The Power of the Spoken Word: Orality in contrast with Literacy[1]

Storytelling Techniques. The orality of Indigenous peoples such as those of the Plains, such as the Apsáalooke and Plateau as with the Schitsu'umsh, are characterized by its particular techniques of storytelling. The Schitsu'umsh (Coeur d'Alene) term for storytelling is, *me-y-mi-ym*, meaning, "he/she is going to tell stories." In the various techniques, the storyteller endeavors to transform the "listeners" of the story into "participants" within the story. During the telling of a Coyote story, for instance, it is difficult to be an "onlooker," passive and non-engaged. In fact, participation within the story must be overtly acknowledged throughout the telling, if the telling is to continue. During the telling of a story, Coyote or otherwise, individuals periodically respond by saying aloud *ee* (in Apsáalooke) or *i ' !* (in Salish), meaning "yes." Among the Pend d'Oreille, participation is acknowledged by making the hand-sign for "I got it," hooking the index finger and drawing it in toward the body. As long as the responses are given, the telling continues. But should they cease, so too would the story. There is no one in the story any longer!

Everyone has the potential to be a storyteller. Indeed, modes of storytelling pervade even everyday language and conversation. Setting down for an evening meal can mean much more than the consumption of good food, as the stories would continue into the late evening hours. When trying to describe the behavior of someone else, it is not uncommon for an abbreviated account of Old Man Coyote to slip into the conversation. It is as if the behavior of the individual in question is modeled after the example set by Coyote. Mari Watters, a Nimíipuu (Nez Perce) storyteller, remembers that "everyone told stories, everyone was a storyteller."

Nevertheless, certain qualities greatly enhance a storyteller's ability to bring a narrative to "life" and transform the "listeners" into "participants" within it. The language of the storyteller is often colored with a dramatic use of intonation, pauses and even the speech mannerisms of the animal people. Grizzly Bear's warning is heard in a voiced "growl." *Bear comes up, "Gra-ah, r-a-a-ah!"* Silence can be as meaningful as the spoken word. Pauses are used to highlight and add drama. *I'll catch up to you..., and...chew out your wind pipe!* Words are often spoken slowly, with deliberation. The volume of the voice may rise and lower, and the pitch may change, accenting this action or that character in the story. *And Coyote stood up, and said "It's me, Coyote!"*, in a clear loud voice. Augmenting the voice is the language of hand and body gestures--visual images. The storyteller may look off to the distance with surprise in his eyes as he says, *And so...Coyote is going along,* and the listeners look off as well! Each repeated instance when Tom Yellowtail makes reference to "here" and "there" within his stories, a hand, an arm, or perhaps a finger will motion in that direction. Among some of the elders, as they spoke the story into being, they would also motion in traditional sign-language.

[1] See works cited for additional background.

While the length of the narratives can be extensive, the actual language used in the stories is generally rather terse. Coyote's actions are stated simply. *It's Old Man Coyote. He is going around, very hungry.* And not only are his actions, but his emotional temperament and motivational disposition, as well as his very physical imagery are seldom given elaborate and detailed descriptions. They are only hinted at. As Archie Phinney stated, "no clear image is offered or needed." Similarly, while the mythic geography and each of its rivers are named, seldom are they painted with the color of flowers, the texture of trees or the song of birds. *Coyote...was going upstream. Coyote is a-a-lways going upstream. And..he's going upstream, and he's going along the Clearwater...* As a consequence, by only loosely defining the image, action and disposition of narrative characters and scenes, the terse language of the story invites each listener to contribute his or her own particular images to the story. The story's landscape and characters are given added color and textural detail through the active imagination of those participating within that story.

The stories are linked to the seasons as well as to the common and daily events people experience. Typically, the long winter evenings are the season for storytelling. In the Plateau area, storytelling often corresponds to the sacred Winter Dances. Among the Apsáalooke, stories of Old Man Coyote should not be told during the summer – "bad things just happen!" His season is from the first frost in the fall until the first thunder is heard the following spring. This is the season when "the snakes and the bears are asleep and won't pay you a visit; they really like joining in!" As you feel the cold winter's wind you know the voice of Coyote is not far away. Similarly, when the tipis are being set up at Crow Fair each August or the first winter's sweat bath is taken, there is always a particular story told. As you drive down the highway, that coulee, this bend in the river or that rock outcropping is pointed to and its story told. As you undergo a season, a locale, or an event you experience its story.

Coyote's stories are often interwoven into a singular narrative cycle accounting for his entire journey up the Columbia and its various tributaries, culminating in the "coming of the people." Such a cycle cannot be completed in a single sitting, however. Clarence Woodcock, a Pend d'Oreille, remembers how it would take his father three consecutive winter nights, from sunset to sunrise, to tell the story of Coyote. And no one would think of deleting this section or shortening that segment of the cycle. The "point" of the telling is as much the *plot* – enjoying the character of Coyote or questing with Burnt Face – as it is the *process* of just participating in the grand adventures.

The length of the narrative is also the consequence of stylistic phrase and sequence repetition. The storyteller can choose to emphasize a particular action by repeating key phrases or ideas. Perhaps to highlight the challenge as well as the distance to be traveled in Plenty Hawk's account of Burnt Face's quest, Burnt Face is seen setting up *four* camps and carried on the backs of *four* groups of Ducks, each of a different color. The number of repetitions in a story often depends on the dominant number pattern of that tradition. Among

the Crow, as with many other Plains area peoples, this number pattern is likely four. Old Man Coyote should not use the bell "four times." Burnt Face heats four sweat stones and waits through four fogs in confrontation with the Long Otter. Throughout most of the Plateau area, three and five are the dominant numbers. It takes Fox three jumps over Coyote to revive him from the "dead." Coyote and Swallowing Monster try to "draw each other in" three times and Coyote makes five flint knives to cut the heart. Coyote is told by his younger Sisters to sweat for five days, using five bunches of rocks. It takes Coyote five digging-sticks and five attempts to break the Swallow Sisters' dam. It is then in the last attempt, be it the third, the fourth or the fifth, that the myth person succeeds in his endeavor or is foiled in his deception.

As Dell Hymes (1981) has pointed out, patterned numbers also shape the groupings of verses within traditional spoken narratives. A storyteller would indicate through the use of intonation, extended pauses or quotative suffixes ("he said") individual verses (as indicated by separate lines in the narrative texts). The clusterings of verses would be organized based on the dominant pattern number of the tradition. Among the Nez Perce, Klamath and Klikitat, for instance, three- and five-verse groupings are typically found. Each set of verse-groupings, in turn, may represent a scene. Scenes designate grouping of action related to a given locale and characters in the story, and are suggested by the narrative's plot and line-grouping structures. The entire structure of the narrative text would be organized in this way.

Seventy years ago, Tom Yellowtail, along with his wife, Susie, and several other Crows, participated in a traditional dance troop traveling the capitals of Europe for six months. Going from rural Montana, visiting the historic sites of Europe and performing before royalty and dignitaries, offered quite the story. Upon his return, the family gathered around to hear the "story." As a seasoned raconteur, Tom told the story with all the techniques and nuances, with all the repetitions appropriate for the telling. An hour went by, midnight passed and by the early morning hours, all were silent. No one could stay in any longer. And Tom had only told of going from Wyola, Montana to New York City! He hadn't even gotten on the boat to Europe.

While the various storytelling techniques just outlined might be expressed in any given raconteur, they are not necessarily to be found equally in all storytellers. There is, in fact, a tremendous range in the style of storytelling techniques used by individual storytellers. In the stories of Lawrence and Tom, for instance, this is particularly evident. Tom relies extensively on hand gestures, phrase repetition and always anchors his stories in a geographic location. In contrast, Lawrence adds drama to his stories by more frequent placement of emphasis on certain key morphemes, as reflected in his use of intonation and by extending the vowel sounds. *A-a-a-h, I slept a lo-o-ng time!*

But there is one vital ability I find associated with all storytellers, that is the technique and quality of remembering. Mari Watters demonstrated to me an amazing capacity for "remembering" a story just told her. We were seated around a camp fire and one among us had just completed his telling of a Lakota story. He was an accomplished teller himself, and told

the narrative with detail and twists, lasting some twenty minutes. Mari said, "Let's see if I got it." She immediately re-told the entire story, complete with the same characters and plot. But it was not a rote memorization that we heard. She had added her imprint, and told it with what she called "heart."

In the context of storytelling, stories are always remembered, and never memorized. Memorization results in a rigidity that can inhibit participation in the story. Remembering encourages spontaneity and thus greater immediacy with the listener. Remembering has an important additional significance. To *remember* is to *return to*, and to *re-unite with* the reality within the story, to *re-establish membership* with the characters of the story. The storyteller seeks *membership* of the listeners as well as him or herself within the story he or she is telling.

In light of this discussion, it is instructive to note the Crow term for storytelling, *baaeechichiwaau*, literally meaning, "re-telling one's own." Traditionally, to tell a story was to own that story. The right to tell a story was obtained either through direct purchase of the story or as the result of the story having been received as a gift from another. We also saw of the importance of "re-telling one's own" in the "Four Smokes" and "Burnt Face" (Yellowtail version) narratives. In both cases, upon being re-united with the entire "camp," the story told was a re-telling by Four Smokes and Burnt Face of their own experiences. In all instances, the story told had become part of the teller, an extension of his or her very being. Storytelling thus involved the re-telling, the re-membering if you will, of one's own story.

It is perhaps this quality of *re-membering* that above all else best distinguishes an oral literature. If a story is to come to life, it must be vitalized with the participation of the listeners as well as the teller, all dancing alongside the characters of the story. When I would hear Lawrence Aripa or Tom Yellowtail tell his stories in the company of a host of others, the stories always have a certain spark and dynamic. I see, reflected in the eyes of those participating, the image of Coyote. But when those same stories are shared with me, alone, without *membership*, the stories by comparison seem flat, without life.

This special quality of *re-membering* first became apparent to me several years ago while living with the Yellowtail family at their home in Wyola. Tom and Susie were most generous and each wonderful storytellers. In fact, Susie had an important story to tell, as did Tom. Susie was the first American Indian "registered nurse" in this country. She received her nurse's education "back East," in Boston. But there she had to change her name – "Susie Walking Bear frightened the patients!" Married to an *akbaalia*, "one who doctors," and a man who "ran" Sun Dances, Susie was herself very active in traditional healing and religious practices. Susie was one of those who traveled with Tom to Europe, and the "sights they saw!" She served on "Presidential Commissions," chaperoned "Miss American Indian" winners as they toured the country, and was always "in demand on College campuses" as a speaker. Susie had a story to tell! And tell it she did. Each weekend, especially during the summer months, Susie would be visited by "friends and strangers" seeking to learn her story. And each weekend I

might be on hand to listen as well. Though most interesting to be sure, after a few sittings, I grew tired of the stories and turned away. And then I noticed. While I turned away, Tom, her husband of fifty-plus years, a man who sat there each weekend of each year hearing the stories, a man who probably shared in the original experience from which the stories sprang, he did not turn away. Tom in fact would laugh, and cry, and act like he had never heard the story before! Susie told her stories with such skill that Tom was *re-membered* within them. The stories were alive. And then I too began participating.

Physiological Experience. Let us consider the most elemental and basic dimension of orality and literacy – the physiological experience of orality and literacy. Orality is fundamentally an auditory experience comprised of morphemes, i.e., meaningful clusters of sound. There is a flow of sound, but no visual presence. As a physiological phenomenon, orality is an event, existing only when it is going out of existence. It is evanescent and transitory. Further, orality is an experience in which the sound envelops and surrounds the listener. It can unify the listener with the source of the sound. Once it is emitted, the sound is heard. The ears are not easily "closed." Orality is thus a transitory event that unifies the listener involuntarily with the sound and its source.

To the extent that the character of the media (the experience of speech as an event) influences that to which it refers (the images of the world), orality tends to reveal a world in terms of action, process and becoming. As we have already glimpsed, *transformation* is an underlying theme within the stories. It may be expressed in a creation account as Coyote frees the Salmon, gives Rattlesnake his particular character, or creates the various peoples from the parts of the Monster. In the Burnt Face and Seal Boy stories, each protagonist is transformed, a face made "as good as when he was first born" and a boy at "home down in the water" among the Seals. The world is revealed and conceptualized as an event

It should be noted, however, that these physiological qualities should not be equated with the residual and retentive abilities of orality and literacy. Despite the transitory character of sound, peoples in oral-based cultures have a tremendous capacity to "remember," in detail, elaborate and lengthy oral narratives, passing them down virtually unchanged, generation after generation. In addition, while the spoken words possess an evanescent quality, it can certainly elicit vivid and lasting images in the mind of the listener. And by contrast, as a librarian or a teacher will attest, to affix words to "permanent" objects, e.g., published books, does not insure their continued usage, nor even their very existence.

The capacity to "remember a story" was impressively demonstrated to me several years ago while teaching on the Crow Reservation. I was the instructor for a group of graduate students home for the summer, enrolled in an off-campus course in "Native American Religion." A "honky" teaching "Indians" about Indian religion is a story unto itself! But the students were "kind" to me, we shared much, and all were eager to explore traditions not so familiar. While

each student was well accomplished in literacy and fluent in English, all were nevertheless grounded in the oral tradition. Each spoke Apsaalooke as his or her primary language. Priding myself in the materials I had prepared for the course, I soon became concerned and then annoyed when none of my students took diligent notes on my "wonderful" lectures. Few took any notes at all. I would have my day – the midterm exam would be based extensively on my lectures! But the day belonged to my students. They had "remembered" in detail that which I had spoken in lecture and, in turn, conveyed it with elegance in their Blue Books! They did not need to rely upon the written word, note taking, to retain what was an elaborate and relatively large body of new knowledge.

Meaning Contextualized – Knowledge Experienced. In addition, the ways in which orality and literacy elicit, organize, store and communicate meaning and knowledge also significantly differ. In orality, meaning is inexorably interwoven in the immediacy of human experience; it is contextualized. Meaningful morphemes emanate out of an integrated social context involving interpersonal dynamics, gesturing and intonation by the speaker, and listener responses as well as a shared syntax and semantics. There can be no meaning without it being spoken within a social context. Among the Apsáalooke, there are subtle variances in the intonation patterns in certain words, all dependent upon the age and gender differences of the speaker. The meaning of a particular word can be significantly altered depending on the intonation voiced by an older woman or by a younger man. Personal pronoun distinctions (he, she, it) are not made in the Apsáalooke language. Only in the larger context of its usage can gender distinctions be determined in a speech utterance. As you may have noticed, Apsáalooke storytelling minimizes the use of function words such as conjunctions (about, for, of, with) or prepositions (and, but, or, both). In fact, the character of the language found in all our story texts is rather *terse*. Separate morphemes, and the meaningful ideas they represent, are tied together given the particular gesturing and intonation used by the storyteller, and not necessarily by the actual words uttered. A teller may glance in a certain direction and point his finger, and *all* the eyes look off, but there are no words spoken. The meaning embedded in the narratives is not reducible to the words alone, but is rendered out of an entire context of social interactions.

Similarly, knowledge itself is organized, stored and communicated in narrative-based structures of human experiential action. Knowledge is embedded within stories and their telling, in ritual dance and song, in various art and architectural forms, in dress and regalia worn, in the cradleboard comforting a baby, and throughout the landscape as a mythic geography. The rock outcropping and river beds, the fall of snow and the coming of the salmon tell a story, are like a text conveying knowledge. In turn, their stories are repeated each winter, told aloud by the elders. And most importantly, all these "stories" are experienced directly and personally. The song is sung, the dress worn, the lodge lived in, the path along the river

travelled, the story felt. Each time the rocks are heated and the sweat lodge entered, its story and meaning are reiterated. Thus, you directly participate in what you know, in knowledge. "When the story ended, . . . you look and see, see the story; we are linked."

Power of Words. The summer of 1974 when I interviewed Alan Old Horn, I was participating in an ethnographic project designed to "improve" understanding and relations between the Indian Health Service physicians and their Apsáalooke patients. Tensions had been growing for some time, in part predicated on the physicians' unawareness of their patients' cultural values relating to health and healing. I was to gather information on the Crow perspective of health and healing, and, in turn, write up a paper so physicians could gain an introduction to the health perspectives of their patients. While everyone I worked with was excited about the project and most cooperative, there was one slight problem. For many of the most traditional families, when it got down to discussing actual afflictions a member of the family once had, few would verbally talk about them. And then I was introduced to the Crow word, *dasshussua*, literally meaning, "breaking with the mouth." That which comes through the mouth, words, has the power to affect the world. People were reluctant to discuss an illness for fear of bringing forth that affliction.

And then I began appreciating *dasshussua*. One does not say "good bye" upon departing from a good evening's visit, but rather "I'll see you later," *diiawakaawik*. "Good bye is too final--you may not see them again!" One should always fulfill that which he has publicly stated he intends to do, or "accidents seem to happen!" When you need to convey something publicly before the tribal council, at a giveaway or during a ceremony such as a Sun Dance, it is best to convey it through "an announcer," someone older, more "experienced in the use of words" and who would not inadvertently abuse them, someone like Alan Old Horn. An announcer may even have a medicine bundle pertaining to the "proper use of words."

When it is time for a child to receive its "Indian name," a clan uncle or aunt will be consulted. Having "dreamt" the name, and in a ceremony involving an opened medicine bundle and prayer, the name will be bestowed upon the child. And you might hear a voiced concern – "I hope the name agrees with the child!" If the words of the name agree with the disposition of the child, the child grows to become the words of his name. But should the name disagree, the child will become sickly and a new name must be sought. The "Indian name" is that name used in prayer and at sacred ceremonies. It is not one's public name. It is most cherished and revered. One's name will guide and protect. More than one veteran of a foreign war has come back "unscratched," "protected because of my name!"

The spoken word has a power, *baaxpee*, a creative force to affect the world. In the context of storytelling, this has particular significance. As the fibers of the words are woven into the exquisite tapestry of a story and the deeds of a hero are portrayed in those words, the words bring forth those portrayed deeds. The animation of a story literally occurs in voicing the

words of that story. The words of the narrative do not just describe the events referred to in the story; they help bring them about. The stories are to be entered with great respect and responsibility. They should never be taken lightly. For the words of the stories make the world.

This understanding is consistently expressed in the oral literature. In the Sanpoil story of the "Sweat Lodge" that follows, *naming* the various animals and birds is an integral part of creating and bringing forth those beings. In a Nez Perce story, when Coyote *said* he wanted to look like his son and then like a Flathead man shooting grouse, Coyote became them. In the Wasco story of Coyote freeing the fish, Coyote *said* to the two Sisters that they would become swallows, and they did. When Coyote *spoke* the words, "Shush ta-ways-s ta-lee-e," the logs he was on went apart. In a Kootenai narrative, when a man named "Wolf" *said* and sang his name, he became a wolf. As reflected in the Kootenai story of the "Star Husband," when a girl *said*, "That is a nice little star there. I'll marry him," the next morning she found herself married. When a story comes to an end or an entire cycle is completed for the season, Clackamas storytellers would tell the myth people spoken of in the narratives to go to the mountains, to the rivers, into the air, becoming the animals of the forests, the fishes of the waters and the birds of the sky (Jacobs 1959). That which had been *spoken* and witnessed in the storytelling was indeed alive and now free to return to a world mythically endowed.

Orality in Conclusion. With reference to some of the implications for the oral literature of the Plains and Plateau Peoples, orality tends to direct attention toward action, process and becoming (the world viewed is expressed through an event – speech), toward involvement (the experience of orality is involuntary), toward social interaction and integration (requiring a social context to elicit meaning), and toward renewal and return (as expressed in the cyclic organization of time and space). In orality, meaning and knowledge are contextualized within a network of interpersonal and experiential
relations. Orality is necessarily a social event, minimally involving at least a speaker and a listener. Orality tends to be participatory.

In the oral tradition, all three dimensions (storytelling, orality and the power of words) coalesce to transform the listener into a participant in the Creation Time and Place (“Dreaming” and “Eternal Time”) - “to run with the Coyote,” as Cliff SiJohn would say, to travel the world of the First Peoples/Animal Peoples in the “canoe” of the unfolding story.

The oral traditions are thus at once didactic, passing on pragmatic skills, teaching values, and disseminating identities, as well as entertaining, bringing a smile or a tear and rendering the difficult times less so, as Vic Charlo said, “helping lighten the load and make things more accessible.” But in addition, the oral traditions also perpetuate the world. Run with the Coyote, renewing the creation of the world.

As all phenomena is spatially and temporarily interconnected (premised on kinship – *ashammaléaxia*) and potentially endowed with “medicine” (for example, *baaxpée*, *súumesh*,

wéyekin), when the expressions of the Creator and Animal Peoples are properly brought forth, as articulated through the words in a story or in song of a ceremony, or during dance and in the regalia of a ritual, so too is their inherent transformative power. Hence, in the act of re-telling Coyote's story, as in donning dance regalia or singing a *súumesh* song, the oral traditions also perpetuate the world, reinvigorating life and meaning into the landscape and all of its varied beings. The Creation time is traveled, a camas field nurtured, and an illness healed. Reality and the oral traditions are one and the same. "Stories make the world."

The oral traditions, however, are not fundamentally explanatory in nature. Because Coyote did such and such, that is why . . . . . ! 1. Such would presuppose that the stories were inventions of human curiosity, created by man to explain what he could not understand, and thus not be creations of the First Peoples, i.e., accounts of their actions. 2. Such would presuppose that the stories are earnest but feeble attempts by pre-scientific minds to understand the world, but are inevitably fantasies and false, and certainly not what is most real and true. And 3. such would presuppose a separate world out there (Cartesian dualism) that needed explaining, and certainly not an interconnected phenomenal world within which one is a part.

Consider the contrasting mode of communication from orality, that of literacy.

Literacy

Technological Development. Literacy is derived from and dependent upon a cultural invention and technological application. It involves the use of some sort of medium surface to record upon, e.g., wood, clay, or stone tablet/surface, hide, parchment, paper, computer screen, and some sort of notation device, e.g., itching or imprinting device, ink and pen, press, keyboard, organized around a shared, standardized symbolic code, e.g., alphabet with consonants and vowels. In the old world, literacy was first developed by the Sumerians, involving cuneiform on clay tokens, some 3,500 BCE. It was fundamentally a series of pictographs, used for recording ideas and numbers associated with economic transactions. With the Semitic languages, such as Arabic, Aramaic, Hebrew and Phoenician, literacy developed a consonant system as early as 1,050 BCE. And with the Greeks, vowels were added as early as 400 BCE. As an early example of the new literacy we have the Dead Sea Scrolls, some 900 documents on papyrus and animal skin, including the entire Hebrew Bible, with carbon 14 dating placing them around 335 BCE - 107 BCE. In the new world, literacy focused around calendarical, cosmic and religious notations, as exemplified by the Omec and Maya, dating back to around 900 BCE.

Physiological Experience. In contrast to orality, the physiological experience of literacy is comprised of visual images, i.e., written words affixed to a page. Literacy is as an object, with a

more or less permanent presence. It has a "thingness" quality. Writing is, after all, housed in the *ink* that appears on the *paper* found in a *book.* The viewer can voluntarily select that which he chooses to view or he can ignore it altogether, i.e., he can "close" his eyes. In this sense, it is directional and focused, allowing the viewer to select and dissect from the field of visual experience. It isolates and creates "words." There are no isolated "words," per se, in orality. In fact, it may be difficult to identify a term for "word" in an American Indian language. Thus, literacy as a physiological experience has a permanence and is an object that allows the viewer to voluntarily select and focus on isolated "words."

To the extent that the character of the media (the experience of literacy as an object) influences that to which it refers (the images of the world), the world tends to be revealed as an object, in terms of concreteness and permanence. The world is conceptualized as an object, objectified.

Meaning Decontextualized – Knowledge Formalized. In contrast to orality, meaning in literacy is divorced from and independent of the immediate human context and texture, having a formalized and autonomous syntax and semantics. "Words" are governed more by a formalized and autonomous set of shared rules. A written sentence can have meaning without the gesturing of a speaker or the responses of listeners. For instance, the inclusion of prepositions allow better linkage of separate words. A sentence can stand on its own. Thus, meaning is much more decontextualized.

In turn, in literacy knowledge is organized, stored and communicated in an elaborate set of standardized, formalized and abstract categories and literary forms. Knowledge is embedded within histories, biographies and various literary and technical genres, and within "lists," "indexes," "tables," "data," "calendars," "textbooks," "dictionaries," "essays," "novels" and "archival records." "History" is made possible. In fact, all these media and expressions come into their very existence through literacy. Words can be isolated, and are given comprehensive and definitive meanings. There are "correct" ways of writing and using words, "proper grammar." Words, and the knowledge conveyed within, are not sung, worn, danced or traveled. Knowledge is thus much more formalized and abstracted from a direct experience of it.

With literacy there is also the possibility of "backward scanning" and the analysis of "lined" texts of words. Words can be scrutinized and dissected. Symbolic logic and calculus, and the assumptions and methodology of the scientific method, i.e., empiricism and rationalism, are facilitated. However, this is not to suggest that peoples in oral-based traditions lack the mental abilities to think abstractly, rationally or empirically. Literacy does not determine modes of thinking, but rather channels and provides alternative and additional parameters for revealing, processing, storing and communicating knowledge.

Literacy In Conclusion. Literacy tends to direct attention toward the appearance of objects (the world viewed is expressed through ink on paper in books--objects), toward selection and the possibility of disengagement (the experience of literacy is voluntary), toward lineality (as expressed in spatial and temporal organization), and toward "history" (reliance on "archival records" based in lineal time--years, decades, centuries, millennia). In literacy, meaning and knowledge are formalized into autonomous, self-contained "words." In contrast with orality, words are decontextualized and are seldom "worn," but are estranged from direct human experience. Participation is not needed to complete the meaning of a word. Literacy is fundamentally a solitary experience; both the writer and the reader communicate in privacy, alone from the other. Literacy can objectify and distance the events of the world from the immediate experiences of the individual.

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