

SOUL AGES

Excerpt from

Journey of Your Soul: A Channel Explores the Michael Teachings

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POLES

	YARBRO	HOODWIN	STEVENS
INFANT	+ Experience – Apathy	+ Innocence – Aversion	+ Survive – Destroy
BABY	+ Acculturation – Subsumation	+ Formation – Rigidity	+ Structured – Inflexible
YOUNG	+ Intention – Judgmentalization	+ Accomplishment – Self-Centeredness	+ Competitive – Selfish
MATURE	+ Cognizance – Ratiocination	+ Resonance – Subjectivity	+ Insightful – Confused
OLD	+ Substantiation – Self-Envelopation	+ Inclusiveness – Undirectedness	+ Wise – Uninvolved

YARBRO:	FOCUS	ISSUE	PERCEPTION
INFANT	Survival	Existing	Me/Not Me
BABY	Structure	Identifying, Organizing	Me/Other Me's
YOUNG	Success	Defining, Doing	Me/You
MATURE	Relationships	Perceiving	You as You Perceive Yourself
OLD	Context	Being	You as Part of Something Greater
TRANSCEN- DENTAL	Social Revolution	Integrating	Synthesis
INFINITE	Spiritual Revolution	Unifying	Tao

What Is Soul Age?

Our physical age is obviously the age of our body, which advances during this present lifetime only. Our soul age advances over our many lifetimes on this planet. The age of our spark, which correlates with our number of previous cycles, advances over our many planetary experiences. So someone can be young in body, old in soul, and be a “middle-aged” spark—or any other combination. Each kind of age affects our perceptions in specific ways.

Although we experience only five soul ages on the physical plane, we will each experience being a member of our entity and cadre when they are reunited on higher planes. In other words, we will experience the sixth and seventh soul ages, transcendental and infinite, but probably not on the physical plane.

Physical aging occurs at a similar pace for everyone, since it is largely dictated by biology. However, we cannot measure soul age using the number of years or lifetimes logged, since the soul develops through experience, not just through putting in time. Therefore we categorize soul ages in terms of changing perspective parallel to the stages of an individual lifetime. Various analogies work. Although the names imply that old souls correlate with old people, etc., I like the following correlations:

Both *infant souls* and physical infants see things, by necessity, in terms of their survival. *Baby souls* and toddlers look for structure, something they can hold onto while they’re learning to walk. *Young souls* and youngsters begin to master the outer world. *Mature souls* and adolescents cultivate their inner world and one-on-one relationships. *Old souls* and college-age young adults develop an overview, gaining a greater sense of the context of their lives. Completing the old-soul cycle and hence the physical plane is like college graduation for the soul. *Transcendental* and *infinite* souls are analogous to fully grown adults.

It might be unsettling to hear oneself described as a baby or young soul. However, the terms and analogies used to convey what the soul ages are about are not meant to be derogatory. They simply illustrate the development of the soul over many lifetimes. As with physical age,

different lessons are dominant at each stage, but we are each on a loop that has no beginning or end.

Being younger in soul age does not prevent one from being consciously interested in the spiritual path or from doing anything one wishes to do, although each soul age tends to be interested in certain activities more than others because of the specific emphases of the age.

Soul age perspective relates less to the way you think about things when you deliberately think about them—your philosophy, for instance—and more to how you habitually see things when you are washing dishes or driving a car. It is your view from the mundane, so to speak.

Anyone manifesting his true personality—that is, anyone in his positive poles—is having a degree of essence contact, no matter what his soul age is or how many previous cycles he has had. This is a function of orienting in love. Essence contact occurs when the personality makes a direct connection with either his own essence or the essence of another person. It is necessary in order for spiritual growth to occur. It can be a powerful and life-changing experience, or relatively mild. Even though our essence is ultimately who we are, our personality can be cut off from it by being identified with ego and acting too strongly from the illusion of separateness.

The table at the beginning of the chapter summarizes how those of each soul age perceive other people, according to Yarbrow. Infant souls do not have a basis for making sense of what is “out there”—they only know that it is “not me.” Baby souls, focused as they are on bringing people together under the umbrella of civilization, see others, sometimes simplistically, as being “just like me.” They can become confused and upset when those “other me’s” act differently than expected. Young souls, learning to impact the world, see others as “you’s” they can impact. Mature souls, delving into their inner world and exploring relatedness, can keenly feel other people’s issues and perceive them in the same way others do themselves. This can make for much intensity and, often, subjectivity, which is one reason the

greatest works of art are often produced by mature souls. Old souls tend to be more detached and try to see themselves and others within a larger context.

The number-one soul age, infant, correlates with the number-one role, servers; both are concerned with survival and life's basic needs. Baby souls, number two, and artisans are concerned with structure. Young souls (three) and warriors work hard to achieve. Mature souls (four) and scholars do a lot of mulling. Old souls (five), like sages, seek a larger philosophical perspective.

Transcendental and infinite souls are covered in chapter 30. These souls normally dwell on higher planes and rarely incarnate on the physical plane; when they do, it is to assist in social or spiritual transformation. A transcendental soul is a representative of a reunited entity, and an infinite soul is a representative of a reunited cadre.

Transcendental souls perceive others as self in synthesis; they directly and objectively experience what others feel. It is the quintessence of compassion, which is the positive pole of the number six role, priest (transcendental is the sixth soul age). Infinite souls exist in oneness with everything, almost to the same extent as the Tao itself, since the infinite soul is, in a sense, a messenger from the Tao. It is the seventh, king-position age and is reminiscent of the way kings unify their kingdoms. According to Yarbrow, infinite souls displace seventh-level old kings, and transcendental souls displace sixth or seventh-level old priests. It doesn't necessarily have to be that way but it makes elegant sense.

Soul age describes our primary perspective and lessons with regard to the physical plane. When we are astral, we are not focusing on learning about physical-plane survival, structure, success, relationships, or context, so soul age is largely irrelevant (although our overall level of development, which is more than soul age, is not). Our perspective from the astral plane regarding the physical plane is relatively neutral, because it comes from outside the physical-plane game. It's similar to when you finish playing in an athletic event—the game looks different from the locker room than it did on the field. Another analogy is being on vacation from school: practically

speaking, it matters little whether you're a freshman or senior when you aren't cracking the books. Our existence on the astral plane has its own lessons, but they are relatively unstructured and might be viewed as extracurricular compared to the physical-plane curriculum.

The majority of my clients are mature souls, with old souls accounting for most of the rest. Once in a while I channel for young souls, mostly late-young. So far I have not done an individual session for a baby or infant soul. This is probably typical of most Michael channels, except that there are many old souls in northern California, so channels there probably see more old souls than mature.

I don't notice much difference in general among my clients of various ages in terms of their degree of interest in and dedication to the spiritual path. The different soul ages do vary subtly in how they feel to me. Young souls feel vital. Mature souls feel intense and dramatic. Old souls feel casual, light, and airy. Young souls emphasize width, mature souls, depth, and old souls, height.

Mature souls tend to concentrate on the more immediate, two-dimensional aspects of their relationships (their specific, direct connection with another person), whereas old souls tend to see their relationships within a more complex web of three-dimensional interrelatedness.

Yarbro gives the worldwide breakdown of soul ages as follows:

10% Infant

23% Baby

32% Young

24% Mature

11% Old

Yarbro gives mottos for each of the soul ages. A client asked Michael through me for more positive restatements of these mottos. Here are the two versions:

Infant: Let's not do it. • Let's try it.

Baby: Do it right or don't do it at all. • Let's do it well.

Young: Do it my way. • Let me apply myself to this situation.

Mature: Do it anyplace but here. • Respect my boundaries.

Old: You do what you want and I will do what I want. • Let's respect different points of view.

Soul Age Levels

There are seven levels to each soul age. In our first physical-plane lifetime, we are a first-level infant soul. We may have one lifetime at that level or ten, depending on how quickly we complete that stage. Some souls (especially priests) like to complete each level as quickly as possible, while others (particularly scholars and warriors) like to take their time and have a more thorough experience, not missing anything that looks interesting. It is an individual choice, and it is not better to go more quickly or slowly. Your choice is what is right for you, and it benefits the Tao for there to be a variety of speeds in this regard.

After completing first-level infant, we move to second-level infant, and so forth. Normally when we complete a level, it is at the end of one lifetime, and we begin our next lifetime at the next level. It is, however, also possible to move from one level to the next in the middle of a lifetime, particularly if we didn't have much left to finish from the earlier level. When we complete seventh-level infant, we move to first-level baby and repeat the seven levels a step higher in the spiral.

When we complete seventh-level old, we *cycle off*—that is, we no longer incarnate on the physical plane. We start a new “game” on the astral plane.

Each soul age level is a particular stage in the realization of that soul age's perspective. I like the analogy that JP Van Hulle channeled, comparing the levels to going to the beach: At first level, we stick our toe in the water. At second level, we are in the water up to our waist (half in and half out). At third level, we dive in and are completely submerged. At fourth level, we reemerge, fully wet with that soul age's perspective. At fifth level, we splash around and play. At sixth level, others splash us. And at seventh level, we return to the shore.

At first-level mature, for instance, a person is just beginning to see the world in terms of relatedness. Much of his perspective is still focused on the outer world, as it was when he was a young soul,

Although he has a feeling of needing more than worldly success. First levels are relatively uneventful; the soul is regrouping. At second level, a person is drawn more deeply into mature-soul perspective and can compare it to young-soul perspective. Then there is a need to reconcile those two views, which can lead to inner conflict: “Which is more important, career or relationships?” for instance. A third-level mature soul is fully enmeshed in mature-soul perspective but doesn’t yet have the ability to confidently operate from it in the world. He may feel the need to be less public while he works hard internally. (Since the young-soul cycle is about success, a third-level young soul may be more active in the world than before yet still lack full confidence. Third levels are about the struggle to climb the mountain of that soul age’s perspective.)

Fourth level is in the middle—three levels have gone before, and three more are to come. It’s the balance point, the place the person feels “I’ve got it!” He is fully functioning at that soul age’s fundamental perspective—his foundation is in place—and can authoritatively carry it into the world. A fourth-level mature soul tends to feel confident of his abilities in relationships. His relationships tend to be in tense and central in his life, which may look at times like a soap opera, but the drama can be fun, too.

Naturally, once the foundation is in place, a person wants to expand in new directions, which he does at fifth level, accessing and integrating more peripheral strands of experience. A fifth-level mature soul may have unusual or even eccentric ways of being and relating to others. At sixth level, the soul “looks at his watch” and says, in effect, “I’m almost done with this soul age, and I need to tie up loose ends, particularly with other people.” This is a busy time for the soul and can require many lifetimes to complete, particularly if there is a lot of karma to repay.

Since the mature-soul cycle is the most intense soul age to begin with, a person who is sixth-level mature can have a difficult time. After a few lifetimes of repaying difficult karmas, he can look shell-shocked, a little like one of those cartoon characters who keeps getting hit over the head with a frying pan, so that tweety birds are flying

around the bumps. It is especially important for those who are at the sixth level to stay up to date with their internal processing; otherwise, they can quickly develop a large backlog. Counseling may be helpful. It is also helpful for anyone who has had a difficult life of paying back karma to realize that it is just a phase of development—every soul has lifetimes like that—and doesn't indicate that he is a “bad person.”

Seventh level reminds me of an old McDonald's commercial jingle, “You deserve a break today....” Especially after the rigors of sixth level mature, the soul feels ready for less intensity. Although there is still plenty of work to do, one's outer life is quieter. At seventh-level, the emphasis is on completing unfinished business with oneself rather than with others. Since seventh level is the culmination of the soul age, the person wants to review what he has learned during all seven levels before moving on. A good way to do that is to teach it to at least one other person (the cardinal roles may teach it to many).

As with the soul ages themselves, Michael math applies to each of the seven levels. First is the server level, laying the foundation. Second is the artisan level, setting up the structure. Third is the warrior level, meeting the challenges. Fourth is the scholar level, consolidating. Fifth is the expansive sage level. Sixth is the priest harmonizing level. And seventh is the king level, pulling it all together.

According to channeling by Sarah Chambers, the seven levels of the mature soul focus on:

- 1 Right relationship with self.
- 2 Right relationship with intimate others.
- 3 Right relationship with other people you come in contact with, such as coworkers.
- 4 Right relationships with your culture/subculture.
- 5 Right relationship with the opposite sex.
- 6 Right relationship with the other cultures on the planet.
- 7 Right relationship with the other beings (plants, animals, etc.) with which we share the planet.

This illustrates how each level becomes more expansive.

Manifested Soul Age

On my Michael charts, I channel both a person's true soul age and the soul age he is manifesting at the time I channel the chart. Our manifested soul age is the average level of our personality's perspective at a given time; it can change relatively rapidly if it is lower than our true soul age. I've had clients who rose from manifesting second-level mature, for example, to fourth-level mature in a matter of months. Our true soul age characterizes where we really are, at least internally, and it is our level of potential function externally as opposed to what we may be dealing with at the moment on the surface. Therefore, it is more significant and influential than our manifested age.

In every lifetime we manifest first-level infant at birth, since our body is not capable of sustaining a higher perspective. Our true soul age may be evident, but it is not engaged. On the level of personality we have to focus on infant-soul lessons such as survival. As we get older, our manifested soul age can increase up to our highest level of previous attainment in past lifetimes. However, we might become stuck at a certain level, at least in some area of our life. For example, a mature soul may manifest young because he doesn't want to face some difficult relationship issues—he's more comfortable focusing on success. Or an old soul may manifest mature because he is not willing to give up some attachments. It is similar to an adult being emotionally younger than his true age in some way, perhaps because of a trauma that occurred in the past. He stays at that place until he is willing or able to face it.

We also might deliberately manifest at a particular level longer than would otherwise be necessary in order to review some lessons. For example, an old soul may need a brush-up on young-soul lessons regarding success and money, and may spend the first half of his life focused on business endeavors. I am not implying that everyone working in the business world is manifesting young—it is subtler than that. Our manifested soul age is the dominant focus of our lives, no matter what we are doing externally. Someone manifesting as a mature soul in business is likely to be most interested in the relationship

aspects of business, even if he is required to spend a lot of time working with other aspects of it.

Soul-age manifestation is often a mixed bag. A fifth-level old soul may manifest young in the area of money, for example, mature in the area of relationships, and old in most other areas. The energies that these perspectives generate might combine to form a composite manifested age of seventh-level mature. Since it can be an average, manifested soul age may not always seem to completely fit.

If someone is manifesting a younger soul age, he may still be gleaning valuable experience.

A third-level old soul may not have developed fully in certain types of relationships when he was a mature soul. For instance, he may have developed a strong mature-soul perspective in sexual, male-female relationships, but not have had much experience with mature-soul male bonding. Maybe he did not have a lot of opportunity.

In any case, when a problem arises in this area, he may not have many resources to fall back on. He may simply not know how to share emotional intimacy with another man, how to trust without being competitive. He is where he would have been as a mature soul when he normally would have first handled this issue. Doing so now might indirectly help him advance to fourth-level old. Once he integrates the mature-soul lessons in this area, he is likely to move on to old-soul lessons in it, since that is his true perspective. Old-soul bonding, incidentally, is deeper yet less personal.

He does not have to manifest third-level old in all aspects of his life to advance to fourth level, as long as he fills in the gaps he needs to.

A person may also need to review some lessons that he already learned because they have not been reinforced for several lifetimes. As the saying goes, “Use it or lose it.”

Once Michael commented on a chart:

Steve is manifesting slightly higher than his own soul level due to imprinting.

He was sixth-level mature manifesting at seventh. I would have thought that impossible, but the client confirmed that it was true. I suppose that means he is living from a perspective he has not yet earned. Perhaps it is like the disciples of spiritual masters who are given experiences they couldn't have had on their own, and who then must grow into them. Since Michael has only made this comment through me once, I assume that this sort of thing is rare.

In the following passage, Michael discusses how a person can benefit from being imprinted by an older soul without actually manifesting older than his true soul age.

A mature soul virtually never manifests old. However, if he is imprinted by someone who is old, he can learn helpful skills.

Suppose that a busy forty-five-year-old has a seventy-two-year-old semi-retired friend. The semiretired friend sees the workaday world from a perspective that is farther away. He has come through its drama and knows what is on the other side. Therefore, he does not take it as seriously as the forty-five-year-old does. The forty-five-year-old can adopt some of his friend's philosophy of life, learning to be more detached, but he is still in the midst of the workaday world—he has not yet come through the other side of it, so he does not yet know for himself what his friend knows.

Likewise, the mature soul is still in the midst of the drama of life. He cannot stop being in it while he is still in it. It would not be beneficial to skip over that whole portion of development. He would always be hobbled by the lack of that experiential movement. However, he can learn from old souls, who naturally find it easier to have a detached viewpoint (although they do not always have it either).

Mature-soul lessons are just as significant and valid as old-soul or any other lessons.

Many older souls who have manifested younger than their true soul age for a number of lifetimes are beginning to manifest more accurately because of the media, which provides a way for any group to know about and communicate with other members. For older souls, who see the world in a larger way than the average

person, there are now many books and other media that help reinforce that way of seeing.

Manifesting our true soul age is not the same as manifesting our essence, which occurs after we dispose of whatever imprinting we carry that taught us to appear different than we really are. We begin to look like our actual role and overleaves across the board. Successful completion of the fourth internal monad is partly defined by manifesting our essence, if we haven't earlier. We will still occasionally be in our negative poles, like all human beings, but at least they will be our negative poles, not a simulation of our parents' or someone else's. We might also still manifest a younger soul age.

Sometimes people are distressed to learn that they are not manifesting their true soul age—they see it as a sign that they are behind in their spiritual growth. That is not necessarily the case. This idea stems in part from the belief that older is better when it comes to soul age. We may feel more integrated when we manifest our true soul age, since our inner and outer perspectives are aligned, but a more accurate indication of where we are spiritually is how much we are in our positive poles.

Can Soul Age Regress?

Once we have been through a developmental experience, it cannot be lost. We may forget its lessons, but the experience is always there to draw upon. Therefore, soul age does not regress, and it is rare for manifested soul age to backtrack as well. When someone seems to regress in life, it is usually due to an increase in false personality. In other words, he is going into his negative poles more frequently; his ego is more in control, and his essence, less. However, this doesn't necessarily mean that he is manifesting a younger soul age. Any soul age can be experienced from either positive or negative poles. Soul age simply indicates the nature of our lessons, not whether we are succeeding in them.

Once, Michael indicated that a person who had “sold out” may have dropped back a level or two in manifested soul age, but that it wasn't a significant change; the minor backtracking wasn't the selling out. If,

for example, he had been manifesting third-level mature, which is a quiet time of internalizing the mature-soul perspective, and later he began to again manifest second-level mature, which is a time of balancing young-soul (outer world) and mature-soul (inner world) lessons, that was not the cause of the increased dominance of his ego.

Someone who seems to be regressing may actually be moving forward but meeting new, more difficult challenges that have temporarily thrown him for a loop.

Older Is Not Better

It is not better to be an old soul than to be mature or young, just as it isn't better to be forty-five years old than it is to be thirty-two or fourteen. A young person may be wise, and an old person foolish. A baby soul may be loving, and an old soul spiteful. People of every soul age are capable of manifesting their true personality—that is, of acting out of their positive poles, which are motivated by love. Younger souls are simply less experienced than older souls, not having completed as many monads. They are less fully tested, one could say.

Having compassion for others through knowledge of oneself is possible at any soul age.

An infant soul can be appropriate and responsible but is not ready to handle larger responsibilities. He is generally not attracted to situations beyond his abilities. It is similar to a child, who can be appropriate and responsible, but for a smaller sphere than an adult can be. You would not expect a six-year-old to hold down a nine-to-five job, for example.

Advancement is not as important as experience. You do advance, because you are in motion, but you are here to experience life in every facet. Some facets of life are easier than others, but each step of development is necessary. If you were to skip over one, you would be left with a gap.

The more conscious you are in your growth process, the more quickly you grow. However, this does not necessarily translate into moving more quickly from, say, second-level mature to third-level mature. It is not necessarily desirable for you to move from second

to third mature as quickly as possible. Your soul age simply indicates your point of perspective. It is not inferior to be second mature rather than third mature; all points of perspective are valid. However, if you are ready to move from second mature to third, and you bring more awareness to the process, it may happen more quickly because you will be in a better position to avoid becoming stuck.

On the other hand, it may be appropriate for you to have an extensive experience of being at second mature. If that's the case, you will do so more expansively if you are growing consciously, but you will not necessarily finish it more quickly. The object of the game is not to move through the soul ages as quickly as possible. It is to move through them in the way you choose to move through them. Choice is the name of the game. Some people are more attracted to the mature-soul perspective and spend more time in it; others are more attracted to the young or old-soul perspectives. It is individual.

Soul age is similar in some respects to physical age. When you are sixty, no matter how intelligent, mature, appropriate, or healthy you are or are not, you go through certain experiences; the sixty-year-old body brings with it a certain perspective—you cannot escape that. Likewise with the eleven-year-old body: an eleven-year-old girl may mimic a seventeen-year-old, wearing makeup and dating, but she probably does not yet have the physical capacity to support a sexual relationship, for instance. Two eleven-year-olds can be quite different, yet share the eleven-year-old experience. In the same way, two people of the same soul age share a common perspective, even though the specifics of their lives may be quite different.

Old souls tend to be tolerant and inclusive, and at least try to be open to other ways of looking at things. People whose points of view are rigid and exclusive may upset them. Overt intolerance would probably not evoke the same level of reaction from mature souls, who are more likely to just shake their heads in dismay and want the offenders to get as far away from them as possible. They do not want others to project feelings into their space that are going

to be difficult for them to process, but they may not necessarily think about it further.

Mature souls need to have their emotional boundaries respected. Baby souls are generally more concerned with behavioral boundaries than emotional ones. They do not tend to become bent out of shape if others are emotionally ugly in their space, although they might be appalled if the behavior seems inappropriate. Mature souls, however, would tend to take in that ugliness and therefore need to keep others out of their space when they cannot process it. Although they may know their own boundaries, they do not automatically know what other people's boundaries are, since they tend to be rather subjective, so others may need to tell them.

It is hard to understand a soul age older than your own. However, every soul age can be arrogant about other soul ages in certain ways. Old souls can be arrogant about those who are intolerant. Mature souls can be arrogant about those who are not taking life as seriously as they are, who do not care as deeply and fervently about their values or who do not take values seriously at all. Young souls can be arrogant about those who are not able to cut it in the world, or seem to be misfits. Baby souls can be intolerant of those who are not following the program. And infant souls can be arrogant toward those whom they think are making life too complicated or who are too disconnected from the practical aspects of survival.

Everyone looks at things from his own point of view, and that is why the Michael teachings are offered—so that people can better understand that there are good reasons for others seeing things differently.

Being an old soul is not all that different from being physically old. Whether speaking of our body or our essence, being old means that one has gone through particular stages of experience, which may or may not result in increased wisdom. Wisdom is having a conscious awareness of the meaning of one's experience, and it is available at any stage. A larger perspective can come with greater experience, but that is not, of itself, wisdom. Experiences provide potential wisdom,

but the wisdom must be harvested. Souls no doubt eventually harvest at least some wisdom from their experiences, but how much and what kind are optional.

Extensive spiritual study and practice, or simply maintaining high levels of integrity and consciousness, in this lifetime or in past lives, can contribute to wisdom. Anyone can choose to study and pursue the spiritual path, no matter what quantity of experience he has had in terms of physical or soul age, or previous cycles. However, those with more experience are more likely to gravitate toward it; those with less experience may feel that they have their hands full dealing with the basics of physical-plane life.

It is ironic that in our society most people want to be physically young, but those who learn of the Michael teachings often want to be old souls. Part of the reason for this is confusion over the term *old soul*. In common New Age parlance, saying that someone is an old soul is a compliment—it implies depth and innate knowledge. However, in the Michael teachings, it simply refers to a particular stage in our developmental process.

Soul age identifies how old we are on this planet, as opposed to how many other planetary cycles we have experienced. The impression of being an old soul, as it is normally meant, can derive from many factors, but the number of previous cycles contributes as much to that as soul age. Having had many previous cycles imparts the look of having been around the block a few times.

Just as a person who is twelve years old in this lifetime can seem wise because he's had many past lives, a person can be young on this planet but seem deep because of having many other planetary experiences under his belt. A young soul with fourteen previous cycles may in certain ways appear older than an old soul with five, although the young soul is primarily outwardly focused, whereas the old soul emphasizes the larger context and tends to be more casual about life on the physical plane. The young soul, on some level, remembers having been a mature and old soul fourteen times before. The circumstances each time were unique, but the fundamentals were the same.

If we think of the old-soul cycle as being equivalent to being in college, an old soul with three previous cycles might be compared to a person attending a community college, whereas someone with ten might be compared to a person attending a state university, and someone with seventeen might be compared to a person attending a rigorous Ivy League school—each is at the same point in his process, but with different levels of complexity.

Soul age, number of previous cycles, and also physical age are merely quantitative measures of potential levels of sophistication. They don't speak to the depth and quality of the specific lessons that an individual has gained, or how much of them she is currently tapping into.

We are each incredibly vast and complex, and the measures and descriptions provided by the Michael teachings are not intended to pigeonhole or limit us; they are simply some of our many traits.

Although *More Messages from Michael*¹ stated that each soul age has its merits and that no soul age is better or worse than another, the descriptions of the soul ages sound most complimentary to old souls. Yarbro states that the old-soul motto is “You do what you want, and I will do what I want,” whereas the young-soul motto is “Do it my way.” Although there is certainly truth to this, it is important to catch the spirit of Michael's words.

In *Messages from Michael*,² Michael said that young souls almost always seek higher education, usually graduate degrees. If the average person on Earth (thirty-two percent of us) is a young soul, that would imply that the average person seeks graduate degrees. Obviously, that is not the case—the average person cannot afford higher education of any kind, although he might desire it. This statement was probably true for the local area where the channeling occurred, the San Francisco Bay Area.

However, the spirit of what Michael said here is clear: young souls are motivated toward the greatest possible outer accomplishment, in whatever sphere. This manifests more obviously in people with higher male energy, which moves outward and is naturally more achievement oriented than female energy. It is also more obvious with warriors and

kings, who are motivated to seek challenge and mastery, respectively. Still, anyone will tend to seek success more at the young-soul age than at others. A young-soul priest in the clergy, for instance, might have the ambition to become the head of his church, whereas an old priest would probably not seek that position for its own sake. He would likely have to feel that holding it would bring a great deal of benefit to all concerned. Otherwise, he might not bother.

I know young souls who have learned to respect other people's points of view, and older souls who have not.

Young souls need to apply themselves to their environment, not necessarily to make others "do it my way" but just to have the experience of having maximum impact. They actually are not necessarily all that attached to a particular way; if you can show them a more effective or workable way, they will generally quickly adapt to that, as long as they can internalize that way and then apply it to the environment themselves. That can manifest as the type of person who has to think that your idea was his.

Young souls do not yet have the ability to see a lot of perspectives at once. They can be tolerant, certainly, but the very nature of the young soul cycle does not lend itself to an overarching view of reality. There is much emphasis on individuality and success.

Although "do it my way" is not the highest possible point of view, it does not necessarily indicate negative-pole function. There are young soul philanthropists, for example, who are genuinely motivated by a desire to use their success for the benefit of others. In fact, they may measure their success by how much good they are able to do for others, which is an enlightened approach. They may think that others should do what they are doing, or at least that more people ought to do it, and there would be much truth in that opinion.

Each soul age has a higher or larger native perspective than the one preceding it. The old-soul perspective is to leave other people alone, to let them do what they need to do. Although you might be able to teach a young soul this in principle, it may not be easy for

him to see why he should, particularly when it gets close to home—for example, with other family members. Of course, it depends on his role, too—a young king or warrior almost has to imprint others with his way of doing things, whereas a young artisan in submission may still want you to do things his way, but not as intensely.

Since we are in the world for many lifetimes, we certainly don't want to come and go without ever having learned how to make full use of the institutions here. The young-soul cycle is the time when obtaining those skills is emphasized. People of other soul ages may also seek a high position, but their main reason is likely to be different. A mature soul who wants to be the Surgeon General might see it primarily as an opportunity to find more meaning in his life, or even to do something great in the world. The mature-soul cycle concerns exploring our depth, seeking the profound. A young soul might also care about his life having meaning or about achieving greatness, but that is not likely to be his primary reason for seeking a high position. Young souls emphasize spreading their wings.

Young souls test their self-sufficiency and independence to see how much they can do on their own before beginning the mature-soul process of developing interdependence. I know a young soul with wealthy parents who is a single mother. She works as a bartender and accepts little money from them except for her daughter's education—she strongly values making it on her own. I, on the other hand, as an old soul, would be perfectly content to live on the dole of wealthy parents!—that is, if there were no major strings attached. I have felt ready to retire since childhood. I have little need to accomplish in the world, except as that gives me opportunities for expression (which sages require) and, specifically, to complete my life tasks.

Like most of us, I do have to work for a living, which has the advantage of helping keep me productive and careful about how I use my time. Without direction, old souls can easily succumb to laziness, since achieving success or even greatness is not a strong motivation. Old souls tend to take the attitude, “Well, it won't matter a hundred years from now.” (I know an old scholar in his eighties fond of saying that.) *Messages from Michael*³ referred to old kings who are

“vagabonds and hoboes” and to old artisans’ “unfinished masterpieces.” Mature souls, on the other hand, tend to take the physical plane more seriously than the other soul ages—everything tends to matter a lot to them.

Old souls often do have high standards of excellence, but they need strong reasons to follow through: either the requirements of survival or, preferably, a sense of mission. It is ironic that issues about survival, prevalent during the infant-soul cycle, can reemerge as the old soul prepares to cycle off, rather like the second childhood that elderly people can have. There are many old-soul New Agers who barely make it financially. Unlike young souls, old souls are little able to suffer hardship in order to make it to the top. If they don’t like what they’re doing, they have a difficult time forcing themselves to do it. They can seem undisciplined, but they can be quite disciplined relative to tasks they care about.

Old souls tend to take the longest time of any soul age to find themselves and come into their own. Part of the reason is that the older the soul, the more levels one has to review before manifesting one’s true soul age. The scientific principle “ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny” explains why, in the development of a human fetus, it temporarily has “gills”: it is reviewing the stages of its prior evolution, and apparently gills were once part of our physical ancestors’ equipment. In the same way, during a single lifetime a seventh-level old soul must review each level of the infant, baby, young, mature, and old stages before manifesting seventh-level old. That’s why a young soul can come into his own earlier than an old soul can. Most old souls do not manifest their true soul age before their mid-thirties, if they do at all. (Roughly two-thirds of all people never fully manifest their true soul age, whatever it is.)

Although old souls especially have difficulties making a living when they can’t find appropriate work, any soul age can have problems related to survival, particularly in a difficult economy. Young souls can lose their jobs too, and have trouble keeping food on the table. Mature souls can be so absorbed in their inner process that they have little energy left over for making a living. In the U.S., those

of all soul ages and roles who are trying to support themselves in the arts often have a difficult time unless they've made it to the top of their field, since there is so little support for the arts and so much competition.

Furthermore, even many young souls would be glad not to have to work for a living, particularly if they don't like their work. They might seek success in other ways. A young server I know would prefer to stay home and raise her children full-time, although she is successful in her career. She might define success in terms of how well she is able to provide for her children. She might also feel that she has already demonstrated her ability to be successful in her career, so that she no longer has the need to continue to pursue that. Another factor is that servers are the role most innately oriented toward raising children.

This brings us back to the fact that the Michael teachings are about energies rather than specific behaviors. Each soul age has a particular energetic quality and perspective. That can be discerned even if, for example, a young soul does not appear to be highly oriented in this lifetime toward outward success, as it is usually defined. Since the young-soul cycle is the warrior soul age, it imparts a coolness to a person not present in the other soul ages. If you compare young and old servers, for example, you will probably be able to see the difference.

A few people have asked me, with a little awe, what it is like to be seventh-level old. A couple of people have even been suspicious that I awarded myself that designation. (I did check it with another channel.) Being seventh-level old is not an award or worthy of awe. We live in a society that tends to see things in terms of becoming the top dog, and being seventh-level old might be interpreted as being the top dog in terms of soul age. Since the U.S. is a sixth-level young country, there are many people seeking top positions. Therefore, it is not surprising that our society is based on a hierarchical view that fosters competition. We need to put that aside if we are to understand the Michael teachings, or any true spiritual teaching. Old is just old. Not every seventh-level old soul is intelligent, wise, or even a nice person, let alone enlightened—it depends on the individual.

Like every soul age and level, seventh-level old has its own peculiar traits. Understandably, those who are seventh-level old (or late sixth level) are often meticulous about not owing anything to anyone, even in seemingly trivial ways. They don't want to leave loose ends in their lives because of their thrust toward completing not just the old-soul cycle but the entire physical-plane cycle of incarnation. Seventh-level old souls may have a particularly strong drive to complete a mission of some sort, but they can be late bloomers.

Seventh-level old souls can carry to its zenith the general old-soul impression of marching to a different drummer and seeming less a part of the world. They often have a hard time fitting into schedules or other people's expectations. They can take what really matters, however they define that, quite seriously, but they are often casual about the form of things.

Although each soul age brings a larger perspective, no stage necessarily sees things inaccurately. In climbing a mountain, we first see aspects of the valley in great detail, but we don't see the whole thing. When we get higher, we see the panorama, but the details aren't as vivid. Our memory of the details can help us when we reach the higher levels. We need each step—they are all “right.” The pleasure is as much in the experience of climbing as in reaching the top. With the soul, every top is the bottom of a new level anyway, so there is no end to the journey.

Within an individual lifetime, the goal is hardly to get old and die, but to experience something valuable along the way. Loving parents enjoy watching every step of their children's progress. Likewise, we can see each stage of our own development as being beautiful. Some spiritual people want to finish their development and regain union with the Tao as quickly as possible. If that had been our spark's attitude in the beginning, we never would have chosen to be cast from the Tao.

Granted, Earth's physical plane is not a picnic at the moment. We might occasionally wonder what could have possibly possessed us to come here. However, there have been easier, more pleasant times, and there probably will be again. In any case, we will ultimately see everything we pass through as having been valuable.

Some people have been told by other channels or psychics that they are on their last lifetime here, and become confused if they are told by Michael that they are not seventh-level old. A theory has arisen among some Michael students that the soul-age pattern will be transcended in the forecasted planetary shift. Perhaps movement through the levels will speed up, since there will presumably be less resistance to growth. However, I doubt that they could be dispensed with altogether—soul ages are merely natural developmental stages. “Instant enlightenment” would not be all that valuable anyway. Growth that is not fully experienced and integrated is flimsy. It is like a plant that grows too fast, without developing adequate roots—it can be easily blown over.

Some channels have gotten information that the Earth’s population will be vastly decreased in the coming times, making far fewer bodies available for incarnation. This could explain the “last lifetime” idea. Perhaps many of us are tying up enough karmic and other loose ends that we can take an extended vacation. The world we would return to later to continue our cycle would be very different, eventually probably less stressful.

We choose whether or not to cycle off. Permission does not have to be granted by somebody else. However, if we try to do it before we are ready, it will become obvious that we weren’t ready, and we will feel the need for a return engagement. If we have not completed seventh level old, we will not feel ready. It is a little like sex: we may pause in the middle of it, but it usually doesn’t feel complete until after orgasm. Being complete with the physical plane can also be compared to an individual lifetime: sometimes people die young, but a life isn’t normally viewed as complete unless a person lives to old age.

JZ Knight channels Ramtha, who claims to have lived only one lifetime. He says he then reached enlightenment and therefore no longer needed to incarnate. People usually define enlightenment as a state of all-knowing perfection, which I do not believe is possible. I do not see either Michael or Ramtha as being in that state. To me, enlightenment means being awake to our essence and able to live genuinely in the present moment, in accordance with love and truth, with a free flow of energy. Theoretically, a first-level infant soul could

be enlightened, according to that definition, but he would still have an enormous amount to learn, as in fact we all do, no matter where we are on the loop. Living just one lifetime would be like taking one college course rather than completing a degree.

Some people assume that they are old souls because of their strong interest in spiritual teachings. However, that is not necessarily the case, and many old souls (eleven percent of humanity) are not consciously interested in spiritual teachings. Such interest can be stimulated by imprinting, past-life experiences, overleaves (the attitude of spiritualist, for instance, can contribute), or role (priest especially). Spirituality may simply be an object of study, just as some people are interested in studying animals or the design of bridges.

Being interested in the New Age or in spiritual teachings is not the same as being on the spiritual path, which implies a deep commitment to spiritual values and a willingness to undergo rigorous self-examination. Of course, often they coexist, but there are many people on the spiritual path who are not conversant in spiritual teachings. Likewise, there are people associated with the New Age who are not on the spiritual path, at least not to a great extent. In any case, no one can judge for certain whether someone else is on the path. Love is what the spiritual path is ultimately about. Love itself has little to do with soul age, although presumably our experience of love matures as we go along.

Being an old soul does not guarantee being on the spiritual path or even being a pleasant person. There are tendencies in those directions—we might say that an old soul has room in his life for spiritual things because of the lessons already completed. However, as Michael is so fond of reminding us, all is by choice. An old soul may not choose to become involved with spirituality in a given lifetime. He may have other interests that are higher priorities for him. On the other hand, many mature and younger souls are interested in spiritual teachings. Still, the predominant lessons and perspectives of their soul age are evident in their lives.

This planet offers an extraordinary variety of experiences and studies. There's something for everybody, and every experience has

value. A conscious spiritual study can be enriching and helpful, but whatever a person is attracted to is probably her right path.

Planetary Shift

According to Yarbro, the average soul age on Earth is fifth-level young, and the U.S. average is sixth-level young. (Sixth levels typically involve karmic repayments.) Some channels have gotten the current averages a little higher. In any case, we are moving into the “mature-soul shift,” a change in average soul age to mature.

The shift from young to mature is the most radical shift that can occur in any people’s history. The shift from baby to young is significant, but it is a movement in the same direction as before, toward more effective and powerful outward function. The shift from young to mature is a change in direction, toward inner and higher values. Of course, this could not occur if there had not first been the young cycle. The shift from mature to old is again not a shift in direction, just in focus.

Even if the average soul age is still late young, “coming events cast their shadows before,” and mature-soul consciousness is beginning to have more influence. This can be observed in the popularization of interests such as myth and emotion-based psychologies. These relate to our inner world and our connections with others. A person can be a young soul, learning primarily young-soul lessons, and still have values or a heightened consciousness about issues usually of stronger interest to mature souls.

Young-soul separateness, played out to its ultimate negative-pole conclusion, resulted in World War II’s awesome destruction. People are disillusioned and open to more connectedness, especially with the specter of nuclear or environmental destruction hanging over their heads.

Because of the pervasive mass media, those of other soul ages have been conditioned by young-soul values. Even infant souls living in tribes now sometimes have television sets and want the material possessions promulgated by young-soul media; their

surface thinking has been along the lines of young-soul thinking. As the world shifts to a mature-soul consciousness, new values are becoming more generally accepted, and the media is helping promote them, accelerating their spread.

Mature-soul societies have more emphasis on caring for those who are less fortunate and a greater balance between masculine and feminine. This should lead to a lessening of aggressive tendencies. There is a possibility that within a few hundred years, war will be completely eliminated. Humanity's ability to destroy the Earth can actually accelerate the shift, because it encourages people to realize that it is in their best interests to find peaceful solutions to conflicts.

Young souls are great at building civilizations. The young-soul cycle has contributed a great deal—we are not critical of it. However, particularly in this civilization, young-soul consciousness has manifested in an extreme way. Young souls always tend to be more independent, but the sense of isolation and separateness of young souls in this civilization has been excessive. So this step in your growth will be most welcome, provided you do not destroy the surface of the planet first. That is a real danger.

Profound outer changes will probably not manifest until the average soul age is actually well into mature. The timing will depend on the choices people make: we can accelerate or retard our growth in all areas, including soul age.

We can also affect how the shift plays out, whether it is relatively smooth or rocky—psychologically, politically, and even physically. Humans affect the Earth not only through ecology but also through the ecology of consciousness: individual and collective thoughts and feelings are more significant than most people realize.

In some ways the coming of the mature-soul cycle is the coming of the long-predicted New Age—the mature-soul cycle is a major part of what is new. However, the New Age is more than that. Ideally, it will be a time of cleansing and transformation so that the world's vibration is raised.