

Weak Analogy

(also known as: bad analogy, false analogy, faulty analogy, questionable analogy, argument from spurious similarity, false metaphor)

Description: When an analogy is used to prove or disprove an argument, but the analogy is too dissimilar to be effective, that is, it is unlike the argument more than it is like the argument.

Logical Form:

X is like Y.

Y has property P.

Therefore, X has property P.

(but X really is not very much like Y in reality)

Example #1:

Not believing in the literal resurrection of Jesus because the Bible has errors and contradictions, is like denying that the Titanic sank because eye-witnesses did not agree if the ship broke in half before or after it sank.

Explanation: This is an actual analogy used by, I am sorry to say, one of my favorite Christian debaters (one who usually seems to value reason and logic). There are several problems with this analogy, including:

- The Titanic sank in recent history
- We know for a fact that the testimonies we have are of eye-witnesses
- We have physical evidence of the sunken Titanic

Example #2:

Believing in the literal resurrection of Jesus is like believing in the literal existence of zombies.

Explanation: This is a common analogy used by some atheists who argue against Christianity. It is a *weak analogy* because:

- Jesus was said to be alive not just undead
- If God is assumed, then God had a reason to bring Jesus back—no such reason exists for zombies
- Zombies eat brains, Jesus did not (as far as we know...)

Exception: It is important to note that analogies cannot be “faulty” or “correct”, and even calling them “good” or “bad” is not as accurate as referring to them as either “weak” or “strong”. The use of an analogy is an argument in itself, the strength of which is very subjective. What is weak to one person, is strong to another.

Tip: Analogies are very useful, powerful, and persuasive ways to communicate ideas. Use them -- just make them strong.

References:

Luckhardt, C. G., & Bechtel, W. (1994). *How to Do Things with Logic*. Psychology Press.