

# The Victorian Compromise



# Meaning



- Expression coined by Prof. **Lawrence Friedman**
- Referred to that **double standard** of behavior which tolerated sin and vice, so long as they remained hidden in the private sphere.
- This duplicity characterized Victorian:
  1. Morality
  2. Society
  3. Empire



# VICTORIAN MORALITY

- Men and women had to preserve their reputation to be respectable.

## HENCE

It was required to seem respectable rather than actually being respectable

- Virtues were public while vices were kept private



# A Respectable Man Had:

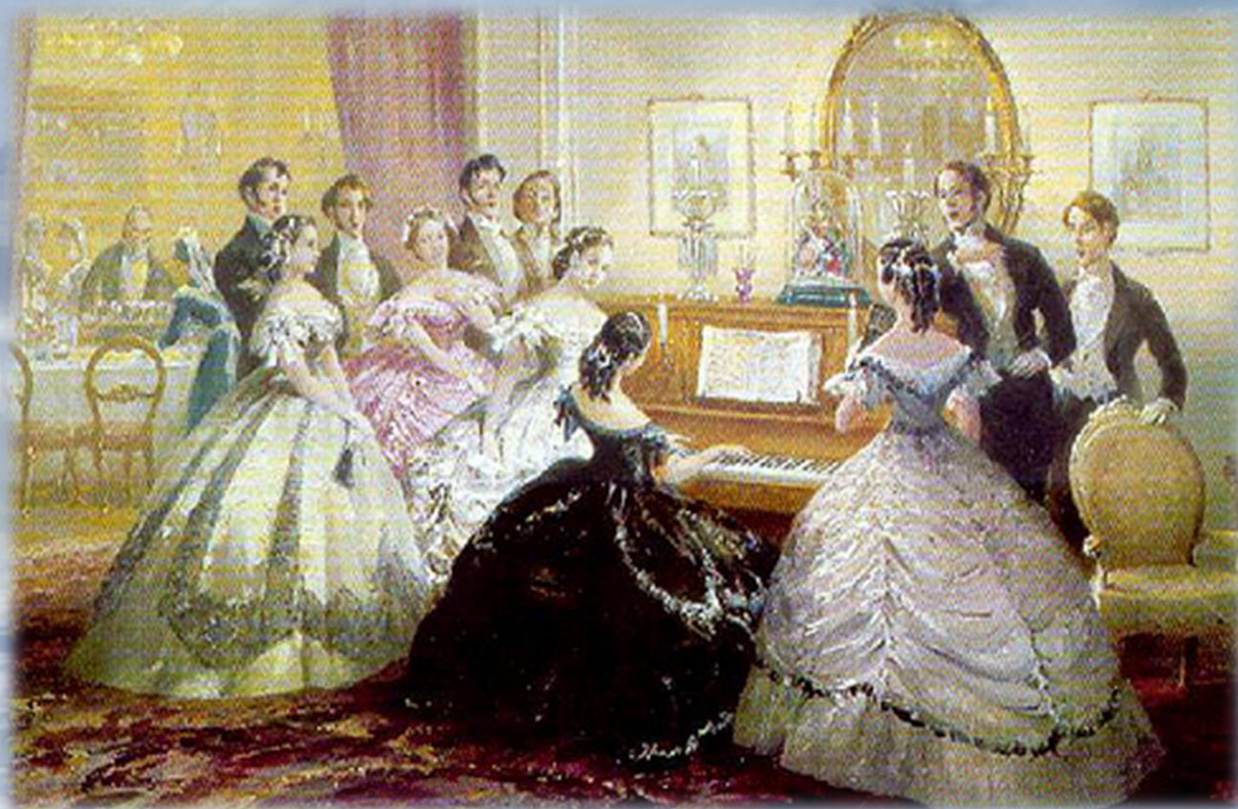
- Connections
- Station
- Money
- Education
- Decorum
- Good-taste
- Godliness
- Good manners





# A Respectable Woman Was:

- Accomplished
- Elegant
- Connected
- Chaste
- Devoted

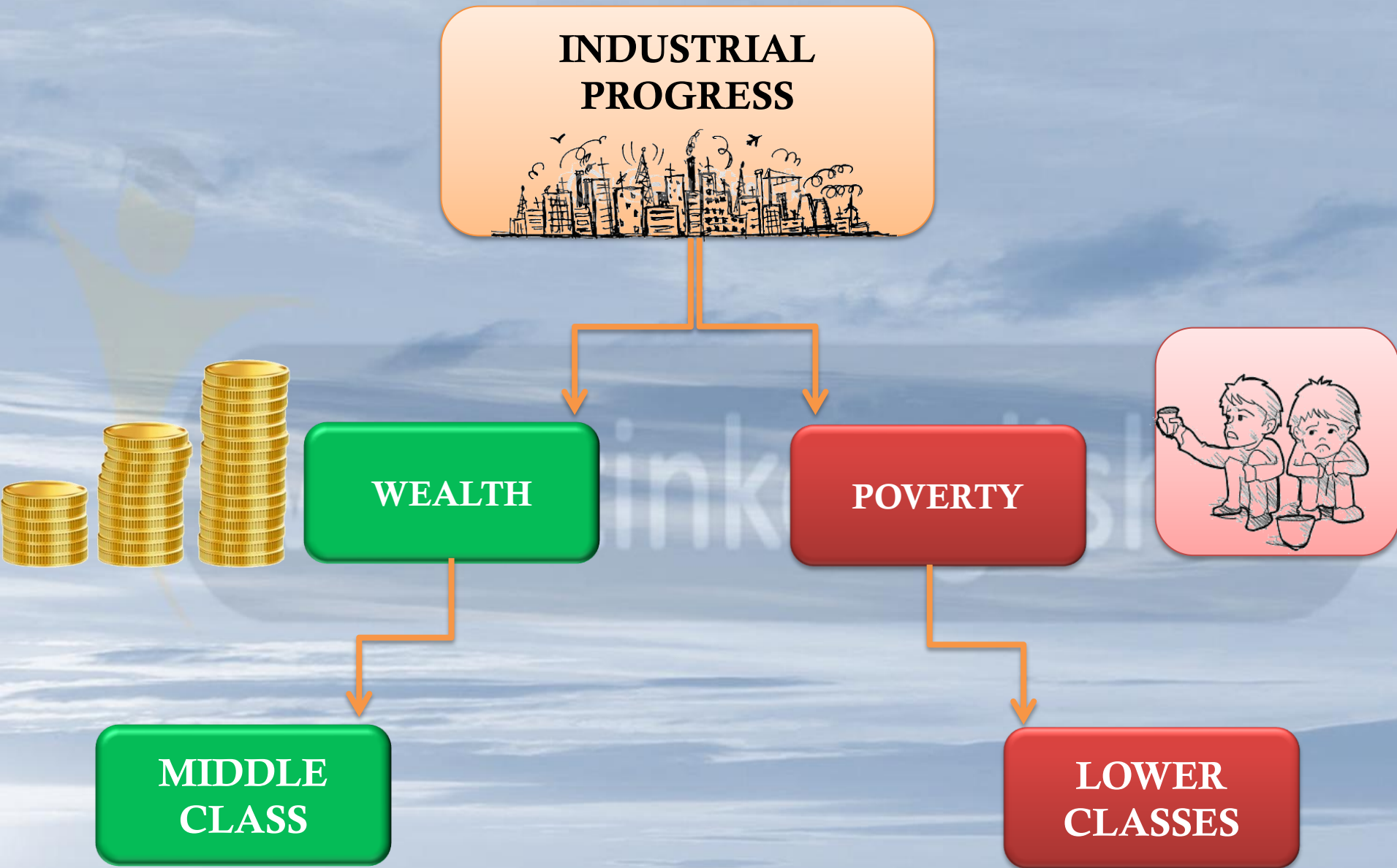


# Social Victorian Compromise

- Industrial progress produced wealth but also suffering.
- Upper and middle classes enjoyed marked advancements in wealth.
- Working classes suffered greatly because of:
  1. Poor living conditions
  2. Exploitation
  3. Child labor
  4. High mortality rate







You should take  
into consideration  
the Puritan  
impact on  
English culture!

You might be  
wondering how all  
this was justified, as  
it could not be  
hidden easily!

Success was proof  
of God's good  
will! Hence, the  
poor were all  
sinners!

Even  
Darwinism  
was given a  
peculiar  
interpretation.





# Social Darwinism

- Human groups and races are subject to the same laws of **natural selection**.
- Societies evolve from lower **barbarian** to higher **civilized** forms.
- Natural selection: the most capable **survives**, the least capable **dies out**.
- Wrong to interfere with this process.
- It justified:
  1. Imperialism
  2. Racism
  3. Eugenics
  4. Social inequality



# Victorian Compromise and the Empire

- Great expansion of the British empire.
- Patriotism was influenced by ideas of racial superiority.
- The white man had a civilizing mission and duty as **culturally superior**. This concept justified:
  1. Exploitation
  2. Submission
  3. Destruction of native cultures.





# Robinson, the Prototype of a Colonizer

“... when he espied me he came running to me, laying himself down again upon the ground, with all the possible signs of an humble, thankful disposition, making a great many antic gestures to show it. At last he lays his head flat upon the ground, close to my foot, and sets my other foot upon his head, as he had done before; and after this made all the signs to me of **subjection**, **servitude**, and **submission** imaginable, to let me know how he would serve me so long as he lived. **I understood** him in many things, and let him know I was very well pleased with him. In a little time I began to speak to him; and teach him to speak to me: and first, I let him know his name should be **Friday**, which was the day I saved his life: I called him so for the memory of the time. I likewise taught him to say **Master**; and then let him know that **was to be** my name.  
(Robinson Crusoe)



# The White Man's Burden. Kipling.

- Take up the **White Man's burden**-
- -Send forth the **best ye breed**-
- -Go bind your sons to exile
- To **serve** your captives' need;
- To wait in heavy harness,
- On **fluttered folk** and **wild**
- Your new-caught, **sullen** peoples,
- Half-**devil** and half-**child**.
- **Burden**: a heavy responsibility
- **Breed**: children
- **Harness**: boring daily work
- **Fluttered**: unsteady
- **Folk**: people
- **Sullen**: bad-tempered; gloomy





# The POEM



- Rudyard Kipling originally wrote the poem to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897.
- He revised it in 1899 to exhort the American people to conquer and rule the Philippines.
- He defines **white imperialism** and colonialism in moral terms as a “burden”.
- The white race must take up in order to help the non-white races develop civilization.
- The phrase "**white man's burden**" remains notorious as a racist justification for Western conquest.

# SUMMARY

- The speaker exhorts the white audience to perform a difficult task assigned to them by virtue of their whiteness.
- This task will require the best people in white society to go forth to another land, with an entire generation of young men essentially being exiled.
- These young men will be made to serve a foreign people they themselves conquered; paradoxically, the young men will have to serve their own unwilling captives.
- The young white men will be harnessed like horses awaiting the beck and call of an unreliable, nearly savage people, who have just been captured like prizes in a contest.
- These same people are not human adults but both childlike and evil.





# THE BURDEN THEME

- By emphasizing the hardships of this "burden," the poet sees all the difficulties of an imperialist project.
- The “silent, sullen peoples” lifted up from “bondage” will never offer the imperialists any thanks or praise.
- Imperialism is a sober, **tedious duty** rather than a grand adventure of conquest
- The larger part of “the white man’s burden” is thus an exercise in “patience,” accepting the length and difficulty of the task set for the imperialists.
- Imperialism and colonialism is a thankless task, taken up by whites purely out of goodwill for other races , without any ulterior motive of profit, reward, praise, or even gratitude.
- Imperialism is the white man’s gracious sacrifice on behalf of non-whites.



# RACISM

- It is a racist worldview that the white man conquer to help and educate the non-white races.
- The white races are superior and civilized, while non-white races are inferior and savage.
- White imperialism was never driven by selfless motives. Its consequences were:
  1. devastation of conquered lands
  2. enslavement of native people
  3. the slave trade
  4. the rapacious corrupt practices
  5. the profit and power and national pride that Britain derived from its empire on which “the sun never set”.





# Conclusion

The Victorian period was marked by a strong dualism in any field . The alluring mask made of wealth, expansion and rigorous moral conduct was boasted to hide the other unpalatable truths, which were to be kept secret or invisible as much as possible.

«Public virtues and secret vices» was to become the motto of an entire era, the most glorious one in English history, whose borders are, nevertheless, blurred.



