

Healing through Meaning: Placebo, Meditation and Beyond

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Overview

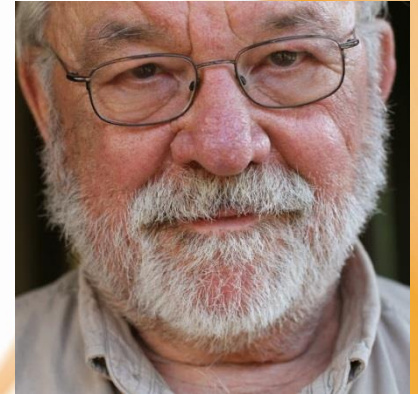
- Placebo
 - Meaning
- Biophysical Model
- Wider notion of Placebo
- Healing and Meditation
- Anomalies Research
 - Healing from a distance





What's special about Placebo?

- Dan Moerman
 - Medical anthropologist
- Placebo does not cause the placebo effect
- But the context
 - size and color of the pill
 - information
 - Interaction
 - etc.
- Meaning
 - ‘meaning response’



What is special about meaning?

- Requires consciousness
- individual, context-dependent
- Makes us human





“The least significant fact about Homo sapiens is that we have evolved. So has everything else that lives. (...) What makes us different is that we are the meaning-seeking, culture-creating animal.”

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks



What is special about meaning?

- Requires consciousness
- Individual, context-dependent
- Makes us human
 - Meaning-seeking creatures
- Does not fit a dyadic cause-effect model
- ↳ Does not fit the biophysical model!



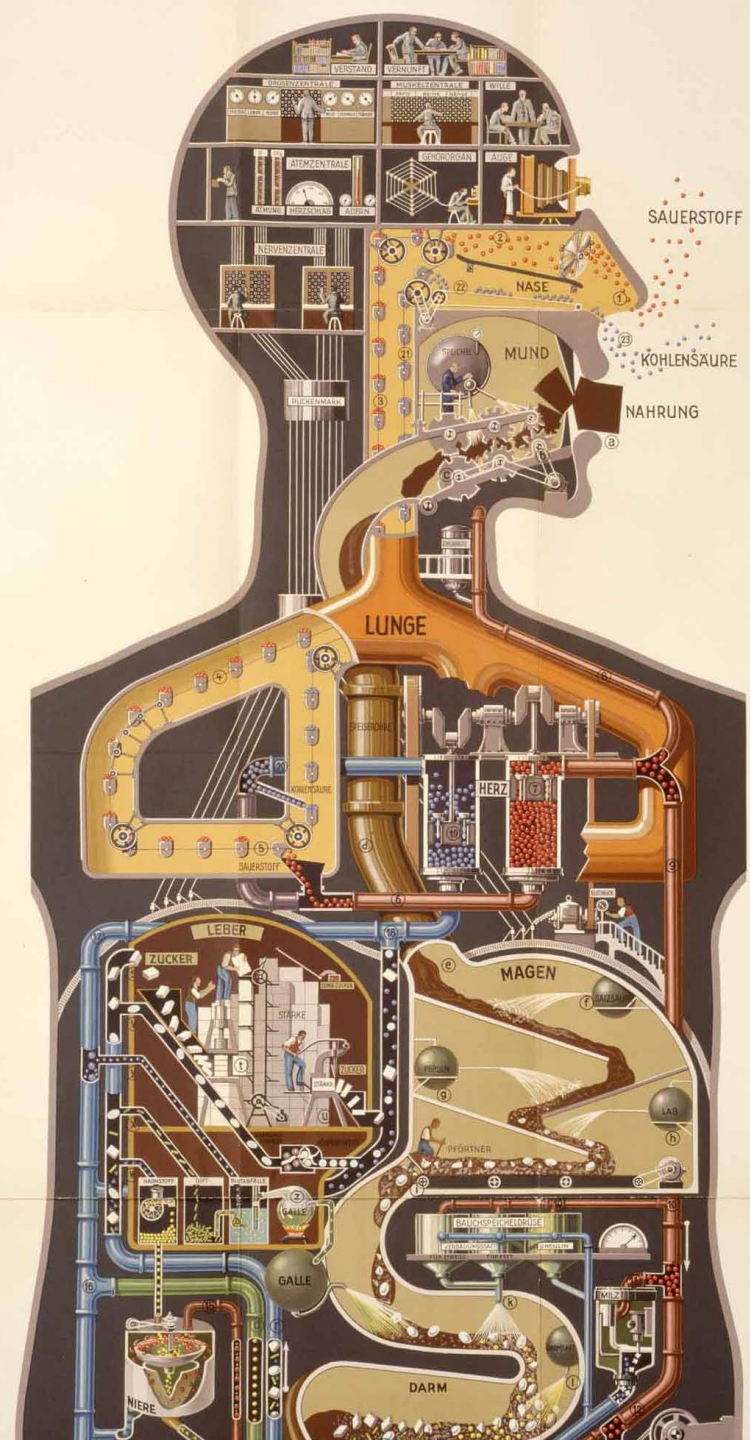
Biophysical Model

The causal machine

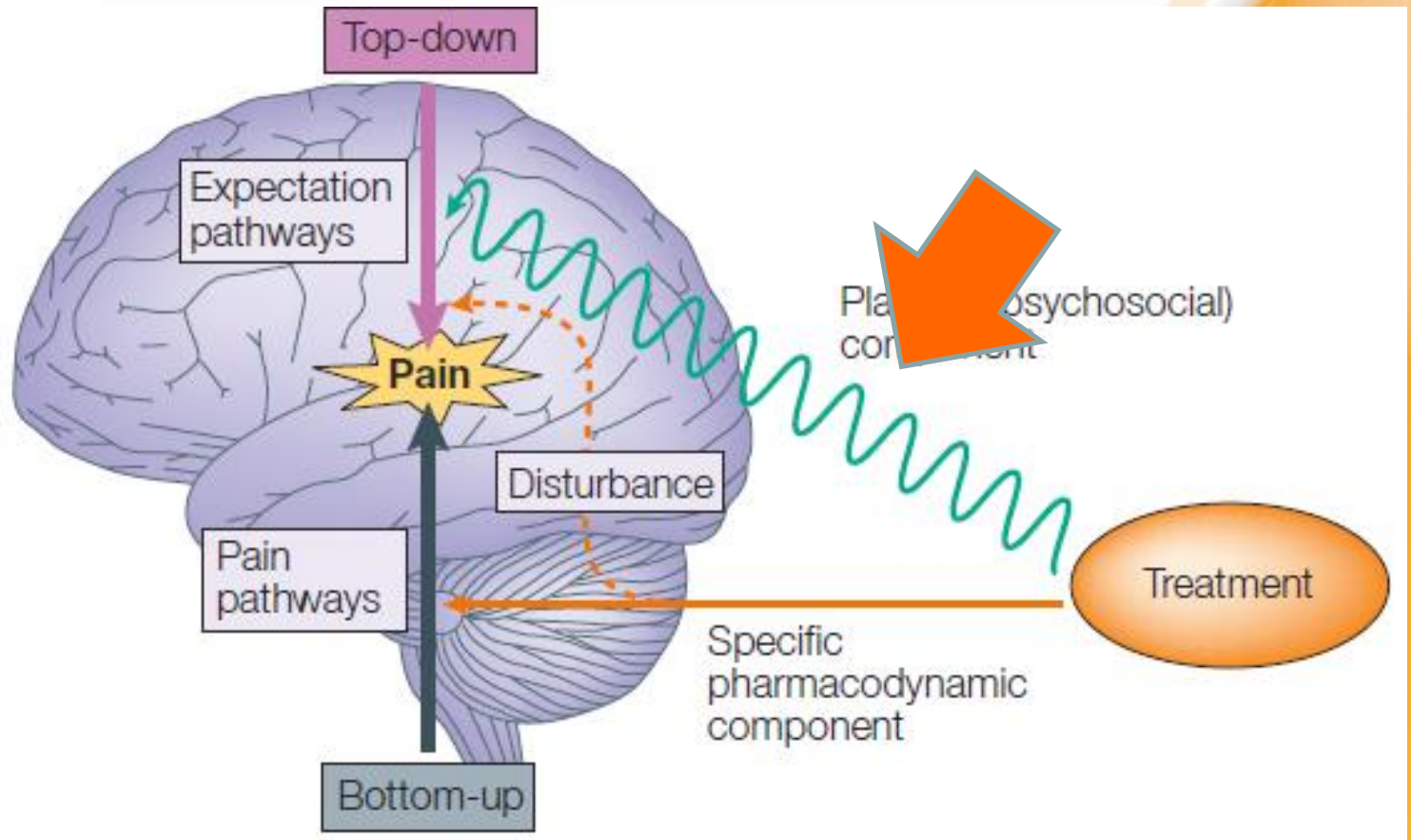
- analytic
- reductionist
- healing from outside
- passive ‘patient’
- **unconscious**

Difficult to locate meaning!

Man as Industrial Palace, Fritz Kahn 1926



The problem



Colloca & Benedetti, Nat. Rev. Neurosc. 2005, 6, 545



Placebo points beyond brain function

BEHIND AND BEYOND THE BRAIN





Every sign matters!



Beyond



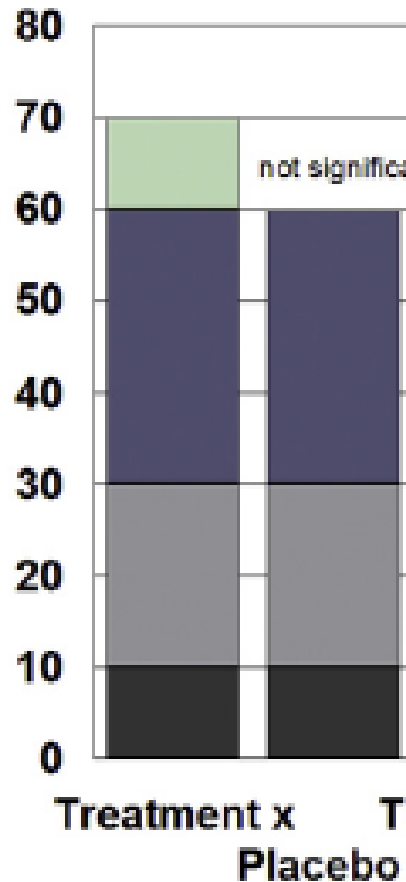
- Architecture of hospitals, etc.
- Social environment
- Communication and interaction
- Attitude
- Patients' attitude
- ↳ Optimal Healing Environment
- Meditation and Healing



Exclusion of Placebo Benefits!

General Effect
%

Efficacy Paradox



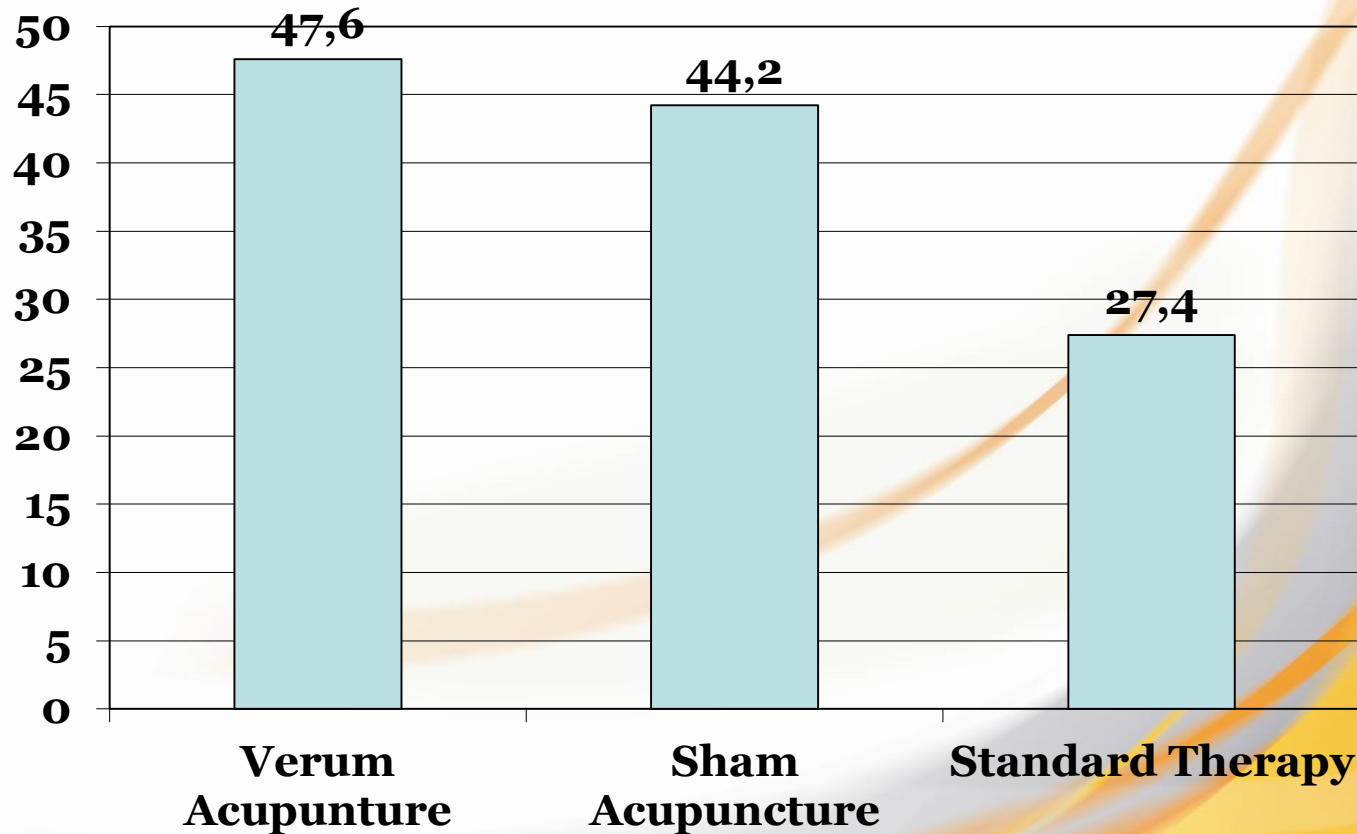
placebo-
effect

- specific
- non-specific
- regression
- artefacts



Acupuncture in lower back pain

- GERAC Haake et al. Arch Int Med, 2007, 167, 1892
- N=1162, % clinically improved

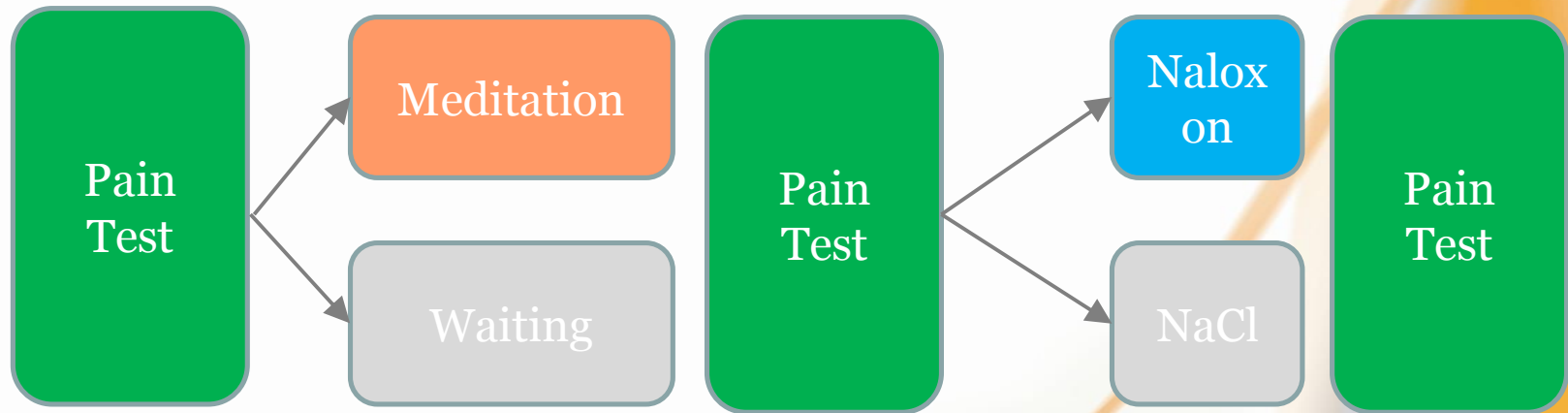


Meditation

- ‚Healing procedure‘
- Conscious self-referential process
- Structural way to work with meaning
- Psychological Effects
- Self regulation
- Effects on the brain



Is Meditation Analgesia the same than Placebo Analgesia?



- Meditation analgesia failed
- Hypothesis not communicated to particip.

Esch, TSchmidt, S. *submitted to PloSOne*



Distant Intention Research

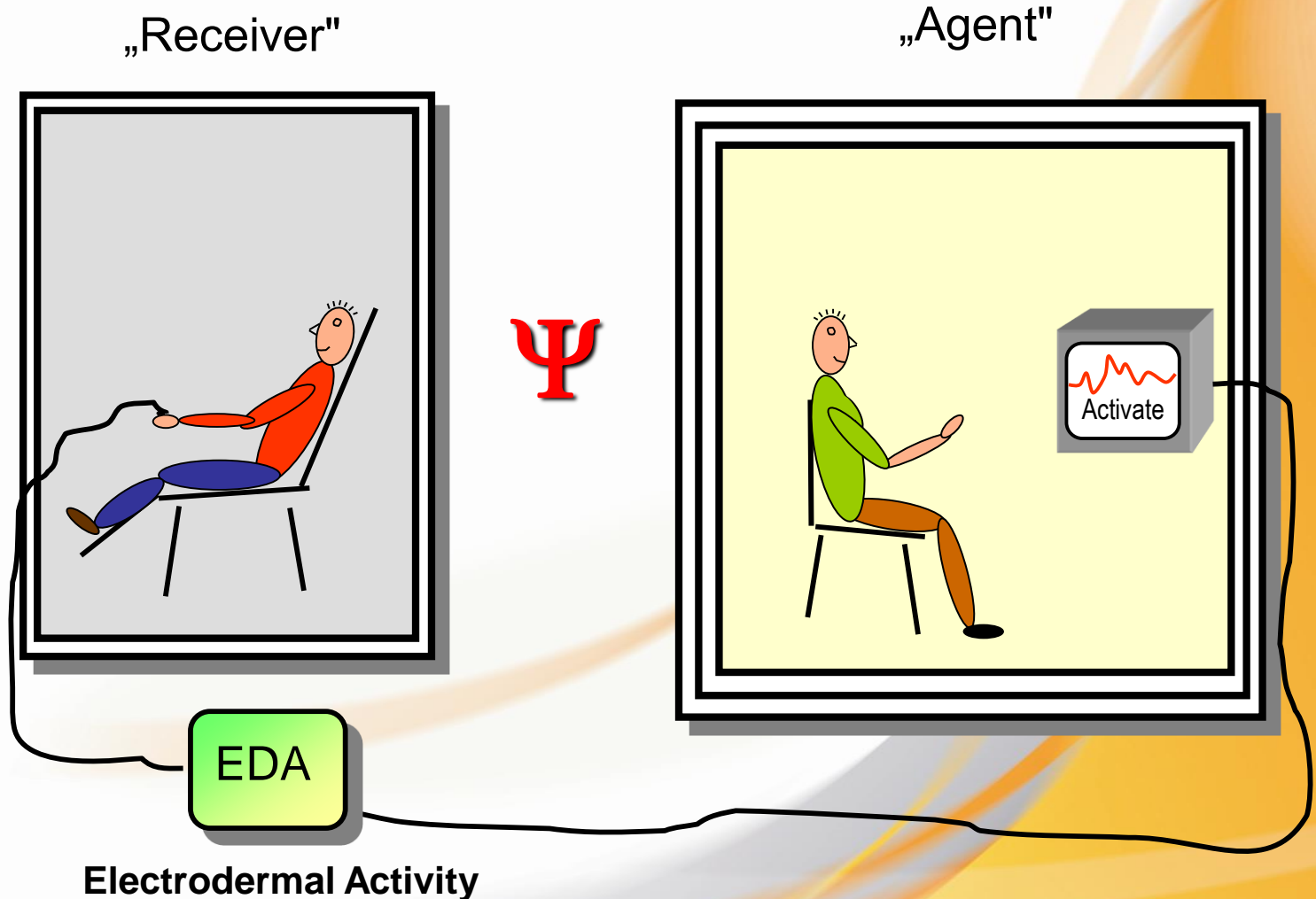


Distant Healing for Others

- Parapsychology Research
- Extension of meaning
- Meaning is not individual
- Co-created world
- How far can the mind reach?
- Positive intentions on the physiology of distant others
 - Prayer, wishes, little rituals, distant healing



Distant Intention Experiment



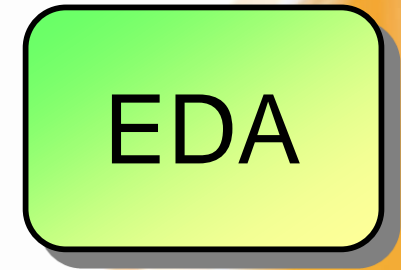
EDA-DMILS

- Started 1977, William Braud
- Many paradigms
- DMILS: Direct mental interaction in living systems
- EDA as dependent variable
- ‘Activate’ ‘Calm’ epochs, rest
- 10-30 epochs, 20-60 seconds
- Randomized, balanced
- Approx. 40 studies



EDA-DMILS Meta-Analysis

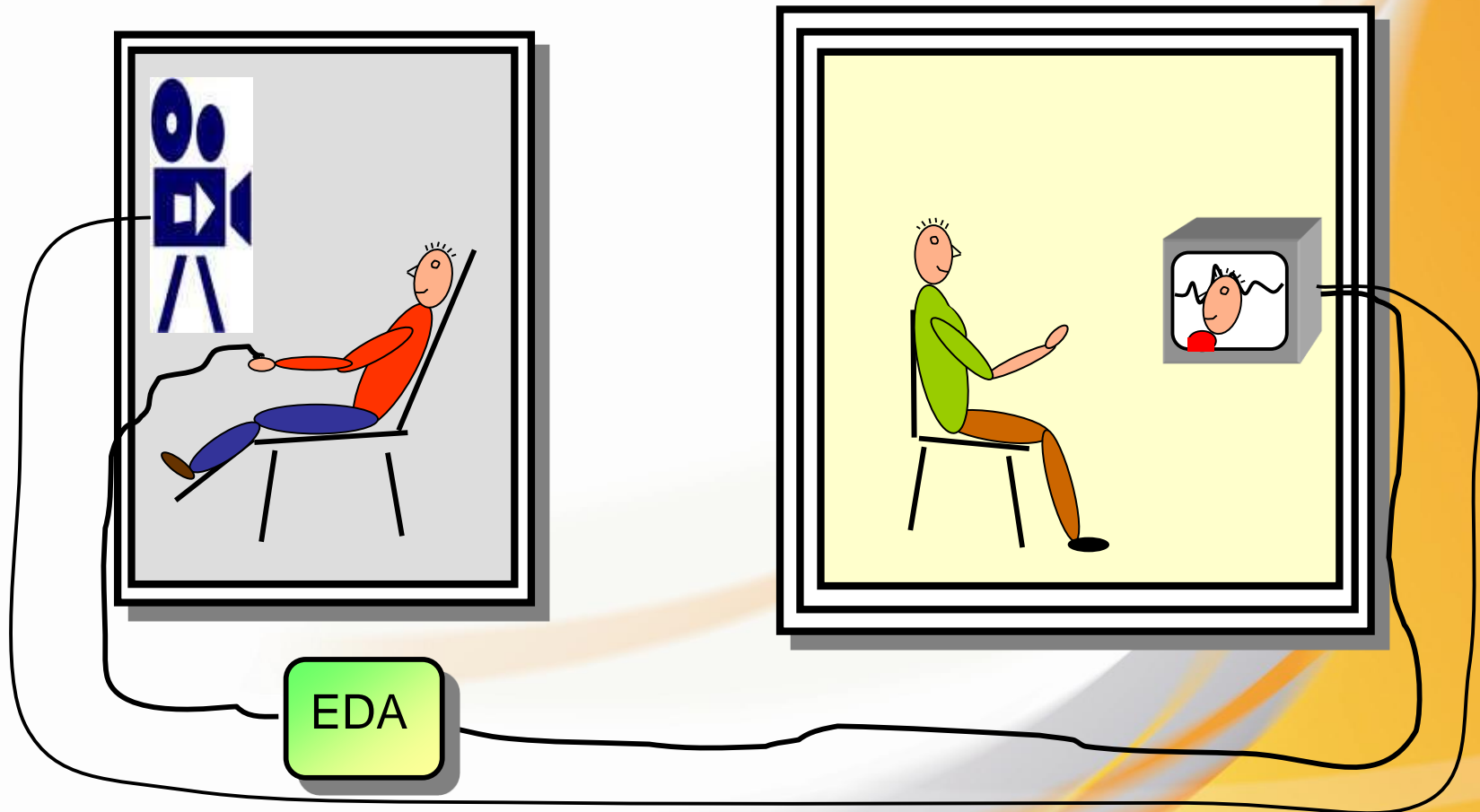
- All EDA-DMILS
- unpublished studies
- Extensive quality rating
- Exclusion of four studies
- Weighted for quality and size
- $K=36$, $N=1015$,
- **Mean effect size $d=0.11$ ($p=.001$)**



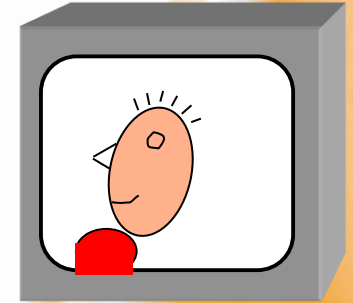
Schmidt et al. 2004, Brit J Psychol, 95, 235



Remote Staring



Remote Staring



- 15 studies, 379 sessions
- Validates first meta-analysis?
- Homogeneity ($p = .60$), no unexplained variance
- Weighted for study size
- **mean effect size $d = 0.13$ ($p = .01$)**

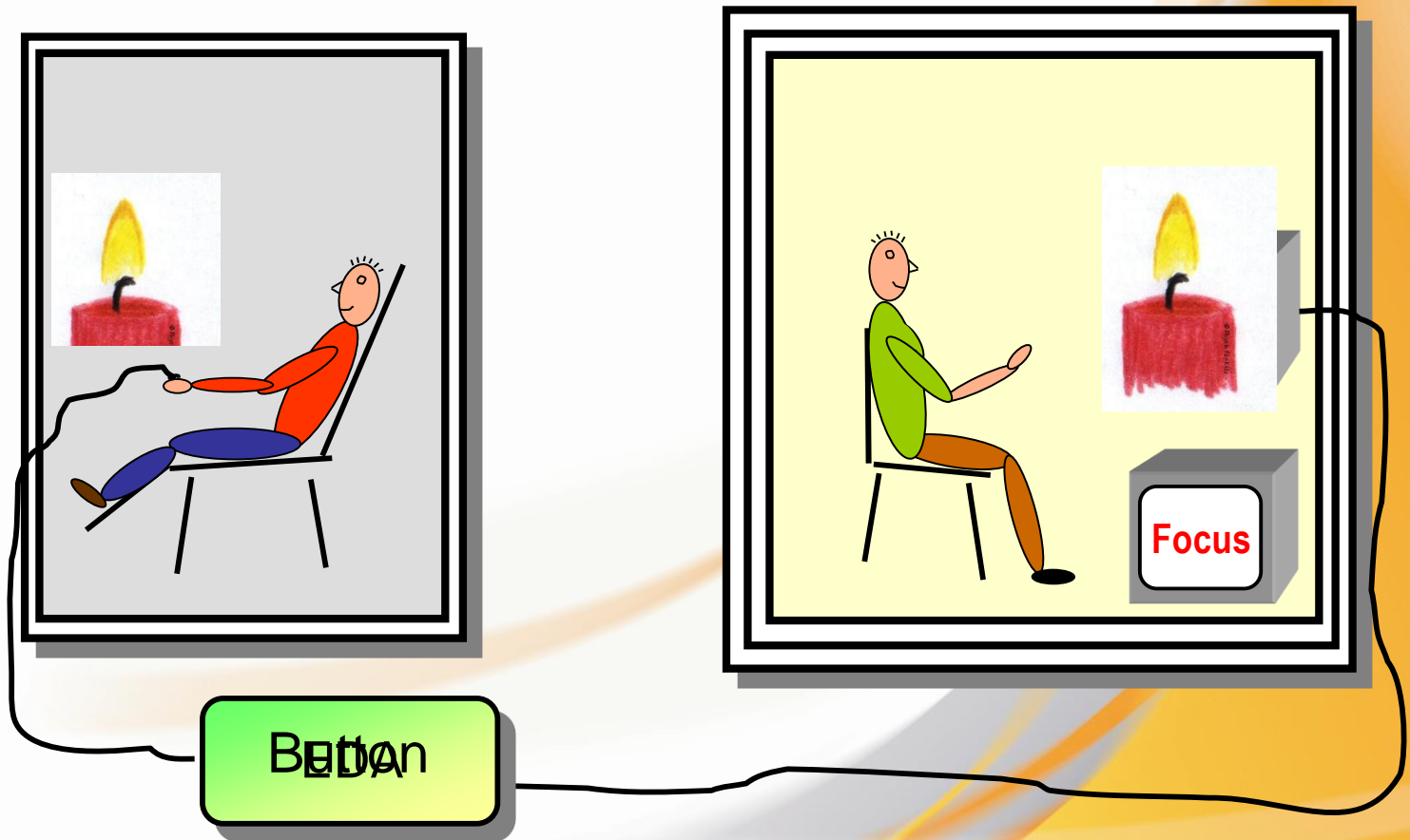
Schmidt et al. 2004, Brit J Psychol, 95, 235



Attention Focusing Facilitation

„Receiver“

„Agent“



Electrodermal Activity



Meta-Analysis

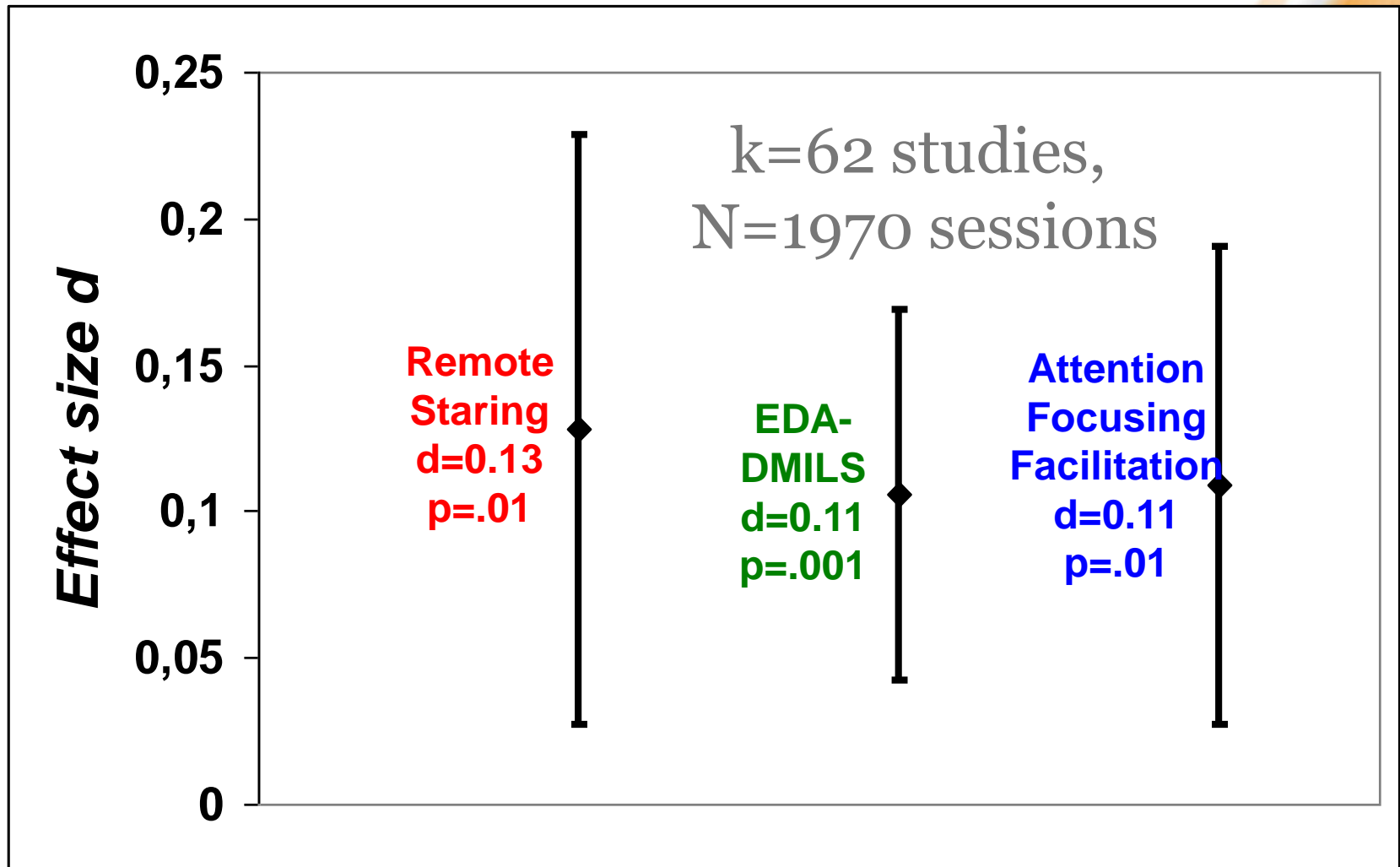


- Until 2010 11 studies, 576 sessions
- Homogeneity ($p = .11$), little unexplained variance
- Weighted for study size
- **mean effect size $d = 0.11$ ($p = .009$)**

Schmidt (2012), JACM, 18, 529-533



Summary



Questionable Research Practices

- Replication Problem in Parapsychology
- Replication Problem in Psychology
 - 36% Replication Rate (Science 2015, 349, aa4716)
- QRPs
 - Selection of variables
 - Running more participants
 - Dealing with outliers, etc.
- Higher standards in parapsychology
- Simulation needed
 - Effects might be partially due to QRP

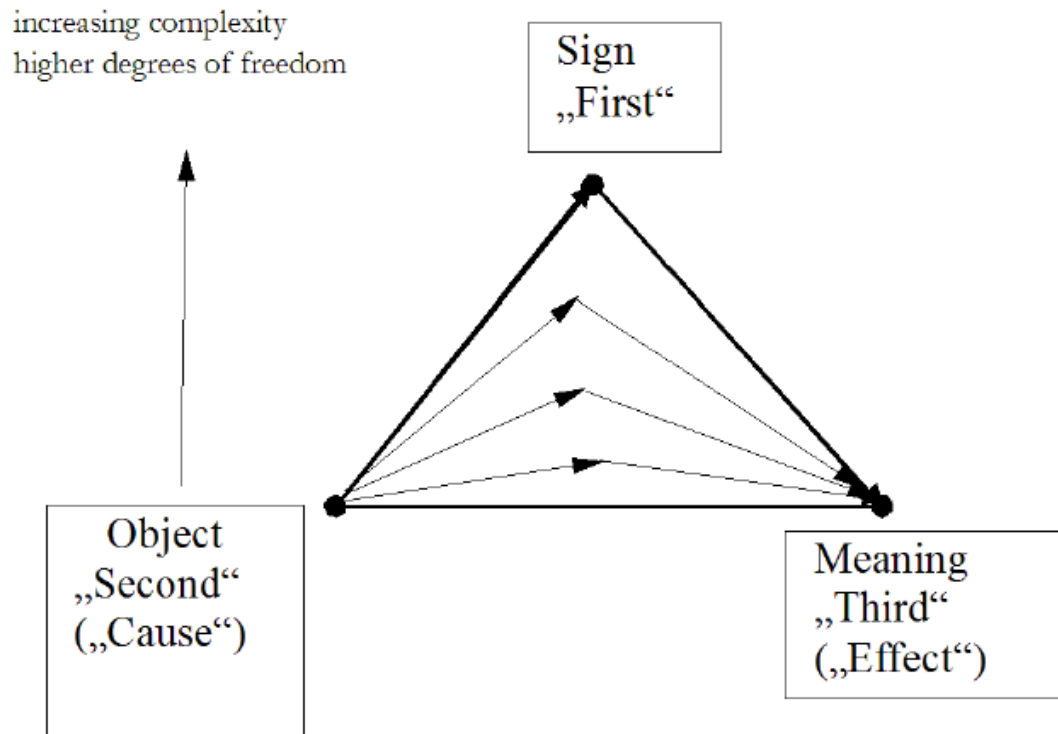


Thank you very much
for your attention!

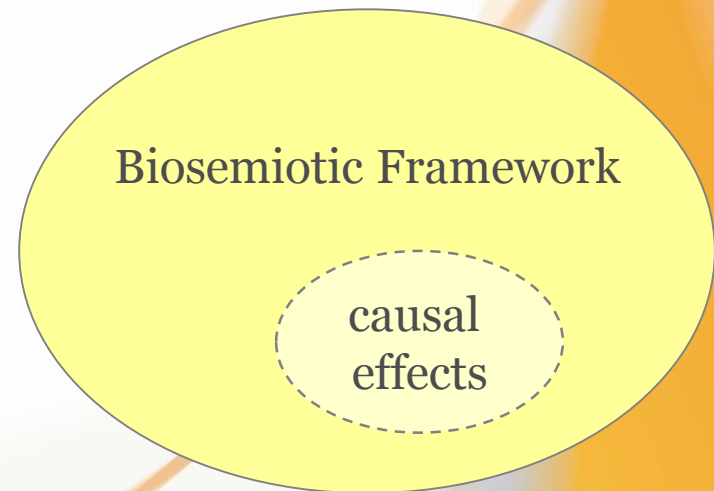
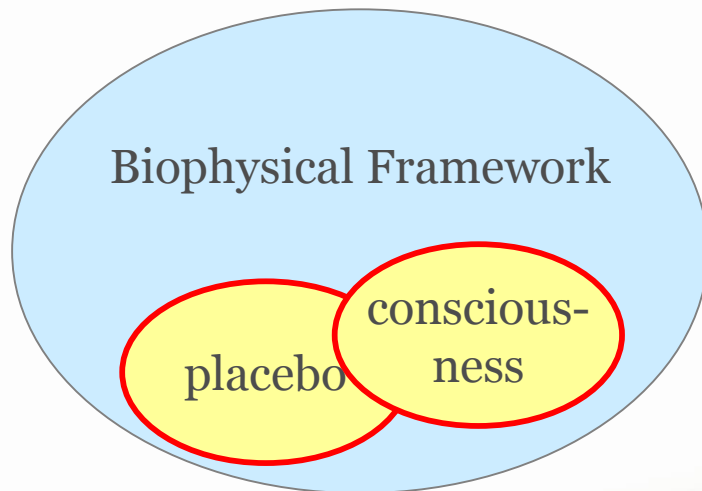


Biosemiotik Model

- Mind-body problem
- Peirce, Uexküll,
- tripartite semiotic relationship

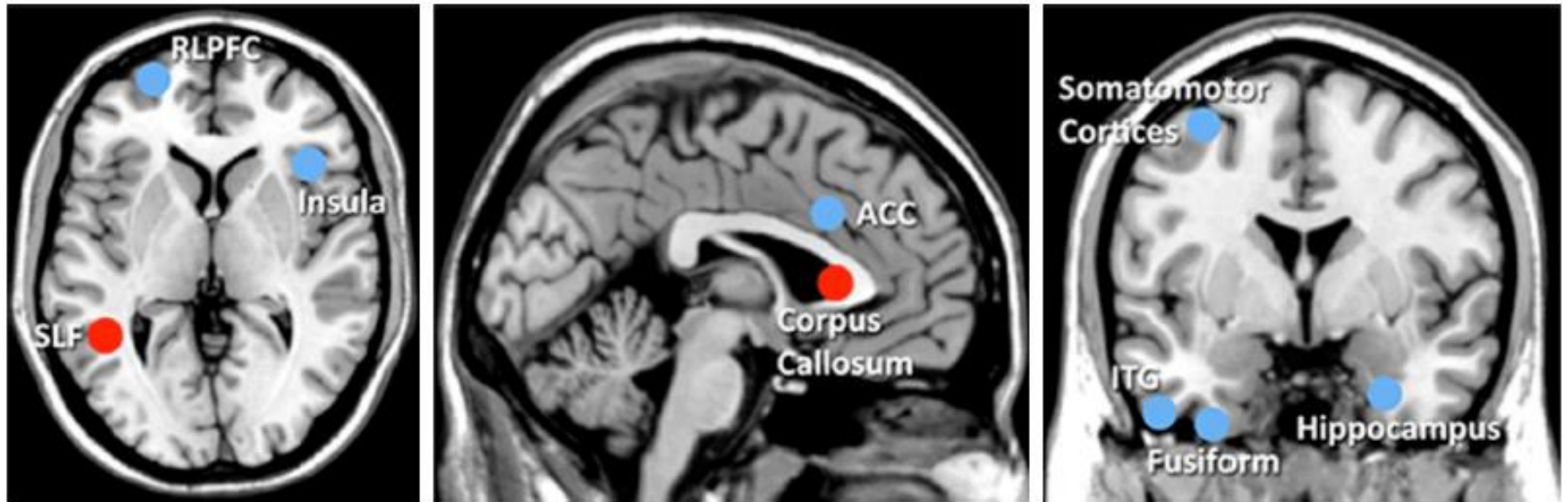


Change of Perspective



Meta-Analysis Meditation

- Change in brain structure, k=21 studies
- Short and longterm



Fox et al. Neurosc Behav Rev 2014, 43, 48

