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3 - The Reaction against Analogy

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Publisher Summary

This chapter describes a series of arguments and counterarguments through which the ambivalence about analogy noted by recent commentators took definite shape. The chapter focuses on an increasingly acute concern that analogy seems to be both indispensible to interpretation and always potentially misleading. At a more fundamental level, these debates can be seen to express a fundamental dilemma that archaeologists confront whenever they seriously undertake to use their data as evidence of the cultural past, namely, that any such broadening of the horizons of inquiry seems to be accomplished only at the cost of compromising actual or potential methodological rigor. Each of the critical reactions against analogy and each of the ameliorating responses represent an attempt to come to grips with this dilemma. Each either endorses one of the methodological options it defines, accepting that research is unavoidably limited or unavoidably speculative, or rejects these options and attempts to show how one or another of the premises yielding the dilemma may be amended and the dilemma itself escaped.

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