3.10: Using Toulmin To Develop Con Strategies

After analyzing an argument using the Toulmin approach you can begin arguing against that argument. There are two overall con-side strategies when clashing with the pro-side.

**Reducing the significance of the problem or potential advantage.** The only reason we ever change from something we have been doing is that there is a significant reason to change. This reason may be that there is a problem that is getting worse and worse, or that there may be an advantage out there if we make the change. Currently more than one state legislature is arguing that all social welfare recipients should be tested for drugs before they are allowed to receive welfare payments. The con-side could argue that the problem is not significant to warrant the change in policy and that the status quo should be maintained.

**The Scientific Method**

*The real purpose of the scientific method is to make sure nature hasn't misled you into thinking you know something you actually don't know.*

--R. Pirsing Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance
This goal then is to weaken the impact of the contentions and thereby the certainty of the Claim is lessened. Those involved grow more skeptical of the Claim. The hope of the con-side is that the certainty of the Claim will fall below the threshold needed to accept the Claim. At this point, the Claim will be rejected and the con-side will win the argument.

The pro-side solution will not solve the problem they intend to solve. The con-side argues that the Claim argued by the pro-side will not work, or in some cases may make the problem even worse. Clashing against the argument that the state should drug test welfare recipients, the con-side may say that the test is not accurate and makes too many mistakes or false positives. They may also talk about how many ways there are to cheat the test. If the con-side can demonstrate that that the pro-side solution cannot work, then the Claim should be rejected.