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SALIENT FEATURES OF EVIL EYE BELIEF AND PRACTICE

AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL LIST OF KEY FEATURES

In his important anthology of anthropological studies on the Evil Eye from past to present, anthropologist Clarence Maloney (1976) lists seven aspects of Evil Eye belief and practice that are conventionally found in Evil Eye cultures around the world, i.e. cultures where Evil Eye belief flourishes:

(1) power emanates from the eye (or mouth) and strikes some object or person;

(2) the stricken object is of value, and its destruction or injury is sudden;

(3) the one casting the evil eye may not know he has the power;

(4) the one affected may not be able to identify the source of power;

(5) the evil eye can be deflected or its effects modified or cured by particular devices, rituals, and symbols;

(6) the belief helps to explain or rationalize sickness, misfortune, or loss of possessions such as animals or crops;

(7) in at least some functioning of the belief everywhere, envy is a factor.[1]

The list is a useful summary of key and consistently attested aspects of Evil Eye belief and practice in modern time and across cultures. It also

1. Maloney 1976:vii–viii.

is remarkable in its consistency with features of ancient Evil Eye belief and practice as described in the most extensive trestise of the ancient world on the Evil Eye, namely the *Symposium* or *Table Talk* of the influential philosopher and biographer, Mestrius Plutarch of Chaeronea, Greece (50–120 CE), the *Quaestiones Convivales* (5.7.1–6; *Mor.* 680C–683B).

PLUTARCH

In the seventh dialogue/question of the fifth book of his *Quaestiones Convivales* (*Convivial Questions*), Plutarch presents a dinner discussion, a Symposium or Table Talk, devoted to the topic "concerning those who are said to cast an Evil Eye" (*peri tôn katabaskainein legomenôn, Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.1 [*Mor*. 680C]). Such discussions normally accompanied banquets. This one included the host Mestrius Florus and his four guests, Plutarch, Patrocleas, Soclarus, and Gaius, the son-in-law of Florus. This is the fullest emic or native informant discussion from antiquity on the Evil Eye, its salient features, how it works, and measures taken to avert it.[2]

Representing the general state of knowledge of educated elites on the subject, the text opens with doubts concerning the Evil Eye that are quickly countered by the host and close friend of Plutarch, Mestrius Florus, who seeks to establish a serious, educated explanation of the phenomenon based on actual physical data. The ensuing discussion among the five speakers recounts various ideas concerning the eye and vision in general as well as notable features of the Evil Eye in particular.[3] The conversation demonstrates what at that time was accepted as rational and credible—not just by common folk but by educated, upper-class elites as well. For Plutarch and his companions the Evil Eye was no matter of vulgar superstition, but an actual physical reality whose operation could be explained on rationale grounds.[4]

What follows is a summarization of the discussion showing the flow of the conversation, with paraphrase or direct quotation where appropriate.[5]

2. On Plutarch's discussion see Hauschild 1979:16–23; Dickie 1991; Rakoczy 1996:186–205.

3. Matthew Dickie (1995:18) sees Plutarch (*Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.2–3 [*Mor*. 680F–681F, 682F]) particularly reliant on the presocratic philosopher Democritus (c. 460–370 BCE) who used his theory of atomic particles to account for the capacity of the eyes of the envious to cause bodily and psychic upset (Diels-Kranz, *FVS* 68 A 77). Plutarch's discussion represents, in Dickie's view (1991), an amalgam of Democritus's particle theory of vision, peripatetic pneuma theory, and notions presented in the Aristotelian *Problemata*. On this text and theories of vision see also Rakoczy 1996:186–205.

4. As Rakoczy (1996:187 and *passim*) repeatedly and rightly has emphasized.

5. I follow the Loeb Classical Library translation by Clement and Hoffleit (1969)

An initial unit sets the stage and presents the thinking of the host, Mestrius Florus (*Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.1 [Mor. 680C–F]). "Once at dinner a discussion arose about people who are said to cast an Evil Eye (*katabaskainein*) and to have an Evil Eye (*baskanon . . . ophthalmon*)" (*Mor*. 680C).[6] "While everybody else pronounced the matter completely silly and scoffed at it, Mestrius Florus, our host, declared that actual facts lend astonishing support to the common belief" (680C).[7] It is not warranted, Florus went on, to reject these facts for want of an explanation (680C). The correct method of procedure is rather to first establish the facts and then by means of logic determine their explanation (680D). Among the many unexplained phenomena that are on record is the fact that there are some persons "who seriously hurt children by looking at them (*katablepein ta paidia*), impairing their susceptible, vulnerable constitutions," but who are less able to similarly harm the stable health of adults (680D).[8] However, Mestrius Florus continued, the so-called Thibaeans living near Pontus in Asia Minor, according to Phylarchus, a historian of the third century BCE, were deadly not only to children but to adults as well as (680E).[9] Victims who were subjected to the glance (*to blemma*), breath (*tên anapnoên*), or speech (*tên dialekton*) of the Thibaeans "wasted away and fell ill (*têkesthai kai nosein*)," as attested by the half-Greeks who bought slaves for sale from there (680D-E). An Evil Eye, in other words, was thought to work in tandem with an evil tongue or mouth (breath, speech; cf. *mala lingua*, and see also 680F). All three—looking, breathing, speaking—involved emanations from the body. In this regard, Mestius Florus continues, illness can be due to contact and infection (680E). But it also does happen sometimes, as previously mentioned, that persons are also injured by a harmful glance (*prosblephthentes*; 680F).[10] This is not to be disbelieved just because the reason is hard to provide (680F).

At this point, Plutarch joins in and responds that Mestius Florus has pointed the way to an explanation in his referring to "effluences (*tas*

because of its general availability, but I have made extensive modifications.

6. The LCL renders *katabaskainein* here and 682E and *baskainen* in 681D with "cast a spell." But the expression "Evil Eye" (*baskanon ophthalmon*) and the standard Evil Eye terminology throughout the dialogue argue that the verb is best rendered "cast an Evil Eye" here and hereafter. LCL "bewitch" in 682B is misleading for the same reason.

7. Heliodorus's novel, *Aethiopica*, presents another instance where the Evil Eye as a cause of illness is doubted by one character but defended by another. On this text, see below, pp. 65–71.

8. Here is the conventional view that the Evil Eye is a cause of illness, especially of vulnerable children.

9. For the Phylarchus reference see the fragment in FGrHist 81 F 79a.

10. Note that terms of the *blep-* root join *bask-* words as terminology for the Evil Eye.

aporroias) from the body" (*Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.2; *Mor.* 680F; cf. 681A). "For odor, voice, and breathing are all various emanations (*apophorai*) from living bodies that produce sensation [in other bodies] whenever the sense organs of sense are stimulated by their impact . . . In all probability, the most active stream of such emanations is that which passes out through the eyes (*dia tôn ophthalmôn*). For vision (*hê opsis*), being very swift and borne by a substance (*pneuma*) that gives off a flame-like brilliance, radiates a wonderous power (*dynamin*)" (680F–681A).[11] Consequently one both "experiences and produces" (*paschein kai poiein*) many effects through one's eyes. Whether one is governed by pleasure or displeasure is determined by what one sees (*tôn horatôn*; 681A). As persons are harmed through their eyes/vision (*dia tês opseis*), so they also influence others and inflict harm on others through these same eyes (681B).[12]

One example of this power of the eye/vision/looking (*opsis*, *emblepein*) involves the chemistry of love where lovers melt each other with their amorous glances (681A–B) "The answering glances (*hai antiblepseis*) of the young and beautiful[13] and the efflux from their eyes (*to dia tôn ommatôn ekpipton*), whether it be light (*phôs*) or a current of particles (*rheuma*), melts the lovers and destroys them in bittersweet pleasure" (681B) . . . "The glances of the beautiful kindle fire, even when returned from a great distance, in the souls of the amorous" (681C).[14] So it is entirely reasonable to believe that it is through their eyes that persons are passively influenced and experience harm, on the one hand, and influence others and inflict injury, on the other hand (681B). Seeing (*prosblepein*) and being seen (*prosblepesthai*) wound more deeply than do touching or hearing, and kindle fire even over great distance (681C).[15] A second instance of the eye's power is how people are

11. These ideas concerning emanations from the body, including the eye, firmly echo the particle theory of Democritus as mentioned above, p. 49. Eventually Democritus and his theory of *eidola* are explicitly mentioned (*Mor.* 682F–683A; cf. Democritus, Frag. 77 (Diels-Kranz, *FVS* 68 A 77).

12. Plutarch thus allows that the eye can function both passively (*paschein*) and actively (*poiein*), though the latter trait seems to prevail.

13. The young and beautiful were deemed typical victims of the Evil Eye and envy; see also Plutarch, *Non posse* [*Mor.* 1090C].

14. The notion of particles or beams of light flowing from the eye echoes peripatetic notions found in the Aristotelian corpus; cf. Ps-Aristotle, *Problemata inedita* 3.52 cited above, p. 28. Rakockzy (1996:193) suspects a common source. When the emanation is thought of as a beam of light, the eye is then comparable to a lamp that casts forth light, as in Jesus's word about a good and an Evil Eye (Matt 6:22–23).

15. The melting and fire-kindling nature of the eye recalls comparison of the eye to the sun sending forth the fiery rays or to a lamp emitting beams of light. Cf. also ocular aggression through hostile staring and intense gazing as typical of Mediterranean cultures (Gilmore, *Aggression,* 1987a).

cured of the illness of jaundice by looking at a yellow-colored plover (*charadrios*, 681C).[16] The bird sucks out the illness of the viewer, which passes like a stream through the viewer's eye (*dia tês opseôs*), and takes it into itself (681C). These birds themselves cannot directly look at (*prosblepousin*) at those with jaundice, but turn away and keep their eyes (*ta ommata*) closed (681D). This is not because the birds begrudge (*ou phthonountes*) the effect of their healing power, as some think, but to avoid being wounded themselves (681D).[17] Third, the power of the eye is evident in the fact that illnesses (*ta nosêmata*) of the eye are more contagious and instant that other illnesses, showing how "penetrating and swift the power of the eye to take in illness (*pathous*) or direct it (*prosbalein*) against another" (681D).[18]

A third guest, Patrocleas, joins the discussion (*Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.3 [*Mor*. 681D]). Moving beyond the physiological effects, he inquires about the psychical aspect (*ta de tês psychês*) of casting an Evil Eye (*to baskainein*; 681D):[19] how can a glance of the eye (*tês opseôs*) spread harm to the persons who are looked at (*tous horômenous*)? (681D). Plutarch answers that the body is affected when the mind and emotions are aroused, as when amorous thoughts arouse the genitals or when pain, greed, or jealousy (*zêlotypiai*) cause one to change color and lose health (681D–E).

> Envy (*ho phthonos*), ensconced by nature in the mind more than any other passion also fills the body with evil . . . When, therefore, individuals under envy's sway direct their glance at others, their eyes, which are close to the mind and draw from it envy's evil, then attack these other persons as if with poisoned arrows (*pepharagmena belê*). (681E)[20]

16. The plover is a yellowish bird, the sight of which was thought to cure the yellow illness of jaundice, according to the principle of *similia similibus*, "like influences like," "like against or curing like." Yellow color attracts and heals yellow illness. Pliny (*NH* 30.94) also mentions this cure: "There is a bird called 'jaundice' (*icterus*) from its color. If one with jaundice looks at it, he is cured, we are told, and the bird dies."

17. The belief is that the eyes of both the victims and those of the birds of healing are conduits of energy so that harm can come from looking directly into another's eye. This is consistent with the idea that humans too should always avoid looking into the eye of Evil Eye possesors. Note also that the verb *phthonein*, generally meaning "to envy" in this context is best rendered "begrudge."

18. The active agency of the eye is clear here, as well as its expelling or casting forth (*prosbalein*), a concept basic to casting an Evil Eye, as expressed by the Italian terms *jettatura, jettatore* (from *jettare*, "to cast, throw").

19. The LCL translation of *to baskainein* as "the casting spells" is misleading. It obscures the fact that the focus of this entire dialogue is on the power of the (Evil) Eye, ocular glance and vision, and not the casting of spells.

20. Consideration of envy is natural to the discussion of the eye and the Evil Eye because it is assumed to operate through the eye. Patrocleas ranks envy as the passion

Artists attempt to render this morbid condition, when painting the face of a personified version of envy (*tou phthonou*).[21] Envy attacks victims through a noxious glance of the eye. Envy and Evil Eye work in tandem, as Plutarch's observation above indicates (*Mor*. 681E).[22]

This comment also illustrates the understanding of the eye as channel of the disposition of envy. Patrocleas concludes that it is thus neither paradoxical nor incredible that those who look with envy at others should impact the objects of their gaze (*tous prosorômenous*; 681E–F). "In general, the emotions of the mind increase the violence and energy of the body's powers" (681F). This explains, he adds, how so-called anti-Evil Eye amulets (*probaskaniôn*) are considered a protection against envy (*phthonos*): they attract the eye (*opsis*) of the envier by their unusual appearance (*tên atopian*) so that the eye's glance is diverted to the amulet and exerts less impact on the victims (682A).[23]

A fourth guest, Soclarus, objects that there is a problem with linking the Evil Eye with envy (*Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.4 [*Mor*. 682A]). Allowing as true what some say about the victims of the Evil Eye (*hoi baskainomenoi*), the dinner guests know full well, he states, that "some people believe that friends and relatives, and in some cases even fathers, have the Evil Eye (*ophthalmon baskanon*)," so that their wives will not show them their children nor allow the children to be looked upon (*katablepesthai*) for very long (682A–B).[24]

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most deeply engrained in the mind and corruptive of the body as well. For envy as worst of the passions and harmful to the body see also Basil, Homily 11, "On Envy" (PG 31. 372–385) discussed in Vol. 4, chap. 2. Compare Sir 31:13: "Remember that an Evil Eye (*ophthalmos ponêros*) is a wicked thing; what has been created more evil than an Evil Eye."

21. On the iconography of envy see Dunbabin and Dickie 1983; Slane and Dickie 1993.

22. Patrocleas's comparison of the emissions from an envious Evil Eye with poisoned arrows graphically illustrates the assumed active, aggressive and harmful power of the envious Evil Eye. For this analogy see also Aeschylus, *Agam*. 241, 468; *Persians* 81–82.

23. This is one of several theories on how anti-Evil Eye amulets work. It claims that the amulet's strange or grotesque appearance attracts the Evil Eye of the envier and diverts its attention, thereby weakening the force directed at the intended victim.

24. Children are universally regarded as potential victims of the Evil Eye (and envy). For more on this point see below under "Victims of the Evil Eye" including one's own family, pp. 61–62, 121, 146–53. Plutarch elsewhere (*De frat.* [*Mor.* 485]) urges that brothers make every effort to avoid envying one another. If they find it impossible to envy, then they should at least direct their Evil Eye at persons outside the family (*trepein exô pros heautous apocheteuein to baskanon*), like politicians who divert internal sedition by promoting foreign wars (*De frat. [Mor*. 485E]). As to the protection of infants and family members, the strategy is concealment—hiding the children from view, or restricting the length of time they can be looked at.

How, in this close circle of family, he asks, can the emotion be that of envy?[25] And, he further asks, what will you say about those who are reputed to Evil-Eye themselves (*heautous katabaskainein*)? (682B).[26] You must have heard of that, or at any rate read these lines:

> Fair once were, fair indeed, the tresses of Eutelidas;
> But he Evil-Eyed himself (*auton baskainein*), that baneful man,
> Beholding (him)self in river's eddy; and straight the deadly sickness (*nousos*) . . . (682B)[27]

The legend, Soclarus explains, is that Eutelidas, handsome in his own estimation, and being affected by what he saw with his eye (*opsis*) [i.e. the reflected image of himself in the water], fell ill (*nosênai*) and lost his beauty with his health. How are these extraordinary phenomena to be accounted for, he asks (682B).

Soclarus's contribution to the conversation mentions several important details. (1) Friends, relatives and parents can have the Evil Eye and harm one another within the close family circle. (2) A strategy of protection is mentioned: to protect vulnerable children in this circle, mothers hide them from the sight of fathers who have the Evil Eye or limit the time fathers can look at the children. (3) It is also believed that people can Evil-Eye themselves (autofascination), with Eutelidas being a classic example. (4) This Evil-Eyeing of one's own family members or of oneself illustrates that the Evil Eye can operate involuntarily. (5) These notions call for an explanation of the relation of the Evil Eye and envy, which is previously postulated in 681E–F. (6) All this is presumed to be common knowledge, however difficult the cases are to understand.

Plutarch (*Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.5) next takes up Soclarus's question about persons Evil-Eyeing their own relatives and even themselves. He points out how the emotions, long engrained in the mind, often work contrary to a person's will (682C). Thus it is no surprise that habit causes those who have brought themselves into an envious and Evil-Eyed state (*tên phthontikên kai baskantikên hexin*) are moved against their own relatives and friends

25. The objection presumably rests on the assumed unliklihood that fathers would intentionally envy *their own children*.

26. Once again the LCL translation "bewitch" for *katabaskainein* fails to communicate an explicit reference to casting of an Evil Eye, despite the explicit mention here of looking (*katablepesthai*).

27. Plutarch citing Euphorion (third century BCE, Frag. 175. in *Collectanea Alexandrina,* ed. Powell). Note the similarity to the Narcissus myth (admiring his reflection in the water and thereby Evil-Eyeing himself) and the danger of beholding one's reflection in a mirror, as well as the myth of Medusa and later the myth of Cyclops in Theocritus, *Idyls* 6.39. On self-fascination see below, 29–30, 55–56, 119, 151.

(*ta oikeia*) consistent with their pathological condition (682D).[28] In these circumstances they are acting in accord with their nature rather than their will, and thus an envious disposition (*hê diathesis*) moves an envious person (*phthonon*) to act enviously (*phthonikôs*) in all things (682D). It is thus natural for one to cast an Evil Eye (*katablepein*) more often on one's own relatives and friends and to hurt them more than others (682D).[29] Plutarch also finds it "not unreasonable" that Eutelidas and all others said to have Evil-Eyed themselves (*katabaskainein heautous*) suffered this misfortune (682E). Good health is precarious and health can wax and wane. When persons experience their health improving, they look carefully at themselves (*heautous epiblepôsin*), looking intently (*kataskopein*) at their bodies with wonder. When their physical condition suddenly worsens, this decline is attributed to their having Evil-Eyed themselves (*heautous katabaskainein*) by looking at themselves (682E).[30] While the looking was intentional, the ill effect clearly was not, thus illustrating the belief that the Evil Eye operates unintentionally as well as volitionally. Plutarch then returns to the case of Eutelidas and similar others in explaining how autofascination (Evil-Eyeing of oneself) most frequently happens (682E–F). He quotes the legend of handsome Eutelidas gazing into the water and inadvertently Evil-Eyeing himself, falling ill and losing his beauty.

Thus, when Evil-Eyed persons behold their reflection in the water, it is thought, autofascination occurs

> by streams of particles (*rheumatôn*) [flowing from the eyes of the beholders on to the water] being reflected from sheets of water or other mirror-like surfaces, rising like vapor, and returning to the beholders (*tous horôntous*), so that they themselves are injured by the same means by which they harm others [namely noxious emissions from the eye]. Perhaps when this [attack by the Evil Eye] happens in the case of children, the blame is often

28. Here Plutarch invokes the Aristotelian concept of habit shaping character traits like that of envy.

29. Presumably because a person is more frequently in the presence of family and friends than of others. Plutarch's explanation implies the assumption that the Evil Eye and envy, in being traits of nature rather than choices of will, can operate involuntarily rather than intentionally, as he explains a few lines later.

30. This explanation turns from envy as the cause of injury to looking at oneself as a cause. When persons, who have visually examined themselves (*heautous epiblepôsin*, *kataskopein*) in pleasure at their good health, suddenly experience a decline in health, it is thought that this decline was caused by their having looked at themselves and hence having Evil-Eyed themselves (*heautous katabaskainein*).

> wrongly assigned to those who gaze at (*tôn enorôntôn*) them (682E–F).[31]

These cases of self-fascination illustrate how the Evil Eye was thought to be governed by nature rather than by will and to operate automatically and *unintentionally.*

Gaius, son-in-law of the host Mestius Florus, now joins the conversation (*Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.6 [*Mor.* 682F–683A]) to remind everyone not to ignore Democritus's venerable theory of vision and its concept of images (*eidola*)[32] that are projected from the eye (*Mor.* 682F). Democritus, Gaius recalls, says that envious persons (*tous phthonountas*) emit these images (*eidôlôn*) "not altogether unconsciously or unintentionally" and that these images are infected with the envious persons's wickedness (*mochthêrias*) and Evil Eye malice (*baskanias*; *Mor.* 683A, referring to Democritus).[33] These images and their malice (when projected) adhere to and permanently reside in persons who are struck by the Evil-Eye (*tois baskainomenois*), disturbing and harming them in both body and mind (683A). Plutarch agrees, asserting that "the only things that I denied to the emanations (*tôn rheumatôn*) were life and free will" (683A)—without getting into any spooky notions of sentient, purposeful shapes and apparitions, which can be discussed tomorrow (683A–B). Plutarch appears to be rejecting any notion that the emanations had an existence of their own apart from the humans from whom they emanated. Whereas Gaius cites Democritus to affirm some role of intentionality and consciousness in the process, Plutarch himself (682C–F) allows little place for the will, especially in the light of the possibility of self-fascination. Plutarch's familiarity with Democritus' atomistic theory of vision and his supposed presumption of an active eye is evident here, however Plutarch's reliance on Democritus may be judged.

More detailed review of this debate would take us too far afield.[34] It is sufficient for our purpose to note the points on which Plutarch and

31. With this final comment, Plutarch seems to be suggesting that it is is not others, who with their Evil Eye harm children, but rather that children Evil-Eye themselves—a rather singular notion.

32. LCL: *simulacra*. Plutarch's reliance on Democritus, the fifth century BCE philosopher and atomist scientist, and his presumed extramission theory of vision and emission of particles/images is now expressly stated; cf. also *Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.2 [*Mor.* 681A].

33. Democritus, Frag. A 77 (Diels-Kranz, *FVS* 68 A 77).

34. For varying positions see Dickie (1991; 1995:16–17) and Rakoczy (1996:191–92 n708, 204–5). In contrast to Dickie (Plutarch gives a variant of Democritus's theory), Rakoczy finds a substantive difference while at the same time agreement on the eye as active organ and looking as a means of causing harm. On Democritus's theory see Baldes 1975.

Democritus agree: vision as involving the flow of particles, atoms, tiny images conveyed through the air, with an Evil Eye projecting particles/images ladened with malice, often connected with envy, and injurious to children and others.

Dickie notes that this extramission theory also "found its way into two collections of physical and medical conundrums, one ascribed to Aristotle[35] and the other to Alexander of Aphrodisias."[36] This positive reception of the theory, as demonstrated also by the comments of Pliny the Elder and Aelian, shows the extent and strength of this extramission theory among the *hoi polloi* and educated alike.

It is highly instructive to compare the data of Plutarch's dialogue with the seven aspects listed by Maloney and cited above as typical of Evil Eye belief and practice across the globe. The comparison shows that basic features of the belief complex have a two thousand year history going back to the first century CE and beyond.

ANCIENT AND MODERN VERSIONS COMPARED

In regard to Maloney's first point, the notion of power emanating from the eye presumes the concept of an *active eye* that is basic to the so-called *extramission theory of vision*. This is the most prevalent of varying ocular theories in the ancient world.[37] Four differing theories of vision have been delineated.[38] I present them here in modified form. One school of thought attributed visual sensation to "effulgences" (*aidola*), thin layers of atoms thought to stream from the surface of *objects* of sight via the air into the eye of the beholder. This is the so-called *intromission theory of vision*, proponents of which included the atomists Leucippus (fifth century BCE), Democritus (c. 460–370 BCE) and Epicurus of Samos (341–270 BCE).[39] "They believed that isomorphic images (or *eidola*) streamed off objects and entered the eye, where they were sensed."[40] The Epicurean poet Lucretius (94–55 BCE) held a similar view. Versions of a second theory, favored by Alcmaeon of Croton

35. Dickie 1995:17; Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problemata inedita* 3.52 (*Aristotelis opera omnia,* ed. Bussemaker 4:332)

36. Alexander of Aphrodisias, *Probl. phys.*2.53 (in *Physici et Medici Graeci minores*. ed. Ideler, 1841, 1:67–68).

37. See Seligmann 1910 2:454–62; Rakoczy 1996:19–37.

38. See Allison 1987:62–66.

39. Plutarch, however, whose speaker Gaius cites Democritus (Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.6 [*Mor*. 682F–683A]), appears to regard Democritus as considering the eye to be an *active* agent emitting noxious particles.

40. C. G. Gross 1999:58.

(early fifth century BCE), Parmenides (fifth century BCE), Empedocles, Pythagorians, Stoics, and the majority of ancient voices (Euclid, Ptolemy, Galen et al.), held that the eye is an *active* agent producing or transmitting particles of ray-like energy. "The eye," Alcmaeon stated," obviously has fire within it, for when one is struck this fire flashes out. Vision is due to gleaming . . ."[41] Empedocles (fifth century BCE),[42] for example, compared the eye to a lamp, as did Jesus centuries later (Matt 6:22–23/Luke 11:33–36), explaining that the eye contains an "elemental" or "primal" fire (*ôgygion pyr*) whose energy is conveyed outward from the body to the object of vision. This is the so-called *extramission theory of vision*. Plutarch (*Quaest. Conv.* 5.7) gives the fullest expression of this view, along with a description of how the Evil Eye works. Plutarch (*Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.6 [*Mor*. 682F–683A]) regards Democritus as representing an extramission theory of vision: "Democritus says that these *eidola* are emanations emitted not altogether unconsciously or unintentionally by the envious (*tous phthonountas*), and are charged with their wickedness and Evil Eye malice (*baskanias*)." (In actuality, however, Democritus conceived of atoms emitted *not by the eye of the viewer but by the object viewed*.) Plato also held the extramission theory of vision. Describing the human body, he expressed the notion of the eyes containing and emitting fire ("light-bearing eyes," *phôsphora ommata*): "When the eye is functioning well, this fire within us is pure (*eilikrinê*) and flows through the eyes out into the world" (*Timaeus* 45b–46a).[43] He added that vision resulted from the light projected from the eyes coalescing with effluences streaming from the objects seen. Fourth, Aristotle [384–322 BCE], and his Peripatetic school seem to have entertained both active and passive eye theories on different occasions,[44] and spoke of the eye as both passive and active.[45] While criticizing the theory of an active eye and conceiving of the eye as passive and receptive (in *de Sensu* [in *Parva Naturalia*] 437a b25–27), Aristotle could on other occasions speak of the eye as an active agent. Writing about the marring effect that the look of menstruating women has on

41. Alcmaeon (Frag. A 5), cited by Theophrastus, *Sens.* 7; cf. C. G. Gross 1999:58.

42. Empedocles, Frag. 31 B84 (Diels-Kranz, *FVS* 31 B 84, vol. 1:342.4–9), and cited in Theophrastus, *Sens.* 7.

43. For Plutarch's version of Plato's theory of vision (in *Timaeus*) see *Quaest. Conv.* 1 [*Mor*. 626C].

44. Rakoczy 1996:134–55; Allision 1987:81 n11 distinguishes between Aristotle's "mature opinion" (*de Sensu* and *de Anima*) and earlier accounts (*Meteor*. 3.2.372a 19–21; 3.372b34–373a19; 4.373a35–b13; b32–33; 374b11, 12; cf. *De cael.* 2.8.290a17–24; *Gen. An*. 5.1.781a3–13.

45. Aristotle, *Insomn.* 459b 27 (*paschei . . . poiei*); cf. also Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 5.7 [*Mor*. 682] (*paschein kai poiein*).

mirrors, he explains that the polluting power of the menstrual blood exits through the eyes and then damages the mirror on which the look falls:

> When menstruating women look into very clean mirrors, the surface of the mirror becomes as a blood-red cloud; and when the mirror is new, it is not easy to remove this dirt; but when it is old, it is easier. (Aristotle, *Insomn.* 459b 27–32)[46]

This theory of the eye emitting a damaging power is consistent with the notion of an Evil Eye emitting noxious rays on hapless victims.[47] His theory concerning menstrual blood and ocular emission is cited frequently thereafter in connection with references to the Evil Eye and its operation.[48]

Among these schools of thought, the extramission theory of vision was predominant in the ancient Mediterrean world, was known also in India and China, and continued in the West throughout the Middle Ages. Its proponents formed a vast array of intellectual luminaries including Alcmaeon, Empedocles, Parmenides, Plato, Euclid (*fl.* fourth–third century BCE), Theophrastus (c. 371–c. 287 BCE), Pythagoreans, Perpatetics, Stoics, Philo (c. 30 BCE–40 CE), Seneca (c. 4 BCE—65 CE), Pliny the Elder (23/24–79 CE), Plutarch (c. 50–120 CE), Galen (129–199 CE), Heliodorus (*fl.* 220–250), Augustine (354–430), al-Kindi (ninth century) Thomas Aquinas (c.1225–1274), Roger Bacon (thirteenth century), Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519), Martin Luther (1483–1546), Galileo (1565–1642), Thomas Willis (1621–1675), and J. W. von Goethe (1749–1842).[49]

Presuming this theory of the eye and vision, Plutarch has one of the speakers, Gaius, explicitly mention Democritus's theory of images (*aidôla*) emitted from bodies[50] as authoritative explanation of how an active Evil Eye operates (*Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.6 [*Mor.* 682F–683A]). Democritus's theory, as presented by Plutarch, of the lasting deleterious effect of the emanations from an envious Evil eye when they strike a victim also explains how the Evil Eye can be thought to cause illness and the slow wasting away of humans and animals. It is the power of the *eidola*, negative energy-laden atoms sent forth from the eye, that strike, wound, and wither victims of an envious

46. For an active Evil Eye see also See also Aristotle, *Fragmenta varia* (ed. Rose) 7 = *Zoica* 7.39.347.17, and in the Aristotelian Peripatetic tradition, Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problemata inedita* 3.52 and *Probl. phys.* 20.34, cited above pp. 21–22.

47. See Rakocsy 1996:134–40; Seligmann 1910 1:93–94.

48. See, e.g., Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theol.* I, *Quaest*. 117, Art. 3; also Marcillio Ficino (*De fascino*, 1583, 1589), Roger Bacon (*Opus maius* 4.7), Paracelsus, among others.

49. On the history of the extramission theory of vision, see also Vol. 3, chap. 2.

50. Democritus, Frag. A 77 (Diels-Kranz, *FVS*, 68 A 77).

Evil Eye. "The harm that *baskania* does, notes M. Dickie, occurs, according to Plutarch, because the eyes, which are positioned close to the soul, draw into themselves the evil with which *phthonos* has filled the soul. As a result, when men rest their eyes in envy on something, their glances fall like poisoned darts on that object."[51] Plutarch states that just as odor, speaking, and breathing produce emanations that can injure susceptible objects, so can the eye, which emits fiery rays. The eye emits a "flame-like brilliance" (*Mor.* 681A), light or particles that strike and wound victims (*Mor.* 681B, E). The ocular glance or eye "kindles passion/fire" (*Mor.* 681C). Seeing and being seen have more power than even touching or hearing (*Mor.* 681C), and are potent even over long distances (*Mor.* 681C). It is the eye that primarily determines one's pleasure or displeasure (*Mor.* 681A). The eye is the organ through which humans harm and are harmed (*Mor.* 681B, 683A). Illnesses of the eye are more contagious and instantaneous than other illnesses, allowing rapid admission to, and emission from, the body (*Mor.* 681D). The harmful emissions of envy from the Evil Eye are comparable to "poisoned arrows" (*Mor.* 681E) or a physical blow (*Mor.* 681D).

Concerning Maloney's second point: The *stricken victims* specifically mentioned by Plutarch are indeed valued; namely one's own children, other family members, and friends (*Mor.* 680D, 682A, 682F), and one's own life and health (*Mor.* 682B, 682E, 682F). In the history of Evil Eye belief and practice, children, on whom the perpetuation of the family rests, are the most frequently mentioned victims. Plutarch adds a reason for their particular vulnerability: their weak and susceptible physical constitutions that have not yet stabilized and grown firm like those of adults (*Mor.* 680D). The "young and beautiful" are likewise mentioned as typical victims (*Mor.* 681B) and for the same reason.[52] Lovers, too, bring pain to each other with their powerful glances (*Mor.* 681A–C), as described also later in Heliodorus's novel, *Aethiopica* (4.5.4–6).[53]

3. Whether or not *Evil Eye possessors* are aware of their power is not addressed directly by Plutarch. Lovers may or may not be aware (*Mor.* 681A–C, D), as is also the case with fathers (*Mor.* 682A), children (*Mor.* 682F), and alien tribes such as the Thibaeans (*Mor.* 680D). Fascinators who Evil-Eye themselves (*Mor.* 682B, E, F) are either unaware or woefully

51. Dickie 1991:26. Rakoczy (1996:108) clarifies a minor difference in the explanations of Plutarch and Democritus. In contrast to Plutarch's exposition, Democritus' atomist theory postulated that emissions proceeded not only from the eye but from a person's entire physical body. On the active agency of the eye and its projection of particles, however they are in full agreement.

52. See also Plutarch, *Non posse* [*Mor.* 1090C].

53. On victims of the Evil Eye see below under "Victims of the Evil Eye."

negligent in taking proper precaution. The consciousness of the possessor, however, is a question that overlaps the issue of whether the Evil Eye operates intentionally or unintentionally. Plutarch, as well as other sources ancient and modern, allow for both possibilities.

Unintentional operation of an Evil Eye is indicated where exotic tribes like the Thibaeans are thought to have the Evil Eye *by nature* (*Mor*. 680D), when family members and friends harm those who are near and dear (*Mor*. 682A, D), when lovers share erotic glances (*Mor*. 681A–D), or in the case of autofascination (*Mor*. 682B, E–F). These are instances when damage is thought to be caused by persons looking intently and admiringly at their own bodies (*Mor*. 682E), or at one another as lovers, or where envy and the Evil Eye are thought to be driven by nature and habit rather than by will (*Mor*. 681E, 681B–D, 682D ["even against the person's will"). *Intentional use of the Evil Eye* occurs when Evil Eye possessors feel and purposely direct envy and malice against others with the intent to injure and harm, as when fascinators direct illness toward others (*Mor*. 681D). Uncertainty about who has an Evil Eye and where it might strike calls for constant vigilance and complete proctection (681F, 682A).

Maloney's list does not include an item about persons conventionally suspected of possessing and casting an Evil Eye. But this is an important point and one on which there seems to be some degree of cross-cultural agreement: any living entities, and even dead animals, may have an Evil Eye, but persons with unusual ocular features or impairments and those who are physically deformed, or social or economically deprived, or who have cause to be highly envious, are generally deemed to be likely fascinators.[54]

4. Uncertainty about the Evil Eye as the specific source of harm and illness is always a factor. Plutarch mentions this uncertainty at the outset (*Mor*. 680C), before he marshals the evidence to prove that the Evil Eye is a cause of illness and loss. The uncertainty would involve: (1) whether or not it was an Evil Eye that caused the damage (*Mor*. 680D–F); (2) if by someone's Evil Eye, then by whose (lover? family member? one's own Evil Eye?); and (3) how it might be cured (*Mor*. 681C–D).

5. The Evil Eye can be deflected or diverted by amulets. Anti Evil Eye amulets (*probaskania*) with a strange or grotesque appearance are said to divert the gaze of the fascinator from victim to the amulet, thereby weakening or eliminating its noxious effect on the victim (*Mor*. 681F–682A). Cure of yellow jaundice can be accomplished by looking at a plover, a yellow bird thought to absorb the illness of yellow jaundice possibly caused by the Evil

54. On possessors and casters of the Evil Eye (fascinators) see below under Fascinators.

Eye. The underlying rationale is that "like works against like" (*similia similibus*). Other amulets or apotropaic gestures such as the image of an eye (eye of Horus, eye under attack) or use of the color blue against a blue Evil Eye were thought to be effective on the basis of the same principle. The *probaskania* (anti-Evil Eye amulets, *Mor*. 681F–682A), as mentioned above (pp. 16, 35), are mentioned in a biblical source as providing protection against crop loss (*Epistle of Jeremiah* 69/70)[55] Other ancient texts indicate devices, rituals, and symbols deployed for modifying or curing harm wrought by an Evil Eye, from Mesopotamian incantations onward.

6. The Evil Eye belief *explains or rationalizes sickness, misfortune, loss, and illness*, as the dialogue illustrates. Plutarch indicates that the Evil Eye (and envy) are considered causes of illness and injury and even explains how the damage is wrought[56] and causes a wasting away.[57]

7. *Envy* is regularly associated with the Evil Eye.[58] Envy, the passion most deeply rooted in the mind, contaminates the entire body with evil (*Mor.* 681E), so that all emanations of the body are poisoned by envy. This explains the connection of an Evil Eye and an evil tongue (*Mor.* 680D–E)—both are conduits of evil emanations. The poisonous emanations of envy are automatically activated and are transmitted through the (evil) eye (*Mor.* 681E–F, 682F), apart from the consciousness and intention of the fascinator (*Mor.* 681E–F). Anti-Evil Eye amulets (*probaskania*) are employed against envy (*Mor.* 681F).[59] As the linguistic evidence discussed above indicates, this association of Evil Eye and envy was ubiquitous and one of the most constant features of Evil Eye belief from antiquity down to the present.

To these seven points listed by Maloney we may add a few more basic features or aspects of Evil Eye belief and practice mentioned by Plutarch.

8. Plutarch shows that *Greek terms for "eye," "vision," "looking" etc. are polyvalent. Ops, omma* (lit. "eye") can also have the extended sense of vision, gaze, glance, looking, beholding, depending on the context. All can be synonyms for "Evil Eye" or "looking with an Evil or envious Eye," with the context being determinative. Plutarch's use of various verbs for seeing, beholding, looking at (*katablepein*, *prosblepein*, *emblepein, antiblepein,*

55. On amulets and protective strategies and devices see below, pp. 155–266.

56. *Mor.* 680D, E, F; 681B, D–E; 682A–B, D–F; 683A.

57. *Mor.* 680E; cf. also Theocritus, *Idyl* 6.39 (a girl, Galateia, becomes envious and wastes away).

58. *Mor.* 681E–F; 682A, C–D, F–683A.

59. For Plutarch's justaposing Evil Eye and envy elsewhere see also *Dio* 2.6.1; *Demetrius* 50.5; *De recta* [*Mor*. 39D]; *De curios.* [*Mor* 518C]; *De cap.* [*Mor*. 91B–C]; *Mul. Virt.* [*Mor*. 254E; *De frat.* [*Mor* 485E]; *De invidia* [*Mor*. 538D]; *Quaest. Conv.* 5.7 [*Mor*. 680B; 681F; 682A, D; 683A]; *An seni* [*Mor.* 796a]; *Non posse* [*Mor.* 1090C].

antiblepseis; *horan*, *prosoran*) in this context are all related to looking with an (envious) Evil Eye (*baskainein, katabaskainein*).[60] This is the case in other sources as well.

9. The Evil Eye encompasses *both seeing and speaking*, both an Evil Eye and an evil tongue or breath (as with the Thibaeans, *Mor.* 680D–E).

10. Evil Eye belief includes belief in the existence and threat of deities and demons,[61] among which are the deity *Baskania* (the personification of the Evil Eye) and the *baskanos daimôn* (Evil Eye demon).

11. Plutarch attests the belief that Evil-Eyed persons/fascinators can Evil-Eye themselves (682B–F), a notion of autofascination also attested elsewhere. A funery inscription from Arsameia[62] speaks of any person "who tries to conceal cowardly hatred that springs from jealousy/envy[63] even while his hostility tries to deny (the fact), and *melts his own eye over someone else's good fortune*" (line 216)—that person will be punished by the gods.[64] Beside portraying one's envying as *melting one's own eye* (cf. Sir 18:18), it also names a "base heart" as the locus of evil disposition (line 229), as do numerous biblical texts. Not only can praise and admiration of another arouse an Evil Eye, but also admiration of oneself, as in the case of Narcissus and Eutelidas (*Mor*. 682B, D); see also Theocritus (*Idylls* 6.39) concerning a certain Dametas, who admired his own image reflected in the water and to protect himself from self-fascination, spit three times on his own chest.

12. Regarding the Evil Eye as a cause of illness is a consequence of the belief that success or misfortune do not just happen (impersonal causation as assumed in modern Western thought). Such failure, illness, misfortune and even death, it is believed, rather is caused by some *personal* agency either human or superhuman (divine or demonic). At instances of such successs or misfortune the question asked is not "*why* did this happen?" (as modern Westerners ask) but rather "*who*/*what* caused this? Who made this happen? Who has it in for me? "Did I do this to myself?"

60. *Baskainein*: *Mor*. 681D; 683A; *katabaskainein*: *Mor*. 680C; 682B, D, E. See also other works of Plutarch including *Non posse* [*Mor.* 1090C] (*hypo de baskanias kai phthonou prosorasthai*); *Mul. virt*. [*Mor.* 254E] (*katablepein*); *parablepein*: (and *bask*-): *De amore prolis* [*Mor*. 496B]; *De curios.* [*Mor.* 515D].

61. Plutarch speaks of "the evil and Evil-Eyeing demons" (*ta phaula daimonia kai baskana, Dio* 2.5–6.1).

62. I. Arsameia, *Antiochus I,* lines 210—220; text and translation in Danker 1982:251.

63. Danker renders "jealousy," but "envy" is preferable.

64. The entire inscription, a "Declaration by Antiochus I of Kommagene Providing for the Eternal Memory of his Beloved Father Mithradates Kallinikos," (c. 50 BCE) is given in Danker 1982:247–52, §42.

13. The ideas of Plutarch's speakers echo the theory of an active eye and an extramission theory of vision that was current for centuries, thus pointing to the constancy of the notions.

14. Plutarch and his spokesmen do not simply recount phenomena concerning the Evil Eye and envy, but offer *educated explanations* of how the (evil) eye works by emitting particles, how the ocular glance strikes its victims like poisoned arrows, why children are notable victims, how the Evil Eye serves as a conduit of particles poisoned with envy, how amulets divert the Evil Eye's glance, how being struck by an envious Evil Eye can be cured, how possessors of the Evil Eye can Evil-Eye themselves. The comments reflect an interest in logical assessment of the data and rationale understanding.

15. This conception of the Evil Eye is presented not as an instance of vulgar superstition typical of the uneducated masses. Nor is there any mention of magic or sorcery. This is rather the "scientific" knowledge of upper class, educated elites, explaining as best they can on the basis of current knowledge. The conversation demonstrates how in educated circles, as well as among the *hoi polloi* of the ancient world, the Evil Eye was regarded not as superstition (though so alleged by some) but as a natural phenomenon explainable in the conventional scientific terms of that time. This is a point stressed repeatedly by Rakoczy[65]—and with justification. Plutarch makes no reference to the Evil Eye in his treatise on superstition (*De superstitione* [*Mor*. 164E–171F]) and in this *Table Talk* on the Evil Eye raises the issue of superstition only to deny it. If ancient science, like modern science, is characterized by close observation, careful logic, and stringent deduction, then explanations concerning the active functioning of the eye and the operation of an Evil Eye must be seen as examples of ancient science and not of ignorant or superstitious popular musing. Ancient scientific minds, it is essential to keep in mind, regarded the Evil Eye and its operation as a physical reality working in accord with natural properties and potencies as then understood. The plausibility of this belief rested on the prevalent notion that the eye was a active agent whose emissions were comparable to the sun projecting rays of light or to a lamp emitting beams of light or to an archer shooting arrows from his mighty bow. This notion of vision pervaded the ancient world and was held by the biblical characters and authors as well. Jesus's comparison of the eye to a lamp (Matt 6/Luke 11) is plausible only on the basis of this idea of the eye as an active entity.

65. Rakoczy 1996:5, 112, 256 and *passim*.

Pseudo-Aristotle's discussion of avoidance of an Evil Eye when dining (*Prob. phys.* 20.34, 926b 20–31) reflects a similar attempt at rational explanation.[66] Heliodorus of Syria in his *Aethiopica* offers another.

Two centuries after Plutarch, Heliodorus of Syria published a popular novel that entailed an episode involving injury from an Evil Eye. An extended comment on how this occurs shows both similarities with, and differences from, Plutarch's earlier account. The text is Heliodorus's romance, *Aethiopica* (third–fourth century CE), the longest and best constructed of the extant ancient Greek novels.[67] A healing procedure is also mentioned (*Aeth.* 4.65)—a rarity in the Greco-Roman literature on the Evil Eye.

Set in Egypt where Evil Eye belief and practice had long thrived, the *Aethiopica* is a fantastic romance concerning the adventures of a pair of lovers, Chariclea and Theagenes. Chariclea is the daughter of the king and queen of Ethiopia, and adopted daughter of an Egyptian priest, Charicles, her frequent traveling companion. Theagenes is a Thessalian warrior, whom Chariclea met after she was sent to Greece under the tutelage of Charicles. Their initial meeting and its consequences is recounted in book three, where the Evil Eye (*baskania*) figures prominently (*Aeth.* 3.7—4.5).

The pair had participated in a processian at Delphi led by Chariclea. Theagenes was victor in a race and Chariclea crowned him with the victor's crown. Their eyes met and they gazed intently at one another. Chariclea thereupon falls ill with running eyes and claims a headache (3.7.1). Her adoptive father and tutor Charicles, unaware of the real cause of her distress, namely being smitten by love, turns to his friend, Calasiris the priest, about his daughter's illness. Calasiris advises that it is not surprising that in such a procession before a huge crowd a beautiful young girl like Chariclea should have attracted an Evil Eye (*ophthalmon . . . baskanon*, 3.7.2). This assumption that public exposure of women makes them vulnerable to the Evil Eye, we should note, continues down to the present, It explains, in addition to other reasons, why females from past to present have been sequestered and have covered themselves with veils and robes from head to foot.[68] It was also for this reason that Chariclea was wearing an amulet (bearing a figure

66. See above, pp. 21–23.

67. Sandy (1982) offers an analysis of *Aethiopica*'s literary construction and subsequent history of reception. Yatromanalakis (1988:194–204) examines "Baskanos, Love and the Evil-Eye in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*"; Dickie (1991) compares the positions of Heliodorus and Plutarch on the Evil Eye. Democritus's theory, according to Dickie (1990), underlies the account of Heliodorus as it did that of Apollonius's *Argonautica*. Rakoczy (1996:205–13) discusses the novel's attention to the Evil Eye and assesses the analysis of Dickie.

68. For antiquity see Tertullian, *Virg. vel.* 15:1–3 (discussed in Vol. 4, chap. 2); for the modern period see Brögger 1968.

of Athena with a Gorgo replica on her shield) as protection against the Evil Eye.[69] Her father then asks Calasiris whether he is among the many that believe in the Evil Eye (3.7.2). Calasiris assures him that he is indeed, and provides an erudite explanation (3.7.3) of how it works:

> [I]t happens in this way: The air flowing about us all, and penetrating the eyes, nose, and breath, and all the passages to the inner parts, and carrying with it the exterior qualities and humors with which it is imbued, carries an infection with it into those who draw it in. Whenever anyone looks with envy (*phthonou*) upon beautiful objects, the ambient air becomes charged with a malignant quality, and that person's breath (*pneuma*), laden with bitterness, blows hard upon the person near him. This breath, made up of the finest particles, penetrates to the very bones and marrow, and engenders in many cases the illness (*nosos*) of envy (*phthonos*), which has received the appropriate name (*onoma*) of the influence of the Evil Eye (*baskania*).[70]

Scepticism is registered, as in Plutarch's *Table Talk*, but is also overcome in the end. The mention of doubt may serve not so much to question the reality of the Evil Eye as to set the stage for this learned explanation of how it occurs.[71] Here in the *Aethiopica* an affirmation of the existence and functioning of the Evil Eye (*to katabaskainesthai*) is followed by the comment, "for vision, because it is strongly moved, spreads a remarkable force, since they (those seeing) send it forth with the help of fire-like breath (*pneuma*)." The explanation is similar to, but also variant from, that of Plutarch some centuries earlier. In place of effluxes from the eye (Plutarch) or from the entire body (Democritus), here it is the surrounding and penetrating *air* that is said to be the medium by which envy, alias the Evil Eye, is conveyed from fascinator to victim to cause illness. Focus on the *air* as the key element between the fascinator and the victim recalls Aristotle's attention to breath's condensing on a mirror and his air-borne theory of contagion.[72] Thus Heliodorus appears to present a pastiche of several theories, as Dickie and Rakoczy have argued.[73] The notion of the eye as active organ, however,

69. So Yatromanolakis 1988.

70. Following, with minor modifications, the translations of Story 1877:158 and Lamb, *Ethiopian Story,* 1961:75–76.

71. So Rakoczy 1996:208.

72. Aristotle, *Insomn.* 459b 27–32; see also Pseudo-Aristotle, *Problemata inedita* 3.52 (*Aristotelis opera omnia,* ed. Bussemaker 4:332). On Aristotle, see also above, pp. 20–24, 29, 58–59, and Rakoczy 1996:134–40.

73. Dickie (1991) reviews various possibilities of literary relationship, concluding that Plutarch was Heliodorus's main source. "Heliodorus gets from Plutarch the idea

the association of Evil Eye and envy, and the looking at another with envy as a cause of illness and injury are basic elements of the Evil Eye complex known to both Heliodorus and Plutarch.

In support of this explanation, Calasiris mentions the illness of ophthalmia, how plague is affected by atmosphere, and how intense looking affects lovers (3.7.4–5), the last of which echoes words of Plutarch on the same subject:[74]

> The origin of love is also an argument to the same effect, which owes its first beginning to sight, which strikes its passion into the soul. And for this very good reason: the eyes, being of all the passages and openings of the body the most susceptible, the most fervent, the most readily receptive of surrounding affections, and drawing to itself, by its warm spirit the influence of love . . . And if some strike with an Evil Eye (*katabaskainousin*) those whom they love and are well disposed to, one must not be surprised if those who are by nature envious (*physei gar phthonerôs echontes*) do not what they wish but what nature compels them to do. (*Aeth.* 3.7.5, 3.8.2)[75]

Love starts with looking, and looking conveys passion to another's soul. The eyes are the most receptive of bodily openings and draw in this passion. Both the Evil Eye and envy can strike their victims "by nature," i.e. involuntarily.

The explanation advances a breath-borne theory of contagion not mentioned by Plutarch but found in such theorists as Aristotle and Galen. Support for the theory includes not only the role that sight plays in lovemaking and wooing, but the effect of the bird called the *Charadrios* or plover, which can draw jaundice from the bodies of those who suffer from this illness.[76]

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of offering a scientific explanation of *baskania*" but his explanation differs radically from that of Plutarch. It builds rather on "an air-borne theory of contagion such as Galen expounds" (Dickie 1991:18, 24). Rakoczy (1996:205–13) presents a differently nuanced view.

74. Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.2 [*Mor*. 681A–C].

75. Heliodorus's statement appears to be a reconstruction of ideas from Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 5.7 [*Mor.* 681A–E; 682C–D]. A further point in common is the cure of jaundice by the plover (*charadrios*; 3.8.1); cf. Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.2 [*Mor*. 681C–D]).

76. Compare Plutarch, *Quaest. Conv.* 5.7.2 [*Mor*. 681C–D] on the *Charadrios*/plover with notions concerning the basilisk (not in Plutarch), a mythical beast whose gaze and breath, it was thought, could wither and destroy whatever they strike (Pliny *NH* 8.33.78; 29.66. On the "jaundice bird" see also Pliny, *NH* 30.94.

Other references to the Evil Eye are also made throughout the novel.[77] Previously in the story, worry was expressed that the *baskania* of a *daimôn* might deprive a man of a substitute daughter (2.33). Mention also was made of the eye of Chronos striking a family and bringing misfortune (2.24), and of a woman with irresistable charm who captured persons by the net that she dragged behind her and that was hurled "from her eyes" (2.25).

After the explanation of how the Evil Eye works, Theagenes falls ill, showing the same symptoms as his beloved Chariclea, and he yawns (3.11), suggesting that he too had been struck by an Evil Eye (*baskania*).[78] Next to Chariclea, he was the most prominent and hence most vulnerable person in the crowd. (The Evil Eye, we recall, was thought to attack those who most excelled and stood out.) Charicles, convinced that the Evil Eye is the cause of his adopted daughter's illness, approaches Calasiris as a healer of the Evil Eye (3.19) with the confidence that it can be healed. Still later, the possibility is entertained that her illness was caused unintentionally by the Evil Eye (*baskania*) of Theagenes, her admirer (4.5). His feeling toward her was not that of a malevolent enemy but of an adoring lover, who could nevertheless do his beloved unintentional but actual harm by Evil-Eying her (*katabaskênas*) with his "envy-inflected glance" (*epiphthonon blemma*, 4.5). Four notable elements of the Evil Eye belief complex appear here: (1) the connection of the Evil Eye with envy, (2) its activation by admiration, (3) its unintentional operation; and (4) its causing illness. All this is quite serious and plausible and in no way connected with vulgar magic which Calasiris rejects (3.16.3–4).

Toward the end of this episode (4.5), Calasiris the priest treats the afflicted Chariclea with a healing ritual for relief from the Evil Eye. Calasiris uses laural, a tripod, fire and incense. He speaks a prayer, waves laurel over the body of the ill girl from head to foot, whispers secret words, yawns, and names Theagenes as the one responsible. These steps are perhaps a parody of an Apollonian oracle and ritual meant to amuse. They are also similar, nonetheless, to actual procedures used for healing then and in modern Circum-Mediterranean settings.[79] This ritual for healing a victim of the Evil

77. For terms of the *bask-* family in the *Aethiopica* see *baskania*: 2.1. (*daimôn baskanias*); 2.33. (*daimonos baskania*); 3.7 (*phthonos= baskania*); 3.9; 3.18; 3.19; 4.5 (twice); *baskainein* (4.5); *katabaskainein* (3.8; 4.5); also *ophthalmos baskanos* (3.7; 3.11).

78. Yawning also occurs later in the healing of the affliction caused by the Evil Eye (4.5.2–3). Calasiris yawns as part of his healing ritual, simulating the yawn of an old woman traditionally engaged to cure Evil Eye attacks (Dickie 2000:246–47).

79. See Schmidt 1913:603–5; Campbell 1964:339; Brögger 1968:15–17; Yatromanolakis 1988:202–3; and Rakoczy 1996:211–12.

Eye is the only such description in ancient Greek and Roman literature, but parallels procedures indicated in much earlier Sumerian texts.[80]

Further mention of envy (*phthonos*) on the part of various characters illustrate the conventional connection of the themes of the Evil Eye and envy.[81] Eventually after numerous harrowing adventures of the lovers and Calasiris, Chariclea's actual identity as daughter of the Egyptian queen is revealed, she is reunited with her parents, the lovers marry, and her illness disappears.

To summarize, salient aspects of Evil Eye belief and practice as mentioned by Plutarch appear here in Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* as well: the eye conceived as an active organ, whose power can cause injury and illness; the high value of its victims—in this case beautiful youths in love; lovers as admiring and possibly Evil-Eyeing one another; uncertainty of both Evil Eye possessors and victims as to whether the Evil Eye was the cause of illness and if so, whose Evil Eye it was; unintentional as well as intentional operation of the Evil Eye; cure of the Evil Eye as possible—in this case through a healing ritual; the Evil Eye (and envy) as explanation of illness's origin; the Evil Eye as linked with envy (which is also known as *baskania*); envy as transmitted by looking and hence via an Evil Eye; polyvalent terms for eye, vision etc.; personal causation of evil (in contrast to mere happenstance); echo of earlier scientific theories of the eye and vision; an informed explanation of Evil Eye operation, with no accusations of magic or sorcery but only an amalgam and modification of earlier educated theory. Writing for upper-class literate popular consumption, Heliodorus and Plutarch both present not vulgar but educated explanations of how the Evil Eye and envy bring about their damage and why the belief is plausible and to be taken seriously.[82]

Rejecting the notion that Calasiris was a perpetrator of fake hocus-pocus, G. N. Sandy observes in his literary analysis of the novel that:

80. See Langdon 1913:11–12, Plate 3; Ebeling 1949:209; Thomsen 1992:29 and Vol. 1, chap. 2.

81. These include a younger brother's envy of his elder brother's elevation as priest (7.2); the envy of a royal woman, Arsace, of the love of Theagenes and Chariclea (7.7, 10, 26; 8.7); Theagenes' concern that even his beloved Chariclea might feel envious (7.21); and Achaemenes' envy of Theagenes who is favored and honored as Arsace's cupbearer (7.27) and as the beloved of Chariclea (7.29).

82. Dickie (1991:21–23, 28) maintains that Calasiris's discussion of the Evil Eye (3.7–9) was not meant to be taken seriously but is rather a"tongue in cheek" pseudo-explanation "having fun at Charicles' expense." This is convincingly rejected by Rakoczy (1996:210 n776) who contests each of Dickie's three main points. The dissimilarities among the similar passages of Heliodorus and Plutarch, and Heliodorus's "lack of internal coherence" (Dickie 1991:29), even if granted, are insufficient to prove an intent on Heliodorus' part to mock and make fun.

> Heliodorus's portrayal of Calasiris is that of a true-to-life Egyptian holy man of his age. There is a tendency in this age to view him and his kind through the cynical eyes of a Lucian, to dismiss his religious practices as fake hocus-pocus. This is to overlook the reputation of Egypt and the character of ancient religion, of the Neoplatonism contemporary with the composition of the Aethiopica, of such a *Wundermann* as Peregrinus and, most important, the summary of Calasiris's words as he and Chariclea are unwilling witness to a scene of necromancy:
>
> For it is not right for a prophet either to attempt or to take part in these practices. For prophets, communication with the divine derives from proper sacrifices and holy prayers, but I come to the uninitiated by actually crawling along the ground among corpses, just as this unfortunate encounter has provided the opportunity to see this Egyptian woman doing. (*Aethiopica* 6.14.7)
>
> The passage simultaneously distinguishes between religious mystery and magic and unites them in the person of Calasiris. While expressing high-minded aversion to popular magic, he nonetheless applies the information obtained from its application to the advancements of the divinely ordained goal of the story.[83]

In the texts of both Plutarch and Heliodorus, the most extensive discussions of the Evil eye in antiquity, the Evil Eye is regarded not as a case of vulgar superstition of the ignorant mases, but as firmly accepted by educated upper-class elites as an actual physical phenomenon of nature.[84] Scepticism on the part of some is registered in both sources, but then is met and countered with explanations of how the eye, the Evil Eye, and envy work. These explanations are based on what were then regarded as physical realities and natural properties. No one labels or classifies it as an instance of magic or sorcery. Injury from the Evil Eye is brought about, not by the application of esoteric knowledge, the use of incantations, or manipulation of certain powerful substances, but only by the physical properities of the eye itself and the corrosive power of envy that the eye releases. These properties are regarded as noxious but also as bequeathed by nature.

83. Sandy 1982:74.

84. So also Rakoczy 1996:211–12, calling for necessary attention to the shifting boundaries between theoretical knowledge and magical praxis. The boundary shifts as substantiated knowedge increases and unsubstantiated belief diminishes over time. With this fluidity of boundaries, "magic" and "superstition" have no utility as descriptive or analytical concepts.