

THE “EPIPHANY” OF THE TETRARCHS?
AN EXAMINATION OF MAMERTINUS’
PANEGYRIC OF 291

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Most of the third- and fourth-century Latin or “Gallic” Panegyrics are true occasional pieces, delivered before an Emperor on important occasions such as imperial anniversaries, promotions and marriages, or on the birthday of a city like Rome or Trier. The occasion in 291 on which Mamertinus’ Panegyric to Maximian was delivered, however, has been a matter of controversy for a long period of time.¹ I shall argue that this occasion was neither the “epiphany” of the Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, nor their joint birthday, but the birthday of Maximian alone.

In the proem to his speech Mamertinus furnishes us with some information about the occasion. For some reason or other, presumably the absence of the Emperor, he has been unable to deliver a speech prepared for the celebration of Maximian’s Quinquennalia (1.1). But no matter. He has been compensated by the Emperor for this disappointment, beyond his expectations (1.2),² and he assures his ruler that he has not wasted his speech—he can use it for the Decennalia (1.3). There’s always a speech on these occasions! And here he is orating before the Emperor at the *next* appropriate opportunity. At 1.1 he tells us what the occasion was; I cite Mynor’s text:

... sentio tamen a me [hoc] praecipue hoc piae vocis officium
iure quodam sacrosancti fenoris postulari, ut expectationem
sermonis eius quem tuis quinquennialibus praeparaveram hac
gemini natalis praedicatione compensem, et dicendi munus
quod tunc voti promissione susceperam, nunc religione debiti
repraesentem.

¹ This Panegyric is number III in the edition of E. Galletier, *Panégryriques latins* (Paris 1952), who orders them chronologically, number XI in the edition of R. A. B. Mynors, *XII Panegyrici Latini* (Oxford 1964), who follows the order of the manuscripts. I give the number of the Budé edition first, then that of the OCT. The OCT text is cited unless otherwise specified.

² Presumably by appointment to the post mentioned in the rubric of this speech (but not in the rubric of II/X): EIUSDEM MAGISTRI † MEMET (mem<oriae> et <rhitoris latini> Seeck; cf. OCT *apparatus criticus*).

Geminus natalis, an odd phrase, which recurs three times, at 2.3, 19.1 and 19.3, but one which is nowhere explained. What is meant by it?

Many scholars, most recently the editors of the *Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, have simply assumed that Diocletian and Maximian happened to have been born on the same day.³ Always implausible, for the Panegyrist nowhere comments, much less dilates upon, such a remarkable coincidence, this assumption appears now to be ruled out by P. Panopolis II of A.D. 300, a dossier of official letters in which the procurator of the Thebaid instructs a subordinate to pay donations, which are now overdue, for various imperial anniversaries—Diocletian's accession, his birthday, and the consulship of the Caesars.⁴ Diocletian's birthday on December 22nd is mentioned several times, but there is not a trace of Maximian. Clearly his birthday was *not* the same as Diocletian's, nor was it officially celebrated as such.

The eighteenth-century German editor C. G. Schwarz suggested that with the emphasis in the speech on the harmony or *concordia* between the Emperors, and their sharing of the Empire, the Panegyrist might be conceiving of them sharing a birthday as well.⁵ After all, at 6.3 he writes: "What ages have ever seen such harmony at the summit of power? For what uterine brothers enjoy their undivided patrimony so peacefully as you the Roman world?" And at 7.7

For we know, most hallowed Emperors, that despite the difference in your ages there exists in you a double fellow-feeling: neither do you seem more alert than he, nor he more cautious than you, but you imitate each other reciprocally, and reciprocally assume each other's age. Thus you behave as if both of you were younger men, both older men.⁶

³ J. Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great* (New York 1949) 49; O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* I (reprint of the fourth edition, Stuttgart 1966) 24, 446 note; C. Jullian, *Histoire de la Gaule* VII (Paris 1926) 59, note 4; W. Ensslin, "Maximianus," *RE* XIV² (1930) col. 2487; *id.* "Valerius Diocletianus," *RE* VII² (1948) col. 2421; A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale and J. Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire* I (Cambridge 1971), "Maximianus 8," 573.

⁴ P. Panop. II, ed. T. C. Skeat, *Papyri from Panopolis in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin* (Dublin 1964), lines 162–66, 169–73 etc.

⁵ C. G. Schwarz, in H. J. Arntzen, *Panegyrici veteres* (Utrecht 1790–97) 66 ff.

⁶ 6.3: Quae enim umquam videre saecula talem in summa potestate concordiam? Qui germani geminive fratres indiviso patrimonio tam aequabiliter utuntur quam vos orbe Romano?

7.7: Intellegimus enim, sacratissimi principes, geminum vobis, quamvis dispaes sitis aetatibus, inesse consensum: neque tu illi videris promptior neque tibi ille cunctantior, sed invicem vosmet imitamini, invicem vestros adfectatis annos. Sic vos geritis quasi iuniores ambo, ambo seniores.

But although this might seem to work well as an interpretation of the speaker's train of thought, we know that it was not translated into official practice; the formal occasion was simply not the official birthday celebration of both Emperors, as P. Panopolis II reveals, and so the bald use of the expression *geminus natalis* at the beginning of the speech without a word of explanation would be perplexing, and its recurrence, with no clarification of or apology for the conceit at any point, unthinkable.

As an alternative explanation Schwarz suggests that Maximian shared a birthday with Hercules as well as tracing his descent from him; hence the *geminus* or "double birthday," and furthermore, that Diocletian did the same, taking Jupiter's birthday. Now the question of gods' birthdays is a complex one. The Greeks celebrated them monthly, but it is not clear that the Romans did likewise. Lactantius, in the *Divine Institutes*, exhorts his readers to avoid the Games, "for the celebration of the Games are the festivals of the gods, inasmuch as they were instituted on account of their birthdays or dedications of new temples."⁷ It has been claimed on the basis of this passage that Roman gods do not have birthdays in our sense, that they are the days of the dedications of their temples.⁸ The claim is overstated, for Lactantius may offer an alternative (festive games either for *natales* or *templorum novorum dedicationes*), but it is nevertheless true that it is difficult to speak of a single day as *the* birthday of Hercules. He evidently had a *natalis* on February 1st, and perhaps June 1st, and locally in Africa, at least, another on October 21st. On June 4th, as late as the mid-fourth century, the foundation of the temple to Hercules Magnus Custos was celebrated with games, and there were other celebrations on August 12th and 13th.⁹ The suggestion of Schwarz is not absurd, for Hercules is indeed a *deus praesens* on the occasion of the speech, as we shall see below, but the explanation of our phrase is to be sought elsewhere.

William Seston has taken an altogether different tack.¹⁰ Emphasizing the extent to which the Panegyrist dwells upon the divine nature and descent of the Emperors, Seston argues that Mamertinus' Panegyric was

⁷ *Inst. Div.* 6.20.34:

... nam ludorum celebrationes deorum festa sunt: siquidem ob natales eorum vel templorum novorum dedicationes sunt constituti.

⁸ W. Schmidt, *Geburstag in Altertum* (Giessen 1908) 116.

⁹ Feb. 1st, Calendar of Philocalus, *CIL* I 1² 258; June 1st, see the dedication to *Herculi domus Augusti* in Rome, *CIL* VI.4, 30901; Oct. 21st *CIL* VIII 262 (Colonia Sufes; Sbiba): XII K. Nov. die natali Herc(ulis) geni(i) patriae; June 4th, Fasti Venusini, *CIL* I 1² 221; Ovid, *Fasti* 6.209; Calendar of Philocalus, *CIL* I 1² 266; Silviu Polemiu *ibid.* 267; *Menologia Rustica*, *ibid.* 280; Aug. 12th–13th, *ibid.* 324–25. See also G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer* (reprint, Munich 1971) 271 ff. Ausonius, *De Feriis Romanis* 24, mentions *natalem Herculeum*, but does not give its date.

¹⁰ *Dioclétien et la Tétrarchie* (Paris 1946) 223 ff.; "Jovius et Herculus, ou l'Epiphanie des Tétrarques," *Historia* 1 (1950) 257–66; "Diocletianus," *RAC* 3 (1957) col. 1042.

delivered on the anniversary of the occasion upon which Diocletian and Maximian proclaimed themselves descended from Jupiter and Hercules and took the names "Iovius" and "Herculius." This was the origin of the immortality of the Emperors (referred to at 3.7, according to Seston), their "epiphany." The *natalis* is metaphorical. Seston's arguments have convinced many,¹¹ but there are problems involved in accepting this theory.

For a start, there is no trace of such a celebration in Roman imperial ceremony.¹² It could be argued that with the adoption of the names Iovius and Herculus the Dyarchy, as it then was, might well have had a unique theology and ceremonial. But in the absence of any explication of the *geminus natalis* by the Panegyrist, the suggestion that what is being celebrated here was an "epiphany" remains speculation. As the *Feriale Duranum* illustrates, the two imperial anniversaries regularly celebrated down to the mid-third century after Christ are the anniversaries of an Emperor's accession, and his actual birthday, some entries reading simply *ob imperium* and *ob natalem*.¹³

Seston attempts to provide analogies for celebration of an epiphany, but they are unsatisfactory. For example, on Seston's own showing,¹⁴ the Persian Emperors attain the *gloria of lux aeterna* when Ahura-Mazda judges them worthy to occupy the throne, i.e., from their *dies imperii* or accession, and not from some later Epiphany. Similarly when Themistius says that the Emperor is a celestial being, not from birth, but from his reign, he is making the familiar contrast between *dies natalis* and *dies*

¹¹ Notably Galletier (note 1, above) I 50 note 2, 51 note 1, and 11, as well as (for example) H. Stern, "Natalis imperii," *Annuaire de L'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientale* 9 (1949) 551–59; A. Chastagnol, "Les années régnales de Maximien Hercule en Egypte et les fêtes vicennales du 20 Novembre 303," *Revue Numismatique* 9 (1967) 59, note 4; R. E. Smith, "The Regnal and Tribunician Dates of Maximianus Herculus," *Latomus* 31 (1972) 1066, note 2, 1069.

¹² The handbooks preserved under the name of Menander, for instance, give rules of speeches for various occasions, such as the Genethliacus (cf. the rubric for Pan. III/XI), but not for an "Epiphany." Orthodox scholarship associates Epiphany and its celebration either with the *Regierungsantritt des Herrschers* and its anniversary, or with the *Adventus* of the Emperor; cf. F. Pfister, "Epiphanie," *RE Supp.* IV (1924) esp. col. 310. For *Adventus*, see below.

¹³ For example, *Feriale Duranum* (P. Dura 54) II 2–3; R. O. Fink, A. S. Hoey and W. F. Snyder, "The *Feriale Duranum*," *YCS* 7 (1940) 42–43. Some entries are expanded, for example II 16–17 (46–47): *VI Kal Iulias quod dominus noster Marcus Aurelius Severus Alexander Caesar appellatus sit et toga virili amictus*. Unfortunately there is a gap in our evidence for the imperial calendar extending effectively from the *Feriale Duranum* of c. 225 to the post-Constantinian era. But the same distinction between *natalis* and *dies imperii* is made both in the fourth- and fifth-century calendars, and in the *Codex Theodosianus* (e.g., VI 8, 19; A.D. 389); see below, p. 163.

¹⁴ Seston, *Dioclétien* 225–26.

imperii.¹⁵ Furthermore, whatever one believes about the relationship between Hellenistic and late Roman theories of monarchy, the fact remains that the contrast between *γενέθλιος διαδήματος* and *γενέθλιος σώματος* on the first-century inscription of King Antiochus of Commagene is again between a *dies imperii*, spoken of metaphorically as a *natalis*, and an actual birthday.¹⁶

It should be noted furthermore that the word "epiphany" or its equivalent appears nowhere in our speech. And what is the Latin for "epiphany"? Ceremonially or ritually the *adventus imperatoris* would appear the closest Roman analogy for what Seston proposes.¹⁷ Indeed there is an *adventus*, an "epiphany," described in some detail in the speech, the appearance of the Emperors over the Alps to an amazed Italy.¹⁸ But it is not the anniversary of this which the Panegyric celebrates; Maximian's winter journey over the Alps was quite recent (*nuper*, 2.4), the latest exploit in a catalogue of expeditions (*proxime*, 8.1).

At first sight Mamertinus' emphasis on the Emperors' descent from Jupiter and Hercules might appear to lend weight to Seston's hypothesis; the subject matter of the Panegyric does seem peculiarly appropriate to the commemoration of an epiphany. But the force of the argument is weakened by an examination of Mamertinus' first Panegyric to Maximian (Pan. II/X). Here there is equally heavy emphasis on the Emperors' divine descent, but this speech was delivered not to commemorate an epiphany, but Rome's *birthday*!

What of the key phrase in 3.7, *immortalitatis origo*, which Seston takes to refer to the origin of the immortality of the Emperors, and relates to the phrase *dicatorum vobis dierum* (2.1)—"days consecrated to you"—in justification of his theory? We must look at the context. In 2.4 ff. the Panegyrist has been commenting on the ceaseless activity of the Emperors, explaining it in terms of their divine descent from Jupiter and Hercules. He first illustrates his point from the career and behaviour of Jupiter (3.4–5) and then from that of Hercules (3.6). "And so it is with your Hercules, Maximian.¹⁹ (The Panegyrist "passes over" his Herculean Labours.)

¹⁵ Seston, *op. cit.*

¹⁶ Dittenberger, *OGIS* I no. 383, lines 82–84; L. Jalabert and R. Mouterde, *Inscriptions Grecques et Latines de la Syrie* (Paris 1929) I no. 1, 18 and note at 82.

¹⁷ For a recent discussion of the ceremony of *Adventus* see S. MacCormack, "Change and Continuity in Late Antiquity: The Ceremony of Adventus," *Historia* 21 (1972) 721–52.

¹⁸ Heralded at 4.2 (*repente in medio Italiae gremio*) and described in detail in Ch. 10: *ut primum ex utrisque Alpium iugis vestrum numen effulsit, tota Italia clarior lux diffusa* . . . etc. (10.4).

Such an *adventus* could appear in the imperial calendar, with consequent celebration of its anniversary; for example, the Calendar of Philocalus for Oct. 29, *CIL* I 1² 274: *Advent Divi*, the celebration of Constantine's entry into Rome after the battle of the Milvian bridge.

¹⁹ Reading *Hercules tuus; herculistus M. Herculis <tui vir>tus* Aem. Baehrens, accepted by Mynors.

Henceforth, indeed, after his adoption among the immortals and marriage to Iuventa, he is nonetheless the ceaseless supporter of valour and favours the every endeavour of brave men, and in every conflict assists the efforts of the more righteous" (*exinde certe nihilominus post adoptionem caelitum Iuventaque conubium perpetuus est virtutis adsertor omnibusque fortium virorum laboribus favet, in omni certamine conatus adiuvat iustiores*).

Take this current festival (3:7):

His quidem certe diebus, quibus immortalitatis origo celebratur, instigat, ut videmus, illos a sacris certaminibus accitos ut pertinaci animositate certandi multa faciant ipsius similia Victoris.

Surely there can be no doubt whose *immortalitas* is being celebrated; it is that of Hercules, the subject of the preceding passage as well as the verb *instigat*, not that of Diocletian and Maximian, as Seston maintains. For the latter interpretation a *vestrae* or *imperatorum* would be required with *immortalitatis*.²⁰ These games, lasting several days (*his . . . diebus*, 3.7), are those of Hercules, Hercules Victor, probably a Tetrarchic festival inaugurated to coincide with Maximian's birthday, although our ignorance of the Tetrarchic calendar, which was shortly afterwards considerably modified if not largely superseded by the Constantinian calendar, makes it impossible to prove this suggestion.²¹

Seston next seeks external confirmation of his thesis in a passage from the *Passio Marcelli*, in which Marcellus' offence (his casting aside of his

²⁰ O. Schaefer, *Die beiden Panegyrici des Mamertinus und die Geschichte des Kaisers Maximianus Herculus* (Strassburg 1914) 36, anticipates me in this; Seston, *Dioclétien* 223, "Jovius et Herculus" 264, and "Diocletianus" col. 1042, ignores the point although he uses Schaefer.

²¹ Naturally, as *Herculus* (the *terminus ante quem* of the cognomen is given by Pan. II/X of A.D. 289), Maximian would be closely associated with these games of Hercules Victor even if they did not coincide with his birthday. That they did coincide might explain the phrase *dicatorum vobis dierum* of 2.1 which Seston regards as confirmation of his interpretation of *immortalitatis origo*: *Et profecto, si non sensus meos dicatorum vobis dierum proxima quaeque veneratio sui maiestate praestringit, hic mihi dies videtur inlustrior magisque celebrandus, qui te primus protulit in lucem*. ("And indeed, if all the very recent celebrations of the days consecrated to you do not blunt my senses by their own majesty I would say that the day which is more worthy of honour is this day which first brought you forth into the light.") But Mamertinus may be speaking more generally of the overwhelming succession of imperial celebrations in the official year—Diocletian's accession on November 20, his birthday on December 22, the inauguration of the new consuls, Maximian's accession. . . . A difficulty with the first view is the *vobis*, which brings Diocletian into the discussion, and with the second, the *proxima*, which may seem inappropriate for a succession of festivals held over several months.

insignia of rank) is dated, in a subliterate *elogium* or report of the *prae-ses*, one Fortunatus, thus:

... die felicissimo hac toto orbe beatissimo *natalis genuini*
dominorum nostrorum eorundem augustorumque cesarum
cum solemne celebremus . . .²²

In an earlier section of the document this day is described as *diem festum imperatoris vestri* and dated to July 21st, 298. The geographical location—Marcellus was taken to Tangier for trial—suggests that the Emperor in question was Maximian. The day in question was his birthday, his actual (*genuinus*) birthday, according to the report, although the phrase as it stands is admittedly absurd.²³ However, Seston simply emends the *genuinus* to *geminus*, thereby creating external "confirmation" of his Epiphany! The *geminus*, seemingly inappropriate with the Caesars now ruling as well, thus forming a Tetrarchy, he holds to refer to the two *sets* of rulers, Augusti and Caesares, Iovii and Herculii.

This is nothing if not ingenious, but the occurrence of the phrase *natalis genuinus* in several fourth- and fifth-century law codes, a fifth-century calendar, and, before Seston's intervention, in the official report of Marcellus' offence, suggests the possibility for Pan. III/XI which occurred to the seventeenth-century editor of the Theodosian Code, Gothofredus, and in recent times to Erik Wistrand, but which has been rejected by all recent editors: Galletier, Mynors and now Paladini-Fedeli.²⁴ No emendation could be simpler, *genuinus* merely having one more perpendicular stroke than *geminus*. But is emendation necessary?

My examination of the Harleian MS 2480 (H), which in the estimation of all critics is the best extant guide to the archetype,²⁵ reveals that it reads *genuini* or *genuino* in all four cases where it is combined with *natalis* (1.1; 2.2; 19.1; 19.3), and the same reading is to be found at 2.2 in

²² Seston, "Jovius et Hercules" 257 ff. I cite the improved text in G. Lanata, "Gli Atti del processo contro il centurione Marcello," *Byzantion* 42 (1972) 514.

²³ E. Wistrand, "A note on the *Geminus Natalis* of Emperor Maximian," *Eranos* 62 (1964) 141–42, explains *natalis genuini dominorum* (etc.) as a "general plural" for the singular, signifying the birthday of one of the Emperors.

²⁴ The phrase *natalis genuinus* (or *genuinus dies natalis*) is to be found in the *Codex Theodosianus* VI 26.11 (A.D. 397) and VI 26.17 (A.D. 416) and in the Calendar of Silvius Plemius (A.D. 448–49) for July 2, *CIL* I 1² 269; Iacobus Gothofredus, *Codex Theodosianus cum perpetuis commentariis* (Lyon 1665) *apud Cod. Theod.* VI 26.11; E. Wistrand (see previous note) 137–39. Wistrand anticipates some of my arguments, but apparently had no opportunity to consult the manuscripts (except for Upsaliensis C917). Galletier (note 1, above); Mynors (note 1, above); V. Paladini and P. Fedeli, *Panegyrici Latini* (Rome 1976).

²⁵ Mynors vii: "Discrepantibus autem H et X [the Italian MSS], ubicumque habita ratione et sententiae et sermonis et numerorum diiudicare possumus, apparet longe saepius rectum servare H."; cf. Galletier XLIII ff.; and the preface of Fedeli in Paladini-Fedeli, esp. xiv, xvi ff.

two of the more important manuscripts in the other major branch in the stemma (X).²⁶ Thus the MS tradition in favour of *geminus* is much weaker than a perusal of the editions of Galletier, Mynors, and Paladini-Fedeli would suggest. For example, Mynors prints *gemini/o* in each case, reading it in H mistakenly at 1.1, and at 2.2 casually remarking of H, “non-dum correctus,” i.e., by h, a second hand. In three of the four cases the word is either written with a break before the second *n* (see Mynors’ *apparatus criticus* at 2.2) or spaced out (at 19.3) to reduce the possibility of confusion. At 1.1 the word is blotted, but the marginal “correction” of h also reads *genuini*. In short, there is a good case for arguing that *genuini/o* stood in the archetype. But, given the similarity of the words, the ease of correction either way and the fact that consideration of clausulae can assist us in none of the instances involved, it would be wise to consider the substance of the Panegyric itself, and especially the context of the four occurrences of the phrase.

At 1.1 the phrase is contrasted with *tuis quinquennialibus*. *Genuinus* makes perfect sense here, Maximian’s actual birthday contrasted with the anniversary of his accession. Mentioned then are the two major imperial anniversaries, celebration of which was hallowed by tradition, the Emperor’s *natalis* and his *dies imperii*. Similarly at 2.2 the contrast between *ipsi illi dies quibus imperii auspicia sumpsistis* and *genuini vestri natales* is between actual birthdays and days of accession. The *vestri* of course is not support for the reading *gemini* because the speaker is generalising, speaking of the *natales* of both Emperors, and indeed, their recurrence. At 2.1, on the other hand, in speaking of the present occasion alone, he uses *te—dies . . . qui te primus protulit in lucem*, a strong point against the reading *gemini*.

But why the repeated insistence that the *natalis* is *genuinus*? Schaefer felt that this was pedantic, and rejected Gothofredus’ “emendation” as a result.²⁷ There are two reasons. First, the *genuinus* is necessary because it was also possible to call a *dies imperii*, by a natural metaphor, a *natalis imperii*. The panegyrist of A.D. 310 uses the phrase—*imperii tui natalis* (VII/VI 2.3)²⁸—and there are coins of Constantine Caesar and Maximian

²⁶ I have examined photographs of seven of the eight manuscripts of the Italian family (X) which Mynors lists as “testes melioris notae,” viz: Parisinus lat. 7805 and 8556; Venetus Marcianus lat. xi 12 (4082) and Z436 (1706); Vaticanus lat. 1775; Londiniensis addit. 16983; and Bruxellensis 10026–32. Of these Parisinus lat. 7805 and Venetus Marcianus 1706 read *genuini* at 2.2; Bruxellensis 10026–32 here reads *genium*.

In the other branch of the tradition, Upsaliensis C917, which I have not seen, reads *genui* at 2.2, as Seston reports, “Jovius et Herculus” 258, note 4.

²⁷ Schaefer (note 20, above) 35, note 2.

²⁸ The metaphor is also used by the Panegyrist of 313 (Pan. IX/XII 16.2), referring to Maxentius’ downfall: *consumpto per desidias sexennio ipsum diem natalis sui ultima sua caede signaret, ne septenarium illum numerum sacrum et religiosum vel inchoando violaret*.

of A.D. 307 with the reverse legend PLUR (or MULT) NATAL FEL which are die-linked with VOTA issues, suggesting that the reference is to a *dies imperii*.²⁹ This is the earliest use of the metaphor *natalis imperii* known to me in a Roman context, but the very legend presumes that the usage was a familiar one. Secondly, we must not overlook the personal circumstances of the Panegyrist. He had carefully prepared a speech for the Quinquennalia which he was unable to deliver (1.1). He seeks now, very understandably, and indeed as part of his professional duties, to build up the present occasion as one which eclipses the Quinquennalia in importance. Anniversaries of an accession are all very well, he argues, but more illustrious and more worthy of honour is the day which first brought you into the light, for it is this, your actual birthday, which has created those virtues with which you adorn the world (2.2–4):

Et profecto, si non sensus meos dicatorum vobis dierum proxima quaeque veneratio sui maiestate praestringit, hic mihi dies videtur inlustrior magisque celebrandus, qui te primus protulit in lucem. Etenim ipsi illi dies quibus imperii auspicia sumpsistis ob hoc sancti sunt ac religiosi quod tales declaraverint imperatores; at certe virtutes eas quibus ipsum ornatis imperium *genuini vestri* procreare *natales*. Quos quidem, sacratissime imperator, quotiens annis volventibus revertuntur, vestri pariter ac vestrorum numinum reverentia colimus, siquidem vos dis esse genitos et nominibus quidem vestris sed multo magis virtutibus approbatis.

While Seston's contrast of *dies imperii* and Epiphany may not be absurd in the context of 1.1 and 2.2–4, Chapter 19 is fatal to his views. First, while at 19.1 the phrase *genuino natali tuo* is comprehensible, *gemino natali tuo* is nonsense. Secondly, look at the line of argument. I paraphrase: "I am right to choose felicity and piety as the most important things to praise on your actual birthday," says Mamertinus, "for other virtues grow with the passage of time—*processu aetatis*—courage, moderation, justice and wisdom. One learns by precept and experience. Piety and felicity alone originate simultaneously with one's birth (*solae cum nascentibus pariter oriuntur pietas atque felicitas*). They are the natural

²⁹ For the coins see C. H. V. Sutherland, *Roman Imperial Coinage* VI, Treveri nos. 639–41, 744–54, and pp. 13, 153. P. Strauss, "Les monnaies divisionnaires de Trèves après la réforme de Dioclétien," *Revue Numismatique* 16 (1954) 27, was the first to draw the inference. H. Mattingly, "The Imperial 'Vota'," *Proc. Brit. Acad.* 36 (1950) 183, note 12, is mistaken in his interpretation of the *natalis* of Pliny's *Panegyric to Trajan* 92.4 as a *natalis imperii*. It is his *natalis genuinus*, September 18th: . . . *diem illum triplici gaudio laetum, qui abstulit pessimum* (Domitian; *obitus*, *Fasti Ostienses*; Suet. *Domit.* 17.3), *dedit optimum* (Nerva; *dies imperii*, *Fasti Ostienses*; ILS 274 = CIL VI 472) *meliolem optimo genuit* (Trajan; *natalis* Sept. 18, *Feriale Duranum*; Calendar of Philocalus, CIL I.1² 272 confirmed by Pliny, *Epist.* 10.17A.2).

virtues. And so it is your *actual* birthdays that have bestowed pious minds and imperial fortunes upon you. Your sanctity and success stem from the good and friendly stars which presided over your birth:"

Optime igitur, quantum arbitror, sacratissime imperator haec potissima eligi quae *genuino natali tuo* praedicarem. Etenim ceterae virtutes et bona cetera processu aetatis eveniunt: fortitudo annis accedentibus roboratur, continentia disciplinae praeceptis traditur, iustitia cognitione iuris addiscitur, ipsa denique illa quae videtur rerum omnium domina esse sapientia perspectis hominum moribus et exploratis rerum docetur eventis. Solae cum nascentibus pariter oriuntur pietas atque felicitas: naturalia sunt enim animorum bona et praemia factorum. *Genuini ergo natales* pias vobis mentes et imperatorias tribuere fortunas, atque inde sanctitatis vestrae omniumque successuum manat exordium quod nascentes vos ad opes generis humani bona sidera et amica viderunt. (19.1-3)

This peroration on "inborn" virtues contrasted with those which emerge *processu aetatis* would be absurd if the *natalis* in question were metaphorical, a rebirth or Epiphany dating at most to no more than five or six years before this speech. (The name *Herculius* can scarcely have been bestowed on Maximian before his accession in 285/6.) No, the Panegyric of 291 is *not* the anniversary of "l'Épiphanie des Tétrarques" which must be removed once and for all from our Tetrarchic Calendar, but Maximian's actual birthday, which, it would seem from the *Passio Marcelli*, fell on July 21st, and was combined with a Tetrarchic festival in honour of Hercules Victor.³⁰

³⁰ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the American Philological Association in Boston in December, 1979.