

## **OTHELLO: a Reflection of the Renaissance Movement from Optimism to Cynicism - Reversals of World Views**

(Find and cite examples in the play)

The Great Chain of Being (animal and devil imagery at bottom, heaven and angel imagery at top):

Empirical Knowledge (Leonardo's "eye") vs. Faith-Based (trust) Knowledge:

Science vs. Superstition:

Social, Domestic, Political, Military Hierarchy:

Ego, Self-worth, Self-consciousness taken to its logical conclusion - Pride:

Battle between good and evil, light and dark, black and white:

Justice (Human reflection of Divine):

Macrocosm/Microcosm:

Fickle Fortune's Wheel:

Music of the universe (in/out of tune):

Reason vs. Passion:

Order vs. Chaos (in nature and man):

The Courtier - give good counsel (Castiglioni):

Machiavelli's attitude toward human nature vs. Alberti's:

Machiavelli's attitude towards relationship of ethics to goals:

Seeming vs. Being (Machiavelli):

\$ - everything is a commodity:

The Process of Sin (from sense to imagination to reason to will to action):

The Other:

The new frank sensuality of women (Titian, Giorgioni, Boccaccio):

Rising in the world (or falling) by "Merit":

Use of language (rhetoric) to persuade to right action (Castiglioni, Petrarch):

Love vs. Hatred

Outspokenness and well-spokenness of women (Castiglioni, Marinera, Veronica de Franco):

Good and bad Judgement / Justice:

Questions:

- 1) Where does Iago hold a mirror up to those around him?
- 2) How does Othello reflect the movement of the renaissance from an idealistic optimism about human potential for excellence and goodness (Pico) to cynicism and even pessimism about human potential for folly and evil (Machiavelli)?
- 3) How is murder, even more - suicide, emblematic of the ultimate demise of the Humanists' project?
- 4) In what ways is Iago's silence an appropriate conclusion to events in the play?