

# **Science Journalism**

## Between Education and Entertainment

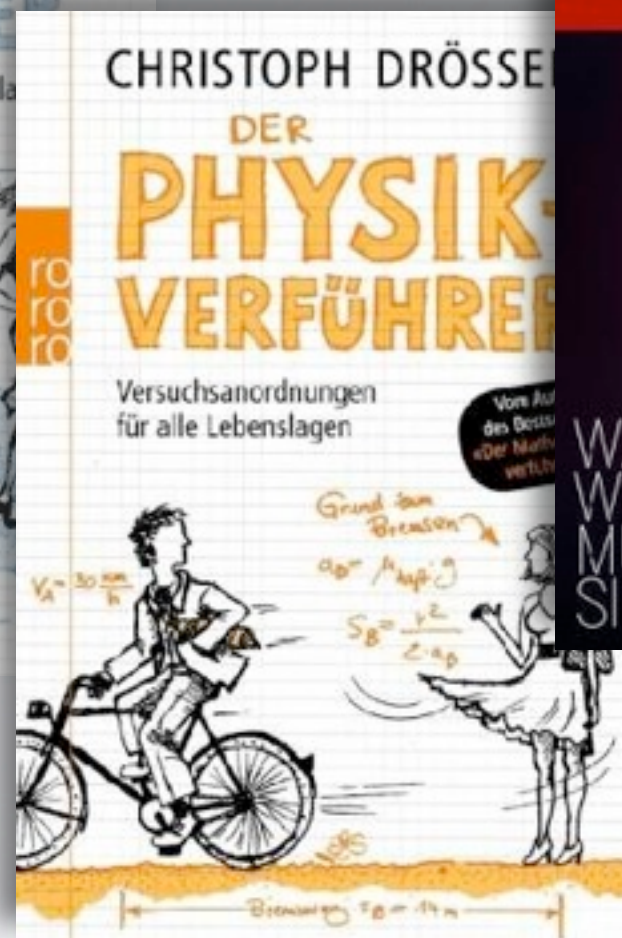
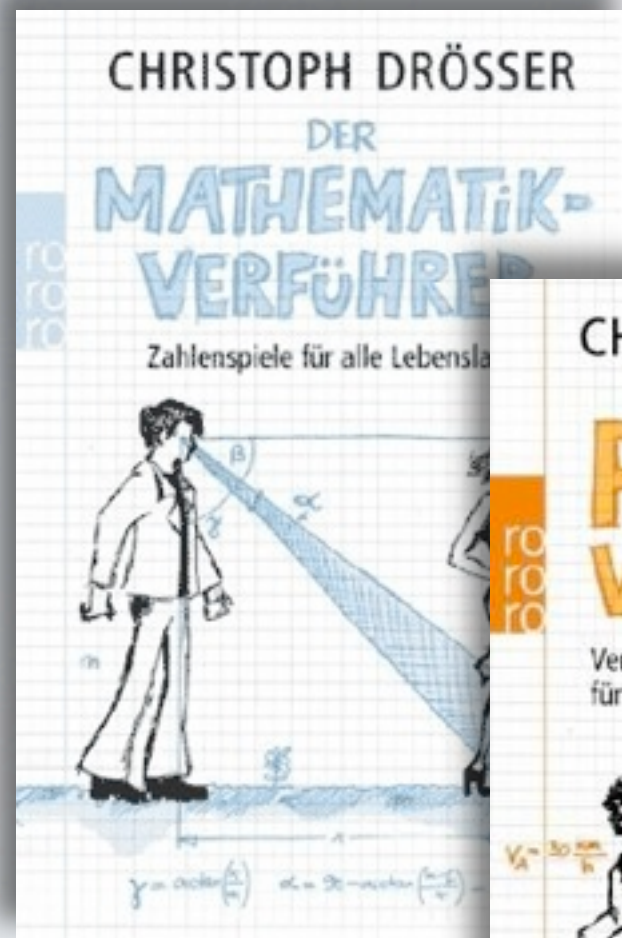


# Die Zeit

Weekly paper, circulation 500,000  
Science section: 8 editors/reporters

# Books

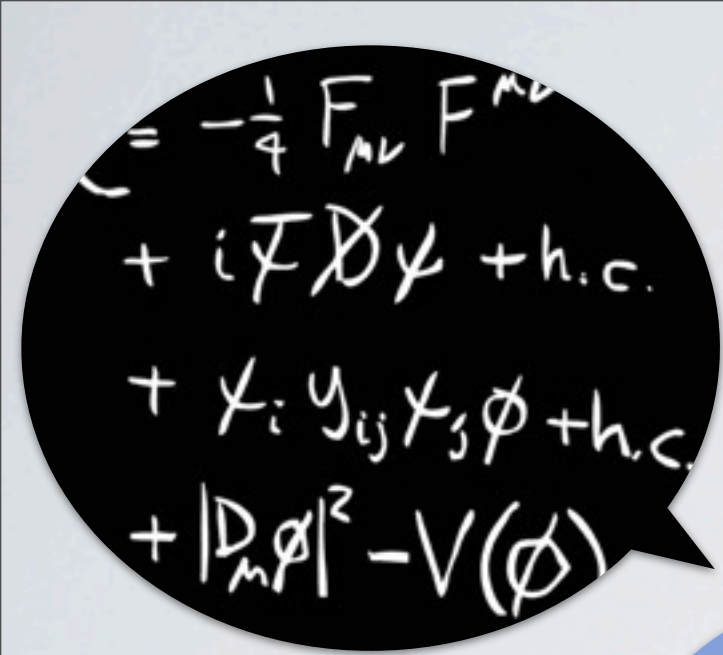
Mathematics, Physics, Music,  
Babies, Urban Legends ...



# Books

Mathematics, Physics, Music,  
Babies, Urban Legends ...

# 1. The Cheerleader Era

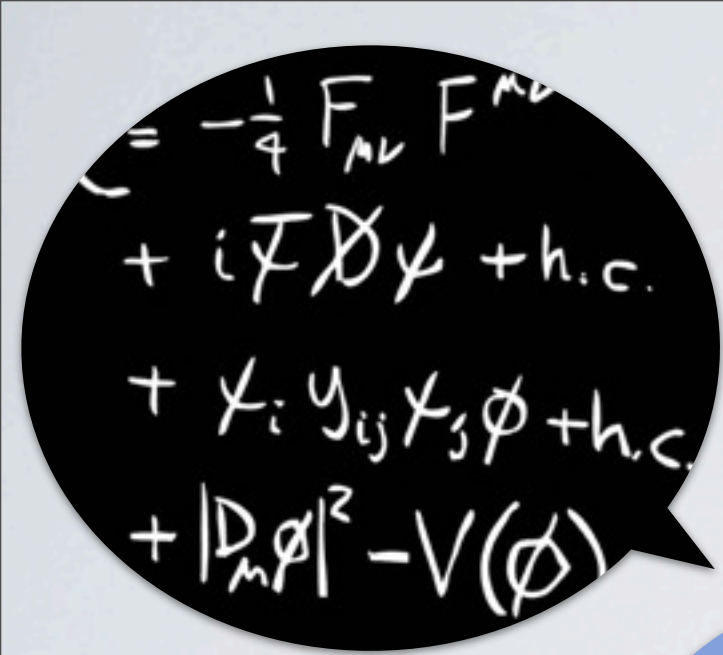


$$\begin{aligned} \mathcal{L} = & -\frac{1}{4} F_{\mu\nu} F^{\mu\nu} \\ & + i\bar{\psi} \not{D} \psi + \text{h.c.} \\ & + \chi_i y_{ij} \chi_j \phi + \text{h.c.} \\ & + |D_\mu \phi|^2 - V(\phi) \end{aligned}$$



Science

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Science

?

The Public

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Science

Translation

God Particle!

! The Public

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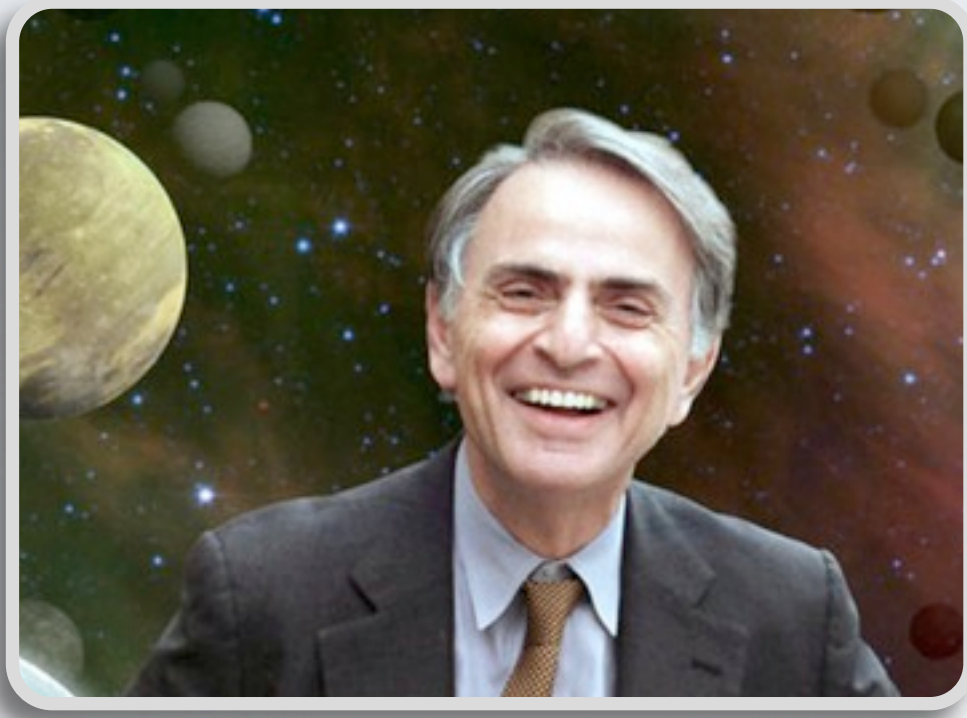


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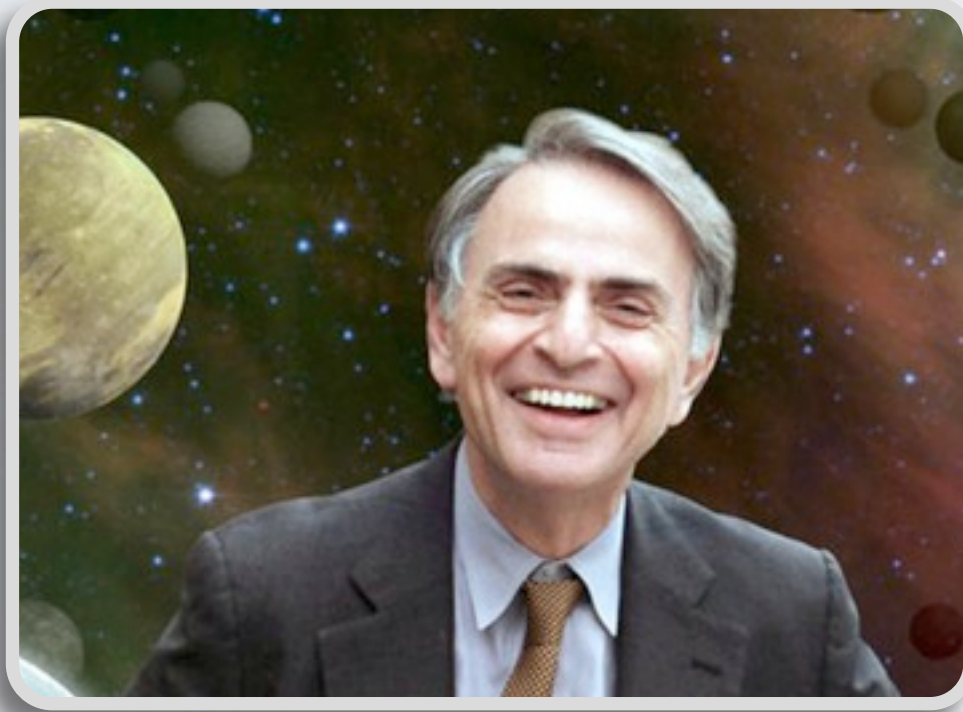


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## 2. The Watchdog Era



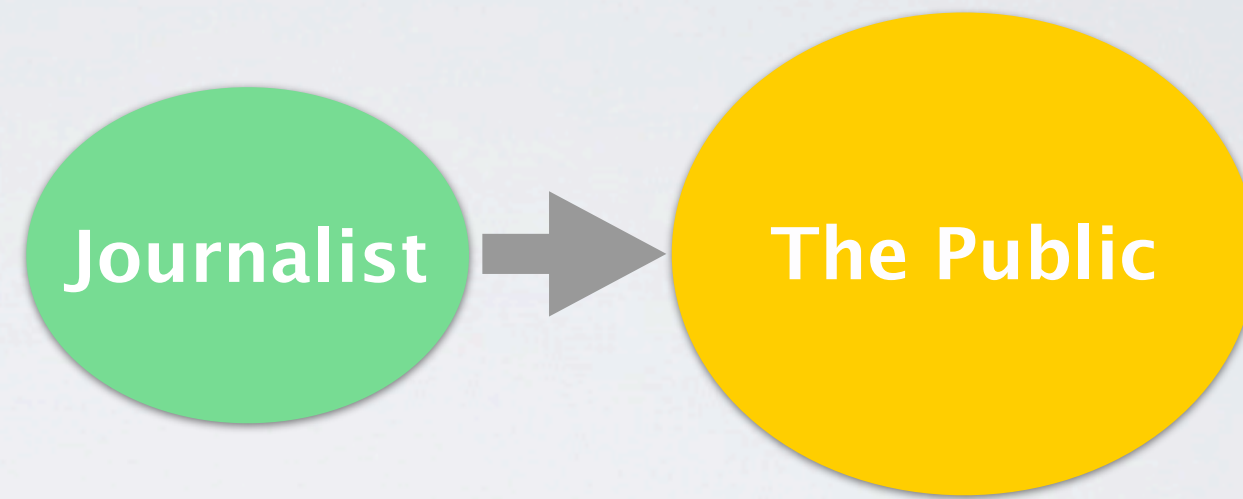
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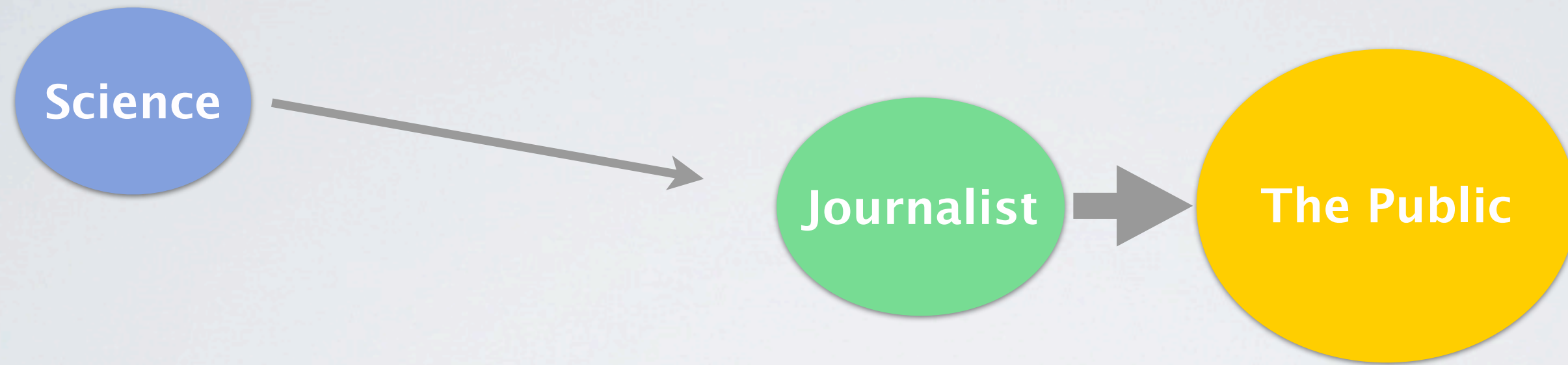
## 2. The Watchdog Era

# 3. The Journalist Era

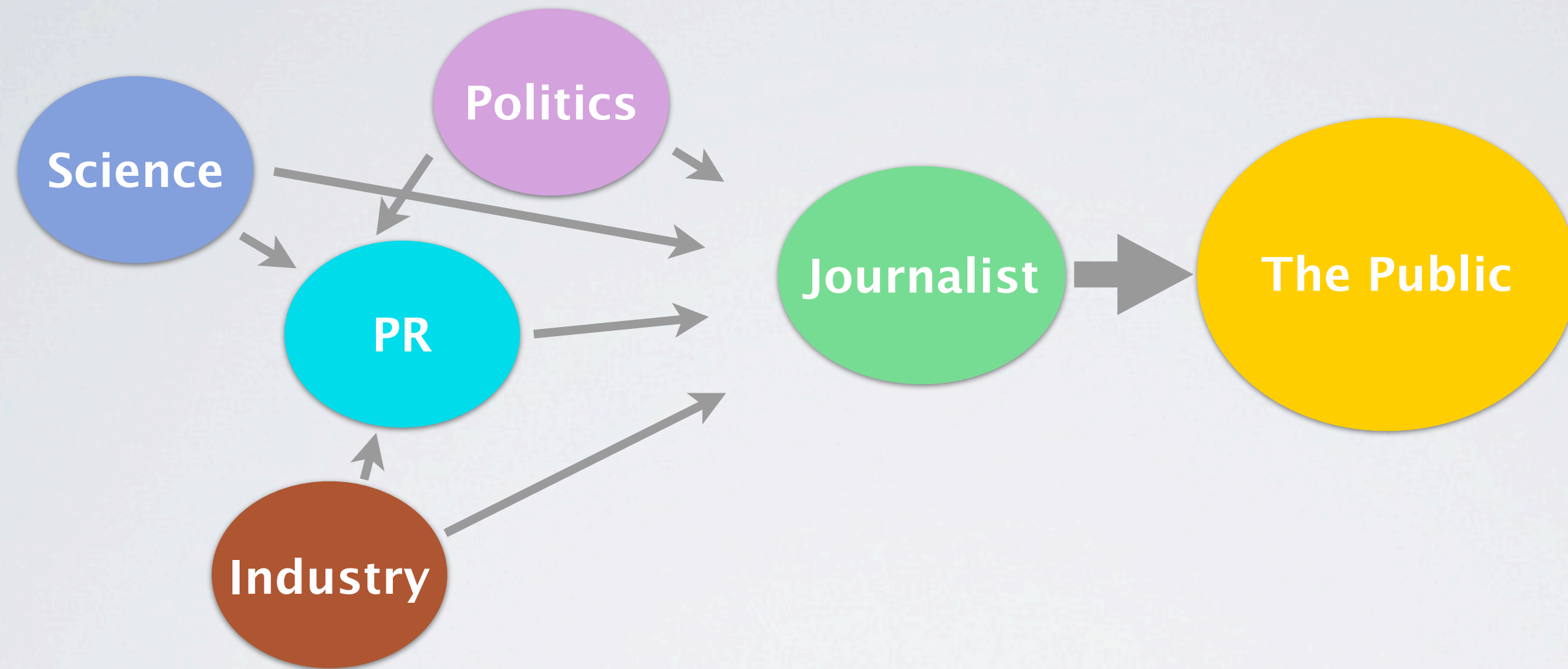




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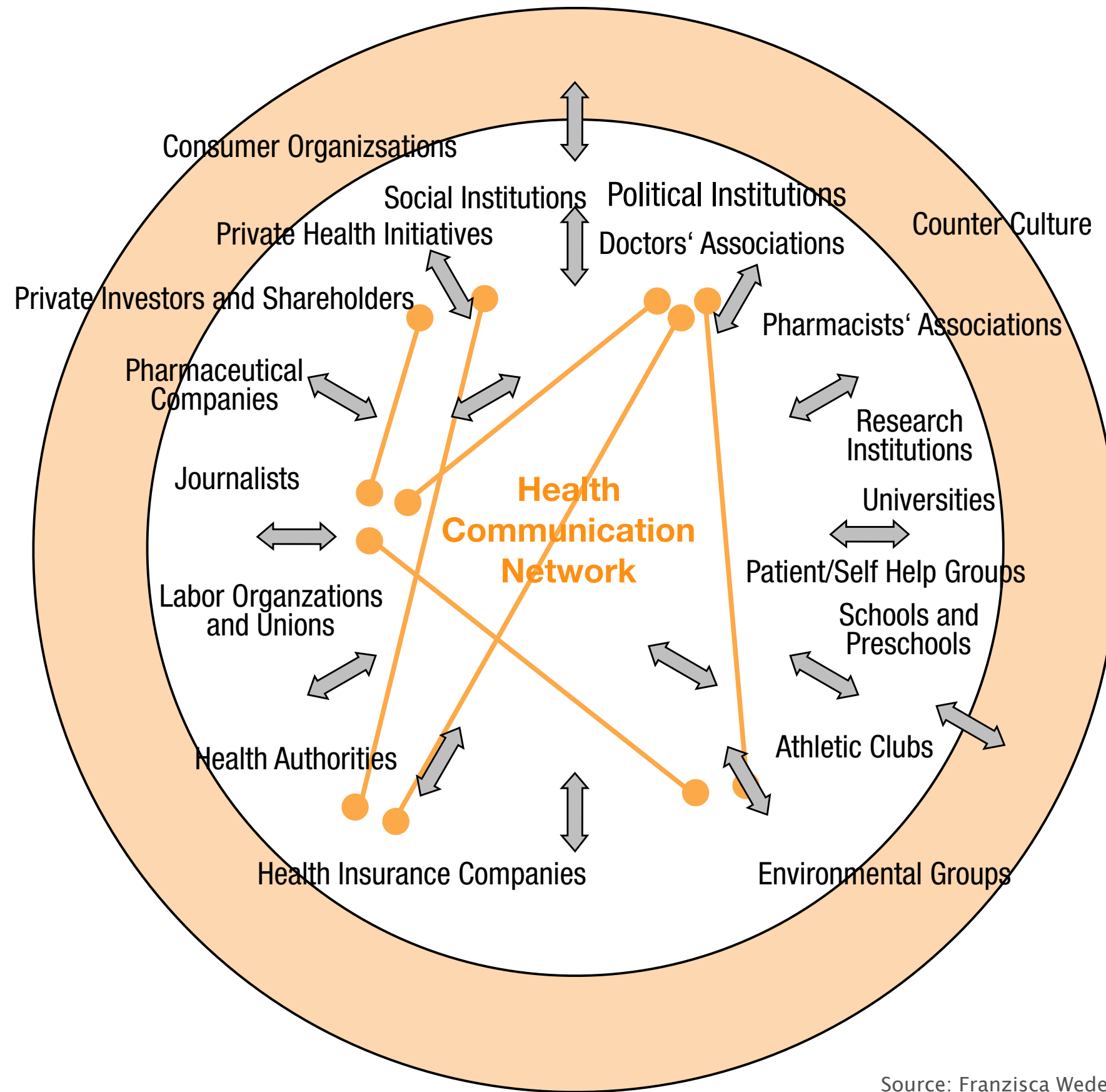


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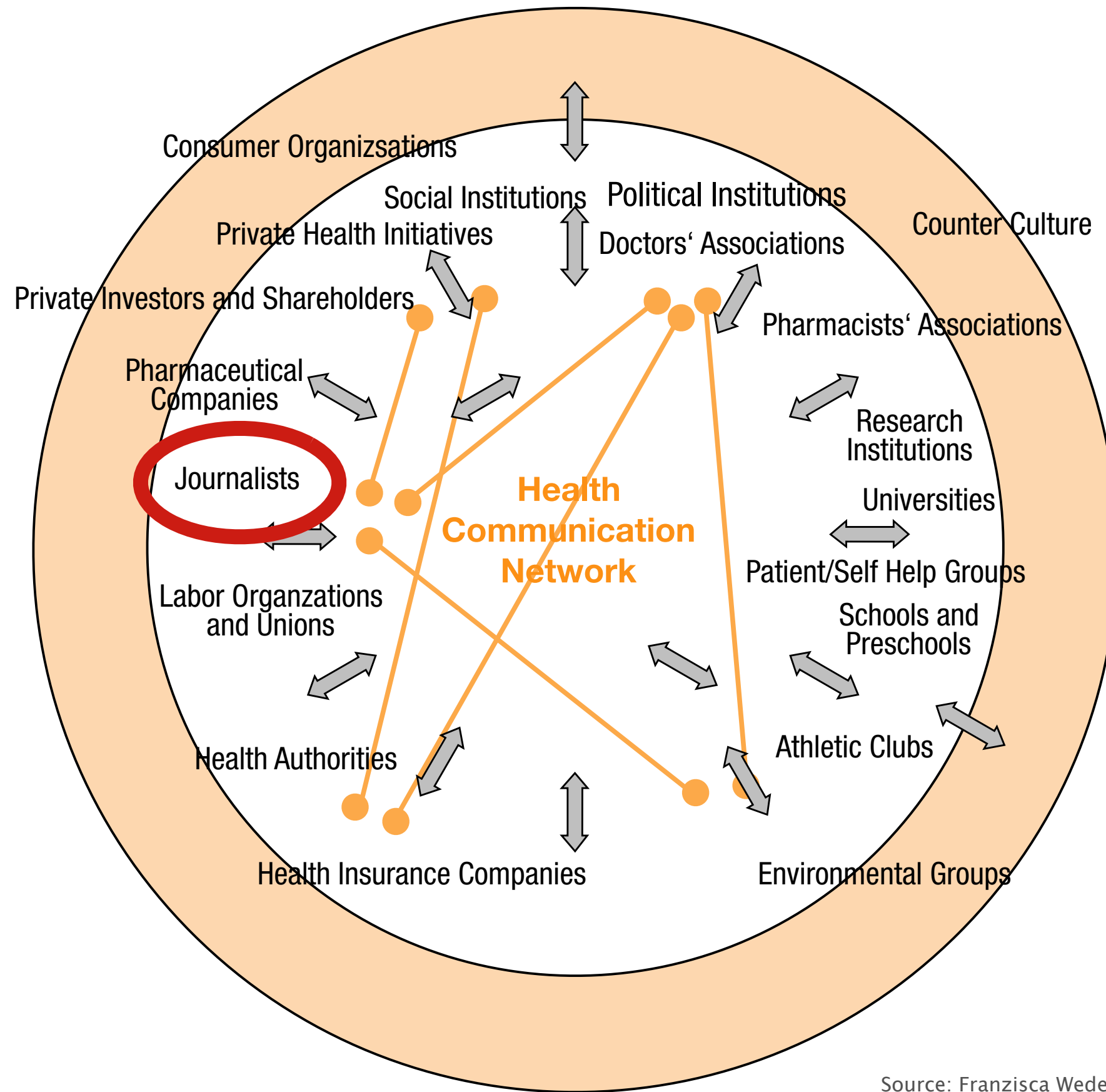


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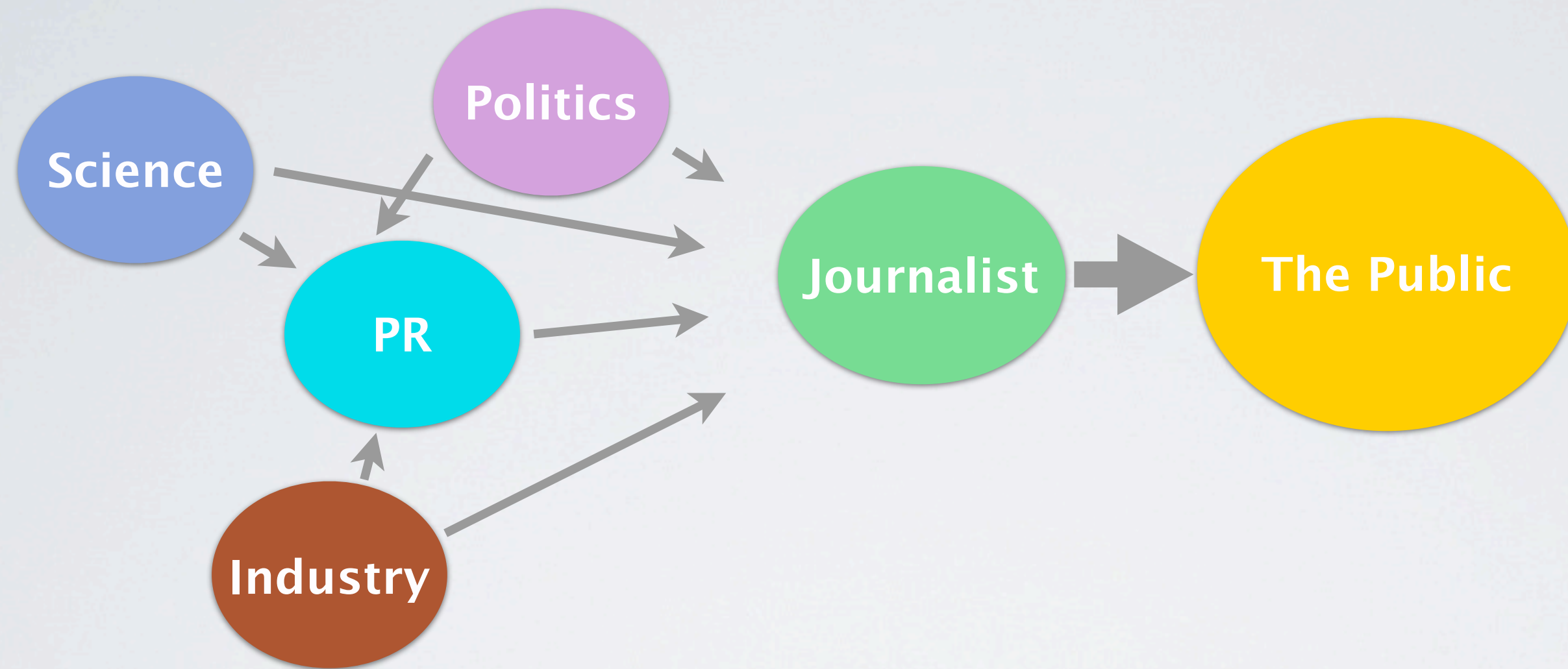
# 3. The “Journalist” Era



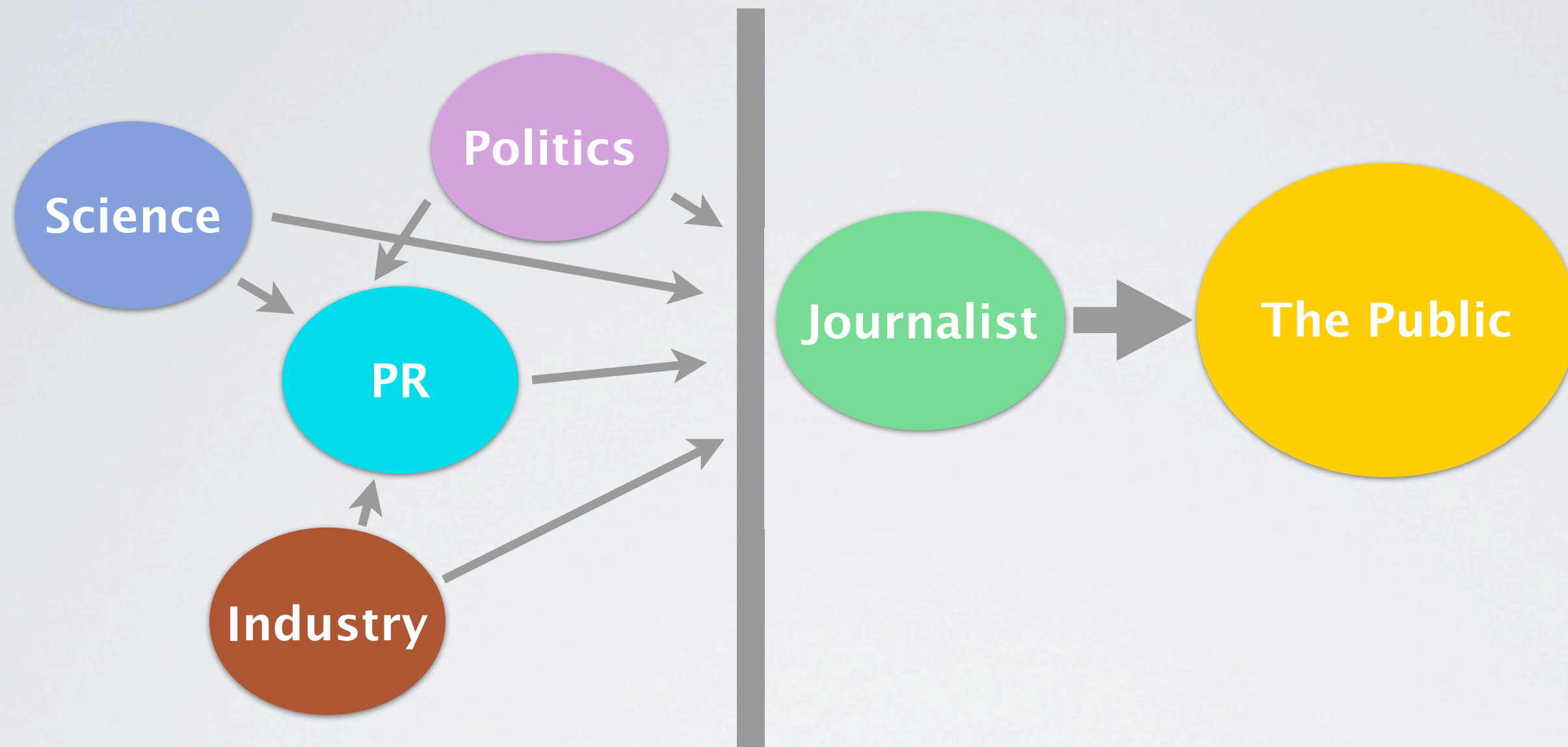
Source: Franzisca Weder



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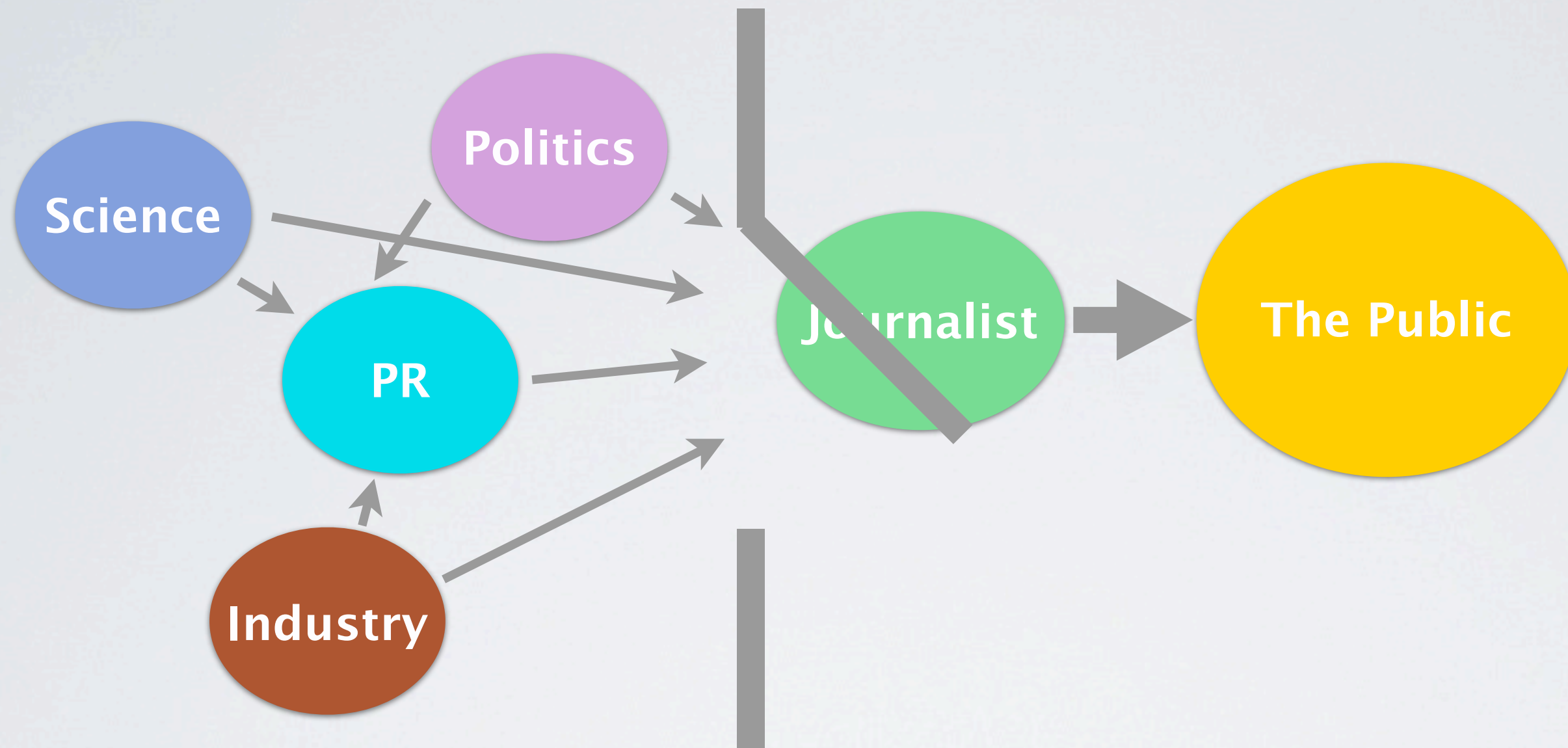


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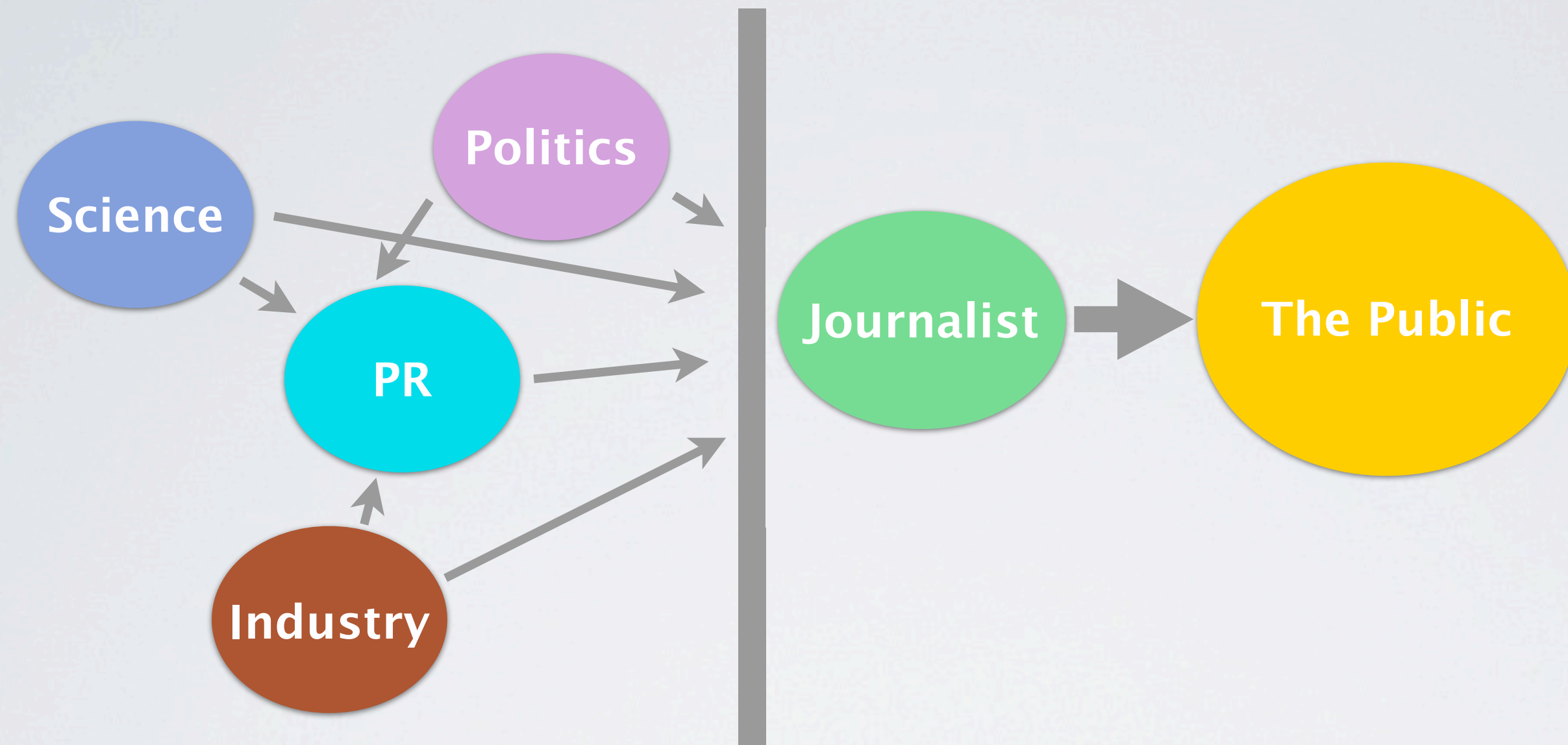


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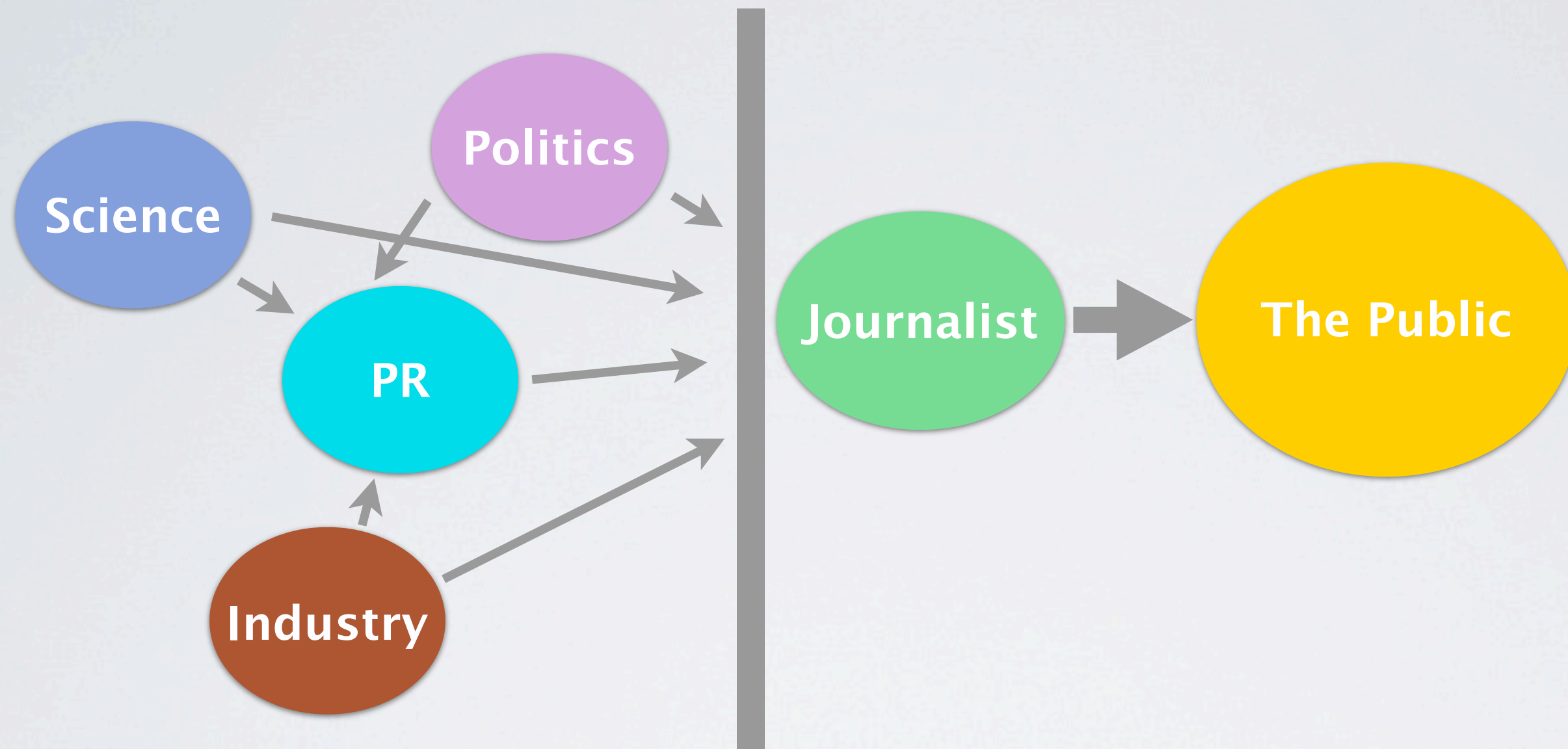




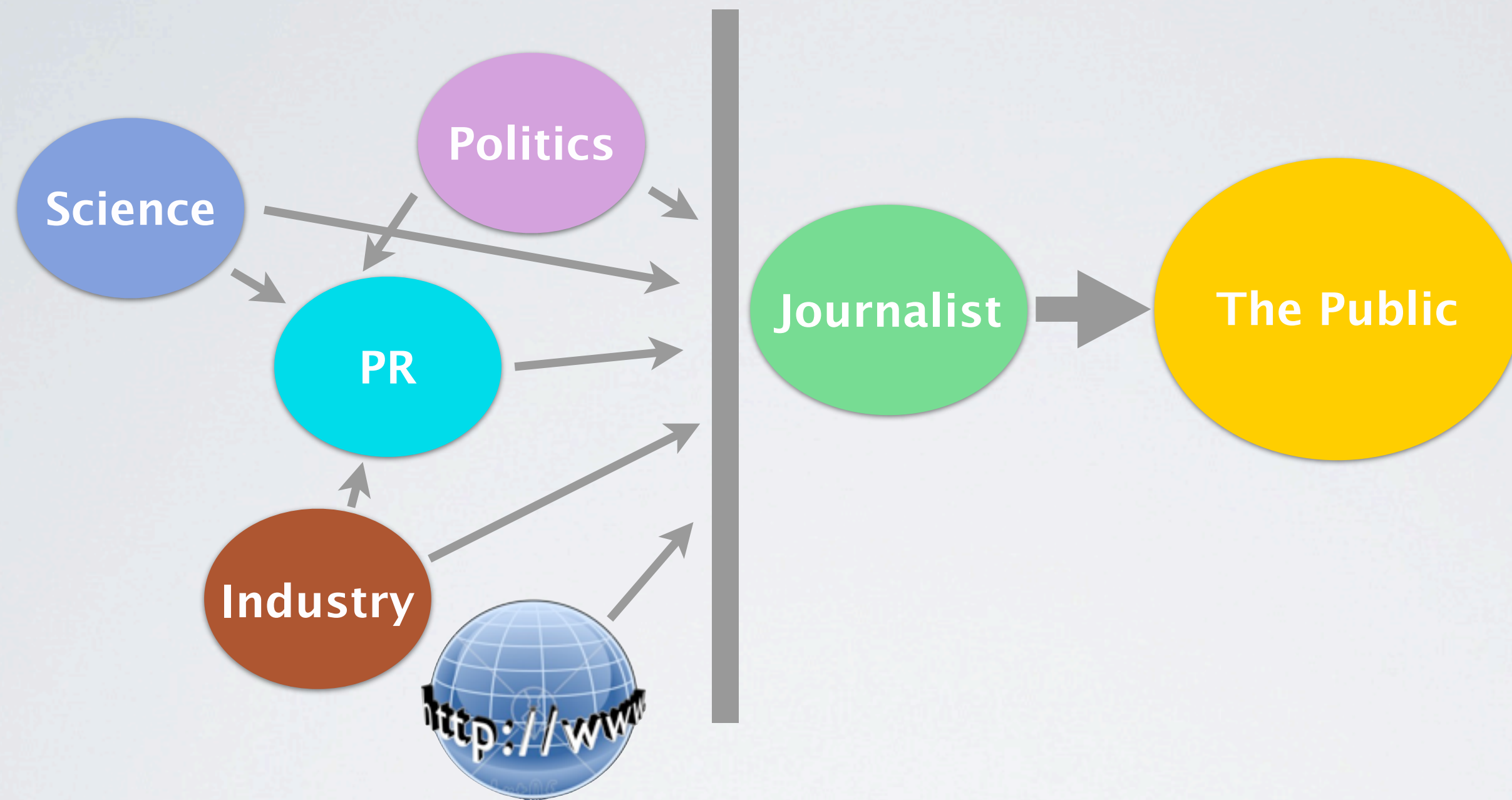
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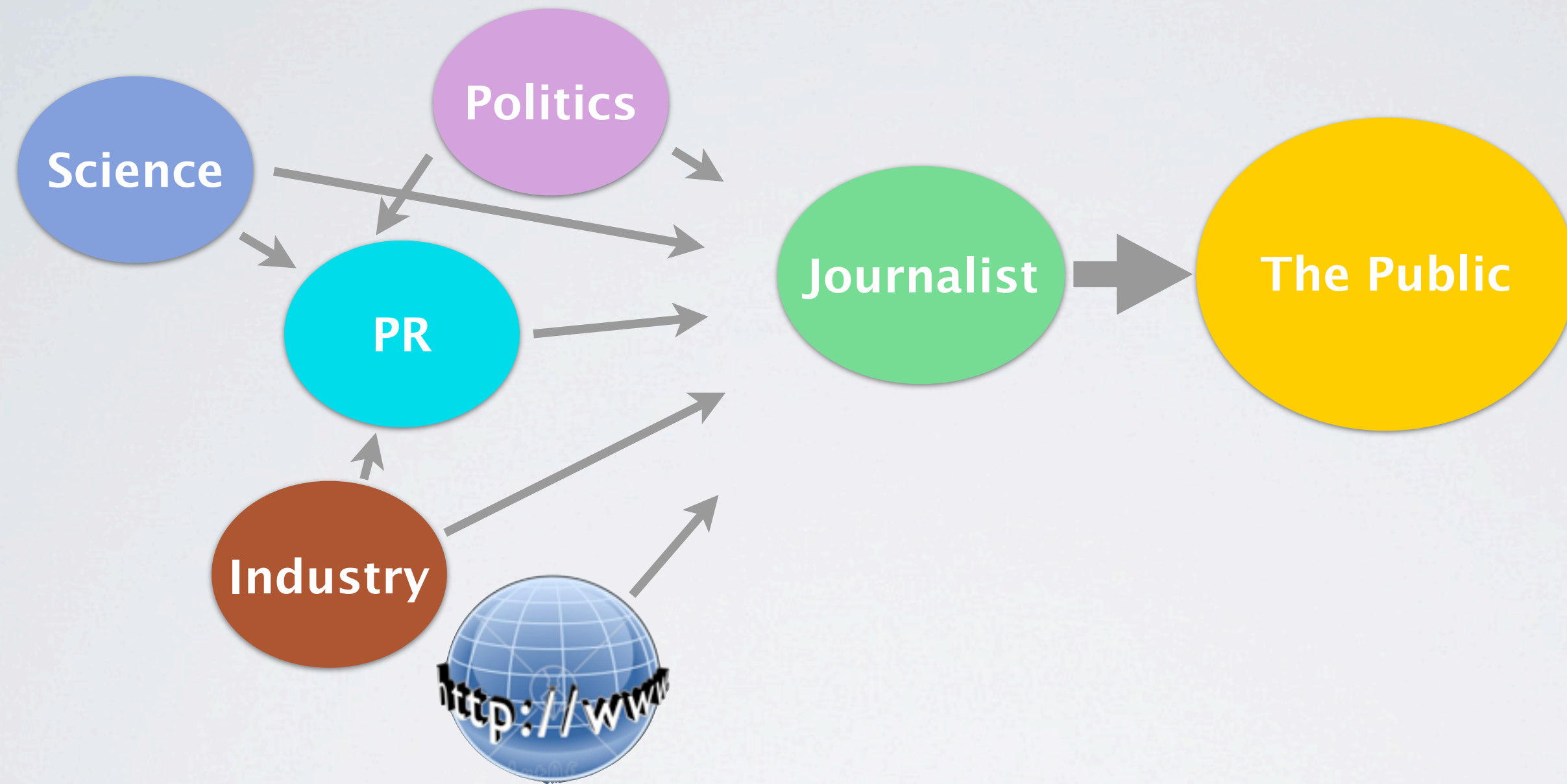
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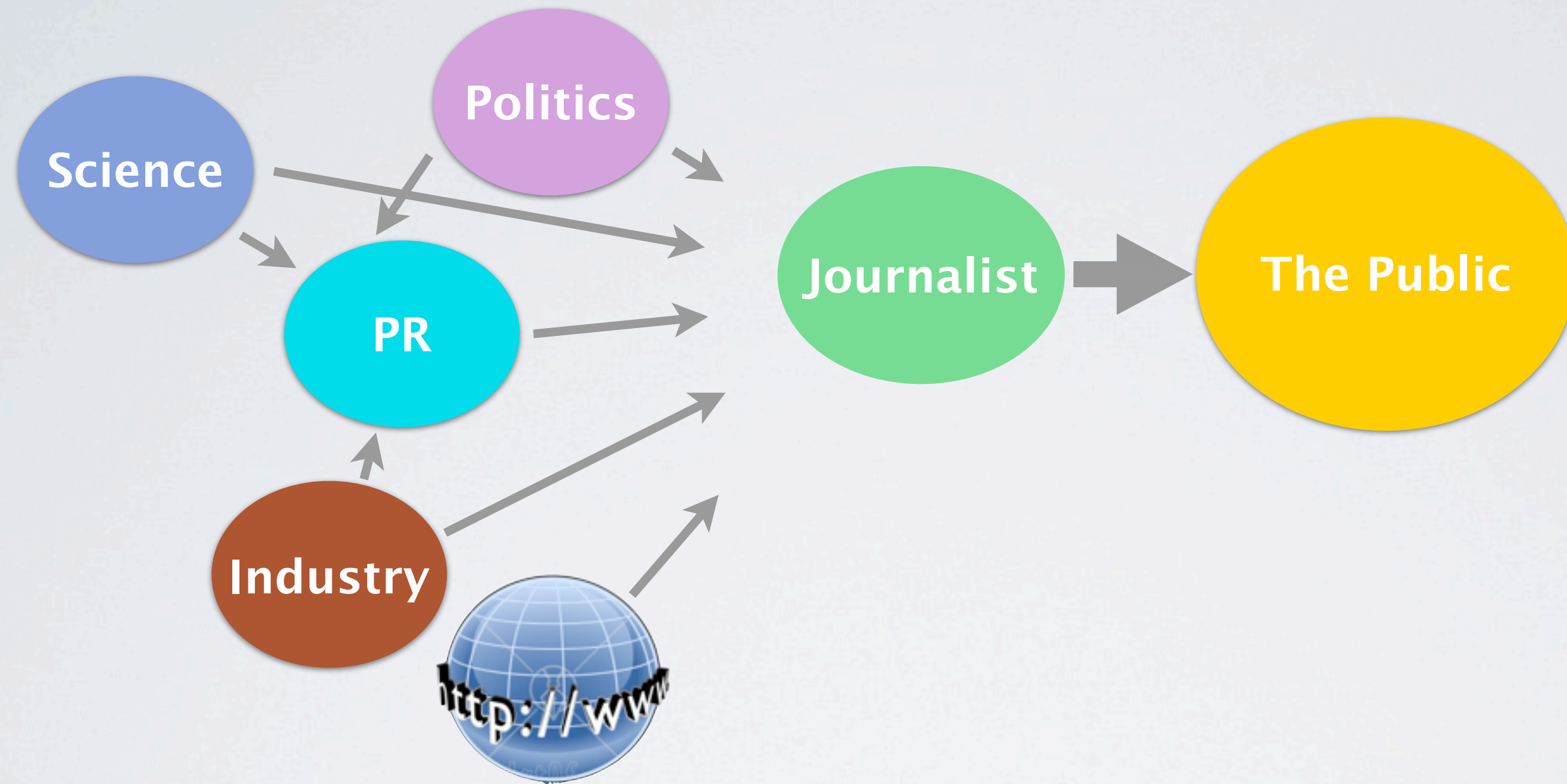
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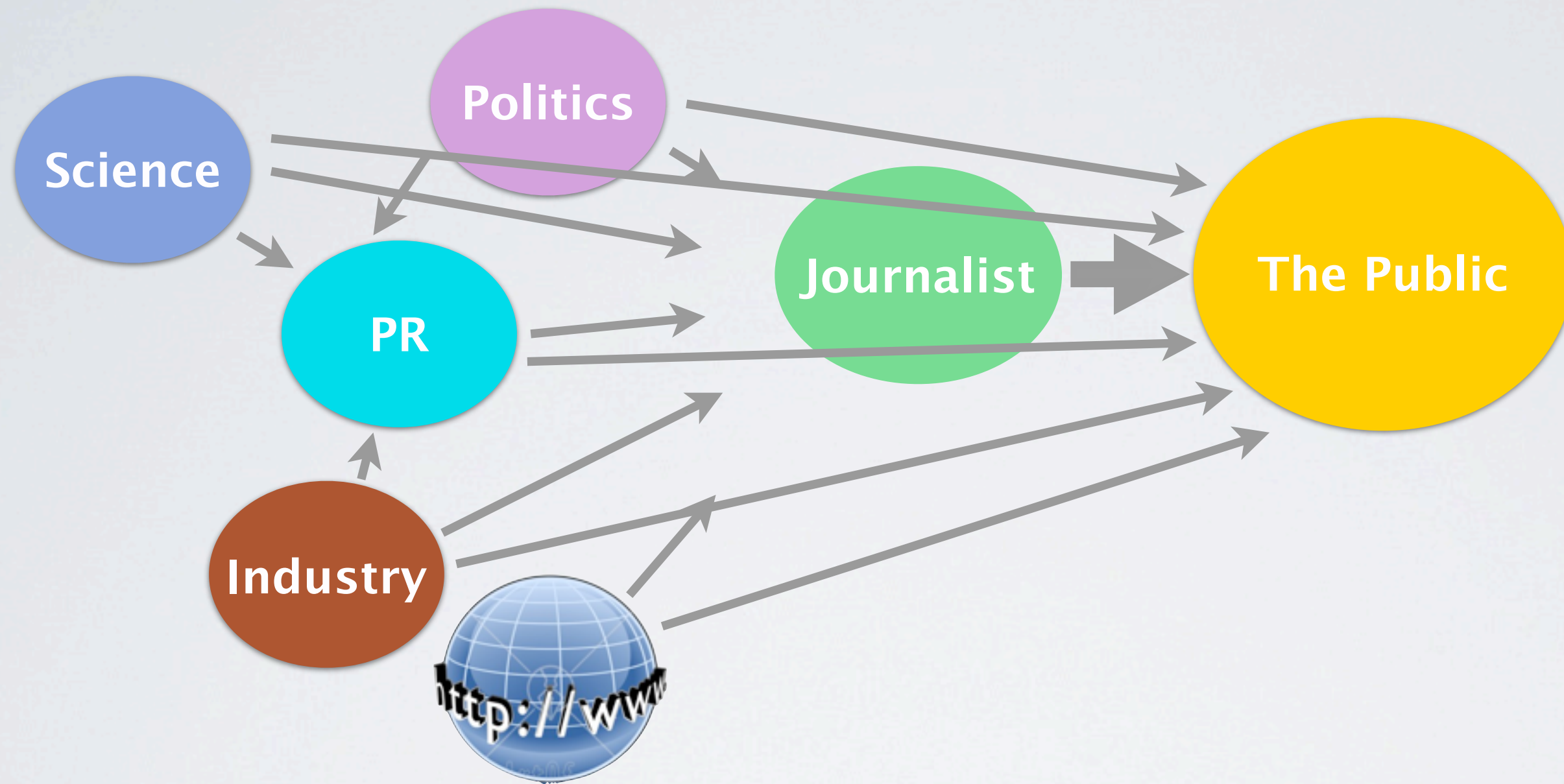
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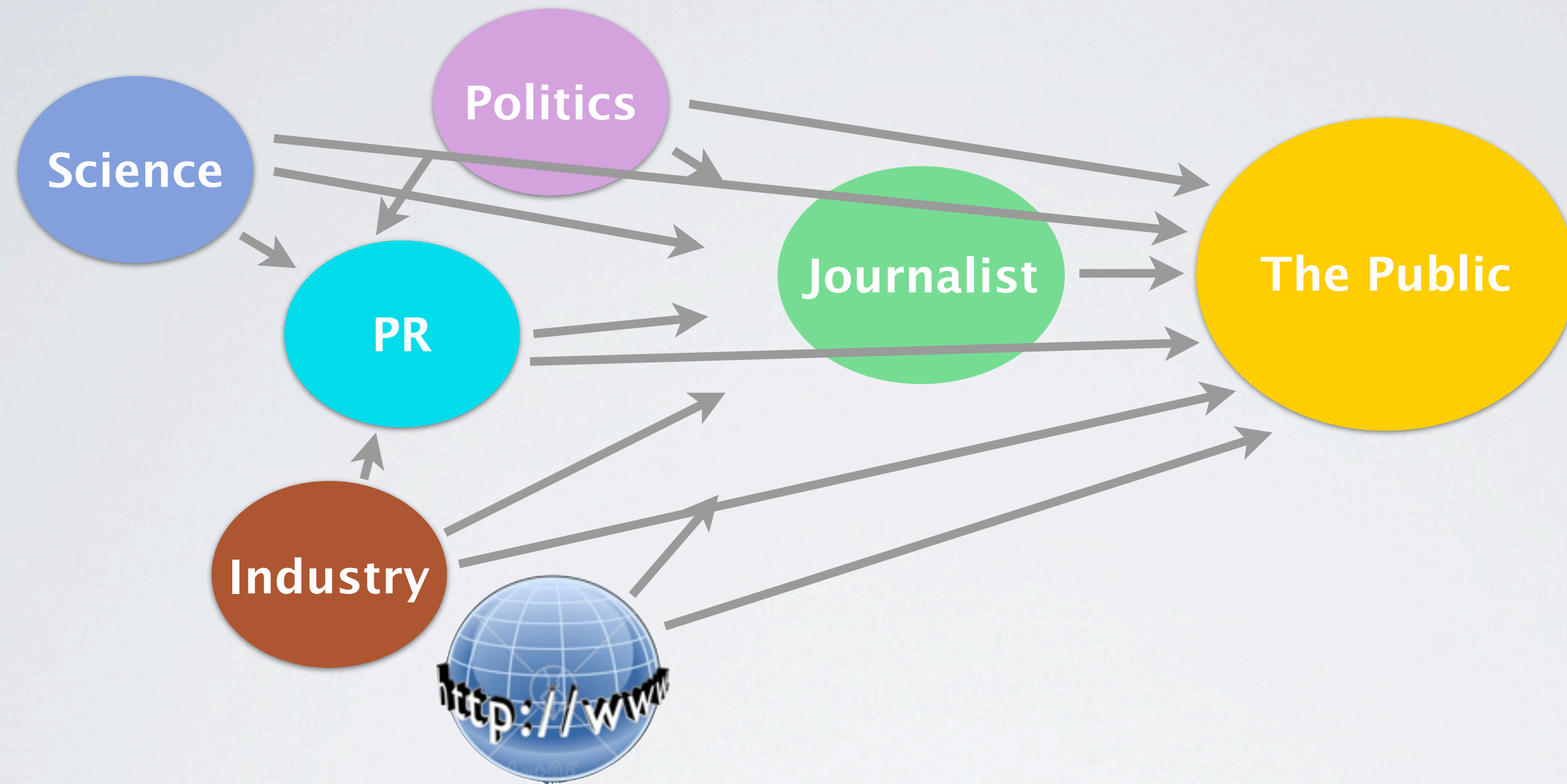
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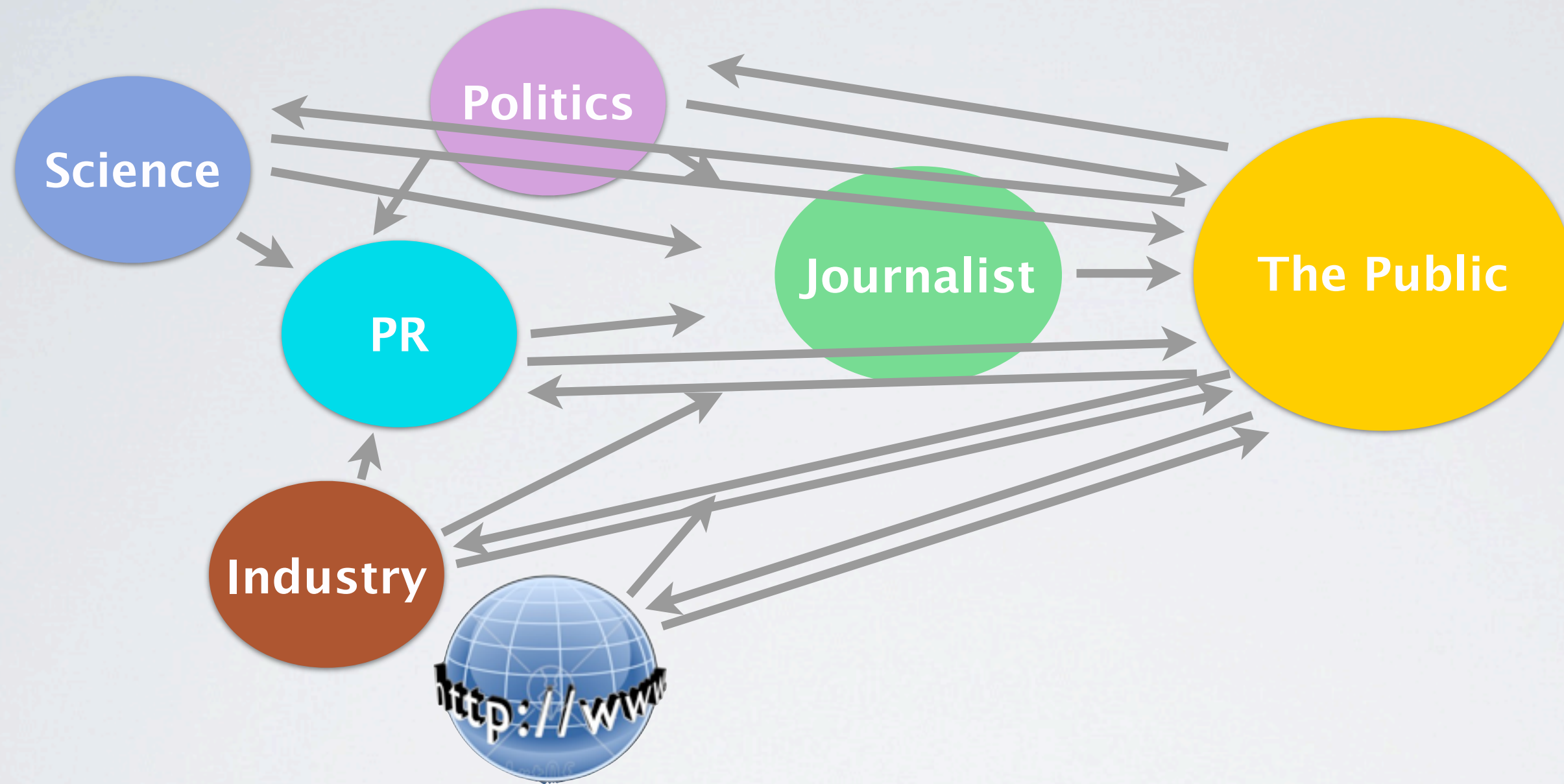


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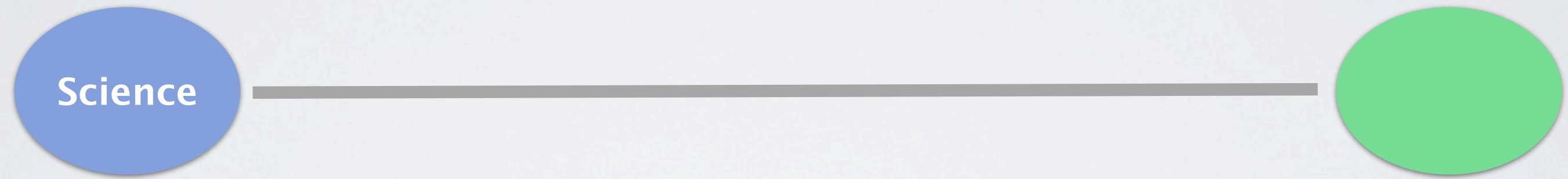
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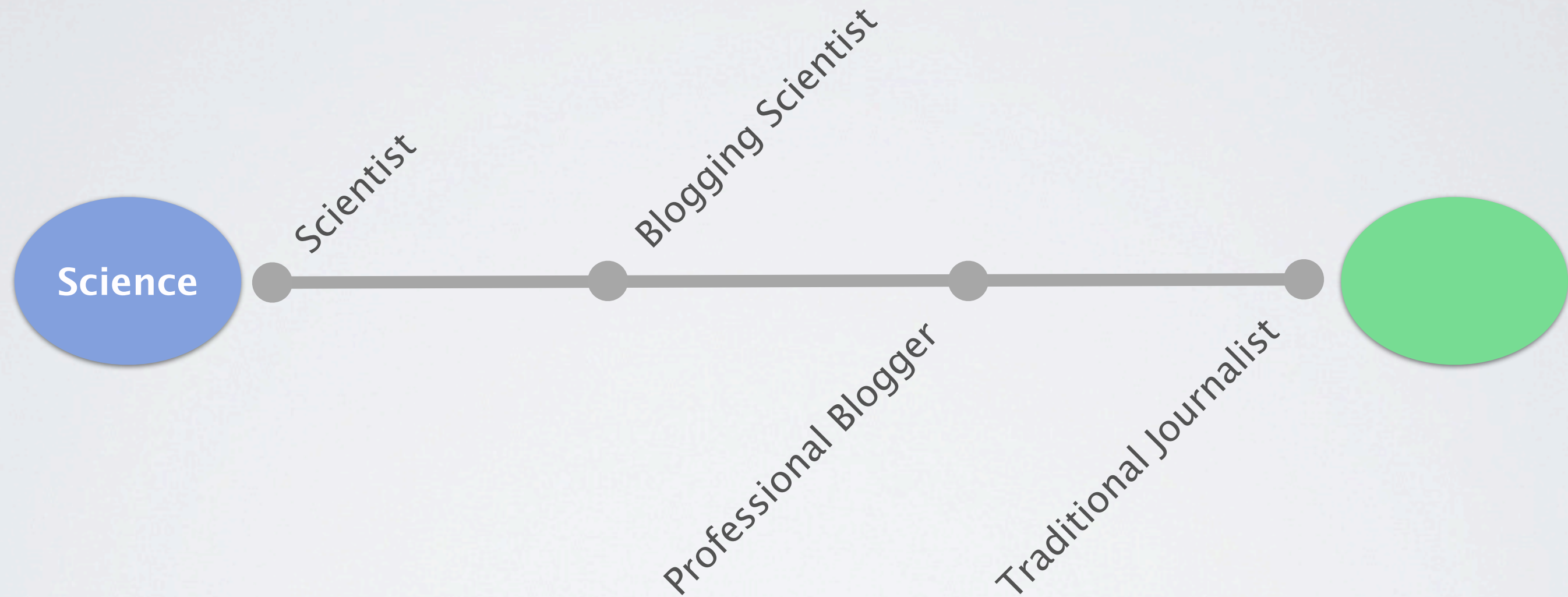


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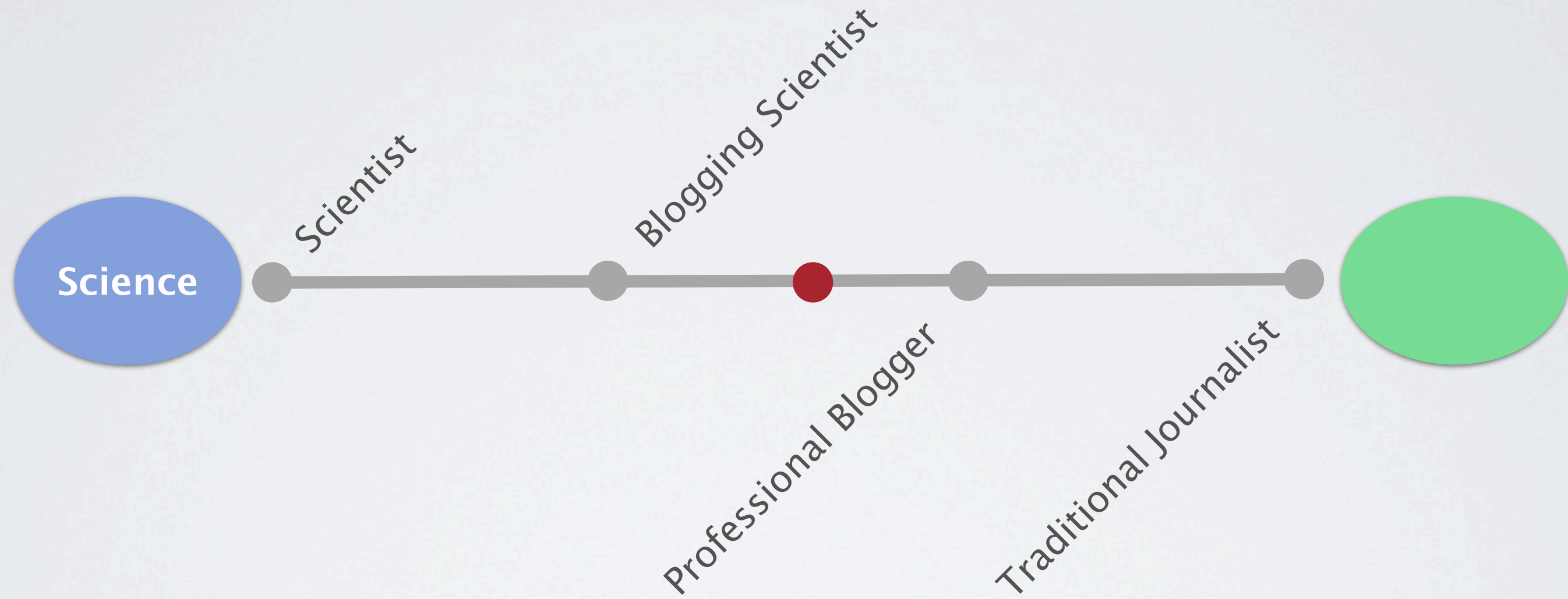
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# An Alarming Trend

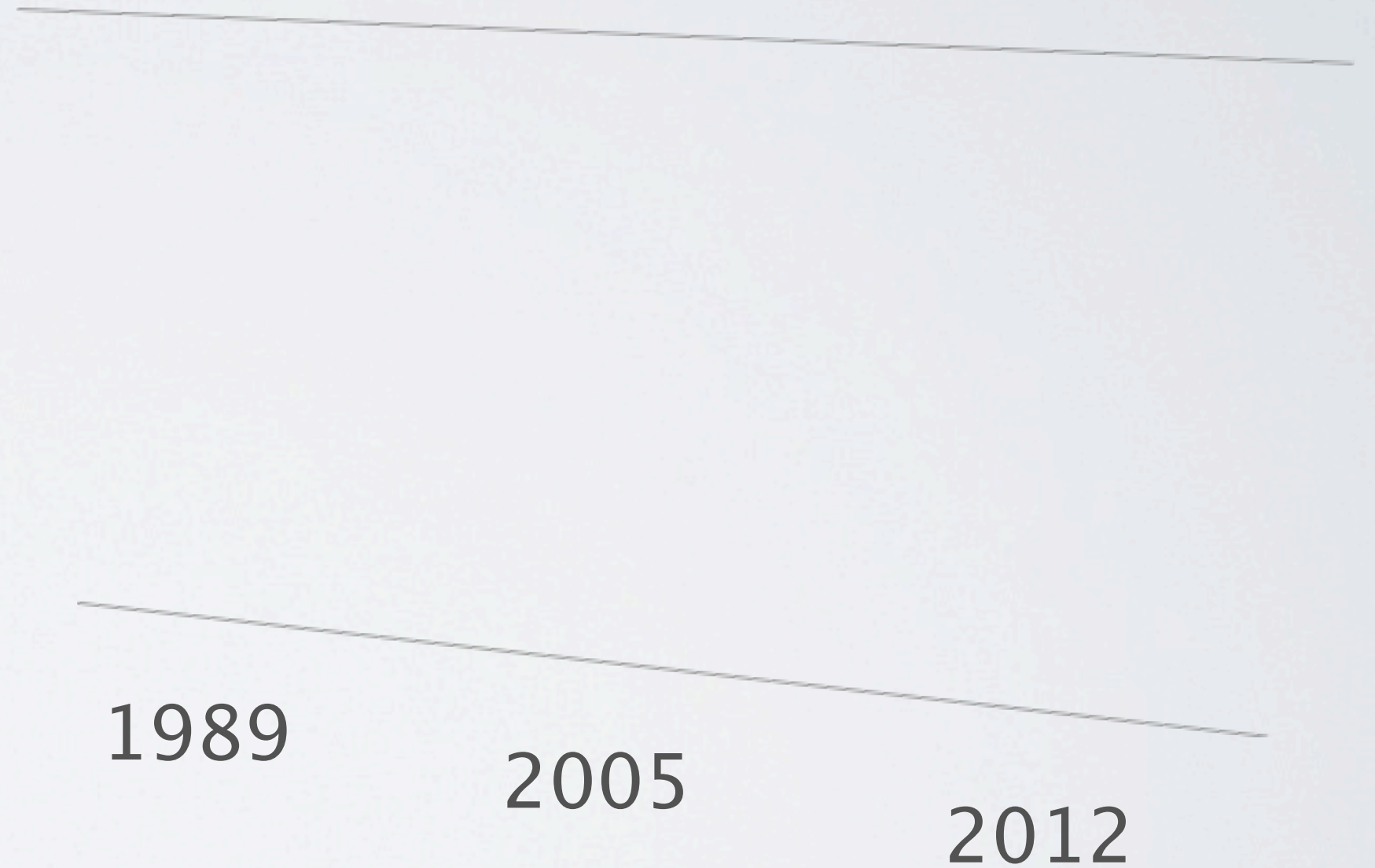
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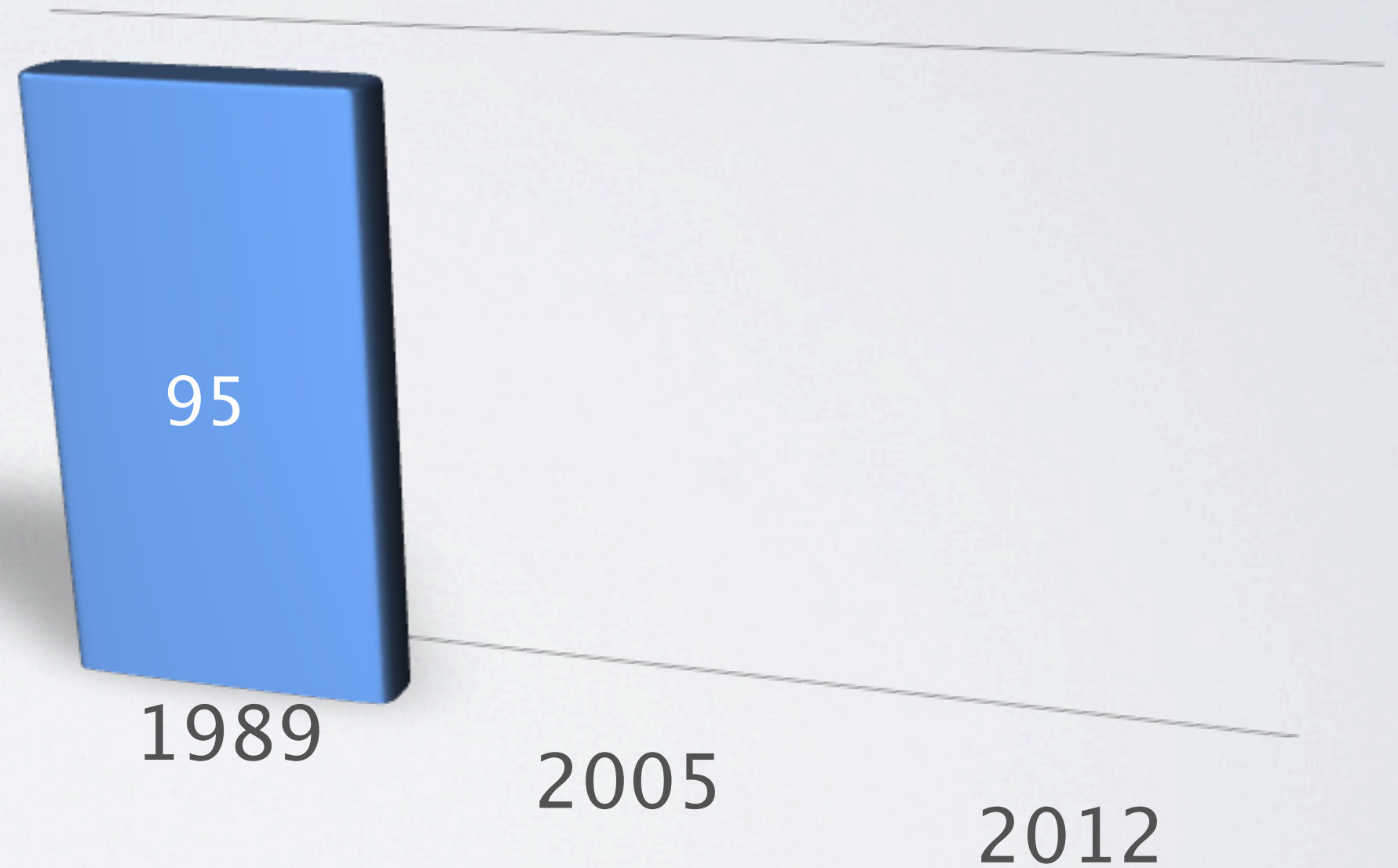
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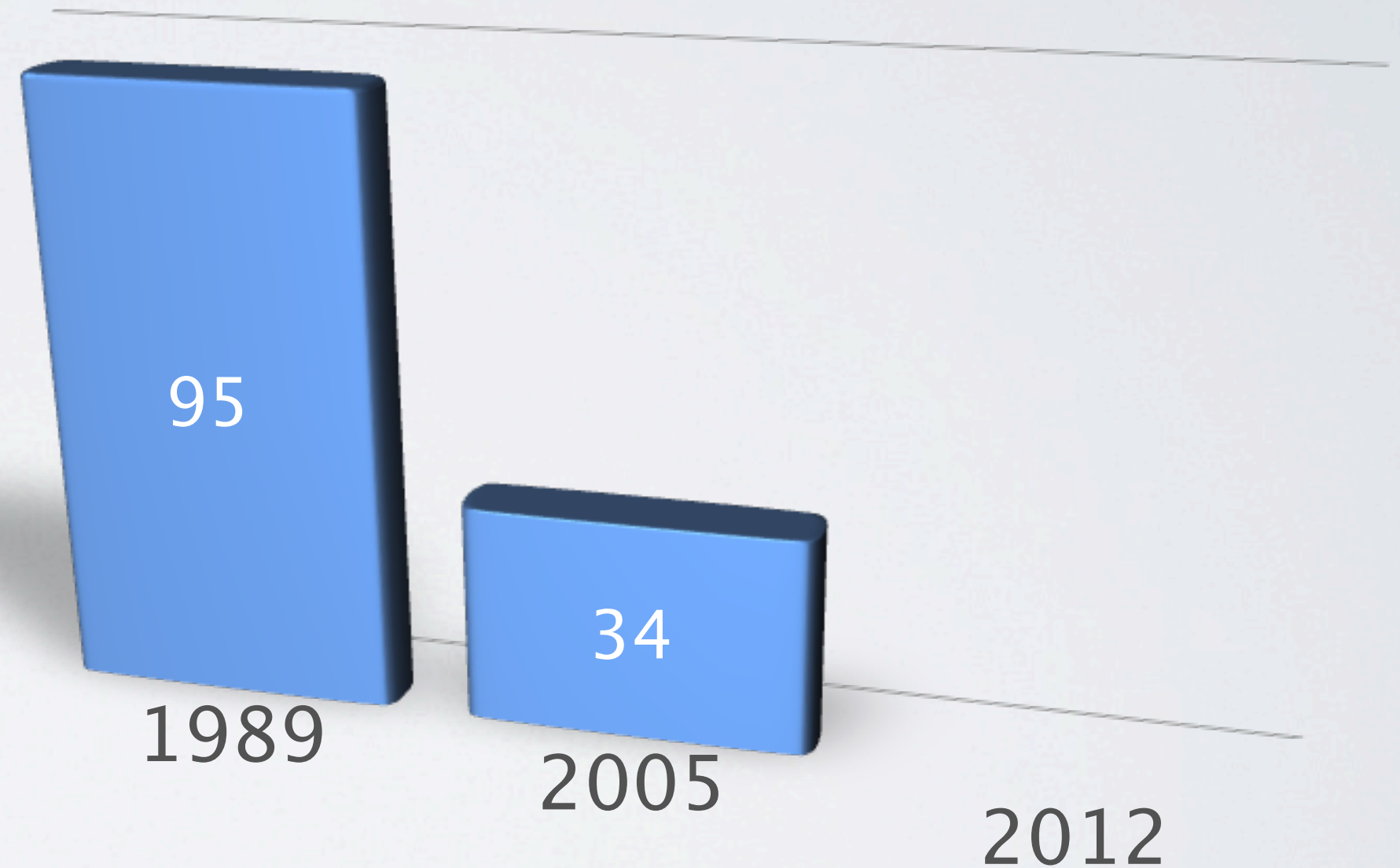
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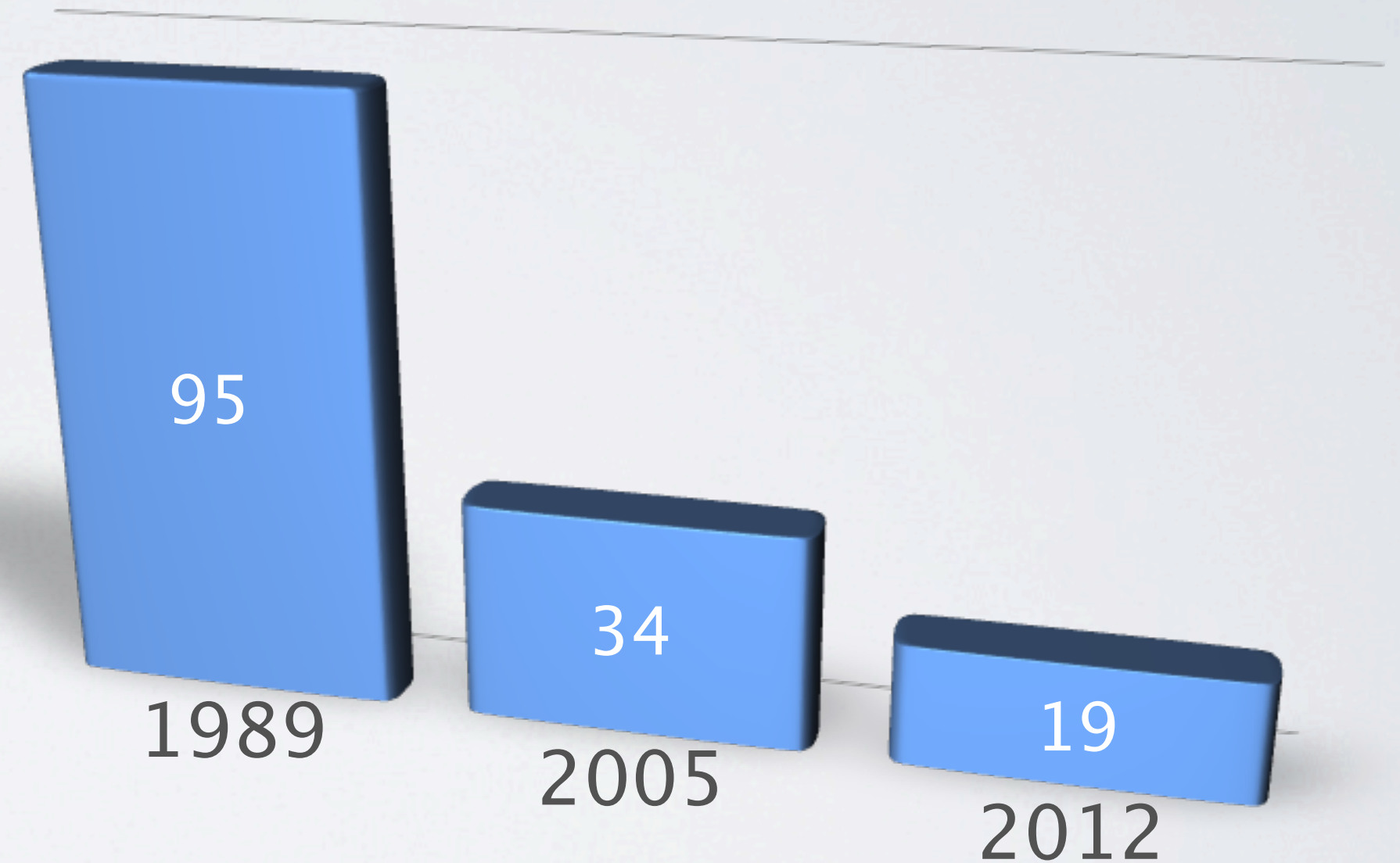




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# New Jobs for Old Media

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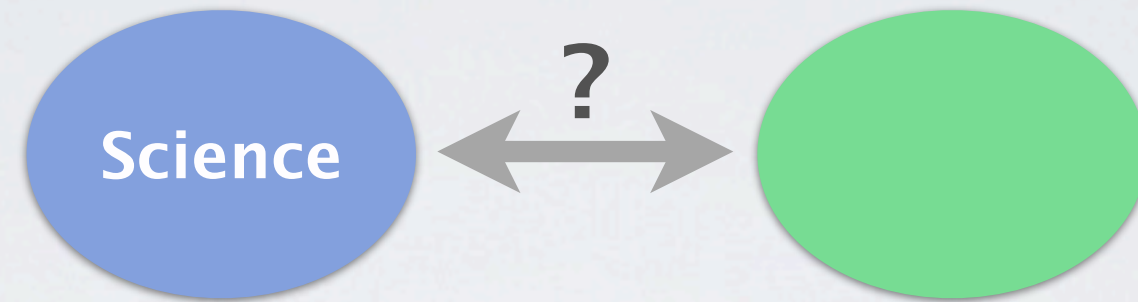
# New Jobs for Old Media

- Don't bring the news, but explain the news
- Surprise the reader
- Give the reader orientation
- Tell stories
- Act in the reader's interest
- Be an expert, but keep the distance

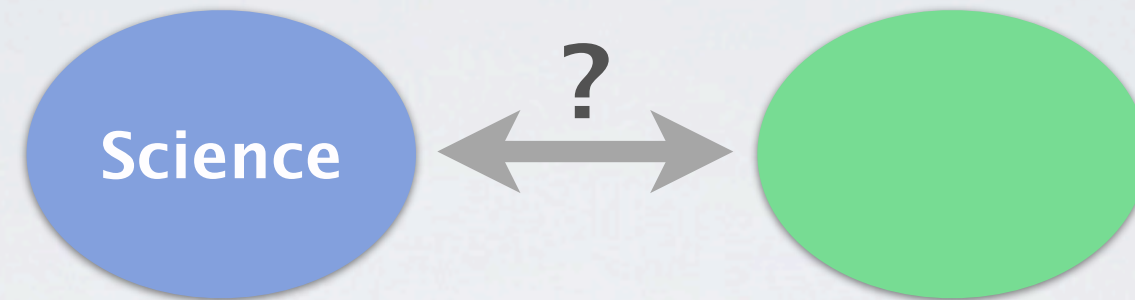


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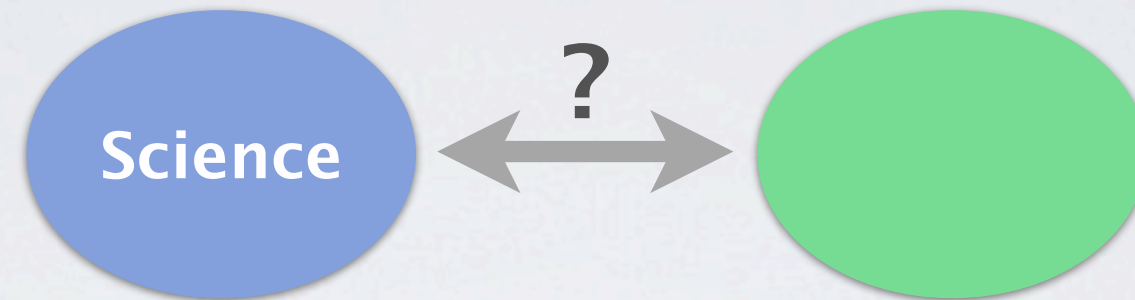


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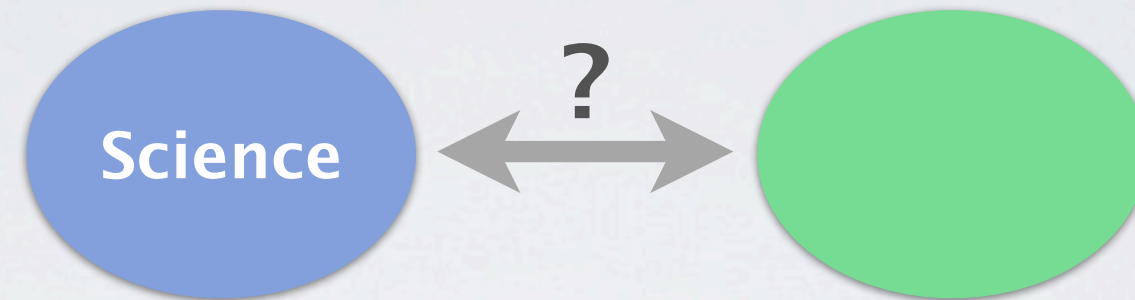
- The journalist is not the scientist's interpreter!

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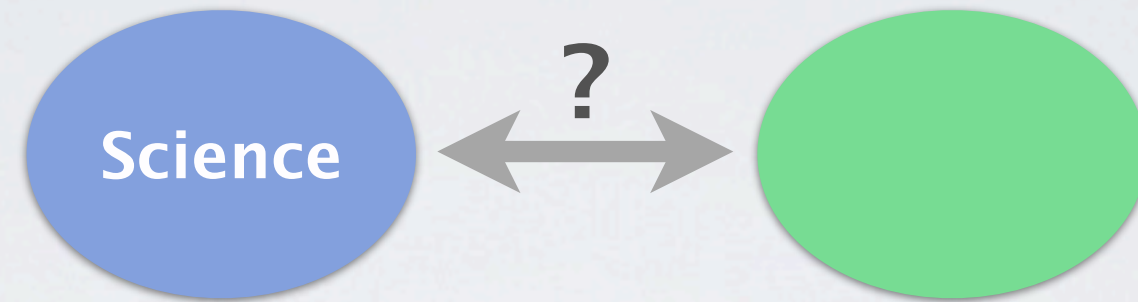
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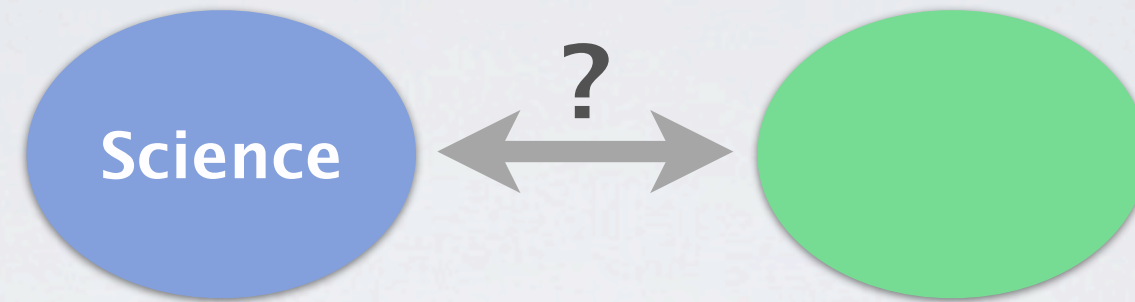


- The journalist is not the scientist's interpreter!
- A vast part of science is too complicated to be explained in general-interest media.
- Scientists have to be able to speak for themselves and address the public in plain language.

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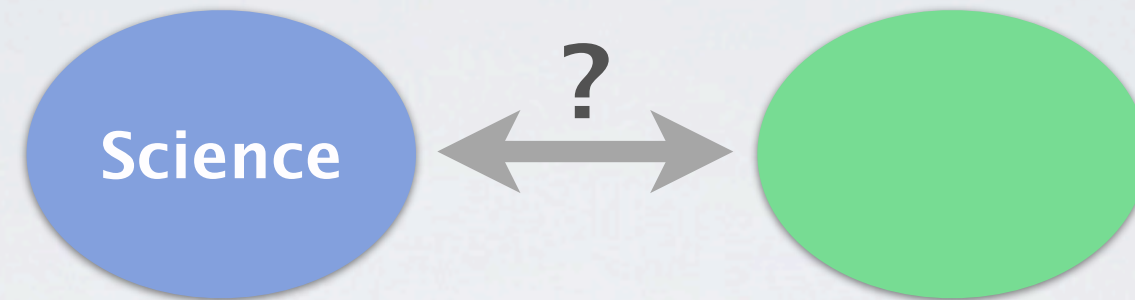


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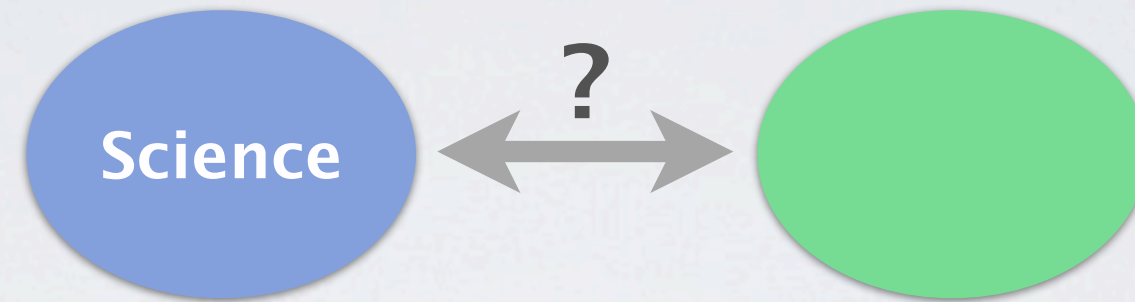
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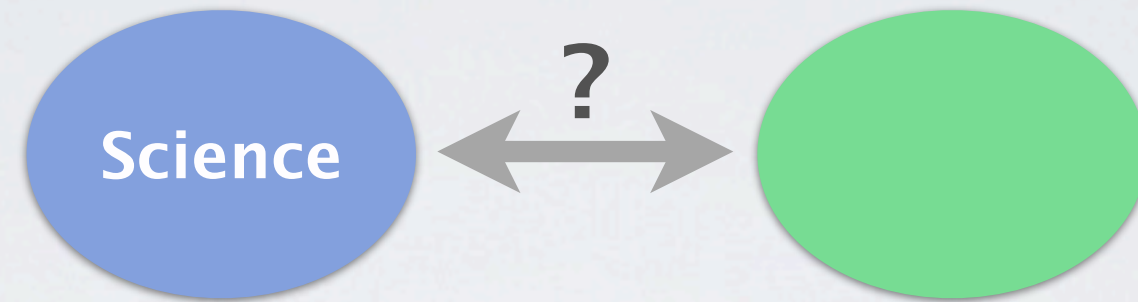


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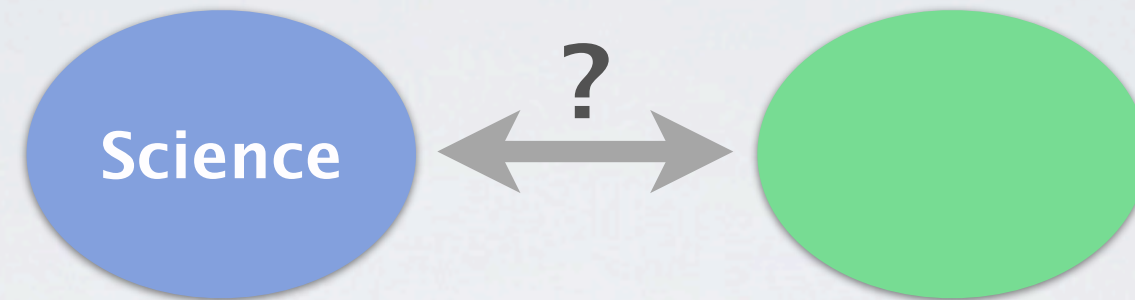


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- The job of science journalists is not just to present their audience with the wonders of scientific progress.

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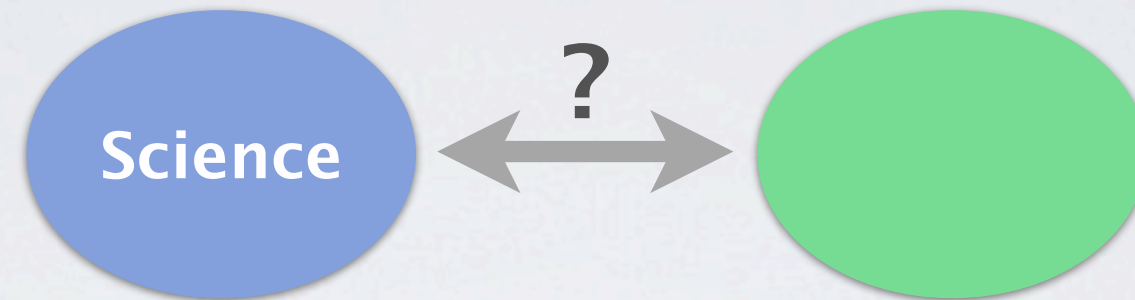


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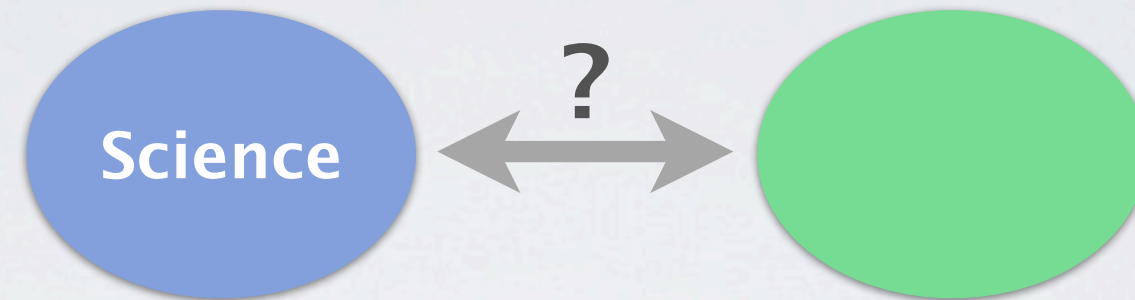
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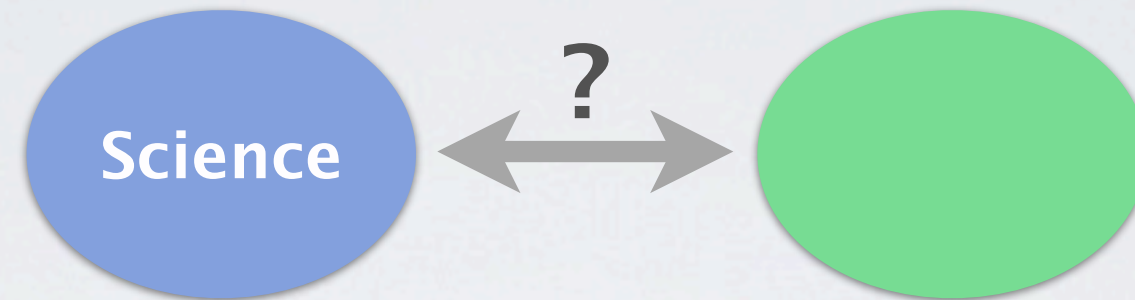
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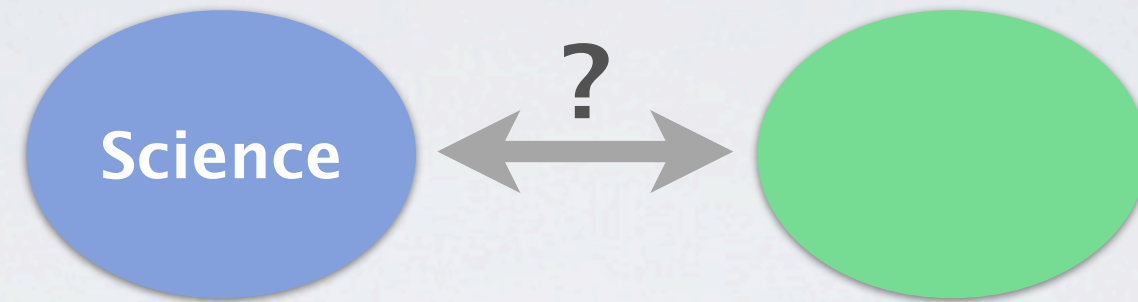
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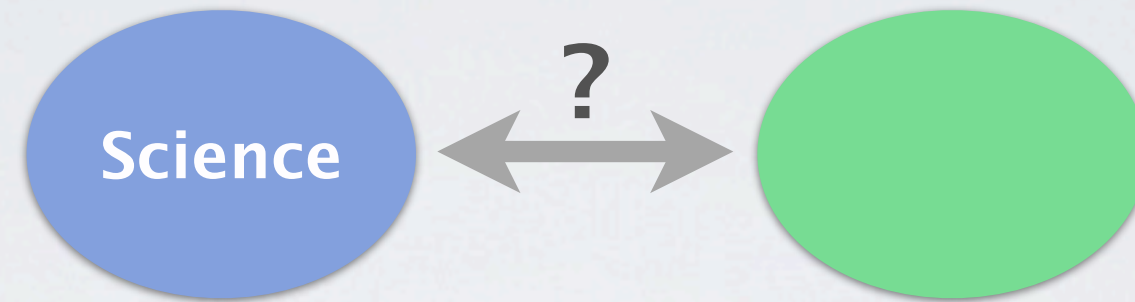


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- Journalists have scientific and non-scientific criteria for choosing their topics.

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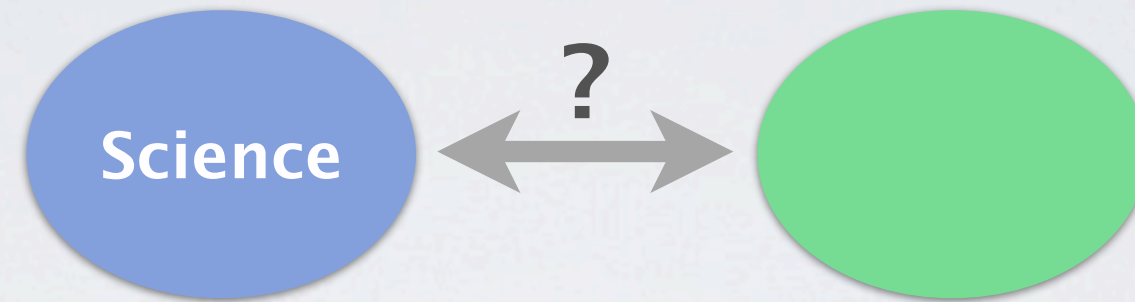
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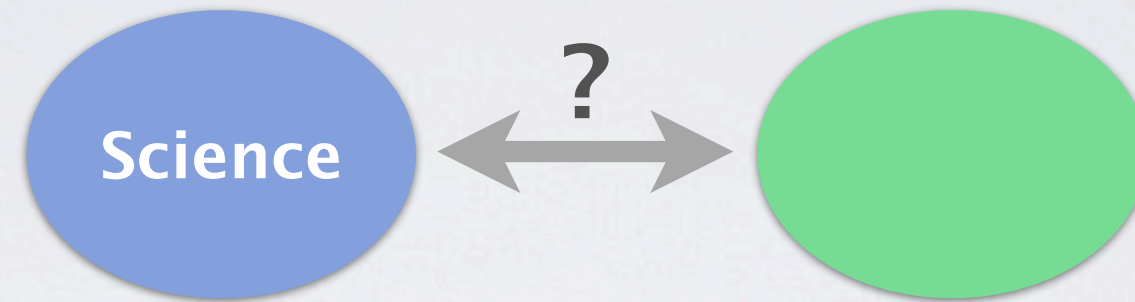


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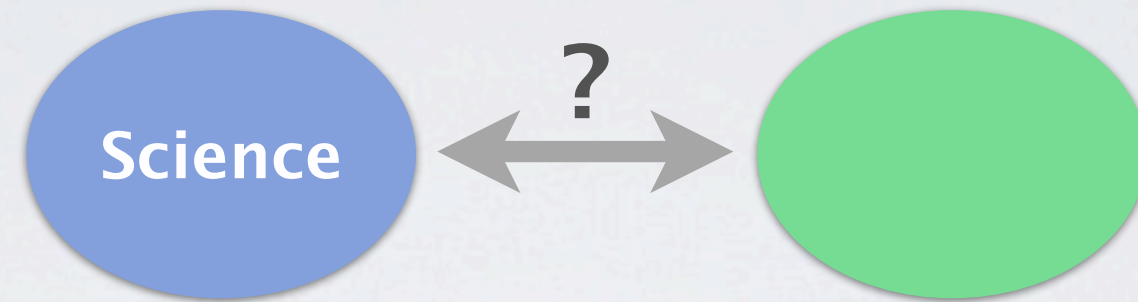
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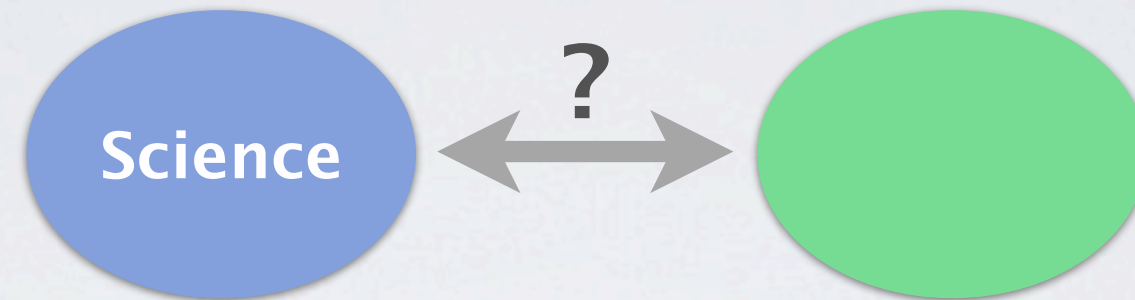


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- “Scientists are to journalists what lab rats are to scientists.”  
(Victor Cohn, The Washington Post)

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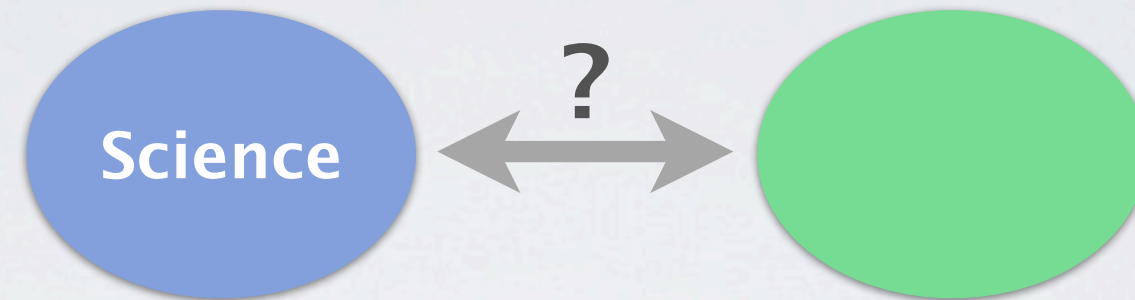


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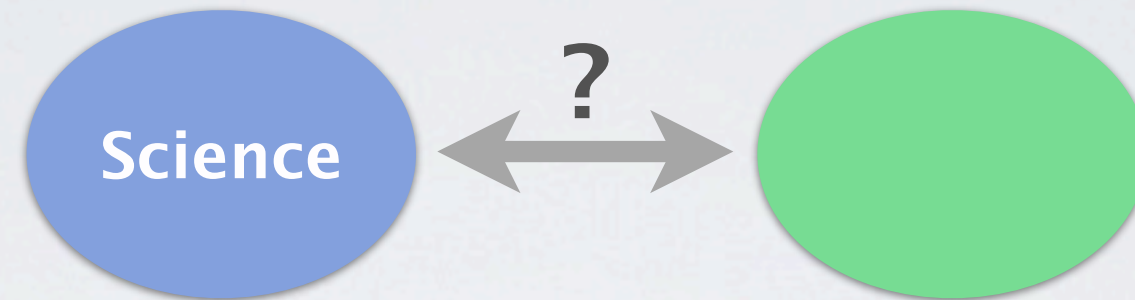
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# The Relationship



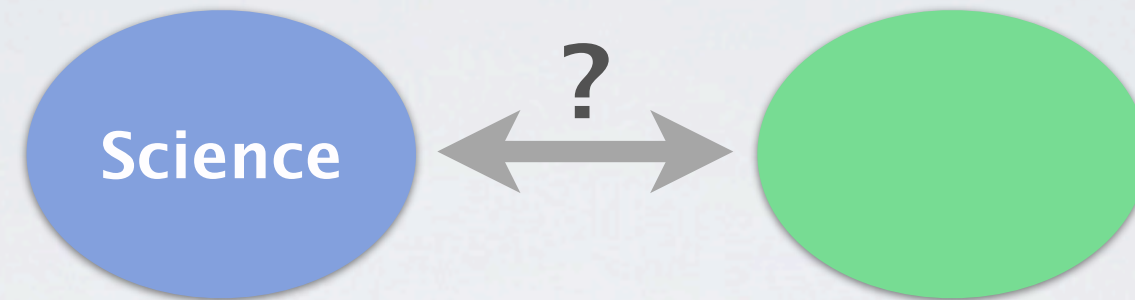
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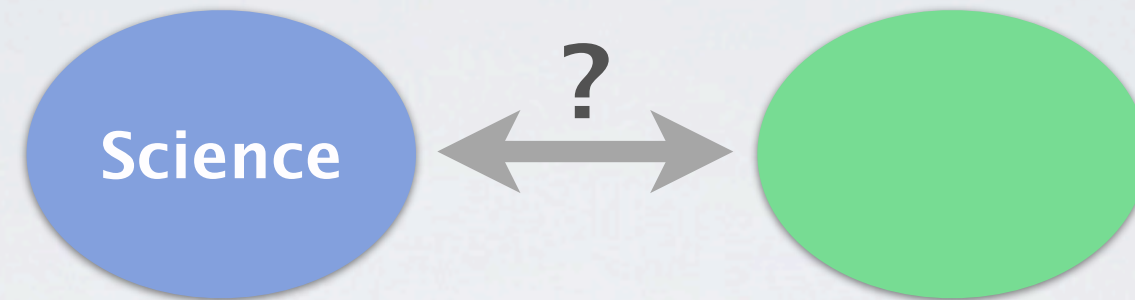
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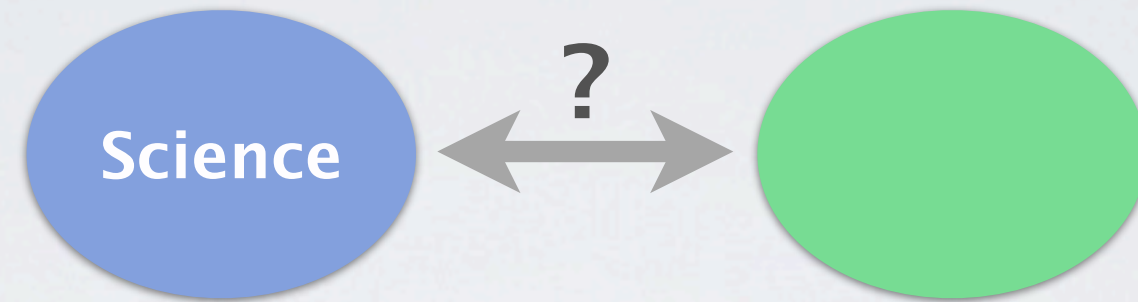
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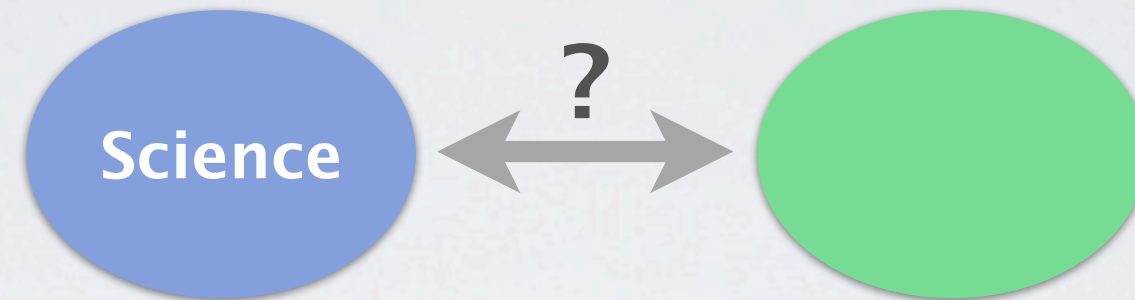
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  - Different languages
  - Different criteria for quality



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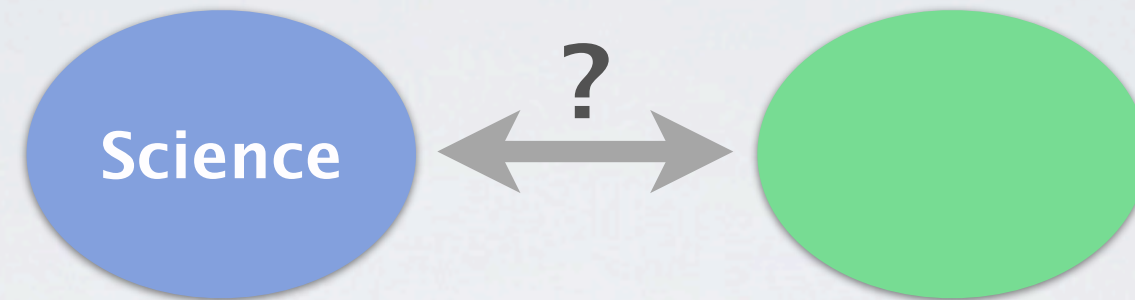


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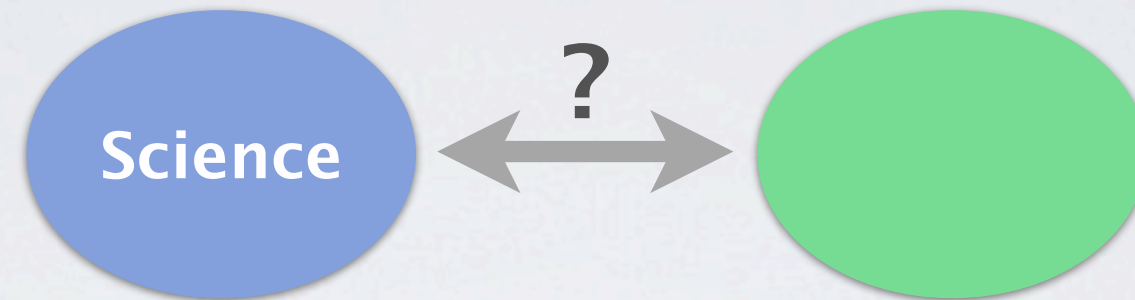
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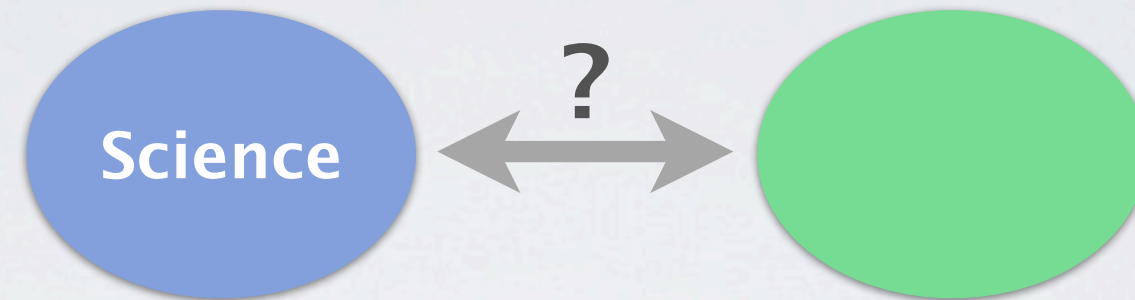
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- In professional encounters, different interests and cultures are acknowledged.
- They appear to have compatible ideas about communicating with the public.

# The Role of the Scientist



Science

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- Expert – provides advice and expertise in current affairs



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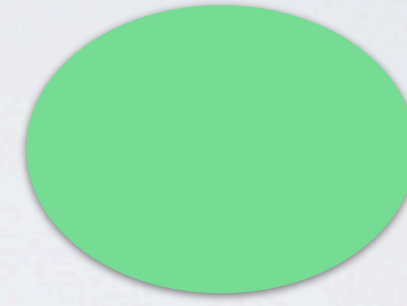
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- Expert – provides advice and expertise in current affairs
- Advocate – warns about dangers, criticizes public policy
- Lobbyist – seeks public exposure to secure funding etc.

# The Role of the Journalist



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- Readers' advocate – picks topics according to what (she thinks) her readers are concerned about
- Steers the communication – “I am asking the questions!”
- Scientist's partner – helps the scientist be articulate

# What Do Science Journalists Do?



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- **Entertain**

# When the Phone Rings ...

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**The fears:**

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## The fears:

- Will she understand what my science is about?

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## The fears:

- Will she understand what my science is about?
- Will she turn my words around?
- Will she misrepresent or exaggerate my results?
- Will she really explain all the details?

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So:

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**So:**

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**So:**

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  - Who is calling?
  - Adjust your level of science lingo (if in doubt: -1)
  - Simplify, don't oversimplify (Einstein)
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# When the Phone Rings ...



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- Be personal (use the “I” word)
- Offer to verify your quotes and