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The Historical Relationship between Morality and Literacy



Questions

How do you define morality?

What is the difference between normativity and morality?

How have morals and/or norms developed over human history?

How does one define a literate vs. a non literate society?

What is the relationship between morality and literacy?

How would one define the “extended mind?”

What about the normativity of the concept of writing itself?

What are the origins of written language?

Why is the Greek alphabet special?

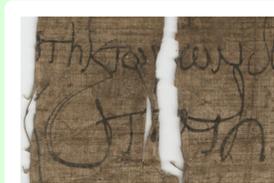
What is the connection between literate vs. non-literate society and pre-legal vs. legal society?

What is the relationship between Greek law and religion?

How did the Greek alphabet allow morals to further develop in law and religion?

Goals

In order to analyze the significance of widespread literacy in the role of moral transformations, it is important to develop an exhaustive understanding of the nuances and historical documentation pertaining to both topics- morality and literacy. In the face of such an expansive topic, my goal was to focus my efforts primarily on the instantiations of morality in written law and religion, specifically in proto-legal and legal classical Greece from approximately 750 BCE and onward.



Methods

To accomplish my intended goal, I researched a variety of philosophical, linguistic, and historical texts and authors:

- **Definition of Morality-** *The Definition of Morality* by the Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
- **Origins and Evolution of Normativity and Morality-** *Social Norms and Human Normative Psychology* by Daniel Kelly and Taylor Davis, *The Extended Mind* by Robert Logan
- **The Extended Mind-** *The Extended Mind* by Richard Menary
- **Emergence and Usage of Written Language-** *Writing* by Barry Powell
- **Greek Law and Religion-** *The Literate Revolution in Greece and its Cultural Consequences* by Eric Havelock, *Early Greek Law* by Michael Gagarin



Findings

1. Written language is a cognitive tool that enhances one’s mental processes and products.
1. The invention of the Greek alphabet resulted in a literate majority
2. Widespread literacy induced an intellectual revolution in Greece
3. The democratization of Greece leads to increasing moral complexity
4. Classical Greece becomes a legal society, religion influences legal proceedings
5. Writing allowed for moral changes in law and religion