Fathers and Sons in Terence

In the *Adelphoe* the heart of the matter is the respective educational systems of Micio and Demea.

Demea is harsh, exacting and restricting
Micio is generous, easy-going and indifferent

Throughout the play Demea is criticized, made a fool of and generally sees his method of education turned on its head. Then why is it that he gets the last laugh in the play and is allowed to make a fool out of Micio whose system is superior?

Elaine Fantham

*Adelphoe* can be compared to *Hauton Timorumenos* of Terence.

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<tr>
<th>Menedemus (harsh father)</th>
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<th>Demea (harsh father)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chremes (lenient father)</td>
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<td>Micio (lenient father)</td>
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Menedemus gets his son back not only into his house but also into his affections.

He sees the error that he made and changes.

Chremes fails in the course of the play to be a good father or a good husband.

He does not examine his motives but remains superficial

At the end of the *Adelphoe*:

The point of Demea’s success is that he examines his motives and changes his attitude if not his conviction

<table>
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<th>857-60</th>
<th>... That you don’t know what you believe you had known, and the things you thought for yourself at the beginning you cast off with experience. That is what now happened to me; the harsh life, which up to now I have lived, since my time is nearly up now I let it go.</th>
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<tr>
<td>ut illa quae te scisse credas nescias, et quae tibi putaris prima in experiundo ut repudies. quod nunc mi euenit: nam ego uitam duram, quam uixi usque adhuc, prope iam excursus spatio omitto.</td>
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The point of Micio’s failure is that his generosity comes from weakness not conviction

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<th>986-88</th>
<th>... Because they think you are easy and jolly, (and) that isn’t from true living nor even from anything just and good, but from wanting to please, gratify, and lavish, Micio.</th>
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<td>quod te isti facilem et festiuous putant, id non fieri ex uera uita neque adeo ex aequo et bono, sed ex adsentando indulgendo et largiendo, Micio.</td>
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W.R. Johnson

Micio is in for a downfall from the beginning. He is self-deceiving and self-contradicting

- **Righteous superiority:**

| 42-3 | I have pursued a tranquil city life and |
Ego hanc clementem uitam urbanam atque otium secutus sum ...
45 ... ruri agere uitam, semper parce ac duriter se habere ...

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<th>• Self-interest:</th>
<th>(He) spends his life in the country, always living stingily and roughly</th>
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<tr>
<td>50 Ille ut item contra me habeat facio sedulo ...</td>
<td>(I brought him (Aeschinus) up from childhood, I held and loved him as my own)</td>
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<td>I do it constantly so that he likewise loves me ...</td>
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<td>• He believes his method and generosity will have the desired effect, i.e. that Aeschinus will never hide anything from him. But this is not the case; Aeschinus does deceive him.</td>
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<td>• He violates the agreement made at the beginning of the play that they only concern themselves with their own sons and not interfere with one another, and he also justifies it.</td>
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<td>803-4 ... nam uetus uerbum hoc quidemst, communia esse amicorum inter se omnia.</td>
<td>... Because there is a certain old saying: “All things are common among friends.”</td>
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<td>• He condescends towards Demea and finally derides him</td>
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<tr>
<td>850-1 nunc mihi uidere sapere. atque equidem filium tum etiam si nolit cogam ut cum illa una cubet</td>
<td>Now you seem to me to be getting it. And I would compel your son to sleep with her even if he doesn’t want to.</td>
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“There lurks here a lazy relativism which derides (and has no business deriding) another great moral truth: that human beings have to work very hard merely to become decent and to stay barely decent. The virtues of Micio, then, exclude the virtues of Demea utterly, and that is their ruin.” – Johnson, 178

The foregoing articles also stress the fact that the proof of a father’s method is in the attitude and character of his son. In this case, Aeschinus holds obvious supremacy.

Aeschinus

- Caring toward his brother; will even allow his plan to marry his girl suffer in order to protect his brother.
- Is open and honest with his father; tried to broach the topic of marriage with his father.
- Takes responsibility for his actions.

Ctesiphon

- Passionate, but with no clear goal for his desires
- No remorse when he is discovered to have deceived his father
Matthew Leigh

He draws a connection between fatherhood and command. In the last scene of the play, Aeschines calls Demea pater. Why?

992-6
sed si id uoltis potius quae uos propter adolescentiam minus uidetis magis inpense cupitis consultis parum, haec reprehendere et corrigere quem obsecundare in loco:
cece me qui id faciam uobis. AE. tibi, pater, permittimus: plus scis quod opus factost.

But if, rather, when you are blinded by your youth and want something really badly, but hardly reflect, you want someone to take you and correct you on these things and provide support at the time—look, you have me to do it for you. AE. Father, we grant it. You know better what needs to be done.

Roman Military Analogy:
• A general received the title or pater when he distributed share of the spoils to the troops.
• A general also became a pater / patronus when he saved the lives of his troops by a timely intervention.

The qualities of both fathers can be united into one character. The Adelphoe made its premier at the funeral of Aemilius Paullus, with whom Terence was associated. As homage to Paullus, Terence has split the characteristics of Paullus into Micio and Demea; thus, to discern the good qualities of both and unite them into one person would give you the ideal.

As far as methods of education go:

Deductive = Demea

• Purely deductive education leads to absurdity, as Syrus shows:

423-9
... et quod queo
conseruis ad eundem istunc praecepio modum: hoc salsumst, hoc adustumst, hoc lautomst parum:
illud recte: iterum sic memento. sedulo moneo, quae possum pro mea sapientia:
postremo tamquam in speculum in patinas, Demea, inspicere iubeo et moneo quid facto usus sit.

And, to the best of my ability, I admonish my fellow slaves in the same way: this is salty, this is burnt; this is hardly clean; this is done well, so remember that again: I constantly advise the things I’m able from my wisdom. Finally, I order them to look in the dishes just as at a mirror, Demea, and I advise them as to what needs doing.

Inductive = Micio

• Purely inductive leads to chaos

88-91
fores ecfregit atque in aedis inruit aliens: ipsum dominum atque omnem familia
mulcuit usque ad mortem: eripuit mulierem quam amabat. clamant omnes indignissume factum esse.

He pulverized the door, ran into somebody else’s house, beat the master and the whole family nearly to death, and snatched away a woman whom he was in love with. Everyone is crying out that the deed is beyond the point of intolerable.

Excess = Aeschines

• It seems that whatever he wants he takes
• He does not seem to have a problem conceiving plans and putting them into practice
Defect = Ctesiphon
• He has a problem solving his own problems
• He shows no remorse for hiding his girl from his father

Solution = Harmonize the methods of each father and steer the education between the two extremes of excess and defect.

Bibliography


