



# Critical Theory and Media Studies

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Approaches to Media Culture

Presented by An Nguyen

Instructed by Mari Maasilta

## 3 main questions to answer:

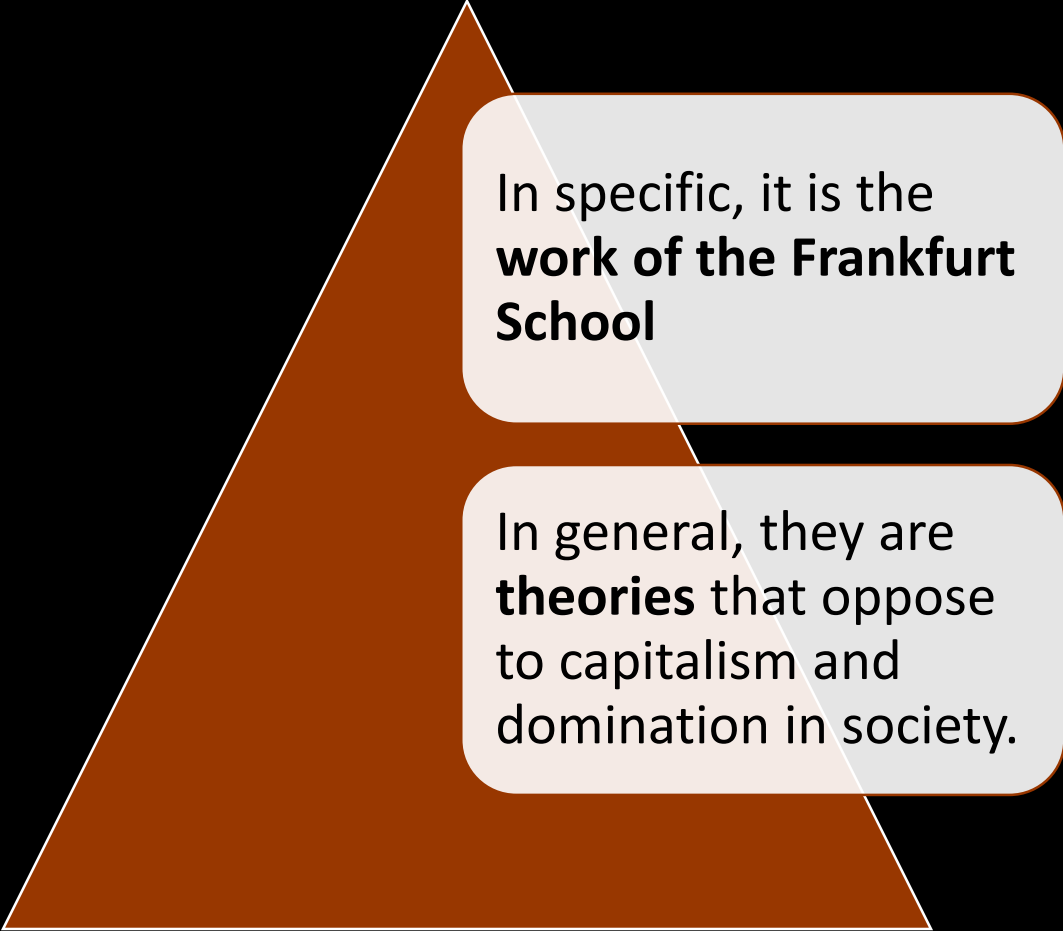


What is Critical Theory?

How Critical Theory contribute to Media Studies/Media Education?

How the Critical Theory can benefit us as media education students /media workers?

# Critical Theory as a term



In specific, it is the **work of the Frankfurt School**

In general, they are **theories** that oppose to capitalism and domination in society.



# All concepts under Critical Theory

- Audience commodity, media accumulation strategies, commodity aesthetics, culture industry, true and false consciousness/needs, instrumental reason, technological rationality, manipulation, ideology critique, dialectical theatre, critical pedagogy, aura, proletarian counter-public sphere, multiple publics, emancipatory media usage, repressive media usage, alternative media, radical media, fetish of communication, ideological state apparatuses, the multitude, the circulation of struggles, hegemony, structure of feelings, articulation, dominant reading, oppositional reading, negotiated reading, capital-accumulation function of the media, commodity circulation function of the media, legitimatizing function of the media, advertising- and public-relations function of the media, regenerative function of the media, propaganda model of the media, communicative action, dialogic communication, discursive communication, communication empire, transnational informational capitalism, working class culture, subculture
- (Christian Fuchs, 2009)

Main concepts to discover today:

# Classical Critical Theory

Mass  
Culture

Culture Industry

Commodification

Standardization

Massification

High/low Culture

Culture Hegemony

False Consciousness

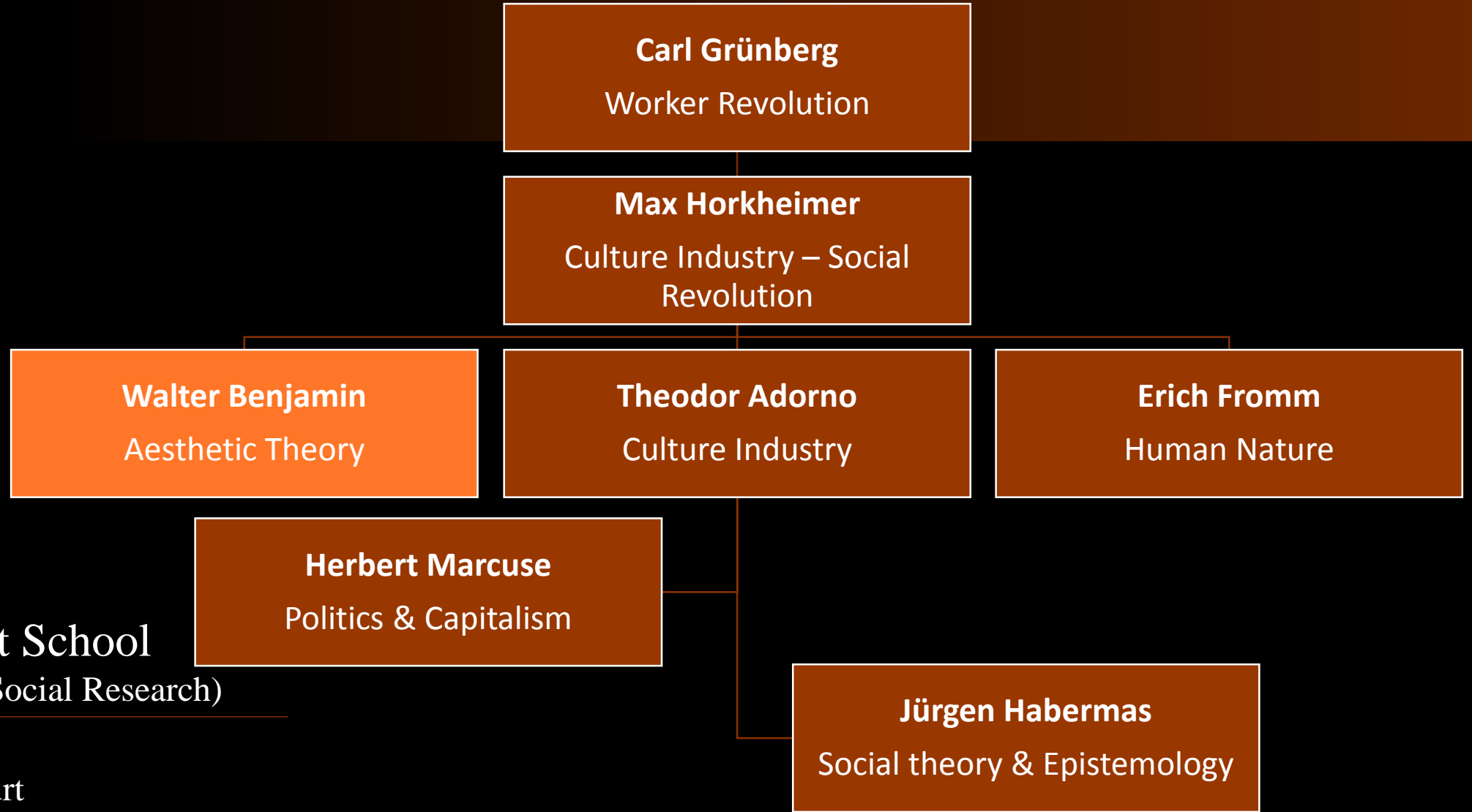
Pseudo-  
Individualiation

Rationality

# The Frankfurt School and Classical Critical Theory

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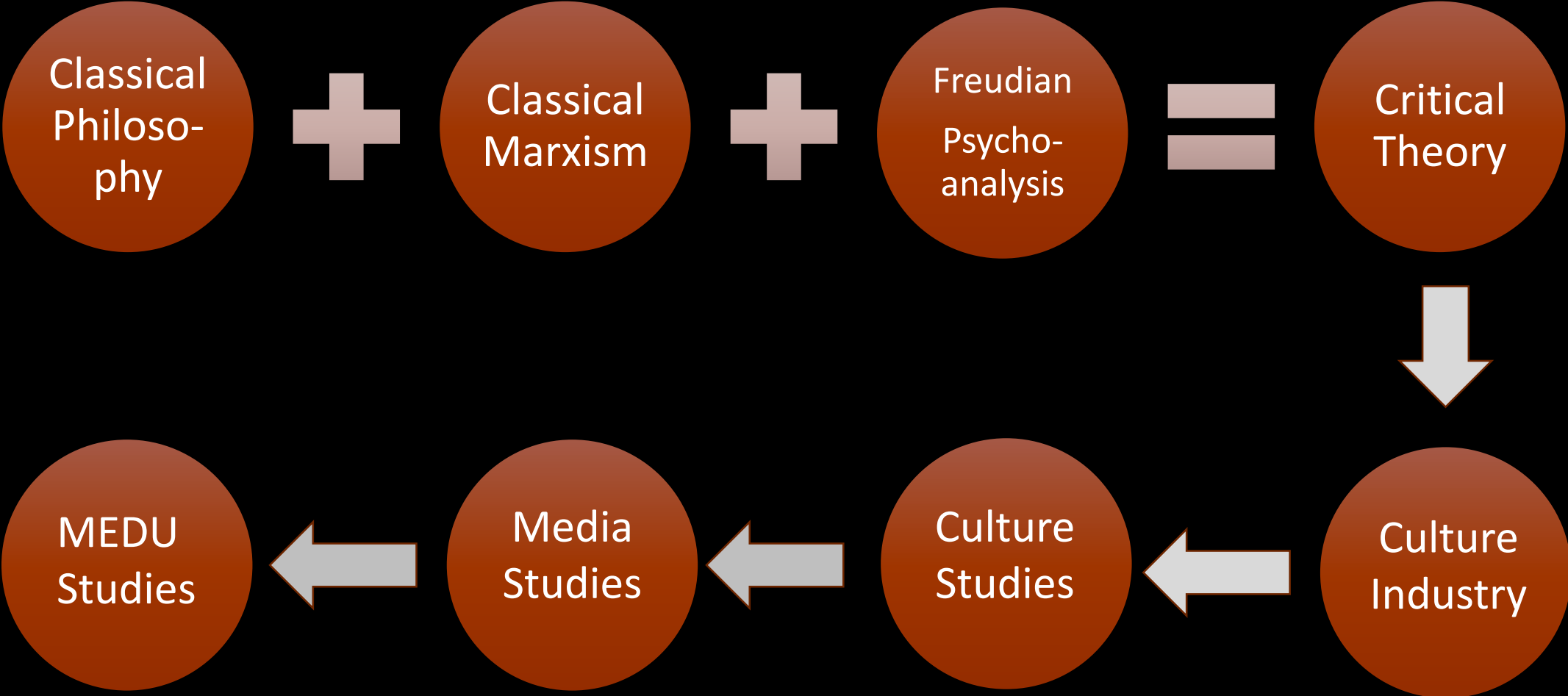
**The Frankfurt School**  
(The Institute of Social Research)

Established: 1923  
Location: Frankfurt  
Financed by: Felix Weil (1898–1975)  
Aims: Developing Marxism studies

# The Origin and the Development of Critical Theory



[Check the full map here](#)







Max Horkheimer suggested the Frankfurt intellectuals to question the interrelations between the problem of “the object” dissolve into (Marxian) sociology and the problem of “the subject” into (Freudian) psychology”  
Snow (1977, p.114)

Marxism	Freudian Psychoanalysis	Critical Theory
<b>Socioeconomic analysis</b> that analyzes class relations and societal conflict using a materialist interpretation of historical development and a dialectical view of <b>social transformation</b>	People could be cured by <b>making conscious their unconscious thoughts and motivations</b> , thus gaining insight. The aim is to <b>release repressed emotions and experiences</b> ,	“A <b>self-conscious social critique</b> that is aimed at <b>change</b> and <b>emancipation</b> through <b>enlightenment</b> and that does <b>not cling dogmatically to its own doctrinal assumptions</b> ” Max Horkheimer

# Mass Culture and Culture Industry

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Culture

Mass  
Culture  
(High/Low  
culture)

# CAPITALISM

Culture  
Industry

Commodification + Standardization + Massification



- **The nature of Mass Culture**

“Mass culture was the seedbed of political totalitarianism”.

- **The nature of Culture Industry:**

“The very areas of life within which many people believe they are genuinely free – free from the demands of work for example – actually perpetuates domination by denying freedom and obstructing the development of a critical consciousness.”

Fagan (2012)

# Theodor Adorno (1903—1969)

- German philosopher, sociologist, classic pianist
- Left Germany in 1933 because of Nazim, lived in Oxford, New York, Los Angeles (USA) until 1949
- Major works:
  - Dialectic of Enlightenment (with Max Horkheimer, 1944)
  - Philosophy of New Music (1949)
  - The Authoritarian Personality (1950)
  - Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life (1951)



- *Art is magic delivered from the lie of being truth.*
- *Every work of art is an uncommitted crime.*
- *Love is the power to see similarity in the dissimilar.*



# High Culture >< Low Culture

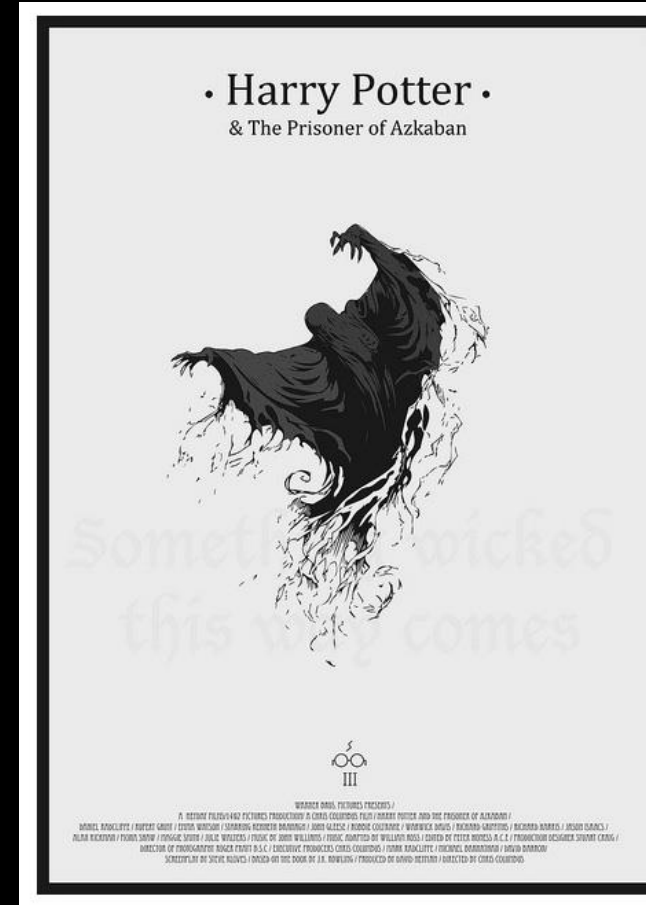
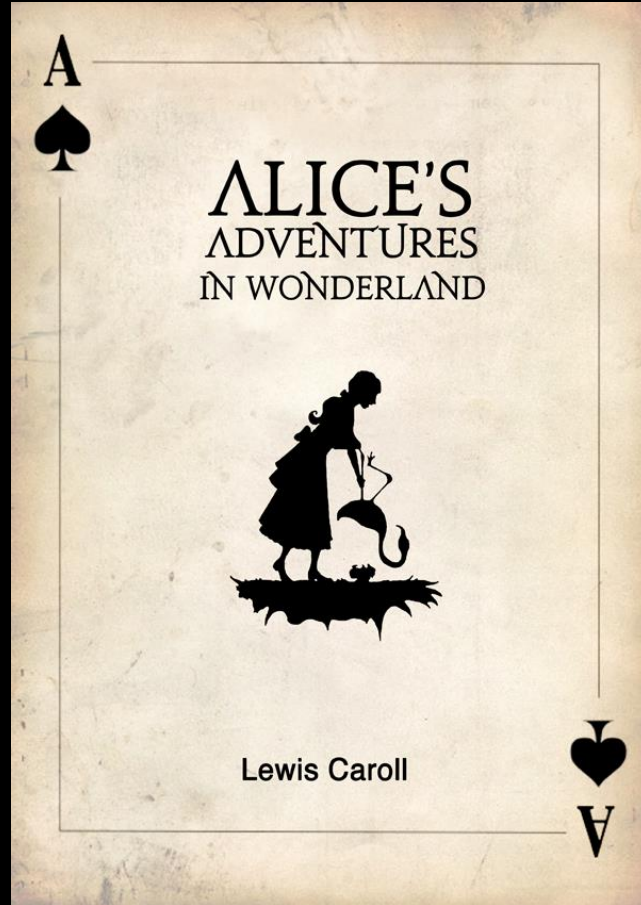
## “High” Culture

- Artefacts: Classical music, ballet, fine art masterpieces
- Consumer: Ruling class
- Characteristic: High “aura”
- Benefits:
  - self-consciousness
  - critical thinking
  - autonomy

## “Low” Culture

- Artefacts: Jazz, films, magazines, radio programs, soap operas, television serials
- Consumer: Working class
- Characteristic: Low “aura”
- Threats:
  - Enslave and entrap working class
  - Exploit their leisure time
  - Weaken ability to think, act autonomically

According to Adorno's theory, which one is "high", which one is "low"?

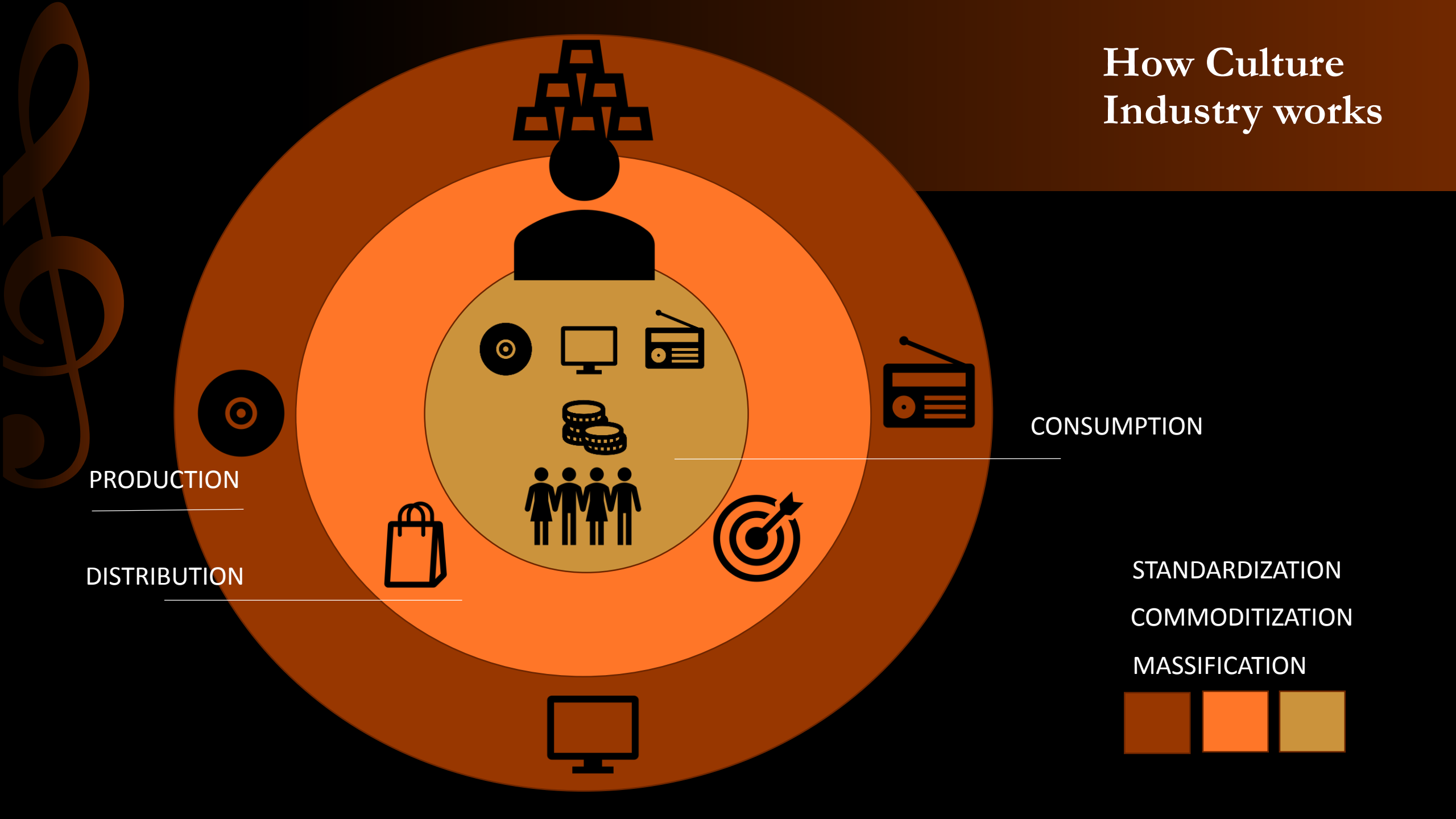


According to Adorno's theory, which one is "high",  
which one is "low"?

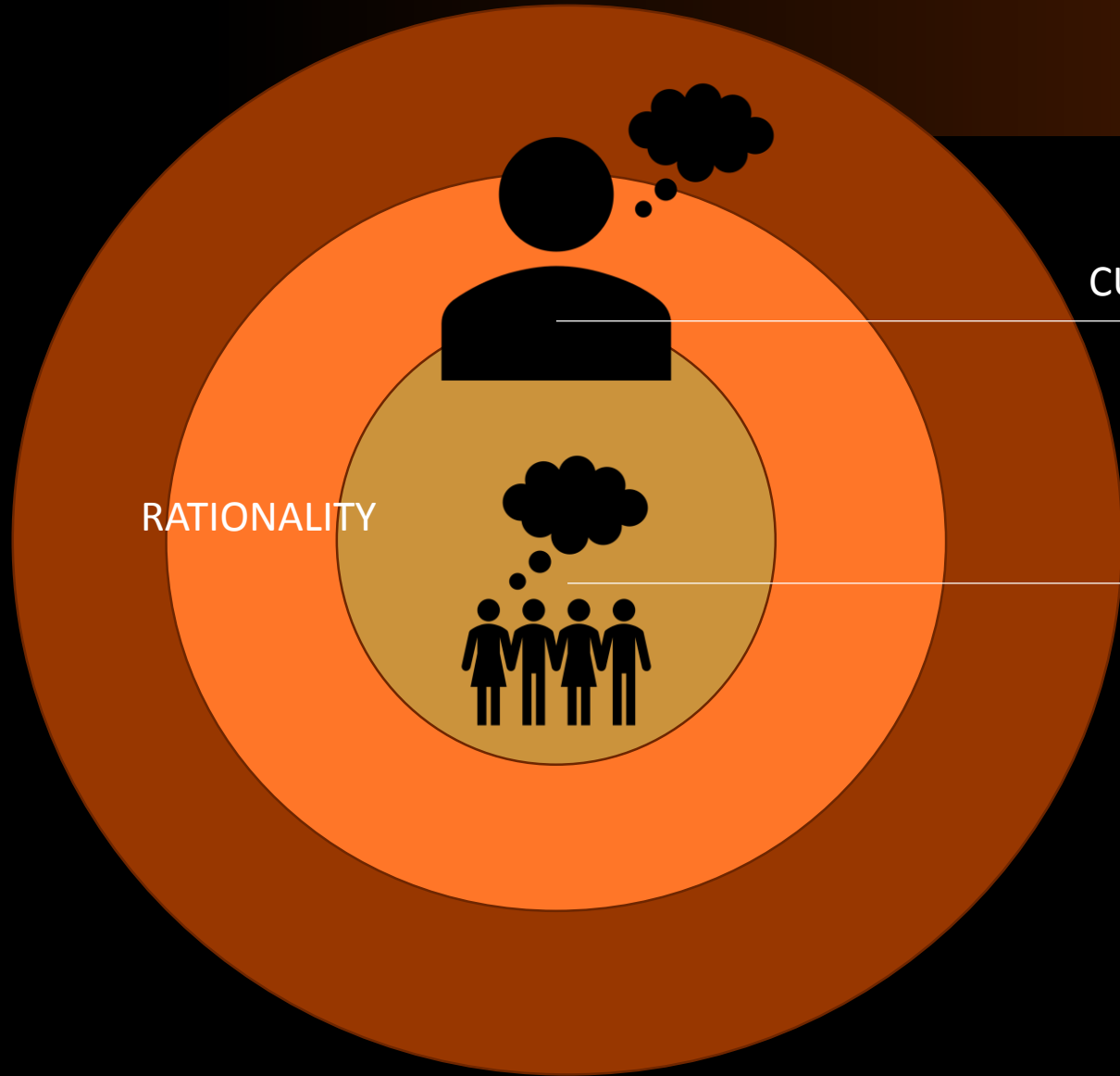




# How Culture Industry works



# Concepts Explanation

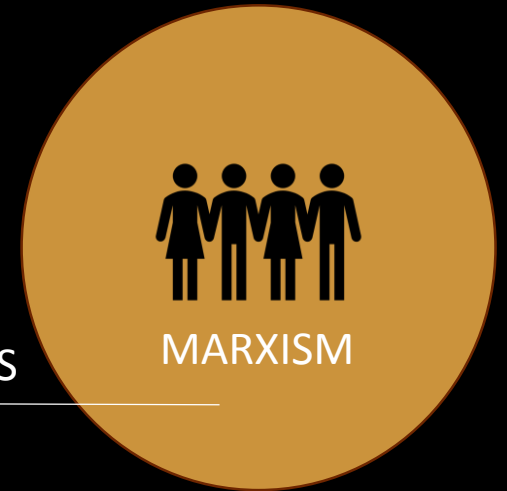


CULTURE HEGEMONY

PSEUDO -  
INDIVIDUALIZATION

FALSE CONSCIOUSNESS

TRUE CONSCIOUSNESS



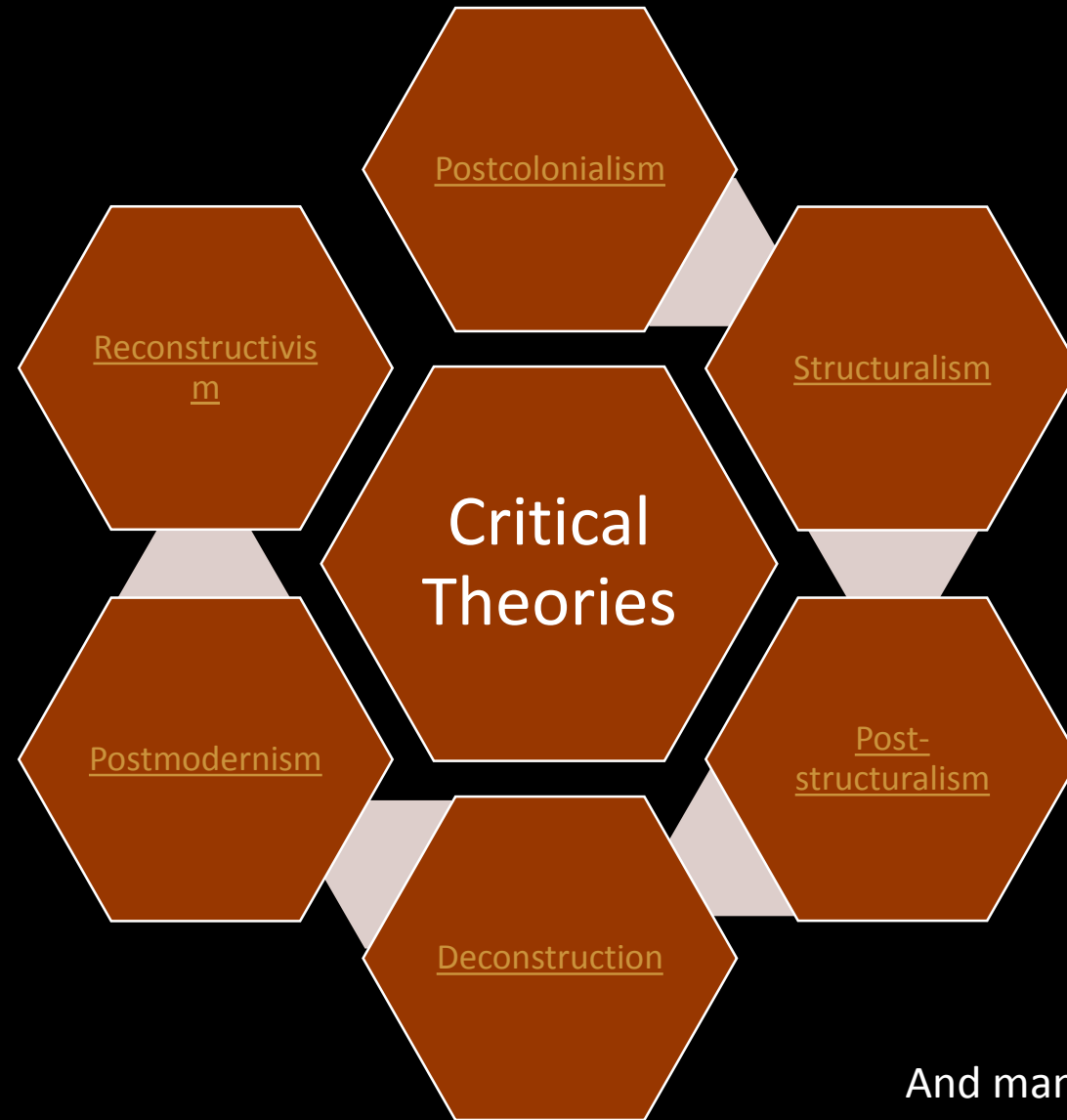
According to Adorno's theory, which one is "high", which one is "low"?



# Contributions of Critical Theory today

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And many more.....



## EDUCATION

- Hary Giroux
- Integrate the culture theories and critical theories into “critical pedagogy” development



## MEDIA AND CULTURE

- Douglas Kellner
- Exploring the disciplines of cultural studies and the philosophy of education



## DIGITAL MEDIA

- Christian Fuchs
- Discussing social media platforms in the context of specific topics



## MEDIA & EDUCATION

- David Buckingham
- Research in the field of young generation, media and education



# Discussion

What does it mean to media educators for being critical?

How can media educators benefit from the Critical Theory?

# Reading tips for online group discussion

## Critical Theory and Culture Industry

- <https://www.ejumpcut.org/archive/onlinessays/JC20folder/AdornoMassCult.html>
- <http://arthistoryunstuffed.com/theodor-adorno-and-the-culture-industry/>
- [http://www.academia.edu/9303217/Adorno\\_Culture\\_Industry\\_and\\_The\\_Lion\\_King](http://www.academia.edu/9303217/Adorno_Culture_Industry_and_The_Lion_King)
- <https://www.slideshare.net/wairere2/critical-theory-1pdf>

## Critical Theory and Media Studies

- <http://www.uwestminsterpress.co.uk/site/books/10.16997/book1/>
- <http://www.heathwoodpress.com/critical-theory-of-information-communication-media-technology/>
- [https://books.google.fi/books/about/Media\\_cultural\\_Studies.html?id=LSpmn22SqD0C&redir\\_esc=y](https://books.google.fi/books/about/Media_cultural_Studies.html?id=LSpmn22SqD0C&redir_esc=y)





Thank you so  
much for your  
attention!

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