

A Christmas Carol: Disability Conceptualised through Empathy and the Philosophy of ‘Technologically Useful Bodies’

ESTER VIDOVIĆ

The article explores how two cultural models which were dominant in Great Britain during the Victorian era – the model based on the philosophy of ‘technologically useful bodies’ and the Christian model of empathy – were connected with the understanding of disability. Both cultural models are metaphorically constituted and based on the ‘container’ and ‘up and down’ image schemas respectively.¹ The intersubjective character of cultural models is foregrounded, in particular, in the context of conceiving of abstract concepts such as emotions and attitudes. The issue of disability is addressed from a cognitive linguistic approach to literary analysis while studying the reflections of the two cultural models on the portrayal of the main characters of Charles Dickens’s A Christmas Carol. The studied cultural models appeared to be relatively stable, while their evaluative aspects proved to be subject to historical change. The article provides incentives for further study which could include research on the connectedness between, on one hand, empathy with fictional characters roused by reading Dickens’s works and influenced by cultural models dominant during the Victorian period in Britain and, on the other hand, the contemporaries’ actual actions taken to ameliorate the social position of the disabled in Victorian Britain.

Key words: *empathy, useful bodies, cultural models, conceptual metaphors, disability*

The article strives to establish a link between disability studies and cultural models, since there seems to be a dearth of articles connecting these fields of study. Two different cultural models will be examined: the Christian model of empathy and the cultural model based upon the philosophy of ‘technologically useful bodies’. The philosophies and attitudes that dominated during the Victorian period in Great Britain will be addressed in order to argue the stability of the named cultural models. The initial hypothesis is that the structure of cultural models appears to be stable, with evaluative aspects changing over time,

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thereby emphasising the role the social and cultural history of a nation play in establishing and maintaining cultural models. The study is in accordance with the orientation in cognitive science that supports the notion that cultural models are metaphorically based (Tolaas; Kövecses; Lakoff and Johnson; Gibbs; Talmy).

THE COGNITIVIST ORIENTATION IN SCIENCE

The beginnings of cognitivist thought in science reach back to the 1970s, when a group of scholars began to question the age-old dichotomy between the mind and body. The cognitivist orientation in science was of an interdisciplinary character from its beginning, with new findings from diverse sciences casting new light upon the way we understand the cognitive mechanisms involved in experiencing the world around us. These new perspectives on human cognition foregrounded the role of experience and perception, on one hand, and of culture and society on the other, while also explaining the manner in which they are processed in the brain.

Cognitivists emphasised the role of the body in the process of cognition, an element that had hitherto been largely neglected by traditional schools. The two most influential orientations in philosophy, which have strongly influenced other sciences and have played a major role in shaping Western philosophy, Cartesianism and Kantianism, advocate 'objective' theories of knowledge in which we encounter an absolute dichotomy between the mind and the body. As pointed out by Mark Johnson, this is the perspective that pervaded the theories of the majority of philosophers, linguists, psychologists, and scientists from other fields of study since Plato discussed mind–body dualism in *Phaedo* (xxxvi). Another scholar of cognitivist provenance, the Croatian philosopher Zdravko Radman, argues that such views were a result of scientific progress and cultural development, as well as of the philosophical developments in the area of cognition. Radman furthermore contends that the triumph of the *ratio*, which glorified man as a 'rational animal', implied the suppression and even negation of the bodily (355).

Cognitivists argue that the mind is bodily determined or *embodied* (Lakoff xi), whereas traditional scholars maintain that mental faculties are abstract and transcendental because they are not bound to any individual organism but are, instead, independent from the human body and its perceptual and nervous system. The body, as pointed out by the French philosopher and predecessor of cognitivist thought Maurice Merleau-Ponty, exists prior to thought or the world we reflect upon. In other words, the world exists for us solely in and through the body. In this manner, continues Merleau-Ponty, we do not obtain an embodied concept of time if we perceive it as a river flowing through our lives and having no relation to our existence, but rather as a function which makes it possible for us to *bodily interact* with the world around us (25).

It is possible to conceive of time in terms of a river because of our capacity to project from a physical, embodied experience (the flow of a river) to an abstract

and non-physical experience (time). The structure of a physical experience is highly schematised and therefore better structured than the structure of an abstract experience, which enables us to understand the structure of abstract concepts such as time *in terms of* more concrete concepts. A process of projection occurs between a concrete concept and an abstract concept, and this process has been named *mapping* by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, the main proponents of the Conceptual Theory of Metaphor. Only selected elements from both concepts take part in this process: the substance of the river corresponds to time, the amount of substance is mapped onto the duration of time, while the motion of the substance past is the equivalent of the 'passage' of time (145). The process is unidirectional and emerges from that concept which is more concrete or, in Lakoff and Johnson's terminology, the *source domain*, and results in the elements being projected onto the more abstract concept or the *target domain* (123). By bringing two different domains together in the process of mapping, we are able to constantly create innovative conceptual metaphors.

My argument about the role that conceptual metaphors play in constituting cultural models is based on a presupposition that abstract concepts, upon which studied cultural models are based, are metaphorically constituted. I further examine the functions of patterns and ideas of culture within the social and cultural history of Britain during the Victorian period and their possible influence on the stability of entrenched cultural models.

CULTURAL MODELS

The cultural anthropologists Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn define cultural models as 'presupposed, taken-for-granted models of the world that are widely shared (although not necessarily to the exclusion of other, alternative models) by the members of a society and that play an enormous role in their understanding of that world and their behaviour in it' (4). Roy D'Andrade and Zoltán Kövecses also point to the intersubjectively shared character of cultural models (D'Andrade 112; Kövecses 193), while the anthropological linguist Gary P. Palmer defines them as 'cognitive models that are culturally specific' (1045).

However, there seems to be common ground between culturally particular cultural models. The manner in which various cultures experience the emotion of anger provides an interesting example of differences and similarities between various cultural models. Kövecses demonstrates that the stages of experiencing anger by members of four different cultures speaking four different languages (English, Hungarian, Chinese, and Japanese) reveal that the cultures and languages mentioned all experience anger in a similar manner. He proposes a universal five-stage model for experiencing anger (196):

- (1) cause → (2) existence of anger or its counterpart (in the form of a force) → (3) attempt at control → (4) loss of control → (5) expression.

According to this model, the members of the aforementioned cultures conceptualise the experience of anger through the conceptual metaphor 'the

angry person is a pressurized container'. This metaphor, as has been pointed out by Raymond Gibbs, is the result of the process of mapping between the source domain, a pressurised container, and the target domain, anger, and significantly depends on the image-schematic structure of the source domain, a pressurised container (*What Do Idioms Really Mean?* 485). In this manner, members of the said cultures conceive of the loss of control as an internal pressure, which is unintentional, sudden, and violent in its character. Moreover, Kövecses claims that the differences in experiencing anger can be attributed to differential experiential focus, thereby concentrating on some aspects of bodily functioning while downplaying the others (234). Thus the increase in skin temperature and heart pressure seem to be universally felt among individuals who experience anger, although the Chinese prioritise the pressure element and not the heat element, while in English both elements are equally important. Kövecses further argues that the perception of the content of the container varies amongst the cultures: the Euro-American conceptualisation of anger as liquid in a pressurised container is based on the medieval model of the four humours (phlegm, black bile, yellow bile, and blood), while the Chinese concept of *nu* [anger] depends on the notion of *qi*, the energy that flows through one's body, which is in turn in harmony with two complementary forces of *yin* and *yang* (235).

The embodied experience of anger, structured through the autonomic arousal and cardiovascular response to it, whether in the form of heated liquid (the Western model) or gas (the Japanese model), focuses upon the *internal* mental structures that metaphors are composed of. However, a number of cognitive scientists assert that metaphors are also *culturally* and *socially* based. Thus Gibbs points out that, apart from conceptualising anger through feeling heated and under pressure, we experience it based on our estimate of the situation we find ourselves in when somebody, for instance, intentionally kicks our leg (156). Our reaction in this case, argues Gibbs ('Taking Metaphor' 159), is defined culturally in a series of steps, which he names the *anger script* (antecedent conditions, behavioural conditions, and self-control procedures). The structure resulting from the script metaphorically corresponds to the structure of our thinking/experiencing anger as fluid in containers that are heated or put under pressure. The notion that metaphors for structuring concepts are both internally and culturally determined is also supported by Kövecses (162), who argues that 'metaphors are just as much cultural as they are cognitive entities (or more exactly processes)', while Leonard Talmy asserts that each cognitive system (language, visual and kinesthetic perception, reasoning, affect, attention, memory, planning, and culture) shares at least some basic structural properties with other cognitive systems, while at the same time possessing structural properties that specify only the cognitive system in question (377). Talmy has named this model of cognitive organisation, which shares fundamental structural properties amongst diverse cognitive systems, the *overlapping systems* model of cognitive organisation. According to Talmy, only the cognitive linguistic and cultural systems possess a universal structure, which serves as a basis for future

variations. These two systems are, asserts Talmy, specifically organised because they are innately determined and, therefore, significantly independent from each other (411).

THE INTERSUBJECTIVE CHARACTER OF EMOTIONS

Emotions can, therefore, be understood both as internally and socially determined. My intention is, however, to foreground the social aspect of emotions in order to argue that they are related to intersubjectively shared cultural models. Studying emotions contextually, argue Michael Haldrup, Lasse Koefoed, and Kirsten Simonsen – referring to Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of emotions as *situated corporeal attitudes* – associates them with various social situations, life modes, and practices (178). Emotions are, therefore, intersubjectively *shared* and are a way of relating to one another. The cultural anthropologist Catherine Lutz, moreover, asserts that individuals are able to *cause* an emotion in another person. Lutz studied the way the Ifaluk, a Western Pacific community, treat emotions. If an Ifaluk utters a sentence *He is needy*, it is literally understood as *He causes me to feel compassion* (144).

The interpersonal function of emotions, which appears to be more prominent in the Ifaluk cultural model than in the Western model, will be subsequently studied in more detail while analysing the literary text. In my study I have opted for a cognitive linguistic approach to literary analysis, viewing matters from the perspective of the historical and social context rather than the perspective of the writer or the reader, although I shall occasionally make brief references to the two latter perspectives.

DISABILITY IN THE LIGHT OF TWO CULTURAL MODELS: THE PHILOSOPHY OF ‘TECHNOLOGICALLY USEFUL BODIES’ VERSUS THE CHRISTIAN MODEL OF EMPATHY

In his portrayal of the characters of Ebenezer Scrooge and Tiny Tim in his fantasy *A Christmas Carol*, Charles Dickens reflects two contradictory cultural models of the Victorian period: the model based on the philosophy of ‘technologically useful bodies’ and the model of empathy towards the disabled and the deprived. These two models will be compared with the aim of determining to what extent they reflect public sentiment towards the disabled in Victorian England. The initial hypothesis that the structure of cultural models remains relatively stable will be challenged with reflections on the possibility of their alteration in the current social and cultural climate.

The philosophy of ‘technologically useful bodies’ and related theories

The cultural model based on the philosophy of ‘technologically useful bodies’ relies on the binary of able and disabled bodies and the established ideologies

of normalcy in nineteenth-century Britain. Disability performs, according to Cindy Lacom, important cultural work since it defines the norm while exploiting bodies in a literal and metaphorical sense, thus establishing the concepts of *normalcy* and *deviance* (547). Tanya Titchkosky emphasises that the most authoritative definitions of disability have come from medical disciplines on one side and social sciences on the other (198). Michael Ashley Stein points out that various disciplines have treated this problem differently due to a different perception of the factors that determine one's disability. Stein argues that medical disciplines view disability primarily through internal factors, whereas social studies understand that it is factors external to a disabled person's limitations that determine an individual's capability to function (87). In that way the 'medical' model of disability understands a person's limitations as inherent and impairing in the sense that the disabled are, due to their medical conditions, unable to perform various social functions, while the social model perceives disability primarily through 'the socially engineered environment and the attitudes reflected in its construction' (86). Research from the fields of social studies and cognitive science emphasise that disability is presented to people through *interaction* with the social and physical environment as well as the social production of knowledge (Titchkosky 198).

The disabled are those who have been marked as 'different' by the non-disabled. According to Titchkosky, disability can be regarded as a 'powerful and obtrusive trait, a master status, marking all of the other attributes a person possesses' (205). This mark of difference originates from the people a disabled person interacts with and becomes a 'stigma'. A stigma, argues Erving Goffman, is a 'special kind of relationship between attribute and stereotype' (4) and marks blemished persons as 'different from other humans, thus making them not quite human' (5). Those who have potential to stigmatise people are, therefore, referred to as the 'normals' and belong to the stereotype, whereas those pronounced as representing 'undesired differentness' are assigned the marked position of the stigmatised.

The experience of the body has been moulded by cultural knowledge and practices, as is pointed out by Danijela Marot Kiš and Ivan Bujan: the bodily system of a human being (the anatomical structure, stature, properties, and functions) provides a foundation for understanding cultural systems (113). *A Christmas Carol* presents a fertile ground for research on the status of the body, its appearance and functioning in the context of (not) satisfying the demands of a dominant culture. According to Marot Kiš and Bujan, social and cultural attitudes to deviances from the norm differ amongst various social structures. Thus overly intolerant social structures, conditioned by the requirements of hegemonistic practices, tend to push bodily conditioned differences to the margins, while more liberal social structures place these differences within the frames of subcultures or social subgroups (113).

Disabled persons have historically been considered less capable than non-disabled persons. Understanding and defining normality gained momentum in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries with the emergence of new 'scientific'

disciplines and discourses, especially physiognomics and statistics,² and the industrialisation of the Western world, when gender, race, sexuality, and bodily traits began reflecting the human ideal, but also the non-ideal. The principles of this science were outlined by Johann Kaspar Lavater in his *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschliebe* of 1775 and these helped create the sentiment towards the disabled in nineteenth-century Britain (see Stoichita 157–68; Tytler 301).

The term *disabled* entered the English vocabulary in this historical period in the context of work ethics, which punished those who could not follow the demands of the fast-growing English economy – that is perform work which had to be completed in factories within strictly prescribed time frames (Lacom 548). According to Lacom, the Victorians' perception of people with disabilities was primarily founded on four forces: 1) developing capitalist economic theories, in particular the free-market economy as advocated by the economic theorists Adam Smith and David Ricardo; 2) an ideology of self-help; 3) a national obsession with empire building; and 4) the growth of industrialism (547). William Holladay and Stephen Watt point out that the economic theory of the free market assigned people with disabilities and deformities the role of outcast and social parasite (869). The Poor Law Amendment Act required those who were unable to keep up with the production norms and time-keeping to turn themselves into workhouses, support themselves by looking for jobs that did not require, in Lacom's terminology, 'technologically useful bodies', or, alternatively, help themselves by displaying their bodies in shows that earned money based on physical difference (Lacom 548). Furthermore, the disabled were seen as potentially disruptive for the expanding British empire. This fear was fuelled by the outcomes of the American and French revolutions, which resulted in a pressure to *contain* potentially subversive bodies (Lacom 548). Thus the 'container' image schema fits nicely with the concept of a bodily mediated identity, leading to the conceptual metaphor 'disability is containment'. The conceptual metaphor reflects the Victorians' sentiment towards the disabled, in particular the attitude of the well-to-do towards this marginalised group. It can be concluded that the upper and middle classes were rather intolerant of the disabled, while keeping boundaries between the 'non-disabled' and the 'disabled' was a must. We can recollect the fictional character of the Dwarf in Oscar Wilde's modern fanciful tale 'The Birthday of the Infanta', where the Dwarf's containment in the forest reflects a physical as well as metaphorical marginalisation of the character.

Moreover, Thomas Malthus's theory of the 'surplus' population suggested that there is a 'constant tendency in all animated life to increase beyond the nourishment prepared for it' (15). Since it is impossible for an economy to support all population, argues Malthus, the natural law of necessity operates through two categories of 'checks': 1) fertility control and 2) checks which increase mortality or the possibility of dying (unwholesome occupations, wars, diseases, famine, and excesses of all kinds). To some, the last subcategory of 'check' left little room for interpretation.

The philosophy of ‘technologically useful bodies’ was in accordance with the Utilitarian ideology devised by Jeremy Bentham at the beginning of the nineteenth century. According to social historian Anthony Cockshut, the main principles of Utilitarianism were egocentrism, pragmatic use in all aspects of life, and hedonism (10). Both philosophies marginalised the disabled poor, whose position became particularly unfavourable after the introduction of the First Reform Act, which entrenched the domination of money and industry over nobility and agriculture (Wild Bićanić 157). The act, generally considered by most social historians to be the event that marked the commencement of the Victorian era in history, was a reflection of the rapid development of technology and industry. The 1830s and 1840s were the most hectic decades of the Victorian period in Britain, while the demands of fast-developing industries required a new workforce for menial jobs, which was mainly recruited amongst the poor. Britain was a class-divided society and keeping barriers between the classes was a must. The upper and middle classes imposed values and attitudes that everybody had to comply with, while the attitude that was criticised most severely by the intellectuals of the period was hypocrisy. Social historian Walter E. Houghton emphasises that hypocrisy consisted of several components: conformity, moral pretension, and evasion (413). Thus the Victorians conformed to the customary order to avoid social stigma, which was reflected in, for instance, a majority of people attending church, although many of those people considered themselves agnostics. The moral pretension of the Victorians, on the other hand, resulted in their declarative worship of one god, the Creator of all beings, and concrete dedication to another, the god of money, Mammon. Moral pretension went hand in hand with evasion, argues Houghton, which impelled well-to-do Victorians to address the living and working conditions of the poor and the disabled with ‘shallow and insistent optimism’ (426). The rich turned a deaf ear to the problems of the poor and the disabled and treated those problems as nonexistent.

The echoes of these philosophies can be discerned in the portrayal of Ebenezer Scrooge. He is a man who is completely dedicated to profit-making, and the accumulation of money is his sole purpose in life. On Christmas Eve he is visited by three spirits: the Ghost of Christmas Past, the Ghost of Christmas Present, and the Ghost of Christmas Future. The spirits’ ‘mission’ is to help Scrooge regain the innocence of his young days and become a person who will be able to not only empathise with the needy but also take appropriate actions in order to help them. The first spirit reminds Scrooge that once he was a dreamy child who vividly imagined his favourite fictional characters (Ali Baba, Valentine, Orson) paying him a visit during his solitary hours. As a boy Scrooge could sympathise with fictional characters and align himself with what they were going through. According to C. Daniel Batson’s ‘empathy-altruism hypothesis’ altruistic behaviours are triggered by imagination and emotion (Harrison 258). Scrooge was able to imagine and empathise as a boy, but over the years he gradually lost these capabilities and started turning into a greedy person interested solely in material possessions.

Having lost the love of his life because of his selfishness and devotion to Mammon, Scrooge completely lost his imagination and turned into a cynical miser. Dickens' 'Eugene Grandet' is not only mean to others, but also to himself. He deprives himself of earthly pleasures, despicably looking down at those who rejoice during Christmastime:

I don't make merry myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people merry. I help to support the establishments I have mentioned – they cost enough: and those who are badly off must go there. (12)

Scrooge perceives poor people as idle, which reflects the sentiment of the middle and upper classes towards the poor during the Victorian period. Moreover, his attitude towards the poor is also in accordance with the philosophy of 'technologically useful bodies': those who cannot contribute to the national economy due to their poverty and/or disability must be contained within workhouses or jails.

Scrooge's character initially represents the most prominent principles of the philosophy of 'technologically useful bodies': immersion in profit making, insensibility, and indifference towards the poor, destitute, and all other marginalised groups. Thus, when asked by two gentlemen to donate some money to the needy, Scrooge sarcastically tells them off:

'At this festive season of the year, Mr Scrooge', said the gentleman, taking up a pen, 'it is more than usually desirable that we should make some slight provision for the poor and destitute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands are in want of common necessities; hundreds of thousands are in want of common comforts, sir.'

'Are there no prisons?' asked Scrooge.

'Plenty of prisons,' said the gentleman, laying down the pen again.

'And the Union workhouses?' demanded Scrooge. 'Are they still in operation?'

'They are. Still,' returned the gentleman, 'I wish I could say they were not.'

'The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, then?' said Scrooge.

'Both very busy, sir.'

'Oh, I was afraid, from what you said at first, that something had occurred to stop them in their useful course,' said Scrooge. 'I am very glad to hear it.' (11)

As the story unfolds, Scrooge undergoes a change of heart. His initial stance that the 'surplus population' should be contained in jails and workhouses starts to alter when the Ghost of Christmas Present takes him to the Cratchitts' house. Bob Cratchitt is Scrooge's underpaid employee and lives in a humble house with his wife and many children. One of the children, Tiny Tim, is disabled: he walks with a crutch and is also supported by an iron frame. A child with polio, wearing leg braces and supported on crutches, was, according to Halfon, Houtrow, Larson, and Newacheck, 'the iconic image of disability' until the 1960s (14). Such a portrayal of Tiny Tim was meant to induce sympathy amongst readers, who were likely to recognise the ailment, which was fairly common

amongst Victorian children, and feel solidarity with the character. The character of Tiny Tim has a synecdochal function and is a representative of a stigmatised social group, the disabled. Dickens hoped that fictional suffering could help his contemporaries ‘ameliorate the actual suffering they encountered around them’ (Harrison 262). How adamant he was to stir social changes is clear in his preface to the 1843 edition of *A Christmas Carol*:

I have endeavoured in this ghostly little book to raise the ghost of an idea which shall not put my readers out of humour with themselves, with each other, with the season or with me. May it haunt their house pleasantly and no one wish to lay it.

Readers empathise not only with Tiny Tim, but also with the other members of his family. The Cratchitts are poor and therefore marginalised in Victorian society. Despite their poverty, the family manages to create a warm atmosphere in their household at Christmas, with Tiny Tim equally participating in all family activities. Thus, Bob Cratchitt does not perceive carrying Tim as a burden, but lovingly carries Tim around and is of service to him, as is the rest of the family. Tiny Tim is thus not contained within the premises of his house as is Wilde’s Dwarf, whose father confines his movements to the forest where they both live. The Cratchitts, in contrast, replicate the Christian model of a united family in which all family members empathise with a sick family member.

The Christian model of empathy

Empathy is, in Gibbs’ terminology, ‘understanding another person’s particular experiences (sadness, joy, and so on)’ as well as understanding ‘the experience of another as an embodied subject of experience like oneself’ (*Embodiment* 35). Neuroscientists advocating the simulation theory (Gallese and Goldman) attribute our capacity to experience empathy to the fine play of neurons, which they named ‘mirror neurons’. These neurons enable us to recognise, comprehend, and imitate other people’s behaviours.

Empathy represents an interdisciplinary topic of research and has been, as pointed out by Mary-Catherine Harrison, the topic of study of diverse sciences: on the one hand of cognitive science, social and developmental psychology, philosophy of mind, and ethics, which study empathy with other people, and on the other of philosophical aesthetics, cognitive psychology, film studies, and literary criticism, which concentrate on empathy with characters (256). Both perspectives will be addressed subsequently with an aim to present ideas for further research on the interrelation between readers’ empathy with fictional characters and their subsequent behaviour.

I shall base my study upon the Christian model of empathy towards the disabled and deprived. According to this model, every individual should empathise with every fellow human being in need, and thus also a poor or disabled person. During the past two thousand years, Western literature has been

modelled on the Christian tradition of understanding disability, as is argued by Michael Bérubé: disability is thus read as ‘a sign of God’s wrath or grace’ (569). While Richard III and Captain Ahab embody the first interpretation of disability, Tiny Tim represents the second option. In fact, continues Bérubé, Tiny Tim’s disability is not portrayed as an index of his own moral standing but an index of everybody else’s moral standing (570). This primarily concerns the character of Ebenezer Scrooge, whose moral standing changes significantly throughout the story. Dickens envisaged Scrooge’s transformation as model behaviour for his potential readers: he hoped that he would rouse empathy amongst contemporary readers, especially the members of the middle and high classes of British society, for the poor, disabled child in the story and, accordingly, help them to improve the position of disabled people in real life.

The Christian cultural model of empathy relies on yet another cultural model: the model of the *Great Chain of Being*, namely its extended version. The basic model, as is pointed out by Lakoff and Turner, perceives all forms of existence as determined by their attributes and behaviour. It is a hierarchical model in which more complex forms of existence occupy higher positions within the hierarchy, while simpler ones are situated lower. Thus people occupy a higher level than animals, since the former are defined by their mental abilities and character, whereas the latter are defined by their instinctual attributes and behaviour. Unlike the basic model of the Great Chain of Being, its extended version includes the element of dominance alongside attributes and behaviour. This model is widespread throughout diverse world cultures, with God occupying the highest position within the hierarchy and dominating his followers, thereby controlling everything and everybody. Such an apprehension of God results in the conceptual metaphors ‘God is up’ and ‘God is power’. These are in turn experientially based and are, according to Jan Tolaas, the result of the fact that we are all born in a gravitational field and with a central nervous system (204). Tolaas argues that we are all able to grasp a metaphorical as well as a literal meaning of a metaphor since both meanings result from ‘a process understandable in terms of our biological structure developing in gravitational and cultural space’ (205). Thus the concept ‘more is up’, which appears to be near-universal, gives room to the establishment of conventional metaphors ‘God is up’ and ‘God is power’.

These metaphors are near-universal and perceive a deity as the supreme power; thus in Christian religious tradition it is God who makes decisions regarding the lives and deaths of all living creatures. While contemplating Tiny Tim’s future, Scrooge wishes for the boy to get better. However, the Ghost of Christmas Present reminds Scrooge of his attitude towards the poor and the needy saying that it is better for the boy to die and thus decrease the ‘surplus’ population. Only after the ghost has spoken Scrooge’s very mind does Scrooge realise the horror of his own view of deprived people. Parallels with the extended cultural model of the Great Chain of Being can be drawn at the point when the Ghost of Christmas Present reminds Scrooge that only God has the power to decide who should die and who should live:

‘Man’, said the ghost, ‘if man you be in heart, not adamant, forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered what the surplus is, and where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, what men shall die? It may be that, in the sight of Heaven, you are more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this poor man’s child. O God! To hear the insect on the leaf pronouncing on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!’ (50)

Scrooge thereupon starts aligning with the poor, sick, and homeless while visiting almshouses, hospitals, and jails with the Ghost of Christmas Present. His stance is reinforced when the Ghost of Christmas Future warns him of his possible miserable end if he does not alter his life path. Eventually Scrooge becomes a true philanthropist and brings happiness to all those people whom he previously considered ‘undeserving’.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The 1840s were turbulent years in British history: new findings in natural and social sciences provided a different perspective on the origin and evolution of mankind, while numerous philosophical schools began advocating a different approach to social relations. While findings in anthropology led to contradictory reactions (Darwin’s work on his theory of ‘progress through struggle’ suggested only the fittest could survive the course of natural selection), the teachings of some of the schools and thinkers of the period contributed to the development of social awareness and solidarity for those ‘less fortunate’. The birth of a new science, sociology, focused on social issues and advocated the philosophy of the maturation of mankind through time. The British sociologist Herbert Spencer, strongly influenced by the French philosopher Auguste Comte, advocated the idea that the history of Western civilisation can be compared with the stages of human life. According to Spencer’s theory, dogmatic instruction is necessary throughout the initial stage of history (that is, childhood); adolescence is equivalent to the historical stage at which metaphysical issues begin to arise; while manhood corresponds to the stage of getting to know the world through experiential science (Newsome 176), and thus a gradual maturation of humanity results in more mature attitudes to the marginalised categories in a population. Moreover, James Cowles Prichard’s influential exposition of monogenism (*Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* [1813; 1847]), according to which all peoples descended from one community, contributed to a different perception of marginalised groups.

Harriet Martineau’s application of the principles of free-market economy to the sickbed can be credited for the fact that the philosophy of ‘useful bodies’ was slowly giving way to empathy towards the disabled. In 1839 Martineau, a prominent journalist and political theoretician, was diagnosed with an ovarian tumour. She voluntarily opted for self-confinement within the premises of her bedroom during her illness. In the years to follow, she became the mistress of her sick-room, controlling the set up of the room as well as the flow of people entering and exiting it. Determined to win the battle over her illness, Martineau advocated

patients' independence in the correspondence she regularly exchanged with her friends. Her collection of essays entitled *Life in the Sick Room, or, Essays by an Invalid*, published in 1844, became a normative treatise on invalidism. Her ideas, which were radically different from the principles of the philosophy of 'useful bodies', pleaded for the extension of an invalid's authority within his confinement. She managed to extend aspects of the sick-room far beyond the borders of her bedroom, thereby introducing amongst the general public the ideas of 'the ill person's privileged access to moral, spiritual and philosophical truths' (Winter 604).

As the attitudes related to the social status of disabled people started to change, so did the stance of the disabled towards their own illness. Disabled people began gaining a sense of strength in spite of their disability. The changes that Dickens hoped to evoke are reflected in Tiny Tim's wish, reported by his father:

Somehow, he gets thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strangest things you have ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and it might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day who made lame beggars walk and blind men see. (47)

It can be concluded that the initial hedonism and egocentrism of the early Victorians began gradually changing into social awareness for the poor and disabled during the 1840s. The change in public sentiment towards the disabled was in part due to the developments in natural and social sciences, on the one hand, and the ideas spreading from different philosophical schools and thinkers on the other. Nevertheless, British society witnessed another shift towards egocentrism, the race for material values, and hedonism during the Victorian era. Thus social historian David Newsome points out that the end of the nineteenth century was marked by orientations in art and philosophy that were turned towards the self—primarily aestheticism and Mammonism (242). This veering towards decadence shook the stability of the dominant cultural models, but did not significantly change their structure (Vidović 311).

Besides philosophical schools, the breakthroughs in science, and the philosophies of the thinkers of the period, we cannot neglect the huge influence of contemporary writers, with Charles Dickens as the most prominent advocate of a different treatment of the poor and the disabled. Dickens was aware of the sore reality and the marginalised position of the poor and, even more so, the disabled, and he stimulated changes by stirring the emotion of empathy in the readers of the day—and this, he hoped, would help spur them to take concrete action. The echoes of the two mutually contradictory cultural models that were dominant throughout the Victorian period, the model based on the philosophy of 'technologically useful bodies' and the Christian model of empathy, can be traced in the portrayal of Ebenezer Scrooge and Tiny Tim. These two cultural models are metaphorically constituted and based on the 'container' and 'up and down' image schemas, respectively. The two cultural models proved to

be relatively stable during the first period of the Victorian era, although the evaluative dimensions appeared to be subject to historical changes.

Ideas for further study could include research on the actual actions motivated by the fictional suffering in Dickens's works. A line should be drawn, argues Mary-Catherine Harrison, between fictional suffering and the suffering of people in real life. The key difference is that readers cannot intervene in characters' lives, whereas we have the power to act when real-life people are in question (259). Harrison raises a question whether fictional suffering leads to suffering in real life and whether the latter is accompanied by equivalent actions. While the emotional effects of mid-nineteenth-century suffering in fiction are well-documented (Harrison 271), subsequent research can focus upon the ways characters which have a synecdochic function in a narrative help in addressing the problems of the marginalised social group they represent. Understanding the principles of dominant cultural models can contribute to a more thorough understanding of the relationship between fictional suffering and subsequent behaviours.

NOTES

1. Lakoff and Johnson define image schemas as the dynamic, experiential patterns our life is made up of (30).
2. Physiognomics is a pseudo-science which assesses a person's character or personality from his outer appearance.

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Ester Vidović is employed at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Rijeka, Croatia, where she teaches English-related subjects. She defended her doctoral dissertation in 2012, in which she focused on metaphors related to understanding time and space in the works of several Victorian authors for children. Her areas of interest include children's literature in English, foreign language acquisition at an early age, and also cognitive linguistics, cognitive poetics, and cultural studies.