

# The Use of Examples

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## Abstract

One of the most important problems for a study of symbolic practices (pictorial, verbal or other) is the choice of a language of description that is general enough to allow for comparisons between different symbolic practices and specific enough to allow for meaningful descriptions of actual practices. I will argue that Goodman's theory of symbols provides some of the categories needed for such an analysis.

I will try to indicate this by looking at Goodman's analysis of a symbolic practice that – though widely used in many different kinds of discourse – has generally not received much attention: the giving of examples.

Goodman's extensional description of exemplification allows us to differentiate between various types of examples and to determine what we mean when we say that examples 'show' something. In this way, conflicting approaches to the question of examples (namely Kant and Wittgenstein) can be seen as complementary. A theory of symbols can operate these clarifications by virtue of its strict extensionalism.

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