

# Argumentation Theory of Stephen E. Toulmin

Post by “Kalosyni” of February 2, 2022 at 2:03 PM

A few days ago, I came across the argumentation theory of Toulmin, and it seems it might be useful...and much easier than formal logic. "Argumentation" here on the forum is all new to me (and for the record, I haven't put in very much study of formal logic).

Toulmin argumentation theory could have compatibility within Epicureanism. Also since we often need to come to a deeper application of Epicureanism based on Principle Doctrines and other writings, this might be a method of drawing conclusions in order to apply Epicureanism to modern life situations.

I am curious to know what others think of this?

Quote

## **Toulmin model of argument**

This section is [transcluded](#) from [Stephen Toulmin](#).

[330px:Toulmin\\_Argumentation\\_Example.gif](#)

Toulmin argumentation can be diagrammed as a conclusion established, more or less, on the basis of a fact supported by a warrant (with backing), and a possible rebuttal.

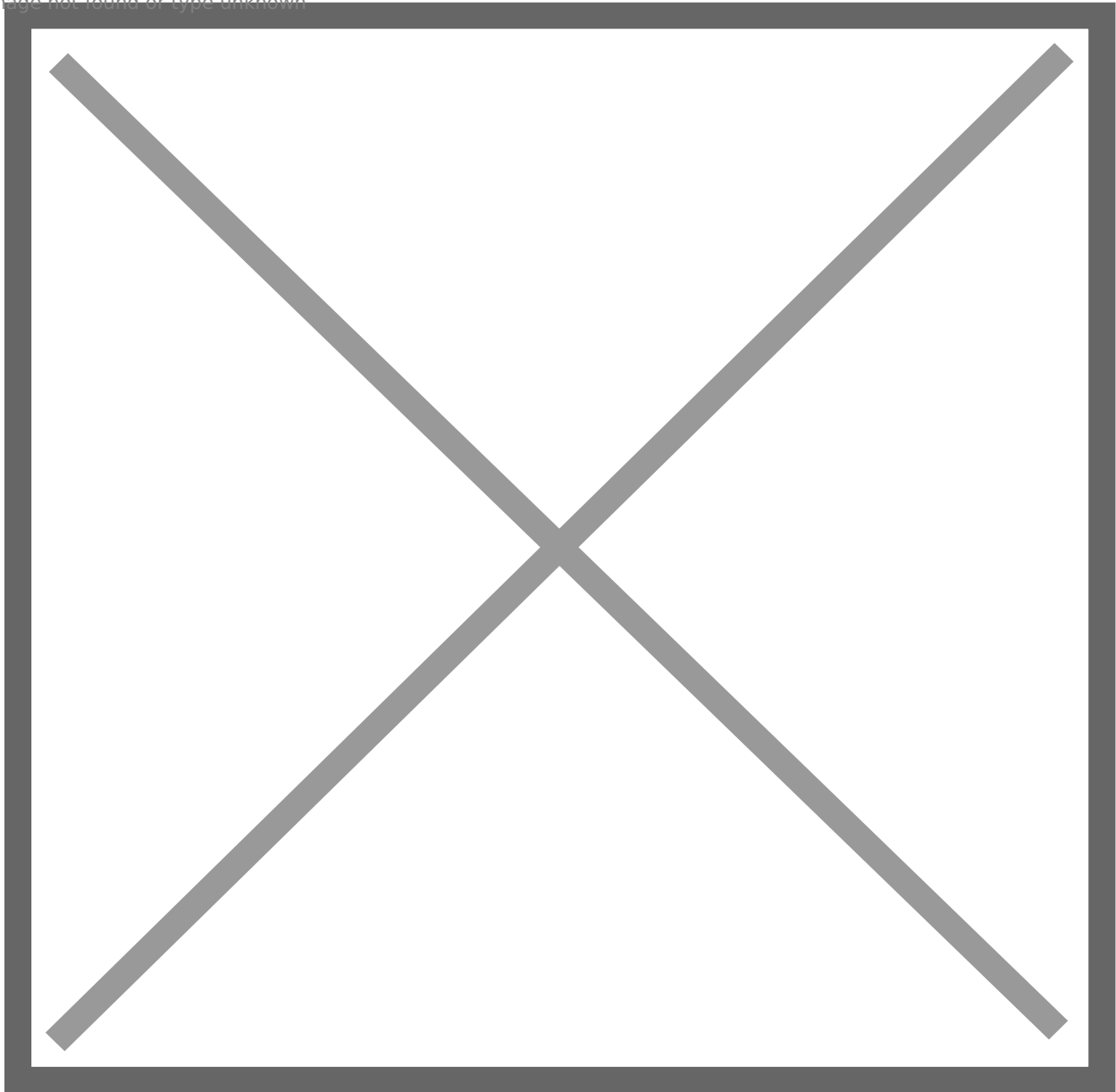
Arguing that [absolutism](#) lacks practical value, Toulmin aimed to develop a different type of argument, called [practical arguments](#) (also known as substantial arguments). In contrast to absolutists' theoretical arguments, Toulmin's practical argument is intended to focus on the justificatory function of argumentation, as opposed to the inferential function of theoretical arguments. Whereas theoretical arguments make inferences based on a set of principles to arrive at a claim, practical arguments first find a claim of interest, and then provide justification for it. Toulmin believed that reasoning is less an activity of inference, involving the discovering of new ideas, and more a [process of justification](#).

Toulmin believed that for a good argument to succeed, it needs to provide good justification for a claim. This, he believed, will ensure it stands up to criticism and earns a favourable verdict. In *The Uses of Argument* (1958), Toulmin proposed a layout containing six interrelated components for analyzing arguments:

[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argumentation\\_theory](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Argumentation_theory)

And here is another good site:

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[Toulmin Argument // Purdue Writing Lab](#)

The Purdue University Online Writing Lab serves writers from around the world and the Purdue University Writing Lab helps writers on Purdue's campus.  
owl.purdue.edu

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**Post by “Godfrey” of February 2, 2022 at 4:00 PM**

First, I have no background in logic or argumentation either. But from the chart, this does look similar to how I understand Epicurean-ish reasoning. Interesting!

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### **Post by “Cassius” of February 2, 2022 at 4:05 PM**

I am rushed for time so I will have to read the article later. I presume we will eventually want to move this to the Canonics section, but I am not able in a few seconds to figure out his point. Is there a way to briefly summarize why this looks like it could be relevant to Epicurean reasoning? By no means am I saying it's not, I am just not quickly grasping the major idea of his suggestion(?) Is this related to probability vs "certainty"?

Is this the essential point?

#### Quote

Including a qualifier or a rebuttal in an argument helps build your ethos, or credibility. When you acknowledge that your view isn't always true or when you provide multiple views of a situation, you build an image of a careful, unbiased thinker, rather than of someone blindly pushing for a single interpretation of the situation.

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### **Post by “Kalosyni” of February 2, 2022 at 8:07 PM**

My idea is to use this kind of argumentation for practical issues, as a way to avoid getting bogged down in abstractions. I will need to think of an example and then post.

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### **Post by “Godfrey” of February 2, 2022 at 8:34 PM**

At least from the chart in the Wikipedia link, it appears that the initial propositions are facts and conclusions are derived from there. That's what I was referring to, although I haven't had a chance to read the whole thing either.

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## Post by “Kalosyni” of February 3, 2022 at 11:40 AM

As we bring in the application of Epicurean principles into daily life, we may need to more effectively base ideas both on specific principles AND on observable sensations, so that we can use the philosophy effectively.

Also it can help everyone here on the forum present their ideas more clearly.

More on using the Toulmin model:

- 1) The claim, the first element in an argument, is an assertion, thesis or proposition and answers the question: "What do I want to prove?"
- 2) The grounds, the second element in an argument, are evidence, specific facts or data that support the claim and answer the question: "What do I have to go on?"
- 3) The warrant, the third element in an argument, yields general support that links the grounds to the claim -- either implied or stated, depending on the audience -- and answers the question: "How do I get from evidence to claim?"

Then further:

- 4) Is it necessary to add "Backing" ? -- Backing is an additional factor considered very important to the claim. "Is the move from grounds to claim safe and reliable?"
- 5) Is it necessary to add a "Rebuttal" ? A rebuttal is an exception that might make the claim invalid. "What possibilities might upset the argument? (This might add a new starting point, or claim).
- 6) Is "Qualification" necessary? With what level of certainty will the evidence be found to effectively support the claim? (adding in words such as "likely", etc.)

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