

# PHILOSOPHY

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# Frank Martela



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# GOOD LIFE: HAPPINESS, MEANING, AND WHAT ULTIMATELY

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Docent of well-being psychology, Tampereen yliopisto



Filosofian Akatemia



Aalto University





ORIGINAL PAPER

Article

# Prosocial behavior increases well-being and vitality even without contact with the beneficiary: Causal and behavioral evidence

Frank Martela<sup>1</sup> · Richard M. Ryan<sup>2,3</sup>

# Fallible Inquiry with Ethical Ends-in-View: A Pragmatist Philosophy of Science for Organizational Research

Organization Studies  
2015, Vol. 36(4) 537–563  
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sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav  
DOI: 10.1177/0170840614559257  
www.egosnet.org/os



# The Benefits of Benevolence: Basic Psychological Needs, Beneficence, and the Enhancement of Well-Being

Journal of Personality 84(6), December 2016  
© 2015 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.  
DOI: 10.1111/jopy.12215

Frank Martela<sup>1</sup> and Richard M. Ryan<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Helsinki, Finland  
<sup>2</sup>Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, Australian Catholic University  
<sup>3</sup>University of Rochester, NY

J Happiness Stud  
DOI 10.1007/s10902-017-9869-7



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RESEARCH PAPER

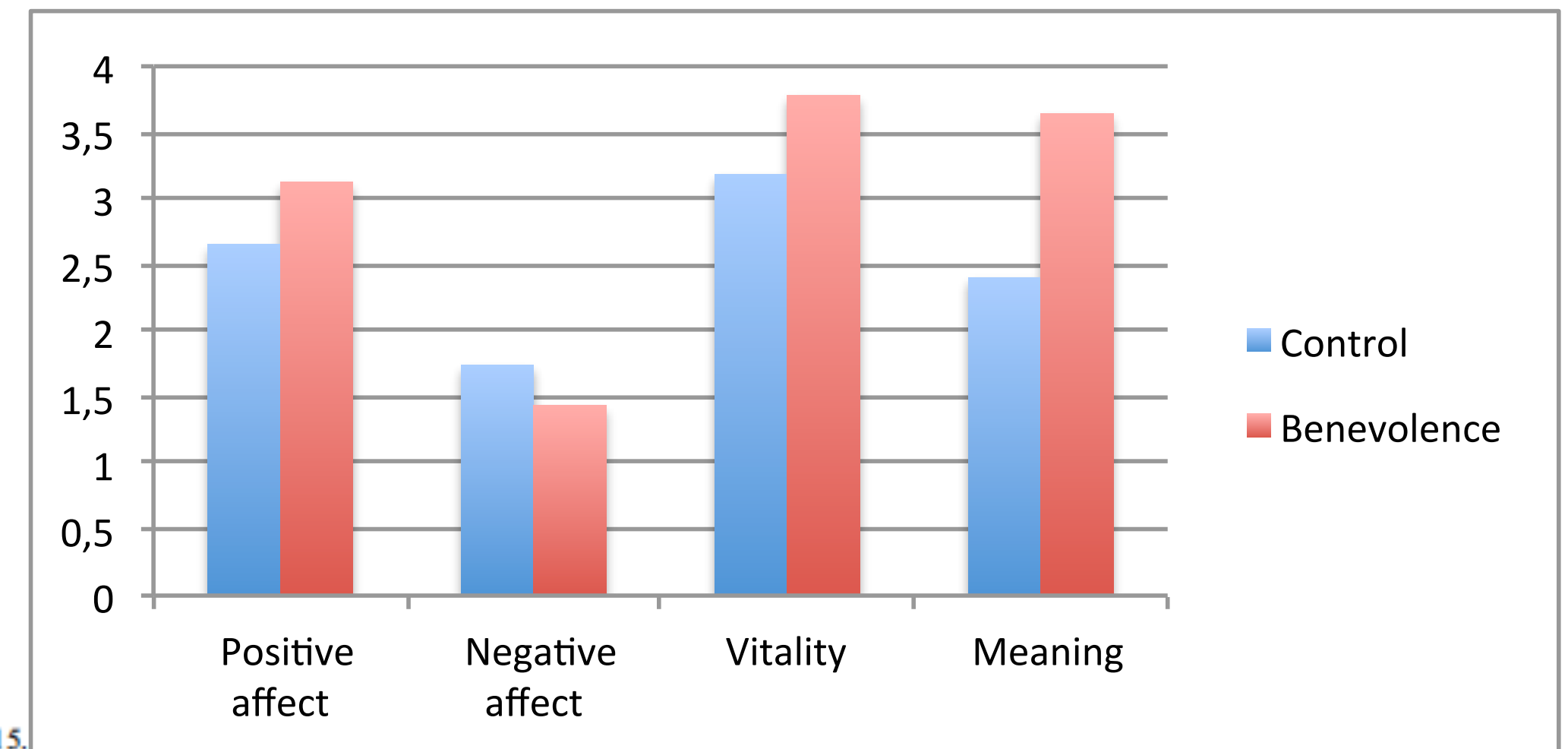
The Journal of Positive Psychology, 2016  
Vol. 11, No. 5, 531–545, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2015>.

# Meaningfulness as Satisfaction of Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness, and Beneficence: Comparing the Four Satisfactions and Positive Affect as Predictor of Meaning in Life

Frank Martela<sup>1</sup> · Richard M. Ryan<sup>2,3</sup> · Michael F. Steger<sup>4,5</sup>

Frank Martela

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The Southern Journal of Philosophy  
Volume 55, Issue 2  
June 2017

The three meanings of meaning in life: Distinguishing coherence, purpose, and

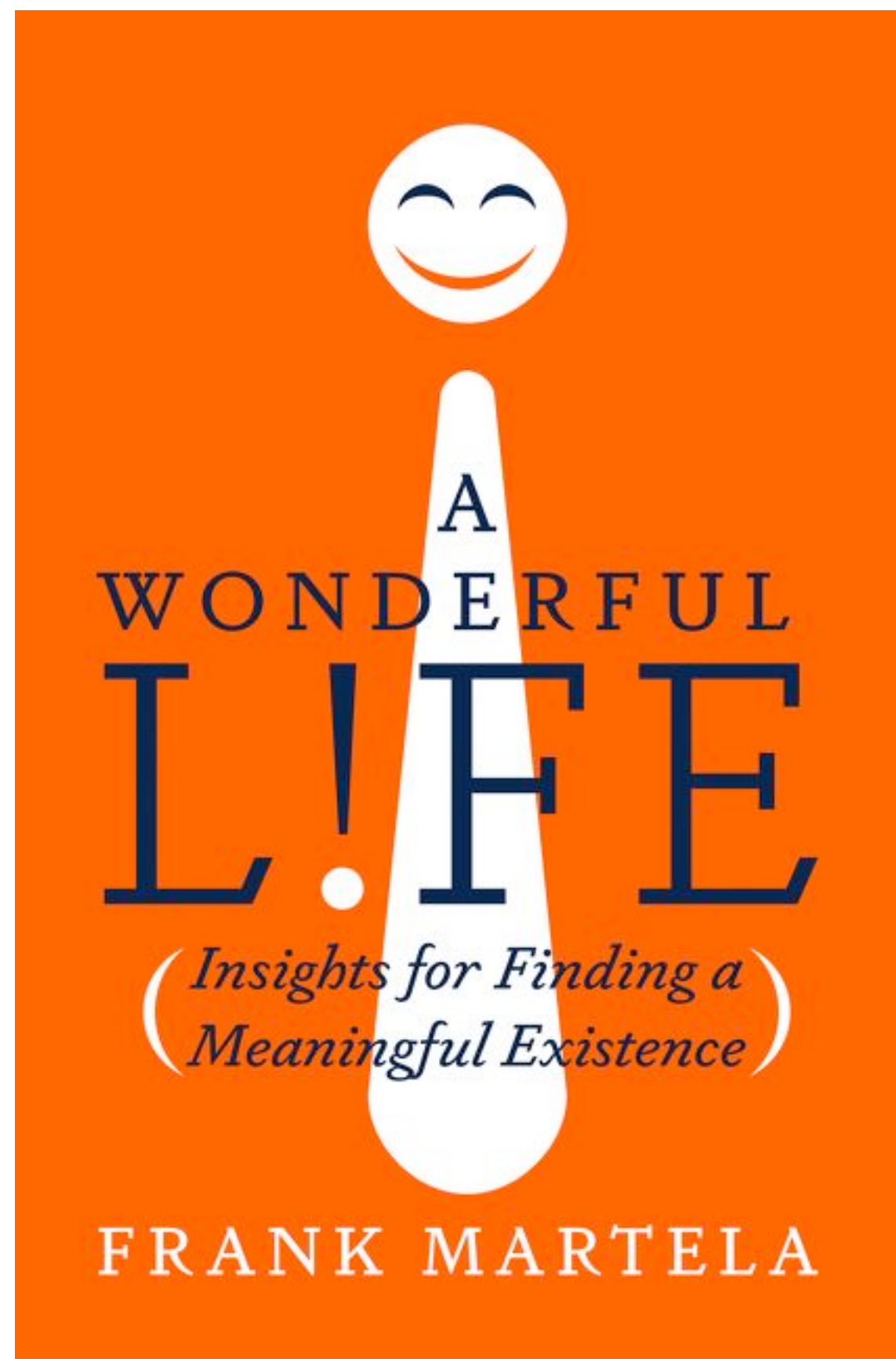
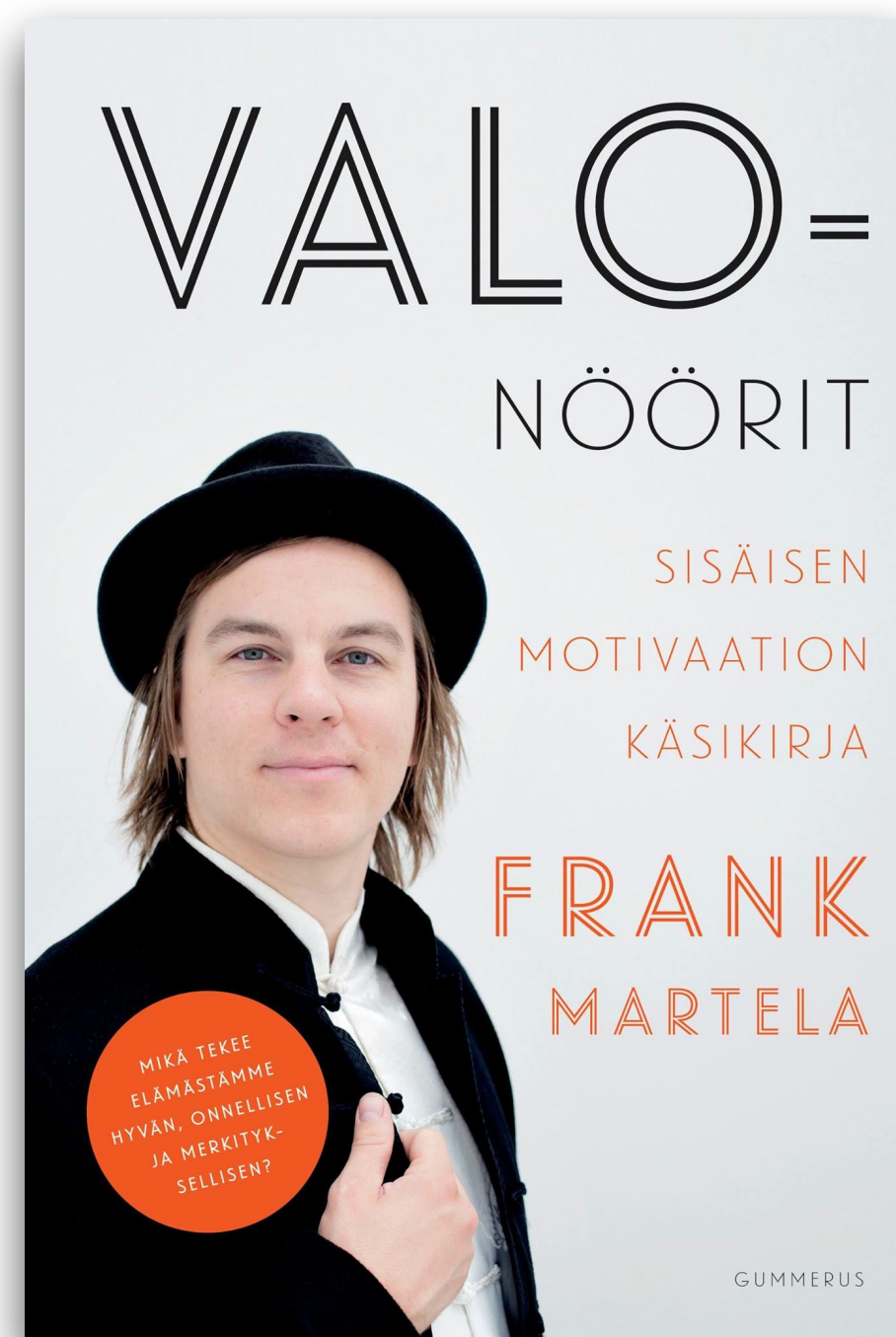
Frank Martela<sup>a,\*</sup> and Michael F. Steger<sup>b,c</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki, P.O. Box 4, Helsinki 00014, Finland; <sup>b</sup>Department of Psychology, University, 1876 Campus Delivery, Fort Collins, CO 80523-1876, USA; <sup>c</sup>School of Behavioural Sciences, North Vanderbijlpark, South Africa

MEANINGFULNESS AS CONTRIBUTION

FRANK MARTELA







# INFO-FUKSI/FRESHMAN 2001

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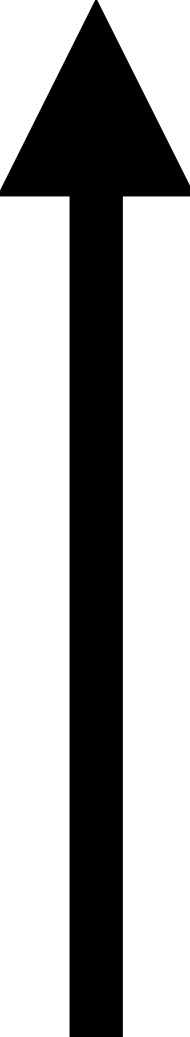




# THE ART OF LIVING

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**Philosophy especially useful in this movement**



**Life valuing**  
Authentic  
Passive

Ineffective hippie	Lightneer
Unlucky person	Empty achiever

Bad                      Good  
**Life management**





**WHAT SHOULD WE VALUE AND STRIVE FOR  
IN LIFE?**





**HAPPINESS**



**IS HAPPINESS THE ULTIMATE GOAL OF LIFE?**



# HAPPINESS IN ANCIENT TIMES

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# WHY HAPPINESS DOESN'T WORK AS A GOAL?

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1. Wrong targets
2. Less happier
3. Less social
4. Double burden



”I actually detest the word happiness, which is so overused that it has become almost meaningless. It is an unworkable term for science, or for any practical goal such as education, therapy, public policy, or just changing your personal life.”

-Martin Seligman, the founder of Positive Psychology







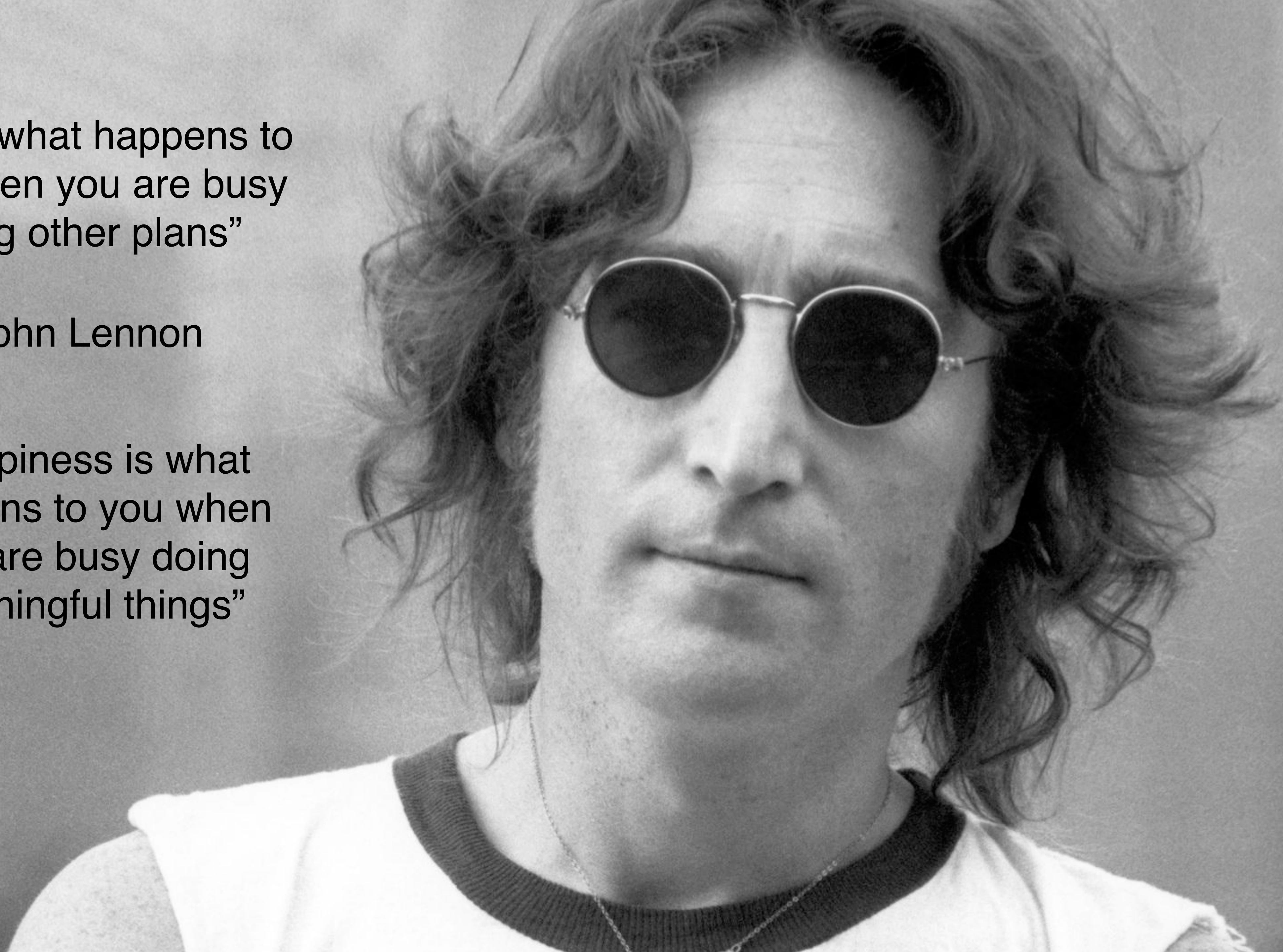
**HAPPINESS IS NOT THE TARGET  
IT IS A BY-PRODUCT OF A LIFE  
WELL LIVED**



”Life is what happens to  
you when you are busy  
doing other plans”

-John Lennon

”Happiness is what  
happens to you when  
you are busy doing  
meaningful things”





**WHAT ULTIMATELY MOTIVATES HUMAN BEINGS?**





**”MOTIVATION IS WANTING”**

**MOTIVATION = THOSE INTERNAL PROCESSES THAT GIVE  
BEHAVIOR ITS ENERGY, DIRECTION, AND PERSISTENCE**

**-REEVE 2018**



# TWO TYPES OF MOTIVATION: AUTONOMOUS AND CONTROLLED

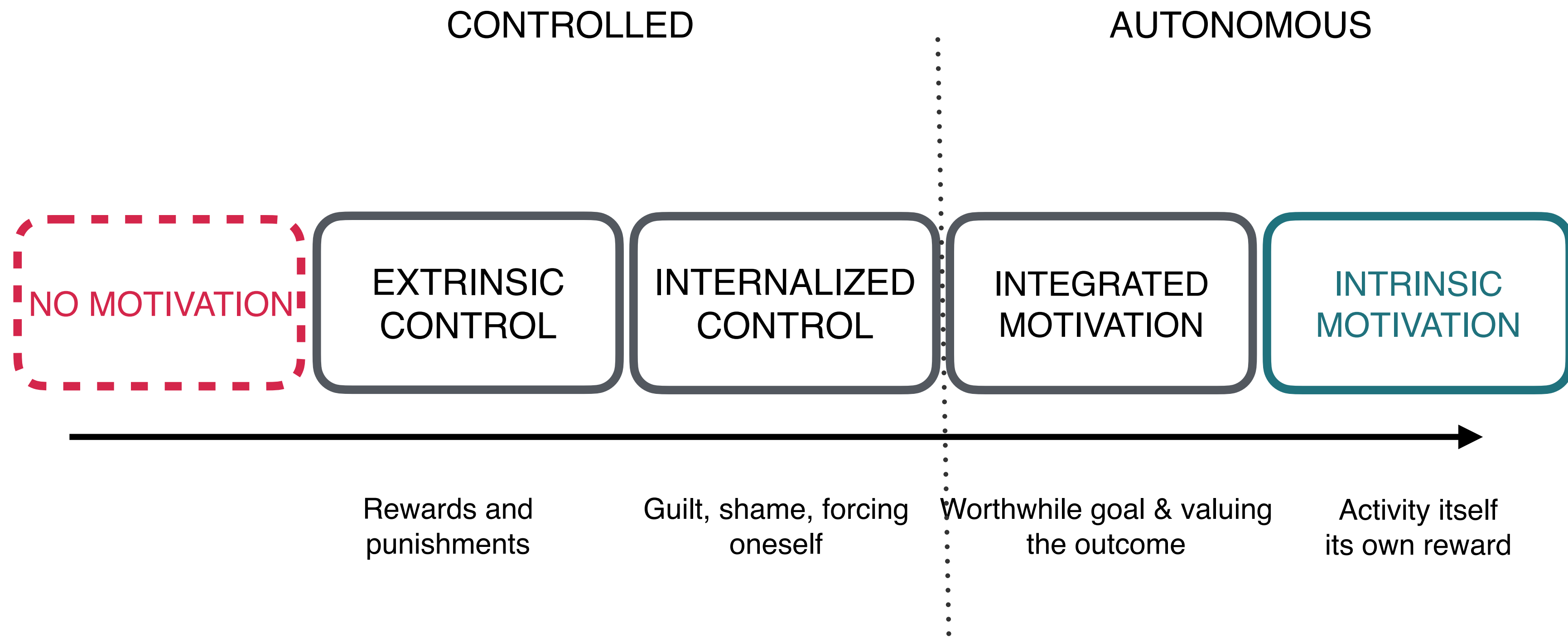
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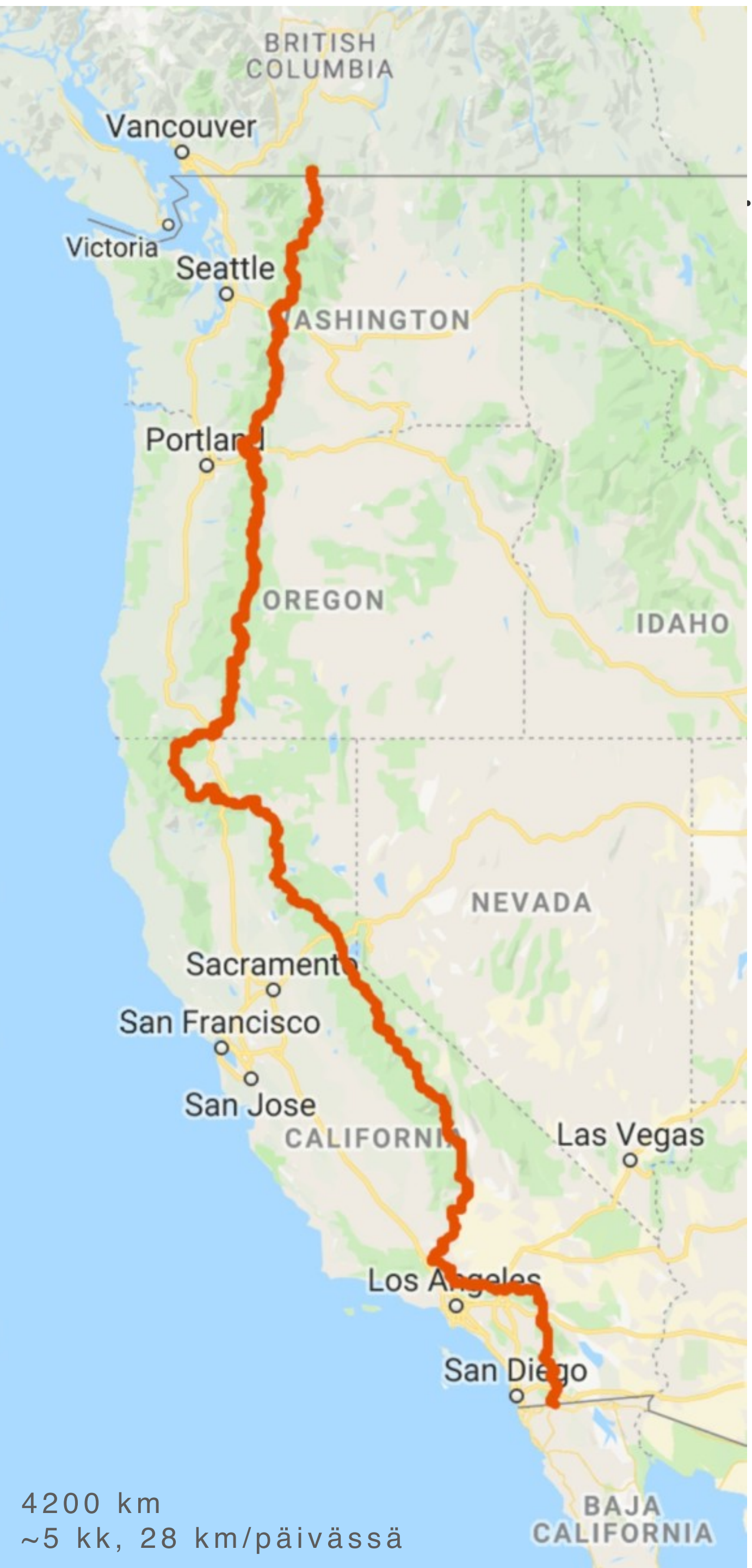
# THE MOTIVATION CONTINUUM

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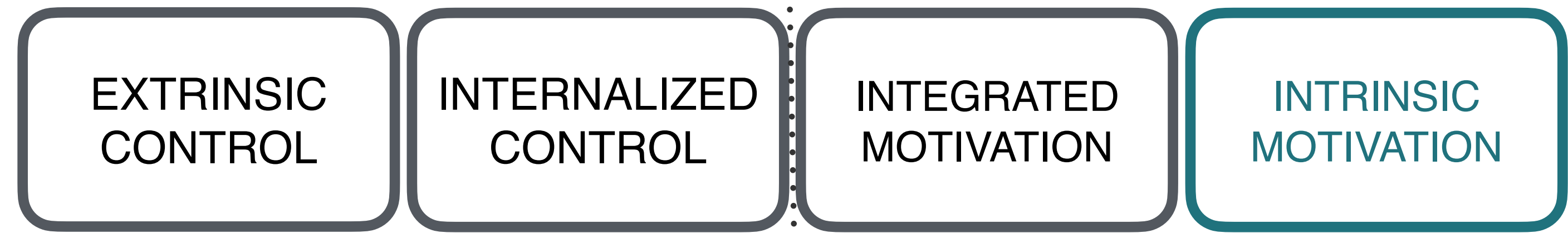


# PACIFIC CREST TRAIL



4200 km  
~5 kk, 28 km/päivässä

## PACIFIC CREST TRAIL

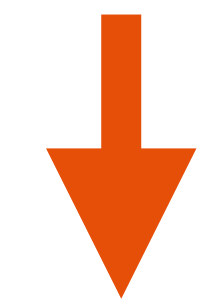
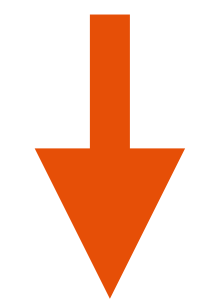
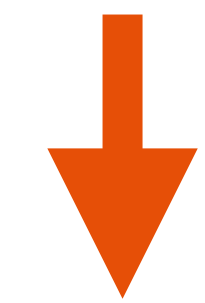


Rewards and punishments

Guilt, shame, forcing oneself

Worthwhile goal & valuing the outcome

Activity itself its own reward



STRENGTHENING PREDICTED COMPLETION

STRENGTHENING PREDICTED COMPLETION AND WELL-BEING

DECREASED DIDN'T PREDICT COMPLETION

Sheldon, K. M. (2020). Going the distance on the Pacific Crest Trail: The vital role of identified motivation. *Motivation Science*, 6(2), 177–181.



**DO YOU DO THINGS**

**A) BECAUSE YOU HAVE TO**

**B) BECAUSE YOU WANT TO**



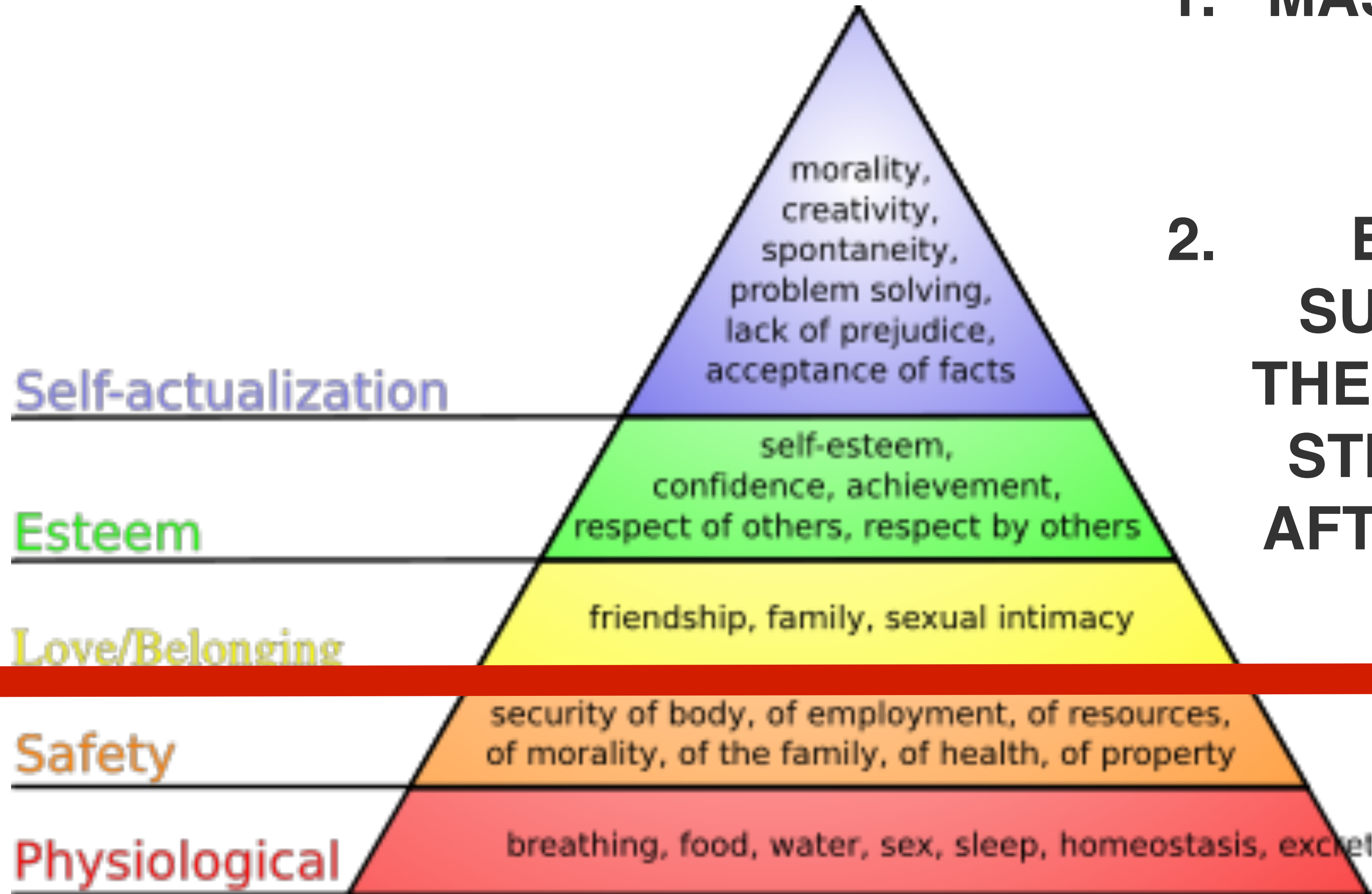
**WHAT ARE THE BASIC BUILDING BLOCKS OF OUR MOTIVATION?**





# MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS PROBLEMS

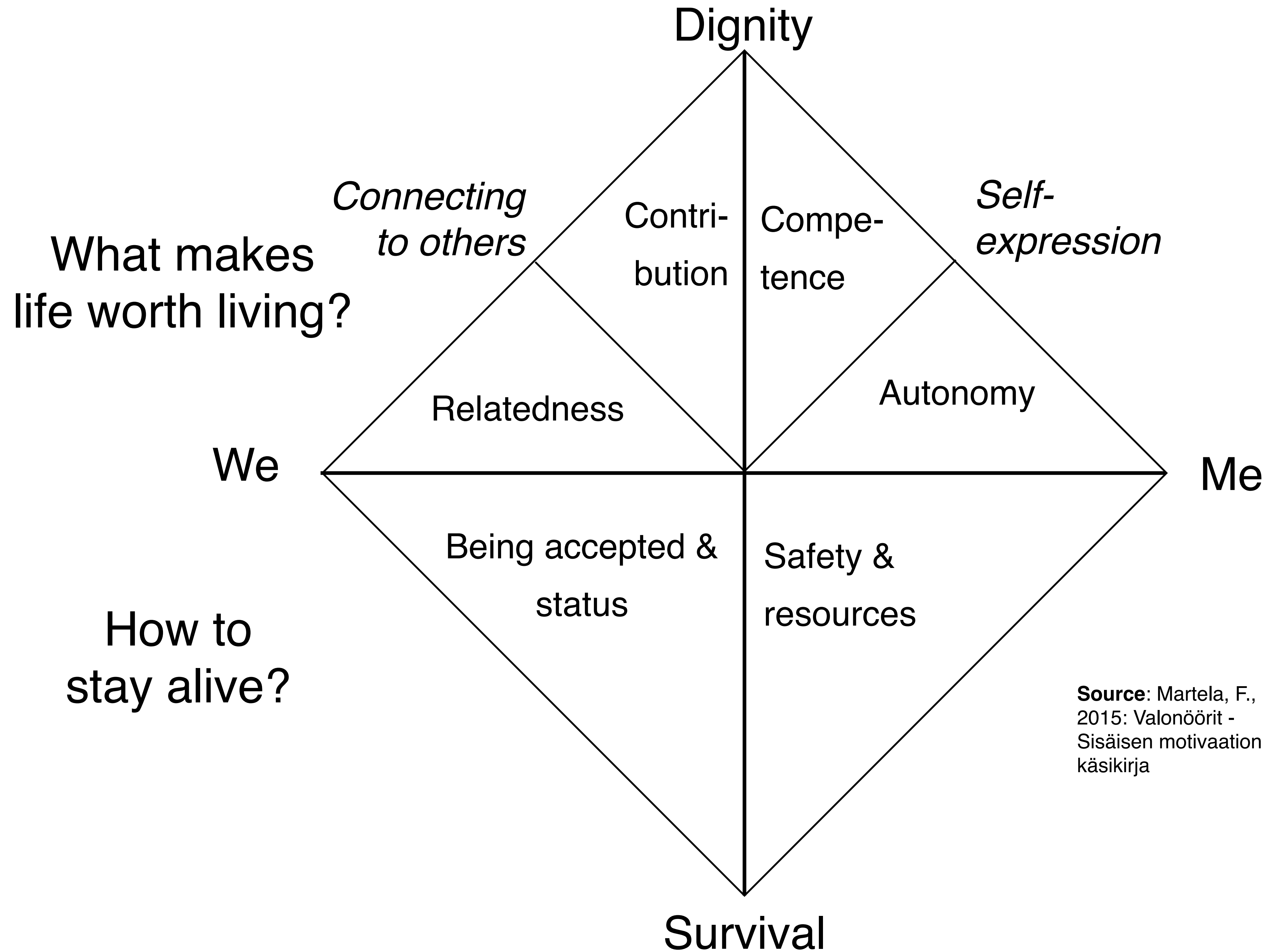
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- 1. MASLOW NEVER DRAW A PYRAMID**
- 2. EMPIRICAL SUPPORT FOR THE HIERARCHY IS STILL LACKING AFTER 70 YEARS**

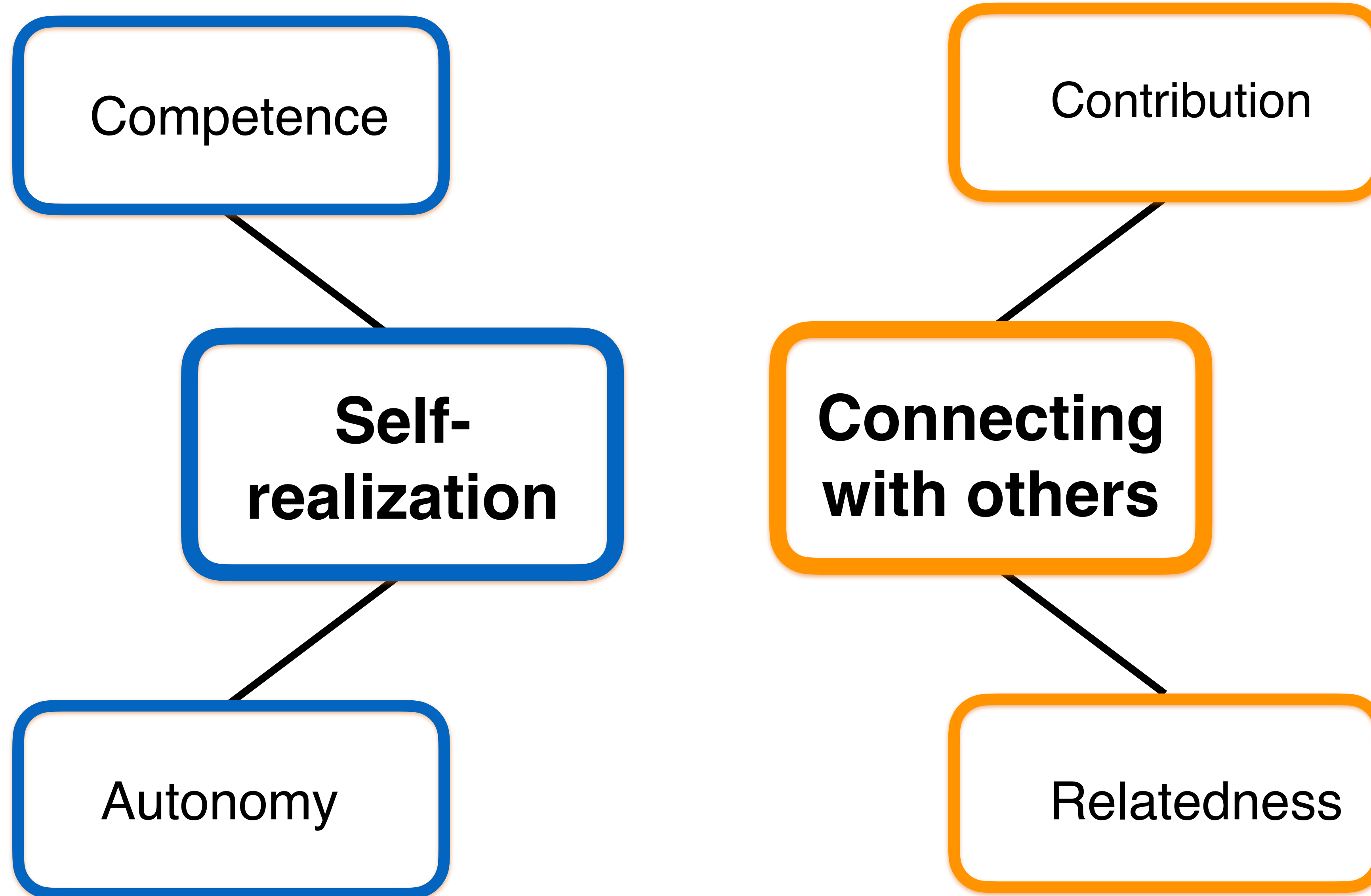
Source: Bridgman, T., Cummings, S., & Ballard, J. (2018). Who Built Maslow's Pyramid? A History of the Creation of Management Studies' Most Famous Symbol and Its Implications for Management Education. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 18(1), 81–98.





**Source:** Martela, F., 2015: Valonöorit - Sisäisen motivaation käsikirja






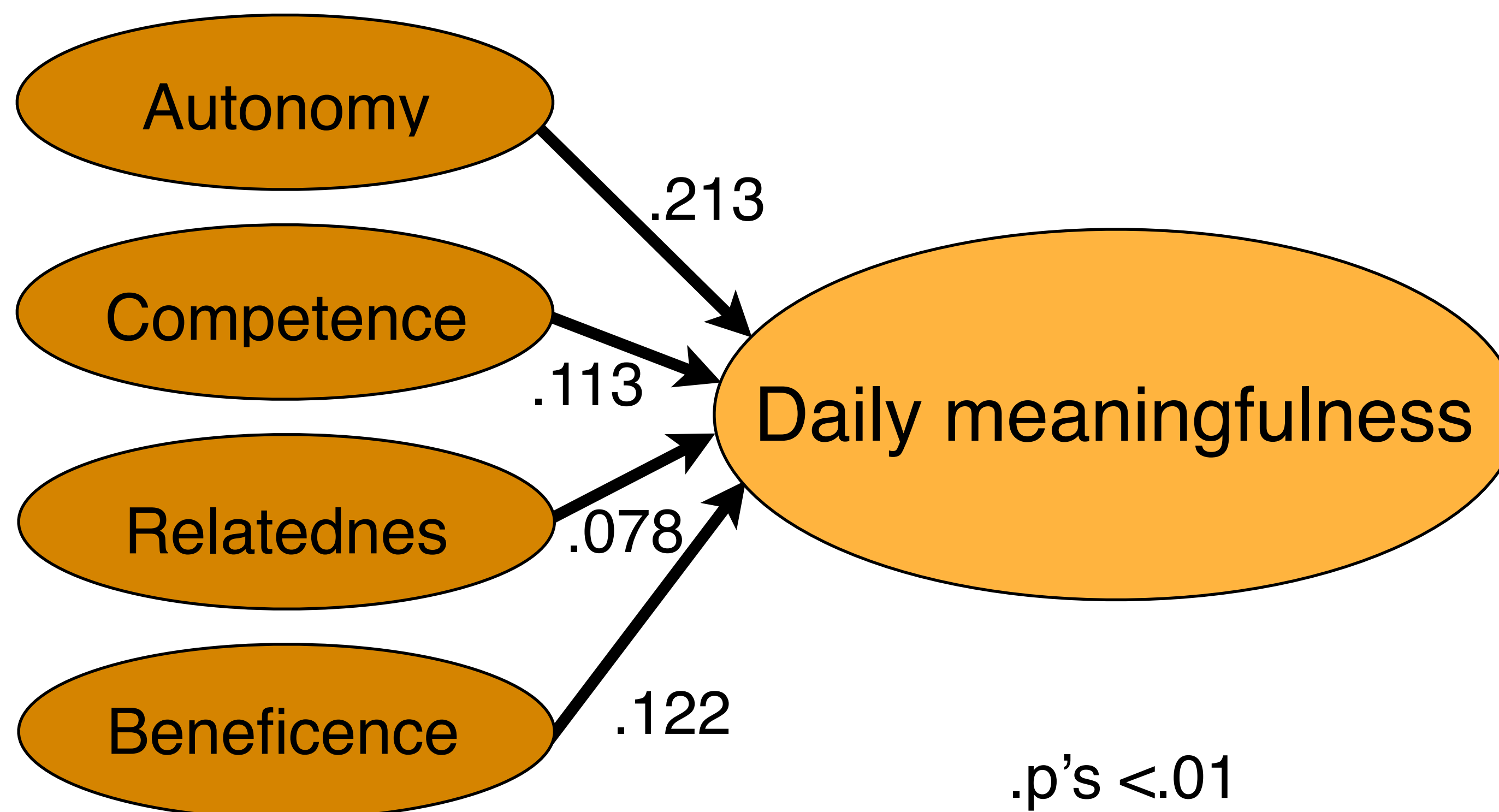
**Lähde:** Source, F., Ryan, R. M., & Steger, M. F. (2017).  
Meaningfulness as satisfaction of autonomy,  
competence, relatedness, and beneficence. *Journal of  
Happiness Studies*



## Meaningfulness as Satisfaction of Autonomy, Competence, Relatedness, and Beneficence: Comparing the Four Satisfactions and Positive Affect as Predictors of Meaning in Life

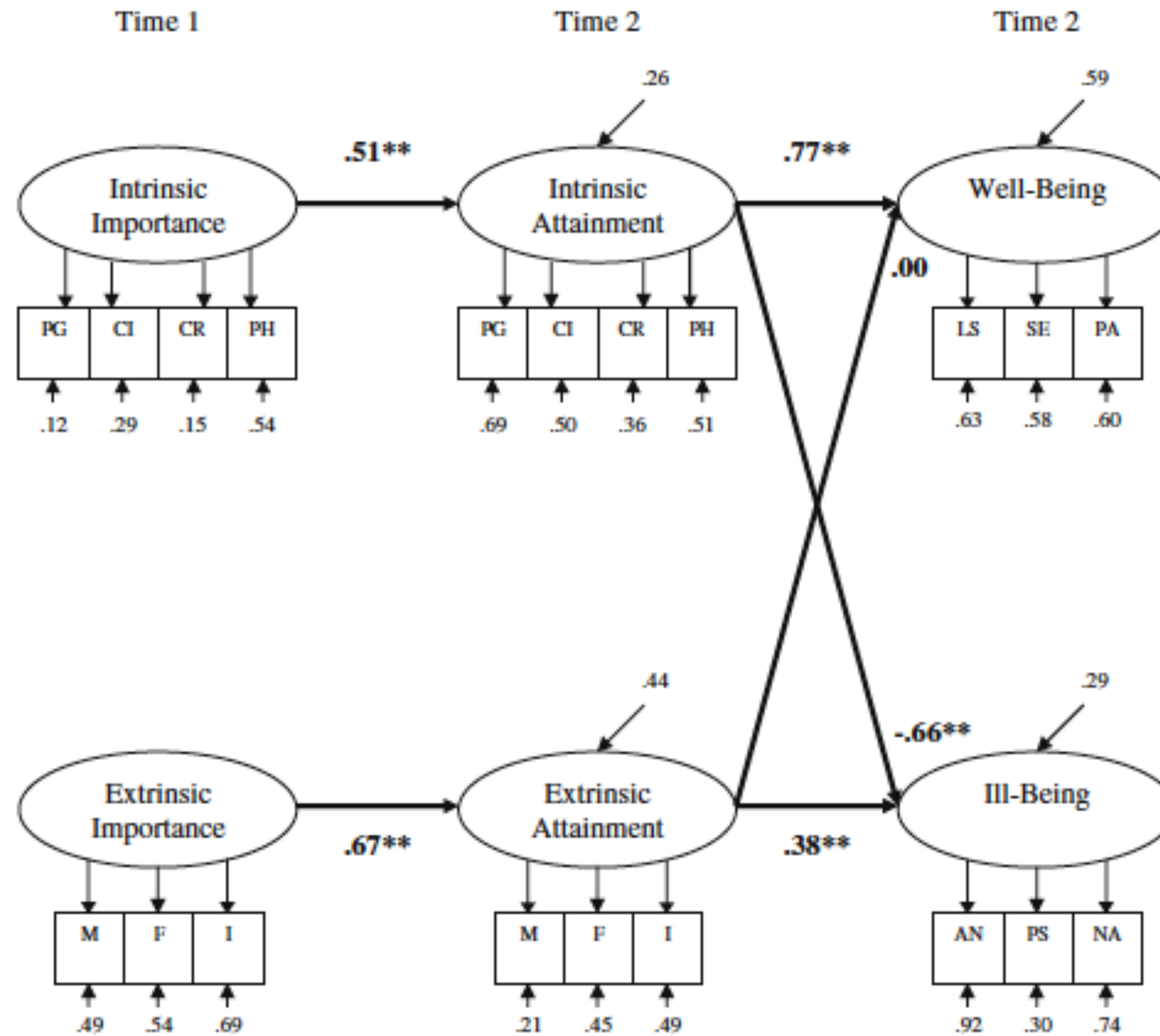
Frank Martela<sup>1</sup>  · Richard M. Ryan<sup>2,3</sup> · Michael F. Steger<sup>4,5</sup>

- 85 university students
- Daily survey on 10 consecutive evenings: 'Today, I felt...'
- Controlling for gender, weekend, trait-level need satisfaction





# INTRINSIC VS. EXTRINSIC GOALS



**Source:** Niemiec, Ryan & Deci 2009: The Path Taken: Consequences of Attaining Intrinsic and Extrinsic Aspirations. *Journal of Research in Personality* 43, 291-306



**ORGANISMIC PERSPECTIVE:  
GOOD LIFE FOR HUMANS IS A LIFE THAT SATISFIES  
THE INNATE PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS OF HUMANS**





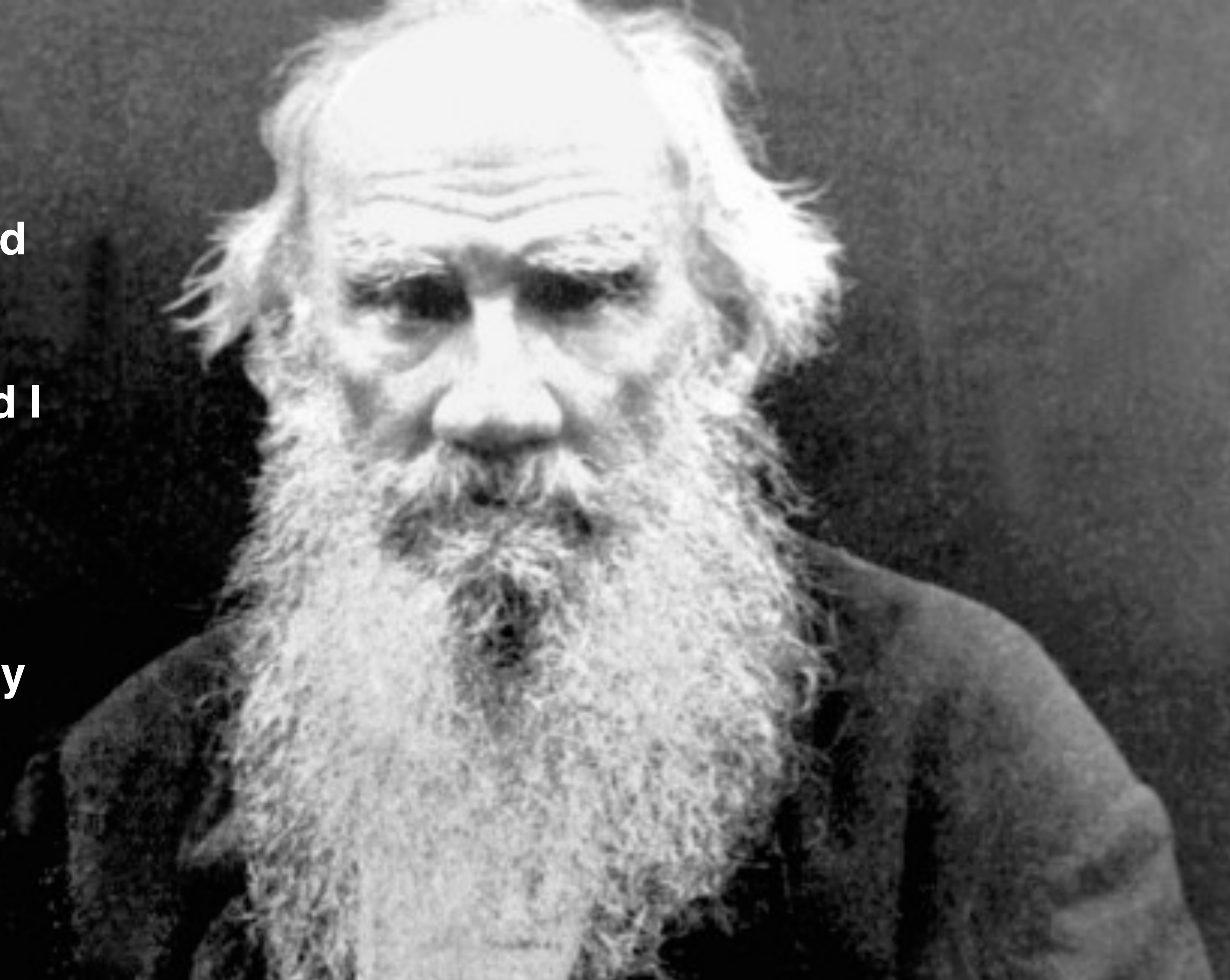
**IS THERE MEANING TO LIFE?**



**”Why should  
I live?”**

**”My life  
stopped and I  
wanted to  
destroy  
myself.”**

**- Leo Tolstoy**





Human beings are “hardwired to seek meaning”  
-Baumeister and Vohs, 2002



# Meaning and longevity

- 6000 participants were tracked for 14 years
- Those one standard deviation higher on purpose in life had a 15 % lower probability of dying during the study period

**Source:** Hill, P. L., & Turiano, N. A. (2014). Purpose in life as a predictor of mortality across adulthood. *Psychological Science*, 25(7), 1482–1486.

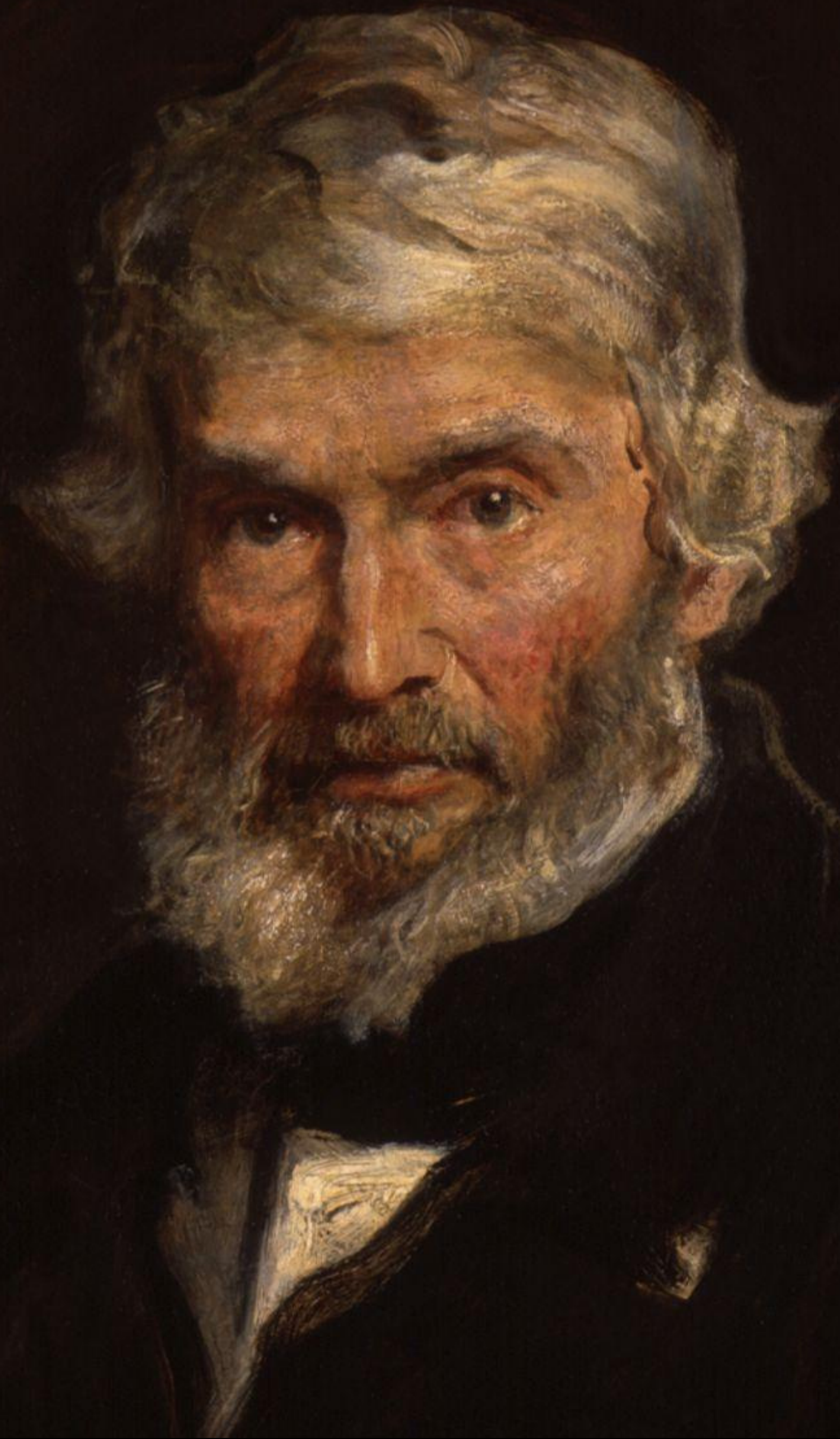
**Source:** Cohen, R., Bavishi, C., & Rozanski, A. (2016). Purpose in Life and Its Relationship to All-Cause Mortality and Cardiovascular Events: A Meta-Analysis. *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 78(2), 122–133.



**WHO INVENTED THE IDEA THAT  
LIFE MIGHT NOT HAVE MEANING?**



**Thomas Carlyle 1834:  
Sartor Resartus**



**“Our Life is compassed  
round with Necessity;  
yet is the meaning of  
Life itself no other than  
Freedom.”**



# NOT ONLY CARLYLE

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Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860)

- "Sinn des Lebens"
  - Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung (1819/1844/1859)
  - Parerga und Paralipomena (1851)



Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855)

- "Min Betragtning af Livet er aldeles meningsløs"
  - Enten - Eller: Et Livs-Fragment (1843)





Earliest use of the phrase (that I've been able to identify):

German: "Der Sinn des Lebens": 1793

English: "Meaning of life": 1833-34

Danish: "Livet uden mening": 1843

Finnish: "Elämän tarkoitus": 1846





3199

2

Unit. Hbn 10.09.2010

5

5



# WHAT ARISTOTLE DID NOT ASK?

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- What Aristotle is looking for in Nicomachean Ethics is the highest human good
  - "some end of our actions that we wish for on account of itself" (Book 1, 1094a: 20-23).
  - Form of excellence unique to being human; "the virtue of a human being"
    - Eyes are there for seeing, the virtue of an eye is clear sight
    - Horses are there for riding, the virtue of a horse is about running and carrying the rider
    - What are human beings for?
  - He considers several candidates



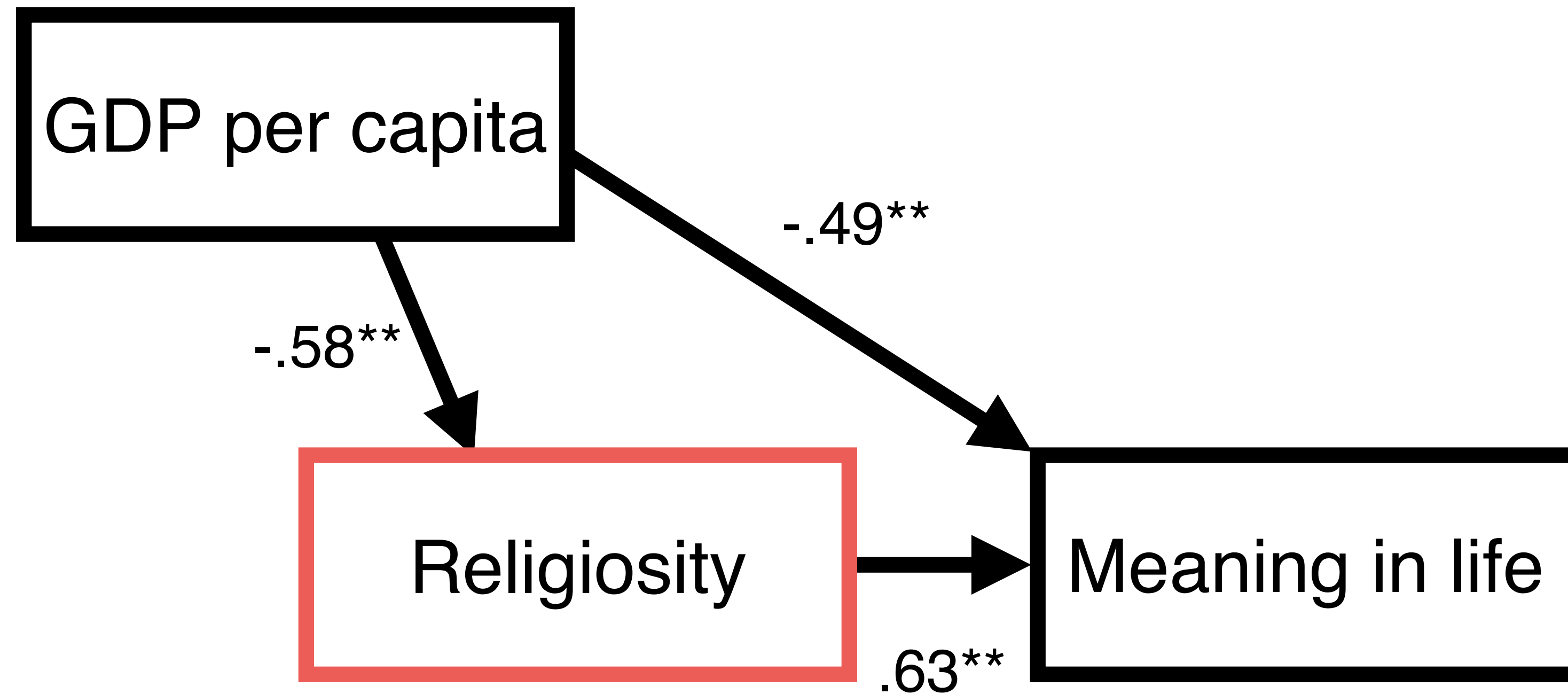
—> *Never questioned whether humans have a good or an end*



**DO YOU BELIEVE IN ELECTRICITY?**



# Loss of religion as a self-evident framework



**Source:** Oishi & Diener (2012): Residents of poor nations have a greater sense of meaning in life than residents of wealthy nations. *Psychological Science*.

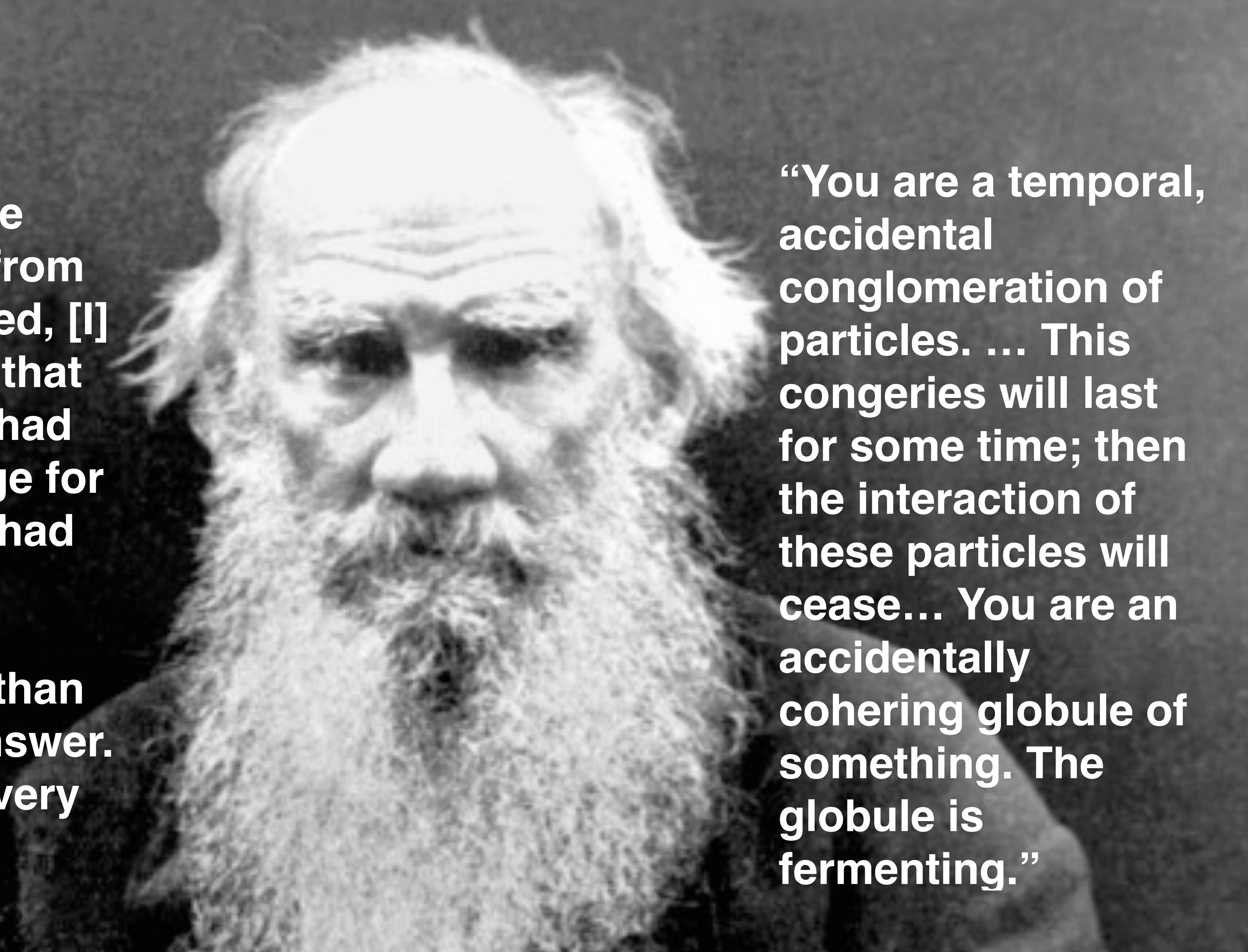


# Leo Tolstoy

He "sought in all the sciences" but "far from finding what I wanted, [I] became convinced that all who like myself had sought in knowledge for the meaning of life had found nothing."

Science did worse than not providing an answer. It "even destroys every possible meaning."

"You are a temporal, accidental conglomeration of particles. ... This congeries will last for some time; then the interaction of these particles will cease... You are an accidentally cohering globule of something. The globule is fermenting."





**SCIENTIFIC WORLDVIEW LED TO A  
DISENCHANTED, MECHANISTIC UNIVERSE**

**BEFORE THAT, COSMOS WAS 'RATIONAL',  
EVERYTHING HAD A PLACE IN IT**

**SCIENTIFIC WORLDVIEW LED US TO REALIZE THAT  
THE WORLD MIGHT NOT CONTAIN OBJECTIVE  
MEANING OR VALUE**



**UNIVERSAL  
MEANING OF LIFE**



**PERSONAL  
MEANING IN LIFE**



**HOW TO EXPERIENCE ONE'S LIFE  
AS MEANINGFUL?**

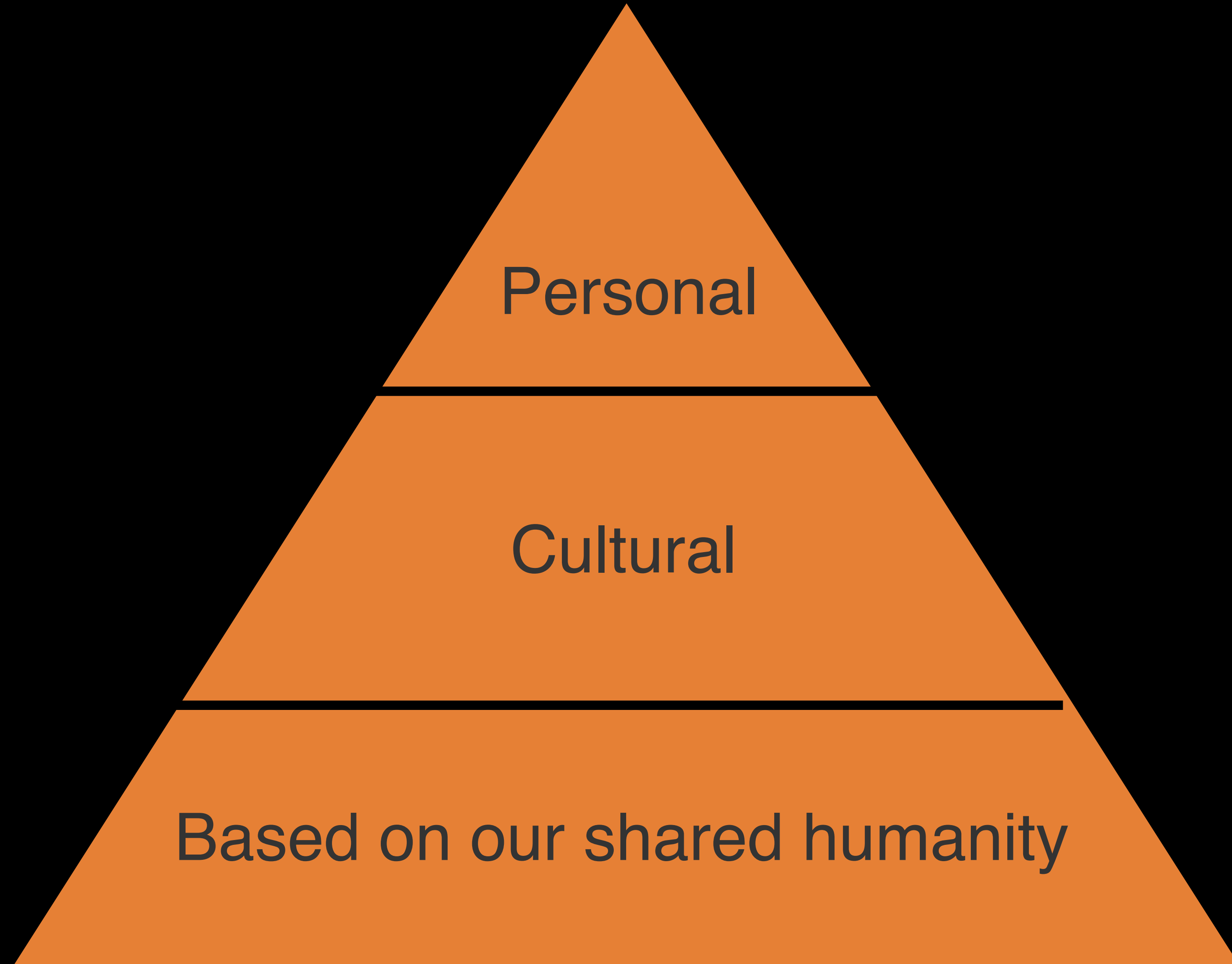


“Before life began, nothing was valuable. But then life arose and began to value – not because it was recognizing anything, but because creatures who valued (certain things in particular) tended to survive.”

- Sharon Street, 2006



# Sources of meaningfulness





**GRAND CALLING**

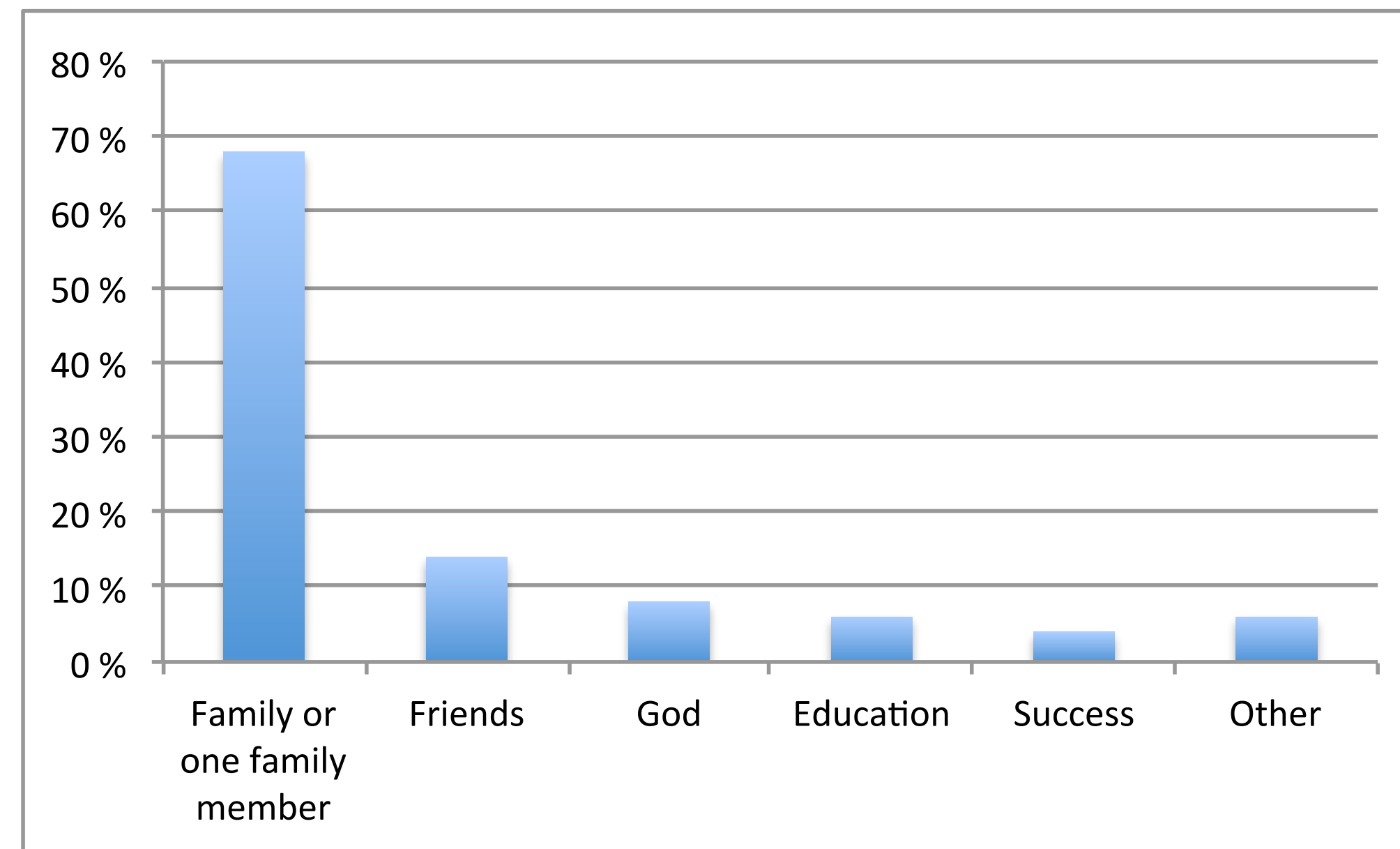
**VS.**

**MEANINGFUL EVERYDAY MOMENTS**



# Relationships

**'Pick the one thing that makes life most meaningful for you and describe why you selected it.'**



**Source:** Lambert, N. M., Stillman, T. F., Baumeister, R. F., Fincham, F. D., Hicks, J. A., & Graham, S. M. (2010). Family as a salient source of meaning in young adulthood. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 5(5), 367–376.



# Control group

HOME SUBJECTS GROUPS RICE! SIGN UP LOGIN ABOUT SPREAD THE WORD ENGLISH ▾

login | sign up (track your totals, join and create groups and more)

English Vocabulary New Subjects! ▶

**peek** means: 🔊

quick look

carpet

mom

woods

### How to Play

- Click on the right answer in the middle of this page.
- If you get it right, you get a harder question. If you get it wrong, you get an easier question.

WARNING: This game may make you smarter. It may improve your speaking, writing, thinking, grades, job performance... [\(more\)](#)



# Contribution group

F R E E  
**Rice** 2.0

HOME SUBJECTS GROUPS RICE! SIGN UP LOGIN ABOUT SPREAD THE WORD ENGLISH ▾

For each answer you get right, we donate 10 grains of rice through the World Food Programme to help end hunger

login | sign up (track your totals, join and create groups and more)

English Vocabulary New Subjects! ▶

**peek** means: 🔊

quick look

carpet

mom

woods

**7103810 grains of rice donated yesterday.**  
**Over 100 billion grains donated to date (see [totals](#)).**

### How to Play

- Click on the right answer in the middle of this page.
- If you get it right, you get a harder question. If you get it wrong, you get an easier question.
- For each answer you get right, we donate 10 grains of rice to the [United Nations World Food Program](#).

WARNING: This game may make you smarter. It may improve your speaking, writing, thinking, grades, job performance... [\(more\)](#)

1 right = 10 grains

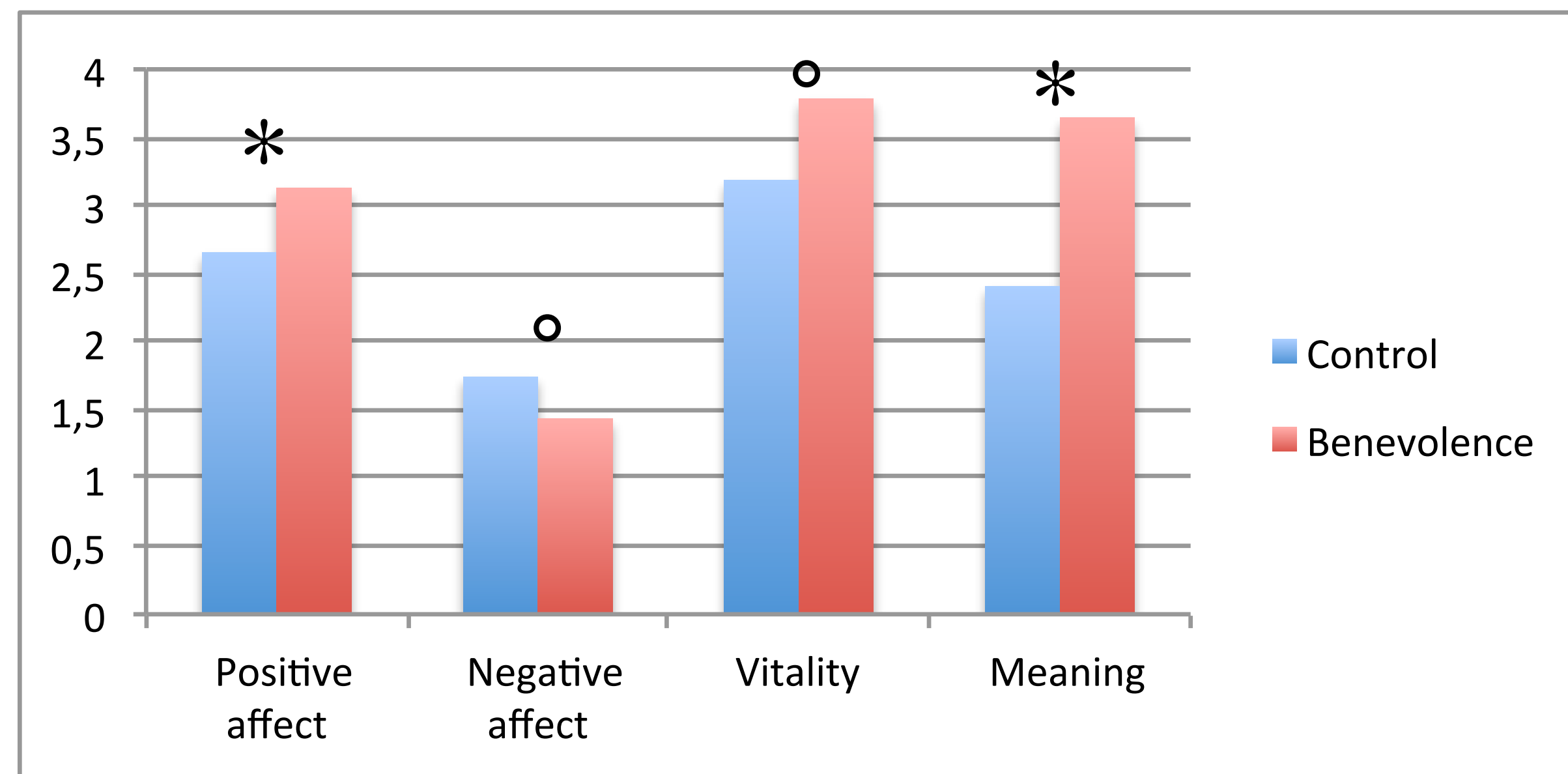
5 right = 50 grains

Play and feed hungry people



## Prosocial behavior increases well-being and vitality even without contact with the beneficiary: Causal and behavioral evidence

Frank Martela<sup>1</sup>  · Richard M. Ryan<sup>2,3</sup>



\* =  $p > .05$   
o =  $p > .10$



# Small acts of kindness

- 108 university employees in US
- Two weeks daily diary study

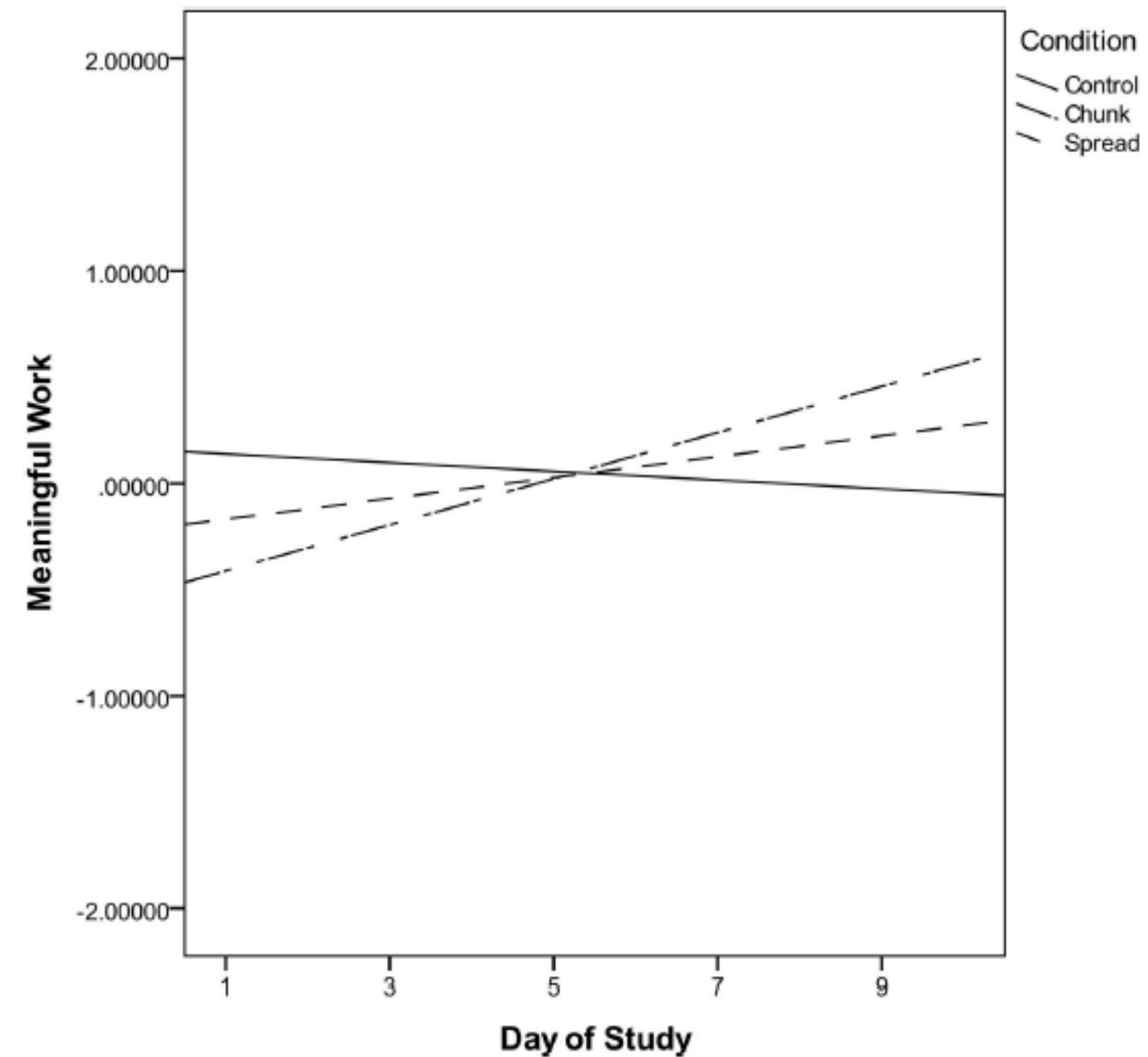


Figure 3. Experimental group moderating the relation between time and daily meaningful work. Meaningful work is in z scores.

**Source:** Allan, B. A., Duffy, R. D., & Collisson, B. (2017). Helping Others Increases Meaningful Work: Evidence From Three Experiments. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, Advance online publication.



Contribution

**Connecting  
with others**

Relatedness



**Meaning in life is  
about making  
yourself meaningful  
to other people.**

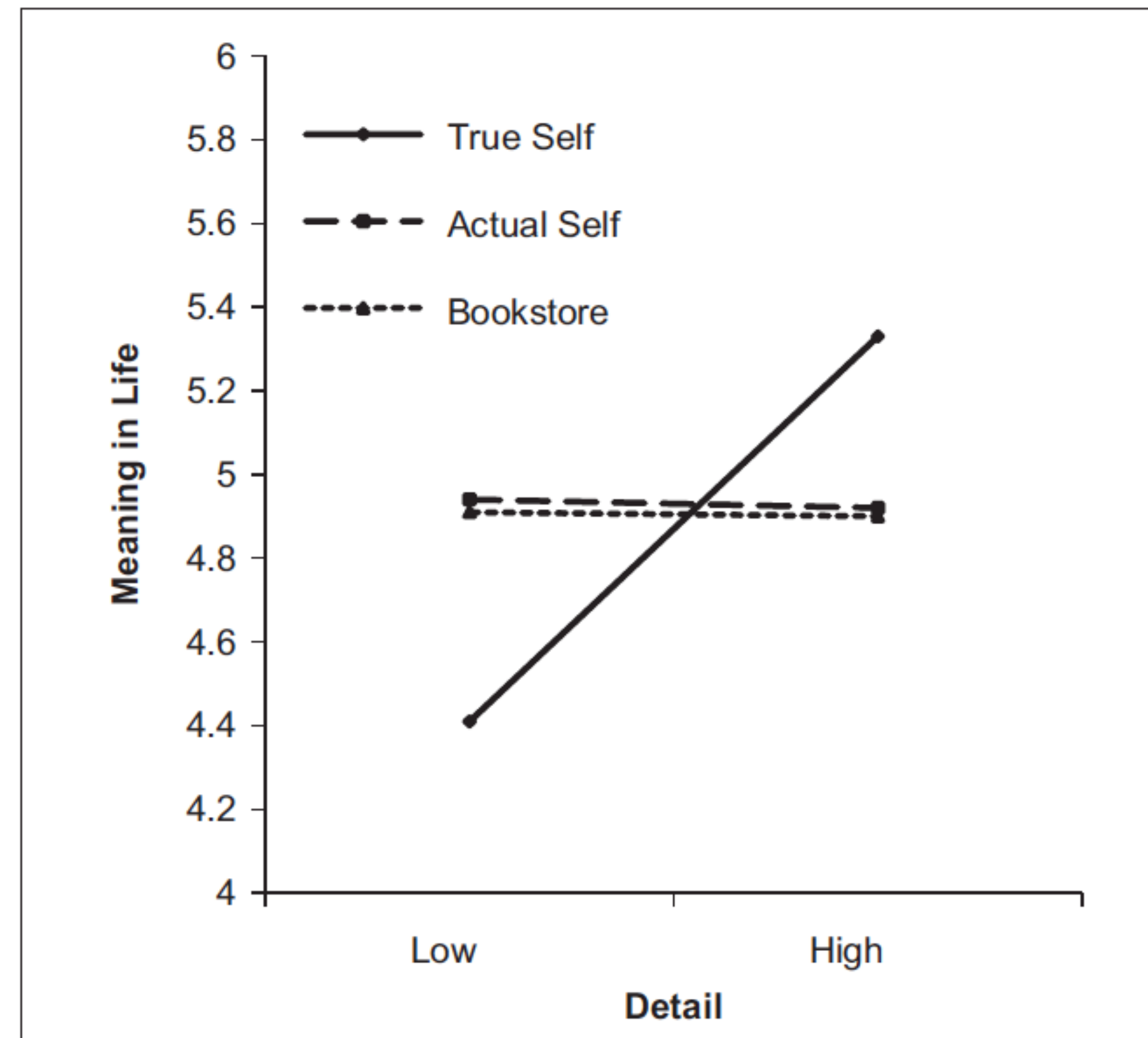








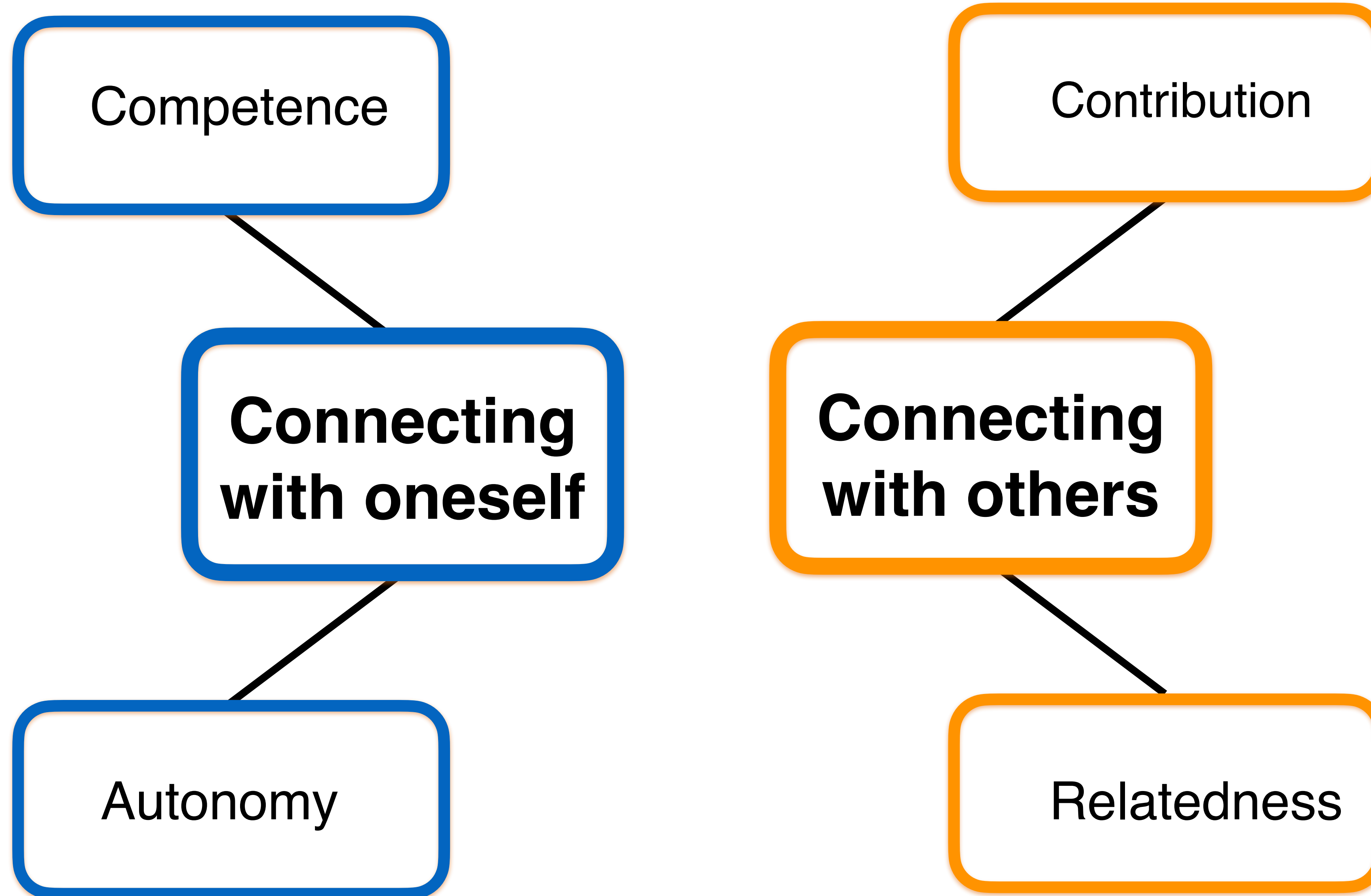
# Self-expression as a source of meaning



**Figure 1.** Meaning in life as a function of writing condition, Study 1

**Source:** Schlegel, R. J., Hicks, J. A., King, L. A., & Arndt, J. (2011). Feeling like you know who you are: Perceived true self-knowledge and meaning in life. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 37(6), 745–756.





**Lähde:** Martela, F., Ryan, R. M., & Steger, M. F. (2017).  
Meaningfulness as satisfaction of autonomy,  
competence, relatedness, and beneficence. *Journal of  
Happiness Studies*



**PRIZING = IMPLICITLY HELD MOTIVATIONAL  
PREFERENCES**

**APPRAISING = CONSCIOUSLY UPHELD  
VALUES**

**WE CAN IN PRINCIPLE CONSCIOUSLY VALUE WHATEVER  
WE CHOOSE TO VALUE**

**HOWEVER,**

**IT IS MOST ADVISABLE TO VALUE WHAT WE ARE PRONE TO  
VALUE ANYWAYS**



**Meaning in life is  
about**

**making things  
meaningful to  
you**

**in a way that**

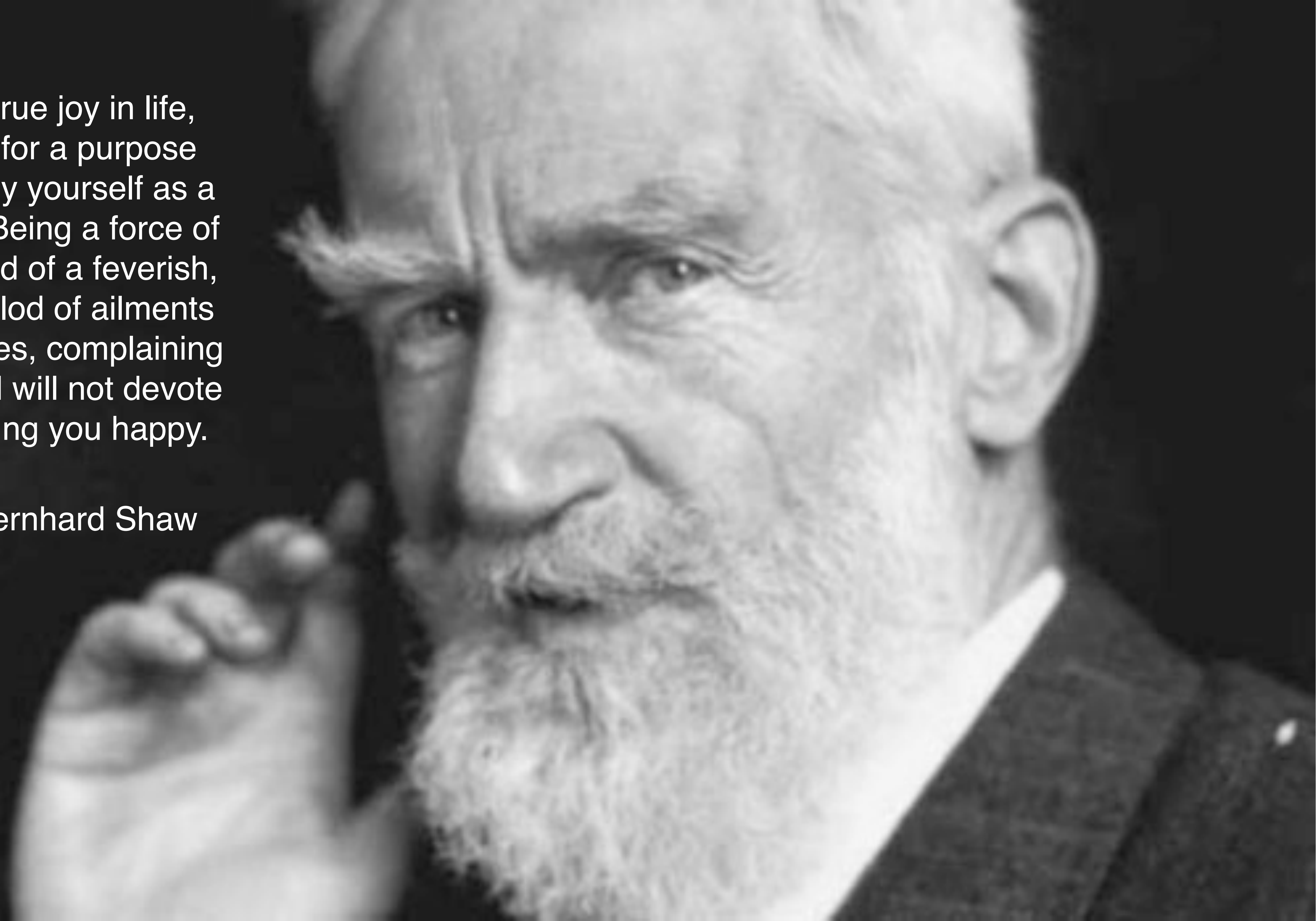
**makes yourself  
meaningful to  
other people**





This is the true joy in life,  
being used for a purpose  
recognized by yourself as a  
mighty one. Being a force of  
nature instead of a feverish,  
selfish little clod of ailments  
and grievances, complaining  
that the world will not devote  
itself to making you happy.

- George Bernhard Shaw







**THANK YOU!**

[frank.martela@gmail.com](mailto:frank.martela@gmail.com)



# Life as a project / Life as a story

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Life is music.

So let's sing and dance as long as the music is  
still playing!