

## LOGIC: THE STRUCTURE OF AN ARGUMENT

An argument can be broken down into three basic parts: the conclusion, the premises, and the assumptions.

- **THE CONCLUSION**

The conclusion (or theses) is the point of the main idea of the argument--what the author is trying to prove.

- **THE PREMISES**

The premises are the reasons or the evidence the author gives to support the conclusion.

- **THE ASSUMPTIONS**

The assumptions support the conclusion but unlike the premises they are unstated--you cannot see them. They link the premises to the conclusions.

**AN EXAMPLE:** THE GODS AND FATE IN THE *ILIAD*, TERESA ROBERTSON

**CONCLUSION/THESIS:** The seductive view (that Homeric characters are uninteresting because they lack some sort of freedom or autonomy or agency -- or maybe simply significance -- that we ourselves possess) is incorrect

**PREMISES:**

Premise ("Counterpoint") 1: The operation of coercive forces does not distinguish the Homeric characters from ourselves, since we too are the victims of various types of "coercion".

Premise 2: In any case, coercion does not threaten agency.

Premise 3: We too are victims of emotions.

Premise 4: Emotions do not seem to deprive people of their autonomy.

Premise 5: We face a structurally similar problem of reconciling determinism and free will.

Premise 6: The truth of determinism would not threaten our own agency; so too fate does not threaten Homeric man's agency.

AN ASSUMPTION:

We have freedom or autonomy or agency

**EXAMPLE #2: DIVINE AND HUMAN MORALITY IN *THE ILIAD*, ANN DELEHANTY**

CONCLUSIONS/THESIS:

PREMISES:

ASSUMPTIONS:

**EXAMPLE #3: HOMER AND THE ORAL TRADITION, NATHALIA KING**

CONCLUSIONS/THESIS:

PREMISES:

ASSUMPTIONS:

**NOTE:** Throughout the semester we will be learning to identify different types of arguments. Each of these types of arguments contains standard assumptions. This means it will get easier and easier to identify the assumptions being made by any particular author or speaker.