

Great advances in human cognitive/psychological evolution in the Quaternary

4. Literacy, as opposed to orality

One of the great advances of human capacity in the Holocene was the development of writing (a technological innovation) that enabled literacy (the storage and manipulation of thought in written form). Comparison of the paired lists below

illustrates that civilization as we enjoy it would be impossible without literacy (and the lists themselves are examples of what literacy can do for us).

***Orality: the world with spoken
but not written language***

Arbitrary decisions

Spoken agreements

Seasonal or lunar time

Oral couriers

Lore

Memory

Variation in meaning through
space and time

Ideas sufficiently simple to
be held in one's mind

Unrecorded numbers

Literacy: the world with writing

Laws

Contracts

Dates

Definitive long-distance communication

Communication across time

Lists

Dictionaries

Theories

Numerals

Walter J. Ong, 1982, *Orality and Literacy*
(Methuen, London & New York).

Facorellis, Y., et al., 2014, Radiocarbon dating
of the Neolithic lakeside settlement of Dispilio,
Kastoria, northern Greece. *Radiocarbon*, v. 56,
p. 511-528.