Over the past twenty-five years, history of science has expanded into history of knowledge. Plurality has been the main message. Commonality, by contrast, is the main finding of the present study. It examines the knowledge practices of the full range of participants in cases of public inquiry—trials, tests, inspections—involving human bodies in contexts of criminal law, police, public health, marriage and family, claims to community aid, and regulation of trades. The cases come from the archives of three agencies of inquiry and evaluation—a government, a university faculty, and a guild—a variety of polities in the Holy Roman Empire between about 1500 and 1650. Participants of widely differing education, occupation, and experience—learned, artisanal, and domestic, as well as specialized versions of these—are found to have shared practices of observation, description, explanation, and argument. This finding opens the prospect of a history of shared empirical rationality, in contrast to the hegemony of difference, dialogue or transfer, and expertise, in how we understand knowing in modern as well as premodern Europe.