The Logic of Exemplarity

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Abstract. The topic of exemplarity has attracted considerable interest in philosophy, legal theory, literary studies and art recently. There is broad consensus that exemplary cases mediate between singular instances and general concepts or norms. The aim of this article is to provide an additional perspective on the logic of exemplarity. First, inspired by Jacques Derrida’s discussion of exemplarity, I shall argue that there is a kind of différance between (singular) examples and (general) exemplars. What an example exemplifies, the exemplarity of the example, eludes any fixed identity and follows a logic of supplement. Second, I shall present the so-called logic of exemplarity. The received paraconsistent view has it that the exemplar of X is an X and, at the same time, is not an X. Inspired by Ludwig Wittgenstein’s discussion of the standard metre, I would like to present an alternative paracomplete view whereby we can say of an exemplar of X neither that it is an X nor that it is not an X.

Keywords. exemplarity, example, singularity, universality, standard metre, différance, paraconsistent and paracomplete logic, Jacques Derrida, Ludwig Wittgenstein

INTRODUCTION

The topic of exemplarity has attracted considerable interest in philosophy, legal theory, literary studies and art in the past fifty years. We can begin with Derrida’s deconstruction, which—as we will see—provides a kind of foundation for thinking about exemplarity. Exemplarity has also been an important focus of Giorgio Agamben’s work.¹ My main focus in this article is, however, recent works on exemplarity from the special issue of Law & Literature entitled “Exemplarity and Its Normativity”, edited by Angela Condello and Alessandro Ferrara, and, in particular, Condello’s book Between Ordinary and Extraordinary (2018).² In what follows, I offer an appreciative yet critical discussion of Condello and others that aims to show the vital role of a deconstructive reading in revealing the intricate complexity of exemplarity.

Let me first state the basic view in these debates, which I take for granted as my point of departure: exemplary cases mediate between singular instances and...
general concepts or norms. This view can be traced back to Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* and to Hegel’s subjective logic, with its conceptual moments of singularity, particularity and universality. For Hegel, the plain distinction between a singular instance and a universal concept is too simplistic. On the one hand, general concepts and norms are too abstract; they do not come with any method for applying them to singular instances. On the other, pure singularities do not express anything universal beyond themselves. There is no obvious way that the singular and the universal can be directly connected. Exemplarity is a way—or one of the possible ways—to achieve this mediation. An example is a singular case which points at something universal. An example is always an example of X, where X is a universal concept.4

However, exemplarity is a broad topic, with varied terminology and applications in several fields of study, and so it is sometimes difficult to determine how the mediation between the singular and the universal might work. Let us, first, try to make clear what kinds of entities can be exemplary. Very broadly put, we can take any empirical category; after all, a category is empirical if one can—in principle—give examples of it. More specifically, focusing on recent discussions, things that can be exemplary include objects (e.g. a work of art), legal cases (in law), human actions, deeds (in ethics), persons (in ethics and religion), experiments, technological procedures or standard practices (in science).5 This list is open-ended. We can study exemplarity in any field of human activity, taking account of these fields’ specific categories. In using the expression “exemplary case”, I intend to cover all these categories.

Exemplarity is supposed to mediate between singularity and universality. One strand of the terminology stresses the singular moment, while another emphasises the universal moment. The following expressions belong to the first strand: “example”, “instance”, “illustration”, “token”, “case”; these expressions can be modified by adjectives like “mere”, “arbitrary”, “undifferentiated”, “singular”. The latter group, relating to the moment of universality, comprises expressions like “exemplum”, “exemplar”, “model” and “paradigm” as well as less common words like “specimen”, “archetype”, “prototype”, “modus”, “paragon”, “arche-example” and “blueprint”. Sometimes a combination is used, as in “paradigmatic sample” or “exemplary case”. Some expressions are limited to certain fields, such as law (e.g. “landmark case” or “precedent”). The idea is that an example or an illustration of X merely illustrates or exemplifies the universal concept X. An example of X is a randomly picked element of X (or something that falls under X), whereas exemplars, paradigms and their cognates have a normative function. As Alessandro Ferrara puts it: “exemplary is what is as it should be.”6 The exemplar of X defines the universal concept of X. To be an X means to be like the exemplar of X.7

Before moving on, let me highlight the terminological convention which I will attempt to follow in this article (and which is in line with most of the literature
mentioned above\(^8\): the expression “example” indicates the singular moment, whereas “exemplar” focuses on the universal moment.\(^9\)

There are, however, expressions that fall between these two moments. We often speak of “the best example”, “an ideal example”, “an exemplary example”, “an example par excellence”, “a privileged example”, etc. These expressions, and the fact that they are intelligible, indicate that there are differences among examples in terms of their exemplifying function. One example can be better or more suitable than another. What makes one example better is its proximity to the exemplar. This consideration calls into question any strict distinction between a singular or factual example and a universal or normative exemplar. The next section attempts to deconstruct this distinction.

**DECONSTRUCTING EXEMPLARITY**

It may seem that many authors have failed to distinguish between examples and exemplars. The aim of this section is to show that the reason why they have been unable to make this distinction is that it is not a binary opposition. Our initial problem is this: how does one get to know what properties are exemplified by a specific example? Given Kant’s famous example of a dog, one may ask whether the colour of its fur or the number of legs it has belong to the essence of a dog, or whether they are only accidental properties. In this case, there is no hesitation, because we know the universal concept of dog. But what about a work of art? A given work of art can exemplify many properties (many of them relational or secondary), and we may not be sure which properties make this object a work of art and which are only accidental (supplementary, by-playing). Or, to put it in the useful terminology recently proposed by Tiziano Toracca, we do not know which features are thin (shared by other examples) and which are thick (not shared by other examples).\(^10\) It is thus indeterminate what exactly an example exemplifies. For Derrida, this indeterminateness lies at the root of his deconstruction:

What example? This one. And certainly, when I say this very example, I already say something more and something else; I say something which goes beyond the *tode ti*, the this of the example. The example itself, as such, overflows its singularity as much as its identity. This is why there are no examples while at the same time there are only examples; I have said this often about many examples. The exemplarity of the example is clearly never the exemplarity of the example. We can never be sure of having put an end to this very old children’s game in which all the discourses, philosophical or not, which have ever inspired deconstructions, are entangled even by the performative fiction
which consists in saying, starting up the game again, “take precisely this example”.11

On my reading of this passage, Derrida is suggesting that a singular example exemplifies more than it was supposed to exemplify. An example of X always exemplifies something beyond X. For instance, an example of a dog can exemplify the colour black. Hence, there is no fixed identity of what is being exemplified. In one sense, there are no pure examples of a fixed concept X; in another sense, every example exemplifies a multitude of concepts.

This indeterminacy blocks or at least obscures the process of turning a mere example into an exemplar. An example may, of course, become an exemplar only if it is clear what is being exemplified. The passage from the example to the exemplar—or, as Gellner puts it, the thetic act of the elevation of a singular to exemplary status12—consists in reducing this indeterminacy, i.e. in determining the exemplarity of the example. One obvious way to reduce this indeterminacy—i.e. a way to find out what is being exemplified—is to consider more examples, a series of examples. The idea is that by considering more examples we can—by an inductive approximation or, in quite different terms, an eidetic variation—see what they have in common (their thin features) and so get closer to grasping what they exemplify.13 We can make this idea more radical by saying that examples always come in series. So, for instance, Peter Goodrich says: “There is no singular exemplum except as a momentary induction or, as used to be said illation from the mutable and inconstant series of exempla, the infinite particulars of a law made only through the instances of its casuistic application.”14

However, the point of the deconstructive account of exemplarity is that this straightforward passage from the example to the exemplar may not work. A series of examples does not need to approximate the exemplar (which expresses the universal concept). A series may go astray, never reaching the universal concept. To show why this may be so, we have to consider what distinguishes examples from each other within a series. An example appears in a vertical relation to the universal concept it is supposed to exemplify and in a horizontal relation to another example in the series. It matters where an example is situated in the series. The difference among examples in the series lies in their accidental (or thick) qualities. Here, however, these qualities are accidental with respect to the general concept (law); i.e. they are not a part of the essence of the general concept. However, if these accidental qualities nevertheless matter in some respect, they must constitute some other concept, i.e. they must be essential with respect to some other law.15 What kind of law is this?

Derrida says in Specters of Marx that “an example always carries beyond itself: it thereby opens up a testamentary dimension”.16 In On Touching, he writes that an example is “a simulacrum of a sample whose symptom would give
away another, hidden teleology: the hand may not be an example among others but the best metonymy of some other”. In a similar vein, in “Parergon” we read that examples “can invert, unbalance, incline the natural movement into a parergonal movement”. We have here a testamentary dimension, a hidden teleology, a parergonal movement, a logic of supplementarity. These expressions refer to the law that regulates the series of examples, or to be more precise, their accidental qualities. This law must be different from (the law of) the general concept. The most eloquent account of this difference is to be found in Derrida’s *Glas*:

For example (the uniqueness of the example is destroyed by itself, immediately elaborates the power of a generalizing organ), the very moment we would claim to recapture there, in a determined text, the work of an idiom, bound to a chain of proper names and singular empirico-signifying configurations, *glas* also names *classification*, that is, inscription in networks of generalities interlaced to infinity, in genealogies of a structure such that the crossings, couplings, switchings, detours, and branchings never simply come under a semantic or formal law.

An example—precisely by being an example—moves (or elaborates) towards the general concept or law (as mentioned above, this usually happens by way of an inductive generalisation or an eidetic reduction). This is to say that the example, in producing a series, moves—by “the power of a generalizing organ”—towards the exemplarity of the example, i.e. towards an exemplar/paradigm/model. This movement, however, is not straightforward (like inductive generalisation); it is full of crossings, couplings and detours which defy any “semantic or formal law”.

We can restate our problem using this terminological apparatus: the other law may override the (law of the) general concept. An emerging other law can be taken to be the main focus of the series of examples. When responding to a work of art, one can typically focus at first on accidental, thick features (e.g. imprecise lines and contours in painting, or malapropisms in literature). They may divert the course of the series elsewhere, to a new concept (e.g. Impressionism, Dadaist poetry). In science, meanwhile, according to Kuhn’s theory, focusing on anomalies may lead to a scientific revolution and the establishment of a new paradigm (i.e. exemplary theories and practices). What was previously accidental (a mistake, an anomaly) becomes part of the essence of a new concept.

Hence, any attempt to find out what is being exemplified by an example, or rather a series of examples, leaves something underdetermined. Such a series of examples can lead to the exemplar of a universal concept, or it can override the
original universal concept and lead to another concept or law. On the one hand, this means that any example is in part already an exemplar or points towards an exemplar. On the other hand, the approximation of the exemplar by a series of examples has no clear sense of closure. This means that every exemplar is in part an example. The clear difference between (illustrative) examples and (normative) exemplars should instead be understood as an interval with two poles. In the remainder of this paper, I will sometimes use the compound “example/exemplar” to mark this ultimate indistinguishability.

In a broader outline, a failure to eventually reach the exemplar is attributable to the impenetrability of the original differance, with its endless play of deferrals and nullifications. As a play, “[d]ifferance is the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences.” There is a differance between the example and the exemplar. Although their written forms differ, phonetically the difference between these words and their cognates may escape us. Differance is a somehow ghostly limit, the ultimate horizon of thought. Thus, exemplarity as this paradoxical structure—of an endless play and, at the same time, of the origin of differentiated conceptuality—lies between the singular case and the general concept or law.

THE LOGIC OF INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION, PARACONSISTENCY AND PARACOMPLETENESS

Just to reiterate: “example” and “exemplar” mark the poles of a deconstructive interval of exemplarity. Let us look at their common etymological root, the Latin exemplum. Even in Latin, both meanings—singular instance and universal model—are preserved. Exemplum is derived from the verb eximere, which means “to take out”, “remove”. The root emere means “take”, “buy” or “acquire”. Condello rightly points out that the term “exemplum” [...] recalls a mechanism of extraction from a series of tokens.” The example/exemplar is thus taken out, removed from the series it is supposed to exemplify. Agamben links this removal with the (originally Greek) term “paradigm”:

What the example shows is its belonging to a class, but for this very reason the example steps out of its class in the very moment in which it exhibits and delimits it [...]. If one now asks if the rule applies to the example, the answer is not easy, since the rule applies to the example only as to a normal case and obviously not as to an example. The example is thus excluded from the normal case not because it does not belong to it but, on the contrary, because it exhibits its own belonging to it. The example is truly a paradigm in the etymological sense: it is what
is “shown beside,” and a class can contain everything except its own paradigm.26

These terms, the singular example as well as the universal exemplar/paradigm, have a dual nature; they mark a removal from the very class they stand for (as an example and as an exemplar) and, at the same time, they belong to this class. To put it in a simple yet radical form: an example/exemplar of X belongs and does not belong to X. In other words: an example/exemplar of X is and is not an X. Following Goodrich and Condello, we can say that the exemplar is an empty signifier, “pure form, mere habit, a singular universal”.27 An example/exemplar is a signifier with two opposing meanings. This contradiction, however, does not lead to the collapse of the whole system. Quite the opposite: this contradiction is at the core of the logic of exemplarity.28 This logic is thus paraconsistent.29

Exemplary cases are self-referential, as pointed out by Condello.30 Their self-reference is, however, contradictory. Or to put it more aptly, the logic of exemplarity reaches its point of inconsistency precisely when the example/exemplar is applied to itself: that is, when it is asked whether the exemplar of X is an X, whether the exemplar is self-referential. Using Terrone’s terminology again, this question can be rephrased in an explicitly self-referential manner: is the exemplar of X like itself? One can ask this question about any object a: is a like itself? Is a like a? And in this paraconsistent setting, the answer would be: it is and it isn’t.

Referring back to the discussion from the previous section, we can ask an analogous question about examples: does an object exemplify itself? Of course it does (this was our point of departure). However, it also exemplifies something else, namely any class that has this object as an element. Hence, it is now clear that an object does not exemplify just itself and nothing else.

This logic of simultaneous inclusion and exclusion applies to singular examples as well as universal exemplars. That is to say, it refers to the whole deconstructive interval between the example and the exemplar. A singular case, some instance of X, in order to become an example, i.e. to exemplify the whole class X, has to step out of X and assume the role of the exemplar. In contrast, the exemplar of X, initially excluded from X, is like any element of X; it must be able to substitute for any element and step into X. In short, the example, in order to exemplify, must assume the role of the exemplar, and, conversely, the exemplar, in order to exemplify, must become an example.

We are now in a position to describe the connection between the structure of exemplarity and différence in more explicit terms. Differance marks the possibility of any difference between presence and absence within any system of signs. But because of its being a precondition of the difference between presence/absence, différence is both present and absent. Differance is both inside the
system and outside the system. Exemplarity fits into this paradoxical structure. The exemplar of X precedes the class X, i.e. it is outside X and, at the same time, as an example, it is inside X. Any element from X can become an example/exemplar and thus step outside of X. This means, however, that the point of undecidability may appear anywhere in a system of signs, and it is not restricted to peculiar expressions like *différance, trace, supplément* or *gift*.

As we have seen, the paraconsistent approach to exemplarity has also been advanced by Derrida\(^3\) and by Agamben, with his contradictory expression “exclusive inclusion”. It is also quite explicit in Condello, who says: “There is no exemplarity without contradiction”.\(^3\) In the final part of this article, I shall argue that paraconsistency is not the only way of conceiving the logic of exemplarity. My account is motivated by the following remark by Wittgenstein about the standard metre in Paris: “There is one thing of which one can state neither that it is 1 metre long, nor that it is not 1 metre long, and that is the primordial metre [*Urmeter*] in Paris.”\(^3\) Wittgenstein speaks about the *Urmeter* (and also about the *Urelement* and the *Ursepio*) with a clear allusion to Goethe’s notion of *Urpflanze*, the primordial plant. This way of putting it highlights the fact that there is no preceding category, no preceding unit of length. I will use the expression “standard metre” only because it is common in recent debates.

Here, we have a single element—the standard metre—that is, the exemplar of the property “being one metre long”. This is an exemplar of X, as discussed above. Wittgenstein now claims that one can state of this exemplar neither that it has the property of “being one metre long”, nor that it does not have this property. One can say of the exemplar of X neither that it is an X, nor that it is not an X. Wittgenstein is clear that this is not an extraordinary property of the material stick: “But this is, of course, not to ascribe any remarkable property to it, but only to mark its peculiar role in the game of measuring with a metre-rule.”\(^3\) What makes the standard metre extraordinary is its peculiar role of being an exemplar. There is no preceding category within which the stick could be extraordinary. The standard metre is thus the *Urmeter*, a pure exemplar.

Before moving on, let us try to explain the peculiarity of the standard metre without invoking any logical puzzles. The attribution that the standard metre is (or is not) one metre long can be taken as an instance of Ryle’s concept of *category mistake*.\(^3\) We commit a category mistake if we take the university as an institution on par with colleges, laboratories and offices (Ryle’s example). We can also extend the notion of category mistake to cases of wholly nonsensical attribution, such as Chomsky’s “Colorless green ideas sleep furiously”. However, as the name indicates, category mistakes consist in violating an established categorial hierarchy. These mistakes can also be intentional or “calculated,” and can be explained as metaphors or other kinds of figurative language.\(^3\) This is, however, not the case when someone says that the standard metre is one metre long.
There is no mistake involved in saying this. Nor is it a case of metaphor. From the commonsensical point of view, there is nothing peculiar about saying that the standard metre is—obviously, trivially—one metre long (cf. the discussion below). The peculiarity of this claim comes to light only if one realises its self-referential character. And it is this peculiarity that leads to the employment of a non-standard logic.

Paracomplete logic can be defined as a logic that violates the law of the excluded middle (either a proposition is true, or its negation is true).\(^3\) “The standard metre is one metre long” is precisely such a proposition. One way of interpreting this situation is that the domain of application of the predicate “being one metre long” is restricted. It is restricted at precisely one point, the point of self-reference. The predicate “being one metre long” is applicable to every material (and geometrical) object except the standard metre itself. The underlying logic is paracomplete because the domain of application of the term “being one metre long” is incomplete.\(^4\)

In Terrone’s terms, if one asked whether the standard metre is like itself (or more specifically, whether it has the same length as itself), the question must be rejected as nonsensical, because it lies outside the scope of the relationship of likeness. This approach is, I think, closer to the common-sense view than saying that a thing is and is not like itself, as the paraconsistent approach has it. The latter is instead a kind of philosophical sophistry.

The paracomplete approach is not entirely commonsensical, though. One could object along the commonsensical lines that the stick that is the standard metre must have a particular length—as any spatial object does. Even if we cannot compare it with itself (or say that it is like itself), we can certainly compare it with another standard stick, e.g. the standard inch. One can say of the standard metre that it is 39.37 inches long. Now, if 39.37 inches mark the same length as one metre, then we can say that the standard metre is one metre long.\(^5\)

To reply to this objection: this detour via another standard of length is possible if there is another standard. We are talking about the primordial metre, the hypothetical very first standard of length. We must not presuppose any pre-existing standard when we define or describe the standard metre. Let us put this aside and suppose there are indeed several standards of length and that we can convert one measure into another (as, indeed, we can in fact do). However, if we say that the standard metre is 39.37 inches long, what is meant by the phrase “standard metre” is only the bare stick, deposed of its role of being a standard of length. Wittgenstein expresses this idea more generally: “one sentence can never describe the paradigm in another, unless it ceases to be a paradigm.”\(^6\) Hence, asking about the length of the standard metre in fact means asking about the length of the bare stick that, for the time being, has ceased to be a standard.
What Wittgenstein means by paradigm is—to take up our terminology—an exemplar, which is, as we know, not entirely distinguishable from an example. The example/exemplar of X is excluded from the scope of application of the predicate X in our paracomplete setting. By considering whether the example/exemplar of X is an X via a detour through another example/exemplar, the object is reincluded in the scope of the predicate X. The lesson is that the inclusion or exclusion of an example/exemplar is not static and fixed once and for all, but is, rather, dynamic and fluctuating.

EXAMPLES OF EXAMPLES

Before summarising the main points of this article, a methodological meta-discussion is in order. This article is about how we treat examples. In the course of the argument, I could not refrain from using specific examples (a dog, the standard metre, etc.). They function, so to speak, as examples of examples. Two claims can be made about these squared examples. Firstly, these examples are partly exemplars of examples, i.e. exemplars of exemplarity, and secondly, one can neither say that they are examples/exemplars, nor that they are not examples/exemplars. It is not difficult to realise why this must be so. The primary function of examples is to exemplify their subject matter. In the present context, however, they exemplify their exemplarity, i.e. how exemplarity (of these examples) is supposed to work. We are interested in (the notion of) exemplarity, not in specific breeds of dogs or units of length. What matters here is the examples’ other law. They are supposed to reveal something universal about exemplarity and, hence, they are not mere examples. At the same time, they are suspended from their primary exemplifying function (their law) in order to exemplify their exemplarity (the other law). Hence our paracomplete perspective: we cannot say that they are (regular) examples, and we cannot say they are not examples.

It may be helpful here to present a few more cases of examples/exemplars that exemplify their exemplarity. Let us consider a situation in which someone is buying a car. In a showroom, there are cars a prospective buyer can look at or take on a test drive. These cars are, however, not for sale. They are mere (illustrative) examples of what the buyer will get if they decide to buy. These cars are also (normative) exemplars. If the buyer makes a purchase, they can expect to get a car that is—in certain respects—like the example/exemplar in the showroom. The showroom sells cars of particular brands and models/lines, such as the Mercedes-Benz A 35. In the paraconsistent setting, the show car is both included in this class (it is a car of this model) and excluded from it (it is not for sale despite being a car of this model). In the paracomplete setting, the class of cars for sale is restricted from the outset. In the advertisement “Mercedes-Benz A35 for sale”, the domain of the predicate “Mercedes-Benz A35” is, implicitly, restricted
so that it excludes show cars. Neither the notice “For sale” nor the notice “Not for sale” can be put on a show car. The car dealer can, of course, offer a show car for sale, usually at a discount, after it has ceased to be a show car (i.e. ceased to be an example/exemplar). The same point can be made about any product that is used to advertise a whole class. This contrasts with cases where a singular product advertises only itself, e.g. a house that has been put up for sale. Advertising a class is a special case of exemplifying. However, using a product in an advertisement can disrupt its primary use. So, for example (another example of an example), when a piece of bread is displayed in a shop window, it becomes stale and cannot be sold as a regular piece of bread.

My final example of an example is one that is abundant in Derrida’s writings: the handwritten signature. Let us consider our (legal) practices with handwritten signatures. We distinguish between an example of a person’s own signature, on the one hand, and an exemplary or specimen signature of that person (kept, say, by a bank) on the other. A signature is recognised as authentic if it is similar enough to the specimen signature. It is never quite determinate which specific features of these two signatures (e.g. certain curves, the thickness of certain lines) are supposed to match (essential features), and which are merely supplementary or accidental. Any example of an authentic signature can determine more essential features of the specimen signature. In this sense, an example of a signature is (or at least determines) an exemplar. The second point (about para-completeness) is also not difficult to make. Neither an example of a signature nor a specimen signature can be used to sign or certify anything (they are suspended from a signature’s primary function). Nor are they forged signatures. With respect to the example/exemplar of a signature, it makes no sense to say either that it is authentic or that it is forged.41

CONCLUDING REMARKS

By way of conclusion, let me sum up the main points I have raised. The background to this discussion is the view that exemplary cases mediate between the singular and the universal. I took this thesis from Angela Condello’s book Between Ordinary and Extraordinary, primarily because this work clearly and lucidly brings together several threads of recent discussions. Following Derrida’s method of deconstruction, I have argued that the topic of exemplarity is pervaded by the ambiguity between the singular example and the universal exemplar (or model, paradigm). The notions of example and exemplar defy fixed identities; rather, they mark the poles of a deconstructive interval referring to the original difference. What may seem to be a predicament is, in fact, the core of how exemplarity actually works. The inexpressible exemplarity of the example, which is at
work both in examples and exemplars, makes it possible that one can reach
the other.

This ultimate impossibility of distinguishing between the example and the
exemplar allows us to challenge the predominant paraconsistent logic of exem-
plarity. The received view is that an example/exemplar is both included in and
excluded from the class it is supposed to exemplify. I have proposed the alterna-
tive paracomplete view that one can say of an example/exemplar neither that it
belongs to the class it exemplifies, nor that it does not belong to this class.

These challenges are not meant to replace the received account of exemplar-
ity, but rather to complement it. The advantage of my proposals is that they
open up the possibility to conceive of an example/exemplar without any pre-exist-
ing category, a pure example.

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   should also be mentioned: two edited volumes—
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2. Angela Condello and Alessandro Ferrara, eds.,
   “Exemplarity and Its Normativity,” Law &
   Literature 30:3 (2018), Angela Condello, Between
Ordinary and Extraordinary: The Normativity of the

3. Other ways include Plato’s *metheke*, Aristotle’s *energeia*, Kant’s schematism (and to some extent his method of reflective judgement) and various accounts of the (productive) imagination or symbolism. For an extended discussion of various “third terms” see Jacques Derrida, “I Have a Taste for the Secret,” in Jacques Derrida and Maurizio Ferraris, A Taste for the Secret (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 5, 75. See also Maurizio Ferraris’s essay in this volume.


7. Here and later, I am invoking the very illuminating neo-Aristotelian (or rather Strawsonian) terminology advanced by Enrico Terrone, “Be Like This: Norms, Examples, Documents and Indexicals from a Neo-Aristotelian Perspective,” Law & Literature 30:3 (2018), 449–463.

8. This is not to say that this terminological convention should be standardised and imposed on others. I maintain, however—though without arguing for it here—that the points I go on to make in this article are largely independent of the terminological choices mentioned here.

9. Agamben refers to a different, albeit related, distinction between exemplar and exemplum: “Sextus Pompeius Festus informs us that the Romans distinguished *exemplar* from *exemplum*.” The exemplar can be observed by the senses [...] and refers to that which one must imitate [...] The *exemplum*, on the other hand, demands a more complex evaluation (which is not merely sensible [...] ); its meaning is above all moral and intellectual.” (Agamben, “What is a Paradigm,” in The Signature of All Things: On Method, 18).


13. As Terrone writes: “one might try to overcome the dependence of examples on concepts by relying on series of examples and contextual factors. [...] Thus, a series of examples, unlike a single example, seems to be capable of functioning independently of concepts and even leading us to grasp the corresponding concept.” “Be Like This”, 455.


15. The argument rests on the intuition that to say that something matters is an informal way of saying that it is essential. This essentiality is, in fact, something universal. To reiterate our previous example, having four legs is a part of the essence of the concept of dog, whereas the property of having a white coat with black spots is not. However, if this property matters, if it is essential, we are dealing with the concept of a Dalmatian. The point is that this example can override the original concept (of a dog) and exemplify something else, e.g. a panda or a horse that has a similar coat pattern.


19. Cf. Matthew Roller’s way of putting this: “Derrida contends that serial exempla have a dual allegiance, both to “the law” under which they are expressly marshaled (the classical category) and to an “other law” that emerges from their piecewise interrelationships (accounting for nonclassical behavior).” Matthew Roller, “Between Unique and Typical: Seneca exempla in a List,” in Lowrie and Lüdemann, Exemplarity and Singularity, 82.


22. As is well known, Kuhn uses the term “paradigm” in both a broad and a narrow sense. In the broad sense, a paradigm stands for “the
entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques“ of a scientific community, whereas in the narrow sense, it stands for a specific puzzle solution, an “exemplary past achievement”. This latter narrow sense of paradigm is close to the term “exemplar” discussed here. Moreover, for Kuhn an “anomaly” is a violation of the expectations induced by a paradigm. In the light of the paradigmatic theory, it is something accidental, an accident. In the normal mode of discovery, an anomaly can be assimilated; it can lead to an adjustment of the paradigmatic theory. An anomaly can also, however, precipitate a crisis which leads to the emergence of a new paradigm: “Sometimes the shape of the new paradigm is foreshadowed in the structure that extraordinary research has given to the anomaly.” That is to say, the anomaly becomes part of (the essence of) the new paradigm. Cf. the chapters “Anomaly and the Emergence of Scientific Discoveries” and “Postscript—1969” in Thomas Kuhn, The Structure of Scientific Revolutions (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).


26. Agamben, Homo Sacer, 22. Another illuminating formulation of this paradox by Agamben is: “to give an example is a complex act which supposes that the term functioning as a paradigm is deactivated from its normal use, not in order to be moved into another context but, on the contrary, to present the canon—the rule—of that use, which can not be shown in any other way.” (Agamben, “What Is a Paradigm?,” 18) Agamben is suggesting, very much in accord with the present line of argument, that taking something as an example implies its functioning as a paradigm.


28. In her discussion of Derrida’s works, Hollander remarks: “the paradox of all exemplarism: that in order to be most itself, Europe must open itself up to its other, to humanity in general. [...] This is paradoxical because it consists in equating the European project with the project of denying its very particularity.” (Exemplarity and Chosenness, 113)

29. For the purpose of this article, we do not need to go into the intricate details of paraconsistent logic. It is enough to conceive of paraconsistent logic as a logic that is inconsistency-tolerant, a logic that blocks the principle of explosion, i.e. the principle that contradiction entails everything.

30. Condello, Between Ordinary and Extraordinary, 46.


34. Ibid., translation amended.


38. My discussion of two different accounts of exemplarity, paraconsistent and paracomplete, is inspired by Livingston’s classification (in The Politics of Logic) of four orientations of thought. Among them, he considers two so-called post-Cantorian orientations: paradoxico-critical (complete, inconsistent) and generic (consistent, incomplete). As already mentioned, Livingston interprets Derrida’s deconstruction in the
paradoxico-critical (i.e. paraconsistent) manner. Moreover, he interprets the later Wittgenstein’s philosophy in the same way. In contrast, I propose a paracomplete (i.e. generic in Livingston’s terms) reading of the later Wittgenstein. It must be admitted that many of Wittgenstein’s remarks, explicitly or implicitly, suggest a paraconsistent interpretation. I maintain, however, that the remarks that I am referring to, esp. §50 of the *Philosophical Investigations*, instead follow a paracomplete logic.

39. This objection was famously raised by Saul Kripke, *Naming and Necessity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), 54.


41. For a thoughtful deconstructive perspective on handwritten signatures, see Michaela Fišerová, “Pragmatical Paradox of Signature,” *Signata* 9 (2018), 485–504.

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