

The Failure of Analogy

Nobody asked but ...

Parrish, your well-taken criticism of rock-paper-scissors is on the nose (an analogy). The problem is with the analogy itself. The analogy tries to mix physical objectivity with metaphysical logic. The physical scissors can cut (physical behavior) or be broken (physical behavior). The paper can be cut (physically) or it can cover (a fuzzy, ill-defined idea; metaphysical at best). Therefore the rock is also stuck with a confusing split between observable action and conceptual inaction. It is a mixed metaphor, this game. Analogies are by nature imperfect. If one thing were like another (analogous) in a perfect way, they would not be different things. Huge amounts of error and distrust in the world arise from a lack of care in handling the fundamental dichotomy between the physical and the metaphysical. For instance, what is the difference between a “government shutdown” and an absence of government?

Kilgore