**The Divine Order - The Great Chain of Being**

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| In Elizabethan times, there was a different way of looking at life.  People, including Shakespeare believed in a Divine Order, or Great  Chain of Being. The Divine Order was the belief that everything in  the universe has a specific place and rank in order of their perceived  importance and "spiritual" nature. The more "spirit" a person or object  had, the more power he or she had.  ***The more spirit an object was thought to have, the higher they would be in the Divine Order. Here is the example of the Divine Order:***  Most Amount of Spirit/Highest on the Divine Order   * God * Angels (seraphim, cherubim) * Humans (kings, merchants, men women, etc. * Animals (mouse, dogs, lions, etc.) * Plants (grass, trees, etc.) * http://3ehamlet.wikispaces.com/file/view/HierarchicalScale.gif/195802992/HierarchicalScale.gifLeast Amount of Spirit/ Lowest on the Divine Order- Nonliving Objects (rocks, metals, etc.)   ***Within each category there were more specific cataloguing.***  ***For example humans were believed to have different amounts***  ***of spirits. Below is an example of the Divine Order for humans:***  Most Amount of Spirit/Highest on the Divine Order   * Kings * Queens * Nobles * Merchants * Least Amount of Spirit/ Lowest on the Divine Order- Peasants   W***ithin families there was even specific cataloguing. Below***  ***is an example of the Divine Order for humans:***  Most Amount of Spirit/Highest on the Divine Order   * Father * Mothers * Sons * Daughter * Least Amount of Spirit/ Lowest on the Divine Order- Servants   ***What does all of this mean?***  The more "spirit" the person or object had, the more power it had in its  interactions with people or things below in the order. People in  Elizabethan England believed that God set up this order and wanted it  to be followed. If someone or something were to break the Divine Order  by not being obedient to whatever was above it, the person or thing that  went against the God's will would be punished. Bigger betrayals of the  Divine Order were believed to bring bigger punishments by God, while  smaller betrayals would bring about smaller punishments. For example,  if a noble overthrew a king, Elizabethan people thought that a natural  disaster (an earthquake, a hurricane, etc.) would strike. If a daughter  disobeyed her father, Elizabethan people believed the daughter might  fall ill. This was a very convenient way for people higher in the Divine  Order to maintain their power.  ***What does this have to do with Shakespeare?***  Shakespeare sincerely believed in the Divine Order, and  many of his plays revolve around this belief. Macbeth, Taming of the  Shrew, Romeo and Juliet, and Hamlet are just a few of the plays that reflect  Shakespeare's belief in the Great Chain of Being and his desire to  maintain God's Order. |

***Structure of His Plays***

