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The later Greek ephebate: A philosophical school for the *jeunesse dorée*?

The history of the Greek ephebate attained canonical form long ago. Originally, Athenian ephebes served for two years, spending the first in barracks, where they learned weapons-handling, archery, javelin-throwing, and the catapult, in the second patrolling the countryside (AP 42.4). By the third century, the term of service shrank to one year and was no longer compulsory. The ephebate at Athens and elsewhere then declined in military importance and ethical significance. Although some weapons training persisted into the Roman period, the later ephebate became “aristocratic rather than civic, sporting rather than military” (Marrou 1948, p. 157) and a “philosophical school reserved for the *jeunesse dorée*” (Pèlèkides 1962, p. 256). Although this picture stands essentially unchallenged, the evidence does not support it. Drawing on an extensive database containing epigraphical and literary references to ephebes, their officials, and related institutions from all over the Greek world, I argue that the ephebate continued to have a military function throughout the Hellenistic period.