Argumentation as Contextual Logic: An Appreciation of Backing in Toulmin's Model

La argumentación como lógica contextual: Una apreciación al apoyo en el modelo de Toulmin

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Abstract: The expansion upon the Toulmin Model that I propose here is a continuation of the "radical re-ordering of logical theory" that Stephen Toulmin developed in the 50 years of inquiry into the structure of argument that he began in *The Uses of Argument.* With appreciation of his understanding of theoretical change as evolutionary, I propose a broader understanding of field-dependence in which the cultural context of an argument functions as Backing for Data, and thereby provides a Basis correlative to the specialized Backing for Warrants.

Keywords: Toulmin model, cultural context, backing, argumentation theory.

Resumen: La expansión del modelo de Toulmin que propongo aquí es una continuación del "re-ordenamiento radical de la teoría lógica" que Stephen Toulmin desarrolló en los 50 años de investigación en torno a la estructura del argumento que comenzó en los *Usos de la argumentación*. Con una apreciación de su entendimiento del cambio teórico como evolutivo, propongo una idea más amplia de campo-dependiente en el que el contexto cultural de un argumento funciona como apoyo para un dato, y de ese modo provee una base correlativa al apoyo especializado para las garantías.

Palabras clave: Modelo de Toulmin, contexto cultural, apoyo, teoría de la argumentación.

1. Introduction

Stephen Toulmin understood theoretical change as evolutionary, rather than (as in Thomas Kuhn's analysis), revolutionary. He spoke of himself as "a hardened contextualist" ("Logic, Rhetoric, & Reason" 3), and of his "conviction that a radical re-ordering of logical theory is needed in order to bring it more nearly into line with critical practice" (*The Uses of Argument* 1958, p. 122, p. 253).[1] Thus it seems appropriate to appreciate his work by expanding upon the model he devised to portray the structure of argument, so that the claims of context have a clear and justified place in it. A "re-ordering of logical theory," in contrast to revolutionizing or renouncing, suggests that building theory is a persistent process that can be the work of many theorists. The understanding of the structure of argument that I propose here is a contribution to that process that is based on observation of actual critical practice as engaged in both the construction and analysis of arguments. It focuses on the element in Toulmin's theory that was barely sketched and remains vague in his own and others' explications of the Toulmin Model: Backing. My goal is to expand the model in order to strengthen its usefulness in the construction and analysis of arguments. I believe that this expansion is one that Toulmin hinted at, and that it is supported by his work in ethics, the philosophy of science, and the history of ideas; but it was not explicitly integrated within his argumentation theory.

The context for this proposal is a return to teaching undergraduate philosophy courses, including ethics and a general introductory course, after many years of teaching graduate courses in rhetorical theory and criticism as well as argumentation within a communication orientation. The required textbook for the Ethics course has a strong moral reasoning focus, includes a chapter on logic that introduces basic formal logical structure (If p, then q, etc.), and does not mention the Toulmin Model. The required textbook

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for the Introduction to Philosophy course has a strong focus on developing reasoning skills; it also includes a chapter that introduces basic formal logical structure (focusing on induction and deduction), and also does not mention the Toulmin Model. Although the authors of the Introduction text note that "the aim of the book ... is to force you to think through your ideas, connect them, confront alternative views, and understand what you prefer and why you prefer it" (*The Big Questions* xviii), they do not correlate that aim with the account of induction and deduction as ways of classifying arguments in the section entitled "A Little Logic."

It's often noted that *The Uses of Argument* was, at best, ignored by philosophers when it was first published—but hailed by rhetoricians. This one-sided appreciation has lessened over the past half-century, but teaching with these textbooks reminds me that it is not gone.[2] The Ethics textbook's author relies upon basic formal logic as the means of "evaluating moral arguments," and explicitly contrasts "reasoned argument" to "persuasion." He characterizes the latter as using "ploys ... emotional appeals, linguistic or rhetorical tricks, deception, [and] threats" (*Doing Ethics* 45). This characterization is a reminder that argumentation theory, which to me bridges rhetoric and philosophy—by attending to *ethos* and *pathos*, as well as *logos*—is built from two approaches to reasoning that still are marked by their historical differences, and even, antipathies.

2. Logic and Rhetoric

Toulmin's awareness of this division may have been strengthened by the generally dismissive, if not outright negative, reception by philosophers of *The Uses of Argument*. I base this suggestion on his proposal that "in order to restore a just balance between formal logic and rhetoric, theory and practice," we should envision them "along a spectrum, with narrowly

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[2] This one-sidedness has decreased dramatically in the years since publication. See, as examples of philosophers' interest, David Hitchcock and Bart Verheij's 2006 edited collection of essays by both philosophers and rhetoricians. As the editors note, "some philosophers have come to take Toulmin's ideas seriously, especially those working in what is called 'informal logic', the philosophical study of the analysis and evaluation of real arguments. In this sub-field, Toulmin's book is a post-war classic" (*Arguing on the Toulmin Model* 3).

formal issues at one extreme [and] openly contextual ones at the other" ("Logic, Rhetoric, & Reason" 6-7). Here is his illustration of that spectrum:

Thinking/acting/talking as Reason requires

Formal Logic	Natural Science	Ethics	Law & Politics	Informal Logic	Rhetoric
Respecting the demands of basic intelligibility	Respecting the natural grain of the world	Respecting the projects of others (as individuals)	Respecting the projects of others (as collectives)	Respecting the special nature of the present case	Respecting the standpoint of the hearers or readers
Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*	Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*	Aristotle's *Ethics*	Aristotle's *Politics*	Aristotle's *Special Topics*	Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*

Figure 1. The demands of rationality or reasonableness (Aristotle's *Organon* revisited).

Source: "Logic, Rhetoric, and Reason" 6.

Each aspect of the spectrum harkens back to a particular component of Aristotle's *Organon* and requires respect for particular aspects of our human environment—from the need for "basic intelligibility" to the "standpoint" of those involved in argumentation. "Respecting the projects of others" appears twice: once "as individuals" and then, "as collectives." This difference and separation between ethics and politics, and this characterization of "others" as "individuals" or collections (presumably, of individuals) is important for my expansion upon the Toulmin Model. I'll return to it after considering the intellectual history that provides an impetus for Toulmin's "radical re-ordering of logical theory" (*Uses* p. 122, p. 153).

2.2. History

Within Euroamerican intellectual history, we can trace the history of formalizing abstraction to the shift from Socrates' practice of reasoning in dialogue about particular ethical and epistemic content, to Plato's insistence upon responding to ontological questions through a dialectical search for

abstract definitions, to Aristotle's identification of logical structures independent of their particular content and context, and to Descartes' isolation of thinking from his, or any other, embodied presence. Each of these ways of reasoning reinforces a preference for abstraction that produces a "pure" argument, extracted from its empirical shell. A contextual logic, however, rejects that abstraction in favor of identification of, and reasoning about, content that is intrinsically embodied in particular times, places, and circumstances; in brief, in particular cultural historical, political, and social contexts.[3] When seen from this perspective, Toulmin's focus on the uses of argument appears as a revolutionary moment in the evolution of theory. It offers an alternative to a particular foundation, which he identified as the "Cartesian program" ("Foreword" ix, x). But as is often the case with revolutions, working out the details is an evolutionary process. His account of the origins and dominance of that "Cartesian program" traces just such an evolution.

"The twentieth century," Toulmin wrote, was "a time of extraordinary change in every branch of philosophy and the social sciences, above all epistemology" ("Foreword" p. ix). This change, he went on to say, amounted to the "abandonment" and even "death" of the "Cartesian program of 'modern philosophy'" that influenced our understanding of knowledge from, roughly, 1650 to 1950, and was marked by "excess individualism" ("Foreword" p. xiii, p. xv). Toulmin contributed much to that change by developing a conception of reasoning that offers an alternative to the "three underlying assumptions" that function as "axiomatic assumptions" he identified as supporting the Cartesian "research program"—assumptions that "appeared so obvious and beyond question that they did not need to be made explicit":

> 1) "The true locus of 'knowledge' is personal and individual, not public or collective." Knowledge is a possession of individual knowers (the individualism axiom).

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[3] This application of Toulmin's work to the development of contextual logic is an aspect of an ongoing research project in which Darrin Hicks and I investigate the value, to argumentation theory and practice, of acknowledging as reasonable the affective content and context of both the structure of argument and the process of argumentation. Our conception of contextual logic relies on process metaphysics (specifically, Alfred North Whitehead's understanding of process and relationality) as well as on the philosophers noted by Toulmin, as acknowledged in the following note.

2) "Physiological mechanisms" provide "cognitive equipment" that produces ideas in the mind, which represent actual events in the environment (the representation axiom).

3) "'Knowledge' ideally takes the form of a deductive system" with "demonstrably certain" components. (the certainty axiom) ("Foreword" x):

The second and third assumptions have been extensively criticized in contemporary scholarship. This is not to say that both have disappeared from everyday and scholarly beliefs and practices, or have little or no relevance to argumentation theory. Despite John Dewey, the quest for certainty persists; despite Richard Rorty, there's an expectation that lurks within our conceptions of truth and falsity; namely, that what we think and say should represent, or at least not distort, how things are. We expect journalists to report just what happened, and we expect jurors to restrict their deliberations to verbalized facts.

I focus here on the first assumption, however, because I suspect that the pervasive presence of individualism in Euroamerican culture—its sedimentation (persistence as a substratum of beliefs and emotions) in our economic, political, and social institutions—supports the second assumption's focus on ideas as individual possessions in the mind and the third assumption's identification of certainty as the goal of inquiring minds. Thus, what follows starts with consideration of the second and third assumptions that Toulmin identifies as underlying the Cartesian program. I propose that the concept of reasoning that the Toulmin Model inspires provides powerful alternatives to both of these "underlying assumptions." However, when I turn to the individualism axiom—in Toulmin's terms, the "excess individualism" that marks the Cartesian program—I find that his rejection of that assumption lacks a corresponding alternative. In the last section of the paper, I propose a remedy for this lack that takes up implications of Toulmin's characterization of Backing from the perspective of other contemporary ways of philosophizing.[4]

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[4] I rely upon commonalities in Edmund Husserl's project of tracing logic to the "life-world," Martin Heidegger's identification of the "forestructure" that informs situated knowing, Hans-Georg Gadamer's account of "prejudice," Ludwig Wittgenstein's attention to

3. Certainty

The Cartesian assumption that's most evidently rejected in Toulmin's understanding of reasoning is that "'knowledge' ideally takes the form of a deductive system" with "demonstrably certain" components. In his words, this third assumption asserts that

> if 'knowledge' is to have any claim on our intellectual loyalty or attention, its building blocks (at least) must be *demonstrably certain*, so that, for Descartes as for Plato, 'knowledge' ideally takes the form of a deductive system, such as the classical Greeks created for geometry. ("Foreword" p. x; Toulmin's emphasis)

Early in Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik's *An Introduction to Reasoning* we read that "the critical study of argumentation or reasoning, with which this book is concerned" requires that we "see what kinds of features make some arguments strong, well founded, and persuasive, while others are weak, unconvincing, or baseless" (p. 11).[5] This focus on diverse features that move us toward a goal (strength and persuasiveness), and correlative disinterest in deductive systems that guarantee transmission of certainty, is quite in keeping with Toulmin's "conviction that a radical re-ordering of logical theory is needed in order to bring it more nearly into line with critical practice" (*Uses* p. 122, p. 253). Among the "principles which will govern any re-ordering," he goes on to say, is "the reintroduction of historical, empirical, and even—in a sense—anthropological considerations into the subject which philosophers had prided themselves in purifying ... of any but *a priori* arguments" (*Uses* p. 254).

This re-ordering of theory requires that we turn our attention from an interconnected set of dualisms (deduction/induction, certain/undecidable,

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the "forms of life" that supply an "inherited background" of implicit rules for our practical activity, Alasdair MacIntyre's identification of experiential traditions and communal narratives as supporting situated practice, and Michael Polanyi's conception of tacit knowing. Toulmin's reliance upon Wittgenstein is the most obvious, but he recognized the contribution of many others; in particular, John Dewey; but also, Husserl and Gadamer ("Logic, Rhetoric & Reason" pp. 7-8; "Foreword" pp. xi-xii).

[5] All quotations from and references to *An Introduction to Reasoning* refer to the 1984 version.

professional/customary, theory/practice) that may be abstracted from the "underlying assumptions" supporting the third assumption, which I call the "certainty axiom." It calls us, instead, to attend to "certain conditions" within which arguments are "strong, well founded, and persuasive" (*An Introduction* p. 82, p. 11). In effect, Toulmin diverts our attention rather than attempting to reject an entrenched theory. The theory he develops replaces "professional" logic's valorizing of deductive certainty, but does so without denying the appeal of that ideal. It's important to appreciate that he offers us an alternative to a tradition—one that dominated thinking about reasoning from Plato to Descartes and beyond—rather than proposing an overall refusal of the claims of certainty, or a reversed hierarchy that sends epistemic anarchy to the head of the table previously occupied by deductive certainty. He traces the appeal of the dominant tradition to historical factors; specifically, to the "creation of the Exact Sciences" following the extended wars in 17th century Europe:

> With Europe split by war, the 16th century Humanists' modesty about the human intellect and their taste for diversity came to look like luxuries. Instead, new and more systematic ways of handling problems [by means of] ... standardized procedures [that] could be taught as a drill [were devised]. ... Maurits van Nassau, the Dutch prince whose military academy at Breda in Holland was a Mecca for students from all across Europe ... was struck by the consensus achievable in mathematics. If religion has been discussed with the same kind of neutrality, what miseries Europe might have escaped!.. Soon this mathematic ideal took a more general hold ... The young Descartes himself visited Maurits's Academy after dropping out of Law School in 1618 ... ("A Dissenter's Life" p. 5)

The "new print culture" that developed from Gutenberg's invention, Toulmin continued, when joined to the appeal of the "mathematical ideal," resulted in a division between the Humanities' and the Exact Sciences' conceptions of human reason. The Humanities granted Rhetoric "a legitimate role" in argumentation; the Exact Sciences "saw arguments as formal inferences, which appeals to Rhetoric could only distort." The outcome was "a tension between the claims of rationality and reasonableness" that, he concludes, "has lasted to our own time" ("Dissenter's" p. 5). Yet the

dominance of the Exact Sciences, with their valorization of certainty, was challenged in the 20ᵗʰ century by a confluence of political and intellectual developments that resulted in an "attack on the 'decontextualized' Cartesian program for philosophy" and the recognition of "how central a place must now be occupied by questions about practice and context, in contrast to the abstract dreams of a universal theory" ("Logic" p. 8). As "philosophers have come to recognize that the rationalist program has run out of steam" ("Logic" p. 7), Toulmin concludes, the certainty axiom has lost its power.

4. Representation

The second assumption that Toulmin identifies as underlying the Cartesian program has been taken up extensively by contemporary theorists who, in diverse ways, reject a representational conception of knowing. In Toulmin's words, the second axiom decrees that

> Any account. ... of 'knowledge' must accommodate itself to accepted ideas about the *physiological mechanisms* in the knower's sensory nerves and brain. So, most plainly in John Locke's writing, the picture took hold of the Mind as [an] ... 'inner theater' ... ("Foreword" p. x; Toulmin's emphasis)

Toulmin explicitly rejects this second assumption, which I call the "representation axiom," in the course of presenting his case for the "re-ordering" of both logic and epistemology. Again, his strategy is one of diverting our attention; here, he shifts epistemology from "the accepted ideas" of theory to the actuality of "critical practice." Understanding reasoning as a "critical practice," he maintains, makes "mechanisms" for reproducing a theoretically-posited external world and 'inner theater' irrelevant—whether those be psychological or physiological mechanisms. He poses an alternative question as a replacement for the tradition originating in Locke:

> The question 'How does our cognitive equipment (our understanding) function?' must be treated ... as equivalent to the question, 'What sorts

of arguments could be produced for the things we claim to know?'—so, leaving aside the associated psychological and physiological questions ... and this question is one for logic. (*Uses* p. 254)

This shift from reproductive "equipment" to a particular sort of productive activity ("critical practice") prompts a shift away from scholarly traditions that rely upon causal (physiological) or perhaps semi-causal (psychological) mechanisms that supply a cognitive representation of events from which formal deductive argument could achieve certainty. These formal modes of analysis are replaced, in *The Uses of Argument*, by "the reintroduction of historical, empirical and even—in a sense—anthropological considerations into the subject [logic] which philosophers had prided themselves on purifying ... of any but *a priori* arguments" (p. 254). I'll return to this mention of "anthropological considerations."

An Introduction to Reasoning elaborates upon Toulmin's earlier suggestion (In *The Uses of Argument*) that reasoning is a communicative and cultural activity, rather than a mechanistic and formal procedure. We read there that "a reasonableness may be generated ... in a communicative environment" that relies upon "procedures of reasoning [that] are inherently embedded in particular cultures" (*An Introduction* pp. 209-210). Because of this "inherently embedded" quality, we can (and even, should) question the extent to which useful analysis can be achieved through extracting arguments from their "practical situation," translating them into "the logician's abstract symbols," and then returning them to their cultural origins for "a final judgment of the validity or invalidity of the argument" (p. 210). That three-stage process of extraction, translation, and reinsertion was needed for a particular division of scholarly labor in which "epistemology was thought of as including both psychological questions ... and physiological questions ... as well as questions of a logical kind" (*Uses* p. 254). Within that conception, intellectual labor on logical questions had to be "purified" of *a posteriori* elements endemic to psychology and physiology. Toulmin's "radical re-ordering of logical theory ... to bring it more nearly into line with critical practice" (*Uses* p. 253), however, redistributes the intellectual property of those labors: "Epistemology can divorce itself from psychology and physiology, and logic can divorce itself from pure mathematics: the proper business of both is to study the structures of our arguments" (*Uses* p. 255).

The "avalanche of changes" set off, says Toulmin, by John Dewey, George Herbert Mead, Lev Vygotsky, Mikhail Bakhtin, R. G. Collingwood and Ludwig Wittgenstein all propose just such a relocation of efforts, for these theorists understand

> all knowledge as socially and culturally situated … .So everything to do with knowledge … has to be understood as acquiring its 'meaning' *in the public domain* … Correspondingly, in the analysis of communication and argumentation, the barriers that the seventeenth-century philosophers had erected to separate logic from rhetoric were at last dismantled. So, patterns of communication … took their place alongside the structure of formal scientific inferences, as topics of epistemological inquiry. ("Foreword" pp. xi-xii; Toulmin's emphasis)

The proper conceptual space for both epistemology and logic, then, is not psychology, physiology, or mathematics—scholarly territories for the study of psyche/mind, the physical functions of living organisms, or formal systems—but in disciplines that study the "communicative environment" in which arguments, "inherently embedded in particular cultures," originate. As Toulmin had concluded in *The Uses of Argument*, a "working logic" needs the "reintroduction of historical, empirical, and even … anthropological considerations" if we are to "study the structures of our arguments in different fields" (pp. 254-255).

In the copious literature inspired by Toulmin's focus on argument fields, the emphasis has been on the extent to which acknowledging diverse standards in different cultural realms is a threat to logical theory's allegiance to a "universal standard of merit and validity" (*Uses* p. 255). That emphasis, I propose, is rooted in the representation axiom: valid arguments are those that accurately articulate a verbal representation of a theoretically-posited material world that is uniformly accessible to appropriate scientific method. Dismantling the barriers between logic and rhetoric, however, enables us to recognize argument fields as generated in diverse social and cultural contexts and populated by distinct audiences. And so we come to recognizing the importance of cultural anthropology and history, sociology and political science, for acknowledging the particularity of standards for reasonable arguments. Also, we come to rhetoric, which has always situated its

study of argumentation in the public domain, studied as a communicative environment in which "reasonableness may be generated" by and for differently situated audiences (*An Introduction,* p. 209). Dismantling barriers between logic and rhetoric may be a condition for a sufficiently radical re-ordering of theory that enables philosophy (freed of allegiance to certainty and representation axioms) to share that environment.

In sum: The belief that knowledge re-presents how things are and strives for certainty is embedded in our philosophical heritage. Thus, critically analyzing and disowning the certainty and representation assumptions are conditions for relocating our epistemic labors in a communicative public domain in which knowledge is generated. The individualism axiom also is pervasive in both mundane and scholarly thinking, but has received far less attention (compared to the certainty and representation axioms) from argumentation theorists. The assumption that knowledge is possessed by individual knowers may be the Cartesian program's most firmly embedded source of resistance against relocating philosophy within "the public domain." To understand why that is, we need to consider the implications of the individualism axiom.

5. Individualism

The individualism assumption focuses on individual reasoning as the source of knowledge, which knowers may give or sell to others just as they could transfer other property.[6] It remains more ingrained in our thinking and acting than is believing that what we know is, or even could be, a representation of what is the case—much less, a representation that can be

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[6] This ingrained individualism underlies current discussion of plagiarism as "stealing"; as detrimental to those individuals who steal (and so lose the opportunity to develop and articulate their own knowledge) as well as to those whose knowledge (intellectual property) is stolen and others who are adhering to the principle of developing their own knowledge. This is reflected in Rob Jenkins' report of his response to plagiarism: "We also need to articulate the reasons that plagiarism is wrong: because it's a form of stealing, because it's unfair to other students, and because it ultimately prevents you from acquiring the writing skills you're going to need—and be expected to have—as college graduates in the work force" ("Toward a Rational Response to Plagiarism").

counted on with certainty. Thus, the first axiom is the most difficult to criticize. In Toulmin's words, this axiom states that:

> The true locus of 'knowledge' is *personal and individual,* not public or collective: The possibility of knowledge is intelligible to Descartes (say) only insofar as he can recognize what is 'known' as part of *his own* knowledge. ("Foreword" p. x; Toulmin's emphasis)

Toulmin addresses this assumption by arguing for theory that "treats all knowledge as socially and culturally situated"; as having a "primary locus [that] must be collective, not individual" ("Foreword" xii). Just how that comes to be is suggested by his reference (mentioned earlier) to reintroducing cultural anthropology and history into argumentation theory. The character of the broader understanding of argument structure that would result is suggested by David Hitchcock and Bart Verheij, in their Introduction to *Arguing on the Toulmin Model*:

> Challenged to defend our claim by a questioner who asks, 'What have you got to go on?', we appeal to the relevant facts at our disposal, which Toulmin calls our *data* (D)... the challenger may ask about the bearing of our data on our claim: 'How do you get there?' Our response will at its most perspicuous take the form: 'Data such as D entitle one to draw conclusions, or make claims, such as C ... A proposition of this form Toulmin calls a *warrant* (W)... Our task, however, is still not necessarily finished. For our challenger may question the general acceptability of our warrant: 'Why do you think that?' Toulmin calls our answer to this question our *backing* (B). He emphasizes the great differences in backings in different fields ... that constitutes the field-dependence of our standards of argument ... The sort of backing that is acceptable for a given substantial argument will depend on the field to which it belongs. (*Arguing* Introduction p. 2; authors' italics).

As Hitchcock and Verheij note (*Arguing* p. 21), the model "was never intended to be a comprehensive theory of argumentation. Precisely because it was so incomplete, it has leant itself to varying interpretations, extensions and amendments" (*Arguing* Introduction p. 21). In what follows, I broaden the scope of these "what," "how," and "why" questions by asking the "Why

do you think that?" in relation to Data, as well as Warrants. In other words, "the challenger may ask about the bearing" of an arguer's context on his or her selection of Data. In everyday terms, the arguer who offers Data is being asked "Where are you coming from?" and his or her response would implicate the cultural and social context in which that Data was generated.

A close examination of Toulmin's remarks during the 50 years following publication of *The Uses of Argument* provides substantial evidence that his early advocacy of "a radical re-ordering of logical theory . . . in order to bring it more nearly into line with critical practice" (*Uses* p. 253) and his self-description as "a hardened contextualist" ("Logic, Rhetoric, & Reason" p. 3) led to increasing attention to the "socially and culturally situated" ("Foreword" xii) status of knowledge. Yet there is a curious gap in this attention to context and situation that may be a byproduct of Toulmin's rejection of the "excessive individualism" encouraged by the "Cartesian program" as well as his resistance (along with Carnap, Frege, and Husserl, and Kneal; see *Uses* pp. 84-88) to psychologism.

Clearly, argumentation requires arguers; which is to say, people who communicate Claims and their supporting Data. But these dialogical actors bear little resemblance to Cartesian egos whose existence is affirmed on the basis of their knowing (i.e., doubting). If Toulmin, or we, wished to extend what he says about the activity of argumentation into investigation of the "who"—the culturally and socially formed arguer—his or our inquiry would proceed more coherently and plausibly along lines set out by George Herbert Mead than along those of René Descartes. Mead's theory holds that there is interaction among the entities, human and otherwise, that populate the world; society forms on the basis of certain sorts of interactions; mind develops as social interaction is reflected upon in symbolic form; and self who is the subject—or more accurately, the agent of knowledge—emerges from that social process:

> Only in terms of gestures as significant symbols is the existence of mind or intelligence possible; for only in terms of gestures which are significant symbols can thinking — which is simply an internalized or implicit conversation of the individual with himself by means of such gestures — take place" (*Mind, Self and Society* p. 47).

Rather than knowledge being a possession of a subject's mind, both mind and self, in Mead's analysis, are understood as by-products (so to speak) of knowledge that develops in social interaction: "It is absurd to look at the mind simply from the standpoint of the individual human organism," he wrote; "it is essentially a social phenomenon" (*Mind, Self and Society* p. 134). "When a self does appear it always involves an experience of another"(*Mind, Self and Society* p. 195). We are closer, in this analysis, to the deconstructionist claim that "language speaks man," than we are to construing language or knowledge within a framework of "possessive individualism" (to borrow C.B. Macpherson's phrase), which has its philosophical roots in a Cartesian or Lockean conception of the thinking subject. This is not to say that Toulmin supports contemporary theorists who reduce the (human) subject to a construct of language. What interferes with that reduction is Toulmin's repeated reference to culture, in distinction from society. Although the rules and laws that order society are verbally articulated, the dispositions, affective predilections, and practices that coalesce to form a culture are efficacious prior to, and even in the absence of, verbal articulation as the objects of cultural anthropology's research or as informing the articulated basis of social structures. This understanding of arguers as cultural subjects strengthens Toulmin's case against the individualism axiom, and suggests a expansion of the Toulmin Model that adds attention to "who"—an arguer as socially and culturally formed, rather than as an individual—to the present structure of "what," "why," and "how." Toulmin's discussion of Warrant and Backing provides the opening for that extension.

6. Warrant

Given this cultural and social (rather than individual) understanding of arguers—of the "who" that constitutes a fourth aspect of the structure of argument—the subject-specificity of Warrants takes on a dual sense of being specific to both subject-matter ("what") and to arguers ("who"). Arguers are artists, doctors, farmers, historians, judges, lawyers, managers, scientists (and so on)—that is, they offer the Warrants they provide by virtue of participation in a particular field of knowledge. "Field-dependence," after

all, encourages restriction to those who reside in that field, by virtue of their ability to use and further field-specific ways of inquiry—in Thomas Kuhn's terms, paradigms—to generate their knowledge. "What a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon both what his previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see," Kuhn concludes—and it may be that "something like a paradigm is prerequisite to perception it-self" (*The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* p. 113).

Thus field-dependent knowledge isn't (in the words of the first axiom) "personal and individual." It is, rather, "communal"—generated within a community of knowers—and thus shared within a particular public sphere. It allows for normed discourse within that limited universe of discourse, and thus enables such discussion to appear to be more orderly than mundane discourse. Warrants are generally available to all members of this community, which forms a specialized "public domain." Indeed, one of the contributions of Kuhn's work was to make us aware of the extent to which education, and especially graduate education, is at least as much a matter of informing new members of a community of what "counts" as a Warrant, within that scholarly neighborhood, as it is a matter of handing over parcels of knowledge to each neophyte. We might think of these parcels as the content that fills in the context of a particular field. Some of that content is relatively stable, and some changes as the field (context) incorporates information from additional research and ideas and discards information which no longer fits the present stage of knowledge in the field.

Perhaps more importantly, insofar as the members of a specialized community speak, reason, and argue as members of that limited population—that is, within the specific boundaries that delineate their fields—their practice demands that they set aside their interests in, and reliance upon, their membership in other communities. For instance, structural engineers in discussion (even, argument) about the relative strength, durability, or economy of particular building materials do not, typically, apply Warrants that speak to (non-mandated) ecological considerations. This "typically" is an important Qualifier, for it serves to remind us that even in normed discourse communities, what counts as a Warrant such as "This is the best material to use in this application" is a dynamic (not, fixed) limitation to the strength of a claim. In relation to this example, legal requirements in a particular time or place may come into play when evaluating the "best ma-

terial"—so that a definite "do not" may become a "probably do." In effect, a Qualifier may suggest that a Warrant needs support—that is, Backing—that takes account of local and temporal factors as well as the goals or purposes that inform an argument's Claim, and thus responds to the question of "why" this Warrant serves to connect the Data and Claim.

The Warrant, Toulmin emphasizes, "is more than a repetition of ... facts: it is a general moral, of a practical character, about the ways in which we can safely argue" in regard to particular facts (*Uses* 106). Although the Warrant may be (indeed, most often is) implicit, an argument partner's expressed doubts about the strength of connection between Data and Claim will require that it be explicitly articulated, along with the Data and Claim:

> Data of some kind must be produced, if there is to be an argument there at all: a bare conclusion, without any data produced in its support, is no argument. But the backing of the warrants we invoke need not be made explicit—at any rate, to begin with: the warrants may be conceded without challenge, and their backing left understood. (*Uses* p. 106)

Toulmin goes on to discuss the various situations in which Backing must be explicitly recognized as knowledge (e.g., *Uses* pp. 111-12, pp. 116-17). Yet insofar as Warrant or Backing are accepted "without challenge," the argument is at least provisionally accepted on the basis of knowledge that is provided by one argument partner to the other—but may remain implicit, and is not "known as a part of" the latter's "own knowledge."

7. Backing

Let's now consider the discussion of Backing in *An Introduction to Reasoning* in order to discover how Toulmin, Rieke, and Janik discuss this notion of an effective implicit Backing. "Our first task" in analyzing the structure of arguments, they tell us, "is to recognize how arguments, or trains of reasoning, are constructed out of their constituent parts: claims, reasons, <u>and the rest</u>" (*An Introduction* p. 12; my emphasis). Then they say, in relation to their example of a mundane conversation about the likely winner of the Super Bowl:

> When we analyze a conversation ... as an exchange of opinions accom-
> panied by a probing of the foundations of those opinions ... we are able
> to scrutinize and criticize the rational merits of the arguments presented
> ... [which] have to do with the reliability and trustworthiness both of the
> facts, grounds, evidence, testimony, <u>and so on</u> put forward as contribu-
> tions to the argument and also of the links between the different ele-
> ments in the argument. (*An Introduction* p. 13; my emphasis)

This "and so on" or "and the rest," I propose, is Backing, which, along
with supporting the Warrant, works with the other elements he names
("facts, grounds, evidence, testimony—all of which are articulated as Data)
to provide the "foundations of ... opinions" and propose "links between the
different elements in the argument."

In sum: Data, as well as Warrant, are supported by Backing. The persis-
tently inexplicit characterization as "and the rest" or "and so on" suggests
that the Backing trails off (so to speak) into a multitude of increasingly
inexplicit factors that comprise tacit knowledge, available to the discourse
partners, which supports the "reliability and trustworthiness" of both War-
rant and Data.

Thus, the "Why do you think that?" question, which solicits a Warrant,
must be asked also of Data. We can do so without fear that individualism
and psychologism will creep into study of the structure of arguments, in-
sofar as follow Toulmin's contextualism, rather than the individualism
against which he argued, as well as Thomas Kuhn's reminder that reference
to tacit knowledge does not "provide a basis for charges of subjectivity and
irrationality." The "intuitions" embedded in tacit knowledge, Kuhn contin-
ues, "are not individual. Rather they are the tested and shared possessions
of members of a successful group" and "they are not in principle unanalyz-
able (*The Structure* p. 191).

My response to that "Why do you think that?" question takes us first
to Kenneth Burke and then to other philosophers and rhetoricians, rather
than to psychology. Burke reminds us that language users "seek for vo-
cabularies that will be faithful reflections of reality. To this end they must
develop vocabularies that are selections of reality. And any selection of
reality must, in certain circumstances, function as a deflection of reality"
(*Grammar of Motives* p. 59). Thus, "Every way of seeing is also a way of not

seeing" (*Permanence and Change* p. 49). A number of philosophers from diverse traditions echo that conviction. Here are a few of those sources.

I have already quoted Thomas Kuhn in relation to the communal basis for Warrants. That status applies also to Data:

> something like a paradigm is prerequisite to perception itself. What a man sees depends both upon what he looks at and also upon what his previous visual-conceptual experience has taught him to see. In the absence of such training there can only be, in William James's phrase, 'a bloomin' buzzing confusion.' (*The Structure* p. 113)

Kuhn begins the Postscript to the second edition of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* by "emphasizing the need to study the community structure of science," and closes it with this reminder: "Scientific knowledge, like language, is intrinsically the common property of a group or else nothing at all. To understand it we shall need to know the special characteristics of the groups that create and use it" (pp. 209-210). I would extend this characterization of "scientific knowledge" to knowledge in general. The groups to which general knowledge, and the language that articulates that knowledge, belong have informed ways of seeing and communicating that reflect the common "selections of reality" that inform (and to some degree, generate) their cultures. Thus, the "why" question directs our question toward cultural—rather than individual—knowledge that informs any particular selection of Data. The "why" question, when directed toward the very selection of Data, asks about the particularities of cultural "training," learned from habits of thinking and being as well as from exemplars that are provided to us from birth onward, and much of which is tacitly known. The "why" question, when asked of Data selection, can elicit reflection that enables articulation of, or at least, points toward cultural practices that inform "visual-conceptual experience" and which we may come to understand by analogy with different practices that we can recognize, even if we cannot articulate them.

Martin Heidegger provides an extensive analysis of the cultural basis of perception in his description of the "forestructure" that allows us to avoid James's "bloomin' buzzing confusion." We all bring to any perception, Heidegger proposes, a set of culturally-provided linguistic possibilities; that is,

we have ways of saying what is seen ("fore-having"). These ways of seeing orient a perceptual experience ("fore-sight") so that we can organize and use what is seen in a way that makes sense to us ("fore-conception"). "In the mere encountering of something," he concludes, "it is understood in terms of a totality of involvements" (*Being and Time* § 149, p. 189). "This totality," he goes on to say, "need not be grasped explicitly by a thematic [that is: explicit] interpretation"; still, it "is never a presuppositionless apprehending" (§ 150, p. 191).

Norbert Russell Hanson opens his *Patterns of Discovery* with this quote from Goethe: "Were the eye not attuned to the Sun / The Sun could never be seen by it" (p. 4). He goes on to say that "Seeing is an experience... People, not their eyes, see" (6), and to ask "how do visual experiences become organized? How is seeing possible?" (p. 13). He concludes that "'Seeing as' and 'seeing that,' are not psychological components of seeing. They are logically distinguishable elements in seeing-talk, in our concept of seeing" (p. 21). The extensive discussion of observation (the title of his opening chapter, which includes these brief quotations) elaborates upon his recognition that an observer "aims only to get his observations to cohere against a background of established knowledge"—and thus, what we come to know depends upon the knowledge we bring to observation, even as it depends upon what we encounter in our observations. The function of this background is emphasized also in his chapter on causality, which begins with this quotation from Percy Bridgeman: "We do not have a simple event A causally connected with a simple event B, but the whole background of the system in which the events occur is included in the concept, and is a vital part of it" (p. 50).

When we turn from philosophy to argumentation theory, Thomas Goodnight's argument in "Toward a Social Theory of Argumentation" focuses on "crucial differences . . . between deliberative rhetoric, characteristic of a public sphere, and discursive norms of reasoning appropriate to specialized enterprises" (p. 60). I understand the former as public sphere argument that relies on cultural Backing to support Data, and the latter as relying on specialized knowledge cited in Warrants that justify connecting that Data with a Claim.

Goodnight directs our attention to the fact that both spheres of argument occur in time, and thus require attention to "each generation's

unique encounter with human culture"—encounters within which "social controversies grow, develop, and decline—catching up whole age groups, fields and societies in arguments" (p. 65). He goes on to argue that "social struggles are discursively constituted, endure, and become reproduced" as individuals experience events "from different vantage points and in distinct ways" that "influence—if not define—the thinking of a social group" (p. 66). These controversies "persist long after the personalities and particular issues have departed from the scene"; they endure in the "cultural base as potentially serious points of disagreement and contention among social groups" (p. 67).

In a later paper, "Complex Cases and Legitimation Inference: Extending the Toulmin Model to Deliberative Argument in Controversy," Goodnight proposes an extension of the Toulmin Model by means of a "major repair" to "field-grounded reasoning" (p. 40). Legitimation inferences are "justifications of the selection of backing to support a given argument" (p. 40). "Typically," he notes they "are left in the background" (p. 41). "In a pluralistic society," however, "deliberation is complicated because the contexts within which arguments are made are not obvious, authoritative, or relevant to all who have a right to a say as citizens and members of the society" (p. 44). This complexity is a mark of "a substantial portion of everyday argument in pluralistic societies," he believes, "because modern living teams with a surplus of reasons for decision, and deliberation requires sorting through the multiple sources that aspire to guide, if not determine, the grounds upon which rational conduct is deliberated" (p. 45). Although Goodnight identifies this requirement as falling within Toulmin's category of "'warrant-establishing' arguments" (p. 44), I diverge from his analysis in proposing that "sorting through" reasons and sources should extend to recognizing and investigating the cultural basis that serves as Backing for the selection of Data.

8. Backing as Basis for Data

The explanation of the Toulmin Model in *An Introduction to Reasoning* provides support for the extended function for Backing that I propose here. For example: "Aside from the particular facts that serve as grounds in any

given argument, we need to find out the general body of information, or backing, that is presupposed by the warrant appealed to in the argument" (*An Introduction* p. 26). The generality of this "body of information," I propose, extends beyond the specialized fields that supply Warrants and into a broader field: the cultural background that we bring, inevitably although typically in the form of presuppositions, to argument. The cultural field functions as the Basis for the selection and deflection of Data (Burke) as suggested in the descriptions of background given by Kuhn, Heidegger, Hanson, and Goodnight. The primary characteristic they affirm is that background provides ways of being and seeing that tacitly inform the arguments that people make.

Warrants, in contrast, range from descriptive statements to normative rules: "the questioner asks for warrants, that is, statements indicating how the facts on which we agree are connected to the claim or conclusion now being offered ... and so are implicitly relied on as ones whose trustworthiness is well established ... a general, step-authorizing statement is called a warrant" (*An Introduction* pp. 45-46). Furthermore, Warrants in some fields are "exact and reliable decision procedures," but in others, "it may be harder to articulate all the warrants employed in argument, in the form of explicit laws, rules, or principles"; rather, the warrants may be a matter of a specialist's "own accumulated but inarticulate 'experience'" (*An Introduction* pp. 52-53).

In sum: throughout both *The Uses of Argument* and *An Introduction to Reasoning*, we are given characterizations of the Warrant and Backing that continue, and perhaps intensify, the difficulties we have in understanding the nature and function of Backing if it is to be limited to "support" for the Warrant. Both Backing and Warrant are composed across a spectrum of affective and cognitive human activity that spans inarticulate experience, values, tacit knowledge, traditional practices, implicit norms, explicit rules, and specialized disciplines. Often, deciding which is doing what is perilously close to an arbitrary labeling.

The result is that these crucially innovative aspects of Toulmin's conception of reasoning are burdened with too broad a range of tasks and too indistinct a division of labor. This is compounded by what may have been a reluctance to recognize and explore the extent to which Backing comprises

domains of human activity that exceed the agendas of most philosophical thinking about epistemology and logic within modernity.

Thus just what Backing does and how remains vague in Toulmin's explication. The "official" answer is that it supports the Warrant. I have proposed that it does more than that; namely, it encompasses a wealth of culturally supplied knowledge that provides reasons, including many that are intrinsically implicit (tacit knowledge) and are the basis for selecting the Data of an argument. Toulmin's reference to theory that "treats all knowledge as socially and culturally situated"; as having a "primary locus [that] must be collective, not individual" (Foreword xii) provides a clue to clarifying the nature of the "and so on" that I identify with this broader conception of Backing. That clue is strengthened by these remarks on culture's influence:

> We grow up in a culture that forms our initial values, attitudes, and expectations. It equips us also with ways of thinking and reasoning whose underlying basis or backing is not always made explicit … Each side takes it for granted that the other party understands words and phrases in the same sense … An important part of sound reasoning therefore consists of 'critical thinking' and this involves being prepared to ask questions about the underlying backing for those ways of thinking and reasoning [that] our culture has drilled into us and normally takes for granted. (*An Introduction* pp. 66-67)

If we are to undo the two problems—too broad a range of tasks and too indistinct a division of labor—that now burden our understanding and use of Backing and Warrant, we need clarification of what distinguishes them. I propose that we do so by analogy: specifically, by considering the differences between culture and society.

Generally, "society" refers to a group of people, typically within a bounded geographic area, whose economic and political structures are ordered by way of institutional patterns that are codified in rules and laws. "Culture," correlatively, generally draws on traditions of behaving, believing, feeling, and thinking that have developed over generations and become embedded in the everyday practices of a people who live as members of that culture, although not necessarily within one specific geographical location.

Society's requirements are relatively explicit—typically, they're accessible in constitutions, laws, and rules. Culture's requirements, in contrast, are primarily implicit; they're "what everybody knows"—although individuals may diverge from that knowledge, even without articulating that divergence. The disapproval that cultural dissidents encounter is emotional; social dissidents, in contrast, also face legal penalties. At times, such as in the United States during the settling of the West in the 19ᵗʰ century and the 20ᵗʰ century civil rights struggles, "law and order" demanded that people subsume their cultural proclivities to the larger society's rule of law. Agents of that more encompassing society (such as sheriffs and judges) were to prevail—although those agents were also influenced, and at times dominated by, practices of so-called "mob justice," such as lynching, that were part of a local culture's customs but forbidden by the larger society's structures

Although cultural anthropology tells us that there have been situations in which a society and a culture were co-extensive, most of modern life, and contemporary life in the United States in particular, is situated within a "multicultural society." The differences among the diverse cultures within one society often lead to conflict between social structures (embodied in national, but also state and local legal and political rules and laws) and cultural customs. For instance, we can construct any sort of building we care to in rural areas but not in cities that have building codes and zoning laws; buy alcoholic beverages in one county but not the next; have restrictions on whom we may marry in one state that are not present in others; and allow women to serve in combat military units in one country but not another. These differences are traceable to different cultural beliefs. Curiously, we tend to grant a degree of objectivity to social structures that is withheld from cultural patterns. The codified linguistic nature of laws, in contrast to the lived experience of customs, may well be instrumental here: we can explicitly cite laws and regulations, but much of culture is lived implicitly, in accord with values and norms (ideas and standards) that are not, and typically need not be, verbally articulated. Typically, the difference is between the objectivity assumed of politics and the subjectivity presumed of ethics.

When we correlate this difference with Toulmin's diagram of the spectrum of reasoning that stretches from rhetoric to formal logic, we discover that the first assumption of the "Cartesian Program" may lurk within the model by virtue of his association of Ethics with "Respecting the projects

of others (as individuals)" while "Law & Politics" are associated with "Respecting the projects of others (as collectives)." The problem with this characterization is that Ethics also is embodied—indeed, enacted—in collectives: the collectives we identify as cultures, in contrast to the collectives we identify as societies.

We can now look at a modification of the spectrum of activity that we saw earlier ("Logic, Rhetoric, and Reason" 6)—this time, as displaying the cultural and social basis for which I have argued:

Thinking/acting/talking as Reason requires

Formal Logic	Natural Science	Ethics	Law & Politics	Informal Logic	Rhetoric
Respecting the demands of basic intelligibility	Respecting the natural grain of the world	Respecting the projects of others (as members of cultures)	Respecting the projects of others (as members of societies)	Respecting the special nature of the present case of discourse	Respecting the standpoint of audiences (as members communities)
Aristotle's *Prior Analytics*	Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*	Aristotle's *Ethics*	Aristotle's *Politics*	Aristotle's *Special Topics*	Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*

Figure 2. The demands of rationality or reasonableness. (Aristotle's *Organon* revised.)

This identification of "others" as members of cultures, societies, and discourse communities that affect and inform the basis of their ideas, rather than as individuals or collectives, enables an expansion of Toulmin's "re-ordering of logical theory" that is more effective when using the Toulmin Model for both constructing and evaluating arguments. The impetus behind of the model, as of much of Toulmin's own broader program, was his rejection of the "Cartesian Program"—not only as it influenced the preference for formal deductive logic, but throughout its effects upon the philosophy of science, the history of ideas, and cosmology. The expansion for which I argue here acknowledges that "others" are members of cultures, societies, and discourse communities (including technical fields) that shape, in complex ways, their ideas, personalities, and value systems—and thus, the Data about which they enter into argument.

This expansion of the structure of argument takes into consideration

largely implicit habits of behaving, believing, feeling, and thinking—most of which resist articulation, even while they affect the Data (what), Warrant (how), and Backing (why) that we (who) select as we craft our arguments. Toulmin acknowledged the importance of Backing, but—perhaps because of his aversion to bringing psychology into logical theory—shied away from considering that Data itself is not simply given, and uniformly given, to arguers. Rather, it is supported by (even, generated in) a process of selection which also deflects us from merely seeing, even as it enables our seeing in accord with our previous experience and training. Insofar as we accept what we have learned from a number of philosophers (Burke and Kuhn, Husserl and Gadamer, Dewey and Rorty): Seeing is a process of selection and deflection by means of which we constitute entities; it also is a practice of abstracting from experience that enables us to specify Data. This process and practice solidifies the habits of behaving, believing, feeling, and thinking underlying Data from which, and about which, arguments are made. Thus they must be acknowledged in response to the "What have you got to go on? How do you get there? and Why do you think that?" questions. We can make that acknowledgement and elucidate the Basis they comprise without fear that broader inquiry focused on the constitutive factors enabling the "who" engaged in argumentation requires psychological analysis, if we acknowledge that diverse selection of Data and Warrant is an inevitable aspect of our humanity.

The more thoroughly we reverse the abstractive procedures of traditional logical theory, the more clearly we can acknowledge that Backing has a generative role for both Data and Warrants; even, provides the implicit substructure for those explicit components of arguments. We thus bring clarity to the vague "and so forth" and "and so on" that persist in explanations of the Toulmin Model from *The Uses of Argument* and into *An Introduction to Reasoning,* and then into the textbooks and teaching aids that teach the model. For we can understand that vagueness as a lingering and resistant presence of the "Cartesian Program," supplied by the individualism assumption. That presence is removed as we expand the function of Backing to include the cultural basis that influences our selection and articulation of Data. Warrants that are accepted in a particular society or technical field then justify moving to particular Claims.

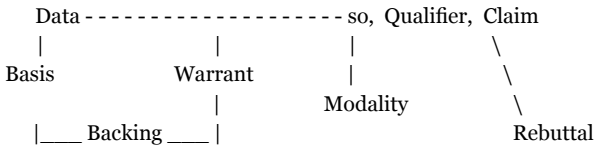Here is how an expanded model that incorporates this function of Backing in the structure of argument looks:

```
Data - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - so,  Qualifier,  Claim
  |                    |              |              \
Basis             Warrant            |               \
                     |            Modality             \
  |___ Backing ___ |                             Rebuttal
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Figure 3. Expanded Toulmin Model.

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