

# Belief dependence

## Belief dependence

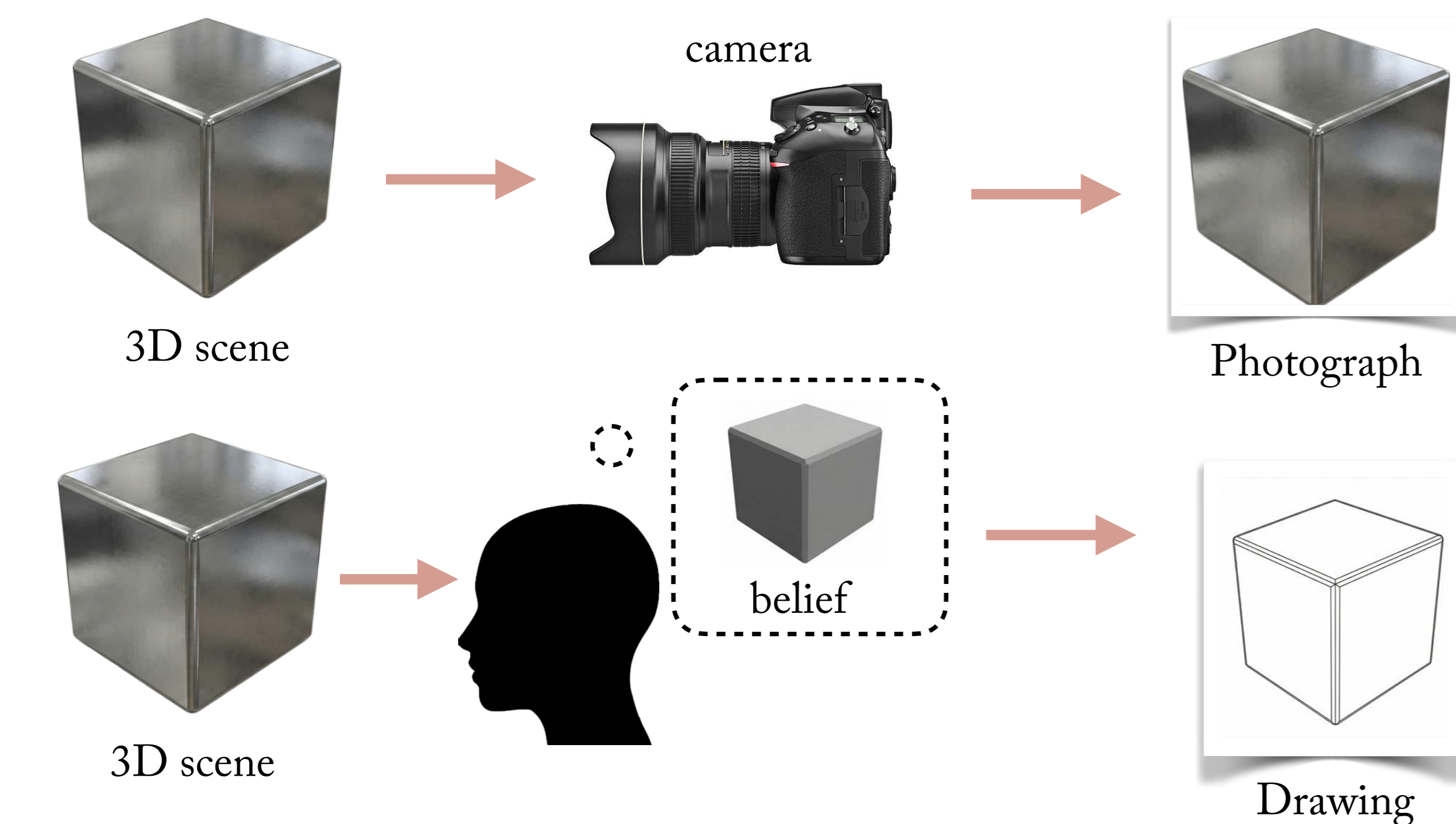
So why do photographs have special epistemic value?

**Initial idea:** drawings depend on human intentions but photographs do not. (This is obviously wrong.)

**Walton's idea:** drawings are belief-dependent, but photographs are not.

**Belief dependence, roughly:** if the beliefs of the artist had been different (but the source scene stayed the same) then the form of the image would have been different.

- **Photographs:** Scene → Camera → Picture
  - Photographs are counterfactually dependent on the scene, but not the artist's beliefs.
- **Drawings:** Scene → Viewer → Mental state → Picture
  - Drawings are counterfactually dependent on the scene and the artist's beliefs.



## Vision, knowledge, and reliability

**Reliability.** In general, reliable channels are more conducive to knowledge. A channel is reliable if it systematically and predictably transmits accurate information.

**Vision and reliability.** Vision is typically reliable, so typically conducive to knowledge.

**Photography and reliability.** Is photography reliable, is that why it leads to knowledge?

**AI and knowledge.** Is AI Art a reliable source of knowledge? Are they more reliable than testimony?

# Phil 161: Photography and Knowledge

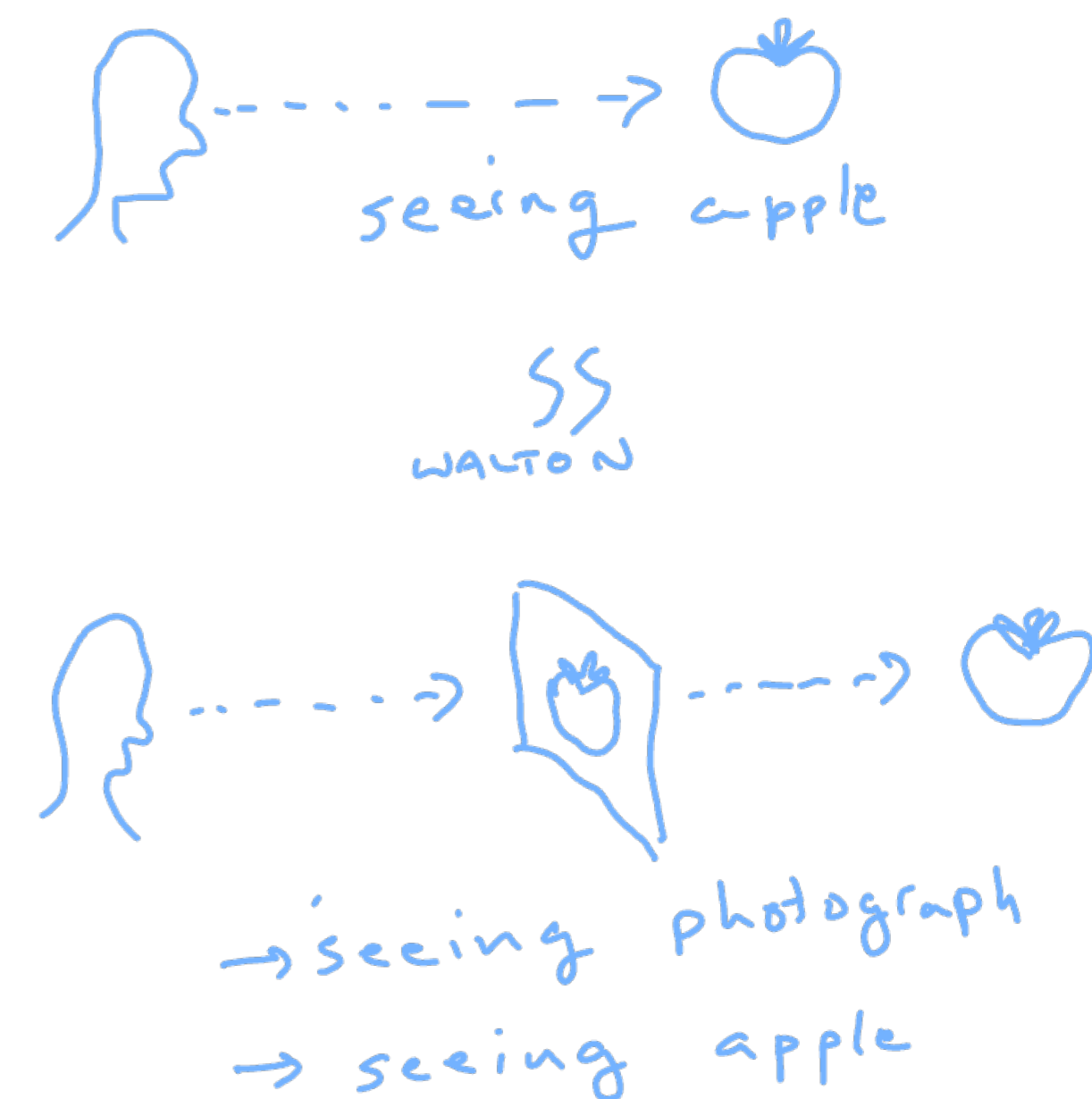
2.12.26 • Prof. G. Greenberg • Quotes from Walton 1984

## Informational Images

- Recall the distinction of content vs. target.
  - **Informational images** have targets in the actual world. They aim to tell you about what has or will actually happen.
  - **Non-informational images** have targets outside of the actual world, or no target at all.
- All photographs, and some drawings are informational.
- But photographs seems to be better suited to the job.
- What is the essential difference photographs and drawings?
  - Degree of realism.
  - Emotional power.
  - Epistemic power.

## Walton on transparency

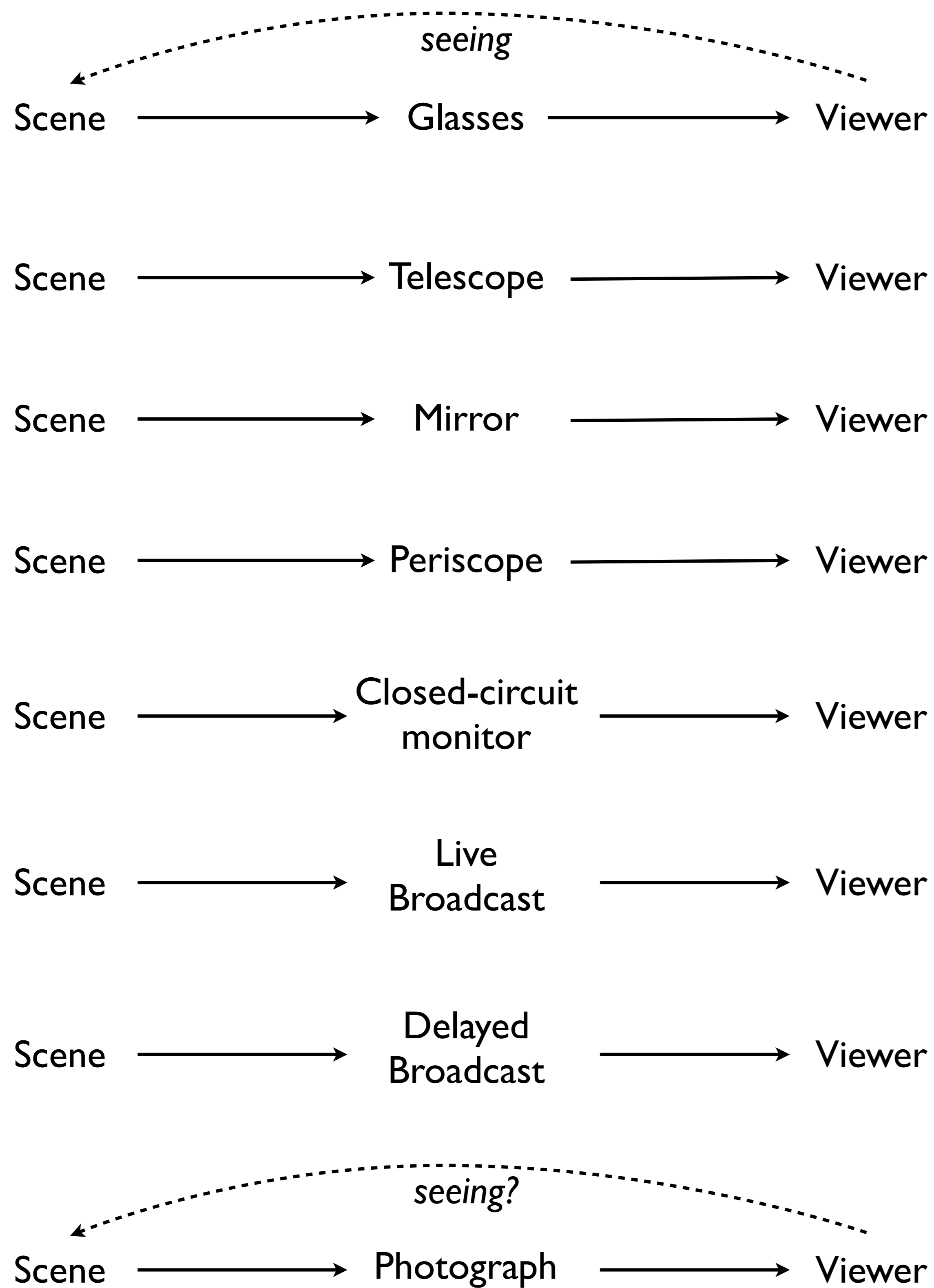
- **Transparent pictures.**
  - **Transparency.** An object P is transparent iff by visually attending to P, a viewer normally comes to see something other than P.
  - **Transparency thesis.** Photographs are transparent.
    - "Photographs are transparent. We see the world through them." (251)
    - "My claim is that we see, quite literally, our dead relatives themselves when we look at photographs of them..." (252)



- **Opaque pictures**
  - "What about paintings? These are not transparent. We do not see Henry VIII when we look at his portrait; we see only a representation of him. There is a sharp break, a difference of kind, between painting and photography." (253)

# Slippery slope argument

"Mirrors are aids to vision, allowing us to see things in circumstances in which we would not otherwise be able to; with their help we can see around corners. Telescopes and microscopes extend our visual powers in other ways, enabling us to see things that are too far away or too small to be seen with the naked eye. Photography is an aid to vision also, and an especially versatile one. With the assistance of the camera, we can see not only around corners and what is distant or small; we can also see into the past." (251)



# Pictures as evidence

## • Pictures as evidence

- Different kinds of evidence provide different kinds of support for a target proposition.
- In general, **perception** provides highly reliable evidence, whereas **testimony** provides less reliable evidence. (Of course, we still accept testimony in court!)
- What exactly is the difference between perception and testimony that explains this epistemic difference?
- We can also compare photography and drawing in the same way. It seems like photography is analogous to perception and drawing to testimony. (Is this right?)
- What is the difference between photography and drawing considered as kinds of evidence?



## • Photography and epistemic value

Walton distinguishes two kinds of pictures: opaque vs. transparent.

Setting aside the specific issue of seeing, we can appreciate that photographs and drawings have different epistemic values.

**Grice's case:** a photograph of a crime vs. a drawing of a crime.

**Walton's case:** a photograph of a dinosaur vs. a drawing of a dinosaur.

Photographs seem to have a special kind of epistemic value, but what is this value?

Knowledge of denotation existence.

Knowledge of attributes.