

ARISTOTLE, MENANDER AND THE ADELPHOE OF TERENCE

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The external or historical link between Aristotle and Menander is attested by two notices in Diogenes Laertius: Menander was a pupil of Theophrastus, and a friend of Demetrius of Phaleron.¹ Whether or to what extent the comedies of Menander and his Roman imitators reflect the influence of the philosophy of the Peripatos is a question that has been increasingly discussed in recent years. If this discussion has centered for the most part on the "ideas" of Menander as distinct from the plays in which these ideas are or were originally expressed, it must be said that the fragmentary nature of much of the relevant material makes this sort of procedure difficult to avoid.² Still, there are obvious risks in interpreting statements of Menandrian characters in cases where little or nothing is known about those characters or the dramatic context in which their remarks were expressed. A more sensible approach would seem to be that adopted by Otto Rieth in a study of Terence's *Adelphoe* which has been widely admired.³ Rieth presses Aristotelian doctrine into the service of a detailed interpretation of a single and complete play—and one which is probably the most interesting of the extant Menandrian comedies from the point of view of ancient moral or political thought.

¹ Diogenes Laertius 5.36 and 79. There seems no reason to doubt this information. See most recently A. Barigazzi, *La formazione spirituale di Menandro* (Turin 1965) 27–28, K. Gaiser, "Menander und der Peripatos," *A & A* 13 (1967) 9–10.

² The most thoroughgoing attempt to show Peripatetic influence is that of Barigazzi; see also T. B. L. Webster, *Studies in Menander* (Manchester 1960²) 195 ff. Barigazzi does provide an interpretation of an individual play, the *Samia* (161 ff.). F. Stoessl's commentary on the *Dyskolos* (Paderborn 1965) is important for its collection of Peripatetic parallels but does not offer an interpretation of the play as a whole.

³ *Die Kunst Menanders in den "Adelphen" des Terenz*, ed. K. Gaiser (Hildesheim 1964).

Rieth's interpretation of the *Adelphoe* and its relation to its Greek original has not gone unchallenged. Indeed, few would now argue that his analysis of the two plays is wholly or even fundamentally acceptable.⁴ Rieth's use of Aristotle has not, however, been similarly scrutinized, and an impression has accordingly been left that Peripatetic ideas are finally irrelevant if not misleading in attempting to understand the meaning of Terence's (or Menander's) play. We cannot be too often reminded that a comedy is not a philosophical tract.⁵ At the same time, it would be a mistake to make judgments regarding the relation between Aristotle and New Comedy on the basis of the too often careless or dogmatic interpretations of Peripatetic doctrine offered by Rieth. The question is of sufficient importance, I think, to warrant a fresh look both at the *Adelphoe* and at the Aristotelian ideas it appears to presuppose.

Rieth's argument is briefly as follows. In Terence's play, there can be no question but that neither Micio nor Demea is intended to represent the virtuous man or the perfect father. Terence's version could be accepted as a faithful reproduction of its Menandrian original were Micio and Demea consistently presented as defective or extreme characters. Yet while the harsh and rustic Demea is generally made the object of ridicule and the urbane Micio presented in a highly favorable light, on occasion—and particularly at the end of the play—these roles appear to be reversed. In fact, however, the character of Micio corresponds closely to that of Aristotle's virtuous man, and Micio's views on the education of the young appear to coincide with those of Aristotle himself. Rieth advances the hypothesis that such inconsistencies as do appear in Terence reflect his adaptation of the Menandrian original. In Menander, Micio had been presented as the paradigm of moral virtue as understood by Aristotle, while Demea had

⁴ See R. H. Martin's recent edition of the *Adelphoe* (Cambridge 1976) 19 ff. as well as H. J. Mette, "Der heutige Menander," *Lustrum* 10 (1965) 127–28, W. P. Johnson, "Micio and the Perils of Perfection," *CSCA* 1 (1968) 171–86, E. Fantham, "*Hautontimorumenos* and *Adelphoe*: A Study of Fatherhood in Terence and Menander," *Latomus* 30 (1971) 970–98, H. Tränkle, "Micio und Demea in den terenzischen Adelphen," *MH* 29 (1972) 241–55, H. Lloyd-Jones, "Terentian Techniques in the *Adelphi* and the *Eunuchus*," *CQ* N.S. 23 (1973) 279–84, J. N. Grant, "The Ending of Terence's *Adelphoe* and the Menandrian Original," *AJP* 96 (1975) 42–60.

⁵ Consider the remarks of Grant, 46–47.

embodied—thanks to his inept conversion to the way of life of Micio—both of the faulty or vicious extremes corresponding to Micio's individual virtues. As for the educational views of the two rival fathers, Rieth argues that Micio's views are those of Menander himself and that they are essentially identical to the views of Aristotle. The relation between Micio and his son (or more precisely his adopted son) Aeschinus is one of love or friendship (*amicitia*), which Micio claims to be the surest way to inculcate respect and to exercise authority (*imperium*) over the young; in apparent contrast to Demea, Micio thinks that one who is a true father rather than a "master" ought to "habituate his son to do what is right by his own inclination rather than by fear of another" (74–76), a result best obtained by behaving in a generous manner and appealing to "shame" (*pudor*) rather than "fear" (*metus*) (57–58).

Rieth's schematization of the characters of Micio and Demea has been rightly criticized for doing violence to Terence's text and to what may be plausibly inferred about Menander's,⁶ and may be passed over for the moment. As regards Micio's educational principles, Rieth attempts to show their Aristotelian derivation in the following way. In his discussion of the relation between the forms of "friendship" (*φιλία*) and the forms of political rule, Aristotle argues that the rule of a good father is analogous to the rule of a king: the true king rules in order to benefit his subjects, whereas the tyrant (or the "master" [*δεσπότης*])—i.e., of slaves) rules only for his own benefit.⁷ Rieth then calls attention to a passage in Plato's *Laws* which teaches that the best form of political rule is a certain mixture of "monarchy" and "democracy" which secures obedience through respect or "shame" (*αἰδώς*).⁸ Finally, in order to show an Aristotelian provenance for Micio's distinction between *pudor* and *metus*, he cites a well-known passage from the *Ethics* in which Aristotle discusses the relation between

⁶ See particularly Grant 42 ff., Fantham 991 ff. In a "Nachwort" to his edition of Rieth (152), Gaiser seems to go considerably further than Rieth himself in understanding the brothers as personifications of a long list of Aristotelian vices and virtues; yet he does not indicate whether or to what extent these vices and virtues figure meaningfully in the play.

⁷ Rieth 19; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1160b2 ff.

⁸ Plato, *Laws* 757a.

courage and “shame” (*αἰδώς*).⁹ According to Rieth, two kinds of courage are distinguished in this discussion: one variety of courage proceeds from shame and hence from “virtue” or a free and deliberate “moral choice” (*προαίρεσις*), another from fear or compulsion; the first variety is that characteristic of the Homeric heroes.

To begin with, Rieth does not pause to consider whether or to what extent an analogy between father and king can be relevant—even from Aristotle’s point of view—to the action of the *Adelphoe*. Rieth in effect argues that the difference between Micio and Demea amounts to the difference between king and tyrant (or master of slaves) as that difference is understood by Aristotle, or that Micio’s rule is simply beneficent while Demea’s rule is simply selfish and even criminal. This wildly misrepresents the real situation of the play. There can be no doubt that Demea is as much concerned to benefit his two sons as is Micio: Micio’s attempt to distinguish himself from Demea as *pater* from *dominus* is as exaggerated as it is self-serving. The disagreement between Micio and Demea is over means rather than ends: not whether but how to educate or to benefit the young. Demea engages our sympathy at the end of the play to the extent that he does largely because we become aware that the genuine benevolence and concern felt by him toward Aeschinus has for so long been unrecognized or denied.

There is a further difficulty with Rieth’s position. According to Aristotle, a king is what he is by virtue of the fact that he benefits his subjects, not by virtue of their desire to be benefitted: monarchic rule over unwilling subjects is not necessarily tyranny. Kingly rule must be distinguished not only from tyranny but also from “political” rule, the rule of free men by free men characteristic of the developed society of the *πόλις*.¹⁰ Political rule is distinguished from kingly rule and from monarchic rule in general by the fact that it depends not on command and coercion but on a consensus created by persuasion. Now it would seem that Terence’s Micio understands himself less as a kingly or monarchic ruler than as a “political” ruler.¹¹ Micio wants

⁹ Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1116A27 ff.

¹⁰ Consider Aristotle, *Politics* 1252A7–16.

¹¹ Consider *Adelphoe* 51–52, *non necesse habeo omnia / pro meo iure agere*, together with the remarks of Phidippus in the *Hecyra* (243–44): *etsi scio ego, Philumena, meum ius esse ut te cogam / quae ego imperem facere . . .*

Aeschinus to do what is right "willingly" (*sponte sua*) or without command or coercion: to the extent that Micio exercises rule or authority, it is a moral authority operating through example and persuasion. Generally speaking, Micio treats Aeschinus not as subject but as a citizen or a free man. According to Micio, the best way to manage children is by the exercise of that virtue which particularly befits free men—*liberalitate liberos retinere* (57–58). This semantic association seems natural in Terence's Latin;¹² the idea would have constituted a paradox in the language of Menander, which associates "child" (παῖς) with "slave." Micio's governance of Aeschinus as conceived by Menander would appear to affront both common sense and Peripatetic views: paternal right is normally and naturally monar-chic right, but Micio refuses to exercise it as such.¹³

We turn finally to Rieth's remarks concerning "shame." Micio, he argues, attempts to base his authority over his son on "shame," so that Aeschinus will do what is right of his own free will or by a deliberate moral choice as required of genuine virtue. This argument rests on a misunderstanding of Aristotle's teaching concerning αἰδώς. When Aristotle discusses courage in Book III of the *Ethics*, he distinguishes genuine courage from five inferior forms of behavior which are frequently confused with it. That form which most resembles genuine courage he calls civic or political (πολιτική) courage; this is the kind of courage characteristic of the Homeric heroes. It most resembles genuine virtue because it comes about through a kind of virtue or excellence (δι' ἀρετήν)—"for it comes about through shame and desire for the noble (for it is for the sake of honor) and avoidance of reproach, which is base." Aristotle then remarks: "one might include in the same category those who are compelled by the authorities; yet these are worse, since they do it not through shame but through fear, avoiding not disgrace but pain" (1116A27–32). Aristotle's point is that those who act courageously in battle through shame or a desire to

¹² As Donatus remarks: *argumentum a coniugatis: liberalitate, inquit, regendi sunt, propter quod liberi dicuntur.* Cf. 77.

¹³ Compare *Ad.* 51–52 with Aristotle, *Pol.* 1259B1–4. Rieth points to the problem inadvertently in citing the *Laws* passage which speaks of holding to the mean between "monarchy" and "democracy"—that is, between coercion and freedom or command and persuasion: Micio's regime cannot be understood as simple "monarchy." But Plato is speaking of the regime of the city and not of the household.

avoid disgrace differ only in degree from those who act similarly under actual compulsion. Shame may be loosely described as a kind of virtue or excellence; it is not a virtue properly speaking because it involves choosing noble action not for its own sake but for its social consequences. If shame does not exercise the direct compulsion of fear, it exercises a kind of compulsion nonetheless. In Aristotle's thematic discussion of shame in Book IV, he makes it clear that shame is itself a kind of fear—the "fear of ill-repute" (*φόβος ἀδοξίας*). In the last analysis, shame is closer to being a passion than a virtue. Moreover, it is a passion appropriate only to the young, "for we suppose that those of that age ought to be full of shame on account of the many misdeeds they commit through living according to passion, so that shame can hold them back."¹⁴

What precisely is Aristotle's view of the educative value of shame? This question is considered in Book X of the *Ethics*, in a passage—oddly neglected by Rieth—which may be said to represent Aristotle's most comprehensive statement on the subject of paternal education. "If speeches were by themselves able to make us decent," Aristotle there argues,

they would carry off, as Theognis says, "many and great rewards," and it would be necessary only to provide them. As it is, while they evidently have the power to exhort and arouse the liberal [*οἱ ἐλευθέριοι*] among the youth to steadfastness and can cause a character that is well-born and truly in love with the noble to be possessed by virtue [*ἡθὺς τ' εὐγενὲς καὶ ὥς ἀληθῶς φιλόκαλον ποιεῖσαι ἂν κατοκώχιμον ἐκ τῆς ἀρετῆς*], they are unable to exhort the majority to become noble and good men; for it is natural with these to obey fear rather than shame, and to abstain from low things not because they are base but rather on account of the punishments, for they live according to passion and seek what is pleasant to themselves . . . (1179B4–14).

"Speech and teaching," Aristotle goes on, will not be effective in all or even most cases because of the strength of "passion." Accordingly, it is necessary to "prepare in advance" the soul of the one being educated in such a way that his character will be "in some way akin to virtue;" and this can be done only by going against the grain. For this

¹⁴ *Eth. Nic.* 1128B10–18; cf. 1108A32.

reason, and because the commands of a father (*πατρικὴ προσταξίς*) do not have the power of compulsion,¹⁵

it is difficult to obtain a correct training beginning in youth unless one is brought up under laws that do this; for to live in a moderate and self-controlled way is not pleasant to most, and especially to the young.¹⁶

Contrary to what Rieth seems to suggest, it is not only Micio who relies on shame as an instrument of education. But whereas Micio relies only on shame, Demea suggests that the young are ruled or educated by three things: shame, fear and law (84–86). Not only is Demea's view closer to the Aristotelian view than that of Micio; it is in remarkable harmony with the Aristotelian view. For Aristotle, shame is ineffective in the great majority of cases in inducing the young to behave decently, and hence "speeches"—persuasive praise or blame—are by themselves largely ineffective as a tool of moral education. Shame (or persuasion) must be supplemented by fear; and fear must be supplemented by law (or compulsion). Paternal "right," far from being—as Micio suggests—too extensive, is in fact too weak: it lacks the full compulsory power of the laws. It is true that Micio also suggests it is the duty of a father to "habituate" (*consuefacere*, 74) his son to behave decently of his own free will. But Micio's notion of habituation is not Aristotle's notion of habituation. For Micio, moral habituation appears to involve employing the stimulus of reward rather than the deterrent or corrective of punishment (65–73). For Aristotle, moral habituation means in most cases "preparing in advance" a soul that lives entirely according to "passion" so that it becomes "in some way akin to virtue" and thereby susceptible in some degree to improvement by speech or persuasion. But this process goes against the grain; it requires that virtue be learned through the compulsory performance of virtuous deeds.

This is not to say that Micio is simply wrong while Demea is simply right. Certainly Terence, and most probably Menander, did not mean to give that impression; moreover, Micio is not simply wrong even according to Aristotle. For Aristotle does not deny that an education which relies only on speech and shame will be effective in some cases.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 1180A19–20.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 1179B31–34. Cf. Barigazzi 105–06.

Aristotle asserts that speech will be effective in exhorting and arousing those of the young who are “liberal” (ἐλευθέριοι) or have a character that is “well-born” (εὐγενές) and naturally susceptible to shame—those who possess what Terence’s Micio calls a *liberum ingenium*. It is just such a character that Micio claims is possessed by Aeschinus. Now Micio would be, for Aristotelian purposes, simply wrong only if it were the case that he had gravely misjudged the character of Aeschinus. In fact, however, it is not the case. One may want to argue that Micio had not fully anticipated the possibility that Aeschinus might commit a misdeed on the order of the one he actually commits—and of which Hegio remarks (463–64), *neque boni neque liberalis functus officiumst viri*. And in other respects—for example, by Aeschinus’ evident lack of frankness and trust—the claims made by Micio for the excellence of his educational methods are rather sharply called into question. Still, even when put to a severe test Micio’s charge vindicates his master’s hopes. Aeschinus is indeed overcome by “shame” at what he has done (682–83); and he is so affected by Micio’s indulgent response that he vows never again to commit such a deed or in any other way to oppose his father’s wishes (710–11), a resolution which seems to be prompted by his newly fortified appreciation and respect for Micio’s judgment as well as by his own native sense of what is right.

Aeschinus’ surrender to Micio in the course of Act IV is surely a triumph for Micio, but it is less than a clear triumph for Micio’s principles. One is tempted to say that Aeschinus is won over in the last analysis less by reason of Micio’s principles than in spite of them. At all events, it is hardly evident that Micio could have claimed the same victory with a son who did not happen to share Aeschinus’ “liberal” nature. Micio claims a universal validity for his educational program; in this respect he deceives himself. It is true that Aristotle makes provision for the possibility of an education that is particular rather than universal or geared to the character and needs of the individual being educated, and that such an education would seem to be superior. Yet Aristotle also argues that the best educator, doctor or trainer is the one who possesses a general knowledge of what is good for all men or for all men of a certain type.¹⁷ Of knowledge of this

¹⁷ *Eth. Nic.* 1180B7–16.

kind Micio gives no evidence. Indeed, it would seem that Micio's educational program derives in the last analysis from observation of a single case: that program has not so much formed Aeschinus as been formed by him.

The limitations of Micio's principles may be seen in the first place in the relation between Micio and Ctesiphon, Aeschinus' brother. There is no reason to believe that Micio is not speaking his mind when he tells Demea that Ctesiphon and Aeschinus both possess a *liberum ingenium* (827-29). Yet there is little in the play that confirms this with respect to Ctesiphon, and much that appears to go against it. To begin with, while the object of Aeschinus' serious attachment is a free-born girl, the object of Ctesiphon's is a *meretrix*.¹⁸ Ctesiphon is certainly never called "liberal" by anyone other than Micio; he displays few signs of shame or sense, and indeed shows little else throughout most of the play than the inarticulateness of a passionate adolescent. Yet Micio appears to assume that Ctesiphon should be treated in the way Aeschinus deserves to be treated. He does not question even to himself the soundness of Ctesiphon's marital choice, and yet he is so convinced of the rightness of his own methods that he does not hesitate to violate the terms of his earlier agreement with Demea in order to take Ctesiphon and the girl under his own protection. One can attempt to excuse Micio, as one wants to excuse Aeschinus, on the grounds of necessity: whether Micio liked it or not, the abduction of the girl had to be allowed in order to save Ctesiphon from a worse fate. In particular, it would not have helped for Demea to threaten Ctesiphon in the way, for example, Chremes threatens Clitophon in the *Heauton Timorumenos*: for Clitophon, the attractions of a paternal legacy outweigh the attractions of Bacchis, but Ctesiphon prefers exile and presumably disinheritance to a life without his beloved.¹⁹ Still, one is entitled to complain that Micio fails even to attempt to persuade or shame Ctesiphon into acting otherwise than he does.

It is worth while considering briefly the relations between fathers and sons in the *Adelphoe* and the *Heauton Timorumenos*.²⁰ On the basis of

¹⁸ Consider Mette 127-28 and *Ad.* 147-52.

¹⁹ According to Donatus (*ad* 275), Menander had had "Ctesiphon" threaten to commit suicide.

²⁰ For a more detailed treatment of the comparison see Fantham 970 ff.

the *Adelphoe* alone, one is likely to form the impression that according to Menander the sons of indulgent fathers necessarily turn out to be high-minded and liberal, while the sons of strict fathers turn out to be, if not contemptible, then somewhat unimpressive characters whose addiction to the pleasures of wine and women is only increased by the necessity of concealment; this state of affairs seems to be the direct result of the kind of education received in either case, as well as indicative of the relative value of each. At first glance, the *Heauton Timorumenos* would appear to confirm this impression: Clinia, whose tastes run to wholesome and free-born girls, is the son of the extravagantly indulgent Menedemus, while the rather light-weight Clitophon, who pursues a Bacchis, is the son of the ostentatiously reasonable but secretly unreconstructed Chremes. In fact, however, Clinia's education had of course taken place before Menedemus' conversion from old-fashioned strictness to extravagant indulgence: Clinia had been raised, not on the principles of Micio, but on the principles of Demea. As for Chremes, it would be unfair to accuse him of a fundamental or unreasonable strictness. Chremes is naturally furious when he learns of Clitophon's intrigue with Bacchis and consequent deception of his father, but he controls his anger and is able to apply in a discreet and calculated manner the remedy of compulsion in the form of a threat of disinheritance, a remedy which is unobjectionable under the circumstances—Clitophon had manifested no signs of "shame" or of voluntary repentance (cf. *Heaut.* 1042-43)—and which is also eminently successful.

On the basis of these observations, one is almost forced to conclude that the character of the paternal regime has nothing to do with the character of the child who is raised up under it, or that much more depends on nature than on education however understood. On the other hand, one wonders whether it is not, after all, more likely from Menander's point of view that a parental regime of comparative strictness will produce a decent and liberal character than that a parental regime of comparative indulgence will produce a character of the same sort; one wonders, in other words, whether the case of Aeschinus is not truly exceptional, and whether Aeschinus' *liberum ingenium* is indeed more than a happy accident of nature. One is particularly struck by another Menandrian example: it is hard to imagine a parent of a more extreme harshness than Knemon, the protagonist of the *Dyskolos*; and

yet—according to the unimpeachable testimony of Pan—Knemon's daughter, being raised by him and having become what she was brought up to be, "knew not one base thing" and could be prized for her virtue.²¹

All this would appear to suggest that Micio and Demea are in equal measure right and wrong—that the education favored by Micio is correct for Aeschinus but wrong for Ctesiphon, while the education favored by Demea is wrong for Aeschinus but right for Ctesiphon. Granting that Demea would be right more often than Micio, it is also true that a high value must be placed on an education designed—as Micio's evidently is—for those whose characters are by nature superior to most men's. On the other hand, it could also be argued that there is nothing wrong with the education favored by Demea in theory. There is, as has been seen, some indication that Demea recognizes "shame" in addition to "fear" and "law" as an instrument of paternal education, thereby at least implicitly acknowledging the existence of the liberal character or of liberal sentiments in the young that a father might want to appeal to. If Demea fails to appeal to such sentiments in practice, the fault would seem to lie with his irascible temperament. What, then, of Micio? If his educational principles cannot claim to be as comprehensive as Demea's, are they adequate as far as they go? Does the fact that Micio also fails significantly in practice reflect in any way on his theory?

I believe there is in fact a central failing in Micio's theory. It has to do with Micio's understanding of shame and its connection with virtue, and it is grounded in the nature of his relationship to Aeschinus. Guided or misguided by Aeschinus' natural decency and the tractability of his character, Micio tends to assume that the shame Aeschinus displays is a necessary and sufficient indication of his progress in virtue or in the development of what Aristotle calls "moral choice." Micio tends to identify shame with virtue; he assumes that Aeschinus' reluctance to disappoint or offend him translates into a settled disposition not to commit blameworthy acts "whether present or absent" (73). In short, Micio fails to make the Aristotelian distinction between acting decently

²¹ ἡ δὲ παρθένος / γέγονεν ὁμοία τῇ τροφῇ τις, οὐδὲ ἐν εἰδυῖα φλαῦρον (*Dyskolos* 34–36; cf. E. W. Handley, *The Dyskolos of Menander* [Cambridge, Mass. 1965] 135). Consider also *Dyskolos* 198, 201, 384 ff.

for the sake of praise or social convenience and acting decently because doing so is right. He fails to understand that shame is a passion which can prepare but not substitute for virtue—that it is a passion which competes with but does not necessarily master the other passions that are characteristic of youth. Micio is unprepared for Aeschinus' lapses precisely because he underestimates the degree to which Aeschinus continues to "live according to passion" or remains an immature youth. As was pointed out earlier, Micio tends to regard the relationship between himself and Aeschinus as based on "friendship" rather than on any form of domination; he is too inclined to treat Aeschinus as an equal—as a mature man with settled habits and disposition with whom he can talk frankly and reasonably, and as a friend to be benefitted by gratifications rather than punishments.²²

If the preceding analysis is correct, there is every reason to agree with those critics of Rieth who maintain that the ending of the *Adelphoe* does not differ substantially from that of its Greek model. By exposing the selfish as well as narrow basis of Micio's theories and holding him up to ridicule, Demea only makes explicit what had been implicit in earlier scenes of the play, albeit in a way designed to create some uncertainty in the audience's mind regarding the poet's ultimate intentions. As for Demea, his miraculous conversion surely holds a mirror to his own as well as Micio's faults; nevertheless, he enjoys a triumph which must force a revaluation of his earlier behavior, his character and his relation to Micio.²³

The more one thinks about the relation between Micio and Demea, the more one becomes convinced that the *Adelphoe* as a whole should be understood less as a conflict between two opposing systems of paternal education than as a confrontation between two human types. As we have seen, the principles of Micio and Demea or the way those principles are put into practice appear to be decisively affected by the characters or passions of the two men. In this connection, it may be observed that the tendency of most interpreters to focus on the ideological dispute between the play's rival fathers has obscured a fact of some interest: there is in the play only one "father" strictly speaking. There are frequent allusions throughout the play to the fact that Aeschinus is the

²² *Ad.* 65–73; consider also 708–09.

²³ See particularly Fantham 989–90.

son of Micio only by adoption but (like Ctesiphon) the son of Demea by birth, and of course the action of the play largely turns on the license this situation affords Demea for interfering in the familial affairs of his brother. The most striking reference to this state of things occurs in an exchange between Micio and Demea on the status of Aeschinus. *Pater esse disce ab illis, qui vere sciunt*, says Demea; *natura tu illi pater es*, Micio replies, *consiliis ego* (125-26). The contrast between Demea as natural and Micio as adoptive father is more than a comic hypothesis required to create the clash of character and principle represented in the play; it is a theme in its own right.²⁴

For the interpretation of this theme, one may profitably begin by consulting Terence's ancient commentator. Donatus makes the following remark on the line *natura tu illi pater es, consiliis ego*:

ostendit poeta verbis Micionis, qui a natura et affectu sit pater, nullum patrem esse sapientem, eum vero posse sine perturbatione perfrui his quos amat, quem patrem esse consilium fecerit, non natura, hoc est qui filium adoptaverit.

Why is it impossible for the "natural" father to be at the same time a wise father? Commenting on the conversion of Demea in Act V, Donatus remarks (*ad* 855):

... hunc quoque ducat ad sententiam Micionis, non tamen hoc sentientem quod ita fieri oporteat, sed quod ita res cogat. vult enim naturalem inesse veris patribus acrimoniam, sed eam semper invidiosam esse adolescentibus.

Somewhat later (*ad* 873) he restates the same point:

hic ostendit Terentius verum patrem et molestiorem et odiosum magis esse adolescentibus.

²⁴ The most striking appearance of the theme elsewhere in Menander occurs at *Heaut.* 985 ff., where Clitophon attempts to soften Chremes' anger or pretended anger by professing to doubt whether Chremes can be his natural father. It is also of some importance in the paratragic domestic situation of the *Samia* (consider especially 131-35), where the relation between Demeas and his adopted son Moschion offers perhaps the closest parallel to the relation between Micio and Aeschinus in the *Adelphoe*. One also wonders whether Terence's decision to produce the *Adelphoe* on the occasion of the funeral of Aemilius Paulus does not indicate something of his understanding of the play. Paulus was the natural father of Q. Fabius Maximus and P. Cornelius Africanus, who had been adopted into the families respectively of Fabius Maximus Cunctator and Scipio Africanus Maior.

In “true fathers” there is, according to Donatus, a “natural acrimony” or harshness which necessarily affects the relations between fathers and sons; there is a natural, necessary and permanent tension or disharmony between natural fathers and natural sons.

For an understanding of the phenomenon to which Donatus refers, one may turn to Aristotle. In Book VII of the *Politics*, in the context of a discussion of the passion which Aristotle (following Plato) calls “spirit” (*θυμός*), Aristotle makes the following observations:

... it is *θυμός* which produces friendliness [*τὸ φιλητικόν*]; for it is the power of the soul by which we are friendly. A sign of this: *θυμός* rises up especially against familiars [*συνήθεις*] and friends rather than against those who are unknown when it believes there has been a slight . . . But one ought not to behave in this way toward anyone, and magnanimous men are not savage by nature—except toward those who commit injustice. And they will experience this particularly toward their familiars, as was said before, if they believe they have been done an injustice. And it is reasonable that this should happen, for among those they suppose to be in their debt for some benefit they hold they have deprived of this in addition to the injury. Thus it is said “harsh are the wars of brothers,” and “those strong in love will be strong in hate.”²⁵

The word *θυμός* ordinarily means “anger.” In Aristotle’s view, anger is only a surface manifestation or a symptom of *θυμός* properly understood. For Aristotle, *θυμός* properly speaking is the part or faculty of the soul by which we feel love, friendship or attachment (*φιλία*) for the things that belong to us. The connection between “friendship” and “anger” is this. Relations of friendship between human beings, as Aristotle indicates elsewhere,²⁶ subsume and in a sense replace relations of justice, so that a betrayal of friendship constitutes an act of injustice. Now one who has been done an injustice is normally angered. The injustice will be regarded as greater, and the anger it arouses will be more severe, in proportion to the intimacy of the relationship involved. The most terrible crimes of anger occur in the most intimate human relationships—the “friendships” that exist within a family.

²⁵ *Pol.* 1327B40–28A16. The entire passage should be compared with Plato, *Rep.* 375a ff.

²⁶ *Eth. Nic.* 1155A26–28.

The most terrible crimes of anger are a proper subject of tragedy rather than comedy. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle recommends that the tragic deed be committed within the "friendships" of the family.²⁷ Yet if there are by definition no terrible crimes in comedy, there exists a comic equivalent for, say, Medea; it is the *iratus senex*. The psychological basis for the comic convention of the angry father would appear to be as follows. There is a necessary disproportion between the love felt by parents toward their children and the love felt by children toward their parents, since parents love their children as something truly belonging to or part of themselves.²⁸ At the same time, the debt owed by children to their parents is intrinsically beyond repayment. Accordingly, it is only natural for parents to feel slighted by the inadequacy of the return their children are able to make to them, and they are disposed to regard as injustices, and to become angered by, relatively minor lapses in their children's behavior toward themselves and others. They have difficulty maintaining a sense of proportion, and tend to transform trivial offenses and pardonable faults into acts of injustice which call for punishment rather than reasoned admonition.

This phenomenon is particularly well illustrated in the *Adelphoe*. Demea, the "natural" father, insists on regarding as a crime or an outrageous injustice (*flagitium*) what Micio, as indeed any unprejudiced observer, is able to recognize as a "misdeed" (*peccatum*) that is natural or "human" and therefore deserving of pardon rather than punishment (101, 112, 115-16, 686-87). That Micio's view is indeed the view of any unprejudiced observer appears from the fact that Hegio agrees with it (469-71). What is most striking is that the poet goes out of his way to stress Demea's admiration for Hegio: by Demea's own account, Hegio is not only a reasonable man but the very exemplar of "old-fashioned virtue" (442). Demea's disagreement with Hegio concerning the misdeeds of his son cannot be understood as a disagreement of principle, since Demea also regards himself as an adherent of old-fashioned virtue. Demea's unreasonable strictness has to be understood as an expression not so much of his character as of a particular passion aroused by a particular act of injustice—the passion of

²⁷ *Poet.* 1453B19.

²⁸ Consider *Eth. Nic.* 1161B18-27.

paternal anger. In the *Heauton Timorumenos*, Menedemus is given a speech which characterizes Demea's situation as much as his own:

ita comparatam esse hominum naturam omnium
 aliena ut melius videant et diiudicent
 quam sua! an eo fit quia in re nostra aut gaudio
 sumus praepediti nimio aut aegritudine?
 hic mihi nunc quanto plus sapit quam egomet mihi!²⁹

Finally, a Menandrian fragment provides a remarkable parallel to Aristotle's observations concerning θυμός: "Don't irritate your father; you have to realize that the one whose love is greatest is also angered by the smallest things."³⁰

The question of the role of "anger" in Menandrian comedy altogether is of more than passing interest. "Anger" (ὀργή) was the title of Menander's first play. The *Dyskolos* may be said to be a study in one kind of anger—the anger at others' failings which expresses itself in misanthropy.³¹ The *Heauton Timorumenos* is a study in the anger at one's own failings which expresses itself in guilt and self-hatred.³² In the *Perikeiromene*, it is the anger of Polemon which is responsible for the action of that play. Perhaps the best access to Menander's understanding of anger is provided by the prologue to the *Perikeiromene*, spoken by the goddess Agnoia. After reviewing the situation as it stands at the beginning of the play, Agnoia makes this statement, with reference to Polemon:

All of this was set ablaze on account of what is to come, so that he might fall into a rage [εἰς ὀργὴν ἀφίκηται]—for I led him on, and he is not this way by nature—in order that the revelations should begin, and everybody find their own kin. So if anyone held this against him and thought it a disgrace, let him change his opinion.³³

²⁹ *Heaut.* 503–07. Cf. 439–41.

³⁰ Menander, fr. 659 Kock.

³¹ For the connection between δυσκολία and θυμός consider Plato, *Laws* 935a6–7 and context.

³² Consider *Eth. Nic.* 1166A33 ff., *Eth. Eud.* 1240B21 ff., Cicero, *De finibus* 5.10.28. See Barigazzi 140 ff.

³³ *Perikeiromene* 42–48. A suggestive discussion of Polemon's character and the action of the play in relation to Peripatetic ideas is provided by W. W. Fortenbaugh, "Menander's *Perikeiromene*: Misfortune, Vehemence and Polemon," *Phoenix* 28 (1974) 430–43.

Agnoia explains that Polemon is not angry “by nature.” The audience is thus asked not to consider his anger and the acts that proceed from it as a “disgrace” or as something fundamentally vicious. While plainly someone who is more than ordinarily exposed to the promptings of anger, his character is not deformed by the vice to which Aristotle attaches the name “angriness” (ὀργιλότης). His anger is not a deliberate and settled disposition but a passionate reaction to the particular situation contrived by Agnoia. “What comes about from anger [θυμοῦ],” says Aristotle, “is well judged not to be from forethought, for it is not the one acting in anger who initiates the action but the one who angers.” And since it is not from forethought, Polemon’s action is not a deliberate act of injustice (ἀδίκημα) but a “misdeed” (ἁμαρτημα) which is deserving of pardon.³⁴ In Aristotelian language, Polemon’s susceptibility to anger is to be understood as the failing of one who is “incontinent” (ἄκρατής) rather than “vicious” (κακός). Polemon’s character, his “moral choice,” is fundamentally good, but he is not always able to choose what is good because of the impulse of passion—in his case, the passion of anger. His character is not bad, but it is flawed—by the “flaw” (ἁμαρτία) of anger.³⁵

Generally speaking, Menander’s characters are never “vicious” in the Aristotelian or indeed in the ordinary sense. But neither are they entirely good. What makes Menander’s characters both comic and sympathetic is that they are at the same time fundamentally decent and all-too-human, given to the passions and weaknesses that are the common lot of humanity. The typical central character of a Menandrian play is a decent man with a “flaw” (ἁμαρτία) which makes him susceptible to an excess of passion; these excesses in turn cause him to commit certain “misdeeds” (ἁμαρτήματα = peccata). Such characters suffer from what Menander as well as Aristotle refers to as “incontinence.”³⁶ Aristotle seems to provide a blueprint for Menandrian comedy when he observes that comic poetry is “an imitation of men who are worse than the ordinary, though without being completely vicious [οὐ μέντοι

³⁴ *Eth. Nic.* 1135B25–27. Cf. 1135B11–25 together with *Rhetoric* 1374B4–9 and Barigazzi 140 ff.

³⁵ *Eth. Nic.* 1147B20–48A5.

³⁶ For “misdeeds” consider *Dyskolos* 713 and *Epitrepontes* 693 (see Barigazzi 147); for “incontinence,” *Samia* 129 (cf. 116).

κατὰ πᾶσαν κακίαν],” and that the ridiculous element in comedy depends on “a certain kind of misdeed” (ἀμάρτημά τι) that is morally reprehensible while lacking in painful or destructive consequences.³⁷

To return to the *Adelphoe*: it has been frequently observed³⁸ that the *peccatum* committed by Aeschinus is to be understood in the light of the Aristotelian distinction between ἀμάρτημα and ἀδίκημα. Aeschinus is surely not a vicious character, and his “misdeed” should not be regarded as a deliberate “injustice.” What has failed to be remarked is that Demea is no more a vicious character than his son. Demea cannot possibly be understood to represent one (or both) of the vicious extremes that surround an Aristotelian virtue. There is every reason to believe that Demea’s heart is in the right place—in Aristotle’s language, that his intention or “moral choice” is the correct one. Demea’s good intentions are indeed not altogether manifest, but there is a good reason for this: his intentions are obscured and distorted by passion. Just as Aeschinus is mastered by erotic passion, Demea is mastered by thymetic passion—by the passion of paternal anger. In Aristotelian language, Demea is “incontinent with respect to anger.”

Despite the fact that Demea’s anger is, to paraphrase Micio, a “natural and human” failing that deserves to be indulged,³⁹ Micio is unable to understand or indulge that anger. Micio does not feel the natural anger of a father because he is not a natural father. Micio is not angered by the behavior of Aeschinus because he does not feel in the way Demea does that Aeschinus owes him a debt. He does not feel that Aeschinus should love him just for what he is; rather, he tries to secure Aeschinus’ affections by constant acts of friendship. Precisely because he regards Aeschinus’ affections and respect as a free gift rather than as something owed, he does not feel wronged and hence angry when Aeschinus acts in disregard of him.

Yet it is not sufficient to say that Demea suffers from a passion or pathological condition of which Micio is free. The vindication of

³⁷ *Poet.* 1449A32–37. In discussions of tragic *hamartia* the evident moral dimension of the ἀμάρτημά τι mentioned here is generally overlooked; but consider G. K. Gresseth, “The System of Aristotle’s *Poetics*,” *TAPA* 89 (1958) 312–35, where tragic *hamartia* is brought into relation with “incontinence.”

³⁸ For example, Rieth 21 and note 46.

³⁹ Micio calls Aeschinus’ act a *peccatum magnum at humanum* (687); compare *Eth. Nic.* 1136A8–9, 1147B20–48A11, 1149B4–11.

Demea at the end of the *Adelphoe* is also in some sense a vindication of his anger. Anger is the political passion par excellence, and Micio is entirely apolitical. His attachment to Aeschinus blinds him to the educational needs of the majority of the young or to the kind of education that is politically relevant. Micio manifests no understanding of or concern for the requirements of the city or political life. Micio recalls Xenophon's Proxenos, who was able to rule "gentlemen" by praise and blame but was utterly unable to secure the obedience of the common soldiers either through shame or fear; he reminds us of the "sophists" described by Aristotle who believe that the political art is the same as rhetoric, or that "speeches are sufficient" in ruling human beings.⁴⁰ Micio, who lacks anger, does not pay sufficient attention to the need for law, coercion or punishment. Demea's anger, while it may occasion injustice to individuals, is a necessary support of justice in the city. *Stat Aristoteles defensor irae et vetat illam nobis exsecari*, says Seneca: according to Aristotle, anger is not only a natural but a useful passion that can act as the "armament" of virtue.⁴¹ According to Menander:

If each of us opposed willingly the one who does injustice and joined others in doing so, considering as his private wrong the injustice that had occurred, and cooperated in avenging it harshly, the harm done by the wicked would no longer increase, but being guarded against constantly and punished where there is need, they would become rare and even disappear.⁴²

It is better—from the point of view of the city or political life—to err in the direction of severity than of softness:

What is now called goodness [*χρηστότης*] by some is only an abandonment of all of life to wickedness, for no one who does an injustice is punished.⁴³

To what extent these sober thoughts actually represent the view of Menander or a conscious theme of his plays is uncertain. The least that can be said is that the Aristotelianism of Menander appears to be

⁴⁰ Xenophon, *Anabasis* 2.6.19–20; Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1180A15 and context.

⁴¹ Seneca, *De ira* 3.3.1; cf. 1.17.1: *Aristoteles ait affectus quosdam si quis illis bene utatur pro armis esse*. Compare also Cicero, *Tusc. disp.* 4.19. This is likely to have been the doctrine of Theophrastus' lost treatise on the passions (consider fr. 72 Wimmer).

⁴³ Menander, fr. 548 Körte. Cf. fr. 725 and Barigazzi 84–86.

⁴² Menander, fr. 543 Körte.

more pervasive and more nuanced than has generally been assumed. Certainly the *Adelphoe* suggests that Peripatetic ideas served Menander neither as intellectual ornamentation nor as rigid formulae for the treatment of character but rather as integral elements in the conception and construction of his plays.