

CONCLUSION

Discontinuities and Diversity

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Bodies as Evidence emerged over several years from a series of informal conversations and formal workshops. The editors and contributors, working in ethnographic field sites from India to the United Kingdom and Argentina to the United States of America, noted that many contemporary matters of great consequence are now recognized and discussed as matters of evidence. On the one hand, calls for evidence-based policies and practices seem to be heard everywhere; on the other hand, previously taken-for-granted evidential relations are being tested and teased apart. Of course, as we stated in the introduction to this volume, the history of philosophy has witnessed the rise and fall of numerous evidential regimes, but discussions of evidence are by no means confined to epistemology or scientific discourse. Rather, most professions recognize and gather evidence in particular ways and operate their own systems of “veridiction.” Indeed, it is possible to argue that deep transformations in professions, disciplines, and institutional divisions of labor are part of the contemporary problematization of evidence. For example, anthropologist Helen Lambert (2009) describes the rise of “evidence-based medicine” alongside the increasing prominence of similar discussions in the domains

of welfare, housing, and public policy. In short, our discussions based on ethnographic knowledge of diverse field sites suggested to us that much could be said about the contemporary by engaging directly with contested bodies of evidence.

Bodies as Evidence also emerged from the recognition that discussions of evidence in anthropology have thus far been limited. Lambert's (2009) excellent discussion of evidence-based medicine turns to focus on ethnography, questioning the lack of "evidence" in, of, and from the discipline's favored method. Her work is illustrative of recent writing that takes anthropological evidence as its primary focus (e.g., Csordas 1994; Hastrup 2004; Engelke 2009; Chua, High, and Lau 2009; cf. Cull 1854). These anthropologists insist upon the relational qualities of evidence—in Thomas Csordas's (1994, 475) elegant formulation, "Evidence has to be of or for something." However, this position clearly presents a two-sided challenge. First, ethnographic understandings of evidence must be sufficiently open to account for the numerous evidential regimes found in the world. Anthropology, as Mary Douglas once put it, is classically about our "provincial logic" encountering "native thought." Thus, "two different sets of hypotheses about the nature of reality and how it is divided up are exposed, each carrying the ring of self-evident truth so clearly that its fundamental assumptions are implicit and considered to need no justification" (1972, 27). Second, however—and this is the inspiration behind several recent writings on evidence in anthropology—ethnographic engagements with relational evidence-making, causation, and doxastic attitudes are still expected to be "evidence based" in the contemporary moment. Regardless of the varieties of so-called native thought, a certain provincial logic seems to be prevailing.

Bodies as Evidence is not a series of essays on anthropological methods; it is, rather, a response to the contemporary focus on evidence, the tremendous weight placed upon evidence today, and the simultaneous erosion of trusted sources of evidence. In this volume, then, the editors and contributors have focused on evidence in security contexts, one of the contemporary domains in which relations of cause and effect, truth and falsehood, doxastic and affective attitudes and reason all seem to be coming apart and reforming. Although security is often regarded as a natural requirement of human life, the semantically vacuous term is better understood as denoting processes that naturalize themselves differently depending on cultural factors and the particular historical moment. In other words, "security" and "insecurity" are names for processes that are highly variable. For instance, in *The Spirit of*

Laws Montesquieu proposes that security and justice are foundational to liberty, but he concedes that “there are cases in which a veil should be drawn for a while over liberty, as it was customary to cover the statues of the gods” (1914, 102). In this analysis, however, one does not govern primarily through security; one does not permanently govern in the darkness behind a veil. Note, then, the historical discontinuity between Montesquieu’s philosophy and the post-9/11 “securitarian” reason of U.S. vice president Dick Cheney:

We do, indeed, though have obviously the world’s finest military. . . . We also have to work sort of the dark side, if you will. We’re going to spend time in the shadows in the intelligence world. A lot of what needs to be done here will have to be done quietly, without any discussions, using sources and methods that are available to our intelligence agencies if we’re going to be successful. That’s the world these folks operate in. And so it’s going to be vital for us to use any means at our disposal, basically, to achieve our objective. (Cheney 2001)

The contrast here is between the eighteenth-century reason of the state (*raison d’état*) and the contemporary reason of the counterterrorist apparatus.

Today’s “security” thus seems to name a permanent process of following a potentially dark path to an unreachable future free from terror, deprivation, and injustice. To begin to study the processes and pathways of such security measures, one must attend to discontinuity with the past, to ruptures in the relations of evidence with the world, and to the production of doxastic and affective attitudes, moral and ethical relations, and even reason. In short, neither security nor evidence offers us unbroken lines that stretch back into the past. Michel Foucault points directly to the modern rupture in evidence that uncoupled the “truth” of morality and ethics from scientific rationality:

Descartes . . . said, “To accede to truth, it suffices that I be any subject which can see what is evident.” Evidence is substituted for ascetics at the point where the relationship to the self intersects the relationship to others and the world. The relationship to the self no longer needs to be ascetic to get into relation to the truth. It suffices that the relationship to the self reveals to me the obvious truth of what I see for me to apprehend that truth definitively. Thus, I can be immoral and know the truth. I believe that this is an idea which, more or less explicitly, was rejected by all previous culture. Before Descartes, one could not be impure, immoral, and know the truth. With Descartes, direct evidence is enough. After Descartes we

have a non-ascetic subject of knowledge. This change makes possible the institutionalization of modern science. (Foucault 1983, 252)

While some anthropologists have sought to provincialize Foucault's approach to relations of truth, knowledge, and power (e.g., Tambiah 1990), others recognize that the orientations available in his work pointed to problematizations worthy of sustained anthropological attention (e.g., Rabinow 1996, 161). Indeed, it is noteworthy that Foucault emphasized the highly specific and mundane forms of knowledge that accompanied the birth of modern institutions such as the asylum, the clinic, and the prison—forms of knowledge that would later assume the mantle of scientific rationality. “The birth of the sciences of man,” he tells us, “is found in . . . ignoble archives, where the modern play of coercion over bodies, gestures and behaviours had its beginnings” (Foucault 1995, 191). Today, the always unstable and unfinished walls dividing key societal institutions such as the military, the police, the prison, and the factory have crumbled; disciplines have blurred; and divisions of labor have broken down and reformed.

Security discourses and practices now traverse many societal domains. Disciplining is achieved not only in mainstreamed institutions but through the micromanagement of populations in contexts of welfare, urban governance, policing, and the war against terror. The discussion of Ieva Jusionyte, Daniel M. Goldstein, and Carolina Alonso-Bejarano on the penetration of the national boarder into the inner space of the nation-state makes painfully obvious the multiple threatening presences of portals in the lives of migrants. To survive, draw benefits, and be granted citizens' rights, people must regularly evidence their compliance with multiple rules. Nikolas Rose (1996) argued that government in advanced liberal democracies downloads onto citizens the responsibility of caring for themselves and their lives. Security regimens ensure that citizens comply. They also create shadow worlds, the characters of which have been at the center of several chapters in this volume. Hypervisibility of those aspects thrown up by indicators hide the human experience of living in an age of (in)securitization. They create instead the worlds of “illegal” migrants rendered increasingly insecure, worlds where, despite the fantastical promises of forensic knowledge, some dead bodies are identified and others remain Other. Then there's the illusion of “evidence” from the tortured body. Thus, while contemporary security regimes often claim scientific rationality, they remain rooted in ignoble and provincial forms of knowledge production.

Security clearly has a problem: *bodies as evidence*, or the desire for and fas-

ination with technologies that promise to provide evidence-based and thus neutral knowledge by tracking, understanding, and tracing the human body. But, as the contributions to this volume show, while technoscience promises neutral knowledge about human bodies it generally delivers only partial knowledge about social categories and persons. In short, (in)securitization produces and reproduces the poor, the migrant, the victim, the criminal, or the terrorist enemy. Indeed, in *The Quest for Certainty* (1930, 51), John Dewey proposes that modern scientific rationality has failed to acknowledge or digest an ancient philosophical problem, namely, “that certainty, security, can be found only in the fixed and unchanging.” But security has also become a matter of regulating the “changing course of events” (1930, 96) and even the risk-filled future. Security now labels regulatory efforts to specify, fix, lock into place, verify, and make certain a world that often refuses to cooperate. Thus, in the gaps, interstices, and shadows of security-modernity one finds tricksters, fakes, and frauds; occult economies; and the malevolent operations of terrorist enemies. Like the counterfeit modernities that Jean and John Comaroff (e.g., 2006) address, security exposes a double conceit at the core of modernity, namely, that bodies, signifiers, and identities can be fixed and that security discourses and practices have somehow acquired a magical formula that will enable that fixing to occur. One can give numerous examples to illustrate, but perhaps the most obvious example comes yet again from U.S. counterterrorism. Since 2001, the U.S. government has invested hundreds of millions in technologies that can search the human body for signs of “malintent” or the intent to cause harm. The theory of malintent substantiates technoscientific efforts to read the body, from eye movement to fleeting facial expressions. In other words, theory decides what counts as evidence. But scientific rigor has to take a back seat, because the theory is classified in order to maintain security (see Maguire and Fussey 2016).

But how do we anthropologically investigate the production of knowledge, and evidence, in the realm of security? In this volume we have emphasized conceptual work on body-knowledge, as well as the mimesis and magic that can be found tangled within the roots of the great contemporary drive to secure individual identities, bodies, boundaries, and borderless conflicts. It is clear to us that security and insecurity are interfused in the sense that fear is both a target and outcome of security discourses and practices. As Jean Comaroff put it during one of the workshops that inspired this volume, late modernity is stalked by “the perfectly ordinary person who turns out to be someone, something, dangerously different from whom they say they are—by

the spectre of the counterfeit citizen, the imposter immigrant, the bogus asylum seeker, the inscrutable terrorist” (Comaroff 2013). Our efforts herein have shown the play of truth and falsehood, seen and unseen, the elevated claims and “ignoble archives” (Foucault 1995, 191). We have not, however, succumbed to the temptation to see power as always coercive or alterity as an always-available source of alternatives. Rather, through its diverse contributions, this volume shows us the enormous and active production of knowledge and evidence in the realm of security, bodies of evidence that are never as coherent as they present themselves, forms of knowledge that are forever shadowed by insecurity and doubt, for both the observer and the observed.

This volume began with contributions on the topic of biometric security. Today’s registration efforts ongoing in India are part of the largest biometric capture project in human history. But such efforts have a particular history, one rooted, according to Michael Taussig, in the use of fingerprints to prevent people from impersonating others in order to collect pensions and other benefits. Biometrics became signatures and fetishes, used to make people legible and to scare them with the power of mysterious signs. This was, in essence, the “modernizing sorcery [of] colonial bureaucracy” (1993, 222). But modern biometric systems emerged in multiple locations, from the Hooghly River in India to metropolitan heartlands of empire, and drew new lines connecting colonial administrations to policing institutions and scientific racists to social reformers. Simply stated, biometrics was not and is not a series of targeted interventions to solve problems of identification. Rather, what we are investigating here is a coalition between practical problems and solutions and much broader visions of human life itself. The evidence presented by the human body to verify individual identity is evidence of a unit within a human population that is pockmarked by unknown spaces and forever ringed by an outside. Again, we must attend to discontinuous histories in order to understand the ways in which error-prone technoscience imagines and targets human life, which is itself, “never completely in the right place, that is destined to ‘err’ and be ‘wrong’” (Foucault 1994, 15).

Of course, the point here is not that the human body cannot be read or that all technical and scientific efforts are doomed to failure; rather, we have attended to particular contemporary ways of reading the human body and looked to the contemporary drive to do so in an expanding number of domains. The new bodies of evidence create new power-knowledge regimes and with them novel ethical dilemmas. They result from the confrontation of power with the fleshy condition of human existence. Insecurity is written

into the body. For example, the deployment of biometric registration reveals the intimate link between moral order and body inspection. The technological upgrading of the multilayered international borders causes innumerable physical and mental injuries and even death. The use of forensic evidence for recovering the stories of victims of specific political orderings, such as illegal border crosses or victims of mass killings, individualizes and sentimentalizes the memory of suffering. It offers avenues for families to mourn and cope with untimely death at the cost of sidelining broader political debates about ethical failure and unjust orders. Counterinsurgency tactics and the use of drones are defended by a discourse that celebrates death as achievement of intelligence. The rhetoric of the War on Terror justifies killing suspected bodies before they can articulate an alternative truth. The effort to fix and settle opens the search for security and play of evidence to its Other. Thus, questions of difference come into sharp focus in contemporary policing and counterterrorism. When one reads Gregory Feldman on how an undercover police team translates intelligence into “evidence,” one is left wondering about the status of both. Do police, those charged with the provision of security, recognize shifts in security discourses and practices; do they see contemporary bodies of evidence as pockmarked by unknown spaces and forever ringed by a troublesome outside?

It seems that anthropology needs to be better engaged with “evidence-based” institutions and assemblages where security is produced, and thus better able to offer insights and critique. To date, many of the efforts to study evidence in the discipline of anthropology have been methodological, reacting to a sense that anthropology will lose its relevance among evidence-based fields if it does not agree to become more transparent about its own data-gathering techniques. Thus far, these efforts have not gained traction, and the discipline has not engaged with evidence as a problem of the contemporary. *Bodies as Evidence* is an effort to highlight the problem of evidence today, rather than an effort to fold anthropology and ethnographic approaches into contemporary power-knowledge. Herein, we do not valorize anthropology or the ethnographic; rather, we are unified by a concern with evidence in security contexts: if we can grapple with and pin down the problem of evidence in contexts where security is produced then engagement, reflexive analysis, and even critique are possible. If not, the truth will be produced by others, elsewhere, uncritically.

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