

DEMOSTHENES AND THE AGE OF MAJORITY AT ATHENS

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DEMOSTHENES' BIRTHDATE and the age of majority at Athens constitute one of the most disputed *crucis* of Athenian prosopography.¹

The outlines of the problem are simple. Demosthenes describes himself as "7 years old" (ἐπὶ ἑτῶν ὄντα 27.4) when his father died. According to the same speech, the first speech against his guardian Aphobus, his minority lasted about 10 years.² Yet *AthPol* says Athenian boys came of age at 18 (ὀκτωκαίδεκα ἔτη γεγονότες : 42.1).³

I shall begin by discussing three recent solutions to the problem. The first is R. Sealey's: *AthPol* is simply wrong. "Mistakes in a learned inquiry do not bring such immediate consequences as mistakes in a legal pleading. So the Demosthenic evidence is to be preferred" (197).

But Sealey offers no explanation for this mistake. And it is hardly credible that *AthPol* should err in so vital and widely-known a detail.⁴

Carter's solution is different, but no less drastic. He suggests that Demosthenes and *AthPol* are in fact describing the same age. It is "a question of Greek idiom" (52). And his examination of Greek idiom leads him to conclude that we must "interpret the words ὀκτωκαίδεκα ἔτη γεγονότες as meaning 'in their eighteenth year' or 'when they are seventeen'" (55).

Carter's evidence for Greek idiom falls into two groups: (i) birth-notices and ephebic certificates from Roman Egypt, and (ii) literary citations of the age of individuals, especially Caesar and Pompey. I discuss it at some length because Carter's conclusion is of obvious importance for all students of Greek and has not yet been countered.⁵

I would like to thank my friends Stan Belobaba, P. S. Derow, and M. B. Wallace for encouragement and advice.

¹I cite the following works by author's name only: J. M. Carter, "Eighteen Years Old?," *BICS* 14 (1967) 51-57; J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families* (Oxford 1971); A. Hoeck, "Der Eintritt der Muendigkeit nach attischem Recht," *Hermes* 30 (1895) 347-354; Ch. Pélékidis, *Histoire de l'éphébie attique des origines à 31 avant j-c* (Paris 1962); P. J. Rhodes, *The Athenian Boule* (Oxford 1972); R. Sealey, "On Coming of Age in Athens," *CR* 7 (1957) 195-197; D. Welsh, "The Age of Majority in Athens," *CNV* 21 (1977) 77-85; W. Wyse, *The Speeches of Isaeus* (Cambridge 1904).

²27.6, 17, 24, 26, 29, 35, 36, 59, 63. Cf. 29.34, 59; 31.14. The *exact* duration of the minority is a main element of the problem. See below for discussion.

³ὀκτωκαίδεκα ἔτη is a correction by a later hand of an original ὀκτωκαίδεκεταις in the papyrus. The reading does not affect the problem: the two expressions are equivalents (see 28 below).

⁴Cf. Carter 51-52; Welsh 79.

⁵Rhodes (172) and Welsh (79) reject Carter's conclusions on Demosthenes' age, re-

The first group is irrelevant. These are official documents, and their apparent use of inclusive reckoning may well be the result of Roman or other influence on bureaucratic practice. Certainly we find no trace of it on two near contemporary gravestones bearing age at death from Gournah (*IGRR* 1.1234, *CIG* 3.4825).⁶ This evidence *is* of interest, however, in showing that official age-reckoning need not mirror informal methods.⁷

The second group is no more helpful. Appian says Caesar died in his 56th year (*BC* 2.149: ἐτελεύτησεν, ἔτος ἄγων ἔκτον ἐπὶ πεντήκοντα), Plutarch that he was 56 (*Caesar* 69.1: θνήσκει δὲ Καῖσαρ τὰ μὲν πάντα γεγονώς ἔτη πεντήκοντα καὶ ἕξ). This leads Carter to remark (52): "It looks as though Plutarch and his readers, when told that a man was fifty-six, took him to be in his fifty-sixth year—not his fifty-seventh."

This would be a valid argument⁸ if we knew just when Appian and Plutarch thought Caesar was born. But the evidence is contradictory. Most ancient accounts of his age at death do imply a birthdate in 100 B.C., and this agreement would support Carter's view. But Eutropius' account of Munda (6.24) suggests 101 or 102, and the tradition about Caesar's early career also favours an earlier date.⁹ We do not *know* from which dates Appian and Plutarch (or their sources) reckoned and we cannot therefore argue from their accounts of Caesar's age to their usage.

The evidence on Pompey is similarly confused, with Plutarch contributing much of the confusion. He gives three different reports: Pompey died *on or before* his birthday (*Quaest. Conviv.* 717c), *on* his birthday (*Camillus* 19.7), or *the day after* his birthday. Carter emphasizes this last passage (*Pompey* 79.4), where Plutarch says that Pompey died ἐξήκοντα μὲν ἐνὸς δέοντα βεβιωκώς ἔτη μῆ δ' ὕστερον ἡμέρα τῆς γενεθλίου τελευτήσας τὸν βίον. Velleius (2.53.4) and Cicero (*Brutus* 239) knew that Pompey was

lying on *AthPol*'s account of the age of the arbitrators. They do not discuss his argument on Greek idiom.

H. Michell states that, among the Greeks, "The day the child was born was to them its first birthday and the modern first birthday was its second" (*Sparta* [Cambridge 1952] 167). Michell offers no evidence. His view is opposed on linguistic grounds by C. M. Tazelaar in a discussion of Spartan age classes (*Mnemosyne*⁴ 20 [1967] 128). Tazelaar asserts that "... if age is indicated by means of the perfect participle of γενέσθαι, the number of years is taken 'exclusively'." But the passages he cites in support (n. 5)—including *AthPol* 42.1—prove nothing in themselves.

⁶See 27 below.

⁷A parallel: the old Egyptian variable year remained in use long after its replacement by the official year.

⁸It is, however, misstated. Rather, Plutarch may have known Appian's sources, and may have taken 56th year to mean 56, and not 55. Or Appian may have understood Plutarch's 56 (or that of his sources) to mean 56th year instead of 57th.

⁹See G. V. Sumner, *The Orators in Cicero's Brutus: Prosopography and Chronology* (Toronto 1973) 134–137 for a brief review of the evidence. Sumner argues for 102 B.C.

born in 106 B.C. Did Plutarch know too? If so, he describes him as having lived 59 years a day after he turned 58. But we hear from Velleius (2.53.4) that some of Pompey's own contemporaries were able to misdate his birth by five years, and Plutarch's inconsistency about the birthday indicates that he could mislay a mere year with no difficulty.

This portion of Carter's evidence is too problematical to contribute to a solution of our problem.¹⁰ And in fact there are indications from Demosthenes himself which seem to rebut his argument.

We have seen that Demosthenes' father died when Demosthenes was ἔπτ' ἐτῶν. Later in this same speech (27.63) he asks the jurors to consider how much worse he would have fared if he had been in his guardians' charge for 6 years longer: εἰ κατελείφθην μὲν ἐνιαύσιος, ἔξ ἔτη δὲ πρὸς ἐπετροπείθην ὑπ' αὐτῶν ...

It appears from these passages that a child ἐνιαύσιος is ἔπτ' ἐτῶν 6 years later. If we can establish the sense of ἐνιαύσιος we should arrive at a figure for ἔπτ' ἐτῶν.

The word ἐνιαύσιος does not recur in Demosthenes, but it is found in other fourth-century authors. In Plato's *Laws*, the Athenian recommends a wait of a full year (οὐκ ἐλάττων ἐνιαυσίας) between marriage and procreation (6.779d). In the Aristotelian *Historia Animalium*, we read that pigs begin to copulate at 8 months, and then sows bear litters ἐνιαυσίαι (545a 28 ff.). The boar can generate at 8 months, but the litter is poor until he is ἐνιαύσιος (cf. 545b 4). ἐνιαύσιος can only mean "one year old"—the word for "under one year" is αὐτοετής (*HA* 545a 24, 562b 12)—and it is a reasonable assumption that this is its meaning in Demosthenes as well. 6 plus 1, then, makes 7, and a child ἔπτ' ἐτῶν is 7 years old—107 6.

Other evidence, also from the *Historia Animalium*, tends the same way. The ass (545b 20) begins to copulate at 30 months (τριακοντάμηνος). But normally asses do not bear young until they are ἢ τριετείς ἢ τριετείς καὶ ἐξάμηνοι. A series: τριετείς must mean "three years old."¹¹

A number of late sepulchral inscriptions lead to the same conclusion.¹² A child of 4 (τετραέτης) dies in his fifth year.¹³ A girl ἐτῶν ιβ' is called

¹⁰Carter also discusses Plutarch's reckoning of Cicero's age of death (*Cicero* 48.5). The expression (ἔτος ἐκείνο γεγονώς ἑξηκοστὸν καὶ τέταρτον) is unusual, but shows, despite Carter's doubts, that Cicero at 63 was described as "in his 64th year."

¹¹ἢ τριετείς ἢ τριετείς καὶ ἐξάμηνοι is Schneider's emendation of the manuscript readings, διετείς ἢ καὶ τριετείς καὶ ἐξάμηνοι (PD) and ἀλλ' ἢ τριετής ἢ διετής καὶ ἐξάμηνος (AC, vulg.). It is accepted by recent editors.

¹²I have selected these examples from a collection of Greek epitaphs giving ages at death. The basis of the collection is the list given by B. E. Richardson, *Old Age Among the Ancient Greeks* (Baltimore 1933) 277–360. It was rechecked and updated by reference to *SEG* 1–25, *MAMA* 7–8 and *IGBulg* 2–4 and includes 718 texts for those dying before 19. I found just one inscription which may support Carter's argument. See note 17 below.

¹³*BCH* 13 (1889) 314 no. 22, Paphlagonia. Cf. *IG* 12.5.973, Tenos (= W. Peek, *Griechische Vers-Inschriften* 1 [Berlin 1955] 684, "I Jh. n. Chr?"), and Peek 1944a.

δωδεκέτης.¹⁴ A woman completes 14 years and dies—age 14—in the fifteenth.¹⁵ A youth of 15 (ἐτῶν δεκάπεντε) has lived 15 years.¹⁶

This is just what we should expect from the few exact ages and calculations we know from tombstones. *IGRR* 1.1234, for example, commemorates a little Egyptian girl who lived from 29 October 120 to 16 January 127. She is described as 6 years plus, not 7.¹⁷

This evidence combines to confirm Carter's assumption (55) that ὀκτωκαίδεκα ἔτη γεγονότες, ὀκτωκαίδεκ' ἐτῶν, and ὀκτωκαιδεκέτης "mean the same thing." But what they mean is "18 years old," not 17.¹⁸

The most recent proposal is that of D. Welsh: "... the age of citizenship was changed between Demosthenes' registration in 366 and the time when the *Athenaion Politeia* was written ..." (79). And he provides both a background for the change and a specific reason for its form.

Welsh ties the change in the age qualification to a reform of the

¹⁴*IG* 12.8.446, Thasos (= Peek 705, "Ende I Jh.").

¹⁵*IG* 4.196, Corinth, "*lit. vulg.*" Cf. *IG* 14.1728, Rome (= Peek 745, "3/4 Jh.?).

¹⁶*IG* 5.1.1186, Gythium, Laconia (= Peek 2003, "I H. I Jh.?).

¹⁷Cf. *CIG* 3.4925 (Egypt, early 2nd century A.D.) and especially *IG* 14.139 (Syracuse): a child who died at 3 years, 10 months, 5 days, is identified with a dead saint who had lived ἔτη γ'.

Of course, any child nearing the age of 4, say, might loosely be called a four-year-old, in Greek as in English. This may explain an elaborate bilingual inscription from Rome (*IG* 14.2012 = Peek 1924, A.D. 94) which commemorates Q. Sulpicius Maximus, a poetic prodigy, who lived, according to the Latin text, 11 years, 5 months, 12 days. One of the Greek epigrams styles him δύοκαίδεκ' ἐνιαυτῶν. But it is probably better to admit it as an anomaly.

A much less certain anomaly is provided by G. Kaibel, *Epigrammata Graeca* (Leipzig 1878) 372 (Phrygia, "IV fere saeculi"), a series of badly composed epigrams for Trophimus Eutycheus and his daughter. Trophimus' wife died in the same year as her husband—at 70, according to line 19, in her 70th year (ἐν [ἐ]τει ἐ[βδομηκοστῶ] according to Kaibel's restoration of line 15. But Kaibel admits his supplement is doubtful.

The case of Hermocrates (Egypt, 2nd century A.D.) must involve a slip. One epigram (*SEG* 20.661) says he was τρίς δέκα καὶ δύο' ἐτῶν. The next (662) reports that he had finished 33 years of life (ἐνδεκα τρίς τελέσας ... ἔτη βιώτου).

Such carelessness is not unknown elsewhere. Ursicinum, featured in *SEG* 19.650 (Trier, Christian) lived 28 years in Greek and just 18 in Latin.

¹⁸Carter does not mention one text which might support his argument. This is a curious entry in Pollux (8.105: quoted by Arethas on Plato *Alcibiades* 105a):

περίπολοι. ἔφηβοι περιήσαν τὴν χώραν φυλάττοντες, ὥσπερ μελετῶντες ἤδη τὰ στρατιωτικά, καὶ εἰς μὲν τοὺς ἐφήβους εἰσήσαν ὀκτωκαίδεκα ἔτη γενόμενοι, δύο δὲ εἰς περιπόλους ἡριθμοῦντο, εἰκοστῶ δὲ ἐνεγράφοντο τῷ ληξιαρχικῷ γραμματεῖω καὶ ὦμνον ἐν Ἀγραύλου ... This passage is certainly confused: Pollux puts the enrolment onto the ληξιαρχικὰ γραμματεῖα after the entrance into the ephebate instead of before. And it is not clear at what stage after the ephebate has begun the enrolment takes place. Pollux may mean that the ephebes, 18 at the beginning of their term of service, are enrolled, at 19, before the term is out. But it is also possible that Pollux or his source believes that ὀκτωκαίδεκα ἔτη γενόμενοι can mean "17 years old." On this reading, the ephebes enter the ephebate at 17, serve two years as *peripoloi*, and then become full citizens, aged 19 and in their 20th year.

Athenian ephebate soon after the Battle of Chaeronea. He notes that that reform—a measure to improve the Athenian army—would hardly escape the suspicions of Macedon. Therefore, he argues, the Athenians included in the reform of the ephebate a “gesture” to honour the young Alexander and to mollify the Macedonians: “Since Alexander had become an Athenian citizen shortly after his eighteenth birthday, henceforth all new Athenian citizens (the newly organized ephebes) should also be 18 years old” (82).

It may fairly be doubted, however, that the Macedonians would have been much fooled by the “gesture” to honour Alexander. Nor is it likely that the Athenians would move to cut the numerical strength of their army (by raising the age qualification), even for the short term, in such a time of crisis.

More important, we have (as Welsh admits: 79–80) absolutely no evidence of this change in our sources. The reticence of *AthPol* is only slightly worrisome.¹⁹ The really surprising silence is in the lexica and scholia. Ancient scholars were much troubled by the formula *ἐπὶ διετὲς ἡβῆσαι*. This phrase, used to describe some form of legal competence in the orators, was explained by different authorities as referring to two different ages.²⁰ Didymus (*ap.* Harpocration s.v., Schol. Aeschines 3.122) thought it meant 16 years old; Bekker’s *Anecdota Graeca* (s.v., p. 255.15) gives 18. Neither of these divergent theories can be based on an age of majority of 17, and there is no reason to believe that their authors had ever heard of such a thing.²¹

It is of course tempting simply to disregard this possibility. Pollux was a rhetorician, not a historian, and our texts do not transmit his *Onomasticon* entire, but in an epitomized form, abridged and interpolated. (See E. Bethe, *RE* 10.1 [1918] 776 ff.) In fact, however, we may be able to do better, to identify the source of the anomaly, though I hasten to add that my proposal is a conjecture only.

Most of Pollux’ information on classical Athenian institutions comes from *AthPol*, but indirectly. (See Bethe, *loc. cit.* 718, and for an example of his use of secondary sources in general, D. Gill, *PdP* 18 [1963] 131–132.) And he shares many intermediary sources with Harpocration: his delay of the ephebes’ entry into citizenship, for example, is also found in Harpocration (s.v. *ἐπὶ διετὲς ἡβῆσαι*). Now, Harpocration (s.v. *περίπολοι*) was struck by a difference of opinion in two sources on the ephebate. *AthPol*, he says, relates that the ephebes are *peripoloi* for just one year, Aeschines (2.167) for two. It seems likely enough that this disagreement was also recorded by Pollux and then garbled by his epitomator (or later corrupted) to yield our text. Thus, *ὀκτωκαίδεκα ἔτη* has its origin in *AthPol*: the two-year service as *peripoloi* comes from Aeschines. Pollux’ text once mentioned the one-year term described by *AthPol*. This was not included in the Epitome (or fell out later), but the one year was added to the age given for the beginning of the ephebate to give the age of 19 for entrance into full citizenship.

¹⁹ *AthPol* does give some indications of change in certain institutions (e.g., 41.3), omits them in others (e.g., 49.4).

²⁰ See Pélékidis 51–57 for references and discussion.

²¹ Welsh gives two examples of Athenians born in the fifth century who may have reached majority at 17. One is Eupolis, the comic playwright said by a very late and

We have seen that none of the recent attempts to solve this problem are likely to be right. We can now move on to consider a different approach.

Coming of age, as described by *AthPol*, involves a two-stage process: enrolment among the demesmen is followed by the *dokimasia* before the *boule*. We must now try to fix the date of each stage in the Attic year. Here, neither *AthPol* nor the first speech against Aphobus provides any assistance. Evidence from other sources is far from decisive, but we can at least outline the possibilities.

Two passages (Isaeus 7.15 with 28, ps.-Demos. 44.39) show that adopted children might be introduced to the demesmen at elections, the *arkhairesiai*. One of these introductions, that of Thrasyllus in Isaeus 7, seems to have taken place sometime after the feast of the Thargelia on 7 Thargelion.²² It is possible that natural children were enrolled among

unreliable source (the *Suda*, s.v.) to have won 7 victories with his 17 plays, the first produced when he was 17. The repeated sevens do not inspire confidence.

The other is Dexileus, commemorated on a grave monument (*IG* 2² 6217 = Tod 105) as one of the *πέντε ἱππέων* who died fighting at Corinth in 394/3. The stone gives his birth year as 414/3, and Welsh argues that, as he was 20 or nearly so at the time of his death as a cavalryman, he must have been an ephebe during the years of his 18th and 19th birthdays. This would make him under 18 on entering the ephebate.

But the argument is built on a number of troublesome assumptions. We do not know that the early fourth-century ephebate invariably involved a two-year term (though Aeschines seems to imply as much for the late 370s—2.167). More important, we do not know whether this or any other aspect of the ephebate involved those destined to make up the cavalry. The instances collected by A. A. Bryant (*HSCP* 18 [1907] 80–88) to show that Athenian youth were free from regular ephebe duties in the fifth and early fourth centuries all concern wealthier citizens, who might serve in the cavalry. The account of the later ephebe training in *AthPol* (42.3) mentions *ὀπλομαχεῖν καὶ τοξεύειν καὶ ἀκοντίζειν καὶ καταπάλτην ἀφίεναι*, not horsemanship. And the ephebes received hoplite equipment, the shield and the spear, at the end of their first year (42.4). (See P. Vidal-Naquet, "The Black Hunter and the Origin of the Athenian Ephebeia," *PCPhS* 14 [1968] 49–64, for the ephebe as a "pre-hoplite" and an "anti-hoplite.")

Mention must also be made of an eccentric and unclear passage in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. Rom.* 2.26). Some Greek lawgivers—perhaps including Solon—are said to have kept sons under their fathers' rule *ἕως τρίτον ἐκπληρώσωσιν ἀφ' ἥβης ἔτος*. The text has been suspected (Bücheler wrote *δύτερον*; cf. Pélékidis 56–57), but is probably sound. The age of majority implied may be 17. A number of ancient writers from Solon to Galen considered 14 a crucial point in the life cycle (see A. Schmidt, *Handbuch der griechischen Chronologie* [Jena 1888] 315–316 for references), and this is most probably the value of *ἥβη* here. (Didymus [*ap.* Harpocration, s.v. *ἐπὶ διετές ἥβησαι*, Schol. Aeschines 3.122] arrived at the classical Athenian age of majority through a similar calculation, adding the two years of the phrase *ἐπὶ διετές ἥβησαι* to 14 to make 16.) But the passage is too isolated, and its interpretation too uncertain, to provide strong support for Welsh's case.

²²No more exact dating seems possible. The elections may have been for the demarch (so Pélékidis 89 n.8, Sealey 195) or for the state archons (so, e.g., Hoeck 352; see Wyse

their demesmen at the same time, though we have no evidence that this was so.²³ If it was—and if practices did not vary sharply from deme to deme—Demosthenes might have been enrolled as early as Thargelion 367/6.

Demosthenes does make one direct reference to his coming of age, but it is extremely ambiguous. He underwent his *dokimasia*, he says (30.15), immediately after a marriage in Skirophorion 367/6 (εὐθὺς μετὰ τοὺς γάμους δοκιμασθεῖς).²⁴ Unfortunately, we have no way of judging the exact

571 for a summary of earlier views). We do not know when these elections took place. We do know the approximate time for the balloting for generals, hipparchs, and other military officers in the *ekklesia*: after the sixth prytany (*AthPol* 44.4), that is, normally in very late Gamelion or in Anthesterion (though the elections could be delayed for a time by bad weather). These may be the elections referred to here; though it would be odd to connect a procedure in the demes to city-wide elections based on the tribes. So early a date would, however, probably rule out the involvement of new ephebes, who are unlikely to have waited so many months for final approval by the *boule* in Skirophorion or later (see below).

Thrasyllos had set out for the festival of the Pythais at Delphi before his father Apollodorus' death. (7.27: Πυθαῖδος, the reading of the best ms., should not have been emended by Reiske to Πυθιάδος. Roussel [1922] and Forster [1927] return to the transmitted text.) He may not have returned by the elections. But we can not use this supposition to determine the date of the elections more closely. Our only other evidence for the date of the Pythais (second-century inscriptions mentioning honorary decrees for participants and offerings of first fruits) indicates only that the festival fell sometime in the last three months of the Athenian year (see A. Boethius, *Die Pythais* [Uppsala 1918] 15–19, known to me only through the review by G. Colin, *REG* 33 [1920] 100–104).

²³See Pélékidis 89 ff. for a discussion and references to earlier views. Pélékidis himself is skeptical.

²⁴F. Blass, *Die attische Beredsamkeit* 3.1 (Leipzig 1877) 7–8, excised μετὰ τοὺς γάμους. He was followed by L. Gernet (in his Budé text, 1954) and L. Pearson, *Demosthenes: Six Private Orations* (Norman, Okla. 1972) 179; P. S. Photiades, *Athena* 38 (1926) 48, emended to κατὰ τοὺς νόμους. No variant reading appears in any manuscript.

Blass' argument was based on Dionysius of Halicarnassus' sketch of Demosthenic chronology in the first Letter to Ammaeus (*Ep. ad Amm.* 1.4). Here we read that Demosthenes was born in 381/0 and had entered his 17th year (εἰς ἔτος ἦν ἑμβεβηκὼς ἑπτακαίδεκατον) in the archonship of Timocrates (364/3). This chronology seemed to conflict with 30.15, and so Blass decided that Dionysius' text of Demosthenes did not contain the words μετὰ τοὺς γάμους. They must, however, have been known as early as ps.-Plutarch, who gives Demosthenes' birthdate as 385/4 (*Moralia* 845d) as a result of combining the passage with *AthPol* 42.1 (Hoeck 351–352). It is probable, then, that Dionysius or his source did read μετὰ τοὺς γάμους but took the phrase to refer to a time after the marriage had ended (in 364/3) rather than after the wedding (in 367/6). It is no argument against this view that Dionysius must therefore have thought Athenian boys could come of age at 16: Didymus thought so too (above, n.21).

A birthdate in 381/0 can be made to fit the testimony of the speech against Meidias (21.154), where Demosthenes (speaking no earlier than 348 [Davies 386]) says he is 32 years old. But that passage must be corrupt—Hypereides (5.22) says Demosthenes was over 60 in early March 323 or soon after—and needs emendation. (Nicklin proposed 35—ΔΔΔΠ corrupted to ΔΔΔΠ—approved by Davies, 386. Goodwin suggested 34.)

force of *εἰθώς*—it may mean a few days later, still in Skirophorion, or at some time early in the following year. Nor can we be sure whether *δοκιμασίαις* refers to the enrolment among the demesmen (as Hoeck thought, 353) or to the *dokimasia* before the *boule* (so Pélékidis, 92).

To sum up: enrolment among the demesmen may have taken place as early as Thargelion and as late as the first few months of the next year.

Demosthenes 30.15, unsatisfactory as it is, is also our only direct evidence for the date of the *dokimasia* before the *boule*.²⁵ It is clear that it can be no earlier than sometime in Skirophorion. But indirect evidence may establish the latest date possible. The ephebic year in the third century seems to have begun on 1 Boedromion:²⁶ the *dokimasia* must have fallen before (or conceivably on) that date. Of course, we do not know that fourth-century practice was the same. Ephebes may have taken up their duties on 1 Hekatombaion, the day the generals took office,²⁷ and a date which would fit most plausibly with a *dokimasia* in Skirophorion. But in the absence of all other evidence, we are probably safe in taking 1 Boedromion as our outside limit.

There are an alarming number of variables and uncertainties in this brief sketch. But we can set the extreme limits for the process as a whole. The first stage, enrolment among the demesmen, probably did not begin earlier than sometime after the first week in Thargelion. The examination by the *boule* may have been sometime early in the new year, and no later than 1 Boedromion. It is possible, of course, that the true limits were much more restricted: enrolment and *dokimasia* may both have fallen close together in Skirophorion or Hekatombaion at the end of one or the beginning of the next Attic year.

It is obvious that Demosthenes might still have been 17 at the time he

In general, we do well to avoid nice calculations based on the text of the Letter to Ammaeus. The statement that Demosthenes was in his 25th year (*εἰκοστὸν καὶ πέμπτον ἔτος ἔχων* 1.4) when he began to write public speeches in the archonship of Callistratus (355/4) cannot be reconciled with his birthdate. And Aristotle, born in 384/3, is said to have been 63 at his death in 323/2 (*τρία πρὸς τοῖς ἐξήκοντα βιώσας ἔτη*, 1.5).

For an extended discussion of Dionysius' account of Demosthenes' career, see R. Sealey, "Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Some Demosthenic Dates," *REG* 68 (1955) 77–120.

²⁵Lysias 21.1 is sometimes taken to prove that the *dokimasia* was held early in the year (so Rhodes 172 n.2). But A. Schmidt (above, note 21, 313) observed that the speaker refers to a most unusual year, the revolutionary year of 411/10, and showed that his evidence would not fit the first two months of that year (so now Welsh 83 n.2). And there is besides some reason to think the speech spurious (Pélékidis 92 n.2).

²⁶J. Oehler, *RE* 5.2 (1905) 2738 and Pélékidis 175, both citing W. Dittenberger, *De ephebis Atticis* (Göttingen 1863), which I have not seen. Two third-century inscriptions, *IG* 2² 665, 282/1, and 787 ca 236/5, partially restored, record decrees passed in the month of Boedromion to commend the ephebes of the previous year.

²⁷For the generals, see W. K. Pritchett, *AJP* 61 (1940) 469–474.

was enrolled among the demesmen—and so spoke of himself as of age—and yet had turned 18 by the time of his *dokimasia* before the *boule*. He must, however, have been very nearly 18 when enrolled, especially if the stages followed each other very closely.

It was the contribution of A. Hoeck to show that the details of the first speech against Aphobus are consistent with an age many months older than 17.²⁸ Hoeck's argument depends on two assumptions: (i) that Demosthenes spoke of himself as 7 when he was nearly 8, to gain his hearers' sympathy, and (ii) that the length of his minority was something over 10 years. It has been attacked by Sealey, who seeks to show that Demosthenes could not have been 18 or close to it.²⁹

Sealey allows that Hoeck's first assumption "may be correct" (196); it is on the second that he concentrates his fire. He begins with an argument from probability: Demosthenes was unlikely to underestimate the length of his minority—and so his guardians' depredations—merely from a fondness for round numbers. But this argument is weak. The orator makes quite a point of being generous in estimating his guardians' debt to him (17, 23, 34), and this particular instance of generosity would cost only a few weeks' interest—little enough if it could help win the case as a whole.

The arguments from the text are no stronger. Sealey adduces two passages which, he says, imply a period of minority of less than 10 years. In the first (27.19), Demosthenes says that Therippides managed his factory for 7 years, after Aphobus had it in his hands for two: nine years in all. But Davies points (124) to another passage (27.23) in which interest from the profits earned during Aphobus' superintendence is calculated for a period of eight years—which must represent the period of Therippides' control. It looks as if Therippides was manager for well over 7 years;³⁰ and it becomes much less likely that the combined total of just nine years can be insisted upon.

The second passage is Demosthenes' parting shot (27.69). Aphobus, he says, has refused to pay back the marriage portion he took "and that too

²⁸Hoeck believed that Demosthenes was in fact just over 18. He concluded (354) (i) that Demosthenes was born toward the end of the archon-year of Dexitheus ("etwa im Juni 384"); (ii) that his father died "etwa im Mai 376," when Demosthenes was very nearly 8; and (iii) that he was inscribed as of age on the deme roll in Skirophorion 367/6 ("Juni 366") after 10 years and a little more of minority.

²⁹Sealey's case against Hoeck was accepted by Carter (51), A. R. W. Harrison, *The Law of Athens: The Family and Property* (Oxford 1968) 74 and note 3, Rhodes (172), and Welsh (77–78). Harrison's second volume (*The Law of Athens: Procedure* [Oxford 1971] 84 n.2 and 205) is more cautious.

³⁰Cf. Demos. 30.15: a woman is married in Skirophorion 367/6 and divorced, two years and six months later, in Posideon 364/3. Demosthenes calls this an interval of two years: δύο μὲν γάρ ἐστιν ἔτη τὰ μεταξύ τοῦ συνοικῆσαι τε τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ φῆσαι τούτους πεποιῆσθαι τὴν ἀπόλειψιν.

in the tenth year" (καὶ ταῦτ' ἔτει δεκάτῳ). Davies argues (124) that the period may be reckoned from the point at which Aphobus actually took receipt of the dowry in full—some time after Demosthenes' father's death.

Welsh (78) finds this unlikely. But is it? The time involved may have been more considerable than either writer realizes. Claimants to an inheritance, unless direct descendants or sons adopted *inter vivos*, had to apply in writing to the archon under the procedure called *epidikasia* before gaining possession of their legacy (ps.-Demos. 46.22). We do not know that this rule applied to guardians. But the principle—to protect the property of the *oikos*—would apply, and it may be that the procedure was the same.³¹ Aphobus, then, would have met with some delay before gaining control of Demosthenes' estate and his mother's dowry. And the delay will have been increased if (as Hoeck thought) Demosthenes' father died at the end of the year, for no such application to the archon could be made in Skirophorion. It is true that Demosthenes says Aphobus came to live in his house εἰθὺς (27.13). But this need be no more than an attempt to emphasize Aphobus' unseemly hurry and greed.³²

Sealey also argues that Aphobus "prepared to sail as trierarch to Corcyra" in 375 "straight after taking over part of" Demosthenes' estate—and so dates the death of the orator's father to 376/5 "and probably not near the beginning of the year" (196–197). But we have seen that the orator's use of εἰθὺς may be misleading, and it refers in any case only to the interval between the death and Aphobus' taking over possession of the house. Between that time and Aphobus' departure there intervened the sale of the slaves and the dispute with Demochares over the maintenance of Demosthenes' sister (27.14–15, Davies 124). The timetable is inexact and, as Sealey admits (196), the passage is "not at all decisive."

It is likely that Demosthenes was under his guardians' control for over 10 years, and even a tutelage slightly under 10 years might leave him well over 17. Sealey therefore has given no reason to believe that Demosthenes was very many months younger than 18 when he came of age.

This does not in itself resolve the formal contradiction with *AthPol*: that treatise says that those enrolled among the demesmen are 18. But I

³¹This is assumed by Harrison (above, n.29) 1.158 and n.2, 2.89.

³²My argument assumes that the text is sound; it may not be. The speech contains at least two examples of corruption in the tradition of numerals. All mss read *τριάκοντα* at 27.11, but Reiske's emendation *πεντήκοντα* has been accepted into modern texts (e.g., Rennie's OCT, Gernet's Budé). Only A gives *δέκ'*, rightly, at 27.17, against *δώδεκ'* in other manuscripts.

There is no disagreement among our mss at 27.69. But it is not impossible that Demosthenes actually wrote *ἔτει ἐνδεκάτῳ*. A copyist might well misread this as *ἔτει ἐν δεκάτῳ* in view of the constant reiteration (see n.2 above) of the number 10 in the speech. This expression would naturally be "corrected" later by the omission of *ἐν*.

think it very likely that *AthPol* has been sloppy here, and that it is the piecemeal procedure I have described which has caused the sloppiness. Not every boy will be 18 at the beginning of the process of coming of age, the enrolment among the demesmen. But all will be 18 at its end. *AthPol* has simply applied a term strictly accurate only for the process as a whole to the earlier of its stages.

We are now in a position to apply each of the possibilities to the career of Demosthenes. His birthdate is uncertain: but only two years are possible, 385/4 and 384/3 (Davies 126). The argument will fit a date in either year.

If Demosthenes was born later in 385/4 than the time of the enrolment in his deme in Thargelion or Skirophorion, he will have been 17 at his registration. He will, however, have turned 18 by 1 Hekatombaion or *a fortiori* by 1 Boedromion.³³

On the other hand, Demosthenes may have been born in 384/3. In this case too he may have turned 18 during the process of coming of age. If his birthday fell before 1 Boedromion, he will still have been 17 at each of the possible dates for enrolment in his deme, but perhaps 18 by the *dokimasia* before the *boule*.

I see no way of deciding between these alternatives, or of determining exactly when each stage of the process took place. It should now be clear, however, that there are several situations which are compatible both with the speech against Aphobus and with *AthPol*. I hope that new information will some day enable us to ascertain which of the possibilities is in fact the truth.

ENDNOTE

There is one further possibility, that posed by the tightest of the timetables mentioned above. Suppose the enrolment among the demesmen and the *dokimasia* before the *boule* both took place late in the Attic year. Demosthenes may have been born very late in Skirophorion 385/4, so late that he was still 17 at both of these stages. In this case too Demosthenes and *AthPol* can be reconciled, through by a different argument.

Demosthenes is concerned with the actual age of a single individual. *AthPol* may be describing what statisticians call a cohort; a group of men born in one year though not all of the same age at any given time. I shall call this an age-class.

AthPol contains good evidence that age-classes—grouping by archon-year—provided the normal method of identifying Athenians for a number

³³See Endnote for the possible implications of a birthdate late in 385/4, after the date of the enrolment in the deme.

of purposes. Ephebes were listed, not by age, but under the name of the archon and eponymous hero for whose year they were enrolled (*AthPol* 53.4).³⁴ Military call-ups were made, not by actual age, but by age-class. Citizens were identified according to the archon and eponymous hero of the youngest and oldest groups to serve (53.7). Arbitrators too were chosen from an age-class listed under an archon and eponymous hero (53.5).

I suggest that the designation *ὀκτωκαίδεκα ἔτη γεγονότες* may describe such an age-class. By this reckoning, all the boys born in the same archon-year would come of age on inscription into the deme register 18 archon-years later. Boys whose birthdays fell before the date of the inscription would be 18; a few others, like Demosthenes, would still be 17.³⁵

Enrolment by age-class becomes still more plausible on closer examination of the dokimasia itself. Some of the boys presented for registration were too young, and could not pass the scrutiny of the deme. Others were rejected at a later stage, by the *boule* (*AthPol* 42.1–2). How would demesmen or bouleutae know how old these boys were? They will have weighed the testimony of the boys' *phrateres*, as they did in cases of disputed citizenship involving allegations of illegitimacy or a non-Athenian parent. All Athenian children were enrolled, at an early but varying age, in phratries.³⁶ Enrolment took place at the Apatouria, a festival held at a fixed time, in the month of Pyanopsion,³⁷—most boys, of course, were between birthdays.

³⁴Inscriptions also identify groups of ephebes by archon-years. See, e.g., *IG* 2² 1156.27, 50–51, 53 (334/3) (= O. W. Reinmuth, *The Ephebic Inscriptions of the Fourth Century BC* [Leiden 1971] no. 2); *IG* 2² 1189.2 (334/3) (= Reinmuth no. 3); *IG* 2² 2970.1 (334/3) (= Reinmuth no. 4); C. Habicht, *AthMitt* 76 (1961, publ. 1962) 143 no. 2.2 (333/2) (= Reinmuth no. 6); B. D. Meritt, *Hesperia* 9 (1940) 59–66 no. 8 column 1.11–12 (333/2) (= Reinmuth no. 9).

³⁵A modern parallel: The Education Act (1974) of the Province of Ontario (Chapter 109, Section 32 [1]) stipulates that "... a person who attains the age of 6 years in any year is, after the first day of September in such a year, qualified to be a resident pupil in respect of a school section ..." Section 33 (2) is similar: "Where a board operates a junior kindergarten in a school, a child who is otherwise qualified ... may become a resident pupil at an age 2 years lower than that referred to in Section 32."

Thus, any child born in 1979 may be enrolled in an Ontario Junior kindergarten in September 1983. Such classes are often called "four-year-old kindergartens:" but there are children enrolled in them from the age of 3 years, 8 months.

³⁶For the age of registration in phratries, see: Aristophanes *Frogs* 418 (cf. Lysias 30.2), Andocides 1.125–126, Isaeus 6.21, 8.19, *IG* 2² 1237.118, *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. Ἀπατούρια, Schol. Plato *Timaeus* 21b.

³⁷We have referred to one exception to this rule: Thrasyllus was introduced to the *phrateres* as Apollodorus' son at the Thargelia (Isaeus 7.15). But this case is a very special situation, the result of Apollodorus' haste to adopt an heir before he died. The attempt of J. Labarbe, "L'âge correspondant au sacrifice du *κούρειον* et les données historiques du sixième discours d'Isée," *Bull. de l'Acad. roy. de Belg., Classe des lettres* 39 (1953) 358–394, to find a similar exception in Isaeus 6 is not convincing.

Now, it is of course possible that the *phrateres* at the Apatouria quizzed a father about his son's exact birthday. But we never hear of anything like it and all our evidence indicates that the Athenians were not much concerned with exact ages. None of the six Attic gravestones which bear an age exact to months or days can be dated before the Imperial period.³⁸ It is even possible that the absence of ages from the gravestones is a reflection of the ignorance of the Athenians themselves. Plato (*Lysis* 207c) describes two young men who dispute which is the elder: they may simply not have known their birthdays.³⁹

How, then, did the phratries record the ages of the children they enrolled? We do not know. But I suspect that the procedure may have been like that urged in the *Laws* of Plato (6.785a):⁴⁰ the year of each child's birth was listed under the appropriate eponymous archon, and not with the exact date.⁴¹

³⁸SEG 14.165, IG 2² 7858, 10683, 11473, 12915, 13226.

³⁹Plautus' *Pseudolus* makes a great deal of a birthday (165 ff.) and this may well have been part of the play's Athenian original, said "to have been produced early in the New Comedy period" (T. B. L. Webster, *Studies in Later Greek Comedy*² [Manchester 1970] 210). We have no firm evidence for annual birthday feasts at any earlier time: see W. Schmidt, *RE* 7.1 (1910) 1135, following a fuller discussion of the matter in his inaugural address, *De die natali apud veteres celebrato quaestiones selectae* (Hanover 1905) 5–9, esp. 8–9.

⁴⁰The best text is R. G. Bury's Loeb edition:

βίον μὲν ἀρχὴ τοῦ παντὸς ἐκάστοις ὁ πρῶτος ἐνιαυτός· ὃν γεγράφθαι χρῶν ἐν ἱεροῖσι πατρώοις ζωῆς ἀρχὴ κόρῳ καὶ κόρῃ παραγεγράφθαι (Orelli: παραγεγράφθω mss) δ' ἐν τοίχῳ λελευκωμένῳ ἐν πάσῃ φρατρίᾳ τὸν ἀριθμὸν τῶν ἀρχόντων τῶν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἔτεσιν ἀριθμουμένων.

The text is obscure: we expect the archons' names, not numbers. But the intent is clear enough: Plato meant Magnesia's years to be designated according to a magistrate, and children's birthdates, reckoned in these years, to be recorded against their names in their phratries. This is surely relevant to Athenian practice (cf. A. H. Chase, *HSCP* 44 [1933] 144). And the use of the vague term "archons" may well be the results of "an unconscious reflection of the Athenian method of marking the year" (G. R. Morrow, *Plato's Cretan City* [Princeton 1960] 127 n. 101).

A later passage (12.947a) describes the *euthynoi* as officials who give their names to the year. I take this contradiction to be a slip (like the different ages given for the ages of men at marriage at 721a-b and 785b with 772d), perhaps caused by the fact that the *euthynoi* are afterthoughts. Other magistrates are introduced early in Book 6.

⁴¹Two passages may be thought to contradict this suggestion. W. K. Lacey (*The Family in Classical Greece* [London 1968] 95) argues from Aristophanes *Wasps* 578 that an Athenian jury had only the evidence of its eyes and hands to judge whether a child presented at the *dokimasia* was in fact old enough. No doubt this kind of subjective judgement came into play. But the passage owes its content to the comic possibilities of such a physical examination, and should not be used to exclude the existence of other forms of evidence.

In Demosthenes 39.27–29, Mantisheus says that Boeotus looks younger than himself, but allows that the argument has little weight: both he and Boeotus will claim to be the older, and no one knows which is correct. This sounds as if Mantisheus had no hard

This implies some consistency in Athenian record-keeping. The first year of life, and the first and subsequent years of civic responsibility, are all established according to the same principle.

If, then, Demosthenes was born very late in the Athenian year, he could still be 17 on enrolment into his deme and at the *dokimasia* before the *boule*, though most of his fellows were already 18. His duties as an ephebe might start directly. But it is more likely that ephebes served from some time after their enrolment, from 1 Hekatombaion or from 1 Boedromion. Demosthenes would then in fact be 18 by the time he began his official duties as an ephebe. This would tend to obscure any anomaly felt in enrolling a boy of 17 among the 18-year-olds.

One further point in corroboration. Citizens served two years as ephebes and then thirty-nine during which they were liable for active service. After the end of their time of active service, citizens had to serve a forty-second year, a year as arbitrators. This year must begin and end on the same dates as the first year of the ephebate: the new ephebes take over the eponymous hero of the retiring arbitrators. Yet *AthPol* refers to it in a rather misleading fashion: "arbitrators are those in their 60th year" (*διαίτηται δ' εἰσὶν οἷς ἂν ἐξηκοστὸν ἔτος ᾗ* 53.4). A personal construction is used, though it really applies to only some of the arbitrators. Most, already 18 at their *dokimasiai*, will be 60, in their 61st year, before their year of service is out. This provides a near parallel to *AthPol*'s terminology for the age-class of the eighteens.

evidence to appeal to. But in fact the evidence may simply not have supported him: it was Boeotus who won the case.

Phratry registers are mentioned at *IG* 2² 1237.20, Isaeus 7.1, Demosthenes 44.41. Cf. Harpocration s.v., *κοινὸν γραμματεῖον καὶ ληξιαρχικόν*.

We know several inscriptions which list phratries, but they tell us nothing about the registers. One document from the early fourth century (*IG* 2² 2344) gives a list headed *οἷδε φράτρες*. But the list contains just 20 names, and shows many family relationships: it is probably made up of members of a *thiasos* within a phratry. Other fourth-century lists (*IG* 2² 2343, 2345, 2347, perhaps 2346 and 2348) may enumerate similar groups of *thiasotai*. At least two of these (2345, 2347) seem to be special records of assessments and honours. The absence of archon-years from these documents does not affect my argument.