About ^{visual} arguments and ^{visual} communication
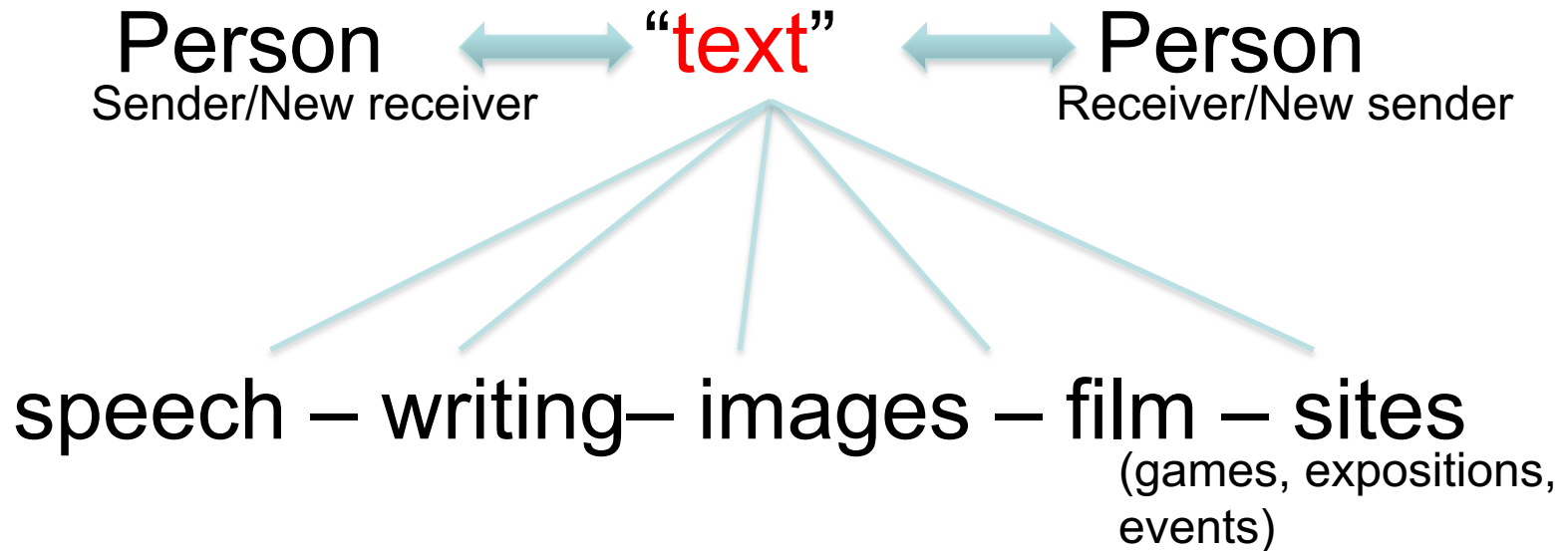
Henrik Juel

To all the clever students here today

November 2021

Overview

- Argumentation and persuasion – what sort of communication is that?

- Logic and Rhetoric: formal/practical arguments

- Topoi – a major premise in debates

- The Toulmin Model explained and renewed
  - Toulmin – Model: how to produce arguments
  - Toulmin – Model: how to analyze arguments

- Dirty tricks and the battle of discourse

- Common misconceptions – and wild ideas!

- What about "visual arguments"? (portefolio)

Communication is an interaction between persons by means of "texts"

Person ↔ "text" ↔ Person

Sender/New receiver   Receiver/New sender

speech – writing– images – film – sites
(games, expositions, events)

Content analysis examines what a specific "text" consists of, how its elements are formed and structured
– *irrespective of what audience*

Reception studies examines how "texts" are being seen, understood, used, reacted to - *by a specific audience*

What it is to argue!

- To argue is to try to show that your own point or claim is not an isolated, random opinion or (false) claim.

- But on the contrary a (necessary or at least likely) part of a larger, coherent whole and view of things which is the right view and opinion about the true state of affairs.

- So you try to support your own point with other statements, reasons, evidence, norms, and rules that your listener/viewer is likely to accept as true, good and relevant.

Many forms of arguments

Monologue   no disagreement

Dialogue, conversation   to reflect

  Conference   to research

    Discussion   to convince

     Debate   to persuade

      Quarrel, Polemic   to win

       Propaganda   to brain-wash

       Violence   to humiliate

       War   to destroy

Carl von Clausewitz (1780 – 1831): "War… is the continuation of politics with different means"

Common (mis)conceptions?

- Good argumentation is rational, it is based on logic, it is objective, based on facts and science, value-neutral.

- Bad argumentation is irrational, it is based on emotions, it is subjective, based on wishful thinking, prejudice and personal values and opinions.

- Reality has a logic "inside" – we just need to see it.

- "Let's not get emotional, please stay rational!"

An argument is traditionally said to consist of:

Two or more claims (premises),
 that together prove (provide reasons for)
  a third claim, namely the conclusion

To be *valid* the conclusion should follow with necessity/ most likely from the premises, and to be *sound* the premises must be true/acceptable

You are all good at logic ☺

I try to show this to my audience by asking first,
if anyone would say that they themselves
do not feel or think
that they are very good at logic – and why they think so?

You are all good at logic ☺

I am not good at math.

Here is a typical answer to that question

You are all good at logic ☺

I am not good at math.

When not good at math, then not good at logic.

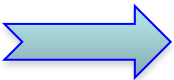And this is a further elaboration of that answer

You are all good at logic ☺

I am not good at math.

When not good at math, then not good at logic.

So:

 I am not good at logic

This is a perfectly valid, logical argument (this form is called *modus ponens*)

"Valid": The conclusion follows with necessity from the premises. However, it may not be a "sound" argument, the premises may not actually be true here.

It is hard not to adhere to common logic:

It will be understood as irony, sarcasm.
Or, as nonsense, delirium, "loosing it".

Example: "I have a lot of slides to present today".
(expected major premiss: "When I have a lot to do,
I will be quick about it".
Expected conclusion: "So, I will do it quickly")

- So, I will present them slowly!

You are all good at logic ☺

I am not good at math.

When not good at math, then not good at logic.

So: I am not good at logic

This is a perfectly valid, logical argument (called *modus ponens*)

p

p ⟹ q

----

q

When p is true,
and when it is true that p implies q

Then it is true that q

We are all good at logic ☺

It is raining

When it is raining, the grass is getting wet
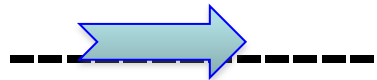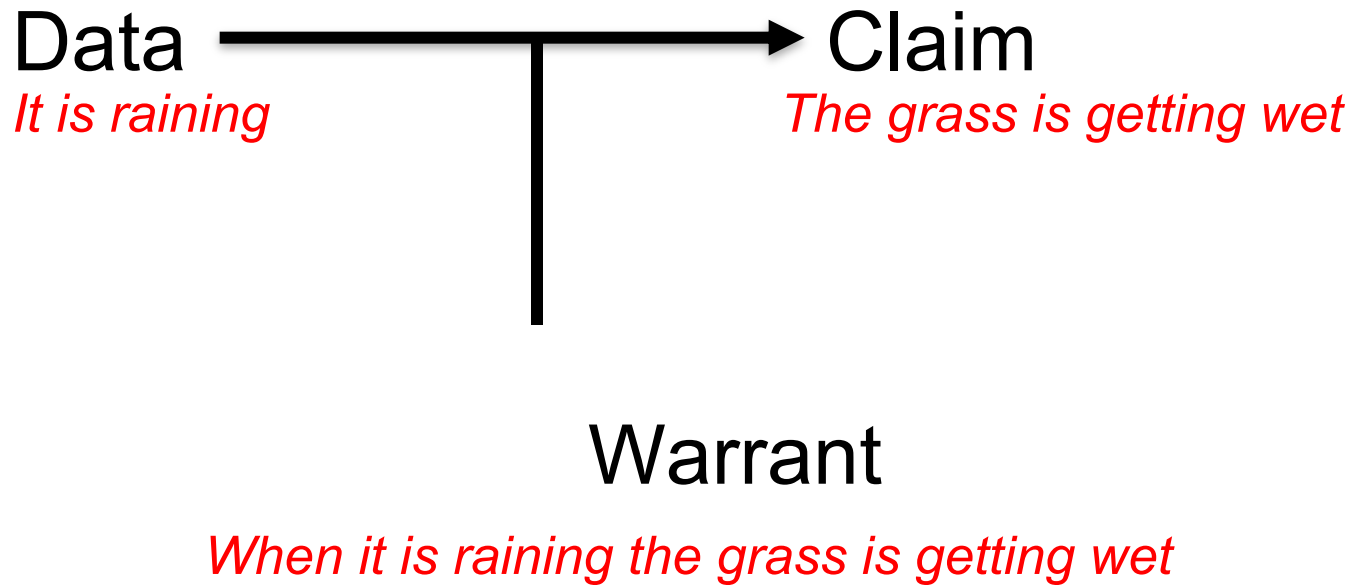

The grass is getting wet

p

$p \longrightarrow q$

----

q

When p is true,

and when it is true, that p implies q

Then it is true that q

Same argument, now placed in Toulmin's original model

Data   →   Claim

It is raining   *The grass is getting wet*

|

Warrant

When it is raining the grass is getting wet

The above examples illustrate "propositional logic", i.e. this is about the relations (inference) between statements (about facts). More about Toulmin's model later…

Besides "propositional" we also have Syllogistic logic:

Syllogisms rest on a clear classification of things

All lions are cats

All cats are mammels

so:

All lions are mammels

In logic all terms must be sharply defined:

If you like snakes, and you call your favorite snake "Lion", then this syllogism will not work, because your term "Lion" does not mean the same as "lions" in the example

Let's prove this interesting insinuation!

Your teacher is an animal

Your teacher is a human being
All human beings are animals
So:

Your teacher is an animal

In logical arguments all terms must be sharply
defined, and used with the same meaning
throughout – so now it's a rather trivial "argument"

Jimmy is taller than John

John is taller than Joe

So: Jimmy is taller than Joe

Do you **see** the logic of this?
Is the logic of this "conceptual", "verbal", "visual"?
What is the nature of logical "thinking" and of "argumentative communication"?

Formalizing

- All A's are (within) B
- All B's are (within) C

  so:
- All As are (within) C

```
              C
           B     C
        AA  B     C
           B      C
```
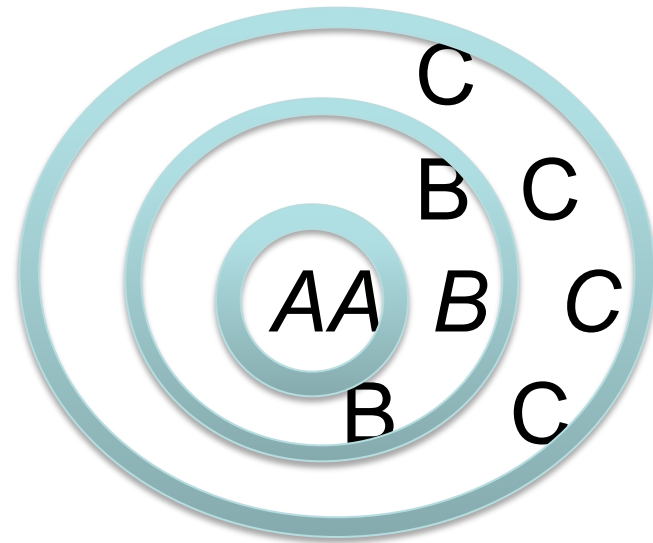
The conclusion follows with necessity.

But, anything can be loaded into this model!

(animals in a zoo, family members, plants, genres of smelly chese)

Same again

Premise (minor): All x are y All cats are dogs

Premise (major): All y are z All dogs are ducks

so

Conclusion: All x are z All cats are ducks

Formally correct (valid) but hard to accept the content here as (sound) normal facts, language or categorization.

In formal logic all terms have a fixed "meaning" (unlike in living discourse) - actually they are just "empty" symbols.

That's why logic is purely formal, a calculus or template, indifferent to your views and opinions (and indifferent to "facts")

Classic

Premise (minor): Socrates is a human

Premise (major): All humans are mortal

So:

Conclusion: Socrates is mortal

Nothing new or surprising here. All just very mechanical and idle.
But the battle in real life discussions is about how to fill in the empty spaces (symbols) and how to interpret the terms. It's not about the rules of logic!

Same again?

Premise (minor): Jesus is a human

Premise (major): All humans are mortal

So:

Conclusion: Jesus is mortal

In formal logic all terms have to have a fixed "meaning" – but in normal language and discussions "meanings" are not fixed

Looks like logic?

Some Muslims are Arabs

Some Arabs are terrorists

so:

Some Muslims are terrorists

But this is not a valid syllogism

– even though the premisies may seem sound (acceptable)

See the next slide: exact same form logically, but now it is obviously wrong

Looks like logic?

Some French are redhaired

Some redhaired are Germans

so:

Some French are Germans

We find that being "French" excludes being a "German".

So the question is, does being a "Muslim" exclude being a "terrorist"?

And that is not a matter of logical calculation, but of interpretation and opinion.

If we hear "Muslims" and "terrorist" often enough close together in speech and video we might start to think it is the same – like "French-Germans"

- Formal logic is an abstract world of its own. But real argumentation takes place in a changing world of interpretations, presuppositions and ambiguity

- An argument is not a representation of the world as it is, but an attempt to draw up a picture of an ordered (part of the) "world" for an audience

- Being good at arguing is not at matter of being logical (as we all are), but a matter of being smart, creative and tough!

Logic and rhetoric

We communicate not in an abstract world (of distinct entities like in math/formal logic) but in a changing and complex world – arguing is situated, we have interests!

In order to mean something we have to use words and phrases open to interpretation and even misunderstanding

Of course body language, the voice, style, and personal performance (and ethos) can be important in everyday arguments – as can other **visual aspects and evidence**

Logic is like a GPS:
Very good at calculating the shortest route and the estimated time of arrival.
But in itself unable to decide where you want to go. That's where you decide!

And the GPS could not care less!

Substantial (practical, rhetorical) argumentation

offers a special view (a pattern, an ordering) of the world:"You have a headache today!"

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- Or: "because the air is bad in this room" (and when…)

Substantial (practical, rhetorical) argumentation

offers a special view (a pattern, an ordering) of the world:"You have a headache today!"

- "because you drank too much yesterday" (and when you drink too much, you get a headache)

- Or: "because the air is bad in this room" (and when…)

- Or: "because you do not like to be here any more" (and when…)

Here the reasons offered for explaining the headache leads us in three very different directions (3 different topoi, worlds)

To argue

- Is like standing a dark night out in a forrest with a magic torch. You decide in what direction you will flash the light and what pictures you will draw and project.

- But you are not alone, and the others also have their lamps and may want to shed light on other items. So what are we going to see?

- And behind every torchlight there is perhaps always something left in the dark…

Topoi – where to go?

Should we have more video (camera) surveillance in our cities?

Pro & con?

We can usually all come up with a few arguments pro & con. To find more arguments it helps to check out various "topoi", as did the ancient Greek rhetoricians. Then consider and choose what suits the situation and audience!

Here follows a modern version:

Topoi

– suggestions for places to look.
Points of view, both pro & con:

- Economy

- Environment & Climate

- Ethics

- Aesthetics

- Culture

- Religion

- Individual

- Society

Pro: more video cameras
(suggestions, examples only)

Economy: will stop thieves and vandalism

Environment & Climate: will stop littering

Ethics: will make us feel safe

Aesthetics: modern cameras are beautiful

Culture: will stop crime culture and gangs

Religion: will reinforce "God sees everything"

Individual: old people feel safe in the streets

Society: much more order and less crime

Con: more video cameras

Economy: expensive way to fight crime

Environment & Climate: will use energy

Ethics: will make us all feel like in a prison

Aesthetics: modern cameras are ugly

Culture: better to build on trust and freedom

Religion: only God should see everything

Individual: no privacy or individual freedom

Society: too much "Big Brother", alienation

From *Topoi* to Toulmin

- Topoi – this classical way of advising a speaker (to look for relevant or persuasive arguments in different "areas") is in a way just a catalogue of different "major premises" or general "warrants" (Toulmin) in an argument:

What is likely to be accepted as a general state of affairs, law, norm, or rule in this case with this audience – and thus support my point?

The original Toulmin

D ——————→ So C

Since

W
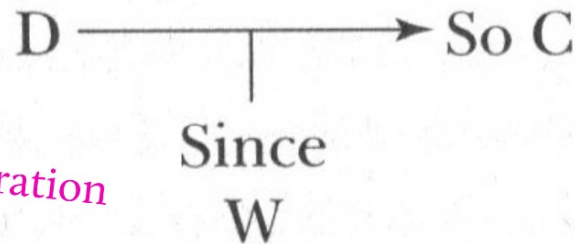
Toulmin's first illustration

Or, to give an example:

Harry was born
in Bermuda } ——————→ So { Harry is a
British subject

Since

A man born in Bermuda
will be a British subject

The basic Toulmin Model:

Data
Some specific evidence or relevant indication

Warrant
Some general law, rule, or norm allowing you to go from Data to Claim

Claim
The point you want to make others see/accept
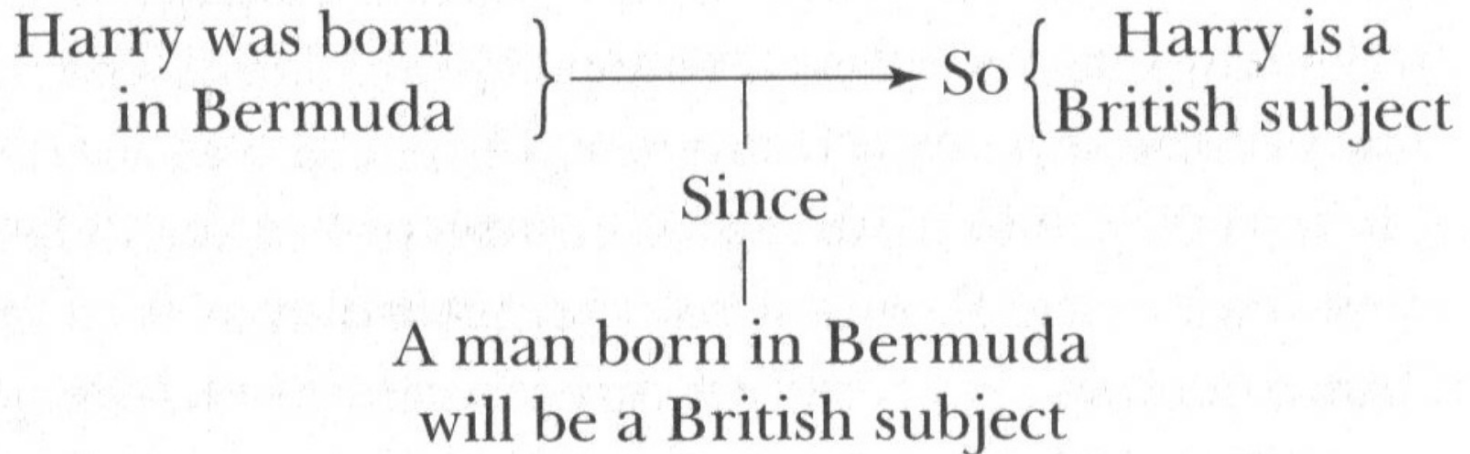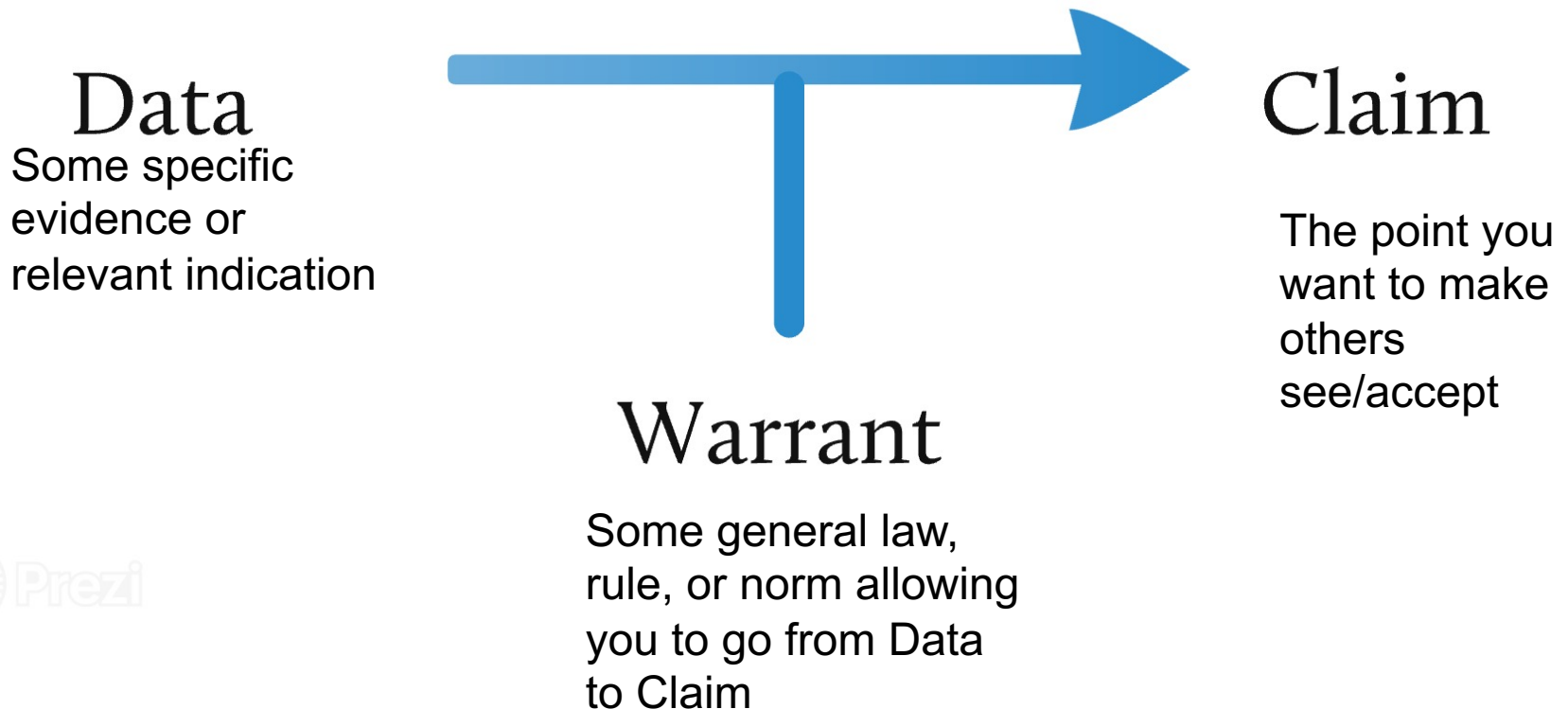
Explaining arguments and preference:

The basic Toulmin Model:

Data
Some specific evidence or relevant indication

Possibilities:
Diesel
Gasoline
Electric

Warrant
Some general law, rule, or norm allowing you to go from Data to Claim

Claim
The point you want to make others see/accept

The car I will buy?

I evaluate:
Economy
Sporty sound
Climate friendly
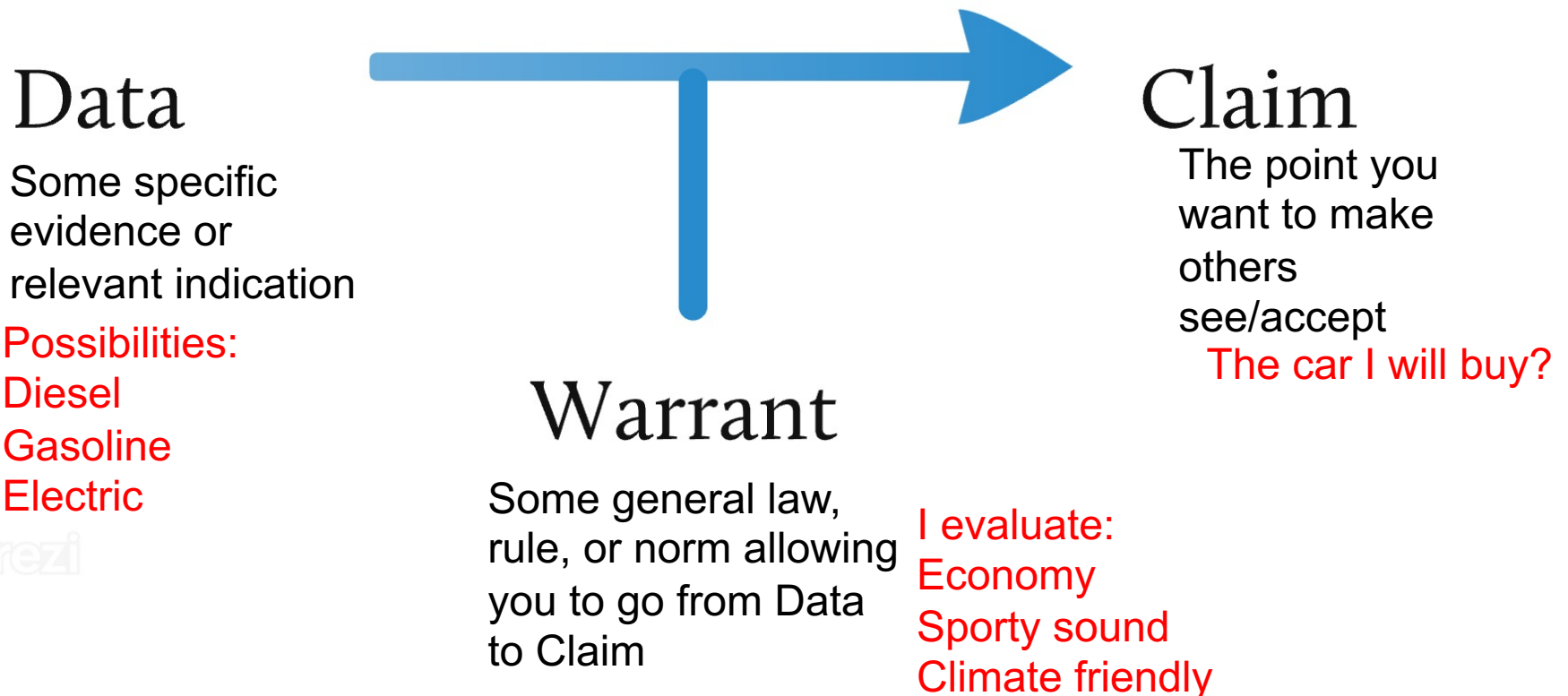
Warning
Confused Danish terminology! In red:
(Henrik's new terminology in green)

The Toulmin Model:

Data → Claim

Two officers saw him driving too fast

Wilkinson is guilty

Belæg
Det givne,
(Anledningen,
Indikationen,
Begrundelsen)
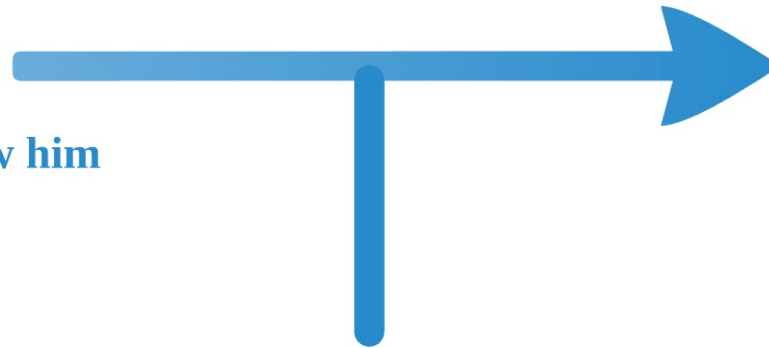
Påstand
Pointen

Warrant
When you are driving too fast, then you are guilty

Hjemmel
Grundantagelsen (Regel, norm)

We most often reason backwards!

Try to give reasons why it is not your turn to do the dishes tonight! Then try different ways of counter arguing!

The Toulmin Model
with new arrows (Henrik Juel version)

Data
Specific observation, premis or "relevant fact"

Les Données

Claim
The point I want to make

La Conclusion

Warrant
General rule, norm, accepted idea

La Garantie
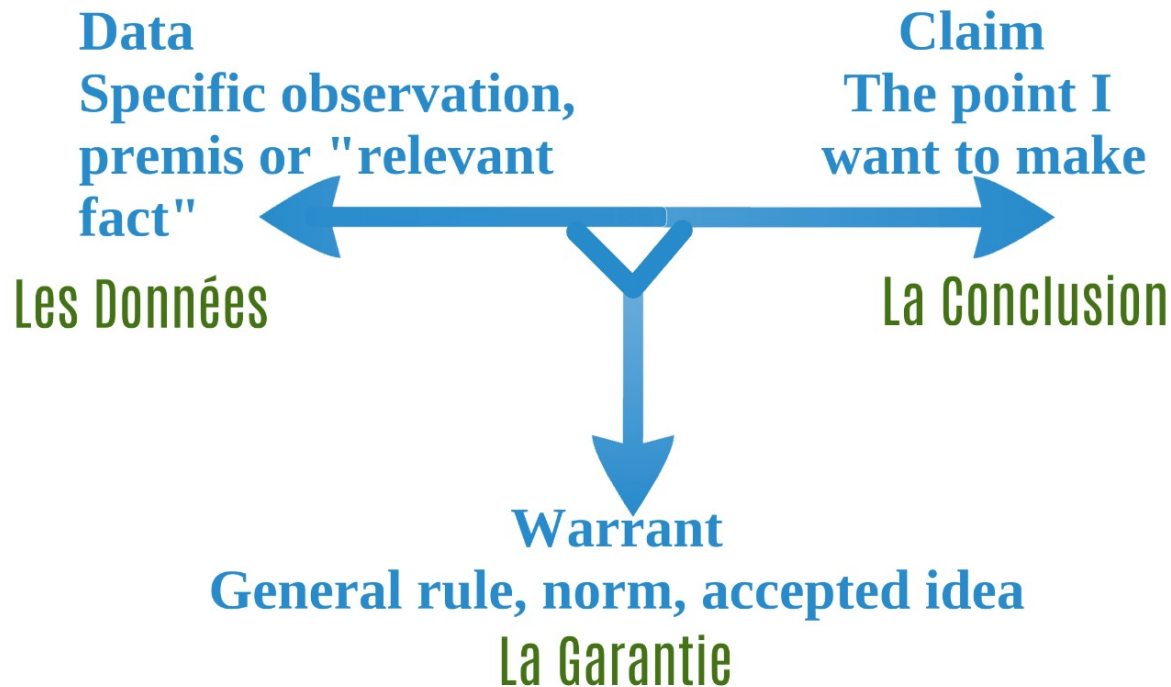
"We are at war"
"Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction"

Data

Les Données

(det givne)

(begrundelsen,
anledning, indikation)

Claim

La Conclusion

(pointen)
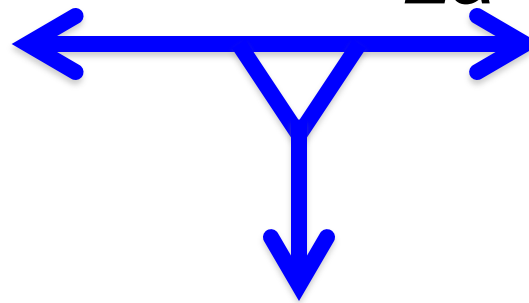
Warrant

La Garantie

(grundantagelsen)

(regel, norm, lov, grundværdi)

Premis or conclusion?
(or why it is often difficult to apply Toulmin at first sight)

"Saddam has weapons of mass destruction "

This statement can be placed in all 3 places of the Toulmin model – and it was! See next

As "*Claim*" or conclusion

Saddam is not cooperating with the UN weapon inspectors

Saddam has weapons of mass destruction
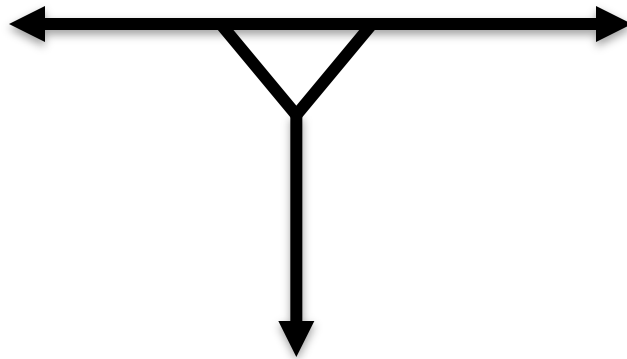
When you are not cooperating with UN weapon inspectors it is because you have something to hide

As "Data" (minor premis)

Saddam has weapons of mass destruction

Saddam is dangerous at must be removed
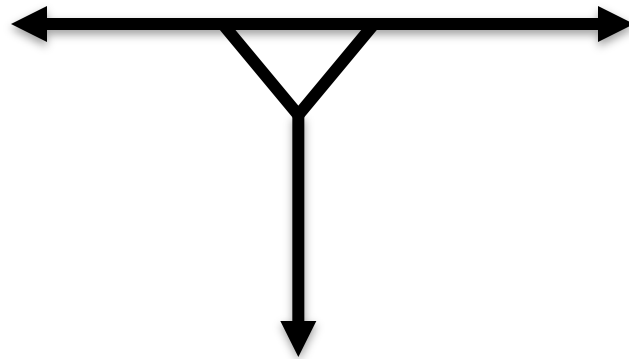
People with weapons of mass destruction are dangerous and must be removed

As the "Warrant" or general assumption (premis major)

Saddam denies that he has
weapons of mass destruction   Saddam is lying
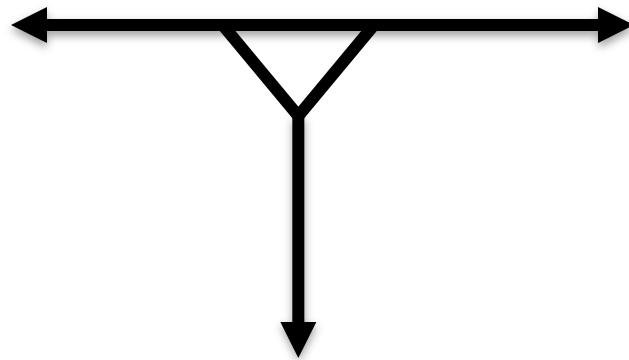
Saddam has weapons of mass destruction

The White House

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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📧 **Printer-Friendly Version**

IRAQ BAGHDAD DENIAL AND DECEPTION

President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat

Remarks by the President on Iraq
Cincinnati Museum Center - Cincinnati Union Terminal
Cincinnati, Ohio

VIDEO | Multimedia

President's Remarks
🎞 view
🔊 listen

8:02 P.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all. Thank you for that very gracious and warm Cincinnati welcome. I'm honored to be here tonight; I appreciate you all coming.

Tonight I want to take a few minutes to discuss a grave threat to peace, and America's determination to lead the world in confronting that threat.

The threat comes from Iraq. It arises directly from the Iraqi regime's own actions -- its history of aggression, and its drive toward an arsenal of terror. Eleven years ago, as a condition for ending the Persian Gulf War, the Iraqi regime was required to destroy its weapons of mass destruction, to cease all development of such weapons, and to stop all support for terrorist groups. The Iraqi regime has violated all of those obligations. It possesses and produces chemical and biological weapons. It is seeking nuclear weapons. It has given shelter and support to terrorism, and practices terror against its own people. The entire world has witnessed Iraq's eleven-year history of defiance, deception and bad faith.
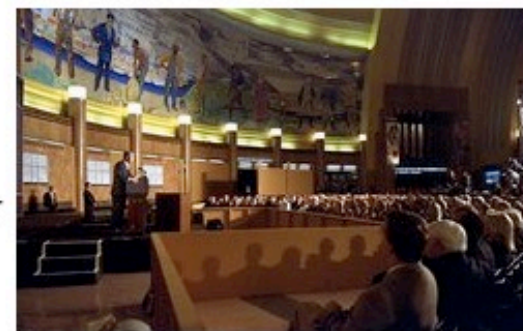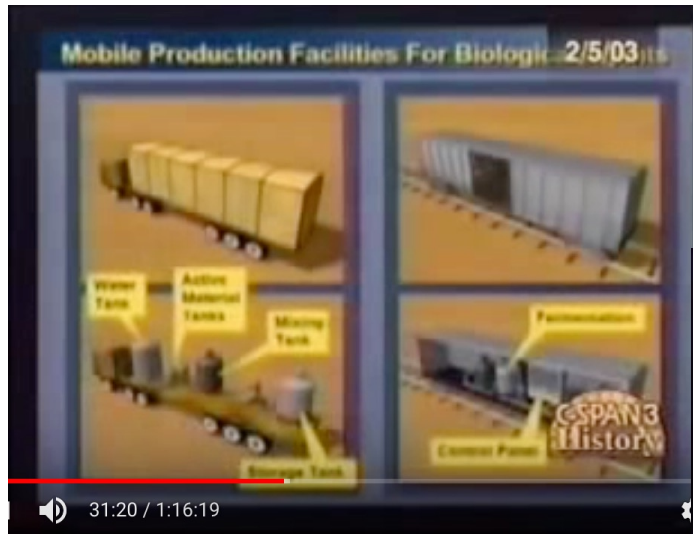

Issues
- Education
- Iraq
- National Security
- Economic Security
- Homeland Security
- More Issues
- En Español

News
- Current News
- Press Briefings
- Proclamations
- Executive Orders
- Radio

News by Date

Colin Powell offered this as Visual proofs – really?

Not all said
Backward reasoning
Not explicit what place
Reasons given//motives
No logical frame inside
Arguments within arguments
Ambiguity, irony, change focus

Critical analysis is difficult but important because:

A few informal fallacies
(that might however be effective)

- Argumentum ad baculum (threat, violence)
- Argumentum ad misericordiam (have pity on me)
- Argumentum ad populum (most people believe)
- Argumentum ad ignorantiam (we don't know, so…)
- Argumentum ad verecundiam (good old)
- Argumentum ad hominem (go for the person)
- Argumentum ad consequentiam (consequence)
- Circulus vitiosus (bad circle)

or Petitio principii ("begging the question")

- Non sequitur (does not follow)

Dirty tricks

Impute (misrepresent your opponent

Red herring (introduce stinking case)

Bad company (bad guys also claim that)

Smoke screen (talk a lot to hide truth)

Boost detail (in your favour, forget the rest)

Open door (argue for what we all agree on)

Gallery (cater for the lowest taste)

Old saying (seems to add credibility)

Bogey (knock down a scare crow)

Change subject (to where you are stronger)

Is this a visualization of a value? Can it be part of an argument?

Eugène Delacroix, 1830

La Liberté guidant le peuble

Présenté au public au Salon de Paris de 1831 sous le titre **Scènes de barricades**

This painting also has a message and a communicative function, but a different one, isn't it?


David, approx. 1801-05

If you "google" the word "justice"
and look for "images" you may find this:
Are these images not visualizations of a value
- at least sometimes, in some contexts?

Beware: a lot of academic texts and scholars seem to find verbal language to be "naturally" much more precise, closer to "rational" thinking and argumentation than pictures, images, video etc. (e.g. calling such items "floating signifiers"). Could it be vice versa? Consider also, if it really makes sense to try to "translate" images into a kind of (weaker) "language" - and is, after all, language essentially the way we think and rationalize and understand our role in the world?

This painting can be analyzed for its communicative functions and for its rhetorical appeal – it does have some impact!

But it is not easy to translate it into words
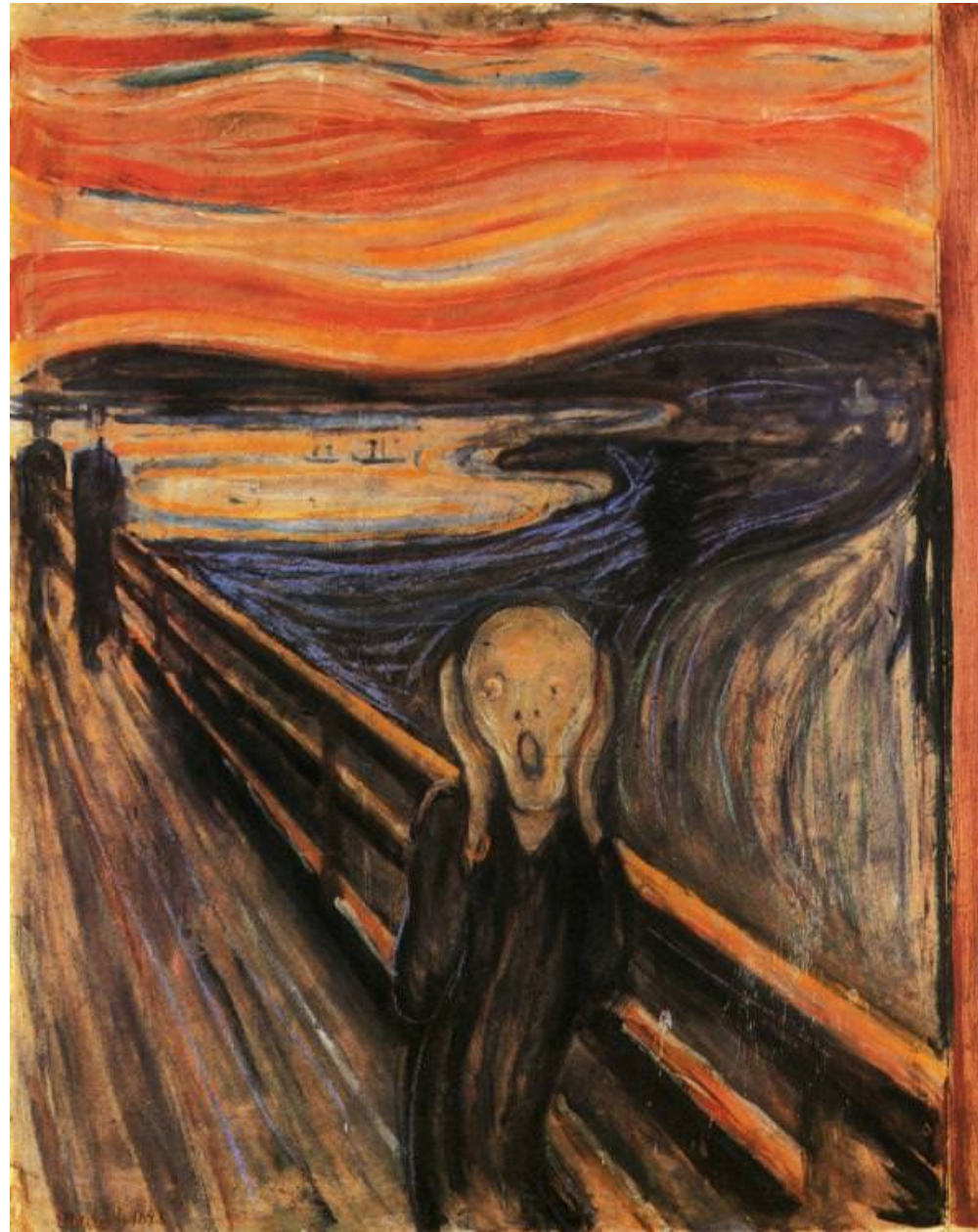
1893 by Edward Munch

Explain if this can be considered a visual argument in itself, or can it be a part of an argument/ persuasive practice?

Try to analyze it using the Toulmin model – or other relevant concepts e.g. from rhetoric showing the "persuasiveness".

Consider different contexts of view, target groups, cultural aspects. Contrast it maybe with another different advertisement.

BMW is a manly vehicle and the brand has made it clear from the start.

Consider if this photo in itself constitutes an argument?
Is the poster to the right (yellow-green) in itself an argument or part of an argument?
What is the role of the flags in the background?
Are the persons carrying the posters part of the argument – to us, the viewers of the photo.

Try to analyze: Dino speaks at the UN:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3DOcQRl9ASc&ab_channel=UnitedNations

Recommended (great about the visual rhetoric): Lynda Walsh: *The visual rhetoric of climate change.*

WIREs Clim Change 2015, 6:361–368. doi: 10.1002/wcc.342

And also by Lynda Walsh (great about evaluating arguments and debate in general, not just about climate): *Understanding the rhetoric of climate science debates*

WIREs Clim Change 2016, e452. doi: 10.1002/wcc.452

See more essays and material on:

http://www.henrikjuel.dk/