

The Power of Example

Crowning example – the excessively exemplary

24 september 2010
Sala 2C10-2C24 Gómez Moreno

Programme

10.00 – 11.00 Francisco Javier Martínez Antonio, CCHS-CSIC: *Aspects of exemplification in early Francoist medical documentary films on Spanish Morocco and Guinea*

11-11.30 Break

11.30 – 12.15 Brita Brenna, University of Oslo: *A large and considerable fish. The basking shark as an excessively large example in 18th century natural history*

Camilla Ruud, University of Oslo: *“The rarest character among the monsters.” An excessively monstrous pig in 18th century el Real Gabinete de Historia Natural*

Kyrre Kverndokk, University of Oslo: *The earthquake and the royal family. The Lisbon earthquake as a Danish-Norwegian example*

12.15 – 12.30 Break

12.30 – 14.00 Discussion

Crowning example – the excessively exemplary

The Example has played an unobtrusive, but essential role in European production of knowledge since Antiquity. It represents a form of logic where something concrete, limited and specific is used to support statements of a more general character. The Example draws together the abstract and the concrete, whole and part, norm and practice, past and present.

The crowning example is a royal example. It exceeds any other in force and eloquence, it is excessively exemplary. Perhaps these examples are not meant to be emulated, but only to be admired. Kings alone can set a crowning example. Yet, at the same time the crowning example shares important features with any other example. John D Lyons points out that an important criterion for examples is an excess of meaning. An example will always tell about more than that which is to be exemplified. The example is being pruned, cut out from a larger reality. This is necessary to create credibility and to make the example be something else and more than the maxime, the theorem, that it points towards. Every example contains a richness of meaning, they are excessively exemplary.

At the seminar we will explore the excess of examples. In what does it consist, and how is it being handled? How are examples created by the cutting off of excessiveness, abundance? And how do they function by/through the aiding of the excess that will be present nevertheless? What role does the excess play – is it a disturbing factor or a necessary ingredient in the rationality of the example? Does it imply that every example is a crowning example; not for direct imitation, but for instruction and admiration?

The Power of Example is a multidisciplinary project at the Faculties of Humanities,
University of Oslo, Norway.

We welcome personnel from CCHS-CSIC to the seminar.