

Summary: In “The Layout of Argument” Toulmin addresses components of the deductive form or syllogism, which have historically been omitted or left implicit, and he suggests that rational arguments in general should be analyzed with a more complex set of categories, and should be no less sophisticated than is required for law.

According to Toulmin, a logically candid layout of argument will include the following features: C - The *claim* is representative of those merits the arguer seeks to establish, D – The *data* is the claim’s foundation. W – The *warrant* is representative of the “rules, principles, inference-licences, etc” that challenge the validity of any given data (98). Warrants are not new data, but work to clarify existing data, as well warrants are general (e.g. the law), and are not the actual facts. Toulmin attributes warrants to the issues that arise when the interlocutors are confronted with a conclusion. At this point instead of entering into a debate the arguers question the validity of the other’s premisses and engage in meta-arguments, or lemma before the issue at hand can ever begin to be argued. Q The *qualifier* clarifies the degree of force, or to what extent the warrant is applicable (i.e. necessarily, presumably, probably). R – The *rebuttal* is a circumstance that would cause the legitimacy of the warrant to be null and void. B – The *backing* holds up the warrant against scrutiny and instead of offering general information, it offers highly specific facts (e.g. statistics).

Reflection: It is interesting to note that Toulmin feels strongly about the field-dependency of warrants (104) as having their own unique terminology. However, would not any discourse’s deductive reasoning have its own terminology? Also, the entire argument would consistently represent the same language and terminology—why does he feel this comes forth strongest in the backing?

I find the difference between backings and warrants only clear in certain fields, or with examples formulated to highlight their differences. In class discussion we (Professors included) all had an incredibly hard time forming our own deductive examples and were continuously troubled with how to distinguish a clear difference between the two. Toulmin alludes to this weakness when he writes, “So long as our statements reflect these functional differences explicitly, there is no danger of confusing the backing (B) for a warrant with the warrant itself. . . In our present example, at any rate, there need be no difficulty”(105). Toulmin’s wording suggests that certain examples are clear and others are not. How is his argument intended to be clear if the examples must be manipulated, or contrived (so to speak) in order to arrive at the neatness and tidiness of his argument’s arrangement? Warrants appear to be incredibly implicit, and in reality it is the backing that actually legitimizes the datum. In other words it seems like warrants cannot stand alone, and seem dependant on the backing. Warrants and backings appear to be two sentences that rest on either side of a semi-colon, rather than the separate hierarchical entities displayed in his diagram. Would it not be possible to place the warrant and backing side by side with a connector line between them (e.g. like the coordinative premisses of a coordinative argument) to show their interdependence in those cases where the warrant cannot stand on its own. On the top of p.112 Toulmin says that they are often bundled together, if so, why not have them visually on one level for demonstrative clarity as to their interdependent nature?