

Parasites, Herbivores and Dried Fish: Dehumanising Metaphorical Blends in Japanese

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ABSTRACT

In the context of a vast body of research on the role and function of conceptual metaphor in linguistic representation of non-dominant or non-normative social groups, the present paper deals with metaphorical blending found in a number of expressions used to describe deliberately single people forming part of the Japanese society. Expressions such as *parasaito shinguru* (“parasite singles”), *sōshoku-kei danshi* (“herbivorous men”), and *himono onna* (“dried-fish women”) are used as labels designating particular groups of people who do not conform to conventional societal roles because of, for example, failing to marry and establish a family in, what is considered, due time. The Japanese language often reflects very conservative, conformist, and ritual-abiding attitudes and mindsets of its speakers and hence, is rife with derogatory expressions which serve to denigrate non-conforming elements of a society. The expressions analysed here are culturally-determined and mirror, at least partially, the mindsets and opinions of some of the Japanese speakers. The present paper is maintained within the methodological framework of cognitive semantics. We conduct a conceptual blending analysis of selected metaphorical expressions found in the Japanese discourse. We find a strong trend towards employing conceptual blends based on dehumanising, often animalising, metaphors in order to linguistically denigrate groups non-conforming to expected societal norms.

Keywords: conceptual metaphor; dehumanising metaphor; conceptual blending; cognitive semantics; Japanese society

INTRODUCTION

Historically, remaining single into late adulthood, especially out of choice, has been considered as a suspicious and even somewhat deviant behaviour in many cultures. This stereotype is still perpetrated, especially in the Asian world (Tanaka & Ng, 2012). It is incomparably more shameful and disgraceful for women to fail to marry and have children in due time. Such a failure, whether caused by life circumstances or, worse still, by deliberate choice, has been stigmatised and frowned upon by the custom-abiding parts of society. Social attitudes find their reflections in conventionalised expressions of the language of a given society (Takemaru, 2005).

The Japanese language, reflecting very conservative and ritualistic attitudes of the Japanese people, is rife with derogatory terms and expressions used to refer mostly to women, but also to some extent to men, who do not conform to rules of standard, socially-approved behaviour. These expressions are mostly metaphorical in nature. The manipulative and opinion-forming power of metaphor has been long recognised in the cognitive semantics perspective. In the present paper we attempt to investigate the role of metaphor-based

expressions as reflections of the society's evaluation and perception of certain social groups in Japan. We present a selection of dehumanising metaphorical blends used to denigrate and ridicule undesirable and non-normative social behaviours, paying special attention to *parasaito shinguru* ("parasite singles"), *sōshoku-kei danshi* ("herbivorous men"), and *himono onna* ("dried-fish women"). These labels are used to describe social groups in a heavily unfavourable and derisive way which reflects their overall perception by the community at large.

The aim of the present study is to place such labels (*parasaito shinguru*, *sōshoku-kei danshi*, *himono onna*) under scrutiny, to explain the dynamic nature of meaning construal of expressions based on metaphorical blending, as well as to demonstrate the possible implications of using them to refer to certain social groups.

The present study draws upon a body of well-established metaphor research investigating the role and function of metaphor in the social world (Steen, Reijnders, & Burgers, 2014; Thibodeau, 2017; Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011), as well as newly-emerging studies dealing with the spread of hate speech, verbal violence, and stigmatisation through dehumanisation in contemporary societies (cf. for example Bastian & Haslam, 2011; Costello, 2013; Haslam, 2006; Musolff, 2015; O'Brien, 2009). This study refers to research concerning linguistic representation of groups and individuals in Japanese, with particular emphasis on the representation of marginalised, minority or otherwise, underprivileged groups (Neill, 2009; Nicolae, 2014; Takemaru, 2005; Tran, 2006).

The present study contributes to the understanding of the role of metaphorical framing in shaping perceptions and attitudes towards groups of people and individuals. It is then not only a linguistic investigation into the semantics of newly-formed expressions, but a contextualised research on the communicative function of metaphor as used in everyday discourse. It stresses the significance of context (social and cultural) in meaning construal and interpretation (Kövecses, 2015) and provides insight into language users' motivations which drive the creation of certain expressions, especially those based on metaphorisation and conceptual integration. Expressions presented and analysed in this way can be dealt with either as matters of language or thought, as each linguistic metaphor is potentially conceptual in nature. Most importantly, metaphor is a matter of discourse and should be studied within the framework of a given socio-cultural context.

The present study provides novel perspectives into dehumanisation through language, as it draws from new strains of metaphor research embedded in empirical studies on language and social cognition. It sheds new light on the problem by applying a methodological framework which combines conceptual metaphor theory with conceptual integration theory in order to account for the emergent meanings of complex metaphorical blends found in the Japanese social discourse. We claim that only such an integrated approach can give justice to the complex nature of meaning formation in novel expressions, such as for example, metaphorical blends, providing, at the same time, an insight into the effect such language may have on its users and the society at large. We claim that metaphorical framing leads not only to certain interpretations and receptions of a given message, but also plays a part in attitude formation, potentially leading to the perpetuation of stereotypes, prejudice, and otherwise negative evaluation of certain groups or individuals.

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR

Conceptual metaphor is undoubtedly one of the most influential and widely applied theories in the cognitive linguistics paradigm. It gained scholars' interest mostly after the publication of George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's seminal book *Metaphors We Live By* (1980). The approach presented there was ground-breaking and revolutionary mainly because it liberated the metaphor from the constraints of literary studies and introduced it to the realm of cognitive

sciences and linguistics. Metaphor ceased to be perceived solely as a stylistic device limited to texts, but was first described as a conceptual mechanism. (In fact, an even earlier proto-cognitive approach to metaphor can be traced back to the so-called Bildfeldtheorie propounded by Harald Weinrich (1958), in which metaphor is seen as a coupling of two verbal domains of sense on the basis of certain analogies established between them). First and foremost, it structures the way we think and only secondarily does it manifest itself at the level of language. The main function of conceptual metaphor is to facilitate our understanding of complex phenomena by structuring the unknown by means of the familiar. Finding patterns between two concepts enables understanding the less familiar (and usually more abstract) one by referring it to the more familiar (and generally more concrete) one. The concepts, however, have to bear some degree of similarity for the mappings to be established. The process can be illustrated diagrammatically in the following way:

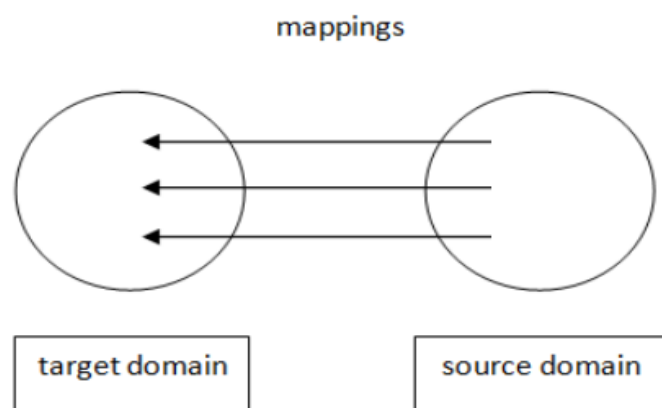


FIGURE 1. Conceptual metaphor

A target domain is the less familiar domain whose understanding can be facilitated (or deliberately distorted and guided into a chosen direction) by comparing it to a source domain. A source domain, in turn, is a domain closer to human basic experience and as such serves as a scaffolding for constructing the understanding of the target domain. Mappings are the correspondences established between the similar aspects of the two domains. They may highlight (strengthen the importance of) or hide (ignore or downplay) certain elements of the target domain. This is why a careful and deliberate choice of the source domain influences the conceptualisation of the target domain to a great extent. The process of recognising similarities and establishing mappings is largely subconscious and thus can be almost automatic (or becomes automatic due to the conventional usage of many metaphors), or may remain deliberate and calculated in the case of unconventional (not yet conventionalised) metaphors.

Metaphor does not simply decorate thought by providing an artful expression of pre-existing ideas. Nor, in a related premise, is metaphor solely the property of public discussion or discourse, used by speech-makers as a tool to make ideas more palatable, persuasive or compelling. Instead, metaphor enters and influences all our lives; it does not remain in the province of professional public speech but permeates individual and collective thought. Far from simply ornamenting or elaborating an idea, metaphor actively influences the thought it helps to articulate, giving it a form and shape that can define or alter it in fundamental ways. (Wills 2009, p. 5)

Using different kinds of metaphorical imageries that is, choosing different source domains to describe the same target domain or describing it non-metaphorically at all, is related to Langacker's concept of construal (2008). One and the same situation may be described in a number of different ways, using "alternative construals" due to human imaginative power, an

ability to see things from different perspectives, with different degrees of specificity, taking into consideration varying scope of reference as well as being able to conceptually engage or disengage from a particular event.

“Metaphor has the power to create reality for us; it is the major way in which the human cognitive system produces nonphysical reality, that is, the social, political, psychological, emotional, and so on worlds” (Kövecses, 2015, p. 83). Thus, the power of metaphor to create social reality including all potential stereotypes, prejudices, associations, and opinions cannot be overestimated, in particular if a given metaphor is used deliberately, i.e., ostensibly in communication between users (cf. deliberate metaphors in Silvestre-López, 2020, p. 37) Thus choosing certain metaphorical frames in order to label different demographic groups often leads to conceptualising these groups in very specific ways and may have implications on the way others perceive and treat them. Metaphorical framing extends way beyond the language into cognition and reasoning (cf. Thibodeau & Boroditsky, 2011).

DEHUMANISING METAPHOR

The use of dehumanising metaphors is one of the most common manipulation techniques aimed to influence the perception of a given group of people (Costello, 2013; Costello & Hodson, 2014; Hodson, MacInnis, & Costello, 2014; Pražmo, 2019; Wills, 2009). Whether deliberate and ill-intentioned or purely mindless, the use of certain metaphorical expressions can and does lead to shaping perceptions about individuals or groups described in such ways. Linguistic representations which make use of animal or inanimate imagery in order to denigrate, deindividualize, or dehumanise people are especially pervasive. They range from relatively innocuous descriptions which do not aim to offend anybody directly, to aggressive and deliberately offensive language which constitutes the so called ‘hate speech’ (Bastian & Haslam, 2011; Sindoni, 2017; Townsend, 2014).

Dehumanising animalistic metaphors serve to undermine the importance and weaken social position of the described groups or individuals (Savage, 2007; Waśniewska, 2018). Human beings commonly assume uniqueness and superiority over non-human beings and tend to claim a privileged position in the Great Chain of Beings (*scala naturae*) yielding only to God and angel-like creatures (Krzyszowski, 1997; Lakoff & Turner, 1989; Rigato & Minelli, 2013).

Animals, plants and other living organisms have been widely used as source domains in various metaphorical expressions, especially those involving human beings in target domains. HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL metaphor is problematic though, for a number of reasons. First, it is factually problematic to treat it as a metaphor, because, technically speaking, humans are animals. The scientific view is in stark contrast with the folk, naïve view which contrasts humans and animals as two polar opposites. It is beyond the scope of the present paper, however, to attempt to resolve this factual inexactitude. The second problematic aspect of HUMAN IS AN ANIMAL metaphor pertains to its twofold evaluative potential. On the one hand, linguistically representing humans as animals is degrading to humans. On the other hand, metaphor has the power of hiding and highlighting certain elements of the domain, i.e., the metaphorical projections are selective and it is often the case that only the desirable aspects of the source domain are projected onto the target domain. Thus, ACHILLES IS A LION metaphor is clearly not degrading, but upgrading since what is metaphorically projected onto the target domain is not the animality as such, but rather the selected, positive features associated with lions, such as strength, nobility, and courage (Lakoff & Turner, 1989). The attributes are both stereotypically associated with given animals or other living organisms as well as overly general. Thus, another metaphor that is at work in metaphorical representation of this sort is GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor. Rather than scientific, this vision of humans and animals is

based on the cultural model of the Great Chain of Beings. The concept dates back to ancient Greek philosophers and was further developed during the Middle Ages (cf. Lovejoy, 2017). It presents a hierarchical organisation of beings which places them at different rungs on the ladder of being. It starts with God at the topmost position, and then downgrades to angels, humans, animals, plant, and inanimate matter.

The great chain is a cultural model defined by attributes and behavior which typically apply to each form of being (humans, animals, plants, complex objects, and natural physical things) in a hierarchy. (...) The GENERIC IS SPECIFIC metaphor singles out common generic structure from specific concepts. The combination of the two models allows us to understand animal behavior in terms of human character. For example, we believe that lions, like humans, are courageous. The people are animals mapping, on the other hand, makes us understand human character in terms of animal behavior. Thus, in *Achilles is a lion*, we see Achilles' courage in terms of a lion's attributed courage. (Barcelona, 2003, p. 111)

No matter how naïve and how far-removed from the scientific worldview, the Great Chain of Being provides an ample source for proverbial expressions and metaphorical conceptualisations. Juxtaposing humans with animals, plants or other organisms located below in the chain constitutes a case of dehumanisation. Lower-level qualities and behaviours are mapped from the source domain onto the target domain leading to a denigrating conceptualisation of higher-level entities (e.g. HUMANS ARE ANIMALS). Conversely, juxtaposing lower-level target domain with higher-level source domain (e.g. ANIMALS ARE HUMANS) leads to personification or other kinds of nobilitation, unless explicitly expressed otherwise.

Different types of animals, plants, and inanimate matter are perceived as inferior to humans. Thus, HUMANS ARE ANIMALS metaphor serves a primarily denigrating function and creates a negative attitude towards a person described in this way. This aim is usually achieved through choosing a particularly despicable, lowly, or disgusting kind of animal as a source domain (Pražmo, 2019; Waśniewska, 2017, 2018). Thus, there are examples of different ethnic groups being linguistically represented as 'insects' 'swarming' and 'infecting' a 'host' nation, 'parasites' 'scrounging' off welfare, 'wild animals' attacking and 'flocking' or even inanimate phenomena related to natural disasters such as 'floods', 'torrents' and other dangerous bodies of water as well as natural disasters affecting a country. Musolff (2012) investigates the use of IMMIGRANTS ARE PARASITES metaphor in the context of the contemporary German society with its Turkish minority and the recent migration from Africa and the Middle East. In this context, the emphasis is put not on the 'germ carrying' function of the parasites, but rather on their parasitic, that is, scrounging nature. Social parasites rely on benefits from the state and in this way weaken the state and take advantage of hard-working citizens. The metaphor seems to be well established in the anti-immigration discourse, together with IMMIGRANTS ARE LEECHES and IMMIGRANTS ARE VERMIN which is also frequent in the British press and online media (Musolff, 2015, 2017).

Such metaphorical representations are especially common in extreme right-wing and xenophobic discourses and relate mainly to the idea of bio-parasite carrying diseases and infecting a host nation. However, the metaphorical notion of a social parasite, sponging off hard-working citizens and leading a lazy and unproductive lifestyle riding on the society's back is also widespread. Parasites, Waśniewska observes:

themselves do not actually elicit a fear response similar to that we experience when attacked by a wild animal; it is rather the feeling of disgust and the threat of infection and contamination that incites the urge to get rid of the foreign body. (Waśniewska, 2017, p. 47)

It leads to the activation of the so called *behavioural immune system* whose aim is to protect us from consuming or having any other close contact with contaminated, parasite-

infected or otherwise suspicious food etc. by creating a feeling of disgust (Ackerman, Hill, & Murray, 2018; van Leeuwen & Petersen, 2018; Sawada, Auger, & Lydon, 2018; Schaller & Park, 2011). Interestingly, it may also affect our reasoning and decision-making in relation to political inclinations, attitudes towards migration, etc. (Aarøe, Petersen, & Arceneaux, 2017). Thus, activating the parasite imagery inevitably leads to eliciting defensive reactions and negative attitudes. The history of the metaphor is long and complex, but regardless of the actual subtype of a metaphor used (bio-parasite, socio-parasite, etc.) the implications are grave.

Regardless of which type of parasite people are categorised as, one thing remains constant: the parasite is always seen as a foreign body, an alien that sneaks in uninvited and therefore has no right to freedom or any type of resources. The metaphor implies the need to control the threat, either through banishment or extermination; any communication, negotiation or cooperation is out of the question. (Waśniewska, 2017, pp. 50–51)

Moreover, this strong evaluative potential and pragmatic implications of parasitic metaphors may be additionally sanctioned by the pervasiveness of biological source domains in other discourses due to the high degree of their embodiment and thus efficiency in facilitating human-scale understanding of different phenomena. For instance, within the legal discourse, in many European civil law systems, especially in criminal law, the legal reasoning is based, *inter alia*, on the metaphors such as STATE IS AN ORGANISM and CITIZENS ARE ITS CELLS, there are also such metaphorical inferences as FOREIGN CITIZENS ARE FOREIGN CELLS ATTACKING HEALTHY TISSUES OF THE ORGANISM or CRIME IS A DISEASE (Wojtczak, 2017; Wojtczak, Witczak-Plisiecka, & Augustyn, 2017). Since the law should generally reflect the “healthy” principles of harmonious social order and the language of law uses expressions that evoke such imagery—even if only at the deeper, subconscious level of cognition—the metaphorical thinking from that domain can easily be transferred onto other discourses (social, political etc.). Given the already pervasive nature of similar or other biological and animalistic metaphors in those discourses, this may inadvertently and falsely warrant such a line of reasoning, inevitably leading to severe social consequences.

CONCEPTUAL INTEGRATION

Conceptual Integration Theory (also known as conceptual blending theory, henceforth CIT) has been one of the most influential and widely applied theories in cognitive linguistics in the recent years. It derives from Gilles Fauconnier’s early concept of mental spaces (Fauconnier, 1985), defined as conceptual packets of information which are activated on-line in a discourse. CIT was further developed (Coulson, 2001; Fauconnier & Turner, 2003a; Grady, Coulson, & Oakley, 1999) and refined (Brandt, 2012; Brandt & Brandt, 2005) throughout the years, but from the outset it has been at the forefront of cognitive linguistics. CIT postulates the dynamic and emergent nature of meaning creation, and thus can be successfully applied to the analysis of neologisms, occasionalisms, and other nonce formations. Also, contextual modifications of meanings of compounds can be accounted for by means of conceptual integration theory (Waszakowa, 2017).

Conceptual integration model, also known as conceptual integration network, is represented diagrammatically in the following way:

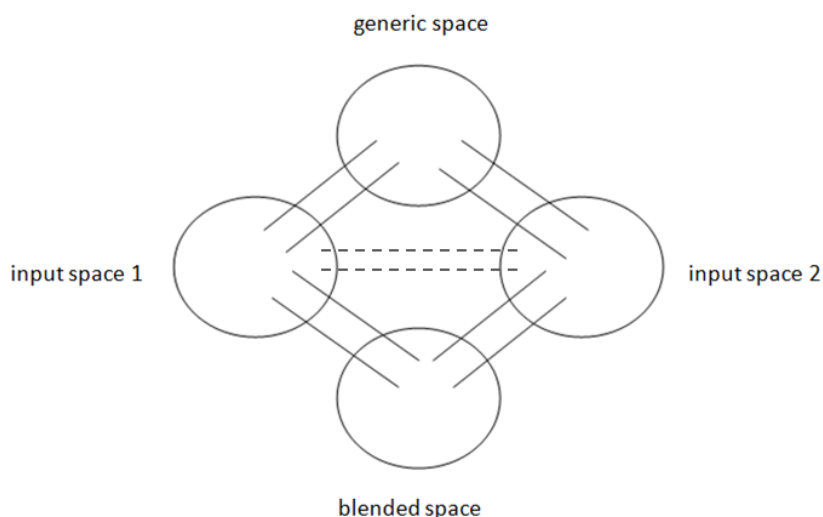


FIGURE 2. Conceptual integration model

Input spaces merge and selectively project certain semantic elements into the blended space. The meaning of the blend is emergent, that is, it can be created ad hoc and processed on-line. It may involve elaborate imagery and complex concepts. In other words, conceptual blending is:

dynamic, supple, and active in the moment of thinking. It yields products that frequently become entrenched in conceptual structure and grammar, and it often performs new work on its previously entrenched products as inputs. (...) In blending, structure from input mental spaces is projected to a separate, “blended” mental space. The projection is selective. Through completion and elaboration, the blend develops structure not provided by the inputs. Inferences, arguments, and ideas developed in the blend can have effect in cognition, leading us to modify the initial inputs and to change our view of the corresponding situations.

(Fauconnier & Turner, 1998, p. 1)

Just like conceptual metaphor, conceptual integration is a way of thinking. It may, and very often does manifest itself at the level of language. It may take the form of “formal blends” (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003b), that is, combinations in which two independent words merge to form one, as well as compounds or other morphological, lexical, or syntactic amalgams. They are all products of conceptual integration.

Compounds can be broadly defined as combinations of two (or more) words which create a new word or expression. To avoid methodological problems that such a broad definition may pose, Réka Benczes (2006) proposes a more precise definition and states that a compound is “a word that is made up of two or more elements, the first of which is either a word or a phrase, the second of which is a word” (Benczes, 2006, p. 8). A juxtaposition of two elements in a compound thus may lead to multiple interpretations unless the possibilities are limited by the context or the conceptualiser’s background knowledge (Pražmo, 2017). Fauconnier and Turner (2003b) provide a detailed analysis of the possible meanings of *dolphin safe* and other compounds with *safe*. Simple forms require the interlocutor to conceptualise “elaborate integration networks” (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003b, p. 64) which differ from case to case. These juxtapositions of words, especially conducted in creative and unconventional ways, lead to the emergence of new meanings as a result of the process of conceptual integration. In other words, they activate “meaning potentials” inherent to elements present in input spaces, but latent until required for a specific interpretation of a certain usage event (Norén & Linell, 2007; Pražmo, 2017). Such blends may or may not be metaphorical in nature. However, there is a special type of conceptual blending: metaphorical blending which is

especially pertinent to the present paper (Berberović & Mujagić, 2017; Berezhnykh, Sivtseva, Skopintseva, & Kontrimovich, 2018; Grady, 2005; Grady et al., 1999; Schröder, 2015; Semino, 2010). In metaphorical blends, metaphors serve as input spaces.

If conceptual metaphor theory is primarily concerned with well-established metaphoric associations between concepts, and blending theory focuses on the ability to combine elements from familiar conceptualizations into new and meaningful ones, then conceptual metaphors are among the stable structures available for exploitation by the blending process.

(Grady et al., 1999, p. 110)

Grady, Oakley, and Coulson (1999) explore the relation between conceptual metaphor and conceptual integration theory. They recognise the existence of “metaphorical blends” in which prominent elements from the input spaces fuse into the blended space and a “single element in the blend corresponds to an element in each of the input spaces” (Grady et al., 1999, p. 114).

Metaphorical blends (...) involve a different kind of fusion, in which certain very salient aspects of input domain structure are prohibited from entering the blend, and in which some salient structure in the blended space is prevented from floating back to the inputs. That is, there is information from one of the inputs (the target) that must be ignored in the blend.

(Grady et al., 1999, p. 115)

Metaphorical blends differ considerably from other non-metaphorical cases of conceptual integration. In metaphorical blends elements from input spaces fuse together without retaining their individual identity. Some blends are figurative, but not metaphorical and allow for the retention of individual identity, such as in the example of the imaginary discussion between a modern day philosopher and Immanuel Kant (Fauconnier & Turner, 1998) or a historical vs modern boat race (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003b). In these cases, there is no blending of identity, but rather imposition of two elements onto a single frame. Metaphorical blends “involve a different kind of fusion, in which certain very salient aspects of input domain structure are prohibited from entering the blend, and in which some salient structure in the blended space is prevented from being projected back to the inputs” (Grady et al., 1999, p. 115).

Berberović and Mujagić (2017) claim that BREXIT IS A DIVORCE is a metaphor (see also Đurović & Silaški, 2018) which gives rise to numerous creative metaphorical blends manifested in language in expressions such as *divorce bill* (financial obligations that the UK has to fulfil in order to leave the Union) *European family* (all the member states), *marriage of convenience* (UK's belonging to the Union), *open marriage* (the deal the UK apparently wanted, but the EU did not accept) and many others. In this blend the UK is represented metaphorically as one of the partners initiating divorce proceedings in order to end a marriage (UK's membership in the European Union represented as marriage of the UK and the EU). The generic space provides a schematic model for being in a relationship. Input space 1 contributes information concerning divorce proceedings and its implications. Input space 2 contains information about the functioning of the European Union and the UK's role in it. What emerges in the blended space is Brexit (Britain's exit from the EU) represented as a divorce. It melds together information from both input spaces and as a result creates a metaphorical blend in which unreal scenario (nation states behaving like humans, having personal relationships and problems, and eventually deciding to file for divorce) becomes possible to be conceptualised. Emergent scenario adds certain emotional colouring to the event (the UK leaving behind an increasingly possessive and abusive partner and terminating a dysfunctional relationship can be perceived as a good thing, even at the cost of a high divorce bill) and as a result may shape public opinion about an event in a certain way.

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

The present paper is maintained within the theoretical framework of Cognitive Linguistics (CL) (Evans & Green, 2006; cf. e.g. Langacker, 1987, 1991, 2008; Taylor, 2002) in general, and Conceptual Metaphor and Conceptual Integration Theories in particular. It is necessary for any metaphor research methodology to establish a pertinent set of criteria for selecting metaphorical expressions in a given discourse. In the present paper, we conduct a Metaphor Identification Procedure developed at the Vrije Universiteit (MIPVU) in order to select metaphorical expressions (Nacey, Dorst, Krennmayr, & Reijnierse, 2019; Steen et al., 2010). The method consists of manually searching through the materials and applying the MIPVU, originally known as MIP (Metaphor Identification Procedure) and proposed by the Pragglejaz Group (Crisp et al., 2007) in order to find metaphorical expressions related to degrading or dehumanising representations of selected social groups.

We wish to explicitly emphasise at this point that the present paper is not a classical corpus-driven quantitative study but primarily a qualitative study of a sociolinguistic phenomenon, which is only illustrated here by selected examples extracted from the corpus of Internet sources, including online press articles, blogs, and fora related to Japanese language and culture (e.g., japantoday.com, zoomingjapan.com, savvytokyo.com, whatjapanthinks.com, japanecho.com, japantimes.co.jp, towakudai.blogs.com, japanpitt.pitt.edu and others). Having selected the most common expressions we then submitted the three main expressions to an extensive meaning analysis to account for the negative interpretation of the examined labels, reflecting the unfavourable perception of the respective groups by the Japanese society. To that end we resorted to the cognitive apparatus offered by conceptual metaphor and conceptual integration as discussed above.

METAPHORICAL BLENDS ANALYSIS

In the following, we submitted to a comprehensive cognitive semantic analysis the three terms discussed in this article, i.e. *parasaito shinguru*, *sōshoku-kei danshi* and *himono onna*. Based on the dynamic aspects of conceptual integration operations, in particular the conceptual analogies that can be identified across the mental spaces in the examples examined herein, our analyses attempt to account for the emergence of dehumanising pragmatic meanings in the three discussed terms.

With the exception of the first one, the other two examples are largely based on the metaphor PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS. The first example is similar, except its source domain is centred around a higher-level category PARASITE, which apart from animals may also include fungi, plants, protozoa etc. These metaphors (PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS and PEOPLE ARE PARASITES) function as the main cognitive structures (technically they form generic spaces) connecting the corresponding mental spaces in the respective blends as discussed below.

1. PARASAITO SHINGURU (Parasaito Shinguru) – parasite singles

Parasite singles in Japan are defined as “full-fledged adults who live under the same roof as their parents, contributing little to the household account and doing virtually no housework” (Tran, 2006). They are portrayed as spoilt and lazy, concerned solely with their own good, spending money on luxurious, dispensable things, and pleasures. Not only do they refuse to marry or move out from their parents, but seem to be enjoying their unemployment and responsibility-free lives.

From the CIT perspective, the first example presents an ostensibly simple and transparent compound, blending two input mental spaces, that of a PARASITE and a SINGLE PERSON, producing a metaphoric blend PARASITE SINGLE.

Input space 1: PARASITE

Input space 2: SINGLE PERSON

Blended space: PARASITE SINGLE

As mentioned above, parasitic imagery proves especially productive in dehumanising the other, where the other mostly refers to a wartime enemy, an immigrant group or a minority group (Musolff, 2007, 2012, 2014a, 2014b, 2015, 2018; Waśniewska, 2017). From the cognitive semantic perspective, the emergent imagery created in the blended space of PARASITE SHINGURU by fusing the two inputs (PARASITE and SINGLE PERSON) is substantially vivid, powerful, and persuasive, which is to a great extent attributable to many conceptual analogies between parasites and single persons as explained below.

The first common feature between the two entities is their relatively high independence – parasites are individual organisms, often acting alone (alternatively parasitising in groups, but individual organisms rarely collaborate, rather compete with each other—whether in mixed-species or intraspecies within-host competitive interactions – cf. e.g. Mideo, 2009); similarly, singles usually live on their own and manifest a certain level of social non-conformism. However, despite their independence, they may lack complete autonomy from their ecological niches—after all, there is an inseparable link between a parasite and its host. In the same way, single people do form the tissue—even if somewhat aberrant (in the opinion of the larger part of a given community)—of the bigger organism, which is a particular society. Both parasites and singles are also characterised by their relatively small size in relation to their host upon which they ultimately depend (another organism or society), that is, parasites are commonly much smaller than their hosts; singles usually form a small portion of their local communities. This may be particularly important in Japan and explains why this metaphorical blend is more negatively charged in its society; in the Western societies the percentage of single people in particular communities may actually be quite substantial.¹

Another commonality between the two examined entities is their aim, that is, their constant adaptation to and survival in the changing environment. Parasites can have many possible temporary/intermediate hosts before they reach their primary host where they can mature and reproduce; in the case of singles, they may need to change the environment they inhabit if the social, cultural, economic etc. conditions are not favourable. Interestingly, however, their final goal—unlike the actual parasites—may not be able to procreate (see e.g. Mandujano-Salazar, 2019) on the self-constructed images of the single adulthood as compared with the normative social image). Nevertheless, the most striking analogy between parasites and single people, which in fact is created already at the stage of blend elaboration, is taking advantage of others – biological parasitism for parasites and social parasitism for singles. This feature as such is not conventionally associated with single people, this characteristic derives directly from the parasite input and is only attributed to singles in the single parasite blend via metaphorical projection. In this conceptual integration network, the frame from the PARASITE input clearly dominates over that of the SINGLE PERSON input (the PARASITE input is topical in this metaphorical blend), which is particularly detrimental to the perception of single people by the large part of Japanese society – as singles are downgraded to the level below that of plants and animals (cf. *scala naturae*), just above the inanimate matter.

¹ The dynamics of United Nations global statistics concerning the marital status can be compared at <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/dataset/marriage/data.asp>. Cf. also the UN report “Families in a Changing World”: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/progress-of-the-worlds-women?y=2019&y=2019>

As indicated above, this is a very simple but pragmatically effective metaphorical blend. Nevertheless, it allows for some contextual variations, depending on what the interlocutor using this blend wants to profile. This stems from the fact that the source domain and the category of PARASITE is very heterogeneous (e.g., various species of organisms that may parasitise others, different life cycles), which may yield diverse metaphorical implications for parasite singles. Particularly important in this respect is the potential level of malignancy or harm done to the other organism or, here, the society – this may range from benign symptoms or behaviours (e.g., merely a presence of a parasitic entity in an otherwise thriving organism and stealing some of its nutrients) to serious health risks or even death of the host (metaphorically – a complete social breakdown). The encountered contexts seem to suggest that the prevalent narration in Japan presents single people as the parasites belonging to the more perilous end of the spectrum. We believe that this particular metaphorical blend hidden behind the label *parasaito shinguru* contributes to the fact that Japanese singles are an easy target frequently criticised and blamed for all the hardships that Japan undergoes (cf. Tran 2006). They have been scapegoated and suffer the society’s contempt regardless of the possible other factors motivating their behaviour and leaving them with little choice, while Japan’s growing youth unemployment and increasing housing costs are often overlooked (cf. also the corresponding problem of the rising single culture *ohitorisama* in Dales (2014)).

2. *SŌSHOKU-KEI DANSHI* (草食系男子) – herbivorous man

Sōshoku-kei danshi are in many respects similar to *parasaito shinguru*, but this term (*sōshoku-kei danshi*) is only applied to men, and can be translated into “herbivorous” or “grass-eating” boys (as opposed to *nikushoku-kei joshi* (肉食系女子) “carnivorous women” and *nikushoku-kei danshi* (肉食系男子) “carnivorous men”). They earn little, spend little, and are generally uninterested in adopting a traditional, responsible approach to adult life. Instead, they are often interested in their personal appearance, fashion, and other paltry concerns. The term was coined in 2006 by Maki Fukasawa in a series of articles on marketing to a younger generation of Japanese men (Neill, 2009). The original intention of Fukasawa was to associate “grass-eating” boys lifestyle and attitudes with “the dietary practices of the Buddhist monks who refrained from eating meat and that the word was primarily intended to express the idea of high spirituality” (Nicolae, 2014, p. 70). However, as the term gained more attention, its etymology has been gradually reanalysed and now is more often associated with the idea that “herbivorous” men tend to avoid carnal pleasures and in relationships seek only platonic values rather than sexual benefits. This interpretation is further strengthened by the fact that in Japanese “sex” is translated as “relationship in flesh”; so herbivorous boys are not interested in flesh.

Nicolae (2014) in her detailed discussion on this social phenomenon observes the importance of the close link between consumption and reality, which can be further extended into a collection of metaphors such as HAVING SEX IS HAVING A MEAL, SEXUAL PREFERENCES ARE DIETARY PREFERENCES, PEOPLE ARE FOOD. Apart from *sōshoku-kei danshi*, she enumerates the following groups of different types of masculinity based on a different type of food-related metaphor: *nikushoku-kei danshi* (“carnivorous men”) – sexually active men who like seducing women; *gyoshoku-kei danshi* (“fish-eating men”) – patient and calm men who prefer to wait for woman’s attention and love rather than aggressively pursue romance, and who, according to Nicolae, can be divided into “various sub-categories for *gyoshoku-kei danshi*, men who have bit of a wild streak are called the *grilled fish with salt* type; men who think of themselves as all-knowing are the *teriyaki* type; men who are patient are the *boiled fish* type; while the narcissists are the *Meuniere* type” (Nicolae, 2014, p. 71); *rōru kyabetsu danshi* (“rolled cabbage men”) – men who look like herbivorous men, but once they meet a woman they start to behave

like carnivorous men; and *kurīmu danshi* (“creamy men”) – sweet and beautiful men with a good heart who know how to take care of woman’s feelings.

Morioka (2013) enumerates what he perceives to be advantages and disadvantages of herbivorous men. Good sides of herbivorous men include the fact that:

- (1) herbivore men place a low priority on sex and thus will not use a woman for her body, (2) they are interested in the human qualities of a woman such as how pleasant and interesting she is, and (3) when it comes to romantic relationships they desire stability”. (Morioka, 2013, p. 3)

Disadvantages, on the other hand, are the following: “(1) romantic relationships develop slowly, (2) the standards they use when choosing a female partner are difficult to understand, and (3) you cannot expect a dramatic, passionate romance” (Morioka, 2013, pp. 3–4). Thus, it is evident that herbivore men do not shun sexual relations or are not incapable of finding women interested in them as potential mates, but rather they lack assertiveness and are decidedly passive. They are further characterised by Nicolae (2014, p. 73) as men who prefer soft drinks rather than alcoholic drinks, are slim and generally do not eat much, but at the same time love sweets and desserts, have ecological awareness, have good relationship with their parents, constantly use their mobile phones, and enjoy reading comics (esp. comics for young women). All these preferences and behaviours together with their lack of assertiveness and being overly interested in stereotypically feminine areas such as fashion and cosmetics have gradually distorted the originally neutral, if not positive, characterisation of herbivore men.

From the cognitive semantic perspective, the conceptual integration network for this metaphorical blend comprises the following mental spaces:

Input space 1: HERBIVORE

Input space 2: MAN

Blended space: HERBIVOROUS MAN

In contrast to the previous example, *sōshoku-kei danshi* presents a more elaborate integration network, which is based on more than one basic and culturally well-entrenched metaphor (PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS, PEOPLE ARE FOOD, PEOPLE ARE PLANTS). In this case both input spaces are very broad and have the potential to open up vast networks of associations, depending on the contextual use of this metaphorical blend. For instance, the HERBIVORE input, which is more topical in this metaphorical blend, provides access to such elements as animals, plants, food, feeding habits, evolution, survival of the fittest, basic instincts etc., whereas the MAN input can be associated with human civilisation, past, modern history, diet, religion, culture, economy etc. Although, upon first glance, it may appear as not so complicated (from a lexical perspective – it is a simple compound), the generic nature of this metaphorical blend—as opposed to *parasaito shinguru* which uses more static and conventional imagery (hence its more metaphorical nature)—allows different conceptualisers to activate various elements or selected portions of the input mental spaces. In fact, the cross-space mappings can be much more creative here as these are based not only on analogy, but also disanalogy. Moreover, not only inter-space but also intra-space relations between the activated conceptual elements are considerably complex in this blending case.

Canonically, conceptual integration involves three processes: composition, completion, and elaboration. In the examined example, at the stage of composition (and possibly completion) the animalistic HERBIVORE frame is very vital, acting as the cognitive structure, allowing to merge selected elements and attributes from the two inputs. But then, the cultural frame (and its different aspects) from the MAN input seems to be more salient for the subsequent elaboration of the blend in particular discursive contexts as it supplies the emergent meaning

with a pragmatic reference frame to human-specific experiential domains such as lifestyle, values, philosophy, economy etc.

In the following part we examine some of the conceptual analogies and disanalogies between herbivores and men that appear to be particularly salient for the HERBIVOROUS MAN blend. First, the feeding pattern – this analogy itself is highly metaphorical. Herbivores are animals whose diet exclusively or mostly consists of plants. In the case of men, we have to access another relatively conventional, cultural metaphor HAVING SEX IS EATING MEAT to understand that plant-based diet in their case is sex avoidance. Fasting (having no sex) is an extended implication derived from this metaphor and can be found in some other metaphorical expressions (e.g. *zesshoku-kei danshi* “fasting men”, *danjiki-kei danshi* “extremely fasting men”) used in Japan. This analogy is also directly related to basic instincts and main motivators for both herbivores and men, that is, eating, staying alive, and procreating (biological/evolutional frame), which are common to all living organisms.

At the level of blend completion, we may also find another important analogy related to the biological/social hierarchy – herbivores are above plants, but fall prey to carnivores. Single men tend to be viewed as socially less successful or inferior to married men with children. Especially by the older generation of men, the so-called *salarymen*, perceive *sōshoku-kei danshi* as effeminate, emasculated, and good for nothing (cf. Charlebois, 2013). However, simultaneously, we can notice a significant difference with regard to the relative ontological and cultural status of animal herbivores vs humans (also reflected in the *scala naturae*). Furthermore, for the blend to make sense, the conceptualiser wishing to understand the expression *sōshoku-kei danshi* must perform a significant whole-part compression of the role-value into uniqueness, that is, constrain the broader meaning of a MAN into that of a HERBIVORE (although conceptually and naturally humans are omnivores, they may become vegetarian or vegan mostly only by conscious choice, which is not so much the case with animals). This disanalogy more broadly relates to the potential adaptability of both herbivores and people. In fact, the second input space could as well encompass all people, not just men, but it seems that the opposition herbivore–carnivore underlying the analysed blend triggers a stronger cultural association with the male part of the human species. This is also in line with the still prevalent male dominance in the Japanese culture. Also, for this reason, any mentions of *herbivorous women* are extremely rare. Biological adaptability of herbivorous animals is much more constrained than that of humans who are not only omnivorous and biologically versatile, but also culturally flexible.

Another dissimilarity concerns the relative threat factor – herbivores are usually not a threat to carnivores; also, rarely do they compete with other herbivores. In typical cultural setting there is the phenomenon of male rivalry related to sexual behaviours (which may be understood in terms of the previously evoked HAVING SEX IS EATING MEAT metaphor), and thus the pragmatic inference is that herbivorous men can still pose a threat (they can go into some periods of “fasting”, but can also engage in occasional non-commitment relationships). Finally, many disanalogies can be found within the mental space MAN itself, which reflects many contrasts present in the modern human civilisation (adherence to established conventions vs preference for originality, social conformism vs personal independence, general human psychological complexity). Some of those oppositions can also be projected onto the blend (often in a scaled, compressed form) and play a very important role in the subsequent meaning elaboration.

The etymological analysis of the term and its evolution given by Nicolae (2014) above already shows how different discourse-guided pragmatic implications may arise for the perception of *herbivorous men* as a result of different elaborations of the blend. Consider, for instance, different framings of such aspects as lifestyle and threat potential. If the lifestyle of a *herbivorous man* is framed from the perspective of ‘consumer culture’ this will yield pragmatic

implications such as focusing on personal appearance, fashion, and often hedonistic lifestyle (generally rather negative or at best neutral evaluation). On the other hand, if the same lifestyle aspect is framed from the perspective of ‘life philosophy’ or even ‘religion’, the implications will be completely different, inter alia, avoidance of carnal pleasures, seeking platonic values, concentrating on personal self-development and high spirituality (mostly neutral to positive evaluation). Compare this now with the reframing of the relative threat potential of herbivores in the social or economic context inherited from the MAN input. Viewed from this perspective, *herbivorous men* pose a threat to the traditional Japanese social order and values such as family and even prosperity of the nation as they are not willing to produce offspring, they earn little, spend little, and hence do not support national economy. Just like *parasaito shinguru*, they fell easy prey to various types of criticisms and accusations which eventually led to the Japanese society blaming *sōshoku-kei danshi* for the declining birth rate, the rise of unemployment, and low sales of cars, alcohol, tobacco, and other luxury items for which they apparently do not care much (Nicolae 2014, 77).

3. HIMONO ONNA (干物女) – dried-fish woman

Yet another metaphorical blend used disparagingly in the Japanese society refers to unmarried women. *Himono onna*, literally a “dried-fish woman”, is a woman usually in her 20s or 30s, who has given up on seeking love or romantic relationships. Compared to the previous two, this expression and its social impact is still vastly underresearched, but such a woman is stereotypically associated with a lifestyle involving spending a lot of time at home and unwillingness to go out and socialise. She could not be bothered to go to hairdresser’s too often, does not shave her legs or other parts of the body on a regular basis, does not wear make-up on non-working days (“Himono Onna – Dried Fish Woman,” 2012). She does not intend to have children, but instead works, saves money or spends it on herself, and is generally independent. Such behaviour and attitude are considered anomalous and have become entrenched in a language in a form of a degrading, dehumanising metaphor.

The final example appears to be a female functional equivalent of *sōshoku danshi*, albeit *himono onna* evokes also different mental imagery due to a very different conceptual integration network that underlies this expression.

Input space 1: DRIED FISH

Input space 2: WOMAN

Blended space: DRIED-FISH WOMAN

At the core of this metaphorical blend lie the same basic metaphors as in the previous example (PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS, PEOPLE ARE FOOD) and one of its input spaces is also part of the higher-level domain HUMAN – here WOMAN, which can be associated with aspects such as human civilisation, diet, religion, culture, economy etc. However, the other input space is constructed around the concept of DRIED FISH, which in comparison with the previous example, is far less generic (viz more concrete). As a consequence, it constrains the number of possible cross-space connections, making the blend more ‘streamlined’ and potentially less prone (or more difficult) to be reframed in social discourses.

Given this topological disparity between both input spaces, the following analogies at the stage of blend elaboration can be distinguished. First, the most conspicuous, perception-based similarity between some women and dried fish is the subjective unattractive appearance and, for some, perhaps also unattractive taste (this analogy may actually be conceptually weaker). Fish are dried in the sun; they desiccate (which is highlighted by the first kanji character 干) – this means they cannot produce offspring. This lack of willingness to reproduce

can also characterise modern self-conscious women; they can even be viewed as draining the society of the prospects of better future. By successive metaphorical inference, dried fish are dead fish and this may be seen as analogous to the social death of a person, which is congruent with the social image of *himono onna* (prefers staying at home, watching TV, avoids social interactions).

Based on the visual features and human experience of dried fish, it is possible to establish a connection between the texture of a dried fish (dry and tough skin) and a character of some women (dry and tough demeanour), which in the case of the elaboration of the DRIED-FISH WOMAN blend allows for profiling their being independent, unafraid of the social stigma and prejudice. However, there is also at least one important incongruence between the inputs, which derives from the generally neutral or positive perception of dried fish in Japan – it is actually a traditional food item. Drying in the sun is a well-established natural technique of preserving food for a longer consumption period. This positive association naturally clashes with the perceived unconventional and undesirable social behaviour of the women referred to as *himono onna*. Nevertheless, the last two aspects discussed above (the texture–character analogy and the preservation incongruity) can potentially serve as a basis for the social reevaluation of the *himono onna* concept through the reframing of the blend from the perspective of those conceptual correspondences/relations. In fact, it appears that this is exactly what some *dried-fish women* have already tried to achieve by embracing their identity and reclaiming the label *himono onna* by proudly emphasising their independence and deliberate non-conformist life choices.

Surprisingly, the *himono onna* have actually started to embrace that name and are proud of being the way they are, though these women are still quite rare. As their lifestyle is opposed to what is considered “normal,” a funky name was made up for it to label it as “unnatural” or “strange.”
 (“Himono Onna – Dried Fish Woman,” 2012)

CONCLUSION

All in all, the role of conceptual metaphors in creating and shaping social attitudes cannot be overestimated. These cognitive devices are helpful as they facilitate the understanding of complex social and other issues, but they may also lead to biased and prejudiced conceptualisations of groups and individuals. This twofold nature of conceptual metaphors makes them so interesting to linguists and other scholars. Conceptual blends based on metaphors provide an even richer repertoire of interpretations as they act across multiple frames activating various imagery and meanings. Bearing in mind the above, it is evident that metaphors alone (e.g., PEOPLE ARE ANIMALS, PEOPLE ARE PARASITES) are relatively stable cognitive structures that constantly evolve and reflect human knowledge (i.e., they are not motivated exclusively by individual experiences, but rather are product of social cognition). Thus, they have a tendency to firmly preserve certain images once they are well entrenched in a particular community, which means they may be (and usually are) very difficult to modify (e.g., IMMIGRANTS ARE PARASITES as discussed in the theoretical background). At the same time, conceptual metaphor is one of the most basic mechanisms by which we think and conceptualise the world. It can be thought of as our basic operating system which is very efficient in processing the information, but slow in regard to updating. By contrast, conceptual integration is much more dynamic and open to novelty. It acts as individual and specialised software used for local purposes, more adaptable for updates, always ready for new patches in the form of new conceptual inputs (e.g., the evolution of concepts like MARRIAGE or FAMILY to better reflect the dynamically changing social and civilisational circumstances in order to expand to concepts such as SAME-SEX MARRIAGE or PATCHWORK FAMILY – cf. (Fauconnier & Turner, 2003c). Hence, metaphors are indispensable, but if an unfavourable mapping is coined

by a society, it will linger and have negative repercussions (a case in point are most metaphorical images of IMMIGRANTS). Fortunately, blends operating on metaphors may reframe at least some of their primary meaning, but may not work equally efficiently for the entire society.

Metaphorical mappings, once established, are difficult to alter. Moreover, there are different levels of social evaluation, motivated by different associative mechanisms; for example, all three terms analysed in this article are primarily motivated by metaphors, but their full semantic potential comes into foreground only through their elaboration in the conceptual integration network. Blending operations also allow to reveal certain differences in the cognitive motivation of the examined expressions. For instance, *himono onna* is based to a greater extent on visual similarities that can be interpreted more uniformly by different conceptualisers (and probably triggers more visceral and thus stronger reaction); the other two examples require more mental effort (esp. *sōshoku-kei danshi*) to invoke certain images. By the same token, *parasaito shinguru* is also stronger (despite its most general image), because it activates the behavioural immune system reaction which is automatic and subconscious. For these reasons also we may observe different evolution of those metaphorical blends (and their axiology) in social discourse.

As discussed above, it is relatively easy to reframe *sōshoku-kei danshi* in numerous directions (concentrating on selected aspects of their ‘herbivory’ – life philosophy, socioeconomic impact, sexual abstinence etc.). Similarly, there is some chance to neutralise *himono onna* (as evidenced by the actions of some Japanese women). However, it seems that not much can be done about *parasaito shinguru* – its evaluation remains unequivocally negative with no possibility of attenuating the associative impact it produces in the mind of the conceptualiser. Seen from this perspective, this example seems to be the weakest blend (due to its inflexibility) and the strongest metaphor (due to the very fixed imagery). The same holds true for the effect of PARASITE imagery in other discourses – political, legal etc.

To sum up, metaphorical blends emerging dynamically in discourse have a strong influence on creating new ways of thinking about the world as well as strengthening certain perceptions about social groups or individuals. Accepting metaphorical labels and conventionalising them through language use lead to accepting and sanctioning certain views, for example, on what is considered normative and desirable on the one hand, and what should be avoided and disdained on the other.

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