

Souls and Music: Reincarnation, Lightworkers, Pythagoras, and Plato's *Myth of Er* in *Twelfth Night*

Marianne Kimura

"What persists from lifetime to lifetime isn't a sense of reward and punishment at all, but a sense of the habits that you carry forth. If you're a person who has strong inclinations, or habits of thought and action in one lifetime, you're likely to carry them with you into the next lifetime."—Jeffery Mishlove

The world is enjoying a resurgence of interest in near death experiences (NDEs), death bed visions (where a dying person sees spirits of relatives and pets who have passed away), shared death experiences (where both the dying person and his or her friends or relatives experience spiritual visions as the dying person enters the afterlife), dreams and messages delivered to living people that appear to come from people who have passed away, children who recall their past lives, reincarnation, strange coincidences, often called synchronicities, that can be read as evidence of spiritual influence, witchcraft (using skills to influence the energy of the spiritual world and in turn effect outcomes here), and other spiritual and paranormal phenomena such as mediums and fortune tellers. These spiritual/supernatural topics, covered by thousands of TikTok and YouTube channels, websites, books, and paranormal studies at various universities like the University of Virginia, all attest to this massive and growing cultural fascination, which shows no sign of slowing down.

Similar and related supernatural phenomena are seen also in Shakespeare's plays. Among Shakespearean supernatural characters, there is the ghost of old Hamlet in *Hamlet* as well as the ghost of Banquo and the three witches and Hecate in *Macbeth*, and the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The fortuneteller in *Julius Caesar* appears to have a strong enough connection to the spirit world that he can correctly predict the Ides of March as a fatally unlucky day for Julius Caesar. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo's description of Mercutio's soul as "but a little way above our heads" echoes those who have experienced an NDE and floated out of their dead bodies:

Mercutio's soul is but a little way above our heads
Staying for thine to keep him company... (3.1.126-28)

As for reincarnation, Shakespeare mentions it three times in relation to the Ancient Greek philosopher Pythagoras, who was famous for his theory that souls would be reincarnated. Pythagoras based his belief in reincarnation on his own memory of his past life:

The honour of having the first recorded past-life memory goes to Pythagoras (sixth century BCE), who believed that he had lived before as the Trojan fighter Euphorbus. Pythagoras is said to have recognized Euphorbus's shield when he saw it in the temple of Juno at Argos. (Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, book 15, line 161)¹

In *As You Like It*, Rosalind jokingly alludes to the popular idea that it might be possible to vaguely recall one's past lives when she says:

1 <https://psi-encyclopedia.spr.ac.uk/articles/reincarnation-accounts-1900>

I was never so berhym'd since Pythagoras' time, that I was an Irish rat,
which I can hardly remember. (3.2.176-78)

And in *The Merchant of Venice*, Gratiano says to Shylock:

O, be thou damn'd, execrable dog!
And for thy life let justice be accused.
Thou almost makest me waver in my faith
To hold opinion with Pythagoras,
That souls of animals infuse themselves
Into the trunks of men... (4.1.128-133)

In these lines of Gratiano's, Shakespeare makes it very clear that Christianity (Gratiano's "faith") is opposed to the idea of reincarnation², since Gratiano would have to "waver" in this faith in order to accept Pythagoras' ideas.

With a similar conclusion that Christianity opposes the idea of reincarnation, in *Twelfth Night*, Feste, disguised as the priest Sir Topas, discusses Pythagoras' theory of reincarnation with the "puritan"/ good Christian Malvolio:

Clown: What is the opinion of Pythagoras concerning wild-fowl?

Malvolio: That the soul of our grandma might happily inhabit a bird.

Clown: What think'st thou of his opinion?

Malvolio: I think nobly of the soul, and no way approve his opinion.

Clown: Fare thee well. Remain thou still in darkness. Thou shalt hold

2 "(T)he idea of reincarnation was rejected by the Christian Church as a doctrine because it was believed to contradict the doctrine of corporeal resurrection and undermine the need for Christ's redemptive sacrifices." <https://epubs.utah.edu/index.php/historia/article/view/578#:~:text=Although%20the%20idea%20of%20reincarnation,as%20Valentinus%20and%20Basilides%20of>

th'opinion of Pythagoras ere I will allow of thy wits, and fear to kill a woodcock lest thou disposes the soul of thy grandma. Fare thee well. (4.2.50-60)

Giordano Bruno was asked a similar question about Pythagoras' view of reincarnation by the Roman Inquisition at his trial for heresy:

Gatti makes it clear that at his trial, Bruno had cited Pythagoras in the context of the Pythagorean doctrine of the "world soul":

Already, in the crucial third session of the trial at Venice, Bruno had admitted that he considered the universe infinite and eternal, populated by infinite worlds, and governed by a universal providence identifiable with nature herself. He confessed to doubts about the incarnation of Christ and about the Trinity, and he declared that he believed in a world soul according to the doctrine of Pythagoras. (Gatti 2011: 314)

More specifically, Ingrid Rowland writes "Bruno seems also to have thought, like Pythagoras, that souls, once embodied, were immortal, destined to endless reincarnation". (Rowland, 220-1)

In a radical inversion, Feste, the fool, here in *Twelfth Night* voices the opinion of the soul that Bruno (and by implication, Shakespeare) hold. The prisoner, Malvolio, holds the ordinary Christian view. Now, on stage, this common viewpoint is 'heresy', the unenlightened viewpoint: "Remain thou still in darkness", says Feste. The tables have been turned and the stage becomes the place to conduct secret 'heretical' reforms.³

3 https://www.academia.edu/8607438/_I_have_read_it_it_is_heresy_Giordano_Bruno_s_Gli_Eroici_Furori_as_a_source_for_Shakespeares_Twelfth_Night

Since we know now that Shakespeare cared greatly about and supported Bruno's ideas, the references to Pythagoras and reincarnation (and the opposition to Christianity) in these plays are not merely light-hearted classical allusions to add a veneer of education and culture, but are expressions of firm support for this heretical notion that souls live on after the body passes away. However, the idea of reincarnation was not always heretical; it was a basic and "standard" belief for ages before patriarchal religion arrived:

Reincarnation: Literally "refleshing," the basic Oriental view of cyclic rebirth after each death; the original meaning of being born again. In the role of Fate-goddess, the Great Mother governed the Wheel of Becoming (Greek, *kyklos geneaion*) which meant the cycles of successive lives, like the wheels of karma governed Kali.

Patriarchal thinkers tended to deny the doctrine of reincarnation in favor of the one-way trip to heaven or hell after only one life on earth. They sought eternal stasis rather than cycles. Yet reincarnation was the standard belief of all the ancient nations, with the patriarchal principle of eternal stasis appearing only as a late development. (Walker 847)

Barbara Walker notes that "Jewish tradition retained traces of the reincarnation doctrine", while "reincarnation was the general belief not only in the Orient but throughout pagan Europe. Caesar said the druids taught this doctrine of cyclic rebirths" (Walker 848).

***Twelfth Night* and Reincarnation**

The NDE stems structurally from the idea that the soul survives the body. There is no reason to believe that the NDE has altered in form over the centuries

since Shakespeare wrote his plays, and several ancient texts are concerned with the soul's travel into the spirit world.⁴ *Twelfth Night* contains a relatively lengthy parody of Giordano Bruno's trial, plus, as one of the three comedies that contains a reference to Pythagoras' theory about reincarnation, it may be a good candidate to investigate for some intentional, deep and subtle messages about reincarnation or NDEs. Compared to Shakespeare's other plays, *Twelfth Night* has a relatively high number of occurrences of the word "soul", with 21. Plus, it has a character, Viola, who almost dies at the start of the play, and then steps into a new country:

Viola: What country, friends, is this?

4 From "Historical Perspectives on Near-Death Phenomena" by Barbara A. Walker and William J. Serdahely. *Journal of Near-Death Studies*. Volume 9, number 2. Winter 1990.

"Belief in life surviving physical death is hardly a new concept. As long ago as 2500 B.C. men were writing about this incredible phenomenon (Rawlings, 1978). The Egyptian Book of the Dead, considered one of the oldest pieces of literature in the world, contains a collection of prayers and formulas that can be used for assistance in the next world (Rawlings, 1978; Ross, 1979). Ancient Egypt was the first culture to teach that the soul was immortal (Rawlings, 1978). Within that society it was believed that when a person's physical body died the soul would enter the Judgment Hall of Osiris where it would then begin a life filled with everlasting joy and happiness (Budge, 1956; Ross, 1979). Various ceremonies described within The Egyptian Book of the Dead indicated that the deceased would regain memory, speech, and physical movement upon entry into the Other World. Likewise, the book states that when one dies one will be able to recognize deceased friends and relatives within this new world (Ross, 1979).

The ancient Greeks also believed in the existence of the immortal soul. The Greek philosophers Socrates and Plato both advocated that the soul departed from the physical body at death, freed in order to be reunited with deceased friends and relatives. Plato believed that the reunion occurred in a place of great brilliance, after which the soul would leave in order to observe a life review and receive judgment (Rawlings, 1978). Plato (428-384 B.C.), in the tenth book of *The Republic*, also described a tale about a soldier, Er, who died on the battlefield. At the moment of physical death Er's consciousness departed from his physical body to roam the countryside, reentering his earthly body just prior to his intended cremation." https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc799044/m2/1/high_res_d/vol9-no2-105.pdf

Captain: This is Illyria, lady.

Viola: And what should I do in Illyria? My brother he is in Elysium.
Perchance he is not drown'd—what think you sailors? (1.2.1-5)

This action of Viola to cross a border into a new “country” after narrowly escaping death can be seen as a metaphor for a soul entering the spirit world. The Captain takes on the role of a “spirit guide”, assisting and explaining things to Viola. The sentence “My brother he is in Elysium” suggests also (in a subliminal way) that Viola herself (and Sebastian’s twin) could be in Elysium, because the topic of Elysium is brought in to the scene (just by being voiced on the stage during performance), and because “Illyria” and “Elysium” share some close phonetic similarities. Elysium, the location in the afterlife in Greek Classical mythology, does not have the image of the Christian heaven (full of righteous Christian believers), but appears in Classical literature more as a space of calm, relaxing and peaceful beauty. In Homer’s *Odyssey*, Elysium is described as a peaceful and gentle paradise:

... to the Elysian plain...where life is easiest for men. No snow is there, nor heavy storm, nor ever rain, but ever does Ocean send up blasts of the shrill-blowing West Wind that they may give cooling to men.—*Homer, Odyssey (4.560–565)*

Before proceeding further, it would be a good idea to list the main elements of an NDE in order to compare these to some scenes in *Twelfth Night*. The University of Virginia’s Division of Perceptual Studies, which researches NDEs, provides this information on its website:

Although NDEs vary from one person to another, they often include such features as the following:

- feeling very comfortable and free of pain
- a sensation of leaving the body, sometimes being able to see the physical body while floating above it
- the mind functioning more clearly and more rapidly than usual
- a sensation of being drawn into a tunnel or darkness
- a brilliant light, sometimes at the end of the tunnel
- a sense of overwhelming peace, well-being, or absolute, unconditional love
- a sense of having access to unlimited knowledge
- a “life review,” or recall of important events in the past
- a *preview* of future events yet to come
- encounters with deceased loved ones, or with other beings that may be identified as religious figures

While these features are commonly reported, many NDEs differ from this pattern and include other elements.⁵

Information on Elysium in Greek Classical literature, some of which Shakespeare would have had access to, matches the “sense of absolute peace” criteria listed in the U of Virginia’s NDE website:

According to Eustathius of Thessalonica the word *Elysium* (Ἠλύσιον) derives from ἀλλουσας (ἀλύω, to be deeply stirred from joy) or from ἀλύτως, synonymous of ἀφθάρτως (ἄφθαρτος, incorruptible), referring to souls’ life in this place. Another suggestion is from ελϋθ-, ἔρχομαι (to come).

The Greek poet Hesiod refers to the “Isles of the Blest” in his didactic poem *Works and Days*. In his book *Greek Religion*, Walter Burkert notes the

5 <https://med.virginia.edu/perceptual-studies/our-research/near-death-experiences-ndes/>

connection with the motif of far-off Dilmun: "Thus Achilles is transported to the White Isle and becomes the Ruler of the Black Sea, and Diomedes becomes the divine lord of an Adriatic island".

And they live untouched by sorrow in the islands of the blessed along the shore of deep-swirling Ocean, happy heroes for whom the grain-giving earth bears honey-sweet fruit flourishing thrice a year, far from the deathless gods, and Cronos rules over them.

—*Hesiod, Works and Days (170)*⁶

Moreover, Pythagoras and Elysium are from the same culture of Ancient Greece. Viola is implicitly summoning up the spiritual tradition of this culture, including Pythagoras' ideas, when she brings up "Elysium".

Next, I'd like to look at Act 1, scene 4, where Orsino gives Viola the job of courting Olivia on his behalf. This scene, taken on a secret and esoteric level, corresponds, in the world of NDEs, to the "preview of future events to come", where a soul is assigned a life and given a life mission while it is still in the spirit world.

Duke: Cesario,
Thou know'st no less but all. I have unclasp'd
To thee the book even of my secret soul.
Therefore, good youth, address thy gait unto her,
Be not denied access, stand at her doors,
And tell them, there thy fixed foot shall grow
Till thou have audience.
.....leap all civil bounds...

6 <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elysium>

Viola: Say I do speak with her, my lord, what then?

Duke: O then, unfold the passion of my love,

Surprise her with discourse of my dear faith;

It shall become thee well to act my woes:

She will attend it better in thy youth

Than in a nuntio's of more grave aspect. (1.4.12-18, 23-28)

The underlined phrases have double meanings: “secret soul” (the word “secret” suggests the occult, while “soul” points to the idea that this scene is one part of an NDE or pre-birth experience); “leap all civil bounds” (since the spirit world represents an ultimate boundary); “dear faith” (the spiritual ideas of Giordano Bruno); and “grave”, of course, carries the hidden meaning of “tomb”, which is of course related to the spirit world. Even the word “youth”, repeated twice (lines 15 and 27) carries with it the implication of reincarnation as a child/youth.

These two scenes do *not* mean that Viola is literally reincarnated or really dead, nor does it mean that Orsino or the Captain are *actually* spirits in the other world. Scenes which support Bruno’s ideas about reincarnation in *Twelfth Night* are allegorical skits or *tableaux*, occult dramatization with supernatural flavor. (In this sense, they are ontologically and dramatically comparable to the secret play about the history of Man and the Sun in *Romeo and Juliet*.) These *tableaux* represent a shadowy, underlying plot, since *Twelfth Night* builds up to a climax showing spirits meeting and recognizing each other in the spirit world after one of them has presumably completed a life, while one of them has been in the spirit world. Thus these earlier parts of the play participate in developing this sweeping project.

Jumping back to the important first lines of the play (the first lines of a Shakespeare play always deliver significant messages about the play’s themes), it’s very curious how “death” is the theme again and again, in what is supposed to be a *festive comedy*. “That strain (of music)”, says Orsino, “it had a dying fall” (1.1.4).

A few lines later, Curio asks Orsino “will you go hunt, my lord?” (1.1.16) and Orsino replies by alluding to the Diana/Actaeon myth, which ends with Actaeon’s violent death as he is killed and eaten by his vicious hunting hounds: “my desires, like fell and cruel hounds/E’er since pursue me” (1.1.21-2). Then Valentine returns with news that Olivia would not admit him since she mourns “A brother’s dead love” (1.1.30). Perhaps we could say that a dark, morbid and deathly kind of thematic tunnel leads the reader/audience into a lighted space, the stage, where bright souls, that is to say actors playing characters, will later walk into the light of the spirit world as the theme of the NDE is developed. Indeed, I have often heard it said in various NDE videos on YouTube that our souls are incarnated in our bodies in a way analogous to the way that actors take on roles—and Shakespeare might be subtly referring to this too in Jaques’ lines in *As You Like It*: “All the world’s a stage/
And all the men and women merely players/
They have their exits and entrances” (2.7.139-141) or in Macbeth’s lines: “Out, out brief candle! Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player, that struts and frets his hour upon the stage…” (5.4.23-25).

Feste’s Songs and the *Myth of Er*

Feste sings four songs in the play and the lyrics show important messages, mirroring the stages of spiritual development as a typical person who was socialized in western monotheistic culture escapes from those conventional ideas, learns about reincarnation, and gains new spiritual wisdom and depth beyond the rigid bounds of the patriarchy. Shakespeare desires that anyone inculcated into western monotheistic culture/religion should follow this model.

Feste’s first song is a little sad and related, like the start of the play itself, to the topic of death (“Youth’s a stuff will not endure” (2.3.52)). This song, a typical *carpe diem* piece, asks “What is love? ‘Tis not hereafter” (2.3.47), bringing in the idea that death, the eternal “hereafter”, is to be dreaded (this is what people are taught to believe under the influence of patriarchal religions such as Christianity,

the standard in Shakespeare's day).

Feste's second song is even sadder, and in contrast to the first song, which is 'pre death', this second song is 'post death'. The narrator is a ghost or spirit watching his own dead body, another common part of an NDE ("a sensation of leaving the body, sometimes being able to see the physical body while floating above it"):

Come away, come away, death
And in sad cypress let me be laid.
[Fly] away, [fly] away, breath,
I am slain by a fair cruel maid.
My shroud of white, struck all with yew,
O, prepare it!
My part of death, no one so true
Did share it.
Not a flower, not a flower sweet
On my black coffin let there be strown.
Not a friend, not a friend greet
My poor corpse, where my bones
Shall be thrown.
A thousand thousands sighs to save,
Lay me, O, where
Sad true lover never find my grave,
To weep there. (2.4.51-66)

The soul rises up above his dead body in its shroud or coffin, but still doesn't clearly understand the whole point of re-birth and death.

This second song of Feste's is introduced with Duke Orsino's esoteric, obscure and even unlikely advice referencing "spinsters and knitters" to Cesario/Viola:

Duke Orsino: O fellow, come, the song we had last night.
Mark it, Cesario, it is old and plain.
The spinsters and the knitters in the sun,
And the free maids that weave their thread with bones,
Do use to chaunt it. It is silly sooth,
And dallies with the innocence of love,
Like the old age. (2.4.43-48)

The spinsters (spinners) and knitters “in the sun”, coupled with Feste’s song about a spirit leaving its body are alluding to The Myth of Er from Plato’s *Republic*. Er was a soldier who died in a battle and then after visiting the other world, he returned to the earth to tell about his experiences in the other world:

Er the son of Armenius... was slain in battle... and ten days afterwards, when the bodies of the dead were taken up already in a state of corruption, his body was found unaffected by decay, and carried away home to be buried.

And on the twelfth day, as he was lying on the funeral pile, he returned to life and told them what he had seen in the other world. He said that when his soul left the body he went on a journey with a great company, and that they came to a mysterious place at which there were two openings in the earth; they were near together, and over against them were two other openings in the heaven above.⁷

In the other world, Er sees judges pronouncing judgments upon souls arriving from the world of the living. These judges “told him that he was to be the messen-

7 <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-myth-of-er-120332>

ger who would carry the report of the other world to men, and they bade him hear and see all that was to be heard and seen in that place”.⁸ As I will show later, it is significant for the recognition scene in Act 5, where Viola and Sebastian meet, that at this point in the *Republic*, the Myth of Er contains a description of souls, some of whom “knew one another”, meeting in the other world:

Then (Er) beheld and saw on one side the souls departing at either opening of heaven and earth when sentence had been given on them; and at the two other openings other souls, some ascending out of the earth dusty and worn with travel, some descending out of heaven clean and bright.

And arriving ever and anon they seemed to have come from a long journey, and they went forth with gladness into the meadow, where they encamped as at a festival; and those who knew one another embraced and conversed, the souls which came from earth curiously enquiring about the things above, and the souls which came from heaven about the things beneath.

And they told one another of what had happened by the way, those from below weeping and sorrowing at the remembrance of the things which they had endured and seen in their journey beneath the earth (now the journey lasted a thousand years), while those from above were describing heavenly delights and visions of inconceivable beauty.⁹

In light of Feste’s line in Act 5: “And thus the whirligig of time brings in his revenges” (5.1.376), the next section of The Myth of Er, about punishments for people who were wicked (such as those who judged Giordano Bruno and condemned him to death) is particularly relevant:

8 <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-myth-of-er-120332>

9 <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-myth-of-er-120332>

The story, Glaucon, would take too long to tell; but the sum was this:—[Er] said that for every wrong which they had done to any one they suffered ten-fold; or once in a hundred years—such being reckoned to be the length of man's life, and the penalty being thus paid ten times in a thousand years. If, for example, there were any who had been the cause of many deaths, or had betrayed or enslaved cities or armies, or been guilty of any other evil behavior, for each and all of their offences they received punishment ten times over, and the rewards of beneficence and justice and holiness were in the same proportion.¹⁰

Soon after this, the theme of “the spindle of Necessity”, an astral phenomenon, which will later be developed to include the important female spinners “in the sun”, is introduced in The Myth of Er:

Now when the spirits which were in the meadow had tarried seven days, on the eighth they were obliged to proceed on their journey, and, on the fourth day after, he said that they came to a place where they could see from above a line of light, straight as a column, extending right through the whole heaven and through the earth, in colour resembling the rainbow, only brighter and purer; another day's journey brought them to the place, and there, in the midst of the light, they saw the ends of the chains of heaven let down from above: for this light is the belt of heaven, and holds together the circle of the universe, like the under-girders of a trireme.

From these ends is extended the spindle of Necessity, on which all the revolutions turn. The shaft and hook of this spindle are made of steel, and the whorl is made partly of steel and also partly of other materials.

10 <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-myth-of-er-120332>

Now the whorl is in form like the whorl used on earth; and the description of it implied that there is one large hollow whorl which is quite scooped out, and into this is fitted another lesser one, and another, and another, and four others, making eight in all, like vessels which fit into one another; the whorls show their edges on the upper side, and on their lower side all together form one continuous whorl.

This is pierced by the spindle, which is driven home through the centre of the eighth. The first and outermost whorl has the rim broadest, and the seven inner whorls are narrower, in the following proportions—the sixth is next to the first in size, the fourth next to the sixth; then comes the eighth; the seventh is fifth, the fifth is sixth, the third is seventh, last and eighth comes the second.

The largest (or fixed stars) is spangled, and the seventh (or sun) is brightest; the eighth (or moon) coloured by the reflected light of the seventh; the second and fifth (Saturn and Mercury) are in colour like one another, and yellower than the preceding; the third (Venus) has the whitest light; the fourth (Mars) is reddish; the sixth (Jupiter) is in whiteness second.

Now the whole spindle has the same motion; but, as the whole revolves in one direction, the seven inner circles move slowly in the other, and of these the swiftest is the eighth; next in swiftness are the seventh, sixth, and fifth, which move together; third in swiftness appeared to move according to the law of this reversed motion the fourth; the third appeared fourth and the second fifth.

The spindle turns on the knees of Necessity; and on the upper surface of each circle is a siren, who goes round with them, hymning a single tone or note.

The eight together form one harmony; and round about, at equal

intervals, there is another band, three in number, each sitting upon her throne: these are the Fates, daughters of Necessity, who are clothed in white robes and have chaplets upon their heads, Lachesis and Clotho and Atropos, who accompany with their voices the harmony of the sirens—Lachesis singing of the past, Clotho of the present, Atropos of the future; Clotho from time to time assisting with a touch of her right hand the revolution of the outer circle of the whorl or spindle, and Atropos with her left hand touching and guiding the inner ones, and Lachesis laying hold of either in turn, first with one hand and then with the other.¹¹

So we can see from *The Myth of Er* that the “spinsters and knitters in the sun” who “do use to chaunt it” as described by Orsino are Lachesis, Clotho and Atrophos, the Three Fates, “who accompany with their voices the harmony of the sirens” and who are assisting Necessity with her spindle and threadwork.

Feste's two later songs represent progress toward a more nuanced and expert knowledge of the spirit world, a reason to be more accepting and calm when it comes to death, which is something that happens again and again over many lifetimes. The third song playfully seems to spell out the theme of reincarnation in a sweetly simple, yet poetic way (“I am gone, sir/And anon, sir/I'll be with you again” (4.2.120-23)). Feste's last song reflects on a whole life (“When that I was and a tiny little boy” (5.1.389)/...“but when I came to man's estate” (5.1.392)... “but when I came, alas, to wive” (5.1.397)/... “But when I came unto my beds (old age)”¹². This last song looks very much like what the University of Virginia calls a “life review or recall of important events in the past”, another part of an NDE, and also it shows spiritual development and learning over the course of one lifetime, since the nar-

11 <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-myth-of-er-120332>

12 The footnotes in my *Riverside Shakespeare* speculate that “unto my beds” means “to old age”. Page 440.

rator of the song learns “when I came, alas, to wife…By swaggering could I never thrive” (5.1.397 & 399), that is, he learns he must be kind to his spouse (or indeed anyone) and should not bully people.

The purpose for souls to reincarnate

Gaining this sort of multi-lifetime spiritual learning and soul evolution is exactly the purpose for souls to reincarnate again and again over many lifetimes. Jeffrey Mishlove, an American para-psychologist, author, and a scientist doing advanced research on unexplained phenomena, explained this concept in an anecdote in a recent interview conducted by Alex Ferrari on Ferrari’s YouTube channel *Next Level Soul*:

Well, I had a mentor, Arthur M. Young. He set up the Institute for the Study of Consciousness in Berkeley… One day he said to me, “Jeffery, what do you think is the Philosopher’s Stone, the mythical stone that turns lead into gold?” And he was referring to the soul—lead in your soul into gold. And I said “I don’t know.” He said “it’s the obstacles that we face in life. That’s the Philosopher’s Stone.” We have to confront those obstacles and then our soul gets refined and then we become closer to who we are. I think we all come here, we’re here in this physical plane, in order to face obstacles that we can’t find anywhere else.¹³

The characters in *Twelfth Night* face obstacles, of course, and make choices. We know that Viola loves Orsino (“myself would be his wife” (1.4.42)), yet she does not try to sabotage Orsino’s quest to court Olivia, (which would be in her self-interest, but not in the interest of her development as a soul incarnating to experience

13 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czBPRgxtfoI&t=12s>

obstacles and grow from experiencing them), and instead she sincerely tries to make Olivia consider Orsino's suit seriously. Viola is trying to help both Orsino accept and recognize the painful truth that Olivia doesn't love him, while attempting to help Olivia become more cheerful, while, of course, dealing honestly with the fact that Olivia has fallen in love with her own Cesario persona, while Viola, honoring her own truth (that she loves Orsino) as well, cannot return Olivia's love. Viola's role to conduct reforms lovingly, sincerely and gently, using generous emotions to propel herself forward though she lacks certainty, certainly makes her appear to be what we can call "a lightworker".

Technically, the term lightworker was first coined by author and teacher Michael Mirdad relatively recently, in the early 80s. Later, in 1997, Doreen Virtue released the book *The Lightworkers Way*.

The simplest way to describe lightworkers would be as beings who feel an enormous pull towards helping others. Also referred to as crystal babies, indigos, Earth angels and star seeds, these spiritual beings volunteer to act as a beacon for the Earth, and commit to serving humanity. They often feel greater kindness and compassion towards others right from their childhood – chances are that they've rescued several animals and other living beings in distress from a young age.

Lightworkers tend to be sensitive, and hence they feel sadness and anguish for the misery that dwells in the world around them. This is why they tend to choose professions wherein their empathetic nature can be used to assist those in need, like nursing, therapy, rehabilitation, healing, care-giving, veterinary services, research and teaching etc.

Lightworkers are intuitive and driven by their internal guidance. They can often ably perceive the emotions and needs of other living beings, which enables them to harness and direct their healing powers towards those who

need help. They also believe in carrying out coordinated efforts to dispel or chase away negative consciousness using their positive energies and healing powers.

Not all lightworkers realize the nature of their spiritual calling right away. While some star seeds may realize that their purpose on Earth is to elevate mankind's collective consciousness, several lightworkers can only sense a drive to serve and compassion in their own hearts, and that they feel good when supporting others through difficult times.¹⁴

From this standpoint, of course, since Viola and the play she is found in are the creations of Shakespeare, then we have to say that Shakespeare, whoever he really was, is the real lightworker.

The Recognition Scene

On the shadowy and allegorical level where it deals with NDEs, reincarnation, and supporting Bruno's ideas, *Twelfth Night* crescendos to a brilliant climax that portrays, on the obvious level, Viola and Sebastian meeting again, but on another (allegorical) level, souls scintillatingly recognizing each other in the spirit world. As I said, this scene is almost certainly based on Shakespeare's own personal reaction to reading *The Myth of Er* in Plato and the poignant section there where the souls meet:

...arriving ever and anon [the souls] seemed to have come from a long journey, and they went forth with gladness into the meadow, where they encamped as at a festival; and those who knew one another embraced and conversed, the souls which came from earth curiously enquiring about the

14 <https://www.happiness.com/magazine/inspiration-spirituality/what-is-a-lightworker-and-what-do-they-do-exactly/>

things above, and the souls which came from heaven about the things beneath.

And they told one another of what had happened by the way, those from below weeping and sorrowing at the remembrance of the things which they had endured and seen in their journey beneath the earth (now the journey lasted a thousand years), while those from above were describing heavenly delights and visions of inconceivable beauty.¹⁵

As usual, Shakespeare uses the techniques of double meanings, double entendre and so on, to subtly convey the hidden meaning of 'souls who knew one another embracing and conversing' in Act 5, scene 1:

Sebastian: Do I stand there? I never had a brother;
Nor can there be that deity in my nature
Of here and every where. I had a sister,
Whom the blind waves and surges have devour'd.
Of charity, what kin are you to me?
What countryman? What name? What parentage?
Viola: Of Messaline; Sebastian was my father,
Such a Sebastian was my brother too;
So went he suited to his watery tomb.
If spirits can assume both form and suit,
You come to fright us.
Sebastian: A spirit I am indeed,
But I am in that dimension grossly clad
Which from the womb I did participate.

15 <https://www.thoughtco.com/the-myth-of-er-120332>

Were you a woman, as the rest goes even,
I should let my tears fall upon your cheek,
And say, “Thrice welcome, drowned Viola!”

Viola: My father had a mole upon his brow.

Sebastian: And so had mine.

Viola: And died that day when Viola from her birth
Had numb’red thirteen years.

Sebastian: O, that record is lively in my soul! (5.1.226-246) (my emphasis)

When Viola says “nor can there be that deity in my nature of here and every where”, the choice of the word “deity” points to the spirit world, though the more obvious meaning is that Viola “does not has the divine attribute to exist in several places at once”. Next, “the blind waves and surges” here don’t just mean the stormy ocean where the twins were separated in a shipwreck, but also the time, circumstances and tumultuous lives on planets in other dimensions, such as on our Earth, which entail spirits/souls to be separated. “If spirits can assume both form and suit” of course refers exactly to reincarnation, as does “A spirit am I indeed, But I am in that dimension grossly clad”, where “grossly” means bodily. “From the womb did I participate” sounds like a life review, a soul speaking about a just-completed lifetime. “Were you a woman” implies that Viola is a spirit (on the allegorical level, not a human woman), and “drowned Viola” signifies that she is, on some level, dead (that is, a spirit who has just completed a life on planet Earth). “Oh that record is lively in my soul” underscores the idea that these are two souls greeting each other in the spirit world after knowing each other in previous reincarnations.

Similarly, on a YouTube video entitled “Dead For Seven Minutes, Man is Shown the Afterlife, Past Lives During Incredible NDE”, a man named John Davis says:

This [area] is where people who come back from a lifetime have reunions, and these reunions are with people who have crossed before them: parents, grandparents, friends, siblings, children, and all the people they knew on the other side are there to greet them. Having a lifetime on earth, and finishing a life is a really big deal. It's a huge accomplishment, and now you're back home.¹⁶

The poignancy of the “huge accomplishment” and peace that the souls feel is captured in the Viola/Sebastian recognition scene, as well as the sense of being “back home”, because now that the twins appear together, all the maddening confusions to do with Olivia's misplaced love and Sir Toby's increasingly bellicose and dangerous threats can be put to rest.

The last occurrence of the word “souls” in *Twelfth Night* is found in the last few lines of the play, when Orsino says “A solemn combination shall be made of our dear souls” (5.1.383-84). On the obvious level, this points to the planned double wedding of Orsino and Viola, and Sebastian and Olivia, but on the level of the spirit world, it means a widening circle of spirits greeting each other and meeting in the spirit world. This is probably why Viola doesn't change back into her woman's clothes, since spirits don't need clothes. She is not a spirit on one level, but, as she is one on an allegorical level, Shakespeare allows the allegorical level to percolate up into the surface of the play and subtly disrupt it by leaving Viola in her men's clothes. The subtle, hidden and occult plot twist (on the purely allegorical level) is that these are all spirits and they are waiting for others (the captain and Malvolio (whom Orsino insists must be “entreated to a peace”)) to join them in the “golden time” (5.1.82). Given Shakespeare's reverence for Bruno, this “golden time” will probably be when Giordano Bruno's ideas about the sacredness of nature are

16 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgU4S5CAMq4>

accepted and his “‘tranquil universal philosophy’: a philosophy that he imagined as a peaceful swim through the infinite ocean of universal being” (Gatti 310) arrives. But just what is this “golden time”? I think it is comparable to Jeffery Mishlove’s characterization of the future of the evolution of consciousness:

From a philosophical point of view there is something called the ‘mind-body problem’, which is an unsolvable problem that these materialists have, which is if we live in a cold, dead universe of inanimate matter, how do you unsolvable problem...cold, dead universe, how do you get consciousness? And no one has yet figured that out. I interviewed, some 30 years ago, Francis Crick, one of the great scientists of the 20th century, the man who discovered the double helix nature of the DNA molecule, and he had published a new book called *The Astonishing Hypothesis*. His hypothesis was that the brain creates consciousness. Now most of your viewers sort of naively assume well, hasn’t that been proven a long time ago, everybody knows the brain creates consciousness. And Crick had the honesty to say to me, “it is only a hypothesis, it hasn’t been proven.” In fact, he said, and I have it on camera, “the religious point of view might be correct, that consciousness survives the death of the body. And of course Crick is no longer alive. I think if he were alive, he’d have to admit that we have yet to prove that consciousness is produced by the brain. I would go so far as to say it’s exactly the opposite—the brain exists within consciousness....”

Alex Ferrari: What is the future of human evolution?

Mishlove: Well, that’s a big one, and I have to say it’s the evolution of consciousness itself. Really to even begin to answer that question, we have to ask what is the present of human evolution? And maybe I’m unusual, I think of myself not as a person who was born in 1946 and who will probably die sometime in the next 20-30 years. I think of myself as a person who is

actually at least billions of years old. I mean, my body is certainly, it evolved from single-celled organisms billions of years ago, and I suspect it may have gone through many cycles like that, that that's who I really am. In fact, I go even further and say that I subscribe to the mystical vision that all is one, so that you and I are, one might say, different versions of each other. As well as all of your viewers and listeners. Or the same with every animal, every octopus, every grizzly bear or extra-terrestrial, or insect. That we share what the philosopher Schopenhauer called the One mind that sees through the eyes of every living creature.

Ferrari: So what is the future of human evolution?

Mishlove: Well, that would be the realization of that, not just intellectually as I'm explaining it to you, but understanding it experientially, that I think is the path of spiritual growth.

Ferrari: And understanding that we are all connected...if you just look at nature. So many things have to click for nature to work...¹⁷

The immediate obviousness of the links to nature and to wider circles of beings, not just humans, points to the other layers of meaning I've found in my previous work on *Twelfth Night*¹⁸, where I see the references to Diana, a nature goddess, and the disguise of Viola, who is compared to her, as a significant refutation of patriarchal religions such as Christianity (who is associated with Malvolio, the "puritan", who exits promising revenge). Thus there is a strong connection between Shakespeare's ecological message (against fossil fuels and in favor of protecting material and spiritual nature, which is also the stuff of our spiritual material bodies) and the spiritual idea of reincarnation:

17 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czBPRgxtfoI>

18 https://www.academia.edu/8607438/_I_have_read_it_it_is_heresy_Giordano_Bruno_s_Gli_Eroici_Furori_as_a_source_for_Shakespeares_Twelfth_Night

The concept of reincarnation made nonsense of the Christian doctrine of reward and punishment after death. If all souls returned the same Cauldron of Regeneration, including animal souls mingling with human ones, logically they were not differentiated for eternity into “evil” and “good” souls. The West’s traditional denial of soul-stuff to animals, and its insistence that man alone was immortal and stood at the pinnacle of creation, led to abuses contributing to the present day ecological crisis. At a symposium of theologians in California, 1970, “virtually all the scholars agreed that the traditional Christian attitude toward nature has given sanction to exploitation of the environment by science and technology and thus contributed to air and water pollution, overpopulation and other ecological threats.” Lynn White wrote, “One of the causes of our present crisis is to be found in the Judeo-Christian traditions... which speak of man’s dominance over nature... By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.” It is odd that even here, those living things with feelings are called “objects”. (Walker 849)

To “entreat” Malvolio “to a peace”, means that Shakespeare predicts that one day Christians will abandon Christianity and embrace the spiritual ideas of Bruno. In fact, more recently Max Planck (1858-1947) the father of quantum theory, “said that he viewed consciousness as fundamental and that matter was derived from it.”¹⁹ Slowly the scientific world therefore is embracing Bruno’s conclusion, as captured by Shakespeare in *Twelfth Night*. (*Twelfth Night*, like many other plays of Shakespeare, including *Hamlet*, uses the scientific framework of Bruno’s book *Lo Spaccio della besta trionfante* (*The Expulsion of the Triumphant Beast*), which explains how and why Christianity will draw to an end, due to an environmental and

19 <https://www.npr.org/2014/01/05/259886077/searching-for-the-science-behind-reincarnation>

economic crisis that is precipitated by its own exclusive priority placed on humans and not on the well-being of plankton, oceans, animals, wildlife, our atmosphere, water, and so forth. In other words, the objective of maximizing human population (which started out as an objective to increase Christian believers) leads to that objective itself ceasing to be a good objective.²⁰)

Music

The best way to understand this “golden time” in *Twelfth Night* is to look at the theme of music, since both the “golden time” and music relate to Pythagoras. Indeed, the very first line of *Twelfth Night* is “if music be the food of love, play on” (1.1.1). I have already discussed how Feste’s songs symbolically relate to the growth and development of a soul as it learns about reincarnation and uses this understanding to advance spiritual growth. Moreover, Malvolio, who represents orthodox (i.e. mistaken) patriarchal opinions, complains about the music being sung and played by Sir Toby, Feste, and Sir Andrew; Malvolio is therefore a kind of enemy of music. I would like to show how the theme of music in *Twelfth Night* is not random, but shares in the idea of the spiritual growth of the soul.

In Act 3, to Viola’s line, “Madam, I come to whet your thoughts on (Orsino’s) behalf” (3.1.105), Olivia responds:

O, by your leave, I pray you,
I bade you never speak again of him;

20 This concept that maximizing a metric leads to that metric ceasing to be useful is known as Goodhart’s Law. Goodhart’s Law states that “when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.” In other words, when we use a measure to reward performance, we provide an incentive to manipulate the measure in order to receive the reward. This can sometimes result in actions that actually reduce the effectiveness of the measured system while paradoxically improving the measurement of system performance. <https://www.cna.org/reports/2022/09/goodharts-law>

Bruno could understand that the relentless focus on increasing human numbers provided an incentive to ignore environmental warnings and flashing red lights.

But would you undertake another suit,
 I had rather hear you to solicit that
 Than music from the spheres (3.1.106-110)

This “music from the spheres” is a direct reference to one of Pythagoras’ most famous theories:

The most sublime but least known of all the Pythagorean speculations was that of sidereal harmonics. It was said that of all men only Pythagoras heard *the music of the spheres*. Apparently the Chaldeans were the first people to conceive of the heavenly bodies joining in a cosmic chant as they moved in stately manner across the sky. Job describes a time “when the stars of the morning sang together,” and in *The Merchant of Venice* the author of the Shakespearean plays writes: “There’s not the smallest orb which thou behold’st but in his motion like an angel sings.” So little remains, however, of the Pythagorean system of celestial music that it is only possible to approximate his actual theory.

Pythagoras conceived the universe to be an immense monochord, with its single string connected at its upper end to absolute spirit and at its lower end to absolute matter—in other words, a cord stretched between heaven and earth. Counting inward from the circumference of the heavens, Pythagoras, according to some authorities, divided the universe into nine parts; according to others, into twelve parts. The twelvefold system was as follows: The first division was called the *empyrean*, or the sphere of the fixed stars, and was the dwelling place of the immortals. The second to twelfth divisions were (in order) the spheres of Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, the sun, Venus, Mercury, and the moon, and fire, air, water, and earth. This arrangement of the seven planets (the sun and moon being regarded as planets in

the old astronomy) is identical with the candlestick symbolism of the Jews—the sun in the center as the main stem with three planets on either side of it.

The names given by the Pythagoreans to the various notes of the diatonic scale were, according to Macrobius, derived from an estimation of the velocity and magnitude of the planetary bodies. Each of these gigantic spheres as it rushed endlessly through space was believed to sound a certain tone caused by its continuous displacement of the æthereal *diffusion*. As these tones were a manifestation of divine order and motion, it must necessarily follow that they partook of the harmony of their own source. “The assertion that the planets in their revolutions round the earth uttered certain sounds differing according to their respective ‘magnitude, celerity and local distance,’ was commonly made by the Greeks. Thus Saturn, the farthest planet, was said to give the gravest note, while the Moon, which is the nearest, gave the sharpest. ‘These sounds of the seven planets, and the sphere of the fixed stars, together with that above us [Antichthon], are the nine Muses, and their joint symphony is called Mnemosyne.’” (See *The Canon*.) This quotation contains an obscure reference to the ninefold division of the universe previously mentioned.

The Greek initiates also recognized a fundamental relationship between the individual heavens or spheres of the seven planets, and the seven sacred vowels. The first heaven uttered the sound of the sacred vowel A (Alpha); the second heaven, the sacred vowel E (Epsilon); the third, H (Eta); the fourth, I (Iota); the fifth, O (Omicron); the sixth, Y (Upsilon); and the seventh heaven, the sacred vowel Ω (Omega). When these seven heavens sing together they produce a perfect harmony which ascends as an everlasting praise to the throne of the Creator. (See Irenæus' *Against Heresies*.) Although not so stated, it is probable that the planetary heavens are to be considered

as ascending in the Pythagorean order, beginning with the sphere of the moon, which would be the first heaven.

Many early instruments had seven Strings, and it is generally conceded that Pythagoras was the one who added the eighth string to the lyre of Terpander. The seven strings were always related both to their correspondences in the human body and to the planets. The names of God were also conceived to be formed from combinations of the seven planetary harmonies. The Egyptians confined their sacred songs to the seven primary sounds, forbidding any others to be uttered in their temples. One of their hymns contained the following invocation: "The seven sounding tones praise Thee, the Great God, the ceaseless working Father of the whole universe." In another the Deity describes Himself thus: "I am the great indestructible lyre of the whole world, attuning the songs of the heavens. (See Nauman's *History of Music*.)

The Pythagoreans believed that everything which existed had a voice and that all creatures were eternally singing the praise of the Creator. Man fails to hear these divine melodies because his soul is enmeshed in the illusion of material existence. When he liberates himself from the bondage of the lower world with its sense limitations, *the music of the spheres* will again be audible as it was in the Golden Age. Harmony recognizes harmony, and when the human soul regains its true estate it will not only hear the celestial choir but also join with it in an everlasting anthem of praise to that Eternal Good controlling the infinite number of parts and conditions of Being.²¹

It is probable that this schema of Pythagoras' "golden age" and the references to souls regaining their "true estate" are also basically what Shakespeare has in

21 <https://www.sacred-texts.com/eso/sta/sta19.htm>

mind when Orsino says “When...golden time convents/ A solemn combination shall be made/ of our dear souls” (5.1.382-84), and this in a practical sense is related to spiritual awakening on a broad scale relating to the 1) realization that reincarnation is real; and 2) Giordano Bruno’s ideas about the end of Christianity, what that means, and a growing understanding of the critical importance of protecting the material world.

Another instance of the word “music” which is meaningful in a Pythagorean sense occurs in Act 1 when Viola explains to the Captain that she is qualified to serve Orsino: “for I can sing/ and speak to him in many sorts of music” (1.2.57-58). At first, this seems to be a perplexing line in the sense that Viola doesn’t actually sing or play music in the way that Feste, for example, does. Of course “speak to him in many sorts of music” can obviously mean just what Viola does, using verbal skills to counsel and converse with Orsino. But the word “music”, which is so significant in the context of Pythagoras, can mean additionally that Viola delivers (in an indirect way) inspiring Pythagorean philosophy to Orsino. Probably Shakespeare would have known that “unlike in (other) philosophical schools of (Pythagoras’) time, many of Pythagoras’ students were women. The three basic criteria for Pythagoras to accept someone in his school were wisdom, justice and bravery.”²² Shakespeare seems to have greatly admired those philosophers, like Giordano Bruno and Pythagoras, who were not interested in furthering the aims of “the patriarchy”, but had rather the opposite aims, which was to tear down the patriarchy, and it is without a doubt that Shakespeare’s comedies are centered around brilliant female characters for this reason.

Viola is also associated with delivering music in the sense that Olivia compares Violas’ “suit” to music when she says: “I had rather hear you solicit (your suit) than music from the spheres” (3.1.110). Then it happens again, when Olivia responds to

²² <https://greekreporter.com/2022/08/12/pythagoras-greek-philosopher-theorem/>

Orsino with:

If (Orsino's words) be aught to the old tune, my lord,
It is as fat and fulsome to mine ear
As howling after music (5.1.108-109)

In the sense that Orsino's pleas to Olivia would come after Viola's pleas to Olivia, Orsino's words are "howling", while Viola's are therefore "music".

So, it's necessary to understand what "music" means here in the context of Viola's obvious talents as a lightworker. Music is truly "the food of love", a way to heal and bring about therapy for the soul. Once again, the concept is from Pythagoras:

To Pythagoras music was one of the dependencies of the divine science of mathematics, and its harmonies were inflexibly controlled by mathematical proportions. The Pythagoreans averred that mathematics demonstrated the exact method by which the good established and maintained its universe. Number therefore preceded harmony, since it was the immutable law that governs all harmonic proportions. After discovering these harmonic ratios, Pythagoras gradually initiated his disciples into this, the supreme arcanum of his Mysteries. He divided the multitudinous parts of creation into a vast number of planes or spheres, to each of which he assigned a tone, a harmonic interval, a number, a name, a color, and a form. He then proceeded to prove the accuracy of his deductions by demonstrating them upon the different planes of intelligence and substance ranging from the most abstract logical premise to the most concrete geometrical solid. From the common agreement of these diversified methods of proof he established the indisputable existence of certain natural laws.

Having once established music as an exact science, Pythagoras applied his newly found law of harmonic intervals to all the phenomena of Nature, even going so far as to demonstrate the harmonic relationship of the planets, constellations, and elements to each other. A notable example of modern corroboration of ancient philosophical reaching is that of the progression of the elements according to harmonic ratios. While making a list of the elements in the ascending order of their atomic weights, John A. Newlands discovered at every eighth element a distinct repetition of properties. This discovery is known as the *law of octaves* in modern chemistry.

Since they held that harmony must be determined not by the sense perceptions but by reason and mathematics, the Pythagoreans called themselves *Canonics*, as distinguished from musicians of the *Harmonic School*, who asserted taste and instinct to be the true normative principles of harmony. Recognizing, however, the profound effect: of music upon the senses and emotions, Pythagoras did not hesitate to influence the mind and body with what he termed “musical medicine.”

Pythagoras evinced such a marked preference for stringed instruments that he even went so far as to warn his disciples against allowing their ears to be defiled by the sounds of flutes or cymbals. He further declared that the soul could be purified from its irrational influences by solemn songs sung to the accompaniment of the lyre. In his investigation of the therapeutic value of harmonics, Pythagoras discovered that the seven modes—or keys—of the Greek system of music had the power to incite or allay the various emotions. It is related that while observing the stars one night he encountered a young man befuddled with strong drink and mad with jealousy who was piling faggots about his mistress' door with the intention of burning the house. The frenzy of the youth was accentuated by a flutist a short distance away who was playing a tune in the stirring Phrygian mode.

Pythagoras induced the musician to change his air to the slow, and rhythmic Spondaic mode, whereupon the intoxicated youth immediately became composed and, gathering up his bundles of wood, returned quietly to his own home.

There is also an account of how Empedocles, a disciple of Pythagoras, by quickly changing the mode of a musical composition he was playing, saved the life of his host, Anchitus, when the latter was threatened with death by the sword of one whose father he had condemned to public execution. It is also known that Esculapius, the Greek physician, cured sciatica and other diseases of the nerves by blowing a loud trumpet in the presence of the patient.

Pythagoras cured many ailments of the spirit, soul, and body by having certain specially prepared musical compositions played in the presence of the sufferer or by personally reciting short selections from such early poets as Hesiod and Homer. In his university at Crotona it was customary for the Pythagoreans to open and to close each day with songs—those in the morning calculated to clear the mind from sleep and inspire it to the activities of the coming day; those in the evening of a mode soothing, relaxing, and conducive to rest. At the vernal equinox, Pythagoras caused his disciples to gather in a circle around one of their number who led them in song and played their accompaniment upon a lyre.

The therapeutic music of Pythagoras is described by Iamblichus thus: “And there are certain melodies devised as remedies against the passions of the soul, and also against despondency and lamentation, which Pythagoras invented as things that afford the greatest assistance in these maladies. And again, he employed other melodies against rage and anger, and against every aberration of the soul. There is also another kind of modulation

invented as a remedy against desires.” (See *The Life of Pythagoras*.)²³

Clearly, since Viola doesn't actually sing or play music, but only speaks, Viola's music is her words and lines. By extension and metaphor, Shakespeare means that his whole play, *Twelfth Night*, is the same sort of therapeutic 'music', meant to change lives and souls for the better.

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23 <https://www.sacred-texts.com/eso/sta/sta19.htm>