The Language of Argument

Introduction to Classical and Toulminian Models

FORMAL VS. REAL-WORLD LOGIC

The purpose of FORMAL LOGIC is to prove something is true or not true based on symbolic abstractions that are universal and unchanging.

REAL WORLD LOGIC is based on variables and probabilities. It can't prove something is true or false. The best it can do is make a good case that something is more or less likely to be true.

Classical Argument

- Began in ancient Greece, approximately fifth century B.C.

- Communicated orally and designed to be easily understood by listeners

- Based on formal logic ("if A, then B")

- Effective for neutral or undecided audiences

- Six main components (next slide)

Classical Argument: Six Elements

Introduction: captures attention of audience; urges audience to consider your case

Statement of Background: narrates the key facts and/or events leading up to your case
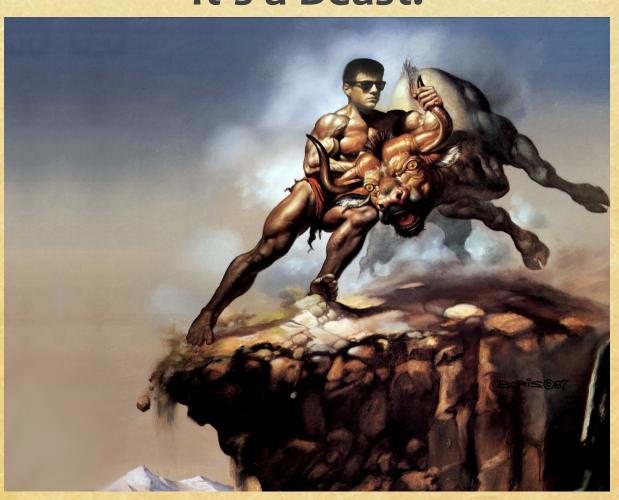
Proposition: states the position you are taking, based on the information you've already presented, and sets up the structure of the rest of your argument

Proof: discusses your reasons for your position and provides evidence to support each reason

Refutation: anticipates opposing viewpoints; then demonstrates why your approach is the only acceptable one (i.e. better than your opponents')

Conclusion: summarizes your most important points and can include appeals to feelings or values (pathos)

Toulminian Argument Model:

It's a Beast!

The Toulmin Model

- Developed in the 1950's by British philosopher Stephen Toulmin who became frustrated with the inability of formal logic to explain everyday arguments.

- Emphasizes that logic often based on probability rather than certainty ("if A, then maybe B, depending on C or D, etc.")

- Focuses not just on claims and evidence but assumptions (stated or unstated)

- Effective for moderately resistant audiences

- Three primary components (next slide)

Toulmin Model: Components

Claim: the main point or position

Data/Reasons: the evidence supporting the claim

Warrant: an underlying assumption or basic principle that connects data and claim; often implied rather than explicit

Grounds: Explanation or support for warrant.

Toulmin Model:
An Example

Claim: My parents should allow me to go to my friend's party on Friday night.

Data/Reasons: The parents of nearly all of the juniors at UHS have given their children permission to attend this party.

Warrant: My parents should act in accordance with the other parents of juniors at UHS.

THE ROLE OF ASSUMPTIONS IN ARGUMENTS

Because real world arguments are not grounded in abstractions, they must be grounded in BELIEFS OR VALUES granted by the AUDIENCE.

Very often, these BELIEFS OR VALUES are not stated but ASSUMED.

USING TOULMINIAN TERMINOLOGY

THIS UNDERLYING
ASSUMPTION
IS REFERRED TO AS A
"WARRANT."

ASSUMPTIONS: SHARED OR NOT SHARED?

As long as the writer and the audience SHARE THE SAME ASSUMPTIONS, it's fine for the writer to leave the assumptions unstated and proceed to make his case.

However, if the underlying assumptions are NOT SHARED (as is often the case), the writer has a problem.

KEY POINT

WHEN THE WRITER AND THE AUDIENCE DO NOT SHARE THE SAME BELIEFS OR VALUES, IT IS UP TO THE WRITER TO DEFEND HIS BELIEFS AND VALUES BEFORE TRYING TO PRESENT HIS ARGUMENT TO THE AUDIENCE.

In Toulminian terminology, this defense of the underlying assumption (warrant)
is referred to as GROUNDS.

QUICK REVIEW

What is the definition of argument?

Answer: An argument is a CLAIM (thesis) with REASONS (sub-claims) supported by EVIDENCE.

USING TOULMINIAN TERMINOLOGY

A CLAIM (thesis)
with REASONS (sub-claims)
supported by EVIDENCE
is referred to as an
ENTHYMEME.

USING TOULMINIAN TERMINOLOGY

AN ENTHYMEME IS AN INCOMPLETE LOGICAL STRUCTURE BECAUSE ITS PERSUASIVENESS DEPENDS ON AN UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION OR BELIEF (WARRANT) THAT THE AUDIENCE MUST ACCEPT.

UNDERSTANDING THE ENTHYMEME

To understand the Toulminian concept of enthymeme, let's look at the sample argument in our text:

The public should not support marine parks and 'swim with dolphins' programs

because these programs place great stress on dolphins by separating them from their natural habitat and social groups.

UNDERSTANDING THE ENTHYMEME

The public should not support marine parks and 'swim with dolphins' programs

CLAIM

because these programs place great stress on dolphins by separating them from their natural habitat and social groups.

REASON

UNDERSTANDING THE ENTHYMEME

This argument is considered INCOMPLETE because its persuasiveness depends on an underlying ASSUMPTION or BELIEF that the audience must accept before being persuaded.

In this case, the underlying belief the audience must accept is that it is wrong to separate wild animals from their natural environment.

When the audience does not SHARE the writer's assumption, the argument is INCOMPLETE.

SO, WHAT'S AN ENTHYMEME?

Definition: A claim made in an argument in which the underlying assumption behind the argument is unexpressed.

Explanation: The audience must have "in mind" (*en + thumos*) an assumption, belief, or value that lets them willingly supply the missing premise. If the audience is unwilling to supply the missing premise, the argument fails.

Main Point: Successful arguments depend on two things:

✓ What the arguer says
✓ What the audience already has "in mind"

ENTHYMEME ILLUSTRATED

CLAIM

The public should not support marine parks and 'swim with dolphins' programs

REASON

because these programs separate dolphins from their natural habitat and social groups.

UNDERLYING ASSUMPTION

Wild animals should remain free in their natural habitats and social groups.

Audience must agree with this assumption
OR
Writer must explain and defend this assumption

TO SUM UP:

- Claims are supported with reasons.

- You can usually state a reason as a "because" clause attached to a claim.

- A "because" clause attached to a claim is an incomplete logical structure called an enthymeme.

- To create a complete logical structure from an enthymeme, the underlying assumption/s must be articulated.

- To serve as an effective starting point for an argument, this underlying assumption must be a belief, value, or principle that the audience grants.

YOU TRY

In the following sentence, the **claim**, "rabbits make good pets" is supported by the **reason** "because they are gentle." However, this argument is incomplete because there is an underlying assumption that the audience may or may not accept. Identify the **unstated assumption** that the audience must supply in the following enthymeme:

Enthymeme: **Rabbits make good pets** because they are gentle.

Underlying Assumption?

Gentle animals make good pets.

PRACTICE (page 75):

1. Copy the following sentences onto a sheet or paper.
2. Underline the CLAIM ONCE and the REASON TWICE.
3. Identify the UNSTATED ASSUMPTIONS that the audience must supply in order to make the following enthymemes persuasive.

1. We shouldn't elect Joe as committee chair because he is too bossy.
2. Drugs should not be legalized because legalization would greatly increase the number of drug addicts.
3. Airport screeners should use racial profiling because doing so will increase the odds of stopping terrorists.
4. Racial profiling should not be used by airport screeners because it violates a person's civil rights.
5. We should strengthen the Endangered Species Act because doing so will preserve genetic diversity on the planet.
6. The Endangered Species Act is too stringent because it severely damages the economy.

Enthymeme: **We shouldn't elect Joe as committee chair** because he is too bossy.

Underlying Assumption/s?

Bossy people don't make good leaders.

Enthymeme: **Drugs should not be legalized** because legalization would greatly increase the number of drug addicts..

Underlying Assumption/s?

Legalization of drugs would automatically make more people use drugs.

Enthymeme: **Airport screeners should use racial profiling** because doing so will increase the odds of stopping terrorists.

Underlying Assumption/s?

Stopping terrorists is the proper role of airport screeners;

Racial profiling is effective in identifying terrorists.

Enthymeme: **Racial profiling should not be used by airport screeners** because it violates a person's civil rights.

Underlying Assumption/s?

Civil rights are an important value in our society;

Civil rights take precedence over public safety.

Enthymeme: **We should strengthen the Endangered Species Act** because doing so will preserve genetic diversity on the planet.

Underlying Assumption?

Genetic diversity must be kept intact.

Enthymeme: **The Endangered Species Act is too stringent** because it severely damages the economy.

Underlying Assumption/s?

Damage to the economy should always be avoided;

The economy is more important than the environment.