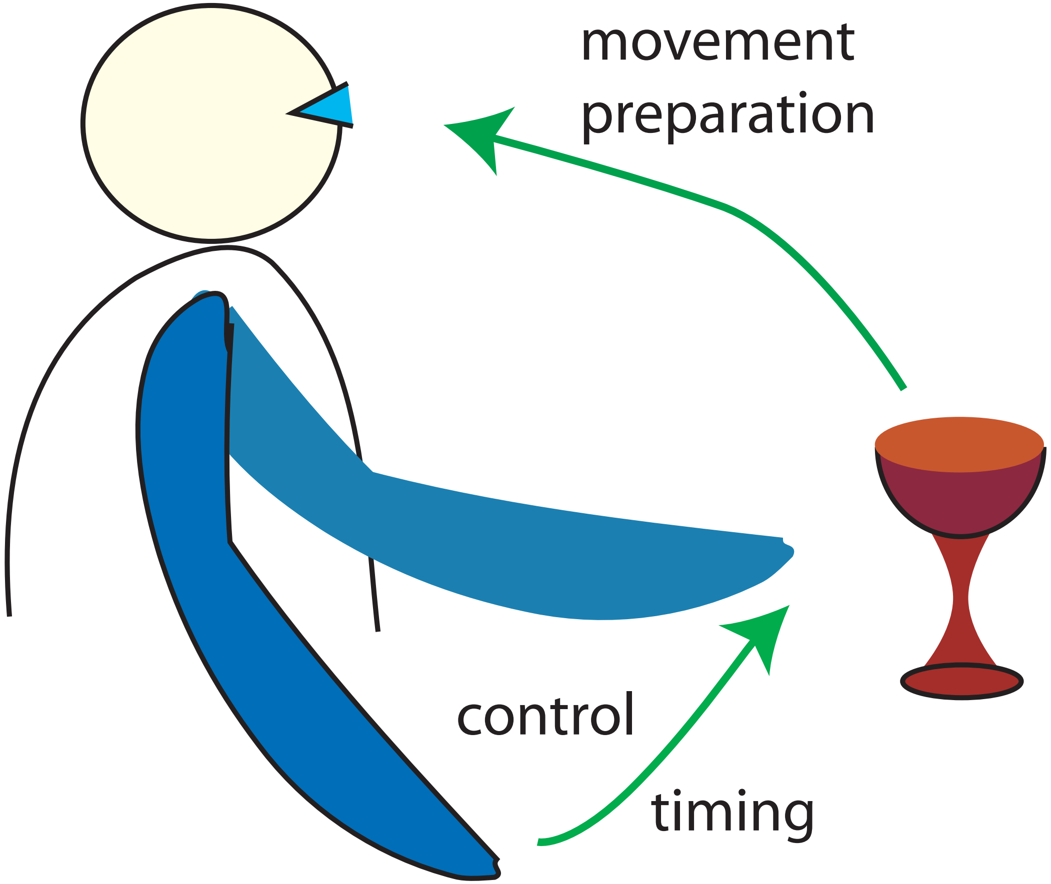
Motor control and muscles

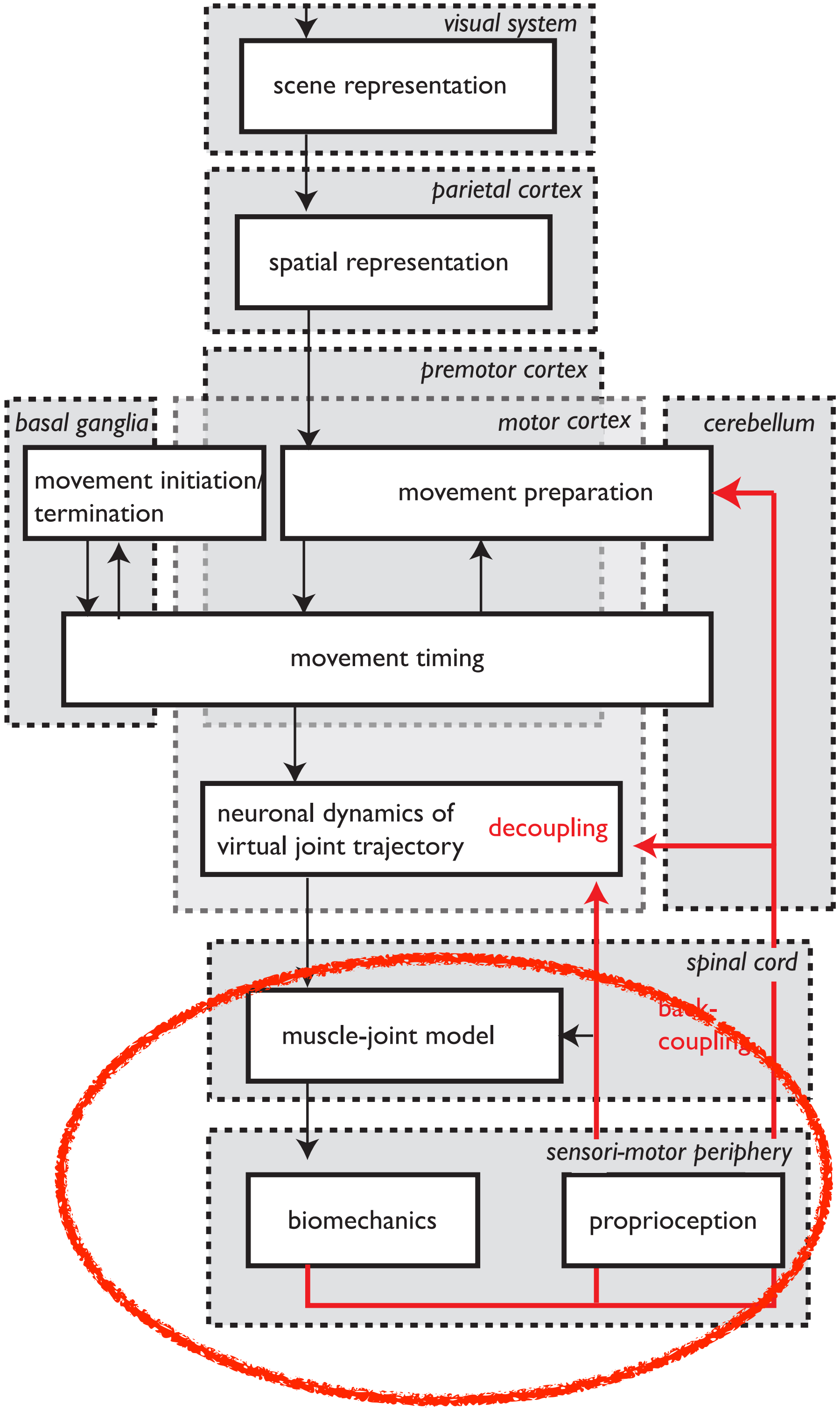
Gregor Schöner

What is entailed in generating an object-oriented movement?

- scene and object perception
- movement preparation
- movement initiation and termination
- movement timing and coordination
- motor control
- degree of freedom problem



motor control



visual system

scene representation

parietal cortex

spatial representation

premotor cortex

basal ganglia

motor cortex

cerebellum

movement initiation/ termination

movement preparation

movement timing

neuronal dynamics of virtual joint trajectory

decoupling

spinal cord

muscle-joint model

back-coupling

sensori-motor periphery

biomechanics

proprioception

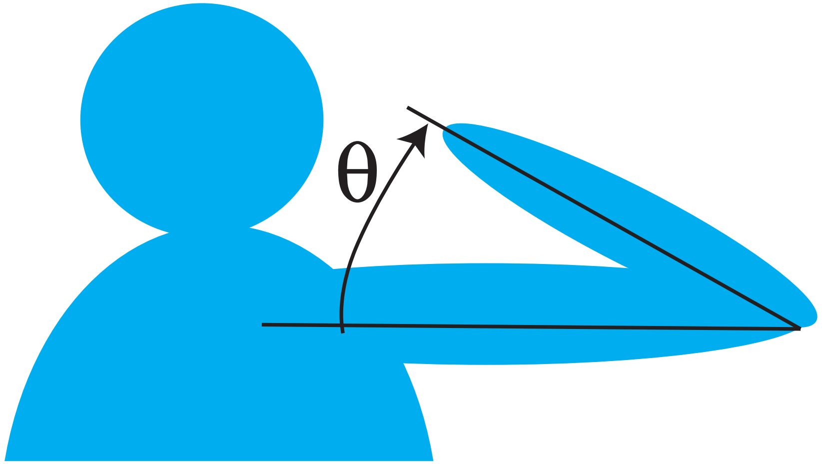
[Martin, Scholz, Schöner. *Neural Computation* 21, 1371–1414 (2009)]

motor control

- how are forces generated that move effectors?
- by muscles, obviously...
- ... and by gravity
- ... and by inertia...

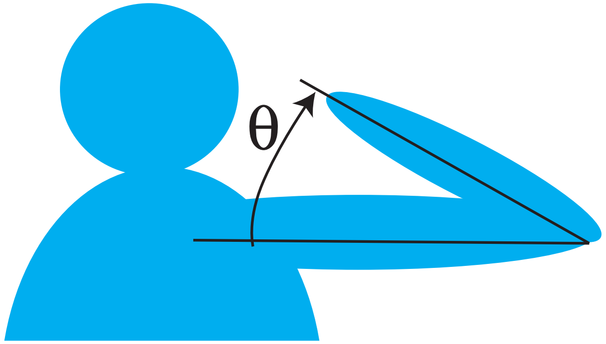
motor control

- posture of the elbow joint with the arm in horizontal position



what about the elbow is "controlled"?

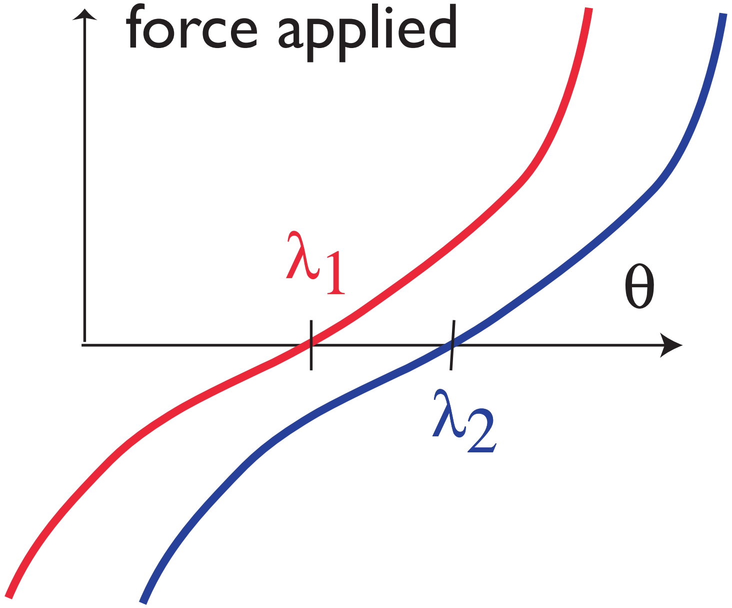
- the elbow does not behave like a passive mechanical system with a free joint at the elbow: $J\ddot{\theta} = 0$
- where J is inertial moment of forearm (if upper arm is held fixed)
- Instead, the elbow resists, when pushed => there is active control= stabilization of the joint



=>experiment

the mass spring model

- Anatol Feldman has figured out, what the macroscopic description of this stabilization is
- the invariant characteristic



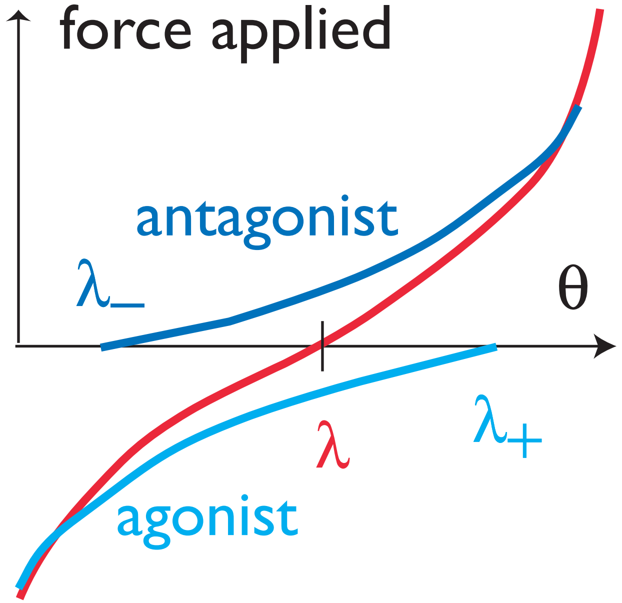
the mass-spring model

- this is an elastic force (because it is proportional to position)
- there is also a viscous component (resistance depends on joint velocity)

$$J\ddot{\theta} = \underset{\substack{\uparrow \\ \text{active torques generated by the muscle}}}{\boxed{-k(\theta-\lambda)-\mu\dot{\theta}}}$$

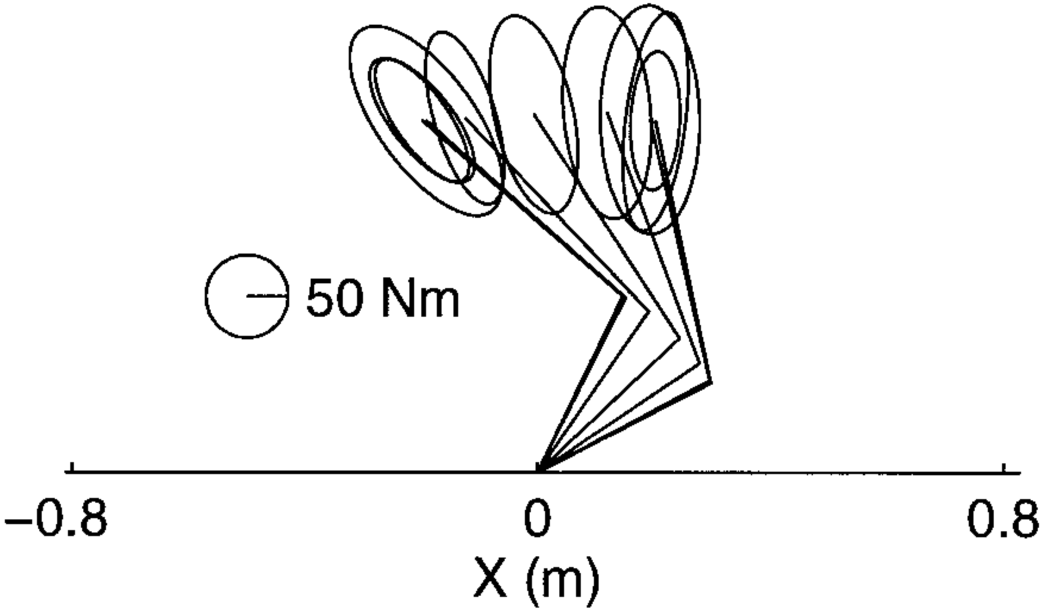
agonist-antagonist action

- one lambda per muscle
- tested on muscles detached at one end
- co-contraction controls stiffness



stiffness

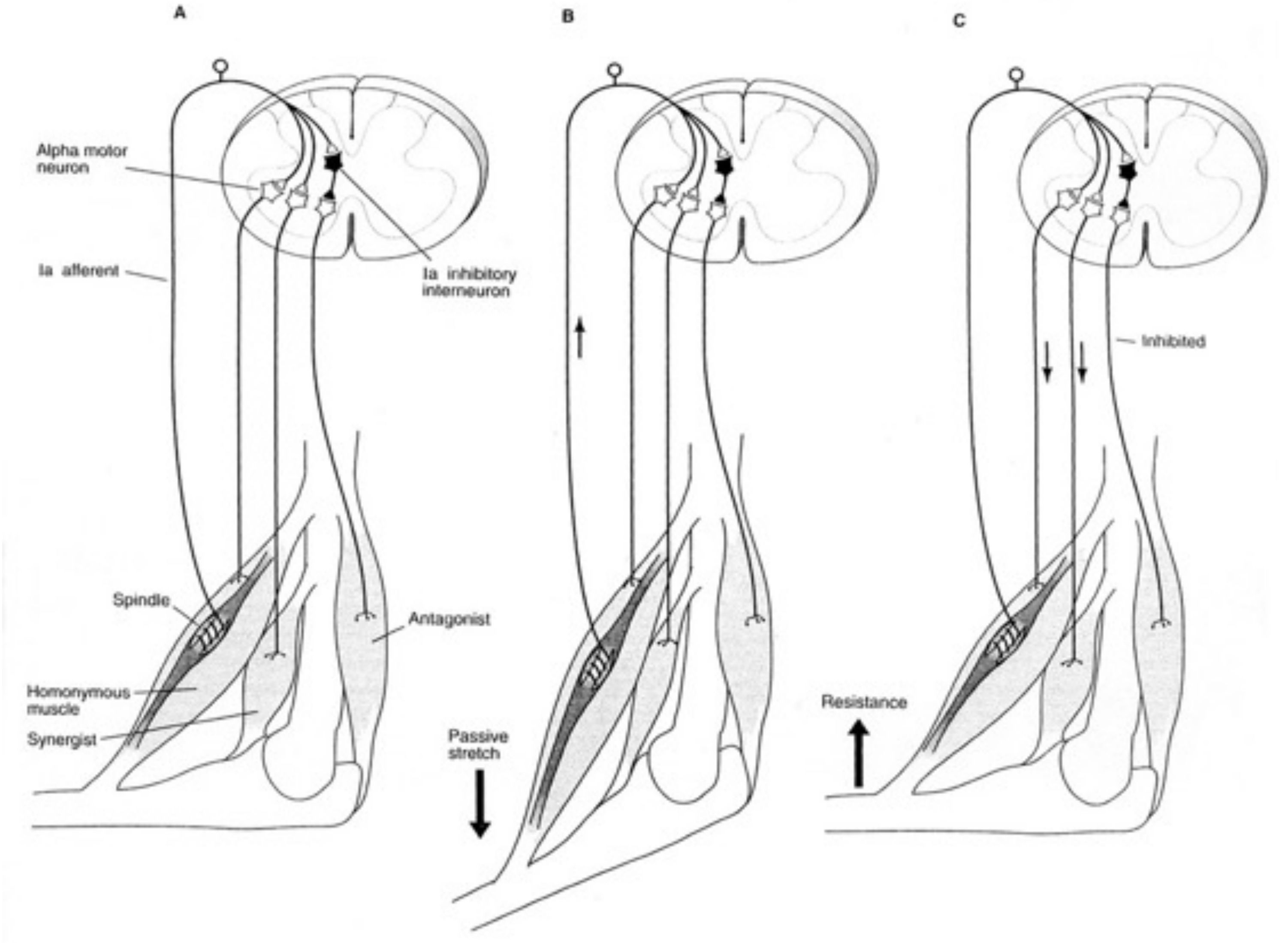
- the stiffness, k, can be measured from perturbations
- the viscosity "mu" is more difficult to determine



$$J\ddot{\theta} = -k(\theta - \lambda) - \mu\dot{\theta}$$

neural basis of EP model: spinal reflex loops

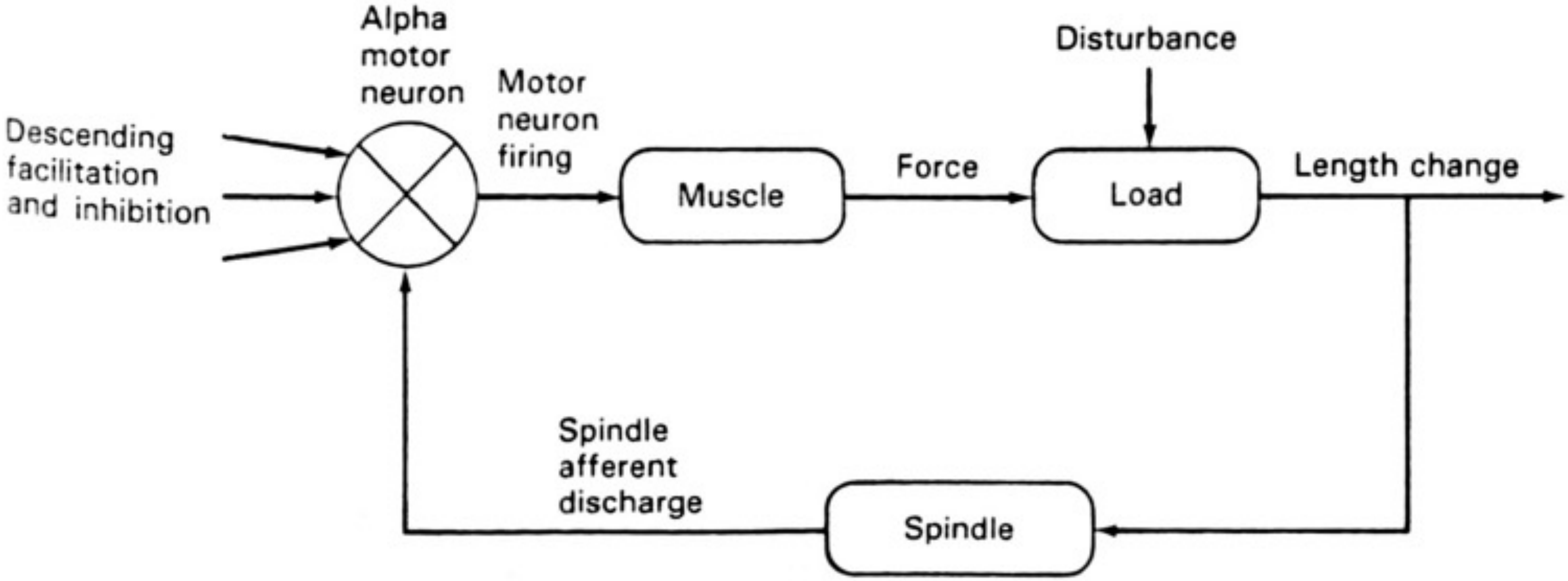
- alpha-gamma reflex loop generates the stretch reflex



[Kandel, Schartz, Jessell, Fig. 37-11]

spinal cord: reflex loops

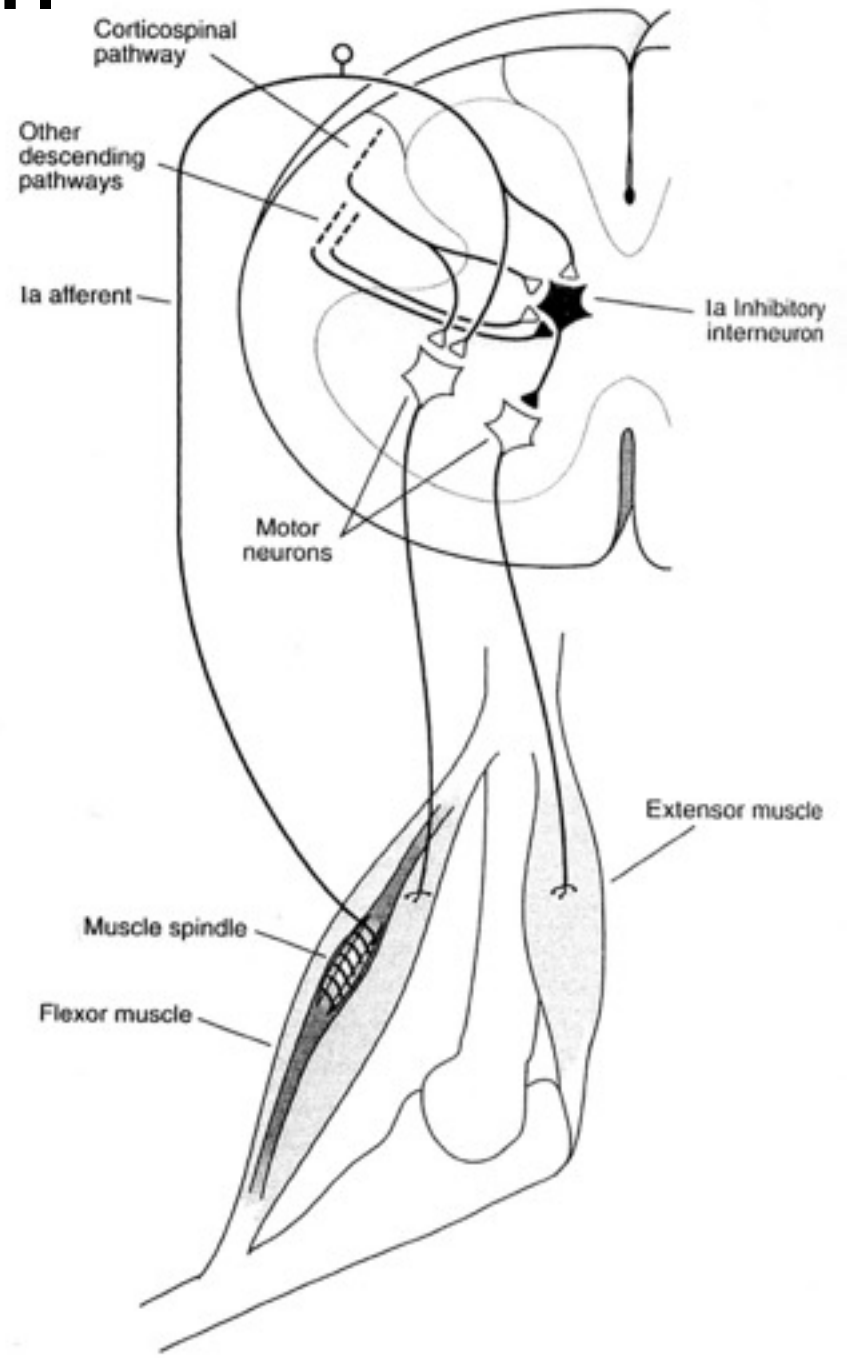
- the stretch reflex acts as a negative feedback loop



[Kandel, Schartz, Jessell, Fig. 31-12]

spinal cord: coordination

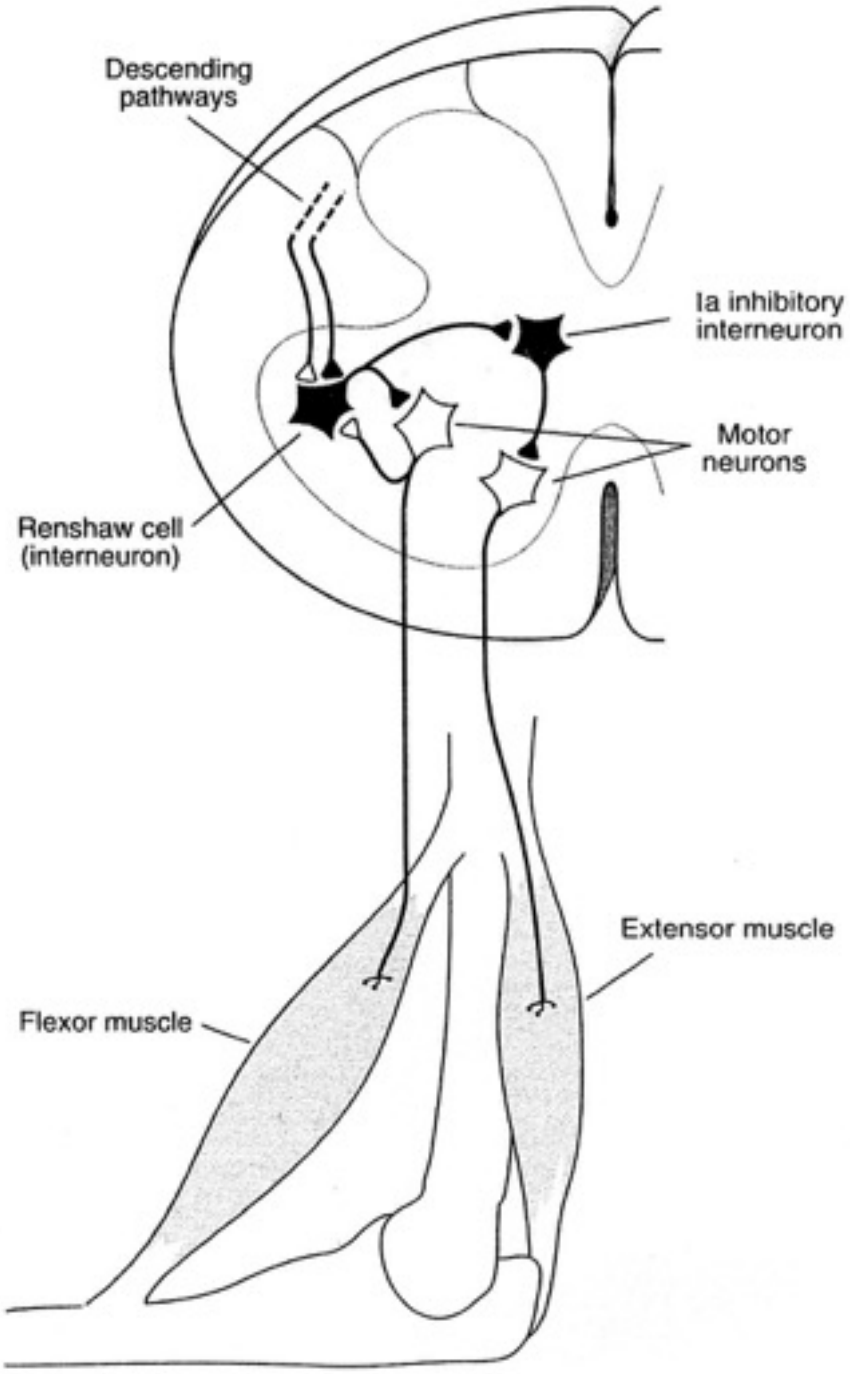
- Ia inhibitory interneuron mediates reciprocal innervation in stretch reflex, leading to automatic relaxation of antagonist on activation of agonist



[Kandel, Schartz, Jessell, Fig. 38-2]

spinal cord: synergies

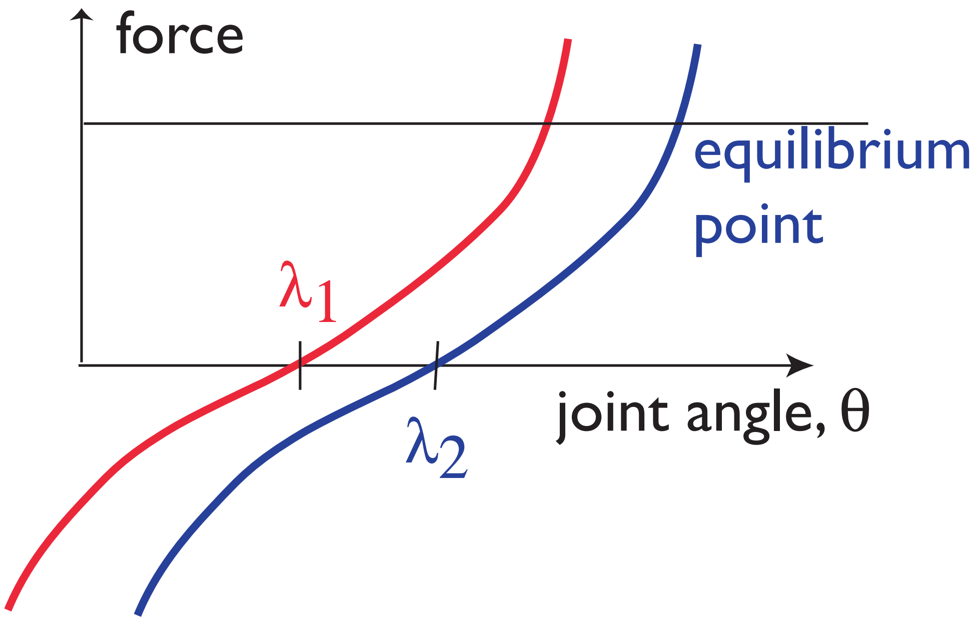
- Renshaw cells produce recurrent inhibition, regulating total activation in local pool of muscles (synergy)



[Kandel, Schartz, Jessell, Fig. 38-3]

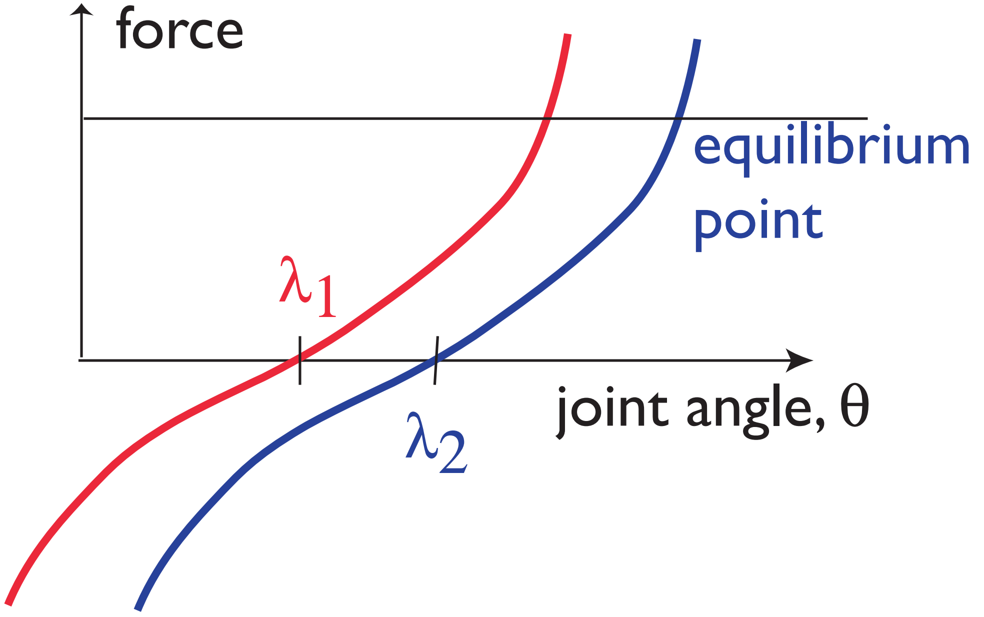
Posture

- muscle-joint systems have an equilibrium point during posture that is stable against transient perturbation



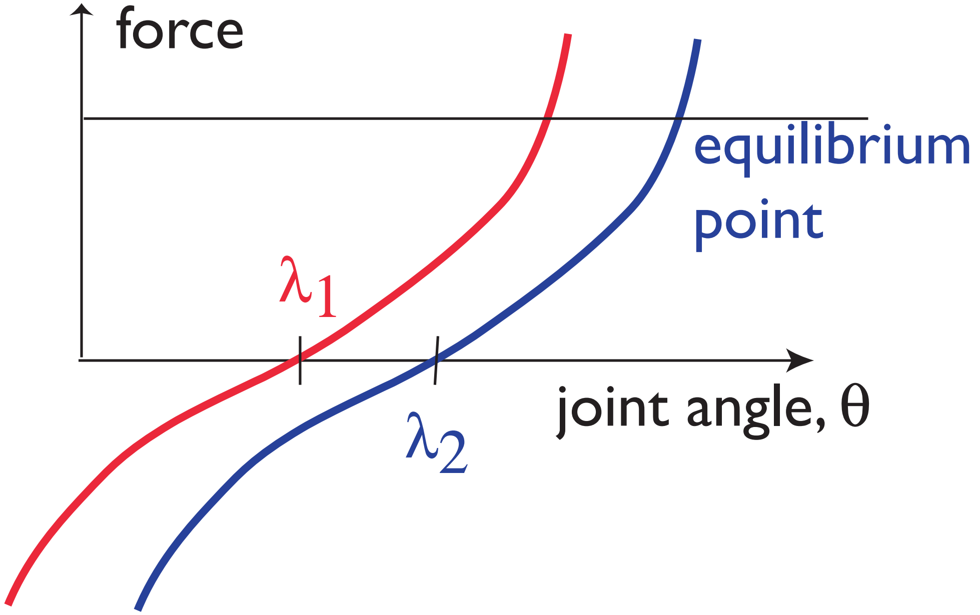
Movement entails change of posture

- that equilibrium point is shifted during movement so that after the movement, the postural state exists around a new combination of muscle lengths/joint configurations



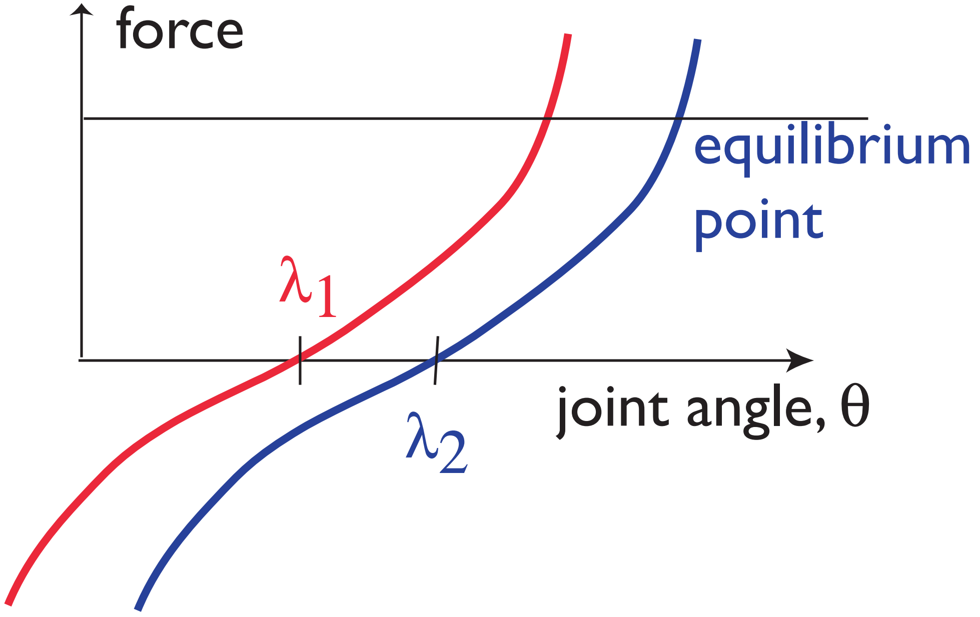
Movement entails change of posture

- most models account for movement in terms of generation of joint torques….
- => the shift of the EP is the single most overlooked fact in control models of movement generation



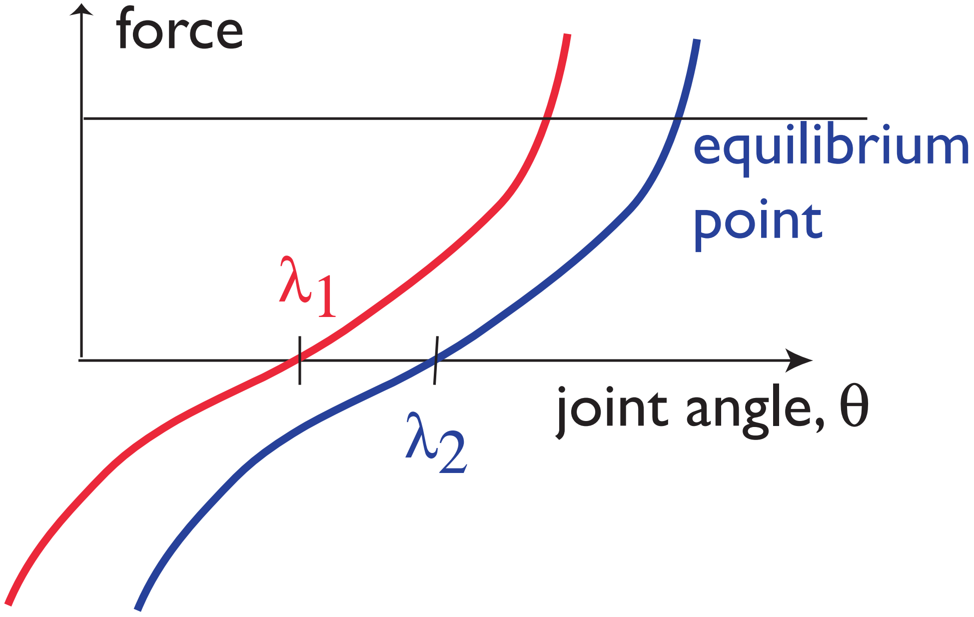
Does the "motor command" specify force/torque?

- no! Because the same descendent neural command generates different levels of force depending on the initial length of



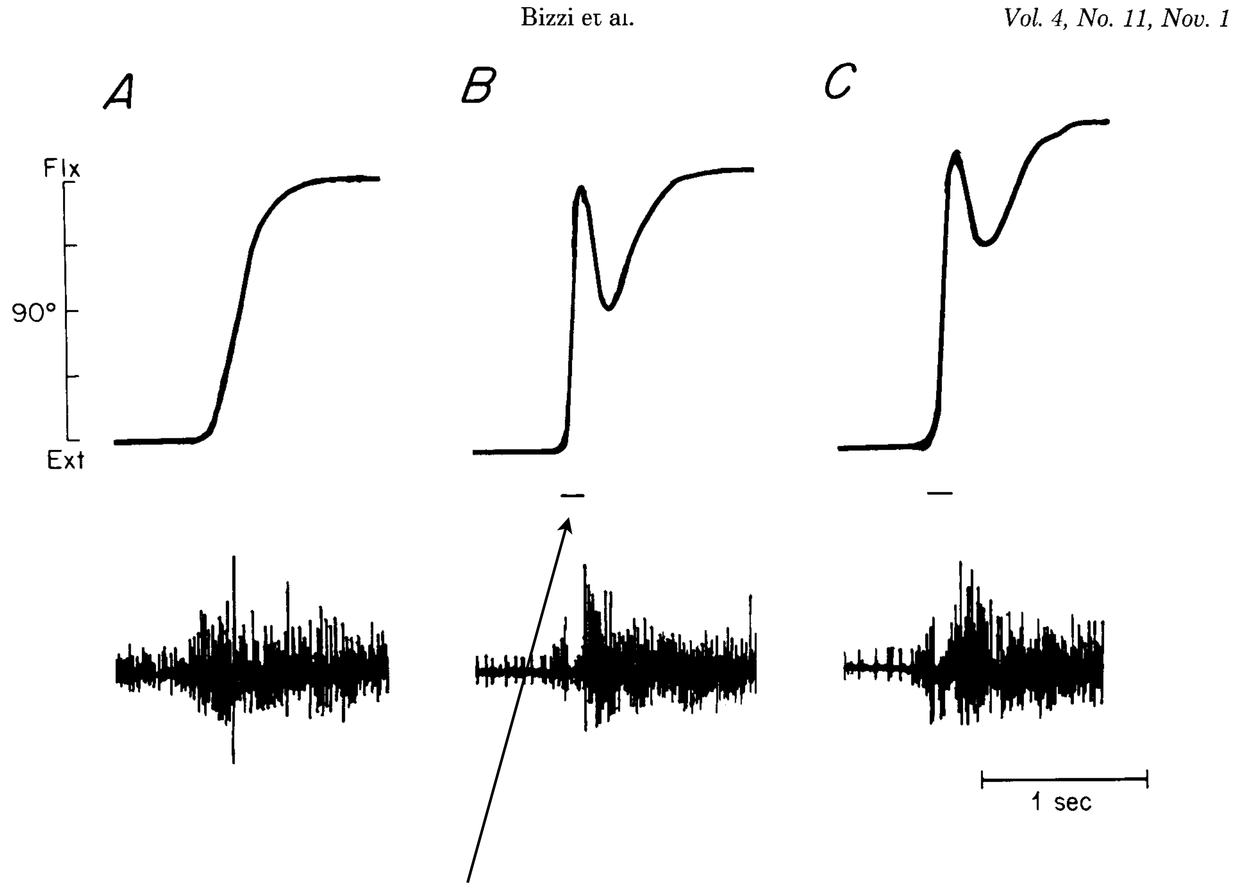
Virtual trajectory

- shifting the equilibrium point is necessary, but is it also sufficient?
- first answer: yes… simple ramp-like trajectories of the "r" command ("virtual trajectories") shift the equilibrium point smoothly in time…



time continuous shift of the equilibrium point

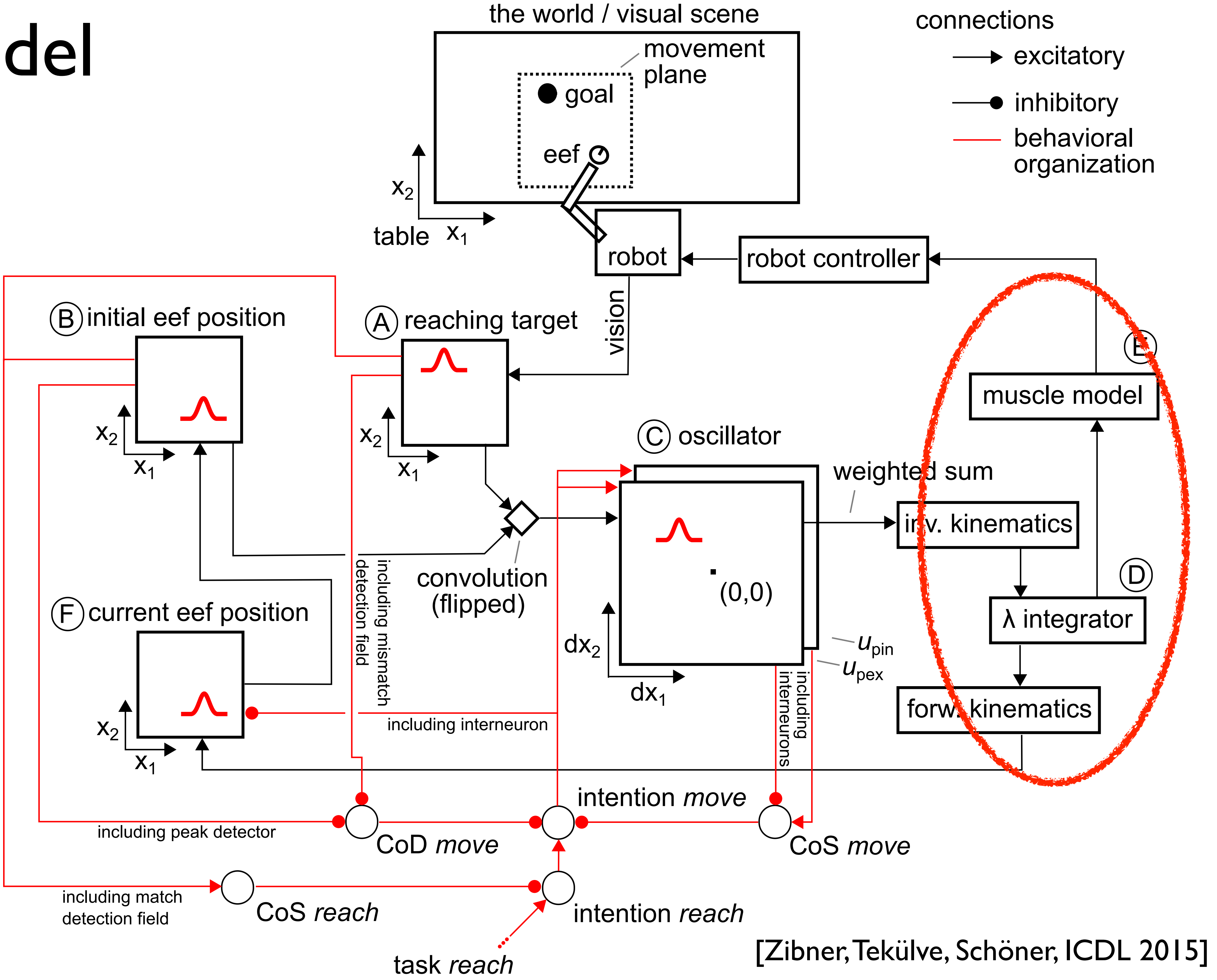
- during movement an external torque moves a joint to the target position
- in the deafferented animal, the joint returns to the "virtual trajectory"



torque

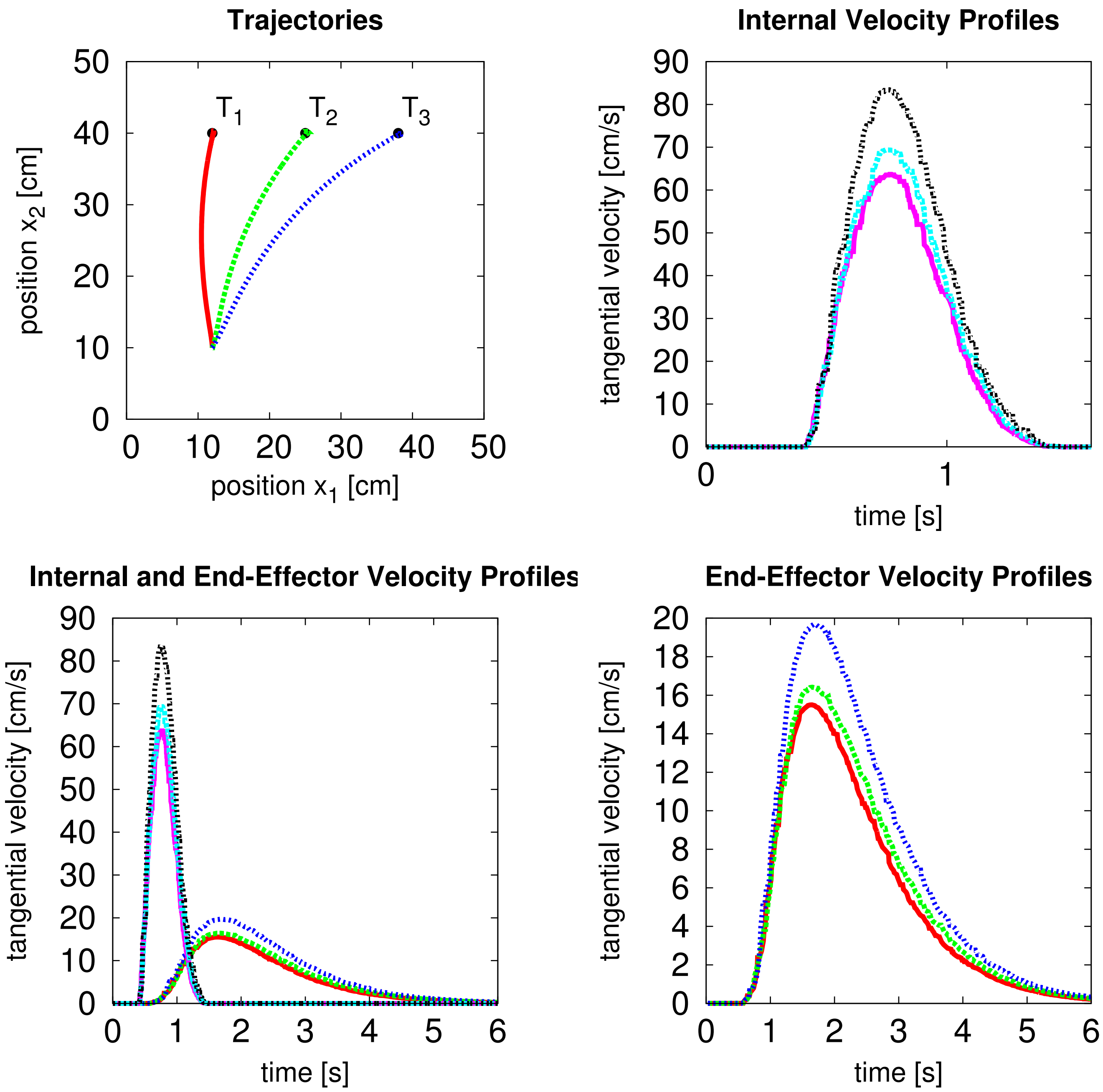
[from Bizzi et al., J. Neurophys. 1984]

Model



[Zibner, Tekülve, Schöner, ICDL 2015]

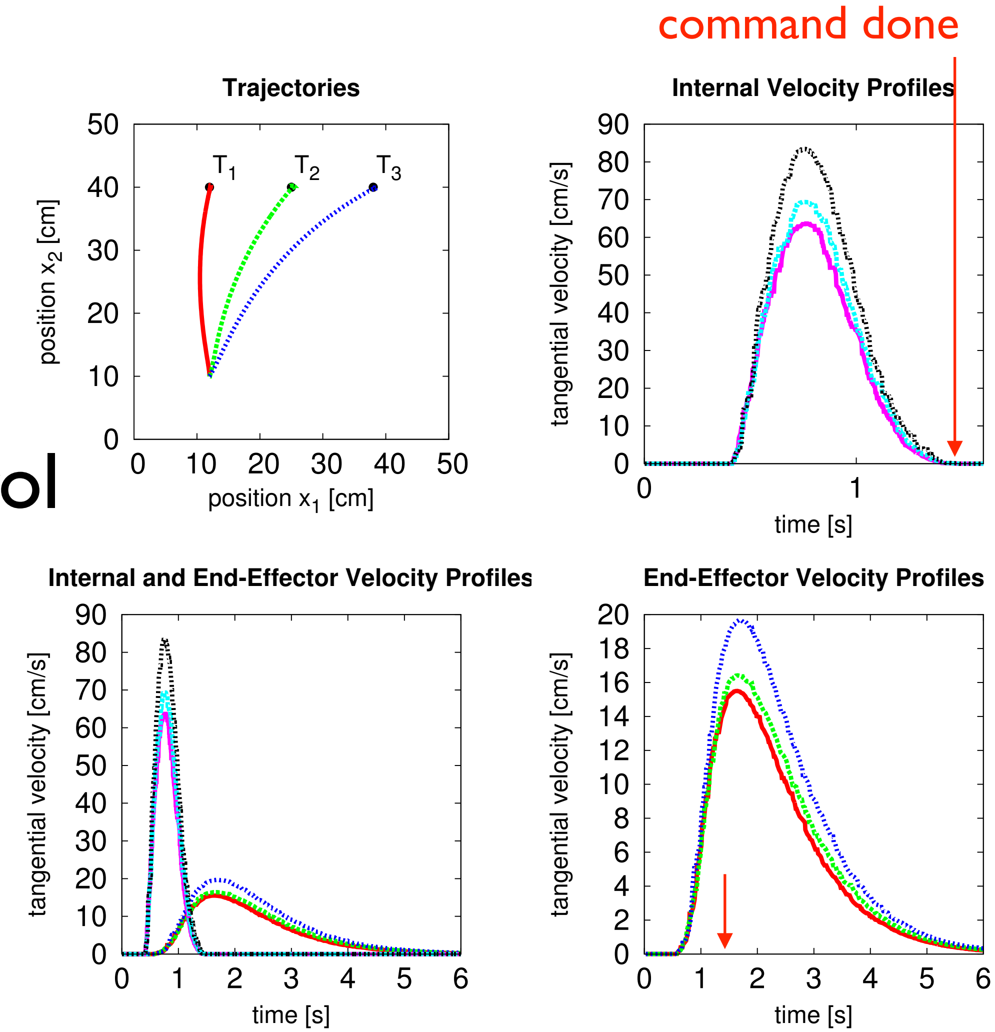
Architecture



[Zibner, Tekülve, Schöner, ICDL 2015]

Architecture

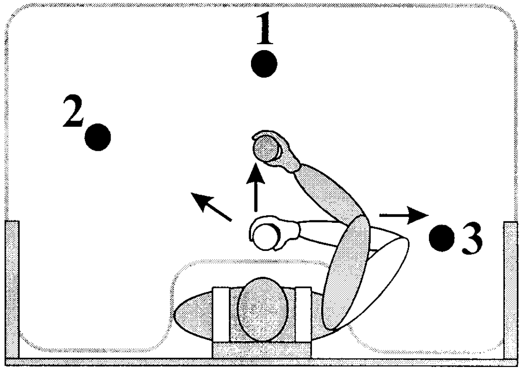
- time delay between “command’ and movement
- broad implications for control
  - for coordination
  - for sequential organization
  - non-isomorphic control signals?

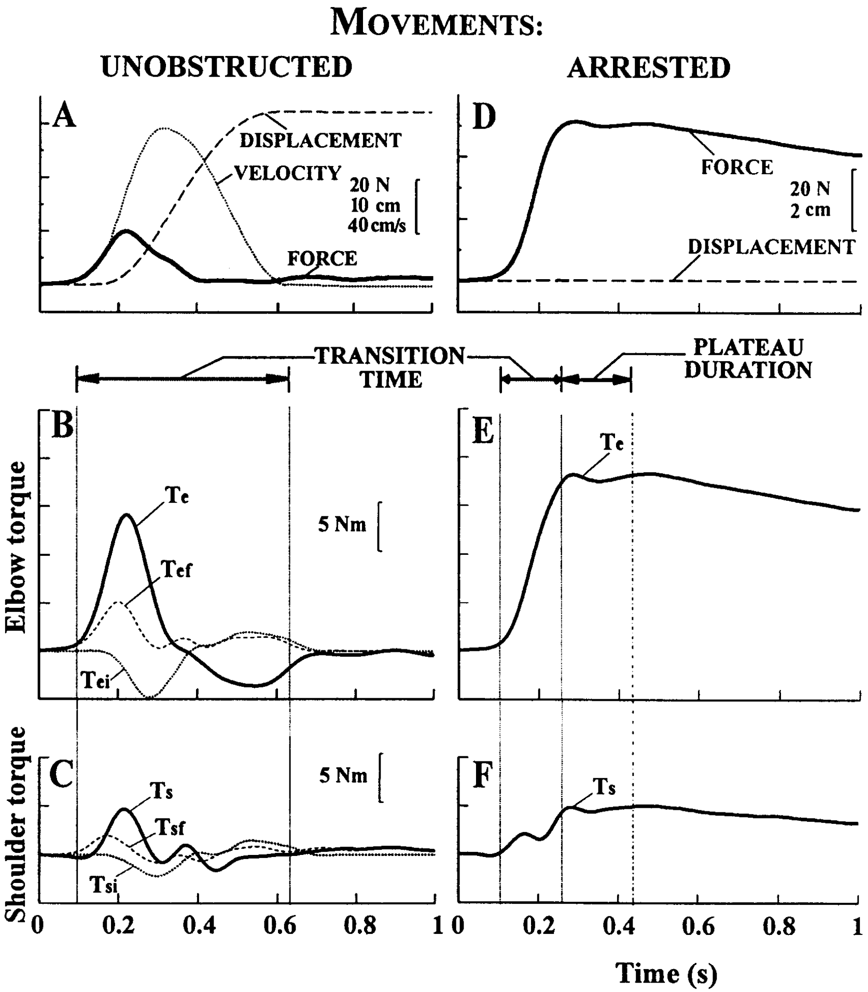


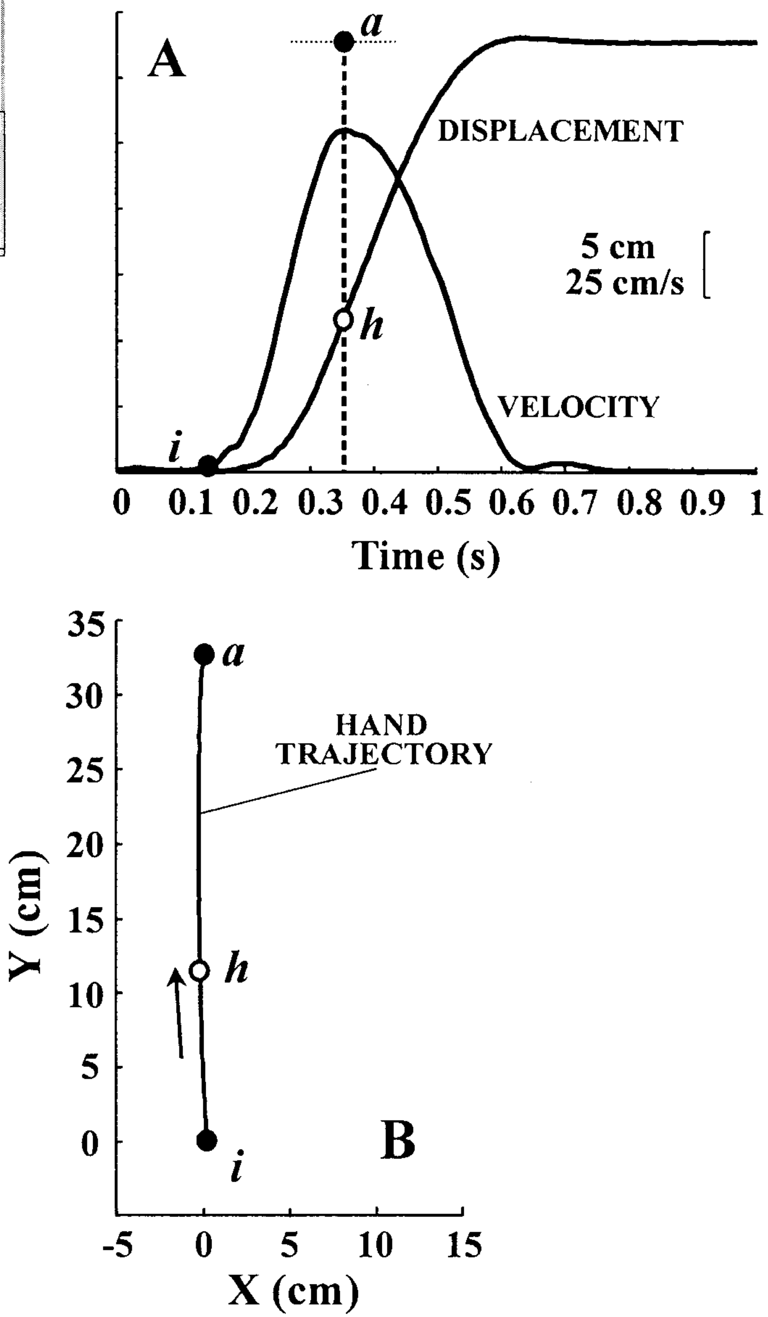
[Zibner, Tekülve, Schöner, ICDL 2015]

Experimental data

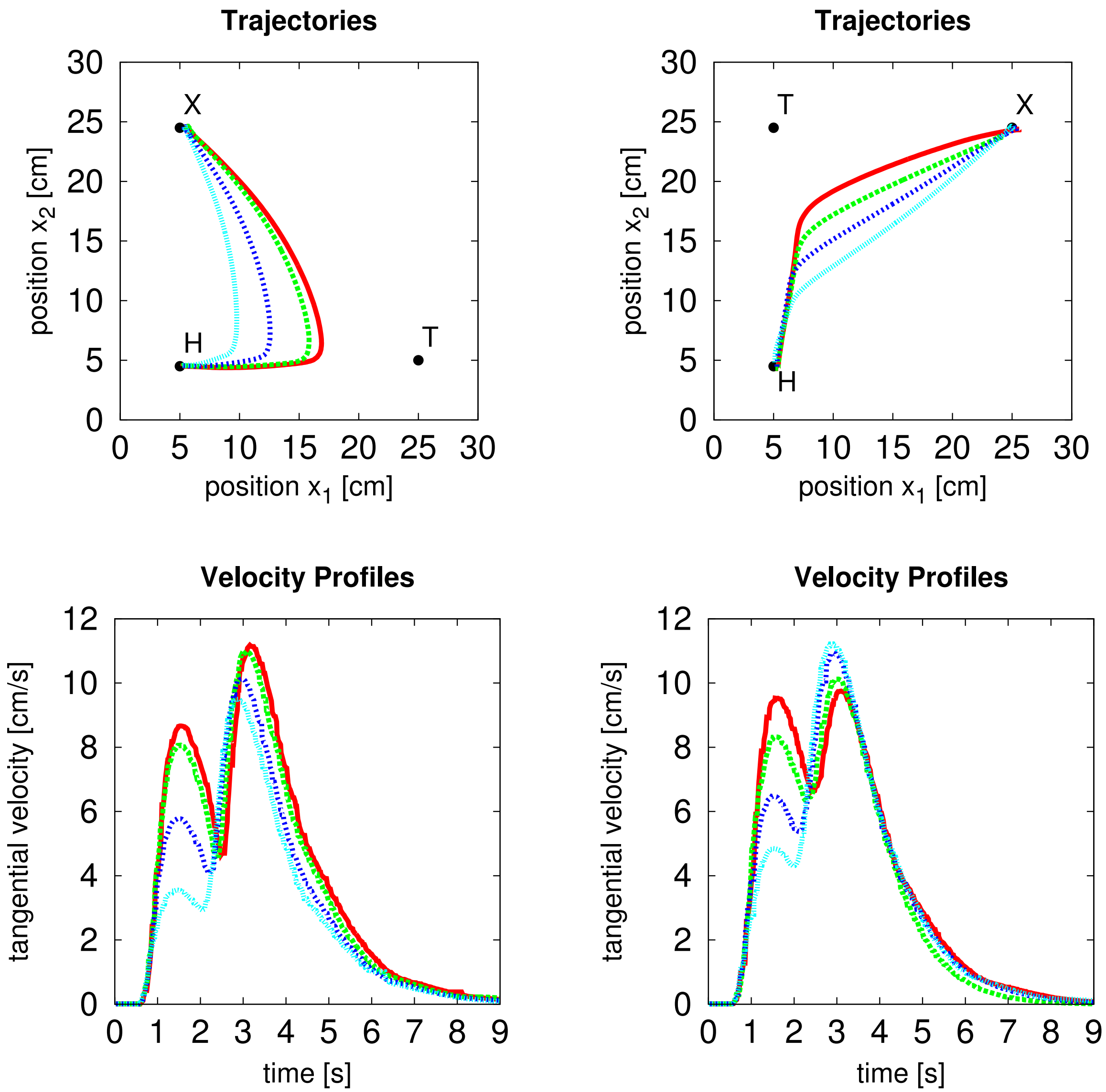
[Ghafouri Feldman, 2001]







Architecture: online updating



[Zibner, Tekülve, Schöner, ICDL 2015]

Virtual trajectory

- This view of movement generation is "quasi-static": the effector "tracks" the attractor that is shifted by the virtual trajectory
- This seems to trivialize the "optimal control" problem = generating the right time course of motor commands so that the effector arrives at the target in the desired time with zero velocity (and has some desired smooth temporal shape).

But

- is this simplification of movement generation as a “quasi-postural” system feasible for fast movements given the relatively soft muscles, the time delays involved in generating torque from muscles, etc. ?
    - the strong time delay between the command and the movement is a hint that this needs investigation

Virtual trajectory

- uses a simplified version of the Gribble Ostry muscle model
- and examines the demands on virtual trajectories (r and c commands) to achieve realistic movement trajectories

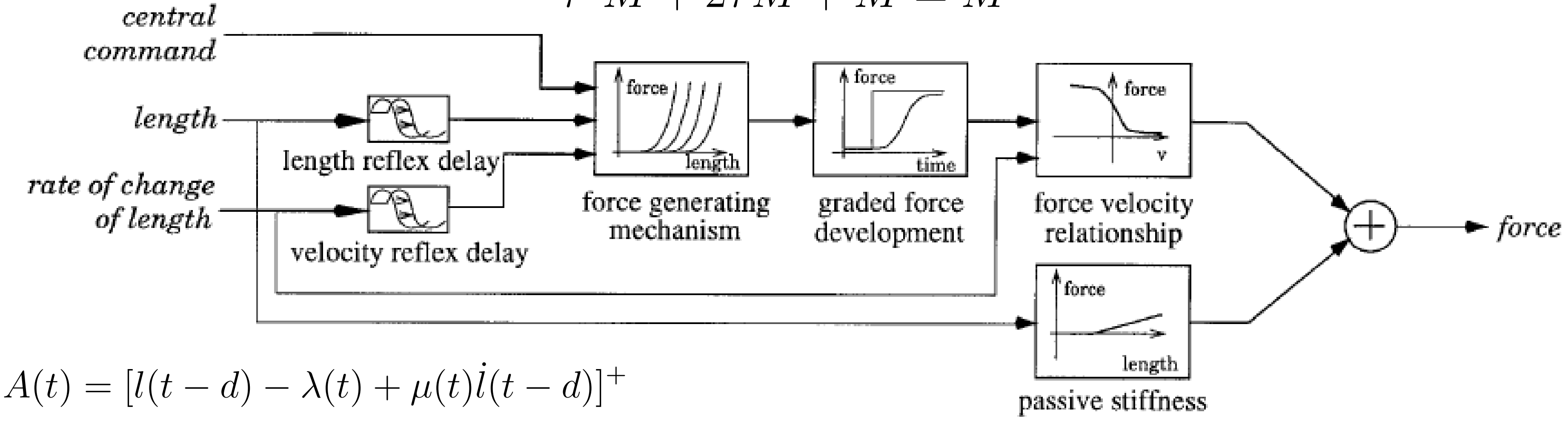
=> Cora Hummert’s master thesis

Muscle model

- to enable analytical treatment, simplify Gribble Ostry: symmetry, neglect passive elastic force

$$\tilde{M} = \rho[\exp(cA) - 1]$$

$$\tau^2 \ddot{M} + 2\tau \dot{M} + M = \tilde{M}$$



$$A(t) = [l(t-d) - \lambda(t) + \mu(t)\dot{l}(t-d)]^+$$

$$F = M[f_1 + f_2 \operatorname{atan}(f_3 + f_4 \dot{l})] + k(l - l_r)$$

Biomechanical dynamics

- … standard…
- bi-articulatory muscles make a proportional contribution

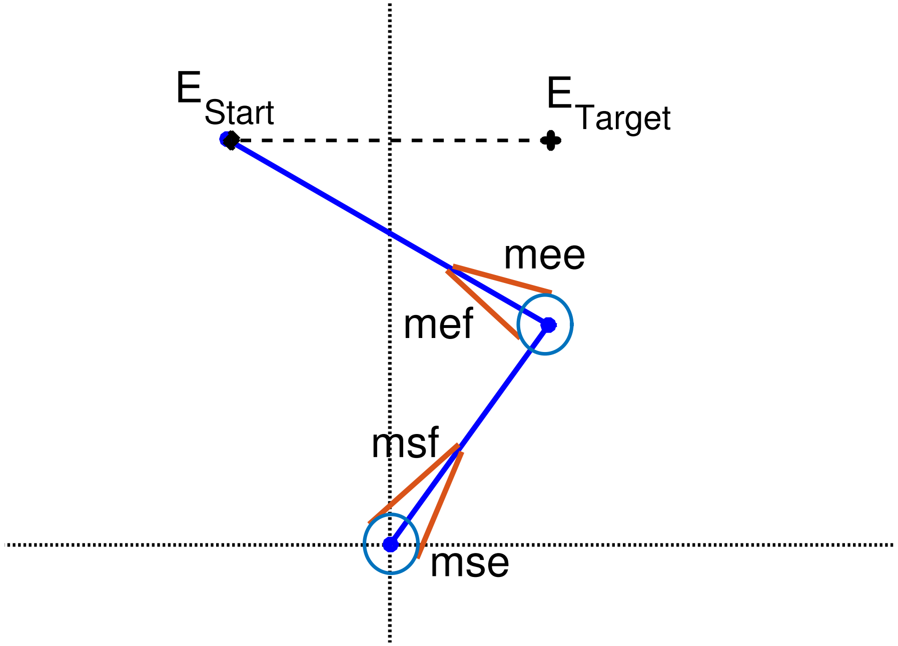
$$T = -H \cdot F$$

with H defined as

$$H = \frac{\partial l}{\partial \theta} = \begin{pmatrix} \frac{\partial l}{\partial \theta_1} & \frac{\partial l}{\partial \theta_2} \end{pmatrix}$$

$$\ddot{\theta} = I^{-1}(T - T_{ext} - C\dot{\theta})$$

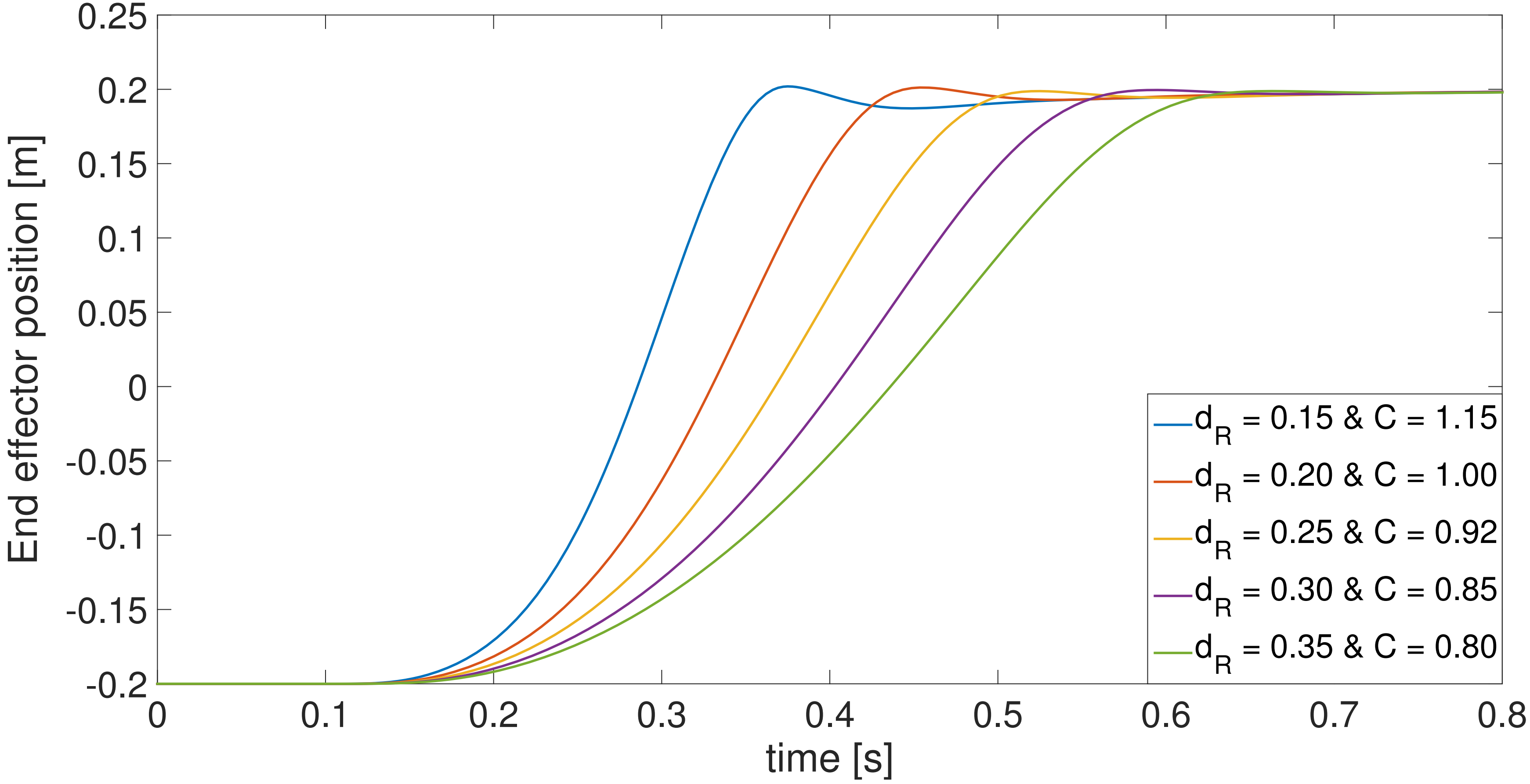
$$x = \cos(\theta_1) \cdot l_1 + \cos(\theta_1 + \theta_2) \cdot l_2$$
$$y = \sin(\theta_1) \cdot l_1 + \sin(\theta_1 + \theta_2) \cdot l_2$$



back to muscle:

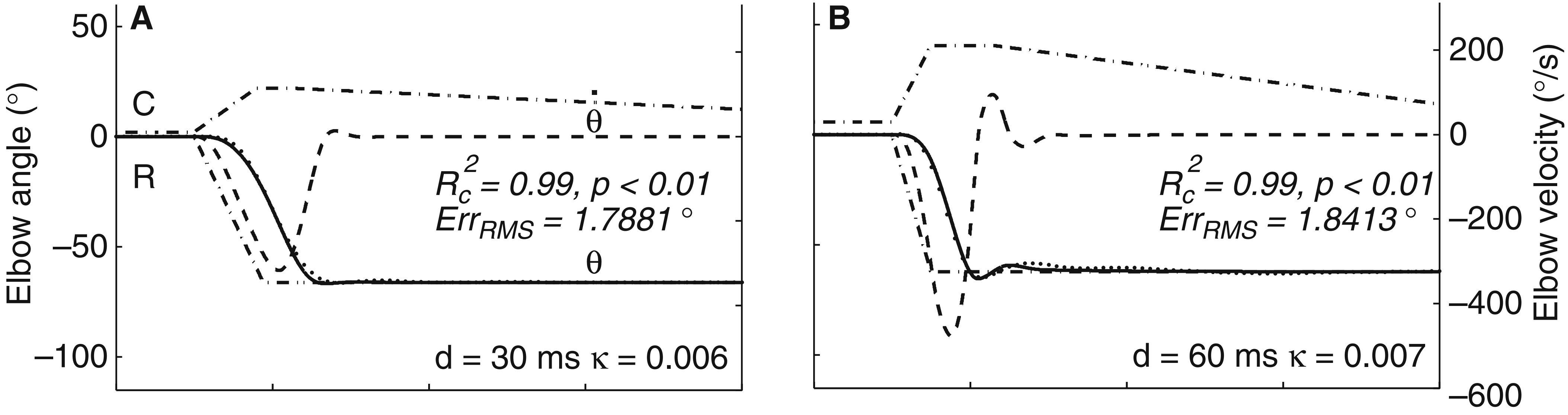
$$l = c + c'\theta + c''\theta^2$$

virtual trajectories: ramps



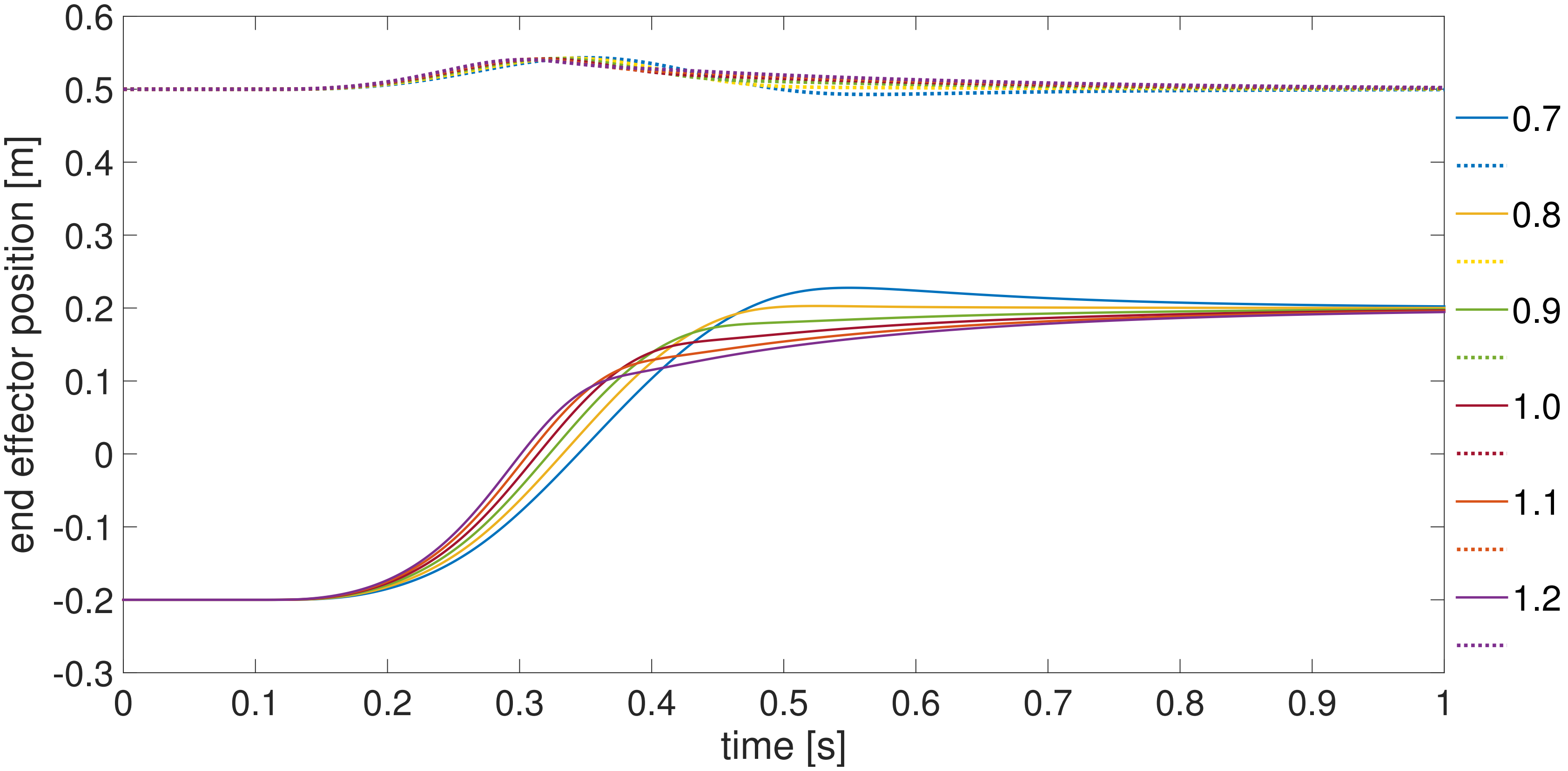
virtual trajectories: ramps

- reproduces Pilon, Feldmann 2006



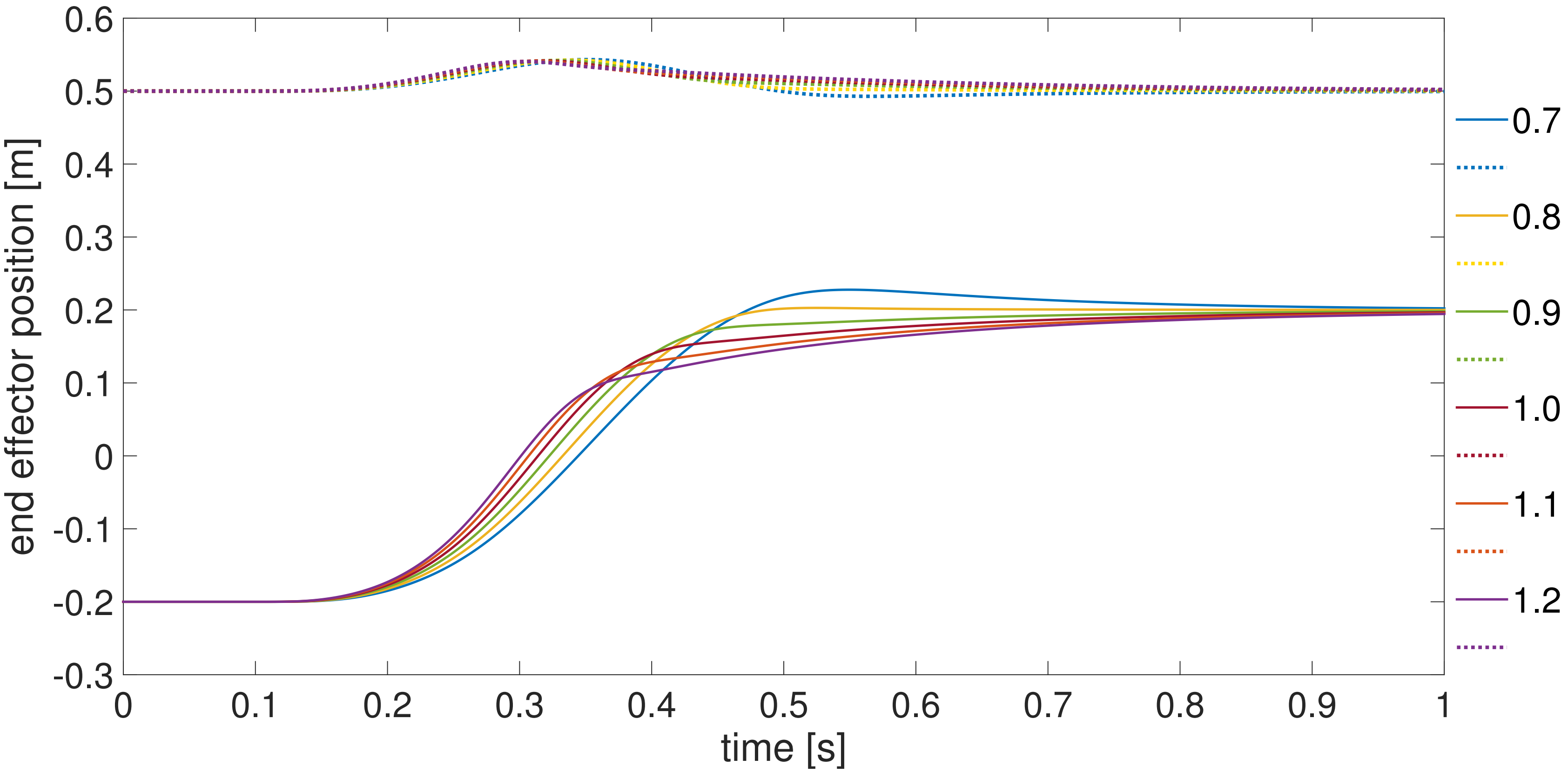
virtual trajectories: ramps

- ramps of "r" command produce realistic movement trajectories only if the co-contraction "c" command is just right



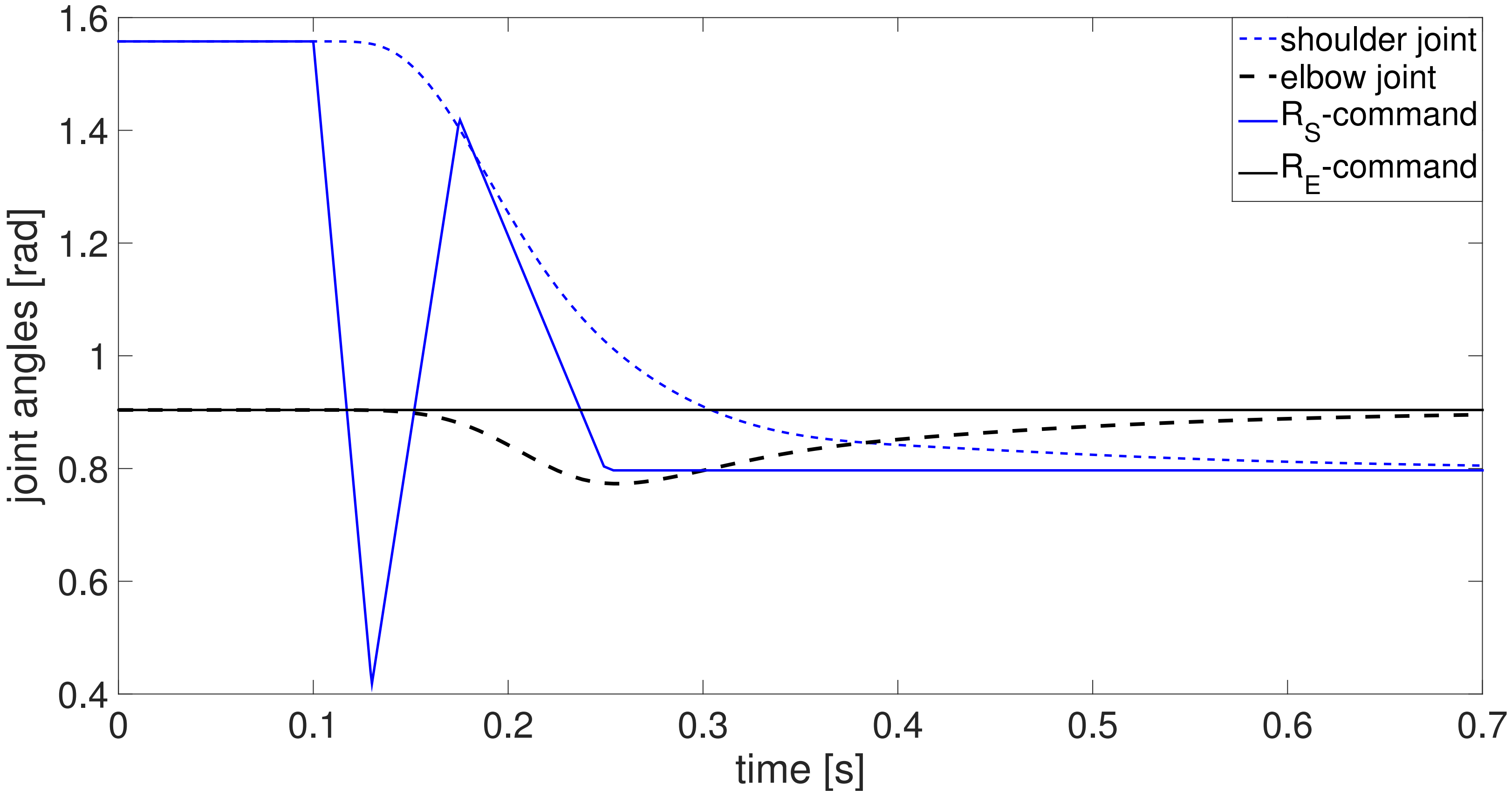
virtual trajectories: ramps

- increasing the co-contraction command does not robustly speed up movement



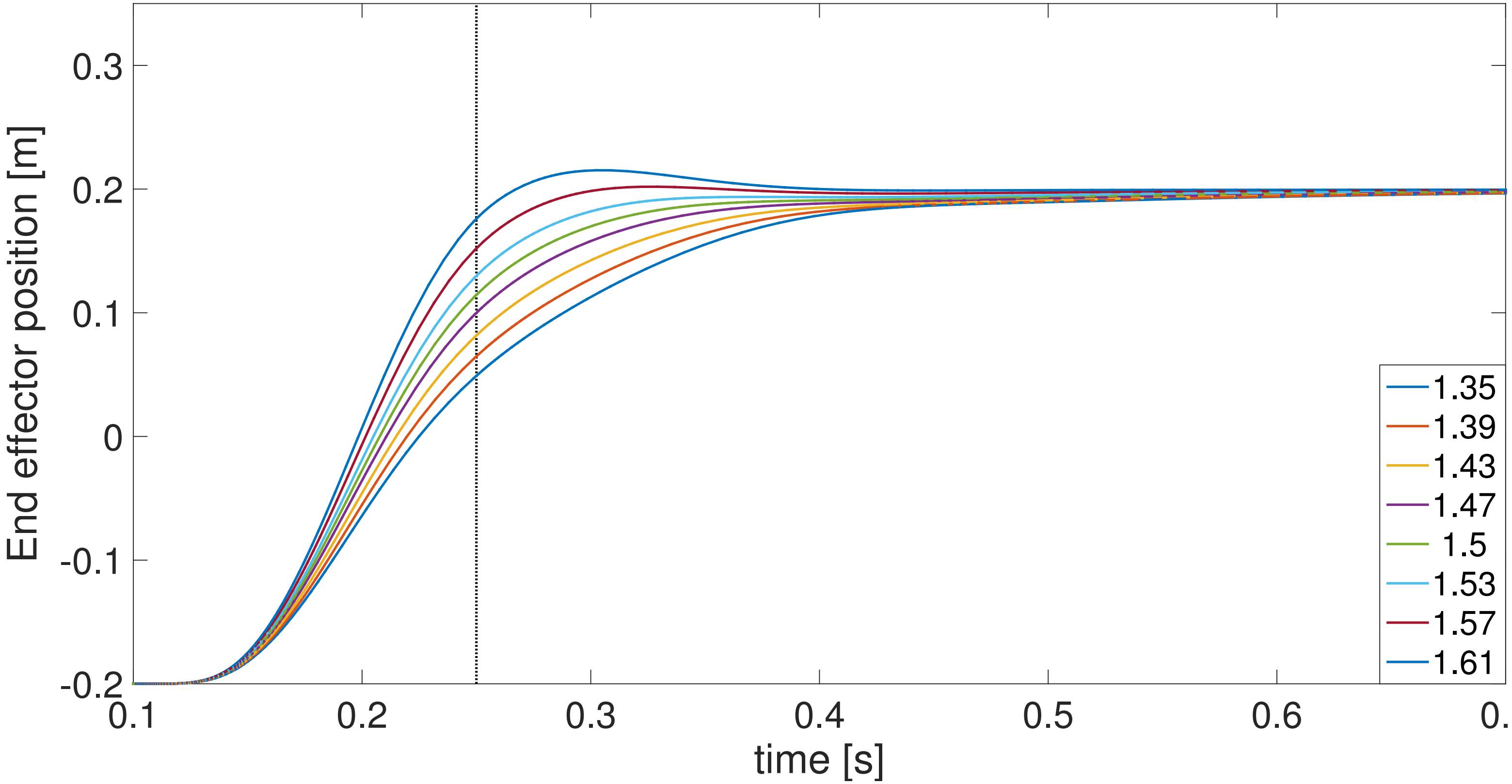
N-shape

- the Latash “N-shape” of the r-command is capable of creating fast movements



N-shape

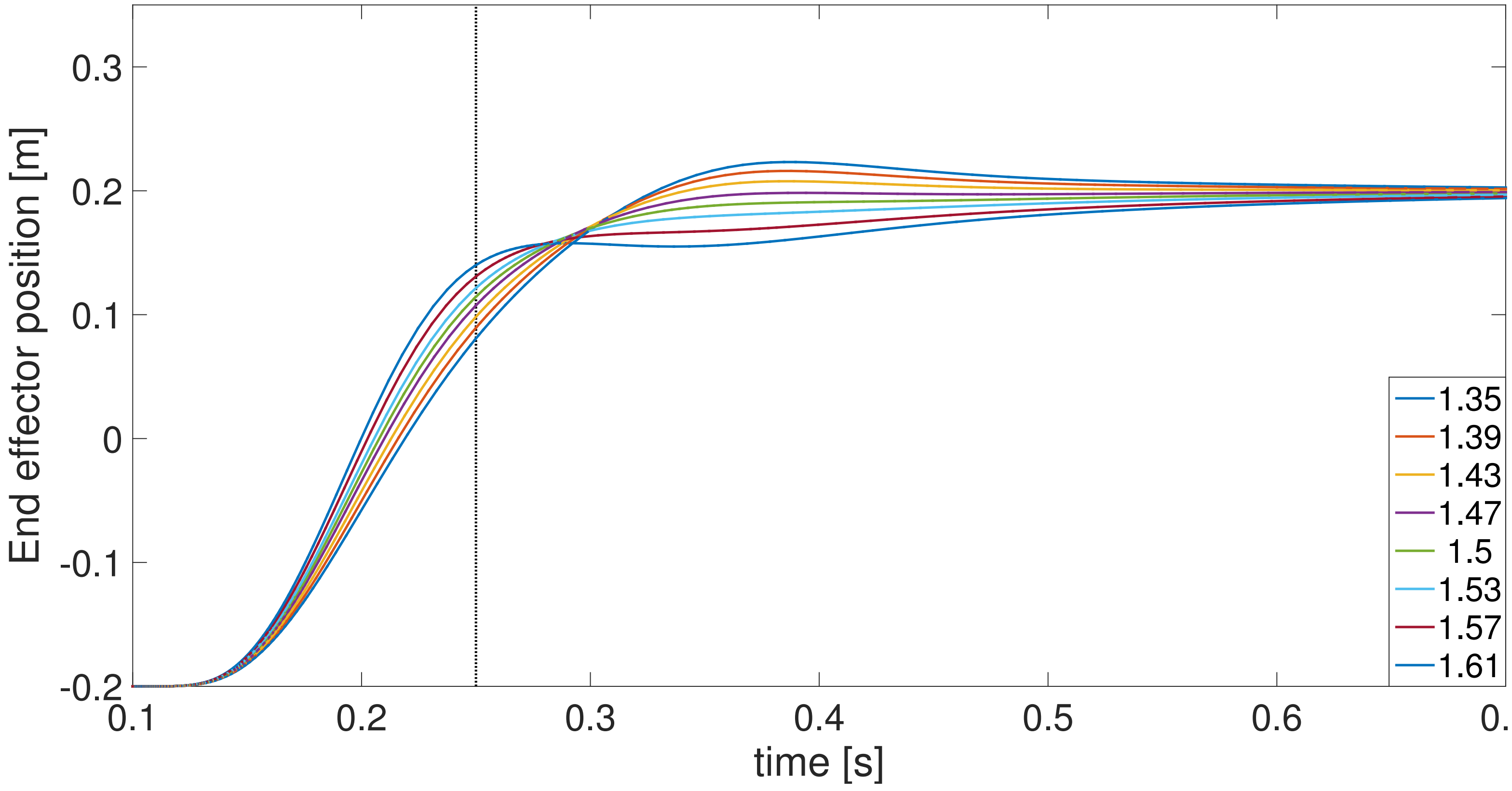
- but the “N-shape” needs to be just “right” to obtain correct movement trajectories



Amplitude of 1st part of N varied

N-shape

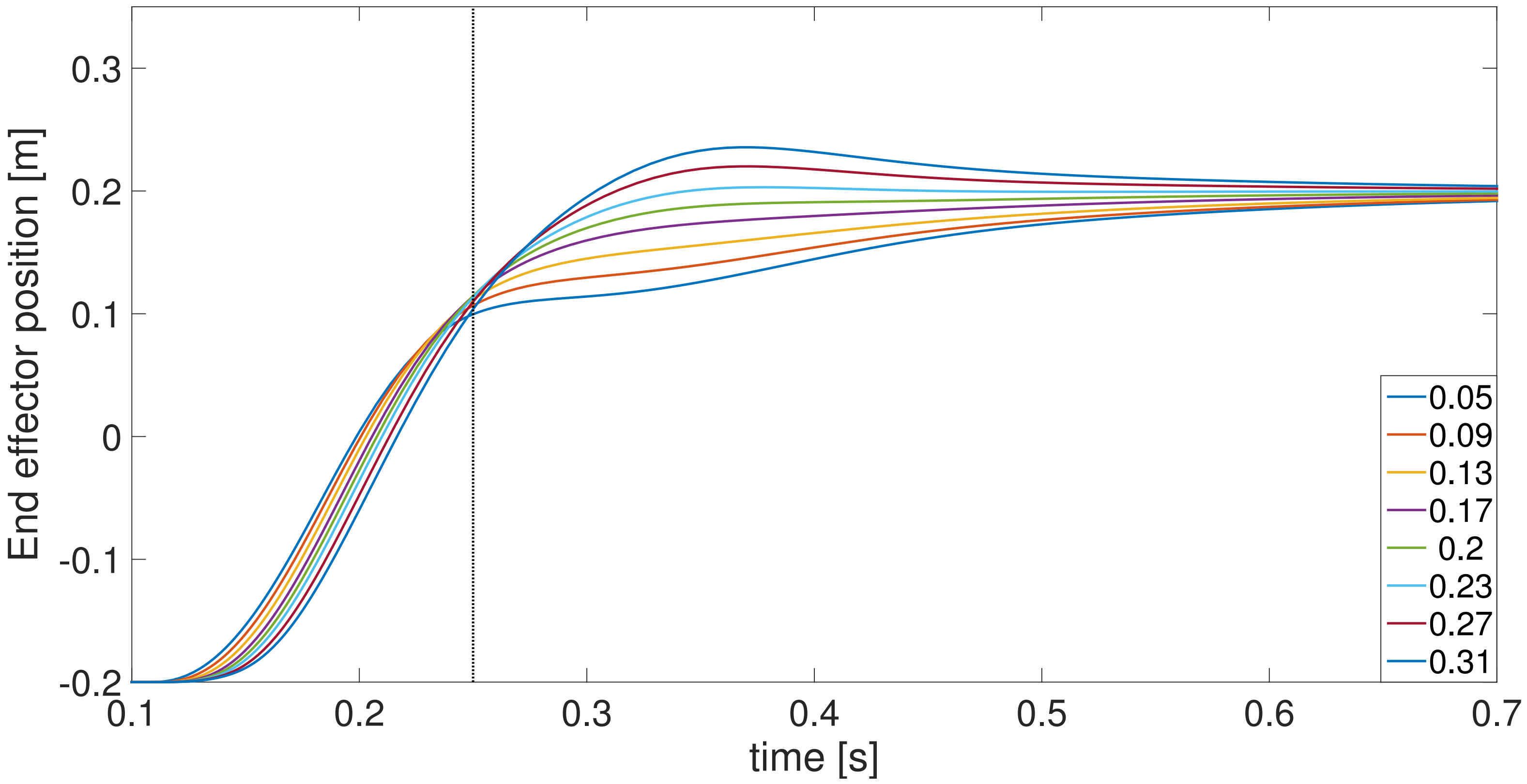
- but the “N-shape” needs to be just “right” to obtain correct movement trajectories



Amplitude of 1st part and 2nd part of N varied

N-shape

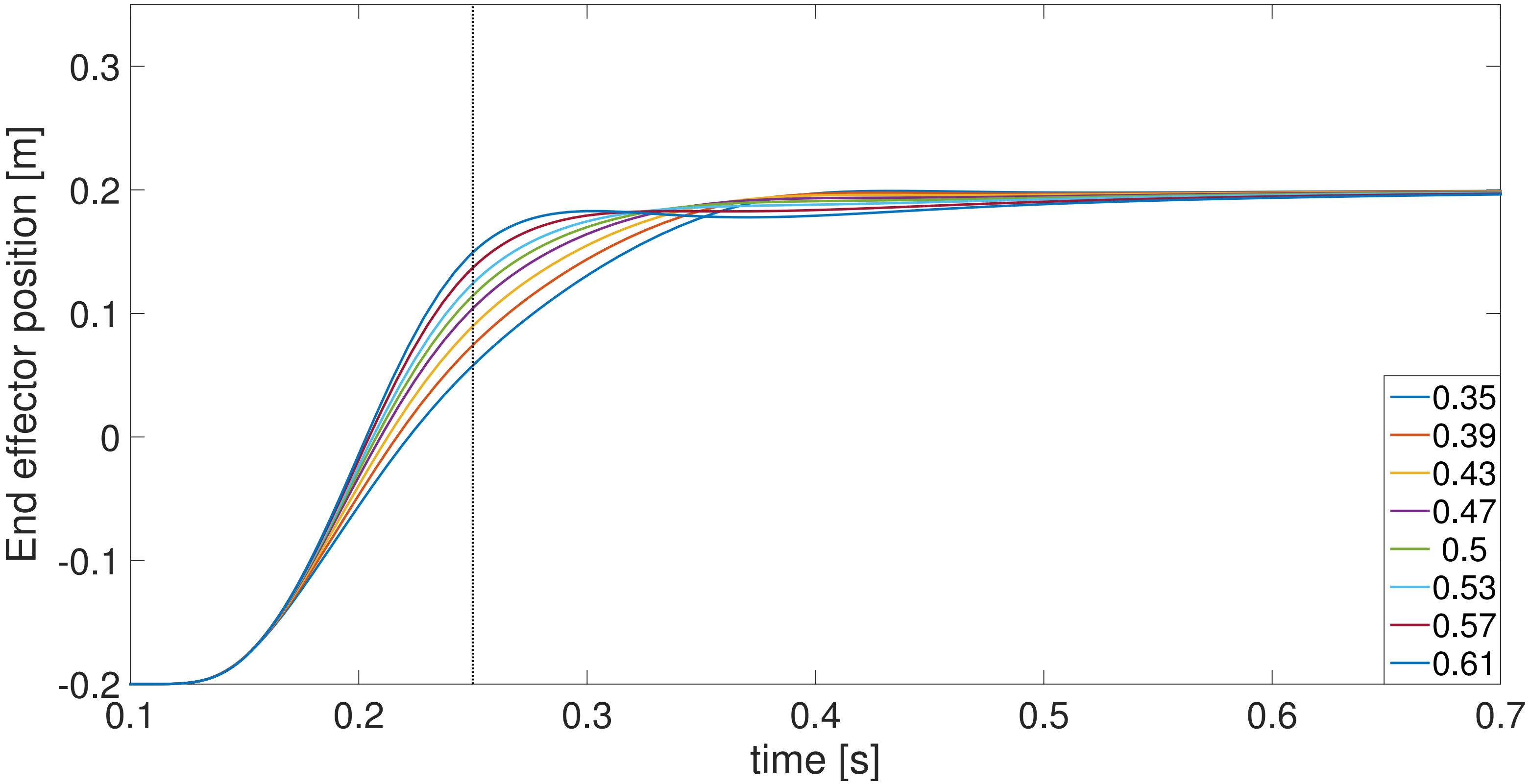
- but the “N-shape” needs to be just “right” to obtain correct movement trajectories



Timing of 1st part N varied

N-shape

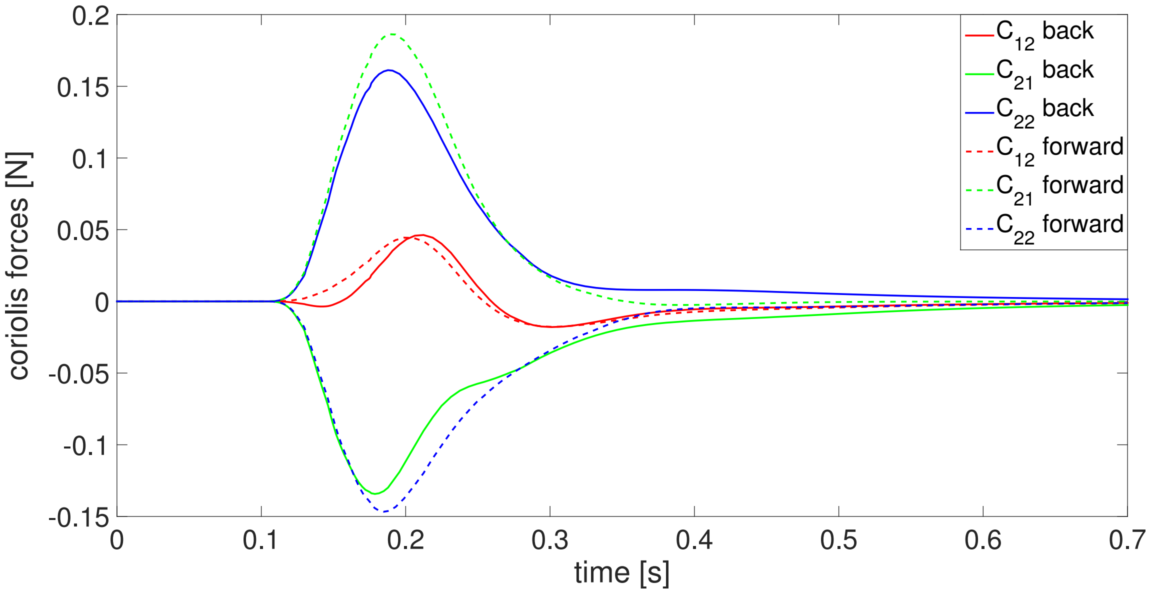
- but the "N-shape" needs to be just "right" to obtain correct movement trajectories

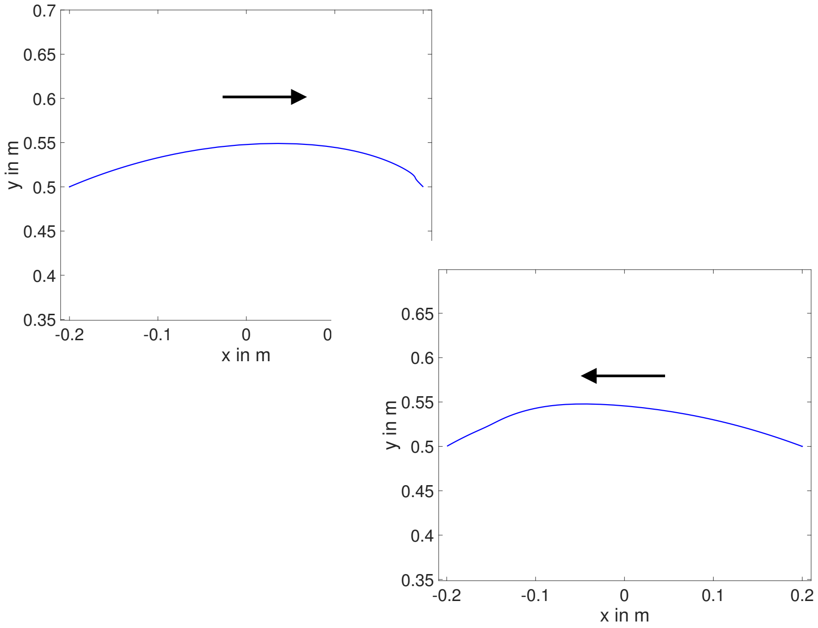


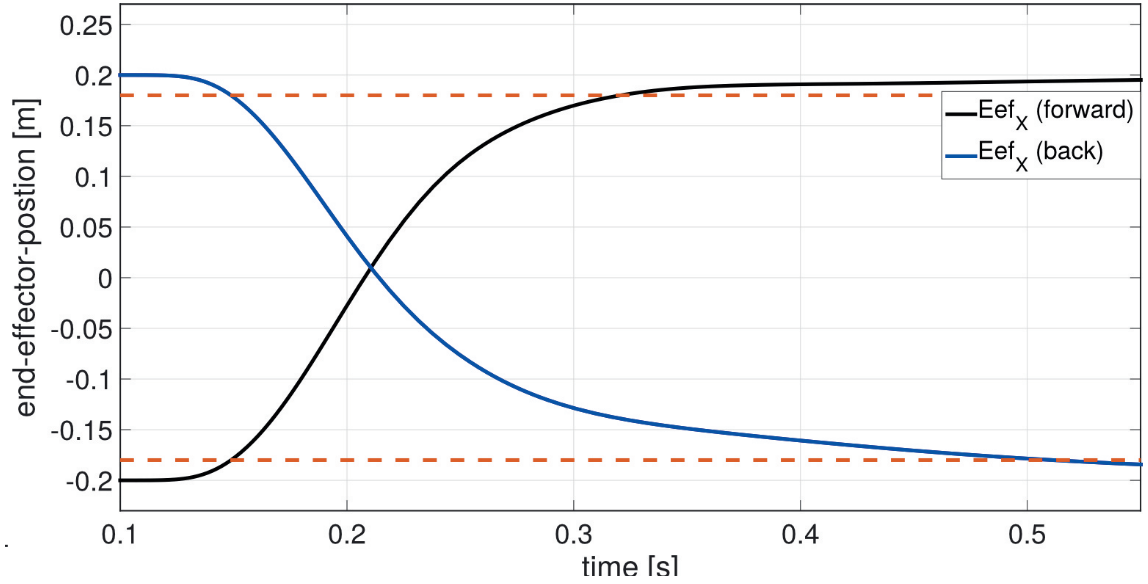
Timing of 2nd part N varied

interaction torques

- when the interaction torques vary, the sam virtual trajectory generates significantly different movements

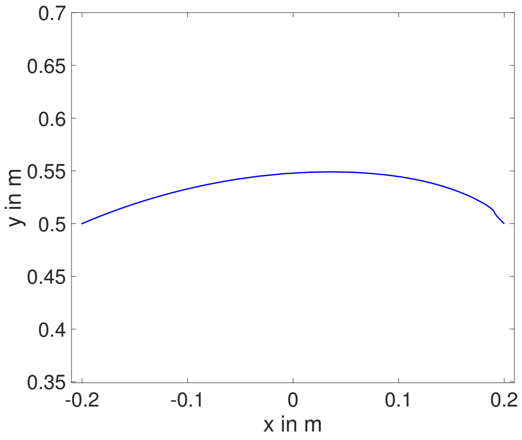


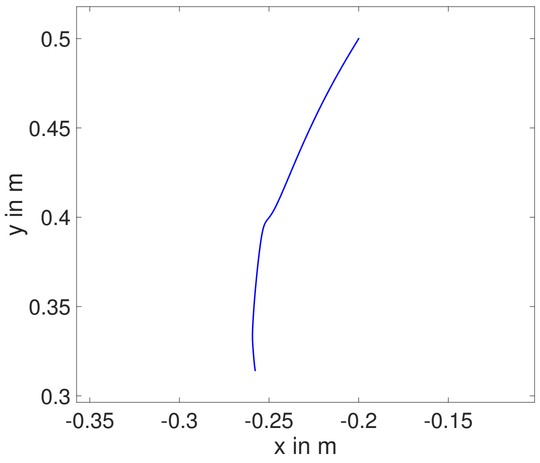


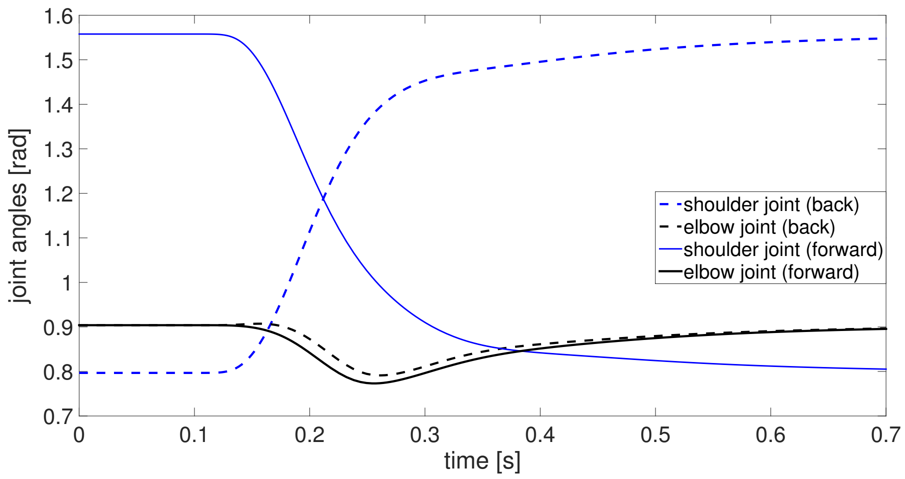


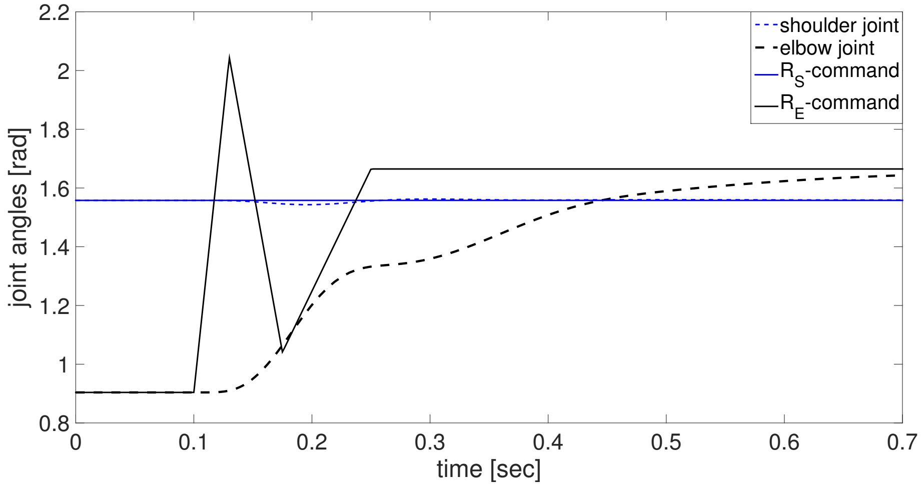
interaction torques

- when the interaction torques vary, the same virtual trajectory generates significantly different movements









inverse models

- in different places in work space where different inertial and interaction torques arise, the motor commands must be different to achieve realistic trajectories
- => kinetics must be taken into account

Conclusion

- muscle dynamics and biomechanical dynamics make that the optimal control problem cannot be entirely trivialized: appropriate space-time virtual trajectories are needed to generate realistic movement behavior