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ROM HARRÉ

LIPSET, SEYMOUR MARTIN (1922–)**US theorist**

Lipset is one of the most influential American social scientists the later twentieth century. Working in the tradition of social research as established by Paul Lazarsfeld at Columbia University, Lipset's predominant concerns are with the conditions of individual political participation and the concept of social cleavages. A major representative of political sociology, Lipset's cooperation with Rokkan earned him the reputation of an eminent scholar in European studies. However, his main focus has been **America**. *American Exceptionalism* (1995) and *The First New Nation* (1973) analyze – following **Tocqueville** – the qualities of US **democracy**. In *Agrarian Socialism* ([1950] 1972), Lipset gives a picture of a specific North American (Canadian) concept of socialism, and his *Union Democracy* (1956) is a classic study of the workings of **trade unions**, reflecting the influence of Robert Michels. His most quoted book is *Political Man* (1981), an exemplary outline of the liberal understanding of politics and democracy (see also **democracy and democratization**).

Major works

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ANTON PELINKA

LITERACY

The term literacy signifies that a major part of societal **communication** is based on or carried out in writing. While **language** is a correlate of **society** as such, literacy and printing are evolutionary achievements of societal communication. The main focus of classical social theory was on the structural consequences of literacy for societal organization. Literate scholarship, literate **intellectualism** and **bureaucracy** play a constitutive role in the rise of advanced **civilization** and **modernity**, according to Max **Weber**. For Talcott **Parsons** (1964), well-institutionalized literacy is a prerequisite to more advanced 'evolutionary universals'. Modern **law**, **science**, the emergence of **states**, religious heterodoxy, and the formation of a **public sphere** are tied to literacy. In what manner, however, is disputed.

Since the late 1960s a field of intensive research has emerged which, from a sociological and philological-linguistic perspective, has shed new light on the problem of literacy. These interdisciplinary explorations share common grounds insofar as they: (1) focus on the medium itself and its operative application; (2) analyze literacy not only with regard to its recording and memory functions but also as a communication medium; and (3) dispense with linear developmental models and instead adopt the assumption of diachronic and synchronic

differences in literacy. This new interest in literacy thus inevitably entails a study of orality. Each can only be defined and determined in contrast to the other. New insights into orality follow from anthropological studies of the consequences of literacy. The theory of the 'homeostatic' organization of oral cultures (Goody and Watt 1963) which allows a dynamic stabilization through reconstructing the past in accordance with the present situation is one example of such work.

Although Marshal **McLuhan** in the 1960s postulated the decline of book culture and the emergence of a new 'orality' in the age of the **media and mass media**, the notion that media never serve purely as substitutes for other media has recently gained more and more ground. Rather, by only seeming to replace earlier media, new media tend to modify them. Hence, linguistic studies distinguish between 'conceptual literacy' and 'conceptual orality' (Raible 1994). Once a society has both forms available, each can be found in either medium. Text forms emerge in the medium of speech that would be neither conceivable nor utterable without literacy. In addition, the practice of juridical, economic and scientific communication is characterized by a continuum of orality, literacy and imagery.

Derrida (1967) adopts a global historical perspective on the problem of literacy and sees book culture on the verge of its demise. What will follow, according to Derrida, however, is a new 'writing situation'. He proposes a modified, generalized concept of writing, encompassing everything that can be a matter of inscription: cinematography, choreography, but also the 'writing' of an image, of music, of a sculpture. Speech is not preliminary to this primary writing, but rather already a part of it. Hence Derrida's critique of phonocentrism leads him to a concept of writing encompassing those signs that depict speech as well as those that do not.

A thorough analysis of the writing systems of the world challenges the notion of the superiority of the alphabet over forms of literacy based on pictograms and hieroglyphs, which, according to authors from Humboldt to Havelock, is responsible for the Greek **revolution** of literacy and its cultural consequences. Today, the constraints and limitations of the Greco-centric perspective on writing systems have been made clear (Coulmas 1989). Admittedly, the alphabet lends itself more easily to learning, thus facilitating its public use. However, cross-cultural analyses prove the assumption of a causal relationship between literacy and societal transformation is implausible, showing that the effects of literacy and printing are dependent on cultural and institutional circumstances and thus vary historically and locally. In particular, the invention of the printing press was far more consequential in **Europe** than it was in China and Korea, owing to the decentralized, marketed distribution of printed works as opposed to the centralized, governed distribution in the eastern countries.

Sociological analyses increasingly focus on operative changes in communication that become possible through the introduction of literacy and printing into societal communication. Such changes themselves can again trigger structural and semantic adaptations. Written communication differs from speech in that it can be carried out without co-presence: absentees can also be addressed communicatively. However, the effects of literacy are not limited to an increase in possible addressees or, with regard to printing, to the consequence of addressee anonymity. Rather, the dissolution of simultaneity and spatial proximity of communication leads to a reordering of time and **culture**. With written communication it is possible to dissect communicative **meaning** into its factual, temporal and social dimension. Written communication escapes interactional control and

thus increases the risk of rejection. According to Luhmann, communication media such as **money**, truth, and **power**, are outcomes of socio-cultural **evolution** reacting to this problem (Luhmann 1997). While speech has an inherent inclination towards **consensus**, written communication promotes the possibility of disagreement.

An institutionalization of critical faculties follows from the many characteristics of written communication: spatial and temporal distance, the possibility of comparison, the pressure of consistency, and the combination of mass literacy and book printing generating a surplus of uncontrollable information. As one of the long-term effects, literacy potentializes communicative reactions: written communication is released from the burden of immediate response and thus can defer acceptance and rejection; it can also refer to something already rejected. Further, it leads to a *modalizing* of reality: fiction becomes possible. Finally, reality can be observed in terms of its prospective possibilities and conceived as a contingent realization of mere possibility. Consequently, literacy does not introduce permanence and stability into societal communication, but instead promotes an awareness of **contingency**. As one of the fundamental semantic effects of literacy, the notion of sociality itself changes (Bohn 1999, Calhoun 1998). Communication is no longer merely a reciprocal, face-to-face process as suggested by the model of speech. Rather, literacy with all its contingencies becomes a form of sociality itself.

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CORNELIA BOHN

LOGICAL POSITIVISM

See: positivism

LOGOS AND LOGOCENTRISM

The noun *logos*, from the Greek verb *legein*, has a number of meanings, including account, reason, speech, and rational **discourse**. It was a key term in ancient philosophy, beginning with Heraclitus and especially with Plato. In a variety of ways, logos has figured as that which accounts for the unity of thinking and world. The term 'logocentrism' implies criticism of man's dependence upon a certain idea of logos. The term first appeared in the work of Ludwig Klages ([1929-32] 1981), where it was opposed to 'biocentrism'. In Klages's account, logocentrism has determined Western culture since Socrates, implying dominance of the mind (*Geist*) and disruption of the primordial unity of **body** and soul. More commonly, however, the term is associated with the work of Jacques **Derrida** and his program of **deconstruction** (1967, 1972a, 1972b). Logocentrism is

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