demonstrating the reality of Syrian refugees who flee their country to find safety in another country. Moreover, the argument can be understood as a visual

[36] I call this the Pasquet/Kurdi example because it is an argument that can be attributed to both figures. Pasquet endorses Tima Kurdi's views. However, he also presents her views in conjunction with the photograph of Alan Kurdi which then makes a visual argument.

[37] This example is also discussed in a recent paper by Harmony Peach, "Picturing a Thousand Unspoken Words: Visual Arguments and the Controlling Force". My notion of visual appeal to pity is inspired by Peach's discussion of Alan's photograph as having a remarkable impact on the broader debate on the refugee crisis. See pp. 70-76 for her discussion on the impact of Alan's photograph on debates about refugee crisis and its notable role in lifting biases.

appeal to pity because Alan's picture evokes empathy in the audience as it directly presents them with the grim reality of a refugee.

It is worth noting that there is both an explicit and an implicit appeal to pity in the Pasquet/Kurdi argument. The direct appeal to pity is made by Tima Kurdi who states refugees are asking for our help and so we should empathize with them. The indirect appeal to pity is made by Pasquet who supports Tima's claims by presenting the photograph of Alan Kurdi in the argument and evoking pity in the audience through the photograph.

Fig. 3. Photograph of Alan Kurdi, the Syrian child who died on his way to Europe (Photographer: Nilüfer Demir). 2015, TIME Magazine. 100photos.time.com/photos/nilufer-demir-alan-kurdi.
Note: The photograph has been blurred in this document. Original version can be accessed via the link above

How would we characterize the appeal to pity in the visual argument featuring Alan's photograph? One possible reconstruction incorporates the photograph of Alan by making its

function explicit in the premises.[38] The following scheme is a semi-reductionist scheme for the appeal to pity in Pasquet/Kurdi argument:

A semi-reductionist scheme of Pasquet/Kurdi's argument

1 We should help refugees. (explicit conclusion)
1.1 If we don't help refugees, their situation will continue to worsen. (explicit premise)
1.1.1 The photograph of Alan shows the worsening of refugees' situation.
1.2 The worsening situation of refugees is a bad consequence. (implicit premise)
1.2.1 *The photograph of Alan* shows the worsening of the refugees' situation is a bad consequence.
1.3. Refugees are asking for our help. (explicit premise)
1.4 Refugees merit our pity. (implicit premise)
1.4.1 *The photograph* of *Alan* shows the worsening of refugees' situation.
1.4.2 *The photograph of Alan* (should) make us feel pity for refugees.

This scheme presents a semi-reductionist reconstruction of visual appeal to pity (as the argument as a whole) because it makes the function of the photograph explicit in the sub-premises of the visual appeal to pity (1.4) without making the propositional content of Alan's photograph explicit in the premises. Compare this scheme to the following reductionist one which makes the propositional content explicit while leaving the function of the photograph implicit:

A reductionist scheme for Pasquet/Kurdi argument

1 We should help refugees. (explicit conclusion)
1.1 If we don't help refugees, their suffering will continue to worsen. (explicit premise)
1.1.1 Alan, a Syrian refugee kid, drowned on his way to Greece.
1.1.2 Alan's death shows the worsening of the situation of refugees.

[38] I make Tima Kurdi's appeal to pity explicit in the argumentation scheme by simply including her own statement about refugees asking for help.

1.2 The worsening situation of refugees is a bad consequence. (implicit premise)

1.2.1 Alan's death was a bad consequence.

1.3 Refugees are asking for our help. (explicit premise)

1.4 Refugees merit our pity. (implicit premise)

1.4.1 Alan is a refugee kid who died.

1.4.2 Alan's lifeless body was washed up against the shore.

1.4.3 The circumstances of Alan's death makes us feel pity for him. [39]

Note that the reductionist and semi-reductionist schemes mirror each other in the logical structure; however, how they incorporate the photograph in the argument scheme is different. As opposed to the semi-reductionist scheme, the reductionist scheme does not contain any direct reference to the photograph of Alan in the premises. Instead, the scheme contains a series of premises that are reconstructed based on the propositional content of the photograph. In this light, the fully reductionist scheme reduces the photograph to its propositional content and, in effect, reduces the visual argument and the visual appeal to pity to their verbal counterpart.

I maintain that a semi-reductionist reconstruction of the Pasquet/Kurdi argument is preferable to a reductionist one for the following reasons. First, it avoids issues that arise for finding the correct or the most appropriate reconstruction of the photograph as that involves making many decisions about how and to what extent we should express the propositions in words.[40] Second, it does not make the visual appeal to pity less persuasive by decreasing its

[39] I consider this to be a fully reductionist scheme because it reduces the photograph to its propositional content in all instances in which it is used. However, reconstruction can be a matter of degree and so other less reductionist schemes are possible.

[40] My reconstruction of visual appeal to pity in (1.4) does not present an exhaustive list of the premises that are communicated by the photograph of Alan. This points to the limitation of reconstruction. One limitation concerns length: should all the propositional content be made explicit in the premises? If so, the appropriate reconstruction would be a lengthy and potentially convoluted one. If there is no requirement that all propositional content should be made explicit in the logical structure; then the problem becomes, which propositions should be included (or excluded)? It seems any reconstruction would, by definition, be different from that of the visual argument containing the photograph of Alan and, in turn, may change the original meaning of the argument.

emotional appeal in translation.[41] Finally, the semi-reductionist scheme allows for the visual appeal to pity to be evaluated from the perspective of fallacy theory and by using pragma-dialectical rules. Namely, we can apply norms and rules to evaluate the use of a photograph as legitimate/fallacious given its function in the argumentation scheme which would then provide us with a greater understanding of the connection between the rhetorical and dialogical functions of the photograph in the visual appeal to pity.[42] The reductionist approach does not have this advantage. Namely, it does not allow the rhetorical role of the photograph to be evaluated.[43] In short, the semi-reductionist approach preserves the original structure of the argument while making it possible for the photograph to be evaluated and incorporated into the broader scheme.[44]

In these considerations, I present a semi-reductionist scheme for analyzing and reconstructing examples such as the Pasquet/Kurdi one. This scheme closely resembles the one presented for the standard cases of appeal to pity in argument from negative consequences. The main difference is the addition of premises corresponding to the photograph. The scheme is as follows:

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[41] The reductionist reconstruction cannot fully portray the *grimness* of refugees' reality and the *tragicness* of their suffering or generally the deep emotional aspect of the refugee crisis. Admittingly, the visual appeal to pity in the reductionist reconstruction is comparatively less persuasive *because* it does not fully capture the emotional appeal and it only allows the opponent to conceive the circumstances of the affected subjects rather than perceive it in reality.

[42] To take a dialectical perspective, we may compare the photograph in the visual argument to a strategic move in a critical discussion. The same way the proponent can make a fallacious move by violating the pragma-dialectical rules of discussion; the proponent of a visual argument/visual appeal to pity can make a fallacious move by using a photograph that can violate a rule. A fallacious use of the photograph can then decrease the acceptability of the visual appeal to pity and/or the whole argument presented in the scheme.

[43] The reductionist approach reduces the photograph to a claim(s) in the conclusion and premises. So, the rhetorical function, namely its potential in persuading and provoking pity, of the photograph cannot be evaluated because it is no longer a component of the reconstruction.

[44] My idea is partly inspired by Scott Jacobs' view that all features of arguments, including rhetorical ones should be considered when reconstructing an argument and relatedly; visual features should not be ignored and eliminated because they contain implicit messages that may have important implications for both the analysis and evaluation of arguments. See "Rhetoric and Dialectic from the Standpoint of Normative Pragmatics" pp. 266 and 271.

The semi-reductionist scheme for the visual appeal to pity

1 Party **X** should take the course of action **A.**

1.1 If **X** does not take action **A**, **Y** will (continue to) suffer from consequences **C**.

1.1.1 This *Photograph* shows a case of **Y** suffering from **C**.

1.2 **C** is a negative consequence.

1.2.1 This *Photograph* shows **C** is a negative consequence.

1.3 **Y** merits **X**'s pity.

1.3.1 This *photograph* shows **Y** suffering from **C**.

1.3.2 This *photograph* (should) make **X** feel pity for **Y**.

A few characteristics of the above scheme deserve attention. First, it shows the multifunctionality of the photograph in supporting the premises stating the consequences as well the premises constituting the visual appeal to pity. This is a noteworthy feature of photographs in the visual appeal to pity. They can provide empirical evidence and evoke the emotions of the viewer. In this sense, they have both rhetorical and dialogical functions in the argumentation scheme. Another important characteristic of this argumentation scheme is that it is semi-reductionist in the sense that it depends on the photograph in order to communicate the visual arguments and the visual appeal to pity. The term 'photograph' is a kind of place-holder for the photograph in the conclusion and premises.

To give a brief summary, I considered two methods of reconstructing visual appeals to pity for a visual argument that features the photograph of Alan Kurdi. I argued that the semi-reductionist method is the preferable one because it allows us to evaluate the use of the photograph while preserving the original meaning of the argument and avoid reconstruction issues. [45]

[45] There are key questions that can be further investigated regarding the connection between different methods of reconstructions and the evaluation of visual arguments. Two interrelated questions are, should visual appeals to pity in the reductionist and non-reductionist reconstructions be considered logically equivalent, as in can

3.2 Evaluating visual appeals to pity

The semi-reductionist scheme for visual appeal to pity resembles the verbal scheme insofar as it is part of an argument from negative consequences scheme. Given this similarity, the visual scheme can also be evaluated by raising critical questions about the acceptability of the premises stating the consequences. Walton's three critical questions can be used to establish whether these premises are plausible and whether they adequately support the conclusion. The main question that comes into focus is whether the visual and verbal appeal to pity in the two schemes can be evaluated similarly as well. Namely, how should the third premise containing the visual appeal to pity be assessed? The answer depends on whether and to what extent the photograph can be evaluated using the identified norms and rules.

A key aspect of the evaluation, which is establishing the legitimacy of the visual appeal to pity, can be achieved by employing dialectical rules. The pragma-dialectical approach can help establish whether the use of a photograph is legitimate based on the function(s) it serves in a particular scheme. The use of the photograph can be compared to a strategic move in a dialogue where the proponent offers a premise in support of her disputed conclusion. In both cases, the argumentative move would be fallacious if it violates a dialectical rule.[46]

Whether the use of a photograph is legitimate in a particular case depends on both its rhetorical and dialogical function. For instance, if the proponent uses a photograph that evokes pity and, at the same time, supports a false premise, then it may be considered fallacious. Photographs can provide evidence and easily lead the opponent into thinking the propositions

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they can be evaluated using the same logical norms and concepts? Second, how would the two methods impact the evaluation of visual appeal to pity and what would be the implications of that?

[46] By comparing a photograph to a strategic move in a critical discussion; I do not mean that they are equivalent in every respect. Clearly, the goal of a dialogue in a critical discussion is to resolve a difference of opinion whereas the goal of a visual argument (and visual appeal to pity) is to raise awareness and deliberation in the opponent.

that are visually presented are true and/or acceptable. If the photograph also has a strong emotional appeal and can provoke pity and empathy in the viewer, it can further this impact and, in effect, manipulate the viewer into taking the proposed action. For instance, in the Alan Kurdi example, Pasquet could frame the photograph of Alan to include other refugee children who have died on their migration journey. In this case, the photograph may lead the opponent to overestimate future consequences and/or draw false conclusions regarding the circumstances of Alan's death. So, while the appeal to pity is justified, the use of the photograph in evoking pity may be considered fallacious given how it supports other premises in the argumentation scheme.[47]

The proponent may use a photograph to evoke pity in order to prevent the opponent from critically assessing the proponent's proposed action. In such cases, the proponent may be defending a morally questionable action.[48] Consider another variation of Alan Kurdi Example where the proponent presents the photograph in support of the conclusion that we should abandon refugees (because they do not deserve our pity).[49] The argumentation scheme for such a case may be formulated as follows:

1 We should abandon refugees.

1.1 If we don't abandon refugees, they will die in migration.

1.1.1 *The photograph of Alan* shows refugees die in migration.

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[47] In this case, the visual appeal to pity, insofar as it relies on the framed photograph, may be fallacious.

[48] The visual appeal to pity may be used to misinform the audience and manipulate rather than rationally persuade them into taking the proposed action which can be considered a violation of the freedom rule. Relatedly, the visual appeal to pity may be used as a cover to distract and deceive the audience from the real issue which is the violation of the relevance rule.

[49] My assumption is that the proponent makes this conclusion on moral grounds. However, in reality, the proponent may employ the logic that if we help refugees, a greater number of them will decide to migrate and, as a result, more refugees will perish on the migration journey. I assume this argument to be also implausible because it suggests the wrong causal connection, namely, that us helping refugees is the cause of their migration, as opposed to the actual cause, war and destruction of their homes..

1.2 Refugees' dying is a bad consequence.

1.2.1 *The photograph of Alan* shows the dying of refugees as a bad consequence.

1.3. Refugees merit our pity.

1.3.1 *The photograph* of *Alan* shows refugees dying in migration.

1.3.2 *The photograph of Alan* makes us feel pity for refugees.

This scheme resembles the scheme for the Pasquet/Kurdi argument. However, it defends the opposite conclusion that we should abandon refugees instead of helping them. The use of the photograph of Alan in this context is logically inconsistent because it evokes pity for refugees when the proponent's conclusion achieves the opposite. Insofar as the proponent expresses logically inconsistent propositions that may emotionally confuse the audience, it restricts their ability to think critically and/or criticize the proponant's standpoint. If the latter is true, then she may be said to violate the freedom rule. Accordingly, the freedom rule can be applied to visual appeals to pity as follows:

> **Freedom Rule*** The proponent should not prevent the opponent from casting doubt and/or rejecting the proponent's conclusion *by evoking pity.*
>
> > *Specification*: the photograph should not prevent the viewer from casting doubt and/or rejecting the proponent's conclusion *by evoking pity.*

Visual appeals to pity can violate the freedom rule by evoking pity in a manner that pressures the opponent into accepting the proposed action. In verbal cases, the proponent places pressure by making the opponent feel morally responsible for bad consequences that may ensue if s/he does not take the proposed action. In the visual appeal to pity, the proponent can further

achieve this goal by relying on a photograph that can cause great pity and, in effect, make the viewer even more inclined to feel morally responsible. [50]

A proponent may defend a conclusion by over-stating the appeal to pity. In the visual case, the proponent may exaggerate the emotional appeal of the photograph by using (overly) emotional language. Consider the following hypothetical variation of polar bear example:

1 You should take action against climate change.
- 1.1 If you don't take action, polar bears may starve.
  - 1.1.1 This *photograph* shows a polar bear's insufferable starvation.
- 1.2 Polar bears' starvation is an awful consequence.
  - 1.2.1 This *Photograph* shows polar bears' starving is an awful consequence.
- 1.3. Polar bears merit the greatest pity.
  - 1.3.1 This *photograph* shows a polar bear's insufferable starvation.
  - 1.3.2 This *photograph* should make you feel the greatest pity for polar bears.

In this scheme, the proponent magnifies the visual appeal to pity by using emotionally-loaded words in making the function of the photograph explicit. Namely, the proponent exaggerates the appeal by claiming that the opponent should feel the greatest pity for polar bears by viewing the photograph.[51] Similarly, the use of terms such as 'awful' and 'insufferable' makes the whole scheme more emotionally loaded compared to a scheme that does not contain such strong terms.

Exaggerating the visual appeal to pity can become fallacious in certain cases where, for instance, pity is irrelevant and/or when exaggerating the emotional appeal of the photograph is

[50] Making the opponent feel moral responsibility is not necessarily fallacious in all instances as moral responsibility is closely tied to moral action.

[51] Arguably, exaggeration becomes an issue if the proponent takes a reductionist approach and attempts to translate the emotional appeal of the photograph in words.

unwarranted.[52] Considering that, we can apply the relevant rule also to the case of visual appeals to pity as follows:

> **Relevance Rule*** The proponent should not engage in irrelevant argumentation or non-argumentation by *overstating the appeal to pity* or *evoking pity* where it cannot serve any justificatory role.
>
> > *Specification 1:* the photograph should not evoke pity where pity cannot serve any justificatory role. (irrelevant argumentation)
> >
> > *Specification 2:* the photograph should not evoke pity beyond what is necessary to establish the proponent's conclusion. (non-argumentation)

Finally, the visual appeal to pity can make the argument one-sided. For instance, it may bias the viewer towards thinking how they feel about the affected subject and their circumstances constitute the whole narrative for taking action. Relatedly, it may make (non) emotional reasons appear less crucial compared to emotional ones in a certain argumentative context. This would be problematic if the proponent proposes specific actions for which the opponent has to be diligent in studying all relevant factors.[53] Consider the following example:

1 We should ask the government to ban all single-use plastic across all industries.
  1.1 If we don't fight plastic pollution, polar bears will starve.
    1.1.1This *photograph* shows a polar bear suffering from starvation.

[52] Over-stating the visual appeal to pity may have other unwanted consequences. Namely, it may pressure the audience into accepting the proposed standpoint by emphasizing the importance of feeling 'great pity'. Furthermore, it may give the impression that the audience should feel intense pity/sympathy in viewing the photograph and if they do not; they should not accept the proposed standpoint (to fight climate change). In this case, the audience may have an emotional response that would prevent a reasoned one which involves doubting and thinking critically about the presented claims.

[53] Walton criticizes visual appeals to pity on the ground they generally "oversimplify" the issue and in this sense encourage fallacious reasoning on the part of the arguer (*Appeal to pity* 158). In these cases, the audience's ability to raise critical questions would be hindered.

1.2 Polar bears' starvation is a bad consequence.

1.2.1 This *photograph* shows starvation of polar bears is a bad consequence.

1.3 Polar bears merit our pity.

1.3.1 This *Photograph* shows polar bears suffering from starvation.

1.3.2 This *photograph* should make us feel sorry for the polar bears.

In considering the environmental policy to ban all single-use plastic, the proponent should not (only) rely on how she or the opponent feel about the condition of starving polar bears.[54] Rather, she should consider all relevant factors and closely examine whether the policy would be effective, feasible and enforceable in the considered context. The visual appeal to pity may be fallacious if the photograph distracts the viewer from other equally relevant reasons that should be considered before accepting the proposed action. Insofar as the proponent draws a hasty generalization by dismissing other relevant factors; she may be said to incorrectly apply the argument from the negative consequences scheme. In this sense, the proponent violates the argumentation scheme rule which can be formulated as follows:

> **Argumentation Scheme Rule*** The proponent should not defend her conclusion *by evoking pity* using an incorrect argumentation scheme and/or incorrectly apply it.
>
> *Specification 1*: the photograph should not be used *to evoke pity* in an incorrect argumentation scheme.
>
> Specification 2: the photograph should not be used *to evoke pity* in an argumentation scheme that is applied incorrectly.

There seems to be a parallel between the evaluation of visual and verbal appeals to pity insofar as they both have a similar logical structure and constitute part of the argument from

[54] It is likely that the appeal to pity would not necessarily be irrelevant but insufficient in that case. The appeal to pity would not be sufficient for supporting the conclusion that we should accept the proposed policy.

negative consequences scheme. There is great overlap in how we can assess visual and verbal appeals to pity because the same norms, rules, and general concepts could be applied to both cases. However, the evaluation of visual appeal to pity is complicated by the fact the photograph serves multiple dialogical and rhetorical functions in any given scheme.

To summarize this section, I have illustrated how we can reconstruct and evaluate visual appeals to pity. This study showed that visual appeals to pity could be reconstructed and evaluated using the same logical concepts and tools with some specifications about how the photograph should be incorporated in the argumentation scheme and evaluated. Insofar as the photograph serves an argumentative role that can be made explicit in the conclusion and premises, it can be made subject to the same evaluative norms. However, its evaluation depends on how it is used in various instances in the scheme. Given the intimate link between the rhetorical and dialogical functions of visual appeals to pity, one aspect cannot be evaluated independently from the other.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that visual and verbal appeals to pity could be analyzed using the same set of logical concepts and norms. I demonstrated that a common type of appeal to pity could be reconstructed using Walton's argument from the negative consequences scheme. As shown, both types of appeal to pity have a logical structure that can be made explicit in conclusion and premises. The only notable difference between the two argument schemes is that there are additional premises in visual appeal to pity which make the function of the photograph explicit in the conclusion and premises. As illustrated, visual and verbal appeals to pity could also be evaluated in the same manner. The dialectical rules and other normative criteria applied

to verbal appeals to pity could also be used to evaluate visual cases with some specifications about how they should be applied to the photograph or the visual component of the argument.

My analysis also zoomed in on the problem of reconstructing appeal to pity in visual arguments. The example of Alan Kurdi showed a semi-reductionist method of reconstruction best fits visual appeal to pity because it both preserves the original meaning of the photograph and makes it possible for us to evaluate it. My reconstructions help evaluate the dialogical function of the photographs in the conclusion and premises as well as its rhetorical function in evoking pity by means of its visual features. Crucially, dialectical rules could help determine whether the strategic use of a photograph in a particular context is legitimate from a fallacy theory perspective.

The present discussion of visual appeals to pity also has broader implications for visual arguments. First, it aligns with Groarke's position that visual arguments can be analyzed and evaluated using logic and argumentation theory. This discussion also challenges the critics' position that visual features of arguments cannot be subject to an argumentative analysis, and informal logicians should abandon the study of visual arguments. How we can use logical concepts and norms to analyze photographs in a visual appeal to pity should inform us that visual arguments can be analyzed using logic and argumentation theory. However, their analysis is complicated by the fact that visual communication is different from verbal one and so requires more input from related disciplines.

My account of visual appeal to pity also challenges the critics' conclusion that visual arguments can be fully reduced to verbal ones. My analysis implies that even if the propositional content of visual appeals to pity could be adequately expressed in words, their emotional appeal and overall rhetorical effectiveness could not be fully captured in their verbal reconstruction.

Finally, there are other avenues of research that may further develop the discussion of visual appeals to pity. Insofar as visual arguments can be reconstructed verbally, they can be evaluated in the same manner as well. This also subjects them to challenges that arise for arguments on a broader scale. Namely, they face issues with reconstruction. So a possible avenue for further research is to study the connection between methods of reconstruction(s) and the evaluation of visual arguments. It could answer the question of how various functions of pictures should be understood in an argumentative context, specifically what is the connection between the rhetorical and dialogical functions of pictures. Understanding the rhetorical function and effectiveness of pictures would involve a greater understanding of how they are used in the dialogical context which needs insight into how pictures impact the viewers' beliefs and how viewers decode visual messages. The insight into these aspects of visual arguments can help develop a fallacy theory that can tell us whether the use of a photograph is fallacious in a certain context and how that affects the acceptability of the visual argument in which it is embedded.

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