

# About Arguments and Visual Communication

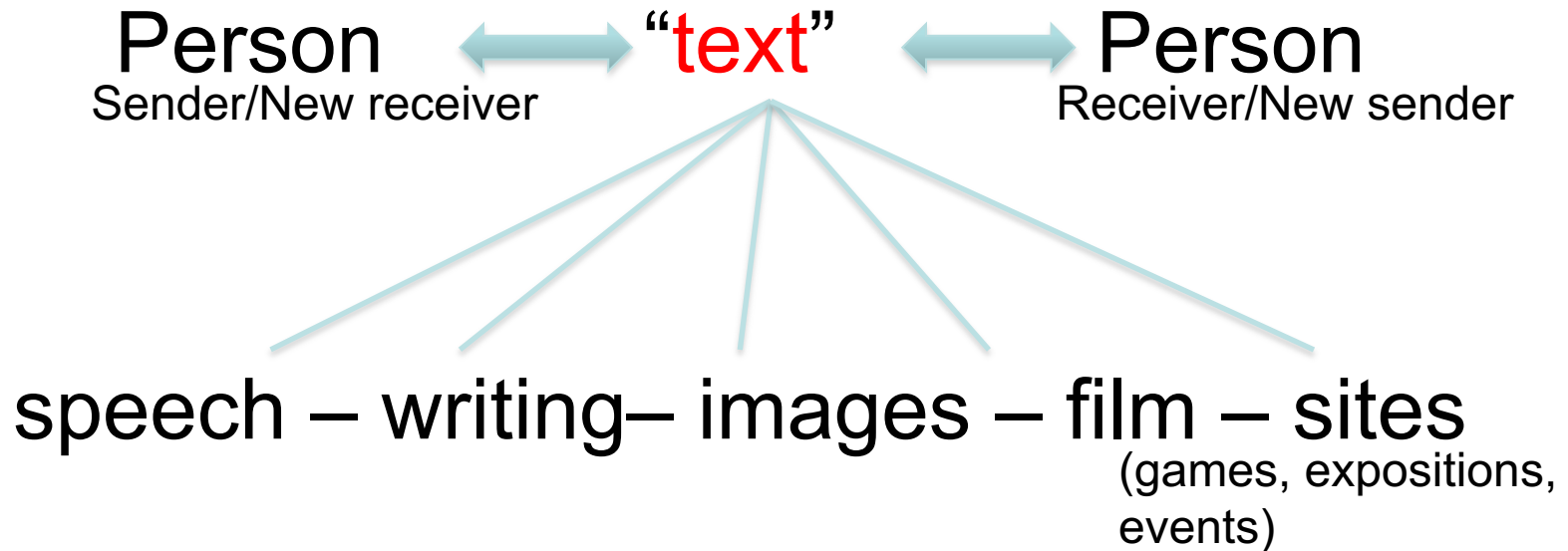
*Henrik Juel*

Slides to all the clever students

# Overview

- Argumentation and persuasion – what sort of communication is that?
- Logic and Rhetoric: formal/practical arguments
- The Toulmin Model explained and renewed
- Dirty tricks and the battle of discourse
- Visual persuasion, visual arguments

# Communication is an interaction\* between persons by means of “texts”



**Content analysis** examines what a specific “text” consists of, the form and structure of its elements

– *irrespective of what audience*

**Reception studies** examine how “texts” are being seen, understood, used, and reacted to - *by a specific audience*

\*Interaction means: Changing or maintaining participants and/or their relations

# Many forms of arguments

<i>Monologue</i>	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
<i>War</i>	to destroy

Carl von Clausewitz (1780 – 1831): “War... is the continuation of politics with different means”

# What it is to argue

## - in an ideal situation!

- 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.

# Common (mis)conceptions?

- Good argumentation is rational, it is based on logic, it is objective, based on facts and science, and value-neutral.
- Bad argumentation is irrational, it is based on emotions, it is subjective, and based on wishful thinking, prejudice, and personal values and opinions.

“Let’s not get emotional, please stay rational!”

The “Positivist” assumption: Reality has a logic “inside” – we just need (others) to see it.

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,  
and we have very little time...  
- So I will present them very slowly!”*

# You are all good at logic 😊

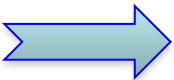
I am not good at math.

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

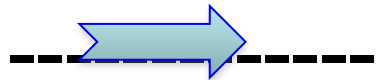
p

When p is true,

p

q

and when it is true, that p implies q

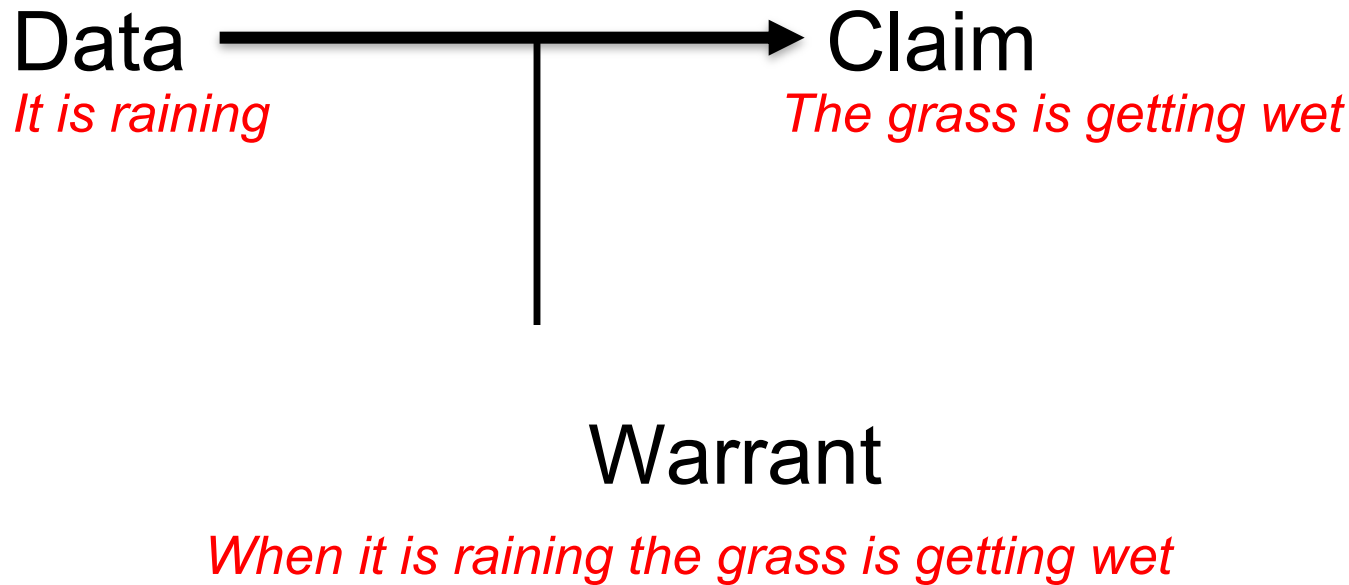


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q

Then it is true that q

# Same argument, now placed in Toulmin's original model



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 mammals

so:

All lions are mammals



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"

Another syllogism:

Jimmy is taller than John



John is taller than Joe



---

So: Jimmy is taller than Joe

Do you **see** the logic of this?

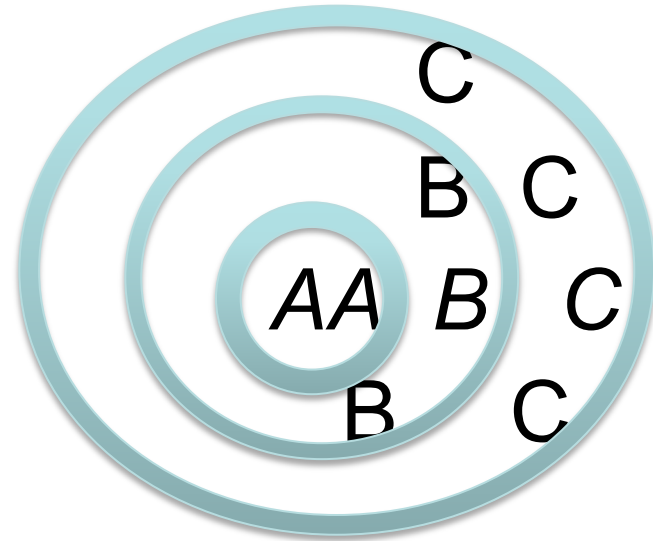
Is the logic of this "conceptual" or "verbal" or "visual"?

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



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 personal views and opinions.

# 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 premises may seem sound  
(acceptable)

See the next slide: exactly the 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 presentation of the world as it is, but an attempt to draw up a picture of an ordered (part or model of the) world for an audience
- Being good at arguing is not a matter of being logical (are we all), 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!



# Substantial (practical, rhetorical) argumentation

offers a special view (a pattern, an ordering, a model)  
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

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- "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 they 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...

# 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)

## 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)

# 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

(suggestions, examples only)

**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

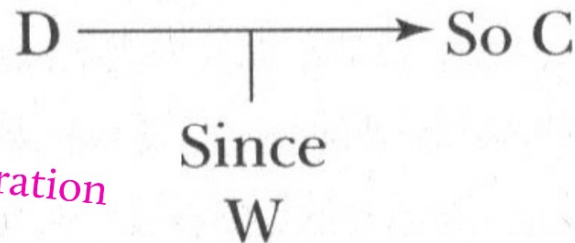
# From *Topoi* to Toulmin

- Topoi – this classical way of advising a speaker (to look for relevant or persuasive arguments in different “areas”) is in a way just a catalog 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 to support my point?*

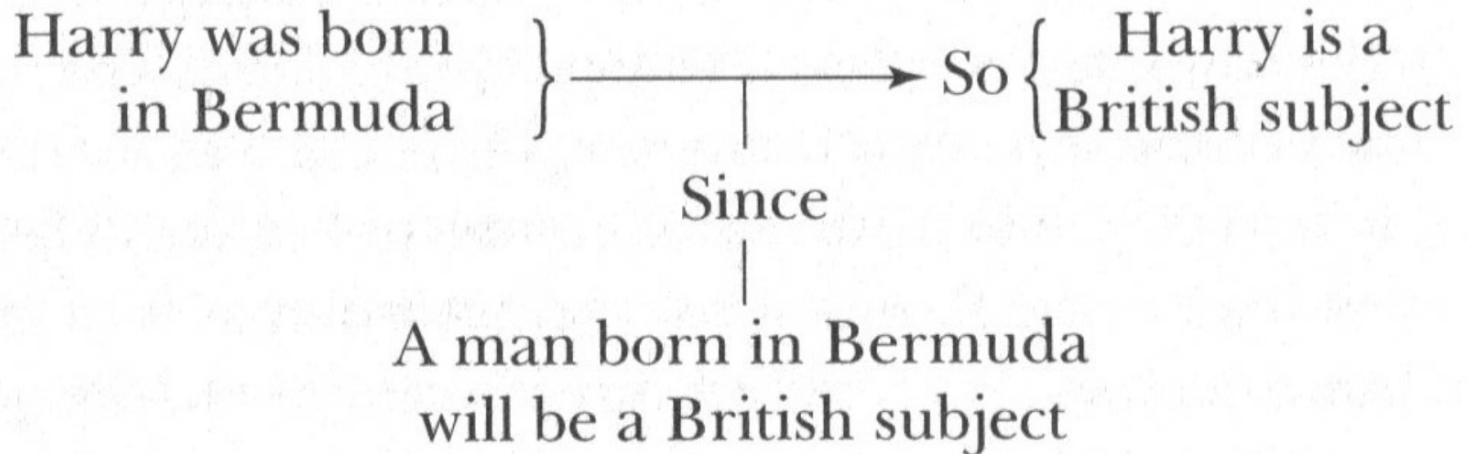


# The original Toulmin

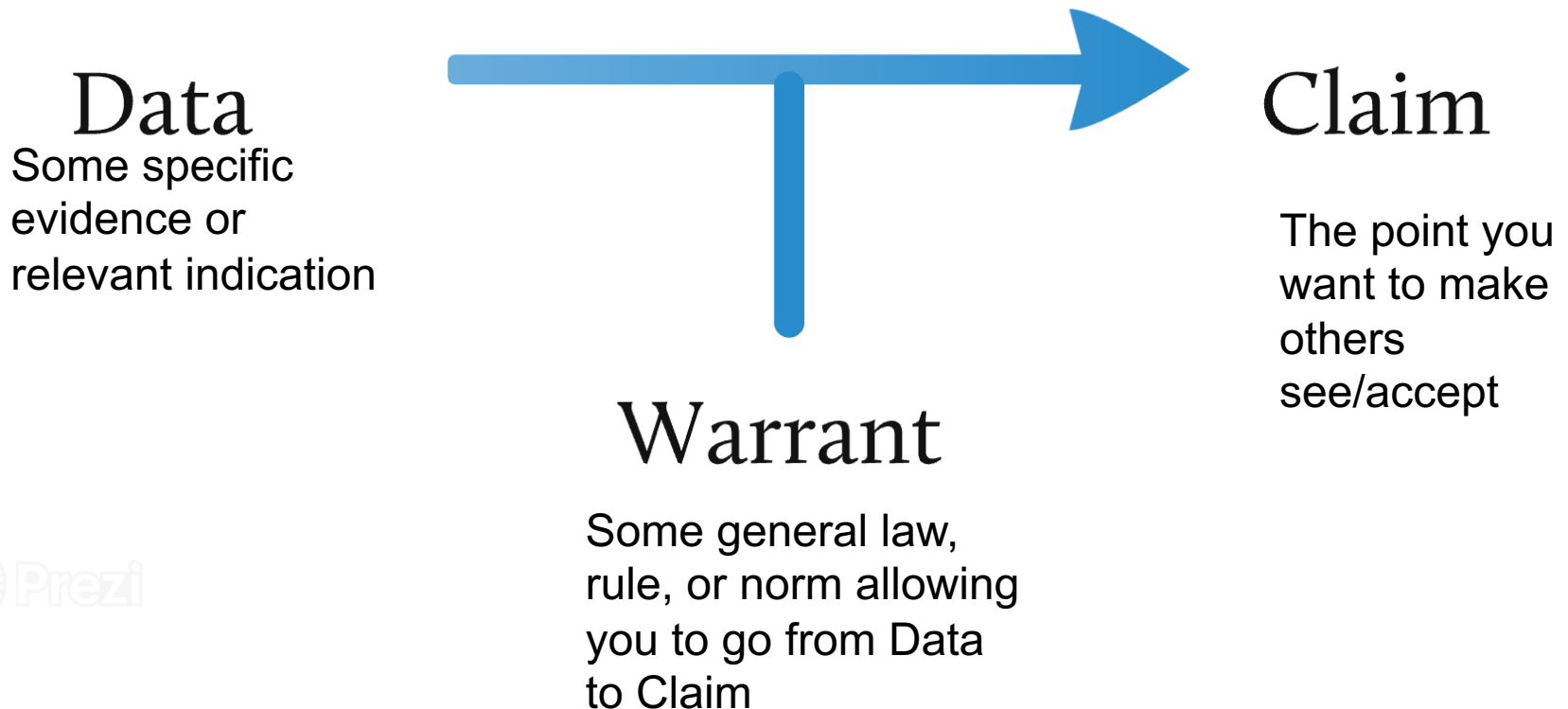


*Toulmin's first illustration*

Or, to give an example:

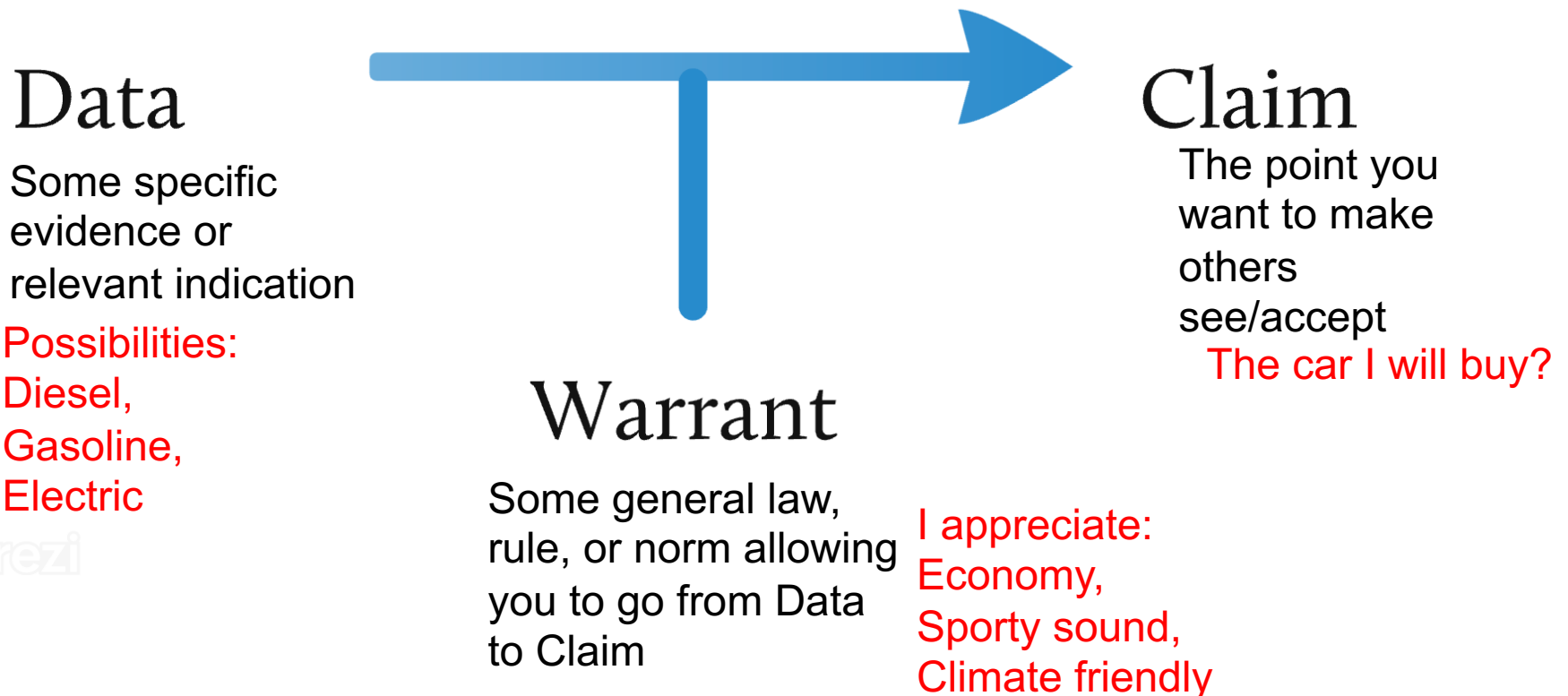


# The basic Toulmin Model:



# Explaining arguments and preference:

## The basic Toulmin Model:



# Warning

Confused Danish terminology! In red:  
(Henrik's new terminology in green)

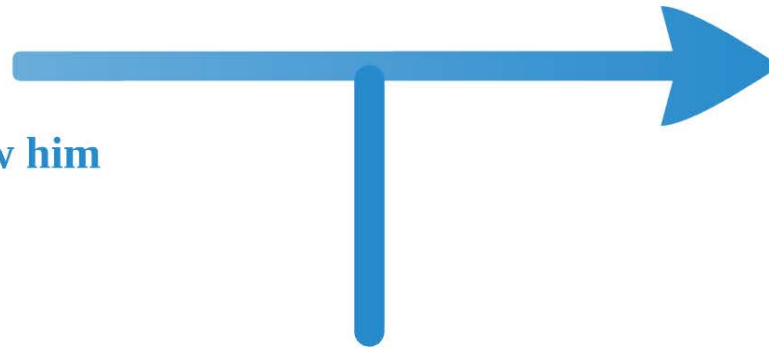
## The Toulmin Model:

Data

Two officers saw him  
driving too fast

Belæg

Det givne,  
(Anledningen,  
Indikationen,  
Begrundelsen)



Warrant

When you are driving too fast,  
then you are guilty

Hjemmel

Grundantagelsen

Claim

Wilkinson is guilty

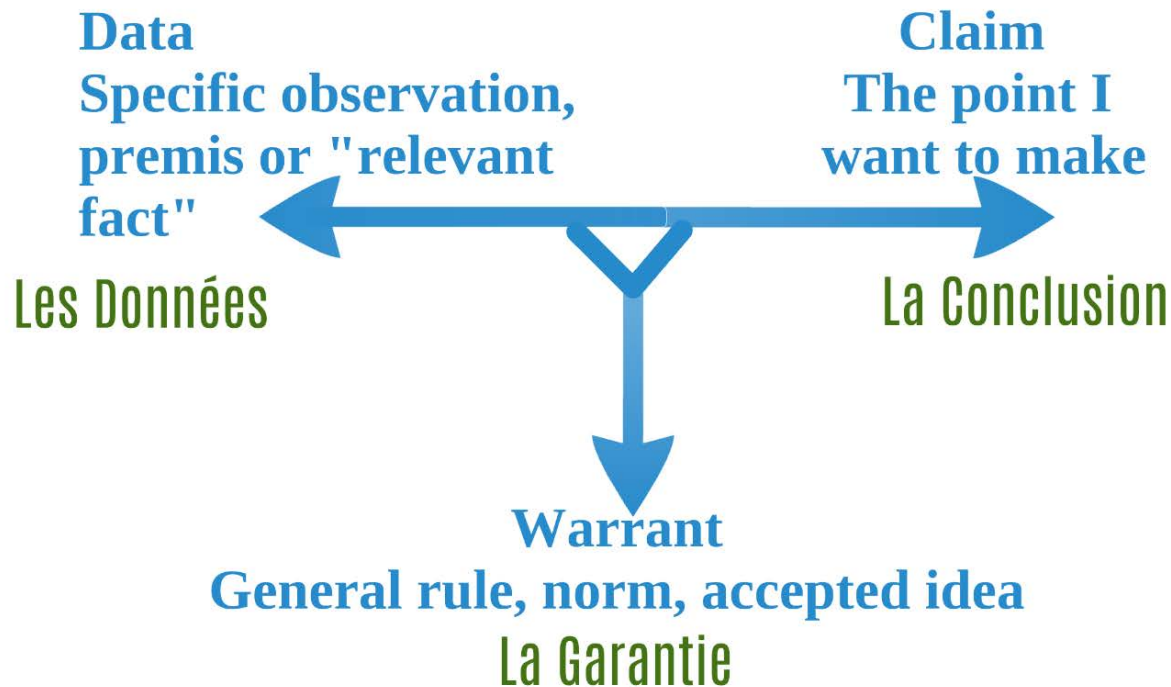
Påstand

Pointen

# 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)



**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:*

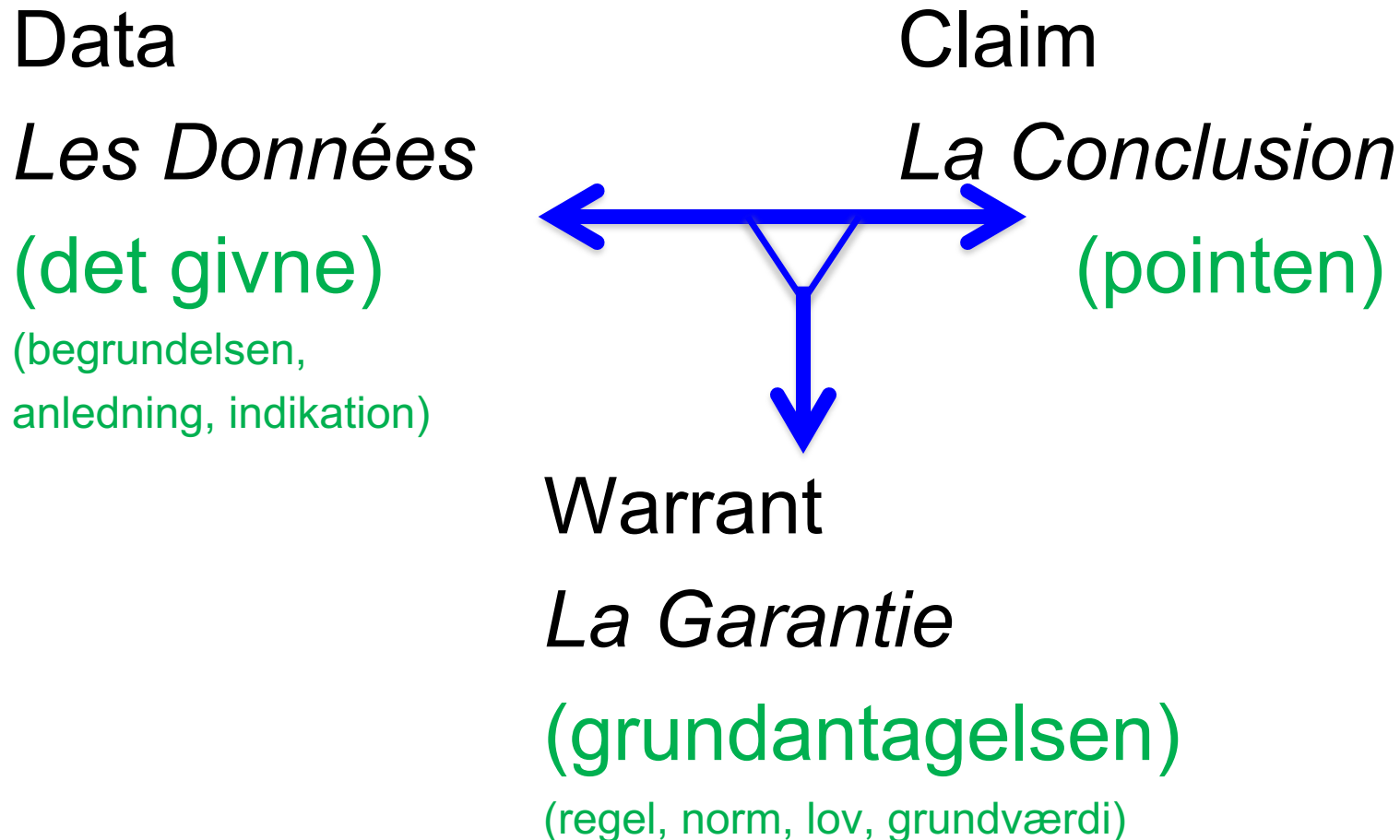
# Premis or conclusion?

(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

“Saddam Hussein has weapons of mass destruction”

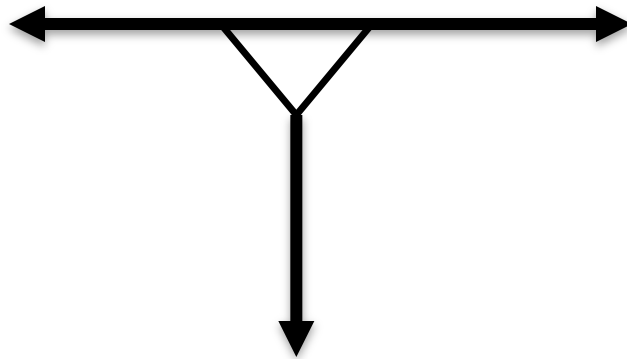




# As "*Claim*" or conclusion

Saddam is not cooperating  
with the UN weapon  
inspectors

Saddam has weapons of  
mass destruction

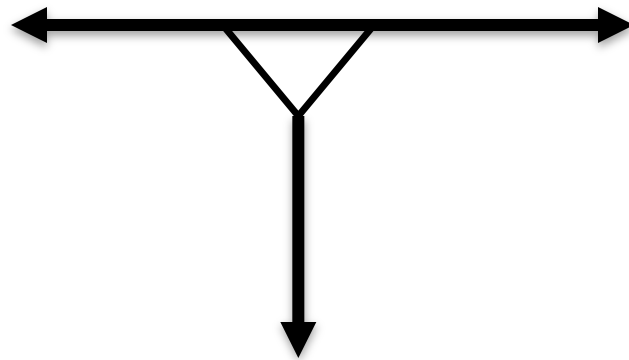


When you are not cooperating with UN weapon  
inspectors it is because you have something to hide

# As "Data" (minor premis)

Saddam has weapons of  
mass destruction

Saddam is dangerous  
at must be removed

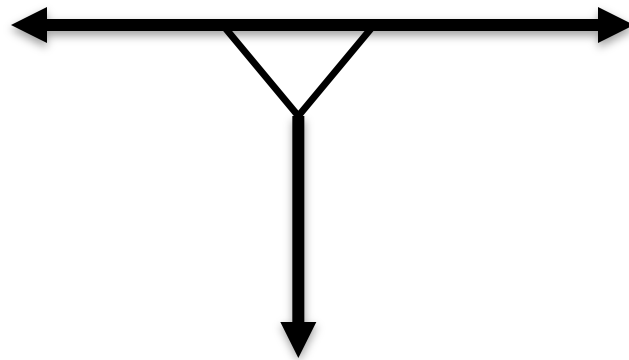


People with weapons of mass destruction are  
dangerous and must be removed

# 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

President \* News \* Vice President \* History & Tours \* First Lady \* Mrs. Cheney

YOUR GOVERNMENT KIDS ESPAÑOL CONTACT PRIVACY POLICY SITE MAP SEARCH



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## DENIAL AND DECEPTION

For Immediate Release  
Office of the Press Secretary  
October 7, 2002

### President Bush Outlines Iraqi Threat

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

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.



VIDEO Multimedia

President's Remarks

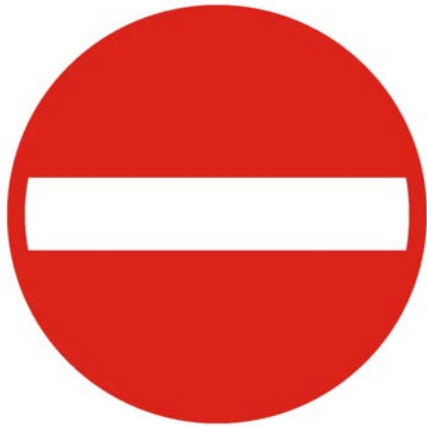
[view](#)

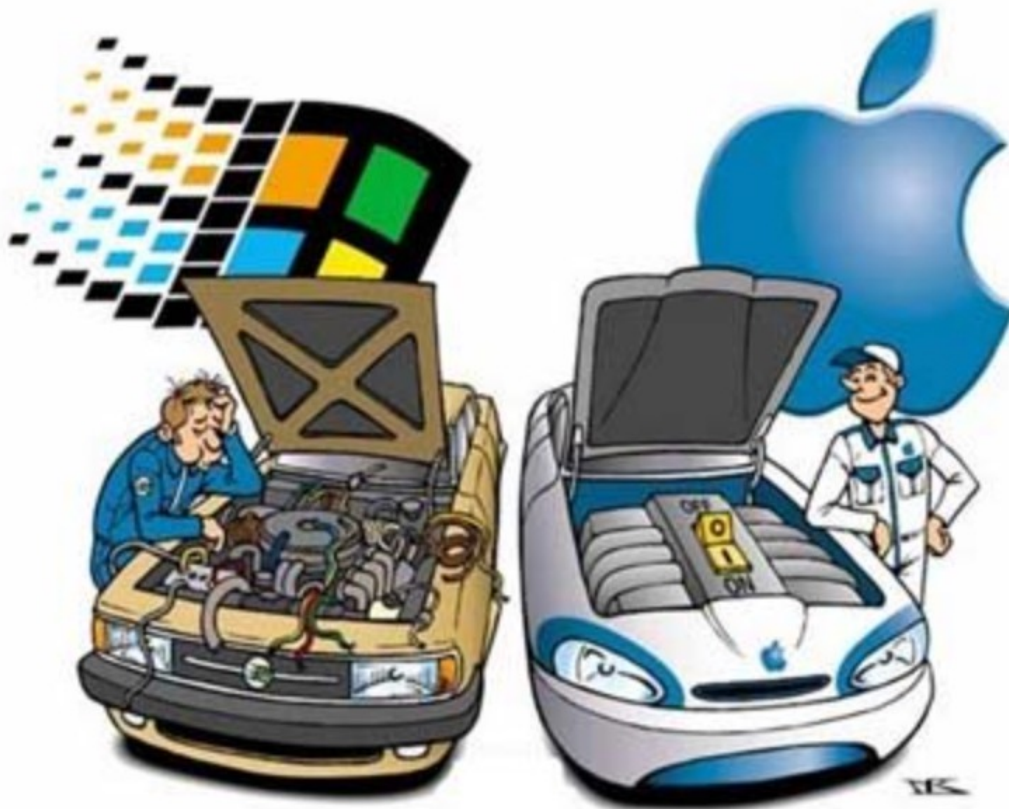
[listen](#)



# Visual Arguments?

With or without words?

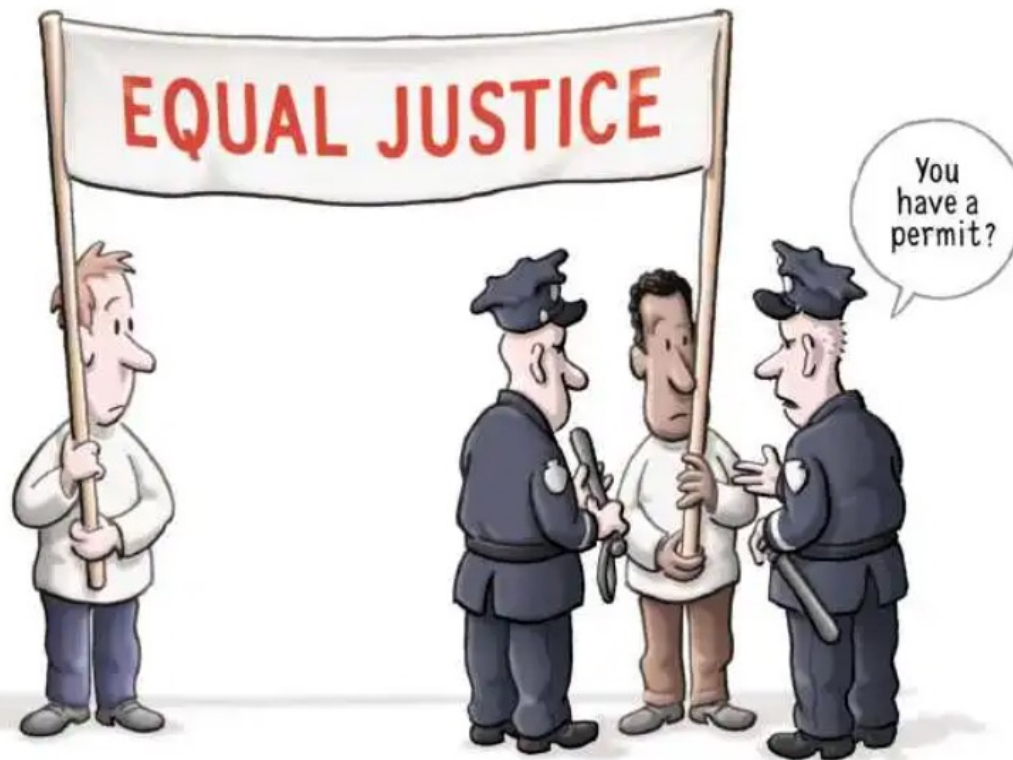






About 440,000 Americans die each year from diseases related to smoking.  
90% of them started as teen smokers.

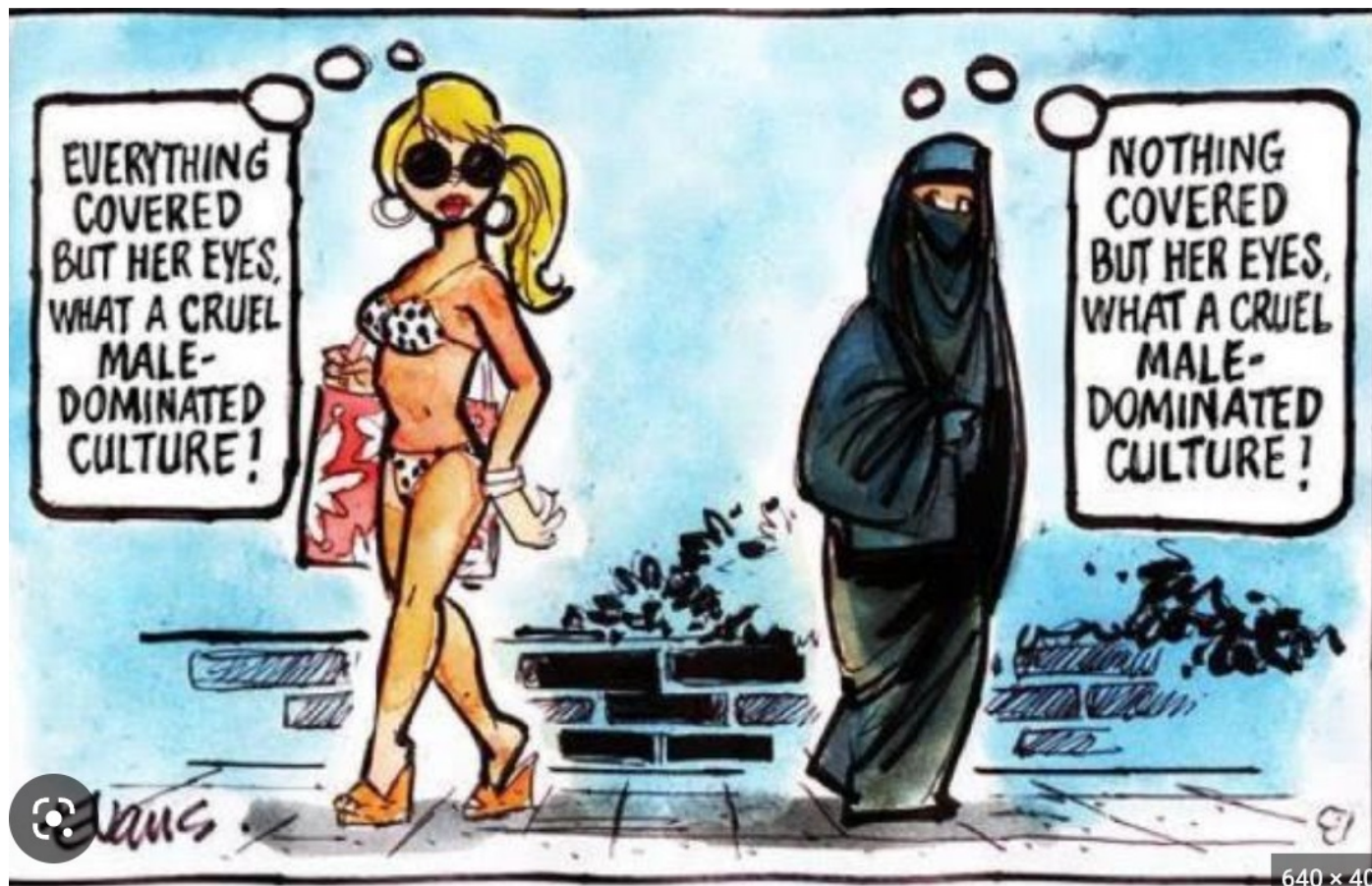




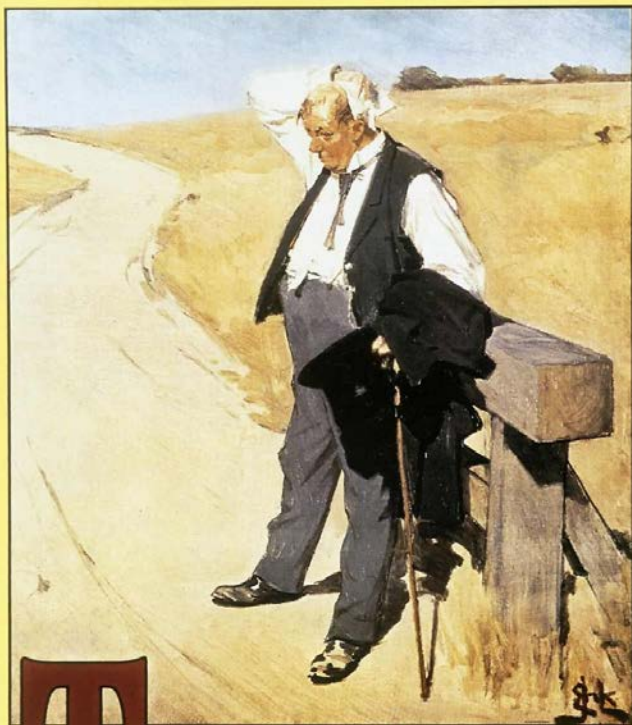
Bennett Chattanooga Times Free Press





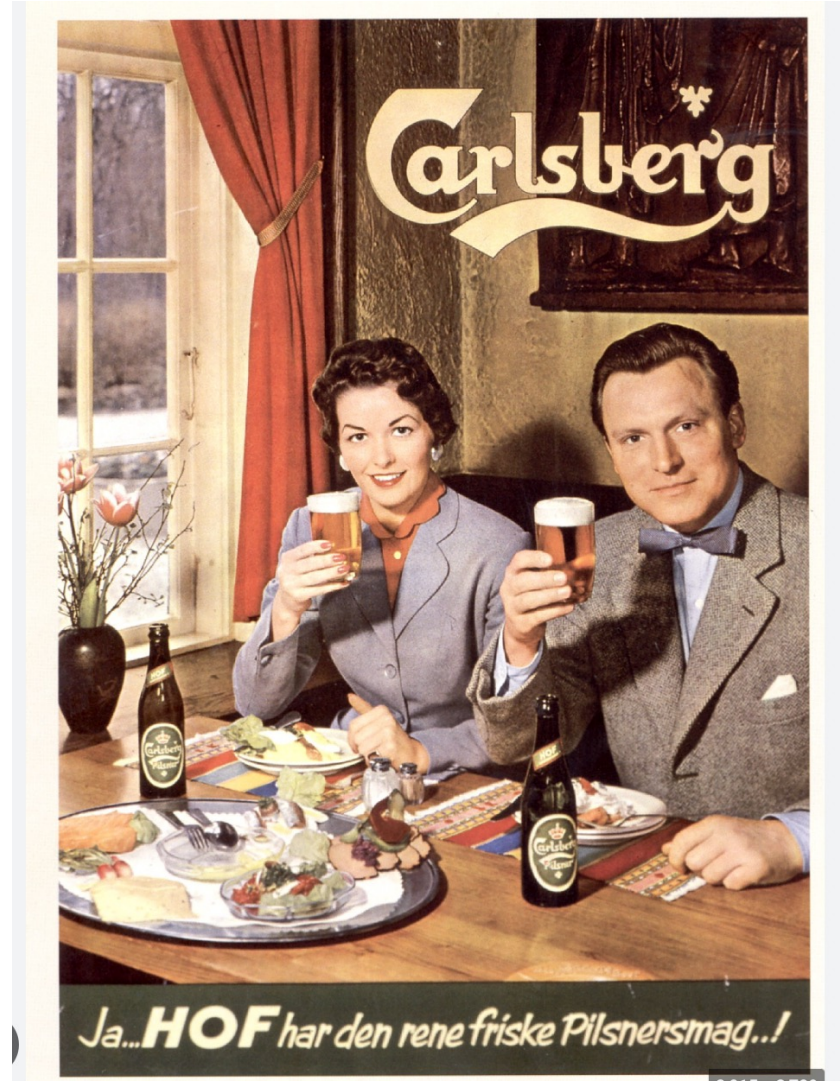






**T**  
**TUBORG ØL**







Exercise: 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.





*Is this an  
argument?  
Or perhaps  
(just) a  
visualization  
of a value?*

Eugène Delacroix,  
1830

La Liberté guidant  
le peuple

Présenté au public  
au [Salon de  
Paris](#) de [1831](#) sous  
le titre ***Scènes de  
barricades***



Picasso, 1937





**YOU WRITE WHAT  
YOU'RE TOLD!**



**THANKS, CORPORATE NEWS!**  
**We Couldn't Control The People Without You**

A MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTRY OF HOMELAND SECURITY



# 1) Point of view and framing by the camera:



Hans Blix, March 7, 2003

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IImVN1dmGuY>



Colin Powell, Feb. 5, 2003

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt5RZ6ukbNc>

Same place and issue: Weapons of Mass Destruction?



Colin Powell offered this as  
Visual proofs – really?

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”).

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?





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?

22. nov. 2022, 16:01



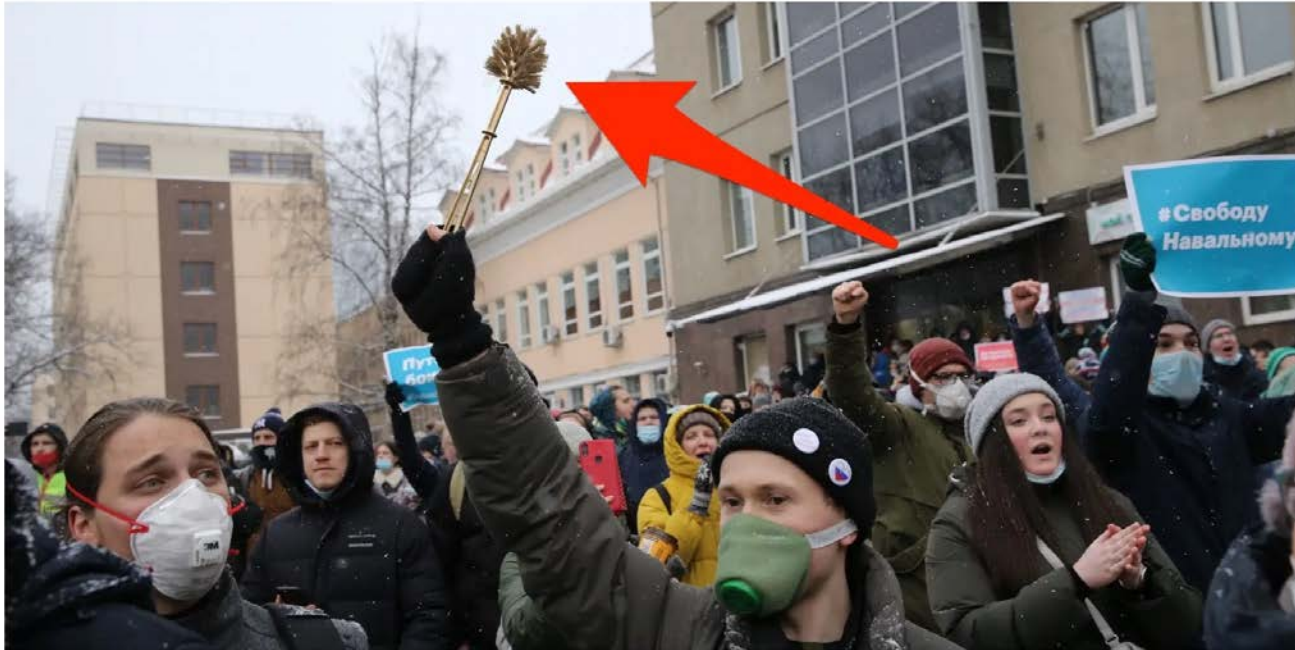
Helle Thorning-Schmidt på plads på Education City Stadium under VM i Qatar. Foto: Mads Claus Rasmussen / Ritzau Scanpix

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Sinéad Baker Feb 1, 2021, 12:45 PM



A protester in Moscow holding a gold-painted toilet brush at a rally against the jailing of Alexei Navalny, on January 31, 2021. Mikhail Svetlov/Getty Images

- Russians held gold toilet brushes while protesting the jailing of opposition leader Alexei Navalny.
- Navalny's foundation recently claimed that Putin built a secret palace that had a \$824 toilet brush.



Brush up!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PwyM86MfiVk>

Farther – Daughter – Missile

<https://www.dr.dk/nyheder/udland/far-datter-billeder-af-kim-jung-un-faar-ekspert-til-spaerre-oejnene-op>

Presidential Debates: Why little things matter, YouTube, 11:17, 2012.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWvjjaH3ssc>

A Presidential Debate can make or break a campaign. 5:30 (2019?)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GZnxZwrZKCY>

See more essays and material on:

<http://www.henrikjuel.dk/>