TALLINN UNIVERSITY

The Nature of Mass Media - A Theoretical Perspective

Past, Present and Future

Henry Loeser PhD

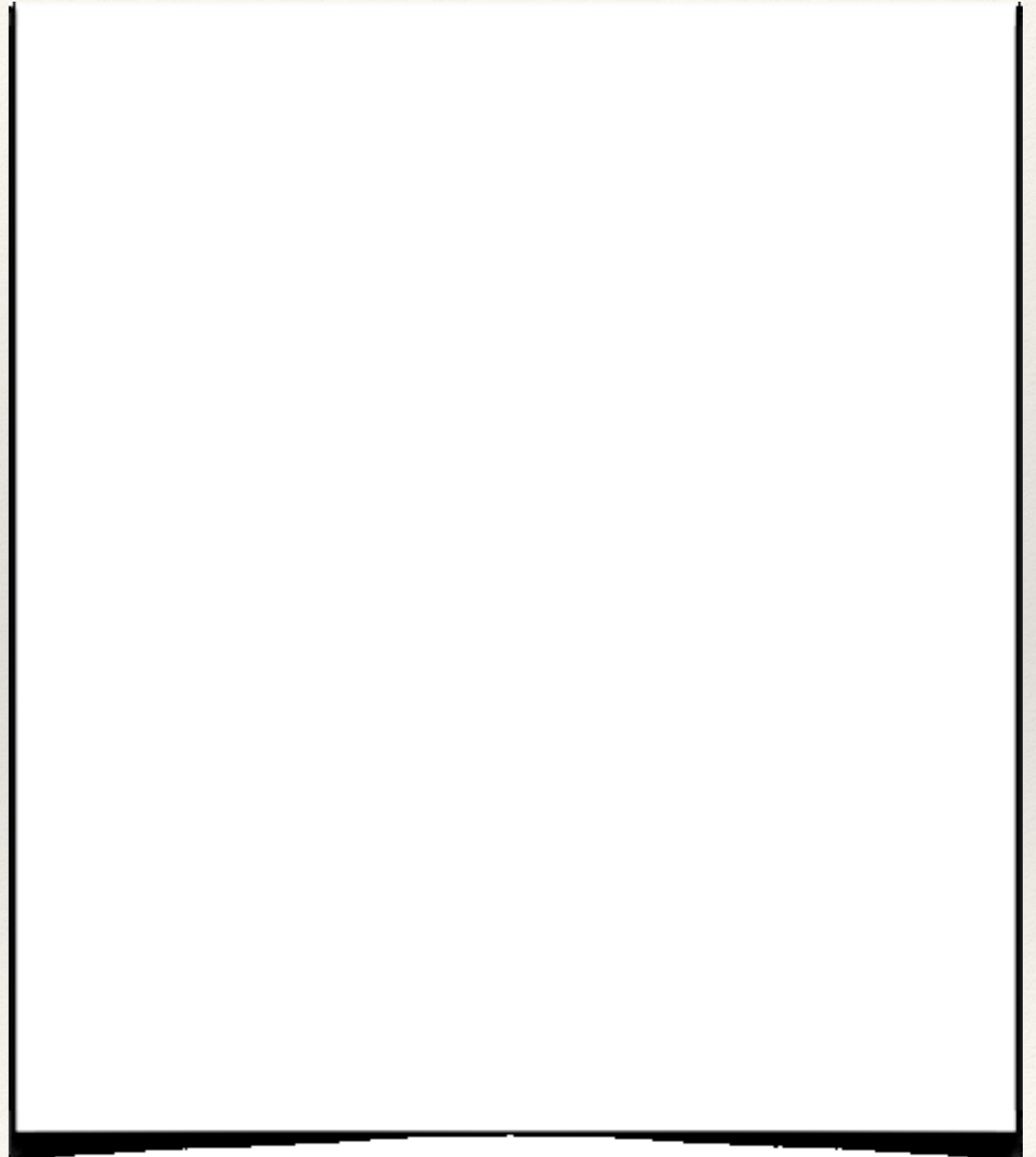# Natural Law

- ❖ Structure of Nature

- ❖ All living things seek utility
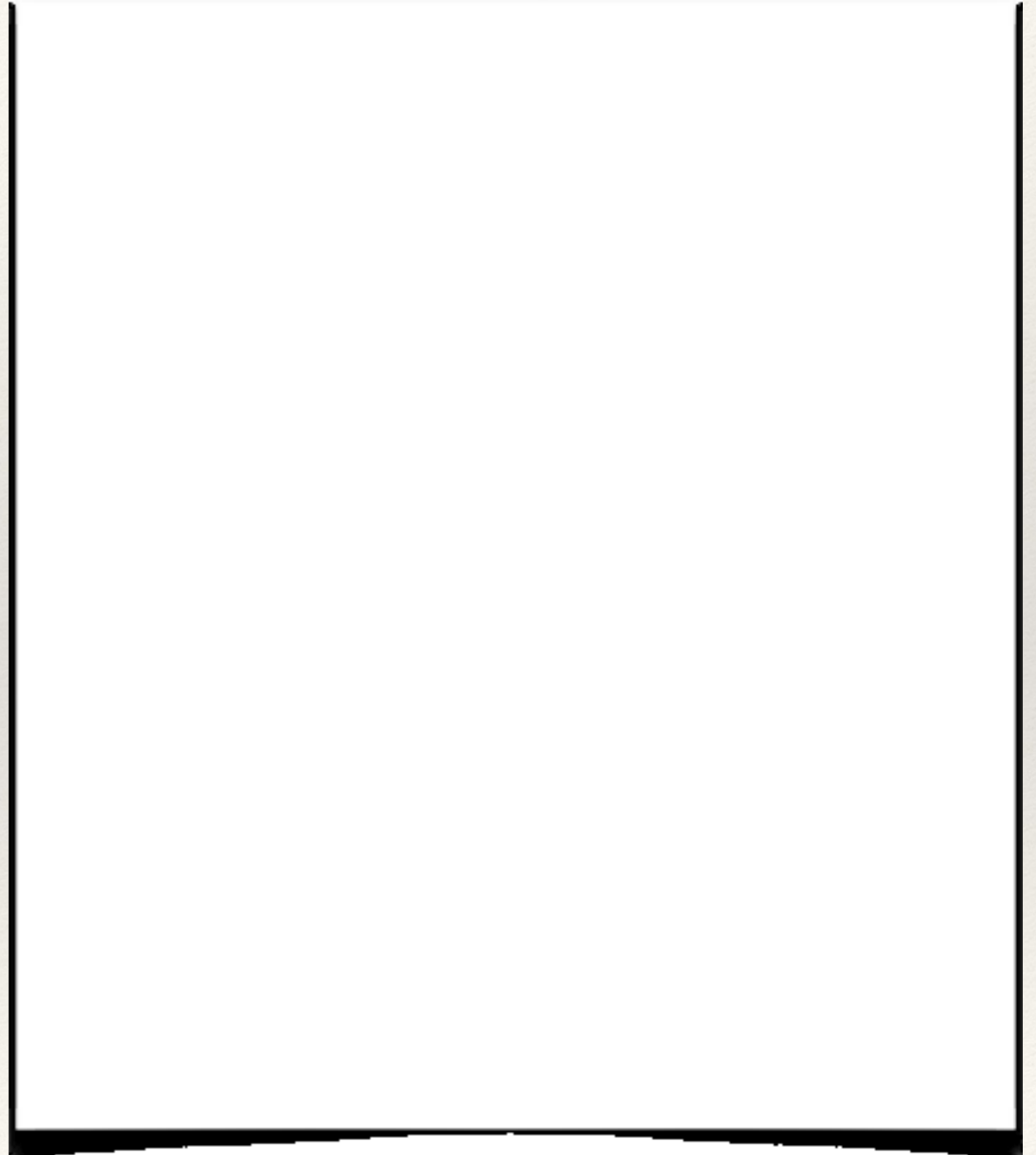
- ❖ Nurture (Rationality)

- ❖ Communication

Human Evolution

- Groups

- Symbolic Interaction

- Language

- *"We shape our tools, and thereafter, our tools shape us." -Marshall McCluhan*

Forming Societies
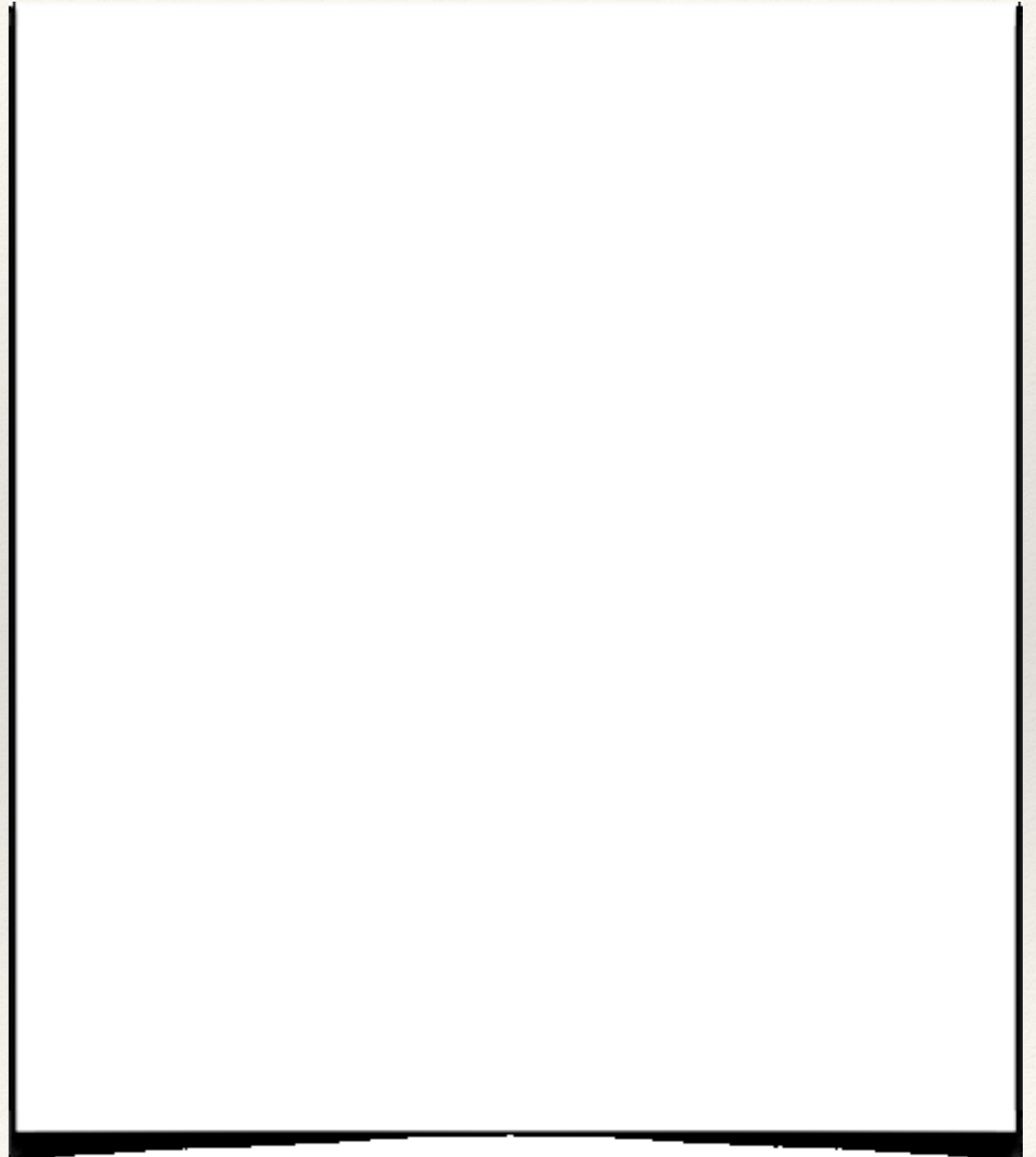
- Specialization

- Agency vs. structure

- Mass Communication
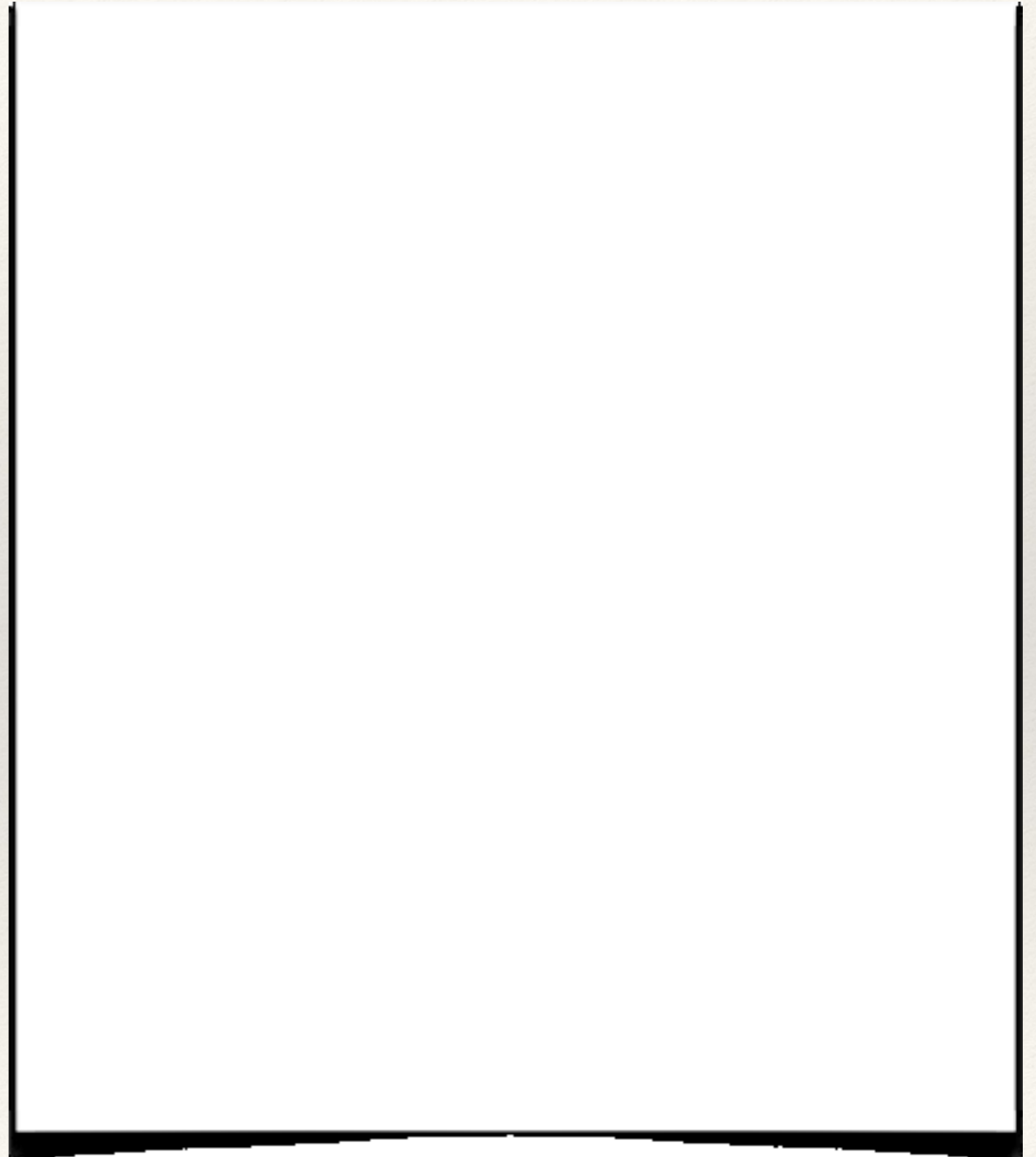
Medieval Europe

- ❖ Feudalism

- ❖ Dual authoritarianism of monarchy and church

- ❖ Culture

- ❖ Rise of merchant class media

Enlightenment

- ❖ Science & technology
- ❖ Secularism

I DO NOT FEEL OBLIGED TO BELIEVE THAT THE SAME GOD WHO HAS ENDOWED US WITH SENSES, REASON, AND INTELLECT HAS INTENDED US TO FORGO THEIR USE -GALILEO
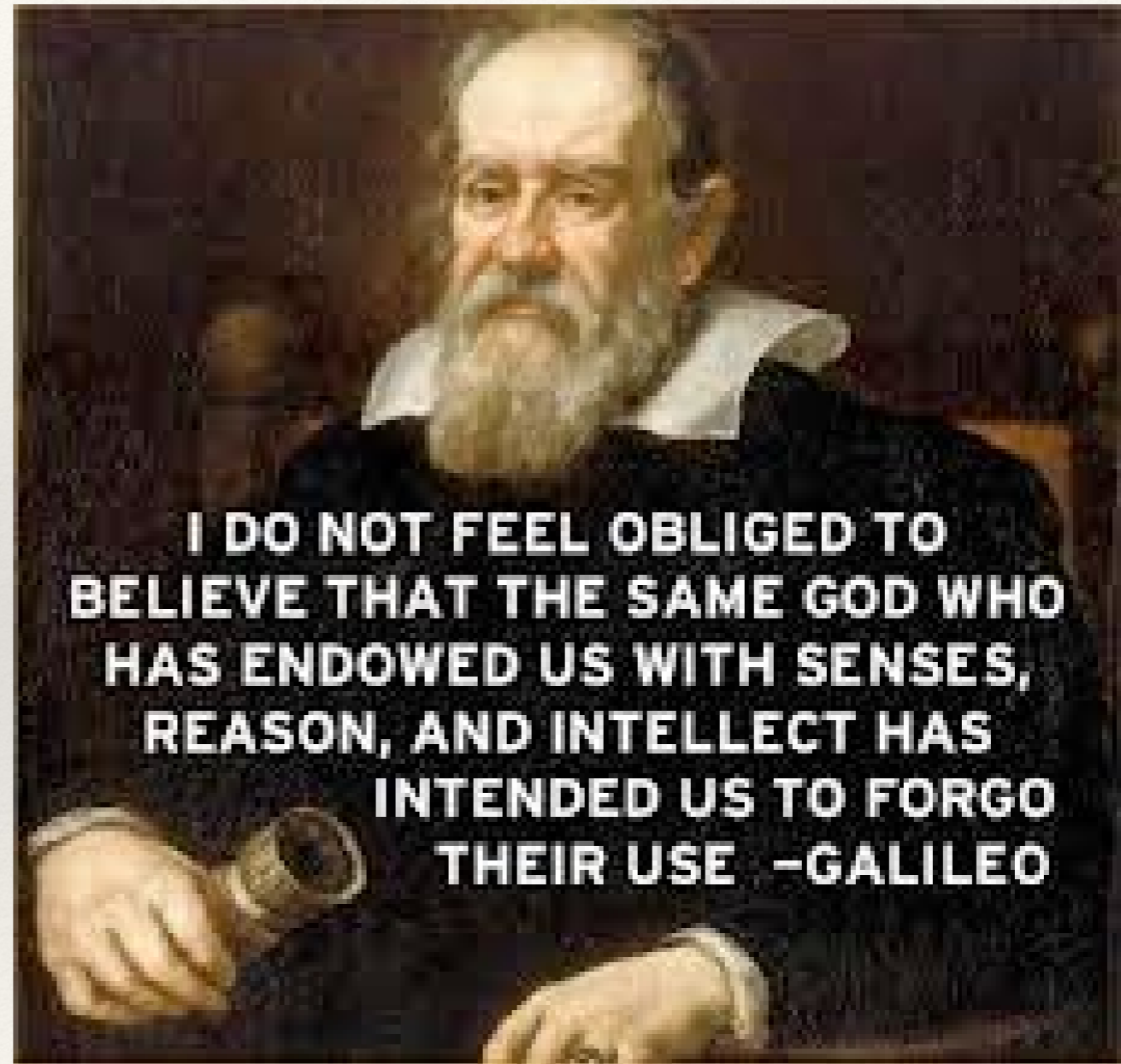
Epistemology

- ❖ - knowledge
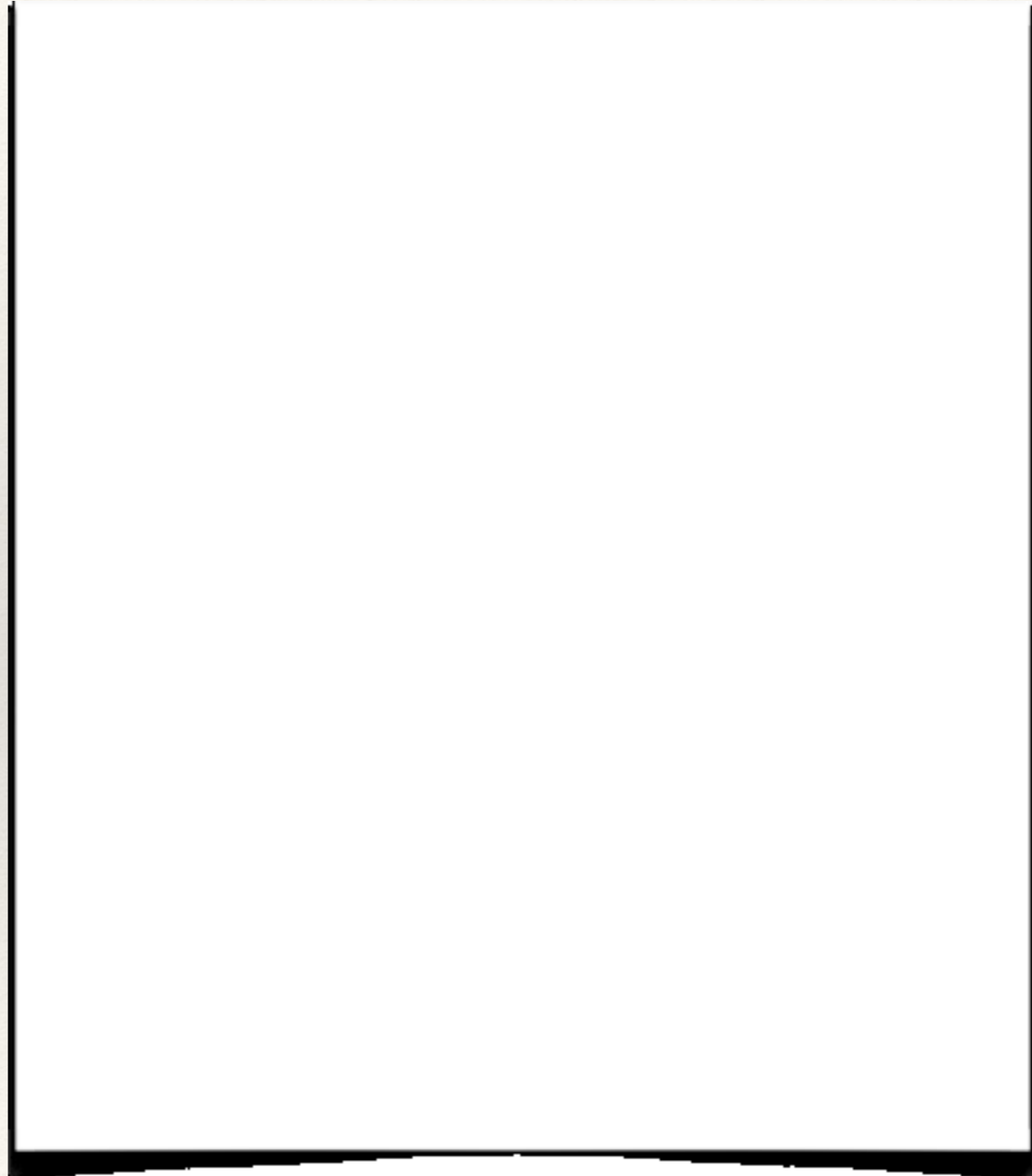
- ❖ - logic /rationalism

- ❖ - value

- ❖ - aesthetics

Modernity

- ❖ Urbanization

- ❖ Democracy

- ❖ Mass Media forms

Social Sciences

❖ Individual - Psychology

❖ Groups - Sociology, Economics, Political Science

❖ Positivist (Natural Sciences, mathematics)

❖ Interpretivist (Symbolic interpretation / critique)

Sociology

- Structure

- - Spencer: "each feature, custom, or practice, its effect on the functioning of a supposedly stable, cohesive system"

- - Giddens: "the pre-eminence of the social world over its individual parts (i.e. its constituent actors, human subjects)"

Civil Society

- Aristotle: "koinōnía politike" (society apart from family & government)

- Hegel: "burgerliche gessellschaft" (citizens' society)

- Heller: "mosaic of identities"

- Habermas: "communicative action in possibility spaces"

- Bordieau, Giddens: "media reproduces culture in civil society"

Civil Society

❖ a segment of society apart from commerce and government occupied by individuals and groups in public life outside the home, encompassing their cultural, ethical, political, and/or religious interests

❖ Culture

❖ Politics

Conflict Theory

- Dysfunctional society

- Agency vs. Structure

- Legal alternativism

Conflict Theory

❖ Horkheimer & Adorno:

❖ In the "culture industries", the rise of 20th century large cultural industry players had created a structured, supply-driven system that "integrates its consumers from above" and was negating the opportunities for individuals and small groups of producers to comprise "a more diverse and pluralistic platform for societal understanding"

❖ Researching the development of public policy should include not just an examination of the actors' behavior, but also an exploration of the value systems upon which the actions were based
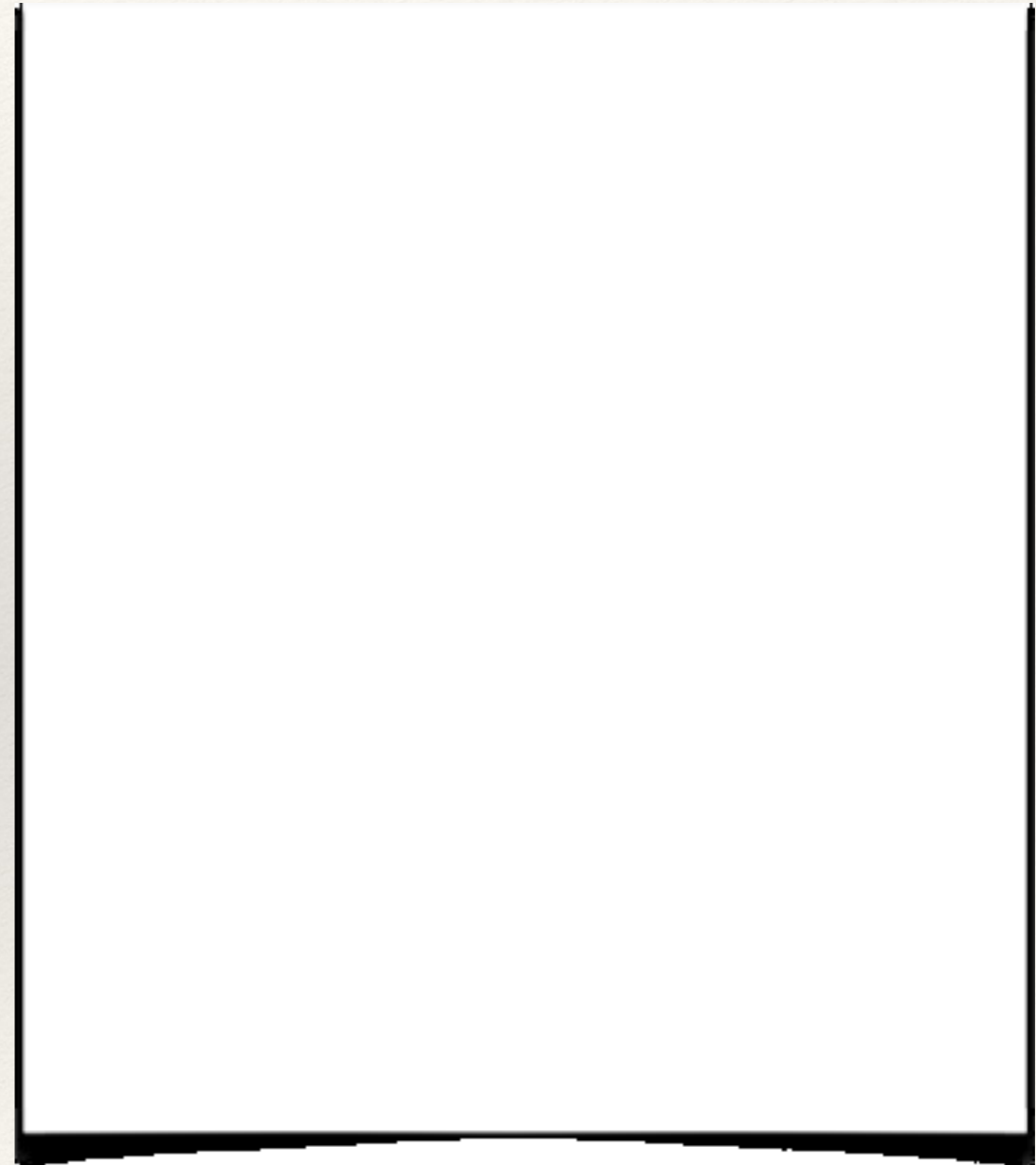
Culture Industries

- The Frankfurt School

- Adorno & Horkheimer 1944

- "culture now impresses the same stamp on everything"

The Public Sphere

The Public Sphere

❖ a participatory bourgeois public sphere of real discourse among equals that transformed into a site of spectator politics manipulated by elites who took control of the medium

❖ the public sphere merged the private concerns of literate individuals regarding family and social integration with the larger public concerns of society

❖ presented in spaces reserved for open discourse among citizens and delineated through argumentative discourse intended to identify and prioritize interests for the common good. Individuals could inform and influence public opinion, even if it was in opposition to the current political status quo.

Public Sphere

❖ The degradation of the public sphere began in the late 19th century concurrent with the societal transition to a system marked by merging economic and political forces, the decline of the individual, and the manipulation of the culture industries
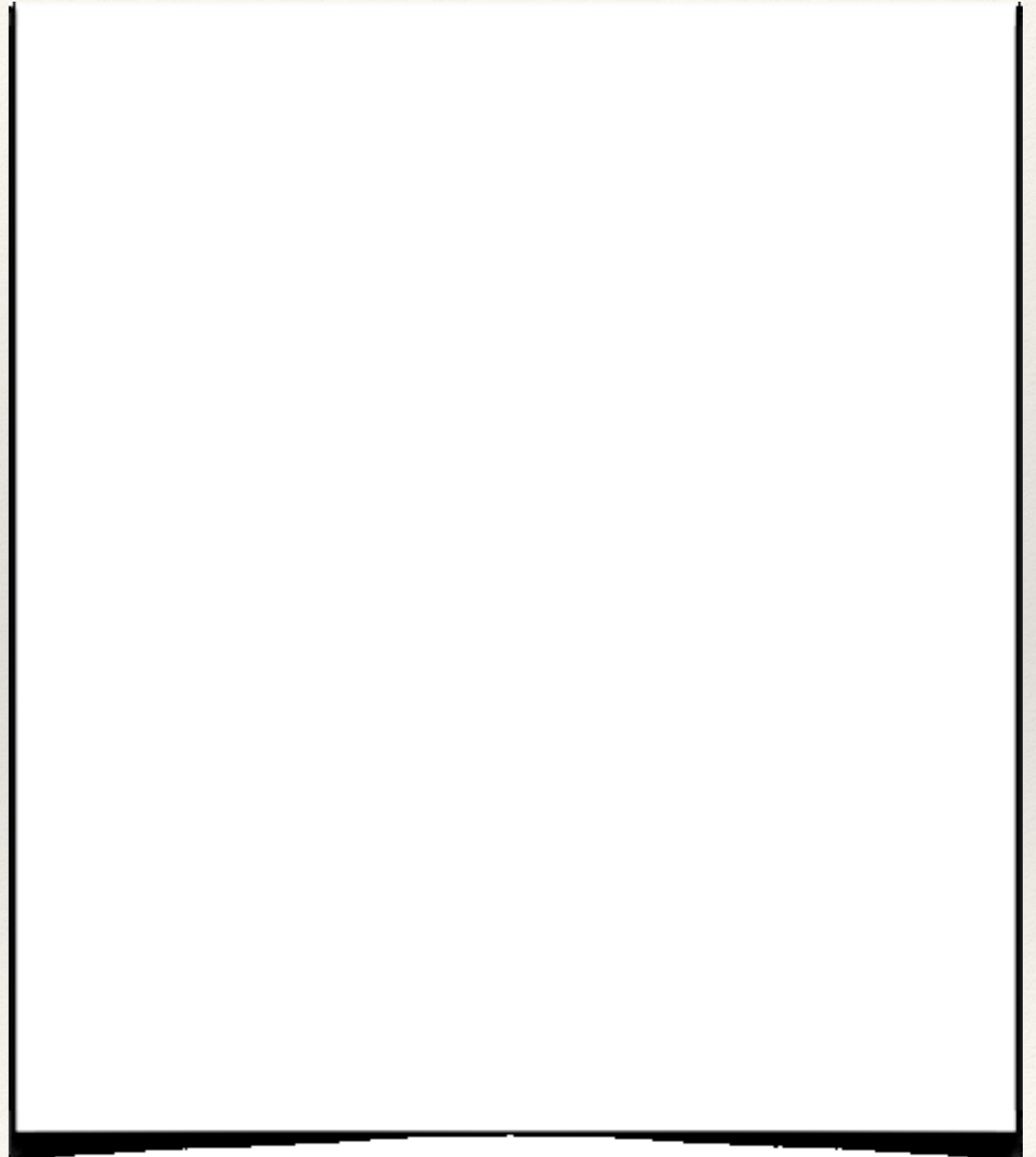
The Public Sphere

❖ **Re-Feudalization**: Public Sphere transformed into "spectator politics manipulated by elites who took control of the medium"

The Public Sphere

- Habermas: "forum for culture and politics co-opted"

- Edwards: "multiple public spheres"

- Fraser: "issues of class & gender"

- Foucalt: "multidirectional power generation from discourse"

- Herbst: "mobilize political resources"

Radio

FIRST FULL-TIME RADIO ANNOUNCER IN THE WORLD
Harold W. Arlin shown as he looked in the early 1920's. He did the first play-by-play of baseball and football and introduced many noted persons in their radio debuts on KDKA.
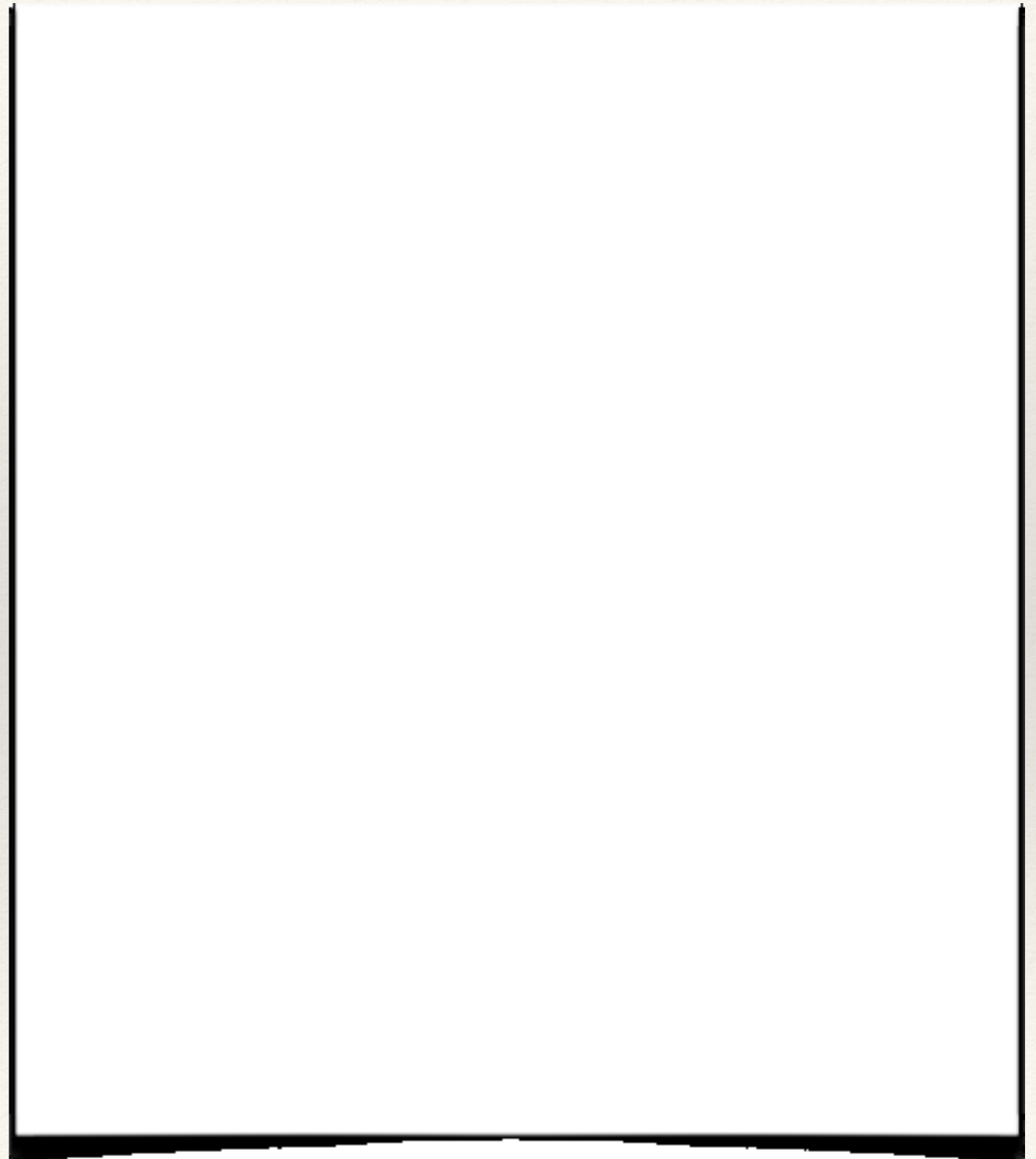
Television

Re-Feudalization II

- ❖ **Re-Feudalization II:**

- ❖ -Policy issues

- ❖ -Commercial broadcast conglomerates
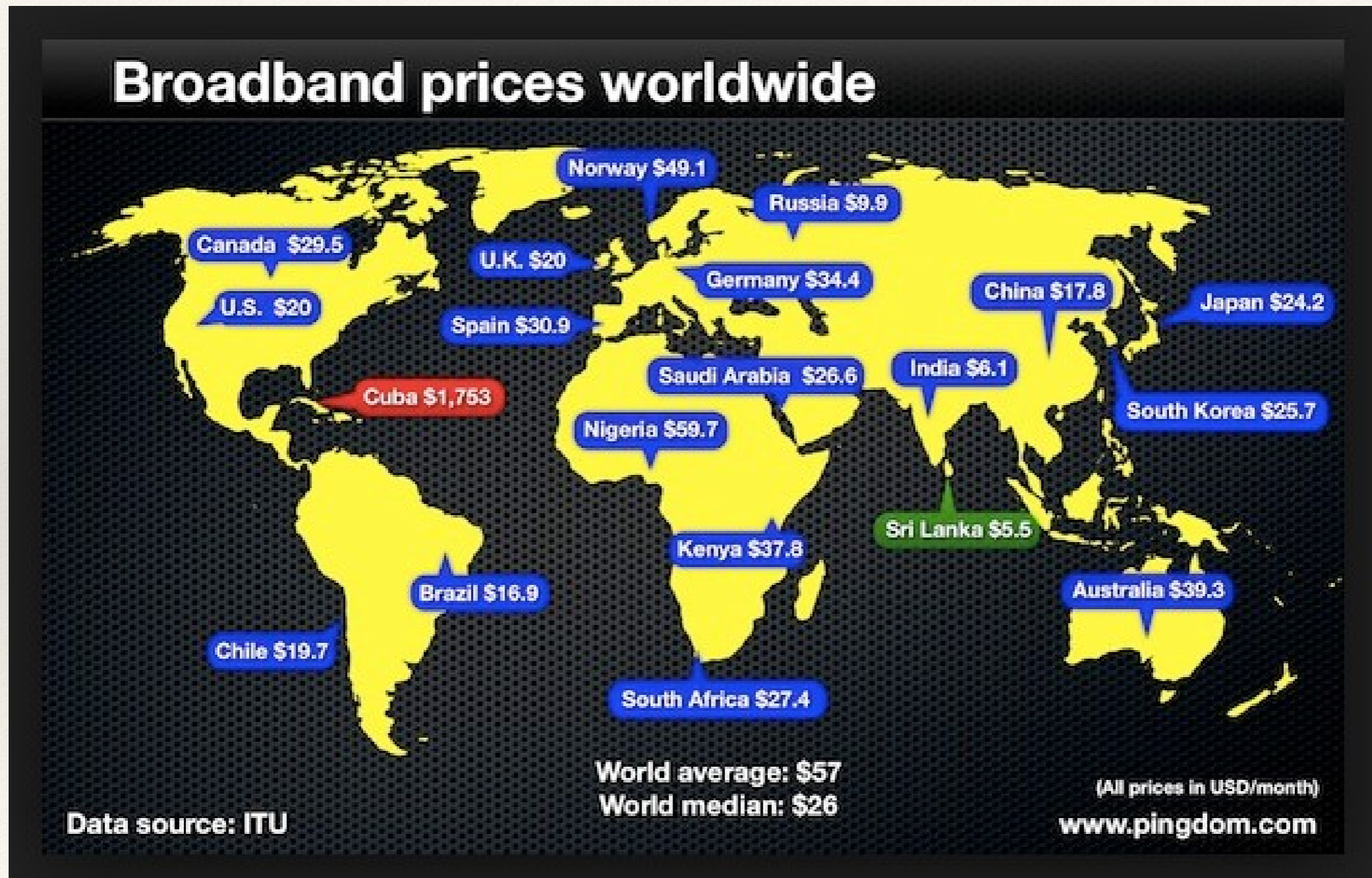
- ❖ -Alternatives struggle

IP - The Great Liberator?

- ❖ One-to-many revolution
- ❖ low barriers to entry
- ❖ virtual democracy

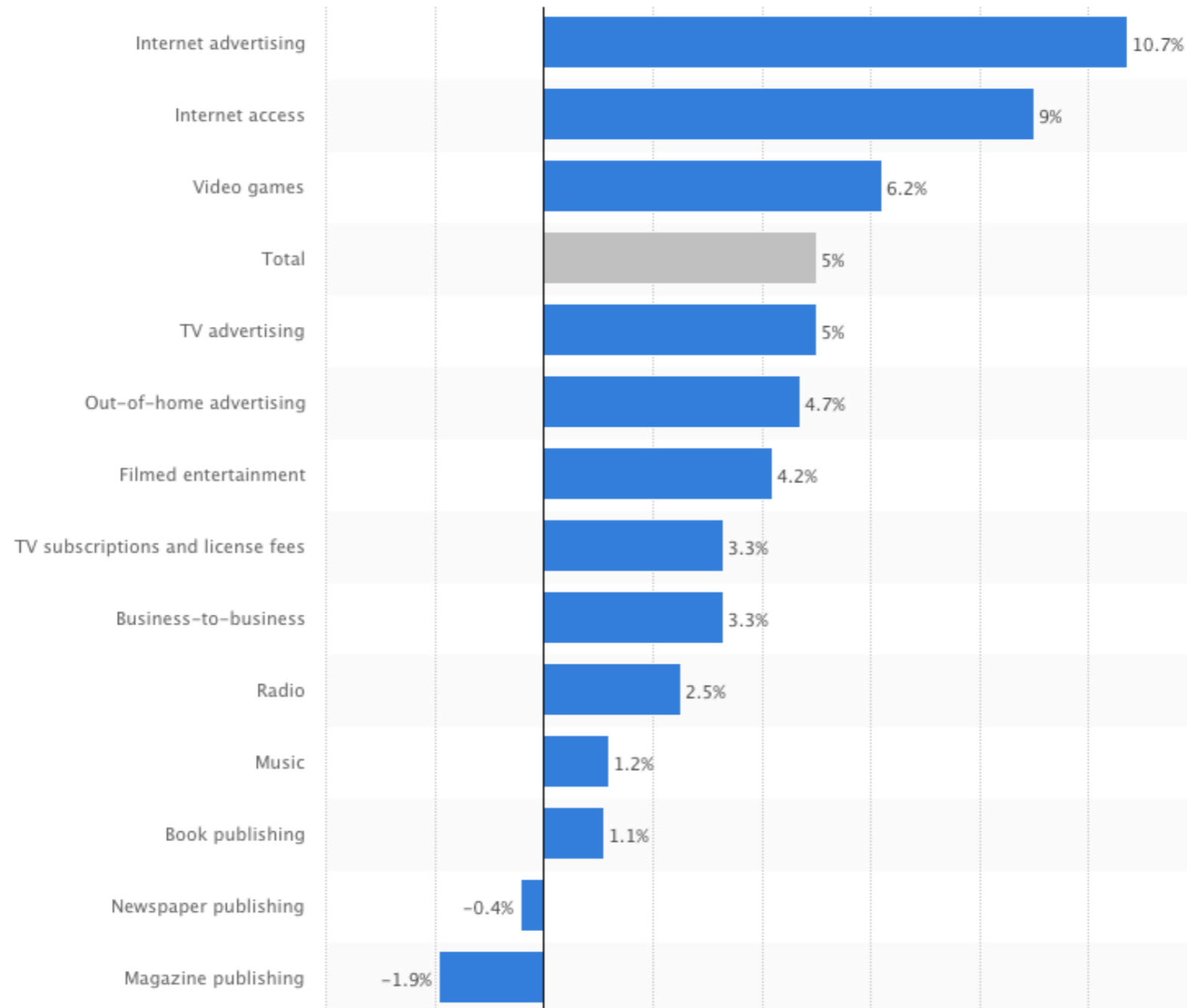# Q1 - The Pipes

Broadband prices worldwide

Q2 - The Revenue

Compound annual growth rate of the global media and entertainment spending between 2013 and 2018, by sector

Sector	Growth rate
Internet advertising	10.7%
Internet access	9%
Video games	6.2%
Total	5%
TV advertising	5%
Out-of-home advertising	4.7%
Filmed entertainment	4.2%
TV subscriptions and license fees	3.3%
Business-to-business	3.3%
Radio	2.5%
Music	1.2%
Book publishing	1.1%
Newspaper publishing	-0.4%
Magazine publishing	-1.9%

Q3 - The Content

* Information

* Opinion

* Entertainment

Q4 – Your Data

Re-Feudalization III?

- Tech oligarchs

- Net neutrality

- Weaponization

- *"The Internet has become a potent tool of deception wielded by political extremists, disinformation warriors and conspiracy theorists."* -New York Times

ICT4D

The Future

- ❖ Beyond streaming

- ❖ Neutrality

- ❖ Creative Commons

- ❖ Funding for real journalism
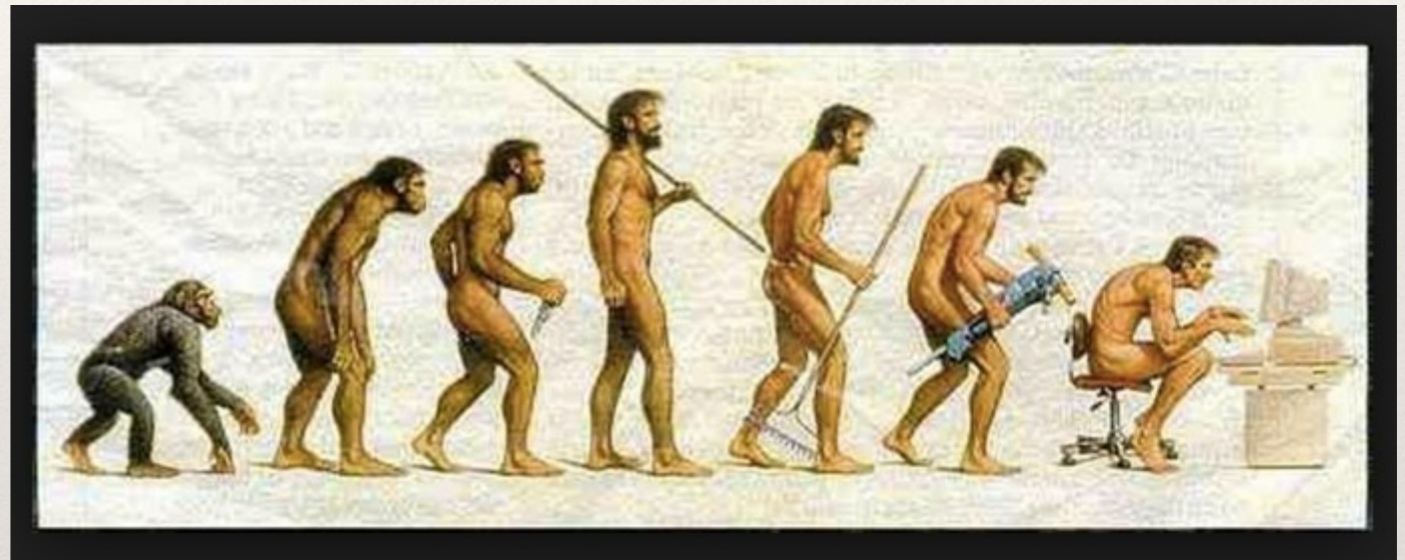
Human Evolution

- ❖ Structural Functionalism?
- ❖ Mass Media form?
- ❖ The Public Sphere?

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