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Reason and proof in forensic evidence

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This essay examines the process by which forensic scientists generate, discover and configure evidence in the legal process. Contrary to the received view in which forensic science is regarded as an archetype of objectivity that is modelled on reasoning in the natural sciences, I argue that the validity, adequacy and persuasiveness of forensic proof is dependent upon characteristics and assumptions that forensic scientists share by virtue of training. Hence, forensic evidence is subject to a model of reasoning and proof that is remarkably different from that of the natural sciences. Using the example of complex DNA mixtures, I outline a multivalent and non-monotonic logic that is the foundation of reasoning in forensic contexts.

Biography

Kola Abimbola is a lecturer in Law and Forensic Science at the University of Leicester, UK. He was previously an Assistant Professor at Seattle University, WA, and he has held visiting and research positions at institutions such as Amherst College, MA, and Haverford College, PA. His research focuses on the legal reasoning and scientific methodology.

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