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**MORAL STANDARDS IN OSCAR WILDE'S  
FAIRY TALES**

**MORĀLES PRINCIPI OSKARA VAILDA PASAKĀS**

BACHELOR THESIS

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## ABSTRACT

The paper “Moral Standards in Oscar Wilde’s fairy tales” proves that Oscar Wilde has a special attitude towards art, beauty and ethics. The writer criticizes the false morality of his time.

The main goal of the paper is to explore the theme of moral standards in fairy tales of Oscar Wilde, focusing on the writer’s views on the meaning of morality in the Victorian period.

Chapter 1 represents the summary of moral philosophy in the Victorian society.

Chapter 2 accentuates on the attitude of the writer towards morality of Victorian England.

Chapter 3 focuses on the analysis of the most significant ideas and moral principles in O. Wilde’s works.

Chapter 4 examines moral standards and main moral laws in O. Wilde’s fairy tales from the collections *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* and *A House of Pomegranates*.

The paper proves that vulgarity, moral depravity, and philistinism have a destructive influence not only on art and beauty but also on the development of personality.

Key words: Moral standards, fairy tales, Victorian period, moral philosophy, morality, moral laws

## ANOTĀCIJA

Bakalaura darbs “Morāles principi Oskara Vailda pasakās” apstiprina to ka Oskaram Vaildam ir īpaša attieksme mākslai, skaistumam un ētikai. Rakstnieks kritīze viņa laika viltus morālīti.

Šī darba mērķis ir izpētīt morāles principus Oskara Vailda pasakās, pievēršot uzmanību Vailda uzskatiem par Viktorijas laikmeta morālītes nozīmi.

Pirmajā nodaļā apskatīta morāles filozofija Viktorijas laikmeta sabiedrība.

Otrā nodaļā akcentējas uz rakstnieka attieksmi Viktorijas laikmeta Anglijai.

Trešā nodaļa ir koncentrēta uz galveno ideju un morāles principu analīzi Vailda darbos.

Ceturta nodaļa analīze morāles principus un galvenos morāles likumus krājumos “Laimīgais princis un citi stāsti” un “Granātābolu namiņš”.

Bakalaura darbs apstiprina, to ka morālai izladībai ir postoša ietekme mākslai un cilvēka personības attīstībai.

Atslegvardi: Morales principi, pasakās, Viktorijas laikmets, morāles filozofija, morāles likumi

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	2
1 AN OVERVIEW OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN VICTORIAN SOCIETY .....	4
1.1 Moral Standards of the Victorian Period .....	6
1.1.1. Respectability .....	6
1.1.2. Patriarchal Rules .....	7
1.1.3. Marriage .....	7
1.1.4. Social Deference .....	7
2. ATTITUDE OF OSCAR WILDE TOWARD MORALITY OF VICTORIAN ENGLAND.....	10
3. DESCRIPTION OF MAIN IDEAS AND MORAL CRITERIA IN O. WILDE'S WORKS....	14
4. ANALYSIS OF MORAL STANDARDS AND MORAL VALUES IN O. WILDE'S FAIRY TALES .....	21
4.1. Cynicism of the Bourgeois-Aristocratic World and Social Inequality. Exploitation of the Poor .....	22
4.2. Hypocrisy and Vanity of High Society. Respectability and Feeling of Being Elected.....	24
4.3. Morality and Moral Values of the Lower Class.....	27
4.4. Love and Marriage in the Victorian Period .....	28
4.5. Attitude towards Art .....	30
4.6. Materialism. The importance of gold and material values .....	32
4.7. Patriarchal Rules.....	33
CONCLUSIONS .....	34
THESES .....	37
REFERENCES .....	39

## INTRODUCTION

O. Wilde is one of the most prominent writers in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. O. Wilde's fairy tales are remarkable creative achievements of the writer's great literary craftsmanship. They are significant examples of this literary genre in the world literature. The stories are distinguished by their peculiar stylistical features and logical structure, simplicity, figurative language of narration and interpretation. In his fairy tales O. Wilde creates picturesque world and special atmosphere.

The writer colourfully depicts the magnificence of palaces, his characters' appearances, refinement of clothing, shimmer of jewelry and luxury of precious things. But most of all, O. Wilde pays a special attention to the depiction of minerals and flowers. A garden with flowers is mentioned almost in all his fairy tales. O. Wilde shows a wonderful world of flowers to beautify the fairy tales. O. Wilde uses rich metaphors and colourful epithets in the description of beauty of Egypt and other lands, etc. But hard labour and terrible living conditions of the lower class are depicted by the writer without embellishments and truthfully. This is the reality of England of the final years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that looks bleak in O. Wilde's works.

One of the main aims of O. Wilde's works is to help his readers to develop a certain artistic taste. The writer touches upon the issue of the importance of art for a person in his essays *The Critic as Artist*, *The Decay of Lying* and other works. In his remarkable quotes where the writer shares his views of art, criticism, idealism, marriage, education, goodness, etc. In the preface of his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, O. Wilde defines the mission of an artist 'The artist is the creator of beautiful things. To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim' (Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, The Preface). Various artists and writers were among O. Wilde's friends, for example, Walt Whitman and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. O. Wilde is established as an expert on 'matters of art and taste' (Online1). O. Wilde is a servant of beauty and art. His definition of freedom has a great importance for the writer and poet.

Nine fairy tales of two O. Wilde's collections of tales are fairy tales for children 'that show a concern with appearance and reality which is central to all his writing' (де Лангланд, 2006:148). These fairy tales are interesting and understandable both for adults and children because O. Wilde broaches the subject of social ethics. Responding to a review of '*A House of Pomegranates*' in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, O. Wilde declares that no 'fairly educated' person could really believe his fairy tales were meant for children: 'I had as much intention of pleasing the British child as I had of pleasing the British public' (Sammells, 2000:12). Indeed, O. Wilde

remarks that his other collection *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* is really meant for children (Sammells, 2000:12). As John Sloane considers ‘O. Wilde’s stories contain images of poverty, urban deprivation, hardship, and suffering’ (Sloan, 2003:120).

In his fairy tales O. Wilde enunciates aesthetic principles as the most significant principles. The main paradox of O. Wilde’s fairy tales is that, despite of their imaginary world and the elements of a fairy tale but also evident discrepancy with them and with real life, the writer’s fairy tales are moral tales that are connected with problems of reality. The tales ‘paradoxically resist both the lugubrious sentimentality of the Romantics’ and ‘the “laborious realism” of Emile Zola and 19<sup>th</sup> century Naturalists’ (Luthra, 2009). As Richard Ellmann considers, Wilde presents the fairy tales like ‘sacraments of a lost faith’ (Pearce, 2001:140). The reconceptualization of O. Wilde’s faith is evident. According to Joseph Pearce, ‘however much Wilde may have been struggling with his own faith, it always emerges triumphant in the stories’(Pearce, 2001:140). The tales ‘often begin with disfigurement and end in transfiguration’ (Pearce, 2001:140).

O. Wilde’s fairy tales have a great importance for understanding of his main ideas and his personal ethical values.

O. Wilde’s fairy tales comprise aesthetic, social, religious and ethical principles.

These are the following objectives that were set to accomplish the research:

1. to analyze fairy tales, essays and other works of Oscar Wilde;
2. to study critical material on moral standards in Victorian society;
3. to accentuate O. Wilde’s views on art and ethics and also Wilde’s steadfast allegiance to his principles.

The paper analyzes two O. Wilde’s collections of tales: *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* and *A House of Pomegranates*.

The paper consists of four parts. There is the following organization of the chapters:

Chapter 1 presents an overview of moral philosophy in Victorian society.

Chapter 2 reflects on O. Wilde’s attitude towards hypocritical morality of his time

Chapter 3 pays a special attention to the main ideas and moral criteria that the writer emphasizes in his works.

Chapter 4 examines moral standards shown in O. Wilde’s fairy tales from the collection *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* and *A House of Pomegranates*.

In conclusion, there is a description of main ideas and thoughts that were pointed out to analyze the meaning of morality for Oscar Wilde.

# 1 AN OVERVIEW OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN VICTORIAN SOCIETY

The Victorian era of British history is the period of Queen Victoria's reign from 20<sup>th</sup> June 1837 until her death on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 1901. Jacques de Langland notes that 'England of the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century is an epoch of vulgarity, hypocrisy, philistine morals and dissoluteness' (де ЛАНГЛАНД, 2006:157). The chapter examines significant moral rules of England of the Victorian period. The term "Victorian" is considered to be belonged to the period of Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901). The term is associated "with the morality and values of the Victorians that can be classed under Religion, Morality, Elitism, Industrialism and Improvement" (Online 2). Synonyms for the word 'victorian' often are "prudish" and "puritanical". Laura Cenicola and Mareike Aumann describe that "the term "Victorian" owns a wide range of connotations, most specifically the high and strict moral standards" (Cenicola and Aumann, 2008). Was the Victorian age so puritanical? The author of the paper will try to answer the question but, according to O. Wilde's works, views of many historians, and view of other writers, for example, Charles Dickens, this time is so far away from Puritanism. As J. de Langland considers the Victorian epoch is "the time of "compromise, double standards, the bad treatment of the poor, very slow progress towards democracy, problems in the colonies" (де ЛАНГЛАНД, 2006:157). The author of the paper considers that the Victorian society is the society of finicality, mannerism and sanctimony.

Victorian morality is associated with the moral climate of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Laura Cenicola and Mareike Aumann, 'Victorian morality can be described as a set of values that supported sexual repression, low tolerance of crime, and a strong social ethic' (Cenicola and Aumann, 2008).

The Victorian epoch is the time of rapid changes in every sphere of life, and the period of significant political reforms. Gavin Sutter points out that, 'people believed themselves to be living in the most modern of ages, at the high point of human development' (Behaving Badly and Moral Outrage, 2003:159). According to Wikipedia, 'it was a long period of peace, prosperity, refined sensibilities and national self-confidence for Britain' (Online 3). The Victorian age is the age of contradictions. Social reforms set forth for the improvement of public morality coexists with class inequality. According to John Sloan 'there is an insistent call for state intervention and the incorporation of the working classes into the political system' (Sloan, 2003: 122).

According to an Internet source, ‘exaggeration of virtue contrasts with the wide distribution of prostitution, child pornography and child labour’ (Online 3). Debora Gorham comments, public opinion considers that ‘the young girls who became prostitutes or who became sexually active at an early age belonged to a social class that could not possibly preserve the moral or the sexual innocence of its members’ (Behaving Badly and Moral Outrage, 2003:182). Debora Gorham points out that ‘any attempt to protect such girls was seen as futile and as leading to the entrapment of middle and upper class male youths, who were usually portrayed as more innocent than the girls they seduced or whose services they purchased’ (Behaving Badly and Moral Outrage, 2003:182). Sex is considered to be something that is essential to reproduction. Sex without being married is a sin. Michael Foucault describes that ‘in the nineteenth century sex became a “police matter...” not the repression or disorder but an ordered maximization of collective and individual forces... a policing of sex; that is, not the rigor of a taboo, but the necessity of regulation of sex through useful and public discourses’ (Foucault, 2007). Sexuality, especially female sexuality, is restricted in the Victorian period. A woman has to keep her and resist temptations. ‘The Victorian Era was extremely judgmental on women, in fact women had only two options; she was either a virgin or she was a mother, anything other than that was subject to critique and ridicule by the society’ (Online 4). Female chastity is widely valued in the Victorian England. Amanda Anderson notes that, Victorian society considers ‘prostitutes, unmarried women who engage[d] in sexual relations with men, victims of seduction, adulteresses, as well as variously delinquent lower-class women “to be fallen women in Victorian culture”’ (Anderson, 1993:2). Victorian society believes that male sexuality is necessary for reproduction. ‘The society pleaded ignorance about a man’s inability to control his sexuality. A man was allowed to seduce women, and in fact it was in their “nature” to do so, but all the responsibility fell upon the women to reject this seduction or else they were damned’ (Online 4). Therefore, the infidelity of a woman is more criticized than a man’s infidelity. Erika Frank comments that ‘the outcome for an adulterous woman was far more costly than those for an adulterous man. The social consequences for a middle-class woman affected her husband, children and indeed her home’ (Online 5).

There is a reason of such high sexual restrictions and strict moral code. As Laura Cenicola and Mareike Aumann mention ‘The Queen's and her husband's attitude about sexual morality evolved out of their knowledge of the morally lacking life of the previous monarchs and the effect that their behaviour had had on the public opinion towards the crown’ (Cenicola and Aumann, 2008). According to Laura Cenicola and Mareike Aumann, ‘Victoria’s husband, Prince

Albert, had suffered from the divorce of his parents who had both been involved in public sexual scandals' (Cenicola and Aumann, 2008).

It has to be mentioned that religion plays a special role in Victorian England. Every social class in Victorian England was religious, going to church every Sunday and reading the Bible every night. 'In some cases, church was attended twice every Sunday due to the growing importance of religion and spirituality' (Online 6). The upper class and the middle class must go to church regularly. They must give to charity. But belief to overcome social evil with organized charity is breaking down. John Sloan insists that 'To the poor, charity is humiliating; it reinforced the segregation of rich and poor' (Sloan, 2003: 122).

## **1.1 Moral Standards of the Victorian Period**

'Queen Victoria stands not only for England and Empire, but also for Duty, Family, and, especially, Propriety' (Online 7). Victorian morality is based on the standards of moral values predominant in England in the period of the Queen Victoria. 'It is a moral guideline based on strict observance of ethic rules, chastity, and sexual restrictions' (Online 8). Maintenance of morality and pragmatism are very important aspects of Victorian morality. The subchapter examines some general moral laws of the Victorian epoch including respectability of the upper class and the middle class; patriarchal rules; sexual restrictions; the importance of marriage; religiosity; contradictive attitude towards children of different social classes; social deference.

### **1.1.1. Respectability**

Members of the upper class and the middle class have to be respectable and have good manners. 'Respectability comprises itself the union of morality and hypocrisy' (Online 9). The maintenance of social distinctions and social class privileges is one of significant characteristics of the Victorian age. As it described in *The Victorian Double* 'the Victorians were proud of their welfare, of their good manners and of their middle-class values, and tended to ignore the problems which still afflicted England: the working class, among which misery and distress were still widespread' (Online 10). Members of the upper class and members of the middle class must be wealthy having all attributes of successful life. According to an Internet source Atuttascuola, 'Respectability distinguishes the middle class from the lower class' (Online 11).

### **1.1.2. Patriarchal Rules**

Victorian society is a patriarchal society. Anne Shepherd points out that ‘for the most part, nineteenth century families were large and patriarchal’ (Shepherd, 2001). There is the cult of domesticity. ‘The home and family were seen as a haven for the middle class male from the impurity, amorality and hustle and bustle of the public world of business and industry’ (Behaving Badly and Moral Outrage, 2003:156). Helena Wojtczak admits that ‘women of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century lived in the state “little better than slavery” (2009). According to Helena Wojtczak, ‘women had to obey men, because in most cases men held all the resources and women had no independent means of subsistence’ (Wojtczak, 2009). Helena Wojtczak points out that ‘every man had the right to force his wife into sex and childbirth. A husband can spend his wife’s inheritance on a mistress or on prostitutes’ (Wojtczak, 2009). As Laura Cenicola and Mareike Aumann also mention ‘families were most important to Victorians. They were rather large compared to families nowadays, with an average of five or six children, and family organization is patriarchal’ (Cenicola and Mareike, 2008). Laura Cenicola and Mareike Aumann add that ‘the father was the head of the family and the household. He was mostly strict and obeyed by everyone. The children did not dare to talk back to him. They always spoke politely and respected him by calling him 'Sir’ (Cenicola and Aumann, 2008).

### **1.1.3. Marriage**

Marital status is very respectful for a woman. Middle-class woman must be pure and care about her family. ‘An ideal Victorian woman, or the “angel of the house” was defined by her role within the home because the family served as a sanctuary for the “preservation of traditional moral and religious values’ (Online 4). There is contradictory attitude towards a married and unmarried woman. According to an Internet source, ‘an unmarried woman is considered to be a failure she even must stand up in the presence of a married woman’ (Online 12). A single woman with a child is reprobated by society. Helena Wojtczak comments that ‘A woman who remained single would attract social disapproval and pity. She could not have children or cohabit with a man: the social penalties were simply too high’ (Wojtczak, 2009).

### **1.1.4. Social Deference**

The moral standards that are impermissible for the upper and the middle class are admissible for the lower class. Social inequality is evident in various spheres of the Victorian epoch. It is concerned with the question of norms of social behaviour. According to online site Religion and Morality, 'the 'high class' Victorians strictly enforced these beliefs and values into the minds of members in society so that women would continue to be seen as pure. In contrast, it was far more acceptable for the working class citizens to have sex before marriage' (Online 6). Sex before marriage in the working class is not so criticized by society than premarital sex in the upper class (Online 6). A Victorian woman can be judged not only by her behaviour but also by her look. According to online source, 'a woman that once used to be poor, now dressed in overly elaborate clothing and beautiful appearance could be labeled as "fallen", since prostitution was the only way to buy such clothing from a woman of a poor background' (Online 4). There is also a contradictory attitude towards children of different social classes. Children belonged to the middle class and upper class are considered to be cute children who have to be defended from realities of cruel world. On the contrary, lower class children work in coal mines and in factories. According to the review *Behaving Badly and Moral Outrage*, 'Victorian images of childhood were often contradictory, children being either as virtuous or else portrayed as victims of poverty' (Behaving Badly and Moral Outrage, 2003:178).

This brief overview can only partially summarize some particular features of England of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is no coincidence that many historians regard the Victorian age as age of contradictions (Victorian England, 1998). In the Victorian age public opinion has a great importance. As online source Wikipedia describes 'Puritanism opposes libertinism' (Online2). It gives rise to hypocrisy, envy, and ostentatious brilliance. 'Victorian hegemonic definitions of selfhood, rooted in sexual repression, shame or false morality on the one hand, and forces of moral anarchy and carnivalesque spirit of fin-de-siecle Europe on the other' (Luthra, 2009). In her book *Women of Victorian Sussex* Helena Wojtczak also points out moral dualism of the Victorians. 'Their moral dualism, their besetting weakness of dreaming of one thing and doing another, might be amusing in architecture or painting, but it involved endless cruelty towards flesh and blood' (Wojtczak, 2009).

'The Victorian Period is not only the period of excesses and defects' (Weinstein, 1995). There are also positive aspects during Queen Victoria's reign. Britain became the most powerful country in the world and the largest empire. 'The "newness" of Victorian society - its speed, progress, and triumphant ingenuity - was epitomized by the coming of the railway' (The Victorian age, 2010). There is the age of many inventions: the telephone, camera, stamps, camera, radio, sewing machine, etc. The Victorian age is also the age where people put much value to

honesty, dignity, diligence, and family. It can be proved by Martin E. Weinstein's analysis of the study Gertrude Himmelfarb, a famous historian of the Victorian Period, who believes that 'that men, women and most especially children lead better lives in a society built around the conventional family, and held together by the pursuit of virtue and respectability, meaning honesty, diligence, cleanliness, thrift and courtesy' (Weinstein, 2012). Martin E. Weinstein comments that 'many of the working class women had to work outside the home to make ends meet, but they believed that the center of their lives was home and family' (Weinstein, 2012). The family and home is the centre of Victorian Society. Despite of many faults of the Victorian Period, there is no such problem of our century as bad demographic situation because of low fertility. In modern time a career is more important for a woman than marriage and family.

## 2. ATTITUDE OF OSCAR WILDE TOWARD MORALITY OF VICTORIAN ENGLAND

O. Wilde daringly criticizes predominant moral philosophy of the Victorian bourgeoisie: hypocrisy, social inequality and sexual restrictions. He criticizes it in his essays, novels and poems. 'O. Wilde attacks Victorian concepts of morality as crude and simplistic, having little to do with the goodness that they claim to represent' (Wakeling, 2009). O. Wilde can be called as anti - Victorian writer. Philip Davis notes that:

many of the leading Victorian writers were of course, in some sense, anti - Victorian – or alternatively could be said to the *most* Victorian – in being deeply critical of the so-called Victorian attitudes of their own age: witness, most obviously, Matthew Arnold against complacent materialist philistinism, or Charles Dickens in exposure of religious hypocrisy, or Ruskin on the unfeelingness and uncreativity of his times (2004:10)

O. Wilde rejects moral standards of his time. He speaks ironically that 'to be good, according to the vulgar standard of goodness, is obviously quite easy. It merely requires a certain amount of sordid terror, a certain lack of imaginative thought' (Wilde, *The Artist as Critic*). According to O. Wilde, a genuine moral feeling is substituted by a notorious 'common sense', banal doctrine of expedience and code of conduct (де ЛАНГЛАНД, 2006:11). Wilde makes a mockery of predominant social rules. In *The Artist as Critic*, the most influential of Wilde's essays, the writer considers that 'of all poses a moral pose is the most offensive, still to have a pose at all is something. It is a formal recognition of the importance of treating life from a definite and reasoned standpoint' (Wilde, *The Artist as Critic*). In this essay O. Wilde examines psychological aspect of prudery and snobbery. He conceives 'that the desire to do good to others produces a plentiful crop of prigs is the least of the evils of which it is the cause' (Wilde, *The Artist as Critic*).

O. Wilde, as a connoisseur of beauty, cannot find beauty in reality of the 19<sup>th</sup> century England. Many critics, as Norbert Kohl and David Henry Wilson, call O. Wilde a connoisseur of beauty. Norbert Kohl and David Henry Wilson consider O. Wilde to be ' "the experienced connoisseur" who emphasizes "the gospel of beauty and its function" (Kohl and Wilson, 1989:73). O. Wilde declares himself as a connoisseur of beauty. N. Kohl and D. H. Wilson comment that 'with the astonishing self-assurance and indeed impertinence as had accompanied his appointment of himself as "Professor of Aesthetic and Art Critic" on the completion of his studies, Wilde designed himself as founder of the Aesthetic Movement' (Kohl and Wilson, 1989:74). The writer is upset about the lack of beauty in Victorian England. According to N.

Kohl and D. H. Wilson, 'Wilde's flight from grey industrial reality of Victorian England into an exotic dream world of rich colours, strange images and precious objects takes him in realm where time and space extend indefinitely' (Kohl and Wilson, 1989:199). But the writer considers that such negative tendencies as material progress and cynicism of society can destruct art. Material progress can be considered as negative because material values have more priority than moral and ethical values. In his play *An Ideal Husband* O. Wilde depicts Victorian society taking the guilt of gingerbread. 'Wilde criticizes political and social corruption, but also gives directions away from it. The play suggests that love leads to happiness, and the plot seems to reward those characters willing to learn and improve upon their moral imperfections' (Online 13). O. Wilde is indignant at the fact that Victorian England is a corrupted country where almost nobody can understand the true importance of art. N. Kohl and D. H. Wilson stress that O. Wilde shows that 'reality does not allow life to be aestheticised through absolute form' (Kohl and Wilson, 216). But even cruel life cannot demoralize and demolish art and its genuine ideals.

O. Wilde never hides his antipathy for despondent Victorian moralism. 'As an Irishman he was enough of a stranger to that creed, as well as, being homosexual, enough of a victim of it, to be aware of how brutally life-denying it secretly was. If he trades in masks, styles and surfaces, refusing to be drawn into the deep "metaphysical" questions which preoccupied his Victorian forebears, it is to bear witness to the truth that forms and appearances have their own reality and their own pleasure' (Campbell, 1991: xix). Wilde marks such tendency as class privilege. He describes it in his essay *The Soul of Man under Socialism* (1890). He insists 'Socialism, Communism, or whatever one chooses to call it, by converting private property into public wealth, and substituting cooperation for competition, will restore society to its proper condition of a thoroughly healthy organism' (Bristow, 1993: xxxii). A conflict of interests develops here. It is rather strange to hear such views from such a dandy as O. Wilde. Actually, a dandy is mostly interested in physical appearance, refined manners, and aesthetics. In the same essay the writer condemns charity for the way in which it blunts the political consciousness of the poor (Willoughby, 1993:26). O. Wilde considers that charity to the poor is like paltry dole from the upper-class. In the *Fortnightly Review* the writer shares his personal views of charity pointing out the feelings of the poor to charity 'Charity they feel to be a ridiculously inadequate mode of partial restitution, or a sentimental dole, usually accompanied by some impertinent attempt on the part of the sentimentalist to tyrannize over their private lives' (Sloan, 2003:123). O. Wilde resents the system of social inequality considering that the poor cannot be grateful for this charity. The writer gives to understand that the poor should not be grateful for leftovers from a grand gentleman's table. 'Why should they be grateful for the crumbs that fall from the rich

man's table?' (Sloan, 2003:123). According to John Sloan, O. Wilde has no doubts that the poor are starting to realize that they should have positive influence in society and not be dependent on the rich. 'They should be seated at the board, and are beginning to know it' (Sloan, 2003: 123). In his works O. Wilde many times accentuates the theme of social inequality that causes poverty of the lower class. The author of the paper can mention O. Wilde's fairy tale *The Devoted Friend* where the writer depicts what motivates a rich man to associate with a poor man. Principally, reasons for the Miller's friendship with a poor Hans are will to manipulate, exploitation, and greed. As John Sloan considers, in this tale O. Wilde 'reveals the devotion of master for man – the Miller for Little Hans – for the exploitative, self-serving thing that it is' (Sloan, 2003:122). Thus, the rich use charity to advance their own interests.

O. Wilde rebels against the spirit of his time not thinking about destructive sequences of it for his own fate. As Christopher Lehmann - Haupt declares 'We inherit O. Wilde's struggle to achieve supreme fictions in art, to associate art with social change, to bring together individual and social impulse, to save what is eccentric and singular from being sanitized and standardized, to replace a morality of severity by one of sympathy(..) Now, beyond the reach of scandal, his best writings validated by time, he comes before us still, a towering figure, laughing and weeping, with parables and paradoxes, so generous, so amusing, and so right.' (Lehmann-Haupt, 2009). O. Wilde is a rioter. He pays dearly for his daringness not to accept common social standards and morals. O. Wilde is convicted for crime against morality. Oscar Wilde is known as one of the most famous 19<sup>th</sup> century homosexualists. He had a passionate affair with Lord Alfred Douglas. Homosexuality is prohibited by law as a great sin. 'It was considered immoral to be homosexual, and the punishment for being homosexual during the Victorian period was execution' (Online 6). O. Wilde was imprisoned for two years on account of his homosexuality. A cruel hypocritical Victorian era is cruel to such rioters like Wilde. 'Wilde's interest in 'rhetoric, humour, self-irony, the mask, theatrical display...are also preoccupations that can play straight into the hands of the English aristocracy' (Bristow, 1993: xviii). O. Wilde cannot allow his feelings to be suppressed by hard social-political circumstances. Society censures him for his homosexual lifestyle. Roman Catholic Church opposes homosexuality. 'O. Wilde had to face and defend his ideas and feelings against this moralist society' (Online 14).

In his works O. Wilde also raises a question about the position of women in Victorian society. Joseph Bristow notes that 'Wilde's career revealed his support for women's suffrage and the foundation of university colleges for women' (Bristow, 1993: xxxii). It is important that O. Wilde during his editorship of a Victorian Women's Magazine the *Woman's World* welcomed the fiction and poetry of feminist 'New Woman' poets and novelists such as Amy Levy and Olive

Schreiner (Bristow, 1993: xxxii). The author of the paper can point out O. Wilde's play *A Woman of No Importance* where the writer mentions the institution of marriage and the role of a woman in it. According to Joseph Bristow, O. Wilde's writings 'often reveal a streak of misogyny that can prove especially unsettling' despite of O. Wilde's support for women's emancipation. Through the play, O. Wilde describes that a woman is wrongly treated in society. Joseph Bristow considers that 'O. Wilde's character Lord Illingworth advances the view that women are treated unfairly in his society, and so they must pay an unreasonably high price for the lives they are expected to lead' (Bristow, 1993:xxxiii).

Attitude towards the writer is unambiguous. Joseph Bristow defines that 'One might instead like to consider the implications of Wilde's irreverence for those sexual, political, and moral distinctions that the late - Victorians made between with what was familiar to them and what struck them as most strange' (Bristow, 1993:xxxiv). Some O. Wilde's contemporaries as Reginald Turner, Algernon Charles Swinburne and John Ruskin are friendly towards him; some of them as the Marquess of Queensberry and Clement Scott hate him. 'For he was his contemporaries' friend and foe – their Irish Englishman, their aristocratic socialist, and their married lover of boys' (Bristow, 1993: xxxiv). Nowadays, Oscar Wilde is one of the most talented literary geniuses of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3. DESCRIPTION OF MAIN IDEAS AND MORAL CRITERIA IN O. WILDE'S WORKS

The chapter examines the main themes and ideas in O. Wilde's works. The writer pays a great importance to such themes as art, beauty, and religion. O. Wilde describes his own attitude towards religion and art. According to Sam Slote, 'Wilde had invoked Christlikeness as an affirmation of his aestheticism and, by extension, his homosexuality. For Wilde Christ was not just a poet, he was "the leader of all the lovers" (Slote, 1995). Sam Slote adds that 'the comparison with Christ proffered in defense buttresses the imputation of homosexuality' (Slote, 1995). Megan Becker-Leckrone, who calls O. Wilde as a social critic, declares that 'for a writer who famously explores the question of art's relation to life, and whose life and work together offer an uncommonly rich site for examining the overdetermined sexual and social culture of late-Victorian England, such a focus is in many ways warranted' (Becker-Leckrone, 2005). According to O. Tumbina, 'religious motives of O. Wilde's fairy tales abound such concepts as aesthetics and ethics' (Тумбина, 2004). O. Wilde mentions the Christ in his fairy tales *The Young King*, *The Happy Prince*, and *The Selfish Giant*. As O. Tumbina comments 'the Christ in O. Wilde's tales is a symbol of sufferings, but sufferings help a person to be clean spiritually to overcome evil' (Тумбина, 2004). Many O. Wilde's characters have to come through sufferings, as the Star-Child, the Happy Prince, the Swallow, the Young King. But, finally, they reach the highest point of morality. In his fairy tales O. Wilde shows wisdom and goodness. In such fairy tales as *The Birthday of the Infanta* and *The Star-Child* O. Wilde contradistinguishes an ugly external world and a person's inward beauty, and a beautiful world and a disgusting soul of a person.

Oscar Wilde praises the power of art. The writer proves that art must inspire a person to be better. For O. Wilde, high art is the synthesis of beauty, morality and virtue. O. Wilde defines essential elements of art: abstract image, fantasy and fiction. Besides fairy tales, these elements are typical for many other O. Wilde's works. O. Wilde never calls these stories for children as fairy tales despite of personification of flowers, birds and animals; the speaking statue; transformations and fantastic events. Thomas Stayley considers that 'O. Wilde's fairy tales revealed another approach to moral situations and human relationships' (Stayley, 1985:319). The imaginative situations become associated with real life situations. The spirit of O. Wilde's view is in his belief that beauty would save the world. For O. Wilde, art is distinctive. He insists that 'if something cannot be done to check, or at least to modify our monstrous worship of facts, Art

will become sterile, and beauty will pass away from the land' (Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*, 1894). The writer opposes beauty to ethics. 'Aesthetics are higher than ethics. They belong to a more spiritual sphere. To discern the beauty of a thing is the finest point to which we can arrive' (Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*, 1894).

O. Wilde assures that art and beauty are immortal. He believes that these conceptions are not ephemeral. O. Wilde selflessly strives for beauty and art in the time of ruling vulgarity. For O. Wilde beauty is truth. In his essay *The Critic as Artist* he emphasizes that 'All art is immoral. The aim of art is for emotion for the sake of emotion' (Wilde, *The Critic as Artist*, 1890). The writer encourages art to exist for art's sake. O. Wilde always believes in the renovation of life and triumph of verity and beauty. In the essay *The Decay of Lying* O. Wilde declares that 'life should imitate art' (Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*, 1894). For him such aspects as ideals and life are not separated. An Internet source Wikipedia gives the following information: 'O. Wilde holds that such anti-mimesis "results not merely from Life's imitative instinct, but from the fact that the self-conscious aim of Life is to find expression, and that Art offers it certain beautiful forms through which it may realise that energy' (Online 15).

O. Wilde has been known as a dandy many years before he became a famous dramatist and poet. His essay *The Decay of Lying* was published in the period between the first and second collections of fairy tales. In the essay the writer grieves for the decay of lying in art. O. Wilde expresses his anti-naturalistic aesthetic theories. Joseph Bristow considers that 'Wilde's essays in particular form an extended dialogue with the varying conclusions each of his Victorian predecessors draw from the theoretical perspectives they take on Hebraism and Hellenism' (Bristow, 1993: xxxiv). O. Wilde determinates influence of art over reality. In his essay *The Decay of Lying* the writer points out that 'Art takes life as part of her rough material, recreates it, and refashions it in fresh forms, is absolutely indifferent to fact, invents, imagines, dreams, and keeps between herself and reality the impenetrable barrier of beautiful style, of decorative or ideal treatment' (Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*, 1894). For O. Wilde, art recreates life. As Neil Sammells comments O. Wilde emphasizes that 'art can create the condition for genuinely moral choice' (Sammells, 2000: 69). The writer declares that art is self-conscious. John Pearce notes that 'O. Wilde promotes the idea that art should dissociate itself from morality, freeing itself from ethical constraints and conventions' (Pearce, 2001: 104).

Analyzing the writings of Herbert Spencer, called as social Darwinist, O. Wilde defines for himself the meaning of the developmental nature of human culture. Joseph Bristow points out that 'Wilde was, in other words, engaging with some of the most significant intellectual advances made in the late Victorian period, and his subsequent writings frequently synthesize his classical

learning with the models of cultural progress he had discovered in scientific sources' (Bristow, 1993: xvii). According to Joseph Bristow, 'the pleasures that may be derived from the aesthetic properties of art cannot exist separately from the ethical conditions that surround human consciousness. Enjoyment, in other words, is always for Wilde informed by moral considerations' (Bristow, 1993: xvii). O. Wilde's morality is far from traditional. Janet Cameron accentuates that in *An Ideal Husband* Wilde says 'Morality is simply the attitude we adapt to people we personally dislike' (Cameron, 2010). In his fairy tales O. Wilde displays all the moral and immoral deeds of his characters.

Public opinion was unfair to O. Wilde. O. Wilde's contemporaries often reproach him with his dissembling. As Sam Slote comments 'Like that savage tribe, Wilde was to break the lance of his fluent paradoxes against the body of practical conventions, and to hear, as a dishonoured exile, the choir of the just recite his name together with that of the unclean' (Slote, 1995). The writer is reproached the writer that there is no connection between art and morality in his works. According to an Internet source, 'Wilde's being concerned about co-existence of the opposites becomes obsessive, one can always refer to the interference of the natural and the supernatural, the good and the bad, the credible and incredible' (Online 16). The writer is known as a master of paradox. O. Wilde declares that 'what paradox was to me in the sphere of thought, perversity became to me in the sphere of passion' (Sammells, 2000:1). O. Wilde's paradoxes are pointed out in his fairy tales where O. Wilde emphasizes all his ideas of aesthetics but then he himself disproves them. One of other paradoxes of O. Wilde is his to find the difference between nature and culture.

The central subject of the tale *The Happy Prince* is the manifestation of love and sacrifice. The tale is an allegory. In the fairy tale O. Wilde abounds beauty and human sorrow. O. Wilde proclaims benevolence and the concept of self-sacrifice in the world of social inequality, indifference and cynicism. In the story the writer 'had moved from the implicit morality of his early poetry and prose to the realm of outright Christian parable' (Pearce, 2001: 141). The most outstanding task of religion is to lighten up morality. Guy Willoughby observes that 'Christian discipleship, then, in spite of societal hostility or incomprehension, becomes the warrant of a wonderful perfection, paradoxically achieved after death by a commitment to others that effaces self' (Willoughby, 1993: 26). Religiosity plays a special role in human life. Many people believe in life after death, and that God looks after their good and bad deeds. They believe in life after death where they will be punished for all the sins and misdeeds of their past life, and they will be given awards their good deeds and faithful service to God. In the end of the story O. Wilde refers to the Bible pointing out the fairness of God. The Swallow stays with the Statue because he

becomes blind. The Statue's heart is broken because his friend freezes to death. 'Both the Prince and the Swallow are rewarded in the end with entry into heaven, and the story may be read as an allegory of Christian salvation' (Sloan, 2003:121). God appreciates their benignity. For him they are two most precious things in the city because they feel charitable to less fortunate people. John Sloan declares that 'having lost his earthly value, the Prince is recast in the image of the utilitarian mayor' (Sloan, 2003:121). The ending of the fairy tale is rather pessimistic because O. Wilde mentions nothing about some changes in society. Sloan points out that "world is left an uglier place" (Sloan, 2003:121). But the story is not useless. It inspires us for good deeds and charity for others but also make us give thought to our behaviour, the purpose of human life and sense of happiness.

The theme of self-sacrifice for others is continued in O. Wilde's fairy tale *The Nightingale and the Rose*. According to Guy Willoughby, 'O. Wilde's story of the Nightingale is an allegory for the all-consuming love and commitment required of Christ's most notable imitator, the artist' (Willoughby, 1993: 27). The paradox of this O. Wilde's fairy tale is that this fairy tale contradicts with the quote of his novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: 'But beauty, real beauty, ends where intellectual expression begins' (Wilde, 'The Picture of Dorian Gray').

In the following fairy tale *The Remarkable Rocket* O. Wilde accentuates such moral concept as egocentrism. The tale is almost certainly an allegorical rendering of O. Wilde's former friend and famous egotist J. M. Whistler. According to Anna Bruder

by the time of this publication, Wilde had detached himself from the chains of Whistler's authority, and in his gift to Ruskin he asserted his symbolic return to the master's school of thought. That Wilde remained ever uncomfortable about Whistler's influence, and tried routinely to exorcise his impact, speaks to Wilde's struggle to reconcile the artistically opposing forces in his life (Bruder, 1995).

Anna Bruder describes that 'O. Wilde's satirical tale of a personified toy rocket whose ego is so immense that he believes his "setting off" is the cause of a royal celebration, neglecting to see that instead the Prince's marriage is the cause of the communal excitement, and his use only a mere footnote to the party' (Bruder, 1995).

In his fairy tale *The Devoted Friend* Wilde raises the subject of real friendship. At the same time, in the fairy tale O. Wilde does not offer any economic and political solutions to poverty and inequality. The writer does not second the sophisticated altruism of Victorian society. Joseph Bristow describes that O. Wilde 'is not to promote the claims of egoism, but to unmask what he sees as the specious altruism of Victorian society – an altruism which is hand-in-glove with a sentimental paternalism towards the poor, and thus the enemy of the kind of radical social change which would really benefit them' (Bristow, 1993: xix). John Sloan agrees with Joseph Bristow pointing out that 'altruism is exposed as a servant of the capitalist system it purports to

remedy' (Sloan, 2003:122). Actually, Hans dies for his self-sacrifice and confusion to refuse the Miller. On the contrary, the Miller benefits from the altruism of a little Hans who complies many requests of the Miller because the Miller is his friend, and he has promised him to give his wheelbarrow. Hans sacrifices his personal interests. Joseph Pearce admits that 'the real genius of the story resides not so much in the parable as in the postscript to the story which contains a parable about the parable, or a moral about the moral' (Pearce, 2001:142).

Joseph Pearce emphasizes that O. Wilde has been known both as a romantic moralist and as an amoral cynic. 'The parenthetical conclusion to Wilde's story also serves as the paradoxical conclusion that Wilde may have been coming to about himself' (Pearce, 2001:142). The dialogue between the Linnet and the Water-rat in the *The Devoted Friend* is like a battle between these two opposed features of O. Wilde's nature. Mark Simpson also mentions O. Wilde's views of the mission of a moralist. According to Mark Simpson, 'Oscar Wilde once famously defined a moralist as someone who likes to lecture on the evils of vices of which he has grown tired. In this accelerated age, a moralist is someone who likes to lecture on the evils of vices that they are about to try' (Simpson, 2006). Therefore, O. Wilde can be considered to be a moralist because in his fairy tales the writer shows up all the vices of his age as social deference, hypocrisy of high society, the gap between the rich and the poor, etc. The statement that O. Wilde is an amoral cynic can be proved analyzing the study of Katrina Monroe who points out that 'Anyone who considers themselves to be a cynic is familiar with Oscar Wilde. Witty, flamboyant, and brilliant, Wilde had an opinion on just about everything and voiced it loudly' (Monroe, 2012). In his essay *De Profundis* O. Wilde declares 'I am one of those who are made for exceptions, not for laws' (Wilde, *De Profundis*). Thus, the writer admits that only his own views are important for him paying no attention to a public opinion.

In his fairy tale *The Star-Child* Wilde cultivates the power of love-kindness and charity. The moral rule of the fairy tale is that the service that a person does to other person will render back again any times over. Kindness is repaid a hundred-fold. 'One should treat others as one would like others to treat oneself. It is ethic of reciprocity' (Online 17). The Golden Rule can be found in Buddhism ("Treat not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful." – Udana - Varga 5.18), Confucianism (Surely it is the maxim of loving - kindness: Do not unto others that you would not have them do unto you." - Analects 12:2), Hinduism ('This is the sum of duty: do naught unto others which would cause you pain if done to you.' - Mahabharata 5:1517) and other religious (Online 18). Evil will come back like a Boomerang. Matthew Arnold notes that 'so with Christian morality in general: its distinction is not that it propounds the maxim, 'Thou shalt love God and thy neighbor,' with more development, closer reasoning, truer sincerity than other moral

systems' (Arnold, 1962:135). In this fairy tale O. Wilde proves that aesthetical attitude to life cannot be worthy without ethical principles. L. C. Ingleby explains that 'the greatest claim that Oscar Wilde made for himself was that he was a high priest of aesthetics, that he had a new message concerning the relations of beauty and the worship of beauty to life and art, to life and to morals to give to the world' (Ingleby, 2006). The handsome but immoral Star-Child through his sufferings and good ethical deeds is changed into a kind beautiful man. In the end of the fairy tale O. Wilde declares:

Much justice and mercy did he show to all, and the evil Magician he banished, and to the Woodcutter and his wife he sent many rich gifts, and to their children he gave high honour. Nor would he suffer any to be cruel to bird or beast, but taught love and loving-kindness and charity, and to the poor he gave bread, and to the naked he gave raiment, and there was peace and plenty in the land (The Star Child, 1979:198)

The moral rule of O. Wilde's fairy tale *The Birthday of the Infanta* is that evil and heartlessness are destructive powers. The humiliation of a personality, especially someone who in any way afflicted, is an indicator of immorality. The writer displays that someone's feeling of own miserability causes sufferings and bitter pain. John Sloan comments that 'The Dwarf's consciousness of his ugliness is answered by the Infanta's admission of the heartlessness and exploitation underpinning the cultured splendours of the court' (Sloan, 2003:120). Despite of his ugliness, the boy's nature is beautiful. The Dwarf is unconscious of his own grotesque appearance. In tale *The Star-Child* people of the village feast their eyes upon the marvelous beauty of the Star-Child. The boy has a beautiful appearance but ugly nature. The beauty works him evil. He becomes a cruel, selfish, and arrogant child. The Star-Child contemns everyone. He makes a beast of himself. 'No pity had he for the poor, or for those who were blind or maimed or in any way afflicted, but would cast stones at them and drive them forth on the highway, and bid them beg their bread elsewhere, so that none save the twice so that village to ask for alms' (The Star Child, 1979:184). The boy does not know what sorrow is. He is narcissist. Therefore, the other moral lesson of both fairy tales is that people should not be judged by their appearance.

In the fairy tale *The Young King* the son of old King who also was brought in the family of an ordinary peasant tries to change the world for better. The Young King meets with not understanding from every level of society: working class, the nobles, and the bishop. The bishop in the cathedral does not praise the Young King for his sorrow. He asks the lad to come back to the palace and put on the proper raiment for his coronation. The Young King wants to find understanding of the person who has religious beliefs and preach morality. The Young King asks him a rhetorical question: 'Shall Joy wear what Grief has fashioned' (The Young King, 1979:104). John Sloan notices that 'finally, the Bishop, the Church's representatives, urges

acquiescence in the suffering and misery of the world on the grounds that God made the world the way it is' (Sloan, 2003:121). The bishop knows everything about the evil in the world. The bishop emphasizes that it is hard for the Young King to change the world, and it is too heavy for the Young King's heart to suffer. At the end of the story the Young King is transformed into Christ. 'The transformation of the Young King at the end into a triumphant Christ figure would again appear to offer a religious solution to the problems of social inequality; but it is one in which the cruel political and economic effects of culture and civilization stand fully revealed' (Sloan, 2003:121). Now the Young King sees a wonderful world around him. According to the text of the fairy tale

He stood there in the raiment of a king, and the gates of the jewelled shrine flew open, and from the crystal of the many- rayed monstrance shone a marvellous and mystical light. He stood there in a king's raiment, and the Glory of God filled the place, and the saints in their carven niches seemed to move. In the fair raiment of a king he stood before them, and the organ pealed out its music, and the trumpeters blew upon their trumpets, and the singing boys sang (The Young King, 1979).

O. Wilde pays a special importance to the beauty of inward world of the character. O. Wilde's positive characters for their goodness and self-sacrifice are appreciated by God. O. Tumbina considers that 'in the contrast between the Christ and a despotic world lays the deep sense of O. Wilde's fairy tales' (Тумбина, 2004).

O. Wilde's fairy tales raise subjects connected with psychology, social and history. According to Neelima Luthra, 'the three tales deceptively resemble the Biblical tract, moral fable or confessional literature, being structured around binaries of: beauty/ugliness, perverse desire/spiritual sublimation, selfishness/altruism and temptation/redemption' (Luthra, 2009). The fairy tales also show a political situation of Victorian England. 'The tales *write the self* reconfiguring identity politics and subverting the notion of a *happy ending*' (Luthra, 2009). As John Sloan comments, 'O. Wilde does not want to hide that behind art, beauty, freedom, culture – at the back of all these – is a hidden and ugly reality' (Sloan, 2003:120). The main aim of the writer is to mirror the reality of the time he lived pointing out his reaction against many tendencies of that time.

The writer considers that reality of life is far from the creation of beauty. Only art can create beauty. As O. Wilde points out in his essay *The Decay of Lying*, 'art is the creation of beauty; life and nature constitute its raw materials' (Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*, 1894). But the writer admits that there is an unequal fight between art and life where life is more powerful. Art is used by O. Wilde to not to despair of his own life where an unequal fight between art and life where life is more powerful.

#### 4. ANALYSIS OF MORAL STANDARDS AND MORAL VALUES IN O. WILDE'S FAIRY TALES

The collection *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* was published in 1888.

The chapter reveals moral concepts in four fairy tales from the collection: *The Happy Prince*, *The Devoted Friend*, *The Nightingale and The Rose*, and *The Remarkable Rocket*.

O. Wilde's collection of fairy tales *A House of Pomegranates* was published in 1891. Each of four fairy tales of the collection is separately dedicated to young women well-known in society for their interest in art and literature. The chapter also pays a special attention to moral rules in three fairy tales from the collection: *The Star-Child*, *The Young King*, and *The Birthday of the Infanta*. According to Matthew Arnold, 'moral rules, apprehended as ideas first, and then rigorously followed as laws, are must be, for the sage only'. M. Arnold adds that "the mass of mankind have neither force of intellect enough to apprehend them clearly as ideas, not force of character enough to follow them strictly as laws' (Arnold, 1962:134). O. Wilde shows up the moral rules prevalent in society of time he lived. The writer offers his own alternatives for the moral rules predominant in the Victorian epoch.

Many O. Wilde's fairy tales display charity and benevolence. John Sloan notes that O. Wilde's fairy tales can be considered to be 'significant samples of the sentimental reforming tradition of nineteenth - century literature' (Sloan, 2003:121). Philanthropy and sympathy can be found in works of Charles Dickens and Charles Kingsley. According to John Sloan, 'Victorian literature is a literature of the heart' (Sloan, 2003:121). The love of humanity is represented as an antidote to social misery and political anarchy. 'The evil effects of hands-off liberalism are alleviated by idealist-interventionist solutions from above-personal reformation, the giving of charity, and contact between the classes' (Sloan, 2003:121). The subchapter finds out significant moral standards depicted in O. Wilde's fairy tales from collections *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* and *A House of Pomegranates*. The author of the paper finds out set of moral standards predominant in Victorian society. The sub-chapter describes these moral standards using the text of fairy tales and theoretical material.

## 4.1. Cynicism of the Bourgeois-Aristocratic World and Social Inequality.

### Exploitation of the Poor.

In the tale *The Star-Child* the Wolf is sure that the Government is responsible for this terrible cold. The Wolf realizes that the Government has a lot of faults. It is O. Wilde's reference to the Government that is blamed by him of injustice and terrible attitude toward the poor who must work hard to survive in so cruel life. In tale the Woodcutters suffers from their poverty. One of the Woodcutters complains that life is for the rich but not for the poor. He bewails that it is better to die of cold than to have such a miserable life. The Woodcutters blames the life of being injustice. 'Injustice has parcelled out the world, nor is there equal division of aught save of sorrow' (*The Star Child*, 1979:180). Matthew Arnold expresses his view of hard life of poor people, explaining that 'for the ordinary man, this sense of labour and sorrow constitutes an absolute disqualification; it paralyses him; under the weight of it, he cannot make way towards the goal at all' (Arnold, 1962:134).

In the tale *The Happy Prince* O. Wilde shows heartlessness and callousness towards sufferings of poor people and arrogance of people of 'best society': the Major, Town Councillors, Town Clerk, Queen's maid- of- honour, etc. When the Major watches the broken statue without the ruby, eyes and gold, they spurn that 'he is little better than beggar' (*The Happy Prince*, 1979:38). Government men invent strange and stupid laws that are very ridiculous: 'We must really issue a proclamation that birds are not to be allowed to die here' (*The Happy Prince*, 1979:38). So called best society does not care about problems of the poor. The rich exploit the lower classes. There are 'more exploitative forms of capitalism in which workers were paid sometimes pennies a day for long hours of backbreaking labor. Social Darwinism also justified big business' refusal to acknowledge labor unions and similar organizations, and implied that the rich need not donate money to the poor or less fortunate, since such people were less fit anyway' (Online 19). The hands of the seamstress are coarse and pricked by the needle because she must embroider passion-flowers on a satin gown of one of the Queen's maids- of- honour. She works day and night to earn a pittance. But the Queen's maid –of –honour disdains that seamstresses are so lazy. Helena Wojtczak notes that 'almost the only skilled work for women was in the bespoke clothing trade, but even that was ill-paid and low-status. Seamstresses became a *cause célèbre* in the 1840s' (Wojtczak, 2009).

In the tale *The Remarkable Rocket* The Rocket thinks that very important persons, as she is, do not need to work. They have no sympathy themselves with industry. 'They have certain

accomplishments, and that is more than sufficient' (The Remarkable Rocket, 1979:80). The Rocket displays the contrast between lower class and upper class. The Rocket suggests that 'hard work is simply the refuge of people who have nothing whatever to do' (The Remarkable Rocket, 1979:80). He points out the fact that princes are always lucky implying that royal life is more successful than life of the poor. The poor will have no good fortune. There is a sharp contrast between excellent life conditions of the aristocracy and the extreme poverty of the lower class. According to Victorian Web, 'Benjamin Disraeli even calls Victorian England the state of two nations: the rich and the poor' (Online 20):

Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws (Online20)

In the tale *The Devoted Friend* O. Wilde derides the Miller's friendly feelings towards Hans. 'Indeed, so devoted was the rich Miller to little Hans, that he would never go by his garden without leaning over the wall and plucking a large nosegay...' (The Devoted Friend, 1979:55). Despite of his wealth, the Miller never gives his friend Hans anything in return. The Miller only speaks pompously about the unselfishness of true friendship. He considers that real friends should have everything in common. O. Wilde wants to show that the rich and the poor have different views of friendship, dignity, generosity of heart, etc.

In the tale *The Birthday of the Infanta* O. Wilde mentions about social contrast several times in the narration of the story. For example, the writer represents the theory of the old Sundial that 'the children of Kings were Kings, and that the children of charcoal-burners were charcoal-burners, and that it was absurd to pretend that it wasn't so...' (The Birthday of the Infanta, 1979:121).

In O. Wilde's tale *The Young King* the writer pays a special attention to the talk of the Young King and a poor man of the crowd. The man asks the lad to come back to the palace and put on the purple and fine linen. He emphasizes that the Young King knows nothing about sufferings of the poor. The man defines the moral rules that exist in their state. 'Sir, knows thou ... that out of the luxury of the rich cometh the life of the poor? By your pomp we are nurtured, and your vices give us bread. To toil for a master is bitter, but to have no master to toil for is more bitter still' (The Young King, 1979:103). The poor accept their lot not believing in changes for a better life. The Young King is confused. He thinks that the rich and the poor are brothers. The man of the crowd considers that they are brothers but the name of one brother is Cain. O. Wilde refers to the Biblical story of Cain and Abel where Cain murdered his brother Abel caused

by anger, jealousy, and pride. Cain had the evil in his heart. The man gives the Young King to understand that there is no fraternal love between the rich and the poor. The rich condemn the poor. The poor imprecate the rich.

In his first dream the Young King speaks with a weaver. He sees many gaunt figures of the working weavers. Their work is physically and emotionally exhausting. But the main difference between a workman and his master is the master's fine clothes while he like many weavers wears rags. The weaver complains that he is becoming weaker and weaker of hunger, but his master is always well-fed. According the weaver's point of view, the well-fed don't understand the hungry. The man emphasizes that the rich make slaves of the poor. 'We must work to live, and they give us such mean wages that we die' (The Young King, 1979:95). The weaver is bitterly disappointed with that the poor work hard but they have nothing. The rich do not work at all but they have luxurious life. He adds that the children of the poor fade away before their time and they are unhappy. The weavers' families suffer, and their faces become hard and evil. No one cares about their fates. 'Through our sunless lanes creeps Poverty with her hungry eyes, and Sin with his sodden face follows close behind her, Misery wakes us in the morning, and Shame sits with us at night'(The Young King, 1979:96). O. Wilde precisely displays the feeling of the poor. The weaver doubts that the young King can understand him because the lad has happy face. The Young King sees the death of the workers who have to look for rubies for a king's crown. That lad also knows that many slaves die because they have to dive in the sea to look for beautiful pearls for the King. He tells the nobles about his three dreams. The courtiers think that the man is mad. They persuade the Young King that these dreams were just dreams. They consider that the members of upper social class have not to care about life of those who work for them. O. Wilde demonstrates popular views of high society.

#### **4.2. Hypocrisy and Vanity of High Society. Respectability and Feeling of Being Elected.**

In his fairy tales O. Wilde shows up the hypocrisy in Victorian Society. Many critics accentuate Victorian hypocrisy and its negative effect for future descendants. Indignation fills our hearts because of an unjust fate of the poor and false morality of that time.

Other ages took it for granted that to be born human was to be born weak, part of a fallen race. But with the Victorians, and with their real descendants—not those of us with willing spirits and weak flesh, but those of us who pounce on them—it was established that moral malfeasance was always positive evidence of the intent to deceive and manipulate; that high standards are high only to shadow the sins that lurk behind them (Rodriguez, 2007).

In the tale *The Star-Child* the Star-Child despises the children of the Woodcutter and other children of the village saying that he is noble while they are of mean parentage. He becomes a master over the children. The other children fulfill all his orders because he is beautiful and gifted. When he pierces with a sharp reed the dim eyes of the mole, the other children laugh together with him at it. 'And in all things he ruled them, and they became hard of heart even as he was' (The Star Child, 1979:184). The boy arises evil. He knows no mercy. The boy repudiates his ill-favoured mother declaring that he could not be a son of so ugly beggar. 'The Star-Child stirred not from his place, but shut the doors of his heart against her, nor was there any sound heard save the sound of the woman weeping for pain' (The Star Child, 1979:187). He asks his mother to go away because she brings him to a shame. The woman wants to kiss her son farewell. The boy jostles his mother noticing that he rather would kiss the adder or the toad than her. He forgets the Bible's commandment that each Christian should know: 'Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you' (Online 21).

In O. Wilde's story *The Birthday of Infanta* the Infanta, the Princess of Spain, celebrates her twelfth birthday. The girl has only one birthday every year. O. Wilde derides the fact that the children of quite poor people also have their one birthday every year emphasizing that even royal origin of the Princess cannot effect on this rule. This is a special day to the whole country; therefore the entertainment programme of a great occasion has to be special. Infanta expresses her delight of Dwarf's dancing so emphatically that the Camerera scolds her pointing out that 'there were none for a Princess of the blood royal making so merry before those who were inferiors in birth' (The Birthday of the Infanta,, 1979:118). The Camerera does not want the Princess to lose her face in front of ordinary children. In tale O. Wilde points out that on ordinary days the little Princess is only allowed to play with children of her own rank, but especially for her birthday her father gives orders that the girl can invite any of children she likes to come. But the writer accentuates the keeping of social positions of rank: 'children following in strict order of presence, those who had the longest names going first' (The Birthday of the Infanta,, 1979:113).

In O. Wilde's tale *The Young King* the Young King, as a son of the King, grows up in the world of privilege (Sloan, 2003:121). According to John Sloan, 'in a sequence of three dreams, he is shown the realities of toil and human misery that sustain Joyeuse ('Joy' or 'Pleasure'), the name of his delightful Palace of Art' (Sloan, 2003:121). The Palace Joyeuse is like new world for the lad that differs from the life in the peasant's house in the forest.

In tale *The Happy Prince* Wilde emphatically depicts hypocritical society where the Town Councillors always agree with the Major.

Joseph Pearce points out that '*The Remarkable Rocket* is "a satire on vanity" (Pearce, 2001:141). Many characters of the tale are consumed by vanity: the Rocket, The Roman Candle, the Bengal Light, The Frog. These characters have the unjustified sense of their superiority. Only their concerns are valid for them. They speak only about themselves trying to create a great sensation. Mimosa Stephenson mentions the study of Jarlath Killeen who presents his allegorical approach to each of O. Wilde's fairy tales. According to Jarlath Killeen, 'the tales though on the surface simple, supernatural, and moral, are underneath treatments of the social, political, and religious plight of the people of Ireland in the second half of the nineteenth century' (Stephenson, 2011). Jarlath Killeen considers that

a grand display of fireworks of the tale *The Remarkable Rocket* can be connected "with the celebration of Guy Fawkes Day on November 5 each year, a celebration of deliverance from the Catholic menace. Wilde's making the Roman Candle the sensible speaker and blowing up the rocket in obscurity identifies the side Wilde takes in the struggle between the Protestant and the Catholic (Stephenson, 2011).

Within the same tale, when the King plays the flute very badly, no one dares to tell him so. Because it makes no matter, for, whatever he does, everybody finds it charming. It has not only negative effect on the art but also prevents moral development of people. In the story O. Wilde also mentions such negative moral concept as fawning. The Page of the Kingdom pays a compliment to the Princess noticing that she was like a white rose before, but she is like a red rose now. Other courtiers go about saying it for the next three days. The King decides to give orders to double the Page's salary. The writer sneers at the King's gesture of generosity. 'As the Page received no salary at all this was not much use to him, but it he considered a great honour, and was duly published in the Court Gazette' (*The Remarkable Rocket*, 1979:69). The King doubles his Page's salary a second time when the Page notes the Prince and the Princess love each other.

In the tale *The Devoted Friend* a hypocritical Miller wants to keep Hans away from any temptations. He considers that if little Hans sees their successful life, Hans will be envious. The Miller points out that he will never allow his friend's soul to be degraded. The Miller has no doubts about the purity of his own soul. The Miller does not need idle and sluggish friends. The Miller's wife worships her husband's ideas about friendship. 'I am sure the clergyman himself could not say such beautiful things as you do, though he does live in a three-storied house, and wear a gold ring on his little finger' (*The Devoted Friend*, 1979:56). The woman is hypocritical as her husband. She lets her husband indulge his egocentrism.

### 4.3. Morality and Moral Values of the Lower Class

In his essay *The Soul of Man under Socialism* O. Wilde emphasizes that ‘Ordinary riches can be stolen, real riches cannot. In your soul are infinitely precious things that cannot be taken from you’ (Wilde, *The Soul of Man under Socialism*). The writer wants to say that a person with a beautiful soul and beautiful heart is richer than a man who pays a great importance to money and wealth. O. Wilde contrasts cynicism and heartlessness of the aristocracy with kindness and benevolence of the poor.

In tale *The Happy Prince* the writer draws attention to the fact that, despite of their hard life, poor people are able to enjoy simple things in life and be happy for someone. Thus, their souls are not empty despite of their beggary. O. Wilde impresses by the kindness of the poor. When the statue of the Happy Prince was set high above the city, many poor people admire it. ‘I am glad there is someone in the world who is quite happy,’ muttered a disappointed man as he gazed at the wonderful statue’ (*The Happy Prince*, 1979:27). The Charity Children notice that the statue looks like an angel from their dreams and hopes. They idealize the Happy Prince.

The magnanimity of the Happy Prince changes the mind of the Swallow. ‘Moved by the Prince sadness, the Swallow begins his task, gradually forgetting his own egoistical concerns out of a growing love for the statue’ (Willoughby, 1993:24). According to Guy Willoughby

the Swallow becomes, in fact, a kind of disciple, distributing the alms of the master in much the same way – as the instruction above suggests – that Christ’s apostles did in the Gospel stories. Indeed, he is not unlike the Holy Ghost itself, that in the form of a dove visits upon Christ’s favored ones the spiritual benison of God (Willoughby, 1993:24).

The Happy Prince gives him the most important moral lesson: to create kindness. The role of the Swallow in the tale can be associated in some ways with the Christ’s apostles because the Swallow is charged with an important mission to destroy evil and improve the world.

In tale *The Devoted Friend* O. Wilde contradistinguishes the selfishness of the Miller with the selflessness of Hans. A simple-minded Hans has a genuine feeling of friendship to the Miller. Many people go to his funeral because people like a little Hans for his kindness and responsiveness.

In O. Wilde’s tale *The Star-Child* one of the Woodcutters suggests leaving the child in the forest because they are poor people. The man considers that they should raise their own children. The heart of the other Woodcutter is not become hardened despite of socially unsuccessful life. He decides to take the child with him because it is the evil thing to leave the child to perish in the

forest. His companion is marveled much at his comrade's foolishness and softness of heart. There is the definition of level of morality of both Woodcutters.

Within the same tale, the Woodcutter often blames his adopted son for being cruel. The man feels pity for the mother of the Star-Child and everyone who is in trouble. O. Wilde often emphasizes the benignity and righteousness of this man.

In the tale *The Birthday of Infanta* a kind –hearted Dwarf enjoys life and its simple joys. The boy is close to the Nature. The little Dwarf does not perceive that almost all the human beings mock at him. They screw up their faces looking at his hunched back, crooked legs, and ugly face. On the contrary, the Dwarf likes everyone. The boy considers the flowers to be the most marvelous things in the whole world. Only birds like the Dwarf. They do not mind that he is ugly. The birds know about the Dwarf's kindness. They know that he has a beautiful soul.

during that terrible bitter winter, when there were no berries on the trees, and the ground was as hard as iron, and the wolves had come down to the very gates of the city to look for food, he had never one forgotten them, but had always given them crumbs, out of his little hunch of black bread, and divided with them whatever poor breakfast he had (the *Birthday of the Infanta*, 1979:121).

He wishes that she can come with him to the forest to play with him. He wants to show her all his delightful tricks. The Dwarf dreams of giving the girl many gifts to make her happy. In the Palace the Dwarf sees many magnificent things. But they mean nothing for the boy. He has different moral values.

#### **4.4. Love and Marriage in the Victorian Period**

Jen Ziegenfuss describes that in Victorian Era 'love actually played a very minor role in the majority of matrimonies that took place' (Ziegenfuss, 2010). More than in other his fairy tales, the theme of love is emphasized in O. Wilde's tale *The Nightingale and the Rose*. There are many symbols, as rose, blood and the bird, are associated with love and beauty. Guy Willoughby explains that 'in literal terms the "thorn-crown" of her agony blossom into a red rose, venerable symbol of love, beauty, and perfection, which represents the artwork in whose symmetry and formal coherence to the martyrdom of its creator is incarnate' (Willoughby, 1993:26). Despite of this great price to pay for a red rose, the Nightingale decides to die for love because 'Love is better than Life, and what is the heart of a bird compared to the heart of a man' (*The Nightingale and the Rose*, 1979:42). The Nightingale believes that the Student is a true lover. According to

Joseph Pearce, 'the Nightingale "embodies the spirit of sacrificial love, ultimately even unto death, but the gift of the Rose, for which she lays down her life, is rejected by the lovers for whom it is intended' (Pearce, 2001:141). The Nightingale emphasizes that Love is a powerful feeling and wiser than Philosophy. The Nightingale brings the rose to the Student and dies. The Nightingale is enthusiastic about the power of love. All that the Nightingale asks of the young man in return is that the Student will be faithful to his own love. It can be created parallel with O. Wilde's life. Despite of public morals and ban on homosexuality, O. Wilde is faithful to his own love. 'He openly flaunted his sugar-daddy relationship with a handsome aristocrat, Lord Alfred Douglas' (Sanello, 2012). O. Wilde is imprisoned for his illegal affair. The prison and hard labour breaks the writer morally. It can be said that O. Wilde as the Nightingale suffered in the name of love.

The Student brings his lover the red rose. The girl does not care that the Student loves her. The girl lives by moral rules for ladies predominant in society. According to Jen Ziegenfuss

the most significant of them are: 1. Marriage was a carefully contemplated subject for a woman; since she would lose control over any possessions once married, it was not something entered into lightly, and a woman was not required to accept her first proposal. 2. The financial aspects of both families were discussed openly. They can be compared to today's prenuptial agreements. A woman's father was responsible for retaining a "jointure" for his daughter; this was a provision in the event that she might outlive her husband, so that she was taken care of monetarily (Ziegenfuss, 2010).

The Professor's daughter prefers the Chamberlain's nephew to the Student because he is richer than the Student. The Professor's daughter will make a good match, if she marries the Chamberlain's nephew. The girl does not care for being ungrateful to the Student. She is a choosy lady. Т. Диттрич points out that 'a Lady must not demonstrate her feeling of gratitude too much. The image of a spoilt lady is more preferable. A lady has to know her price. She has to take courtship as a matter of routine' (Диттрич, 2007:36).

The Student as the Professor's daughter knows nothing about what real love means. In his essay *De Profundis* O. Wilde said: 'The aim of Love is to love: no more, and no less' (Wilde, *De Profundis*). The young people do not have compassion for anybody. The feeling of self-sacrifice to others is alien to them. They are selfish and empty persons without understanding the meaning of such concepts as kindness and beneficence that are more valuable than jewelers and wiser than any sciences. Beneficent actions and motives indicate human morality.

In the tale *The Birthday of Infanta* the Infanta absolutely fascinates the Dwarf. She throws a beautiful white rose to the boy across the arena. The Princess has done it partly to tease the Duchess. But the boy misapprehends the Princess's sweetest smile and her gesture. He takes

them as the Princess's special attitude to him. He does not realize that she like other children make fun of him. The merciless Infanta only mocks at the miserable Dwarf. But even if the boy were not ugly, the Infanta would never be marrying him. Enoch Soames notes that 'Victorians are encouraged to marry within the same class' (Soames, 2004).

In O. Wilde's tale *The Young King* the lad is the child of the old King's only daughter. The father of the Young King is a stranger beneath the Princess in station. Nobody knows about who is he and about his further fate. The Princess made an awful moral sin of that time. It is a shame for a woman to give birth to an illegitimate child. The Princess was punished cruelly. She died in mysterious circumstances. 'Grief, or the plague, as the court physician stated, or, as some suggested, a swift Italian poison administered in a cup of spiced wine, slew, within an hour of her waking, the white girl who had given him birth...' (The Young King, 1979:90). The father of the Young King was killed too. Later the old dying King, remorseful for his great sin, sends for his grandson, and then acknowledges him as his heir in the presence of the Council. Ann R. Higginbotham emphasizes that 'the fate of illegitimate children is terrible' (Higginbotham, 1989). Ann P. Higginbotham points out that 'W. T. Charley, parliamentary spokesman of the Infant Life Protection Society, warned the first born of unmarried parents are the class of infants most exposed to violent deaths' (Higginbotham, 1989). In the fairy tale the son of the King's daughter was not killed but the boy was sent far away from the Palace to a peasant's family. A. R. Higginbotham insists that 'in the nineteenth century the dangers facing illegitimate infants were thought particularly acute in London where unmarried women could hide the births and deaths of unwanted infants in the anonymity of a great city' (Higginbotham, 1989).

#### **4.5. Attitude towards Art**

In the tale *The Happy Prince* the writer sneers at a conceited Town Councillor when he shares his thoughts about art describing the beauty of the statue. The Town Councillor pretends to be a connoisseur of art. 'He is as beautiful as a weathercock,' remarked one of the Town Councillors who wished to gain a reputation for having artistic tastes; "only not quite so useful..." (The Happy Prince, 1979:27). The Town Councillor fears that other people will consider him an unpractical person. The Art Professor also admits that art must be useful. He agrees with the decision to pull down the broken statue, because 'as he is no longer beautiful he is no longer useful' (The Happy Prince, 1979:38). Wilde shows up their airs and graces. Actually, they are

narrow-minded persons who do not realize a real mission of art. They consider that aesthetic is less important than pragmatism.

In the tale *The Nightingale and The Rose* The Student expresses the views of art that are popular in society of that time. David Walsh comments that is 'is particular to the Petty Bourgeois of society, where Art is seen without any deep significance, where purpose in Art is cast aside for the sake of mild leisure, where Art is simply feeding off Art' (Walsh, 1997). The Student pretends to be a well-educated person who can talk about art, philosophy and life. He considers that the Nightingale has form but has no soul. 'In fact, she is like most artists; she is all style without any sincerity. She would not sacrifice herself for others. She thinks merely of music, and everybody knows that the arts are selfish' (The Nightingale and the Rose, 1979:43). The Student wants that art will be that as Bernard Shaw, a contemporary of Oscar Wilde, requires being: 'art should extend beyond itself to become an act of ethical reform, influencing public opinion, public action, and public contribution' (Walsh, 1997).

O. Wilde mentions the attitude towards art in Victorian society in his fairy tales *The Birthday of Infanta* and *The Young King*. In the tale *The Birthday of Infanta* the occasion's programme is full of many various amusements: a marvelous bull-fight, *puppets show*, performance of an African juggler, show of a troop of Egyptians, etc. But the funniest part of the whole entertainment programme is the dancing of a little Dwarf. The Dwarf has crooked legs and a huge misshapen head. All the children shout into a loud. The Dwarf is a really unhandsome human creature. O. Wilde remarks on a perverted artistic taste of the royalties pointing out that 'even at Spanish court, always noted for its cultivated passion for the horrible, so fantastic a little monster has never been seen' (the Birthday of the Infanta, 1979:118). The Dwarf was carried off by two of the nobles as a surprise for the Princess. The boy is a son of a poor charcoal-burner who is pleased to get rid off his useless child.

In O. Wilde's other tale the Young King has passion for beauty. He is satisfied with his new life in the Palace, although sometimes he misses his past life in the common peasant's family. Many people from the Palace consider that this lad's passion is strange.

Those who accompanied him to the suite of rooms set apart for his service, often spoke of the cry of pleasure that broke from his lips when he saw the delicate raiment and rich jewels that had been prepared for him, and of the almost fierce joy with which he flung aside his rough leathern tunic and coarse sheepskin cloak (The Young King, 1979:91).

The Young King's behaviour is strange for other people. One day he is found kneeling in real adoration before a great picture brought from Venice. On another day he is found in a small room of the palace where he is gazing, as one in a trance, at a Greek gem with the figure of

Adonis. The Young King worships beauty inspiring by its gorgeosity. He sends away many merchants to bring him the most expensive and rarest things that fascinated him by their materials and precious stones.

#### **4.6. Materialism. The importance of gold and material values**

In the tale *The Star-Child* one of the Woodcutters performs an act of charity, the other Woodcutter tries to profit from the misfortune of others. The man asks his comrade to give him the cloak. ‘Thou hast the child, therefore give me the cloak, for it is meet that we should share’ (The Star Child, 1979:181). He is eager for gold.

In O. Wilde’s tale *The Young King* the Chamberlain asks the Young King to put on the royal things. But the Young King tells the high officers that he will go out the palace in the same clothes he came to the Palace for the first time. The Chamberlain tries to persuade the lad that nobody will know him for a king without a king’s raiment. The Young King wears the leathern tunic and rough sheepskin cloak and goes out the palace. He makes his crown of a spray of wild briar. Some of the nobles laugh at him. They see a beggar instead of their king. Some of the nobles are angry at him because they are sure that such king stigmatizes their state, and he is unworthy to be their lord.

In the tale *The Nightingale and The Rose* the Professor’s daughter takes notice that the Chamberlain’s nephew has sent her some real jewels. The girl is sure that material things are more valuable than moral things focusing on that ‘everybody knows that jewels cost far more flowers’ (Nightingale and The Rose, 1979:46). The girl is a materialistic person. Wilde gives a characterization of his age in the last replicas of the Student. The writer declares that love is considered to be quite unpractical ‘in this age to be practical in everything’ (The Nightingale and The Rose, 1979:46).

In the tale *The Happy Prince* O. Wilde notes that gold is a metal that has great significance in the Victorian time. The Happy Prince asks the bird to bring leaf after leaf of the fine gold he is made to the poor. He wants make these people happy pointing out that people think that gold can make them happy. The Happy Prince hopes poor people could sell his gifts to not to die of cold and hunger. They can change gold for bread. Gold does not be used by them to become wealthier; it will be used to survive.

In the tale *The Devoted Friend* when the Miller is going to visit Hans, she always asks him to take the big basket for the flowers. They are philistines because they are only interested in material things. They try to derive benefit from anything.

#### **4.7. Patriarchal Rules**

In the tale *The Star-Child* at first the Woodcutter's wife is irritated with her husband's decision because their own children are underfed. Her husband reproaches her for being heartless: 'Into a house where a heart is hard cometh there not always a bitter wind?' (*The Star Child*, 1979:183). Therefore, the Star-Child is brought up with the children of the Woodcutter. O. Wilde wants to show that the word of a man has a great importance in families. The man supports his family. Thus, his word is law for whole family. The Woodcutters have many children as many traditional families in the Victorian period.

In O. Wilde's fairy tales aesthetics, colliding with life, transforms into ethics. It is a logical paradox of O. Wilde's fairy tales. The writer pays a great attention to ethical principles and moral problems. He shows the role of morality in Victorian England.

## CONCLUSIONS

In his fairy tales O. Wilde not only shows up the vices of Victorian society but preaches virtue, goodness, power of beauty and compassion. In the fairy tales O. Wilde shows the nature of many human vices.

In some fairy tales from the collections *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* and *A House of Pomegranates* Christian imagery and mysticism are closely connected.

In his fairy tales the writer does not aim to find ways to solve any problems. Endings of the fairy tales are pessimistic and sad. There is no hope that good will defeat evil. Positive characters die but negative characters do not become better and much kinder.

O. Wilde does not show that he has some hopes for coming positive changes and progress in society. There are so many things that need reforming in public life. But O. Wilde foresees changes in the system of social and ethical values of the epoch he lived in. The epoch of historical canons and radical changes influence public consciousness. False ethics, platitudinous logic and life order of the past are challenged. The writer wants that people could perceive, express their feelings and thoughts liberally, and be able to feel sorry for other human beings.

There are many contrasts in O. Wilde's fairy tales: contrast between good and evil, contrast between luxury and poverty, contrast between fads of the rich and sufferings of the poor. The writer contrasts material well-being of the bourgeois with beggary of the lower class. The contrasts lie in the basis of the analysis of high moral standards in O. Wilde's fairy tales.

The fairy tales of O. Wilde have high social-moral tasks. As all other fairy tales, each of O. Wilde's fairy tales has its own moral. O. Wilde gives clear understanding about the good and evil of human acts. O. Wilde's fairy tales represent the writer's ideas of moral decency and social ethics. Moral ideas of the fairy tales are evident.

O. Wilde uses biting sarcasm, allegories and paradoxes against hypocritical morality and philistinism of high society. The writer unmasks reality of bourgeois society of the Victorian period. He demonstrates it with bitter pathos, he tells the unpalatable truth. O. Wilde contemns standard views of the middle class, so-called 'a bourgeois mentality' on many subjects. The writer denounces philistine tastes of the middle class. It causes English bourgeoisie to become openly antagonistic toward O. Wilde. Many of the writer's works are severely criticized.

Depicting sufferings of the poor, O. Wilde discards from his own views of aesthetics. The writer emphasizes the role of charity. He is inspired by good deeds of his characters who sacrifice themselves for happiness of others.

O. Wilde accentuates on double moral standards of the Miller who demands proof of real friendship of Hans but nothing gives him in return except his beautiful ideas of friendship. It is important that the Water-rat likes the Miller's personality which is shown by the fact that the Water-rat considers that he has 'all kinds of beautiful sentiments himself, so there is a great sympathy between them' (*The Devoted Friend*, 1979:58). The Water-rat does not understand the moral of the story. The Linnet pays a great importance to such aspects as moral purity and genuine friendship. The Water-rat is a cynical human being.

O. Wilde highlights double moral standards of the Rocket. The Rocket blames others of having moral faults that he himself possesses. In the end of the story the Rocket is put into the fire by children. They consider the Rocket a useless old stick. The writer wants to show that a person's having a high opinion of oneself can meet with others' opposing attitude towards him/her. Self-conceit is one of human vices.

In *The Happy Prince* O. Wilde depicts sufferings and rough luck of the poor. The statue of the Happy Prince sees the misery of his city. The writer accentuates on many social problems of that time. O. Wilde gives the characterization of the city depicting complex social realities: unhappy starving children, wealth of the rich and beggary and sufferings of the poor. The soul of the Happy Prince cries out for the ugliness of his city.

The Star-Child pays for his evil. His look is changed. The boy loses his beauty because he is punished for his sin because he denied his mother and drove her away. No one human being wants to help him to find his mother because he made them suffer. The boy regrets that he brought pain into God's world. He is so ugly that now people drive him away. Nobody has pity to him. 'and in the world there was neither love nor loving-kindness nor charity for him, but it was even such a world as he had made for himself in the days of his great pride' (*The Star Child*, 1979:190).

Sufferings and moral pain changes the nature of the Star-Child. Looking for a piece of gold, the boy releases a little Hare caught in a trap of a hunter. The boy gives all his coins to the leper because the man's need is greater than his own. His parents forgive the boy inspiring that his heart is not cruel anymore. The Star-Child becomes the lord of the city. He redeems his fault for his arrogance and immorality. He glorifies the good and sweeps away all evil: 'Nor would he suffer any to be cruel to bird or beast, but taught love and love-kindness and charity, and to the poor he gave bread, and to the naked he gave raiment, and there was peace and plenty in the land' (*The Star Child*, 1979:198). The lord rules no longer because he has bad health as a result of experienced sufferings. The next lord of the city rules evilly.

The Dwarf of O. Wilde's fairy tale is an ugly boy but he has so beautiful soul. When the Dwarf realizes that the Infanta and other children laughed at his ugliness, he sorrows that his father did not kill him. The Dwarf thinks that it would be better if his father...sold him to his shame. The cruel children want the Dwarf to dance for them. The merciless children humiliates at unlucky boy. The Dwarf dies because his heart is broken. The Infanta gives the order that for the future everyone comes to play with him must have no heart. The Chamberlain regrets about the death of the dwarf only because 'he is so ugly that he might have made the King smile' (*The Birthday of the Infanta*, 1979:132). The name of the fairy tale is *The Birthday of the Infanta*. The name can be examined not only literally; there is a real birthday of the girl who is brought up as a cruel and arrogant person. She grows up together with children who also have no heart. They are indifferent to the pain and grief of others. They know nothing about morality. O. Wilde is indignant for such moral rules of society when children and adults can humiliate at a cripple.

The Young King is crowned by someone who is greater than the bishop. The name of the tale can be analyzed in such way that The Young King is a new-born lord who wants to reign in the world where all people are equal and happy; they value morality, kindness and beauty.

O. Wilde demonstrates that, despite of physical power of evil, the good is stronger spiritually. The writer wants his readers to strive for perfection and prevent themselves from going into spiritual immortality. Noble and kind characters inspire the readers to make good actions. O. Wilde emphasizes the conflict between a person and society. Many O. Wilde's positive characters are casted by society that can be noticed in O. Wilde's fairy tales *The Happy Prince* and *The Young King*. In these stories the writer shows that the good is stronger than evil in moral struggle. It is not difficult to realize who is a positive character, and who is a negative character in O. Wilde's fairy tales.

O. Wilde shows that many his characters contradict their ideas with their actions. They intentionally speak beautifully to hide their falsity and greediness.

O. Wilde admits the existence of double standards in social morality and ethical principles for the conduct of human.

## THESES

1. Oscar Wilde is one of the most prominent writers in the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. O. Wilde's fairy tales are remarkable creative achievements of the writer's great literary craftsmanship. They are significant examples of this literary genre in the world literature.

2. The Victorian epoch is the time of rapid changes in every sphere of life, and the period of significant political reforms. The Victorian age is the age of contradictions. Social reforms set forth for the improvement of public morality coexists with class inequality.

3. O.Wilde rebels against false moral standards of his epoch. The novelist scorns vulgarity, prudery, hypocritical morality and arrogance of the Victorian Period. In his fairy tales O.Wilde not only shows up the vices of Victorian society but preaches virtue, goodness, power of beauty and compassion. In the tales O. Wilde shows the nature of many human vices.

4. O.Wilde is a master of paradox. The paradox lies in fact that this work reflects the embodiment of all O.Wilde's ideas of aesthetics but then shows the writer's disproof of the same ideas.

5. The main paradox of O. Wilde's fairy tales is that, despite of their imaginary world and the elements of a fairy tale but also evident discrepancy with them and with real life, the writer's fairy tales are moral tales that are connected with problems of reality.

6. O.Wilde glorifies art and beauty considering that life and nature should follow art and imitate it. The writer proves that art must inspire a person to be better. For O. Wilde, high art is the synthesis of beauty, morality and virtue.

7. O. Wilde rejects moral standards of his time. He speaks ironically that 'to be good, according to the vulgar standard of goodness, is obviously quite easy. It

merely requires a certain amount of sordid terror, a certain lack of imaginative thought' (Wilde, *The Artist as Critic*).

8. In his fairy tales O. Wilde shows up the hypocrisy in Victorian Society. Many critics accentuate Victorian hypocrisy and its negative effect for future descendants.

9. There are many contrasts in O. Wilde's fairy tales: contrast between good and evil, contrast between luxury and poverty, contrast between fads of the rich and sufferings of the poor. The writer contrasts material well-being of the bourgeois with beggary of the lower class. The contrasts lie in the basis of the analysis of high moral standards in O. Wilde's fairy tales.

10. O. Wilde shows that many his characters contradict their ideas with their actions. They intentionally speak beautifully to hide their falsity and greediness. O. Wilde admits the existence of double standards in social morality and ethical principles for the conduct of human.

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