Summary: In this reading, Toulmin is concerned with setting out the general structure of arguments. Toulmin's view is that the simple categories of premise and conclusion do not do justice to the complexity of argumentation. There are many different kinds of claims, playing different roles, that fall under the traditional category of *premise*. Toulmin gives us a much more complex model for the analysis of arguments than the traditional one.

On Toulmin's model, any given argument involves a *claim*, or a conclusion that the arguer seeks to establish, and some *data* or facts that the arguer adduces in support of the claim. The data are always made explicit in an argument. On top of these two parts of arguments, there are also *warrants* involved in arguments. Warrants are general, hypothetical claims, to the effect that on the basis of the data offered, the conclusion may be drawn. Although warrants can be made explicit, they need not be; they generally function implicitly. Warrants are necessary for argumentation to get off the ground: if we are not prepared to accept some warrants, then we will never recognize the legitimacy of making claims on the basis of data. The universal premise in a syllogism is an example of a warrant, asserting that from the data in the minor premise, the conclusion may be drawn. Warrants have *backing*, which is generally some statement of fact, which supports the general claim embodied in the warrant.

A further element in Toulmin's model is the modal *qualifier* on the conclusion – a qualifier to the effect that, given the data at hand and the warrant that we have, the conclusion is probably true, or necessarily true, etc. The modal qualifiers are a concession to the possible *conditions of rebuttal* which, if they obtain, can undermine the claim, because they undermine the applicability of the warrant to the case.

So the model involves a *claim* that is made, the *data* on which it is based, the *warrant* that licenses the inferring of the claim from the data*,* the *backing* of the warrant, the *qualifier* on the conclusion, and the *rebuttal* conditions, which state when the warrant does not license the inferring of the claim from the data.

Reflection: One notable advantage of Toulmin's model over the classical premise-conclusion model of arguments is that it avoids Lewis Carroll's regress, from "What the Tortoise Said to Achilles." Carroll's regress argument (to my mind) establishes that not all inference-warrants can be explicit. I take it to be an advantage of Toulmin's model that it does not require all inference-warrants to be explicit.

Despite this advantage, though, I want to express some reservations about the model as a general picture of the structure of arguments. It seems to me that the simpler model of putting forward premises that are alleged to be sufficient for the conclusion's truth (or epistemic justification, etc.), is a better description of what is going on when people engage in arguments. We do not need to take the major premise in a syllogism as an inference-warrant; we can simply take it, together with the minor premise, as sufficient for the truth of the conclusion (provided that the syllogism is sound). The business of assigning different roles to the different premises in an argument seems to me to make the analysis more complicated than it needs to be. No doubt, there are inference-warrants that are often appealed to, but I don't see why what appear to be universal premises must always be those warrants; it is better to take the argument-structure at face value, as far as we can, and the face-value role of major premises in syllogisms is the same as that of the minor premise.