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***The Iconic Surplus in Visual Arguments:
Where Limitations and Potentials Coincide***

Although visual arguments are used in many contexts, their epistemic status is essentially contested from two sides. The first group of objections challenges the specific iconic *benefit* of visual arguments via the substitutability thesis; that is, the assumption that visual arguments can be translated entirely into linguistic arguments. This implies that the specific iconic qualities of the pictures used are irrelevant for the argumentative purposes. I will argue against this by highlighting the epistemic relevance of their specific iconic capacities. Much more problematic is that the second group of objections challenges the very *possibility* of visual arguments. These objections consider some characteristics of pictures to be limitations and deficits. This characterisation rests on specific limitations itself, insofar as it misses the pragmatic dimension of visual arguments and it interprets the limitations one-sidedly as deficiencies. By including the pragmatic dimension, the limitations of pictures change their character. Instead of understanding the picture-specific limitations as deficiencies, they can be considered as specific conditions of possibility for the pictures to function at all. The limitations can be shown as deficiencies and conditions of possibility at once, insofar as they irreducibly coincide with the very potential of visual arguments.

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