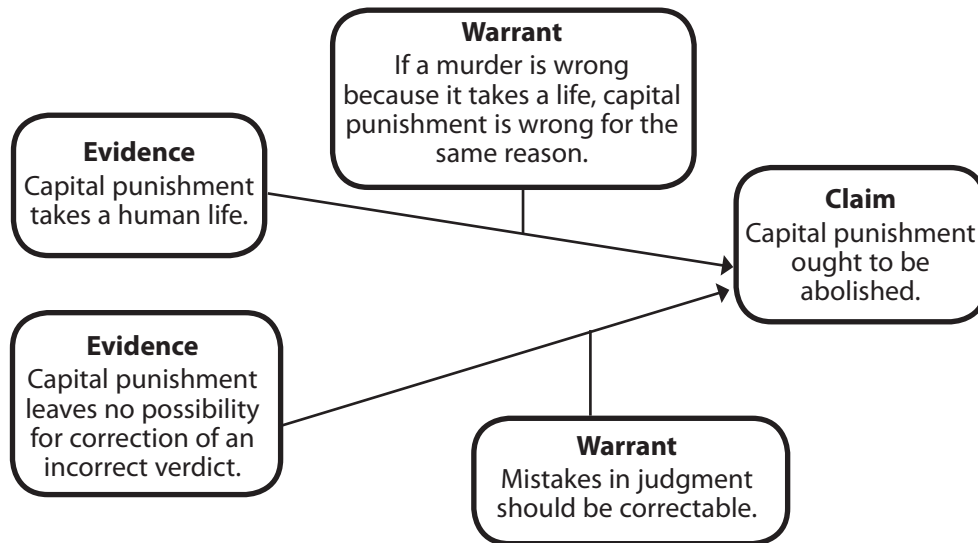


then turn around and take the life of the murderer? Beyond moral grounds, capital punishment ought to be abolished because, unlike other punishments, it alone is irreversible. If evidence is discovered after the execution, there is no way to bring the unjustly executed person back to life.

This argument about capital punishment can be represented in the following diagram:

Independent Argument



This independent argument is based on two pieces of evidence, either of which is strong enough to support the claim that capital punishment ought to be abolished. The first piece of evidence concerns the value of taking a human life, while the second involves the value of being able to correct a mistake. According to this argument, capital punishment should be abolished even if the audience believes only one of the items of evidence. The moral stricture against taking a life is, by itself, a sufficient reason to oppose capital punishment, as is the danger of making an uncorrectable mistake. The strategic advantage of this form of argument structure is obvious. Whereas with convergent structures, the loss of one part of the argument endangers the entire argument, in the independent structure, the argument can prevail even if only a part of it survives.

The Toulmin Model is useful because it illustrates the various parts of an argument and shows how they function together as a whole. Modifications of this argument structure make it even more useful. Still, the model has its shortcomings. One difficulty with the Toulmin Model is that it does not provide any details regarding some of these questions:

- ♦ What are the different kinds of claims?
- ♦ What are the different forms of evidence?
- ♦ What are the different kinds of argumentative warrants?