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Chiara Crisciani, DEATH AS A DESTINY AND THE HOPE OF LONG LIFE IN THE LATIN MIDDLE AGES (pp. 5-26)

This paper shows how in Western culture an intense interest grew about the prolongation of life, and especially so in the 13th and 14th centuries. This interest was shared by physicians, philosophers, theologians, and alchemists. The debate about this subject was particularly concerned with the medical concept of radical moisture, the condition of Adam in Eden, and the fruit of *lignum vitae*. Special consideration is given by this paper to the points of view held by Roger Bacon and by Ps.Lull.

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Donatella Rossi, FAITH OR FATE? THE PATH TOWARDS IMMORTALITY ACCORDING TO THE TANTRIC TRADITIONS OF TIBET (pp. 27-48)

Tantrism represents the esoteric heritage of India; it originated around 500-600 AD. Hindu Tantric scriptures were composed from the eighth century onwards, primarily in Kashmir and Nepal, and from those regions they were gradually introduced in Tibet where they were translated concurrently with the hagiographies of famous related saints. Tantric teachings are revered and practiced by all major and minor Buddhist schools as well as Bon, the autochthonous pre-Buddhist system of beliefs of Tibet which remained predominant in the country until the seventh century AD. According to the followers of the first and oldest Tibetan Buddhist school, called *rNying ma* (literally, the Old One), they were made known by the Indian Guru Padmasambhava, who was invited in the eighth century by King Trison Detsen (Tib. Khri srong lDe'u btsan), the second of the three *Dharmarāja* who played a pivotal role in supporting the spread of Buddhism during the era of maximum influence of the Tibetan Empire (seventh-ninth century AD). On a mystical level Tantric teachings are said to have been transmitted in an ultra-mundane sphere by Buddhas, deities, and other supernatural beings who manifested themselves to privileged audiences under specific symbolic forms, which in turn became the object of meditation, contemplation, liturgies, and bio-spiritual praxes, depending on the teacher or lineage followed. The Tantric Path is considered the fastest one to obtain spiritual enlightenment in reason of its philosophical view, which fosters

deep understanding of the nature of Reality in initiated adepts, resulting in swift development and attainment of psycho-physical powers, among which longevity and immortality. The paper will introduce the different levels of Tantric teachings along with their specific characteristics and objectives; such introduction will serve as a platform for understanding the role played by faith and fate in the quest for immortality and the purpose of longevity in the Tibetan religious traditions.

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Danielle Jacquart, EST-IL POSSIBLE ET LÉGITIME POUR UN MÉDECIN MÉDIÉVAL DE PRÉVOIR LA LONGÉVITÉ D'UN PATIENT? (pp- 49-78)

This paper presents a thorough analysis of five commentaries on the passages of Avicenna's Canon dealing with the length of life and the necessity of death. Four authors of these commentaries were Italian: Antonio da Parma, Gentile da Foligno, Giacomo da Forli and Ugo Benzi. The fifth one was a Parisian master, Jacques Despars. Through their discussions, they had to face such problematic concepts as *humidum radicale* or *mors naturalis*. Apart from natural philosophy and medicine, some of them resort to astrology. But Jacques Despars is the only one to tackle the question of divine providence in this context, which Avicenna himself had raised.

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Joseph Ziegler, WHY DID THE PATRIARCHS LIVE SO LONG? ON THE ROLE OF THE BIBLE IN THE DISCOURSE ON LONGEVITY AROUND 1300 (pp. 79-112)

The Bible in general, and the story of prediluvian longevity in particular, constituted a powerful source of inspiration and legitimation for those who wished to reflect on the human life span, its brevity and its potential longevity, and occasionally even about the possible ways to affect its prolongation. This article surveys Hebrew and Latin exegesis on Genesis 5:4 from around 1300, and shows that the story of the Patriarchs' longevity and its dramatic decline after the flood became in both traditions a platform for reflection about natural longevity and its acquisition. Nahmanides, Nicholas of Lyra, Konrad von Halberstadt and Ptolemy of Lucca show a strong environmental consciousness when explaining the natural causes of the different life spans

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before and after the flood. By analyzing some key debates by natural philosophers (Roger Bacon, Peter of Spain, Albertus Magnus) and physicians (Pietro d'Abano) – all engaged with increasing sophistication in questions of life, death, and aging, the article underscores how the historical memory of the Patriarchs' extreme longevity, and the relevant biblical verses infiltrated the philosophical and medical discourses on aging and the means to slow it down.

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Rolf Scheuermann, «ONE WILL QUICKLY DIE!». PREDICTIONS OF DEATH IN THREE TIBETAN BUDDHIST DIVINATION MANUALS (pp. 113–132)

In the Tibetan cultural environment, various techniques aimed at coping with the uncertainty of the future play an important role in the everyday lives of individuals. They range from the observation of omnia, geomancy and astrology to oracles and prophecies. Yet another category, *mo*-divination, comprises different techniques that involve coins, dice, rosaries, mirrors, ropes, scapulimancy, and the drawing of lots using doughballs. By briefly introducing three diverse Tibetan Buddhist divinatory practices, this article analyzes the predictions related to death contained in the associated manuals, supported by translated excerpts of relevant passages.

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Agostino Paravicini Bagliani, THE PROLONGATION OF LIFE AND ITS LIMITS. WESTERN EUROPE, XIIITH-XVITH C (pp. 133–154)

Prolonging life theories spread in Western culture since the first decades of the XIIIth century and attracted at first the highest social elites. As paradoxical as it may seem, the popes of the last centuries of the Middle Ages were the principal dedicatees of texts of this nature until the middle of the XVIth century. Regarding this long series of texts, this article aims examine one single and important question, that is the nature of the length of prolongation of life, and its temporal limits.

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Charles Burnett, NATURAL DEATH AND THE ALLEVIATION OF OLD AGE IN THE MIDDLE AGES (pp. 155-168)

Death is a natural process to which all animate beings are subject. It is part of the cycle of life which ensures the stable continuation of the world. But man can take precautions to make old age as bearable as possible and prolong life until it reaches its natural end. A carefully-regulated regimen and a judicious use of medications can achieve this aim.

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Joël Coste, LA «MORT DE VIEILLESSE» DANS LES STATISTIQUES DE MORTALITÉ (XVIII^E SIÈCLE - XXI^E SIÈCLE): UNE CATÉGORIE PROBLÉMATIQUE (pp. 169-182)

This paper examines the status of «death of old age» or equivalents in mortality statistics since their origins in the 17th century, and offers some insights on the history of a category which was used for a long time by lay people and physicians before it was challenged and marginalised (but not eradicated). This category, as well as many others in the history of health, is made of anthropological and cultural elements that can be highlighted through a *longue durée* analysis. A journey through statistical tables produced for more than 350 years indeed enables to concretely grasp the status, societal acceptance and use of the category «death of old age» in the modern and contemporary Western world.

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Didier Kahn, QUINTESSENCE AND THE PROLONGATION OF LIFE IN THE WORKS OF PARACELUSUS (pp. 183-226)

In many aspects, Paracelsus (1493/94-1541) can be clearly considered a heir and successor of the medieval tradition of alchemical medicine. However, it seems that he was only temporarily interested in the problematics of the prolongation of life. Only four of his treatises are devoted to this question: the *Archidoxis*, *De renovatione et restauratione*,

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Vom langen Leben, and *De vita longa*, all written around 1526/1528. But neither in these treatises, nor in his other works did Paracelsus use the means for prolonging life available in the alchemical medieval tradition, namely the Rupescissan quintessence and the alchemical notion of a universal medicine. The very notion of a universal remedy was quite alien to his thinking, although he occasionally used it. This probably explains why some Paracelsians tried in several ways to reintegrate the Rupescissan quintessence into the Paracelsian corpus.

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Matthias Heiduk, A QUEST FOR LONGEVITY? A NEW APPROACH TO THE EARLIEST TESTIMONIES OF MEDIEVAL ALCHEMY (pp. 227-254)

Medieval Europe learned about alchemy through the translation of Arabic treatises into Latin. What sparked the curiosity regarding this new knowledge? Was it perhaps the promise of the life-extending effect of the elixir that inspired its initial reception? Historical research has been unable to answer this obvious question so far. This paper merely takes a few cautious steps on the road towards filling the gaps about early alchemy in the Medieval West. It focuses on the problems of the earliest textual witnesses in Latin from the XIIth century (*Liber Morieni*, *Septem tractatus Hermetis*, *Tabula smaragdina*) and adopts a systematic approach by undertaking a stringent comparison of these early alchemica with a large amount of Latin translations from Arabic of this time facilitated by the «Arabic-Latin-Corpus» of digitally-converted texts. This approach disproves two assumptions regularly featured in the research literature. On the one hand, the *Liber dabessi* – a combination of the *Tabula smaragdina* and an alchemical compilation – is not a translation by Plato of Tivoli and probably not a XIIth century translation at all. On the other hand, the *Septem tractatus Hermetis* are not a translation by Robert of Chester, but they show some remarkable accordance with specific words and phrases used in the *Turba philosophorum* as well as by John of Seville. The analysis of the *Liber Morieni* gains less clear results. They neither fully approve nor exclude the commonly attested attribution to Robert of Chester. The second part of the paper collects the statements in these early translations on the possibility of prolonging life. The third part focuses on the question of whether anything can be derived from the historical context of these translations regarding the motivation of the translators in turning towards alchemy. The concluding resumé points to possible further research avenues built on the basis of this paper.

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Michel Pastoureau, LONGÉVITÉ ANIMALE DANS LES TRADITIONS MÉDIÉVALES (pp. 255-266)

The medieval bestiaries are talkative on the life expectancy of animals. Beasts and birds which live on the longest are the stag, the deer, the crow and the raven. We also find in the bestiaries, in the encyclopedies and in the veterinary's treatises some recipes for prolonging the life of horses, dogs and, mainly, hawks and falcons. Among the main mentioned ingredients: milk, figgy bread, hot mulled wine, walnuts, apples, honey, valerian and St John's wort.

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Francesco Santi, TEOLOGIE DELLA RESURREZIONE DELLA CARNE (SECC. XIII-XIV) (pp. 267-282)

The interpretation given by Thomas Aquinas to Aristotle's metaphysics allows the elaboration of an efficient philosophy of perpetuity of the human body, applicable to the Christian theology of the resurrection. A new image of the body and its value is fully represented in it. The new philosophy can be used ideologically, as the preaching of the fourteenth and fifteenth century shows. Meanwhile, the crisis of metaphysics that invests European culture at the beginning of the XIV century puts in trouble on the theoretical level. Meister Eckhart represents a different doctrine of resurrection: in the new doctrine – in relation to the ecstatic experiences of the end of the Middle Ages – the concept of infinity is applied to the person and develops new body virtuality in time and out of time

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Anna Caiozzo, RÊVES D'IMMORTALITÉ: TROIS ROIS, DEUX HÉROS, UN PROPHÈTE (pp. 283-302)

Firdawsi's *Shāh Nāmā*, the Persian Epic, promotes some royal or heroic figures, such as *Jamshīd*, *Dahhāk*, *Kay Kāvūs*, *Siya-vush* or *Kha'dir*, whose histories deal with death, immortality and long life. In fact, in the mythical traditions and texts, the

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concept of immortality is clearly the goal of such tales. In Firdawsi's Persian and Islamic reconstruction, the concept of immortality is less shown. Nevertheless, this mythical context lays in the background of the first kings stories, Jamshīd, D.ah.h.a`k or Kay Ka`u`s, whose terrible punishments as the result of such an ambition were painted by miniaturists since the 14th century. On the other hand, Alexander's Epic integrated in the Persian Epic reveals the true purpose of his heroic quest: the search for immortality. In fact, the journey of Alexander/Iskandar and his mysterious guide, the Green Man Kha`dir, led them at the boundaries of the world where the hero unfortunately lost his guide. There, the latter discovered the fountain of life, becoming an immortal; this scene was well painted in Oriental manuscripts copies.

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Manuel Förg, THE CENTAUR'S DEATH. THE MYTH OF CHIRON AND THE TRANSFER OF IMMORTALITY (pp. 303-320)

The paper deals with the question, how the divine centaur Chiron, although immortal by definition, could relinquish his immortality after he was wounded by Heracles. It is shown that his transfer of immortality represents an archetypal case of overcoming the binary categories of «mortal» and «immortal» – and in doing so, the hybrid creature Chiron acquires particular importance in the spectrum of ancient myth.

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Basma A. S. Dajani, IMMORTALITY THROUGH LOVE IN CLASSICAL ARAB LITERATURE (pp. 321-336)

Being alive, being in love and working towards immortality are some common concerns among mankind during the journey of life. As implicit in the Biblical allusion «In the beginning was the word»²⁸, «words» are transmitted lively through ages and words keep the cord of those eminent people immortal.

Who seeks immortality? What is immortal of men and women? How does one become immortal? This research discusses these questions concentrating on the significance of the «word» as an element of eternity. The «Immortality and demises of the Ardent Lovers» as was reflected upon by some famous Arab literary figures,

philosophers, and jurists is the main theme of this research. Through their sayings, works, and poetry, the research will follow this philosophical and social phenomenon in classical Arab history and its contemporary impact.

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Barbara Hendrischke, *MODES OF AVOIDING DEATH IN THE SCRIPTURE ON GREAT PEACE* (TAIPING JING 太平經) (pp. 337-352)

The *Scripture on Great Peace* consists of materials from the second century CE. Its anonymous authors stress the value of life and introduce different modes of avoiding death. One is to prolong life by moral conduct and proper social organisation so that everyone can live as long as destined for him or her at birth. Another mode is to avoid death by «entering the thatched hut» for an intensive meditation practice that will transform someone's physical condition and allow him or her to live on in this world or in a world beyond. A third mode relies on visualising spirits and is designed for an adept who has retired from worldly affairs, belongs to a religious community and hopes that instead of dying he will «rise to heaven in broad daylight» and become a celestial official. These three modes are not depicted as being in conflict but as stages in an ongoing process. The authors of the *Scripture* are the first to assemble these modes and assign the search for life and study of immortality a central role in propagating social order. For them, this study has much in common with self-cultivation. Someone in search of avoiding death is expected to venerate heaven, follow heaven-derived rules of conduct and practice meditation. He is not seen as in need of special techniques and recipes. This separates the *Scripture* from the main direction of Daoist thoughts on immortality.

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Dominic Steavu, *THE MARVELOUS FUNGUS AND 'THE SECRET OF DIVINE IMMORTALS'* (pp. 353-384)

One of the most peculiar avenues to immortality in Daoism is the ingestion of «numinous mushrooms» (lingzhi 靈芝), a topic that has received little scholarly attention despite being a recurring theme in medieval Daoist texts. This study first provides some basic background knowledge about numinous mushrooms before surveying the princi-

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pal mycological sources from the Daoist Canon. The second part of the study centers on one of these sources, the seventh- or eighth-century «Scripture on Growing Mushrooms from Laozi's Jade Casket: The Secret of Divine Immortals», (Laozi yuxia zhong zhongzhi jing shenxian bishi 老子玉匣中種芝經神仙祕事). Most texts on numinous mushrooms describe how to identify and harvest marvelous fungi in the wild, but «The Secret of Divine Immortals» alone explains how to generate them. A focused analysis of the treatise reveals close connections to Internal Alchemy (Neidan 內丹) and its contemplation methods, strongly suggesting that in some instances, the ingestion of numinous mushrooms may have been a process that was undertaken in the mind's eye in the context of visualization practices.

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Fabrizio Pregadio, WHICH IS THE DAOIST IMMORTAL BODY? (pp. 385-408)

Daoist hagiographic works depict the so-called «immortals» (*xianren*) as extraordinary human beings endowed with several powers, the most important of which is the ability to reach a life span of indefinite length with their ordinary bodies. When we look at other sources belonging to the traditions that evolved during the history of Daoism, a different picture emerges. These sources show that adepts make use of the physical body in order to generate a new person (*shen*) that is not subject to death.

Among others, early Daoist works (ca. 2nd-6th centuries) describe two main ways to attain immortality. The first is by going through a «simulated death» followed by the refining of the physical body, which then serves as a support for adepts to continue their practices. The second way consists in generating an inner «embryo» that is unaffected by death, and is the seed of one's rebirth as an immortal.

Internal Alchemy (Neidan), which developed from ca. 700, inherited elements of both practices. The refining of the basic components of one's own person results in the generation, gestation, and delivery of an embryo. In certain traditions, the embryo is seen as one's «dharma-body» (*fashen*), the unmanifested body of Buddhahood, which is free of birth and death. Despite the differences of perspective, here again the ordinary body is seen a support used to generate the immortal body.

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