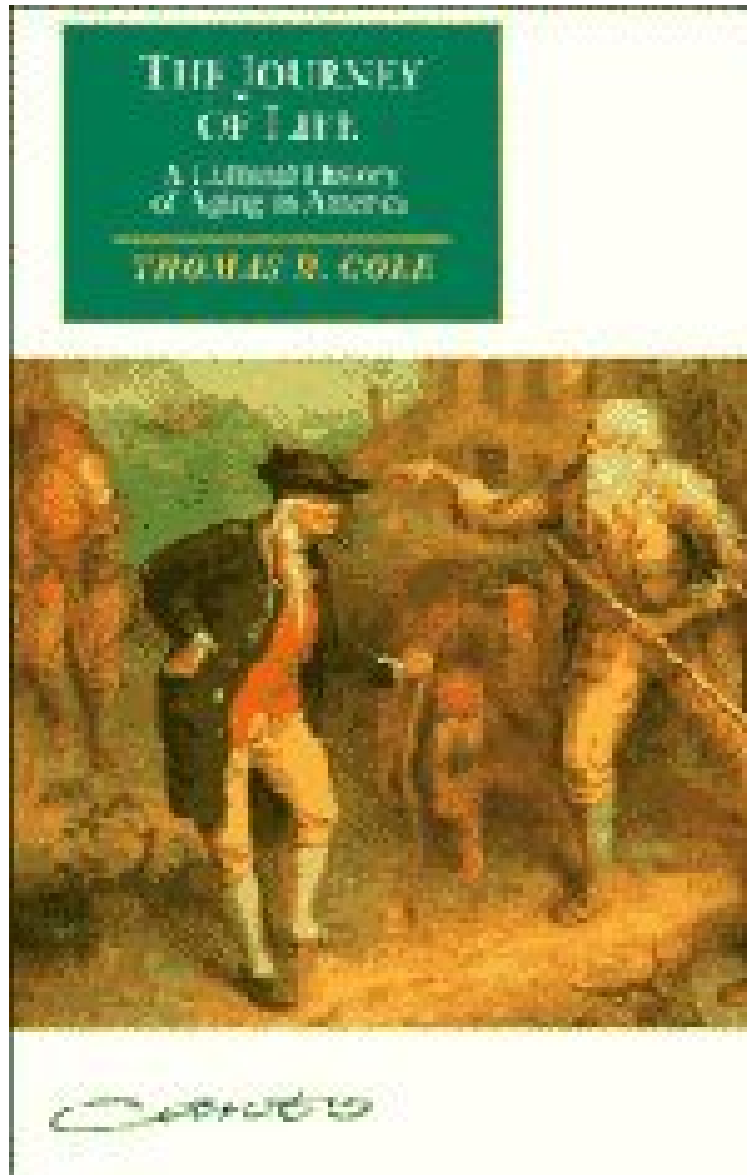


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The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America (Canto original series)

Thomas R. Cole

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Thomas R. Cole : The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America (Canto original series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Journey of Life: A Cultural History of Aging in America (Canto original series):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Never has life felt so long as when reading this book
By ShawarmaEmpireI rarely review books that were required for class, but because this one is exceptional in the degree of misery it caused me, I make an exception. First, roughly a third of each chapter is a summary of the previous chapter; the book really ought to be half to two thirds its length. Secondly, this is not an American history. It makes no attempt to feature anyone who is not well-to-do, white, male, Anglo-Saxon-- with the exception of a few well-to-do, white, Anglo-Saxon women. It is even regionally biased, in that all points of view are based on those of New Englanders. Finally, at no point was the prose easy to get through. Ten pages will drag on forever. While reading this I couldn't shake the thought that my life was unbearably long, and that somehow this book had magically expanded time. I realize this book isn't meant to entertain, but no motive could temper the displeasure this book inspired. Through painful persistence you may gain an idea of what a very limited segment of American society thought about ageing through time. From what I have heard, there are few books on the history of ageing or the perception of ageing. If you are interested in the subject it's quite possible reading this might be bearable, and probably unavoidable. I would say that anthropological studies on ageing would be much more interesting. However, my house has never been so clean because I will do anything to delay reading this book.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. New Insights into Aging in America
By New LebanonThis is a useful discussion of how ideas about aging and older people have changed over time. It's well written and thoughtful.
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. All you wanted to know about the subject
By Millie A. LoebThis excellent, thoughtful history, based on the author's dissertation is both well researched with strong underpinnings of philosophic depth. I highly recommend it.

The Journey of Life is both a cultural history of aging and a contribution to public dialogues about the meaning and significance of later life. The core of the book shows how central texts and images of Northern middle-class culture, first in Europe and then in America, created and sustained specifically modern images of the life course between the Reformation and World War I. During this long period, secular, scientific, and individualist tendencies steadily eroded ancient and medieval understandings of aging as a mysterious part of the eternal order of things. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, postmodern images of life's journey offer a renewed awareness of the spiritual dimensions of later life and new opportunities for growth in an aging society.

From Publishers Weekly
Cole, an associate professor at the University of Texas, here explores the evolution of societal attitudes toward aging, gender and familial ideals from antiquity to the present, discussing both political and philosophical influences. He devotes a major portion of this excellent and accessible scholarly study to examining a wide variety of religious beliefs, many of which envision life as a spiritual pilgrimage. However, with the rise of secular individualism, today's "scientific management" of aging has prolonged the life span, Cole observes, and liberated older men and women of many burdens and duties. On the other hand, he contends, the elderly have been deprived of their traditional cultural roles, special functions and positions in society. Furthermore, he notes, with a youth-oriented culture that tends to consider aging a chronic disease, the spiritual aspects of growing old and of death as natural parts of the life cycle have been slighted. Illustrations. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.
From Library Journal
What has it meant to be old? With the increasing interest in aging, medical and self-help books are crowding our shelves. This work challenges the assumption of value-free studies of aging and offers a critical evaluation of the meanings of aging in American society. Deftly interweaving religion, economics, gender, health trends, and science, Cole documents the period from the Reformation to post-World War I. Tracing the decline of religious values, the rise of the economic pressures of individualism, and the reliance on scientific management of health, he offers new insights into patterns of behavior. An excellent addition to the literature on aging, this book presents complex information in a clear and engaging style.- Jan Blodgett, St. Mary's Cty. Records Ctr. Archives, Leonardtown, Md. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc. 'One could not ask for a more learned or compassionate guide to the mysteries of aging than Thomas R. Cole.' The New York Times Book 'Thomas R. Cole's fascinating study, The Journey of Life, is not so much the history of aging per se, but of attitudes toward it and toward those to whom old age happens. It is therefore necessarily also about American attitudes toward the past and future and the underlying nature of wisdom. The book is exhaustive, its line of development persuasive. It reflects a continuing ambiguity and multiplicity of attitudes in society at every stage.' David Mehegan, Boston Globe 'Cole makes a powerful case for the proposition that we can no longer afford the illusions about aging that we have inherited from the nineteenth century.' Christopher Lasch, University of Rochester