

Argumentation*

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Symsys 130

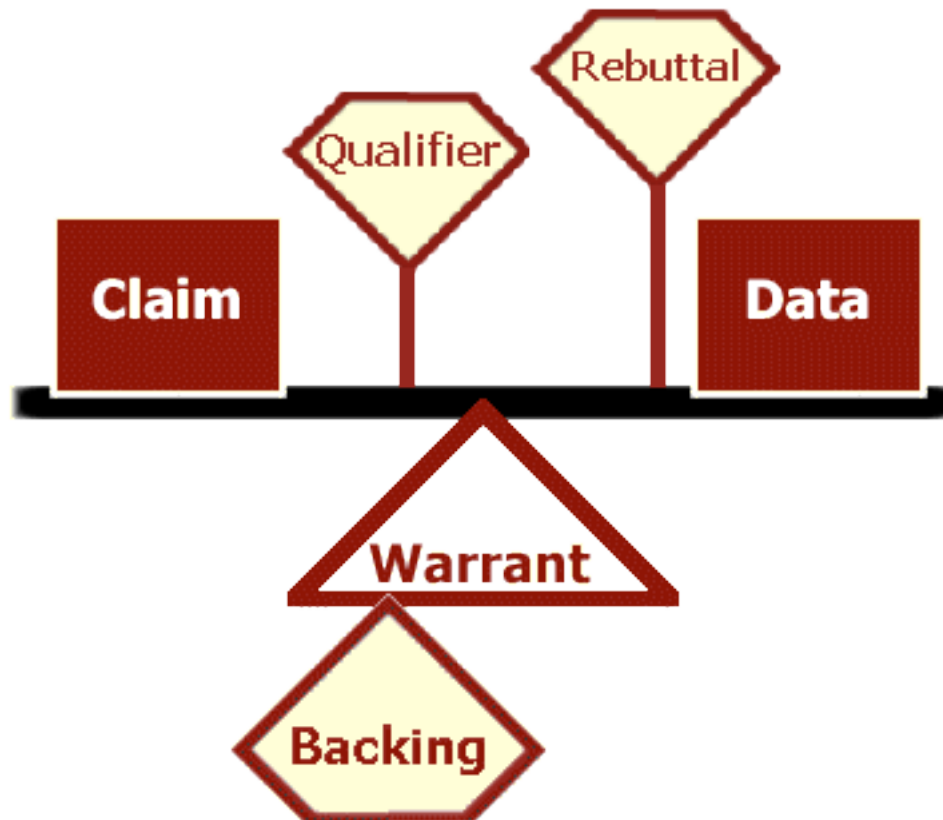
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Source material: M. H. Salmon, *Introduction to Logic and Critical Thinking* (Fifth Ed.), 2006; J. Perry, M. Bratman, and J.M. Fischer (eds.), *Introduction to Philosophy* (Sixth Ed.), 2012

Toulmin, *The Uses of Argument* (1958)



A more complete scheme



Toulmin, *Human Understanding* (1972)

Fields – realms of discourse

Field-dependent arguments – depend on contextual shared assumptions

Field-independent arguments – universal, can be evaluated as such

Other types of arguments

Extended arguments

Implicit arguments

Q: Is a narrative an argument?

The words of argument

Signposts

- I disagree, You are mistaken/wrong, That's just wrong

Elements of argument

- definition, premises, conclusion, evidence, imply, infer

Indicator words/markers

- since, therefore, thus, because

Non-argument words

- I feel, I think, I like

Ambiguity in arguments

Word senses and equivocation

- Mad men should not make important decisions
- My father is mad
- Therefore, my father should not make important decisions

Amphiboly – ambiguous sentence structure

“A well regulated militia[,] being necessary to the security of a free state, the right of the people to keep and bear arms[,] shall not be infringed.” (2nd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution)

Vagueness

Blurry lines – attempts at precisising

Legal examples: “Conscientious Objectors” –
religious and nonreligious

Definitions and arguments

Philosophical method – agree on a definition first, then argue and evaluate

Everyday practice more commonly involves agreeing on evaluation first, then arguing over definitions

- E.g. We may agree that racism is bad, but not agree on what it is

Types of definition

Ostensive

Prototype

Extensional

Exemplars

Intensional

Operational

- Lexical
- Stipulative

Tendentious/persuasive

Use-mention distinction

Use: John likes communism

Mention: John defined “communism”

Confusion: John believes in “communism”

Flaws in argument

Fallacies

Errors

Biases

Inconsistencies

Common fallacies

Ad hominem attacks

Equivocation

Affirming the consequent

False dilemma

Circular reasoning

Genetic fallacy

Denying the antecedent

Post hoc reasoning

Attitudinal biases – Cialdini's persuasion principles

Reciprocity

Commitment and consistency

Social proof

Liking

Authority

Scarcity

Some famous paradoxes

Zeno's paradox (Achilles and the tortoise)

Paradox of the heap (the sorites)

Paradox of identity (Hume)

Some common philosophical moves

“Imagine that a Martian came down...”

“Let’s consider the more general case...”

“Would you apply that principle to yourself?”

“Suppose you didn’t know that...”

“That’s a slippery slope.”

The war between philosophy and rhetoric