Gábor FORGÁCS

Visual Rhetoric Used in the Visual Representation of Natural Language Arguments

The visual representation of natural language arguments has come under intense study in recent years. Combining developments from logic, linguistics, computer science and related fields, various scholars have participated in the development of argument mapping software like Araucaria and Carneades. With the help of these software analysts are able to visually reconstruct the deep structure of arguments, while stripping away unnecessary linguistic elements. The software provide analytic tools to lay out implicit premises and argumentative schemes used in a given piece of argumentative text as well as to reconstruct the relationship between premises.

The paper argues that although these visual representations of argumentative procedure aim to excavate the deep structure of argumentation (similar to that of the Toulmin scheme as progressing from data and warrant towards a conclusion) they are not free from aspects of persuasion. The paper shows that the actual visual layout of natural language arguments can have effects of non-rational persuasion on the audience. Thus in argument mapping a layer of visual rhetoric is added to the visual reconstruction of argumentative structure.

Gábor FORGÁCS is a graduate student at the Department of Philosophy and History of Science at Budapest University of Technology and Economics. He is a junior researcher of the Integrated Argumentation Studies research programme. His current research focuses on strategic manoeuvring in scientific debates and the epistemic aspects of the practice of argumentation. With his background in philosophy and English linguistics his research focuses on issues in argumentation theory and pragmatics. He previously addressed the relationships between Relevance theory and the Gricean maxims and theories on the role and understanding of metaphors. E-mail: gabor.forgacs@filozofia.bme.hu.