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Age, What Age, How Old?

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How old is he? How old was he? In the fields of forensics and anthropology, This question has increasingly come up in recent years resonates in recent years more and more often both in the forensic and anthropological fields. We are looking for seek a the magic number which that will tell us exactly what we want would like to know. But can we really in reality we are able to pronounce find this magic spell, will we ever be clever enough to know a person's age with acceptable approximation spell, we will never be so good to know the age of a person with an approximation we can meet? And what could be the margin of error can we consider as that can be considered satisfactory for us?

Until the Iindustrial Rrevolution, the interest in for the age was very limited. Only Were important only general indications about guidance on the procreation capacity or working the capacity for work were important; there was very little, but had very little interest in a the person's actual age of the subject. Until the end of the 19thIXX century, the task of keeping proper order in birth registers was almost exclusively delegated the registers of births was almost exclusively delegated to the churches. And today, after a period which, that historically, we might would view as consider insignificant, we need to know people's the ages as precisely as possible.

Age, what age, how old many years? We are almost obsessive in our pursuit of accuracy. Almost an obsession with the pursuit of its accuracy.

This O illegal immigrant without a valid document of identity/a proper ID, is he over 18 or not? r less will have reached 18 years of age, the illegal immigrant without documents known? Thate skeleton that we found, can it be matched with one on the of missing persons list? who may be the same? The What was the mean average age of that aprehistoricncient population? which will it be?

The radiology, often involving simple techniques, enabled us to gave us the possibility, often with simple techniques, to study in more depth the possible anatomical districts believed to be most suitableuseful in greater depth. that we consider most suitable. Macroscopic techniques have been added and perfected, to give us more reliable results; they are simpler to use, with fewerless dependent operators (and allow us to be less dependent with less dependence on operators) (?) , the easiest to use [la minore dipendenza dagli operatori].

From this viewpoint, it Seen so it might seem that there are no longer any problems to be examined. /solved. But techniques more suited to biology, forensics or issues to consider, but in fact an increasingly frequent mingling of techniques aimed at biological purposes, techniques born in forensic purposes and techniques born in anthropology run the risk of becoming more and more frequently combined and, if they are not correctly applied, may easily create confusion ical purposes, is likely to create confusion and even riskwhen using a very risky.

The main aim of a A technique born developed for forensic purposes, when applied to in aa still growing growing person subject, has as its main purpose is to determine a that particular person's age, e.g., such as 18 years, and it may can be considered appropriate correct if it indicates that particular age as precisely as possible, to this specific age, even even though it might if grossly mistaken other ages. So if you were able to indicate with precision (to give an absurd [non so se in inglese sia meglio ridiculous, ma io lo intendo come assurdo]example), if /a certain forensic technique were capable of indicating the age of 18 but mistakenly reported 16, the age of 18, but mistaken, ironically the 16that, for us, would be ideal to determine the age of majority. But if our aim is biological, then our technique must be as precise as possible at all stages of growth. It must represent the smallest error possible for the whole period even with a big mistake for us would be the ideal technique to determine the age of 18. As if the purpose is biological our technique should be as accurate as possible in all stages of growth, so it must have a minor error as possible throughout the period under study. And we cannot state that this general error is better if we require it for a particular age. It is said that this general error is better in case we needed it for a particular age. Still use this technique for forensic purposes is a big risk, how to use the first for biological purposes.Again, using a technique for forensic purposes when we are dealing with biology, or vice versa, would mean running enormous risks.

The picture with regard to age may become even more complex may be the picture with regard to age. Our The techniques seek to reduce errors by examining anatomical districts which deteriorate less rapidly in time, but use less perishable over time, but they still encounter various difficulties. To what extent did clash with varying difficulty. As the lifestyle affect has affected the the preservation of the remains of this person? What did they do for a living? And so on., work and many other factors?

Age, this almost magical word, is repeated almost as if it were like a mantra, seeking looking for a the magic answer.

Perhaps Maybe we should start thinking about what path we should follow, and whether, in our case, we should say: "Athat way and if you really want to take, in our case, all roads lead to Rome". Perhaps Maybe we should concentrate our on our established aim and assess its usefulness work in order that we and as a result we aim to assess its use in our cases. Our books and reviews are , our newspapers are often filled with articles discussing that speak generically of age in general, which and who are turning, - sometimes voluntarily, sometimes involuntarily unwittingly - , are addressed to all those seeking answers about age, to all those who ask for a response on age, whatever their field of research.

It is only recently that this kind of study has been flanked with And also this job only in recent years is accompanied, and the not always to the essential work of a statisticians, who may also be doctors who

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possibly corroborateing doctor, but who cannot always explain what they find, nor explain, rendermake yet more scientific the work of work of the scientists even more "scientific". What kind of sample/sampling procedure did we use? How important is it with regard to the population we are studying? To what extent can it be reproduced with other samples? What probabilistic indexes are available to us? As a sample we used, what is relevant in the population that we want to study, how we can reproduce this work in other samples, probabilistic indices that we have? We can and must answer respond to these questions as accurately precisely as possible, but we cannot do so alonemust not think you can do yourself, , or by entering insert only the most elementary statistical analyseis. We must act with humility, delegating this task to those whose job it normally is, to those who are competent. We must try to live in plays in his business, to those who have the skills. We try to live in symbiosis harmony with them, but but at the same time make them understand what they should be looking for, we cannot just delegate making them figure out what to look for, not delegating a task a purely numerical task to them.

We must not place limitations on ourselves. We must be fired with enthusiasm to study all the Do not let us ask ourselves a limit, but have fun to study new techniques, new methods, new formulas. We must do not think we have achieved our goal when we obtain a result which seems brilliant. It's not as easy as that: now we must move the goal-posts a little closer to//consider achieved our goal when we reach a result that looks brilliant, move the bar further on. And gether. And we must be jealous of our work. We must share it with we are jealous of our work. Let's break it with others, but we must also but we expect them to do the same, to study, that they may understand know the reasons which that led to a the development of techniques which can re-create and not just that can recreate and not just be slavishly appliedy. BThe biology requires us to know how to you to be able to evaluate assess the extreme conditions, which only experts know about that only the expert knows how to evaluate and which will enable them to interpret the results allow you to take with caution the results obtained by of our forensic techniques .with due caution.

And we will continue, as we were taught years ago, we must never ask a lady how old she is!, not to ask the age of a lady!

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