

**Sport scientists in-becoming: from fulfilling one's potential to finding our way along**

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1 Sport scientists *in-becoming*: From fulfilling one's potential to finding our way along

2

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12 **Abstract**

13 It is common to encourage people to envision life as a process of fulfilling their potential. But what  
14 exactly does this mean? Traditionally, this question has been addressed by way of ‘complementarity’;  
15 dividing the human into biological and cultural components. Fulfilment is placed on the side of the  
16 cultural; an acquisition of encoded secondary information, transmitted from predecessors, that  
17 represents what it means ‘to know’. Potential has been defined from the biological, as a suite of innate  
18 capacities localised to the mind and body, passed on through a mechanism of genetic inheritance.  
19 Founded upon a metaphor of *inter-generational transmission*, this perspective leads to a  
20 conceptualisation of life as a progressive closure, ‘filling up’ the biologically innate with the culturally  
21 acquired. Despite its prominence, this static view leads to a troubling question: *with one’s potential*  
22 *fulfilled, where is one to go next?* In this theoretical commentary, we offer an alternate, dynamical  
23 account of potential and fulfilment by leaning on Ingold’s notion of *wayfaring*. From this perspective,  
24 life is not a process of filling up with knowledge, but opening up; *corresponding* with varied  
25 experiences cast forward by others, as they to ours, situated within a continually unfolding field of  
26 relations. Ontologically, this view is of ‘us’, not as beings, but as *becomings*, finding their way along  
27 generative paths inhabited alongside others. Knowledge is not transmitted inter-generationally, but  
28 is developed by primarily experiencing the *coming-into-being* of things we enter into correspondence  
29 with. Initiated through a prologue, these ideas are exemplified in sharing our storied journey as sport  
30 scientists in-becoming, following not objects of convention, but corresponding with things of curiosity.

31 **Key words:** Correspondence; Becoming; Knowing; Skill; Information; Wayfinding; Transdisciplinarity

32            “As in life, what matters is not the final destination, but all the interesting things that occur along  
33            the way. For *wherever you are, there is somewhere further you can go.*” – Tim Ingold (2007, p.  
34            174)

### 35    **Prologue: Carrying on**

36    “*Why are you reading literature in anthropology?*” is a question I (the first author) am routinely asked.  
37    After all, I underwent traditional training as a sport scientist. My typical response to this question is  
38    “*why should I not?*”. Indeed, I did not plan or set out to be ‘here’. Rather, I have been following various  
39    lines of inquiry in their unfolding; lines that have ebbed and flowed in response to questions that have  
40    jagged my attention along the way. These are questions which often have no answer, carrying on  
41    through various places in which they lead me. What can be said, then, about the works written with  
42    colleagues in response to such fundamental questions? For me, adopting an Ingoldian perspective,  
43    they are not so much disciplinary articles with starts and ends, but knots entangled along a path of  
44    continual growth. These knots have off-shooting ends that others may or may not want to pick up and  
45    run with while moving along their path of growth (Woods & Davids, 2022). Otherwise stated, these  
46    knots are *places*<sup>1</sup> in which I have pitched my tent, pausing to join in conversation with others, all the  
47    while keeping a responsive ear and eye directed toward an undetermined future (Woods et al.,  
48    2022a). Aligned with Ingoldian insights, knowledge of my surrounds has not as much been acquired  
49    over the years, but grows in moving from place to place (Woods et al., 2022b).

50    As implied by the opening question, I guess I now find myself rather far from ‘home’, dwelling where  
51    many sport scientists typically might not. Recently, I have been considering what this would mean for  
52    my ‘potential’ as a sport scientist if it were to be adjudged based on its ‘fulfilment’? If I am not where  
53    a sport scientist is ‘supposed’ to be, then some may think me considerably lost, stumbling through  
54    places that are unfulfilling relative to my potential *as* a sport scientist. Needless to say, I firmly disagree  
55    with such disciplinary territorialization, and feel it is an artefact of a rather archaic, superficial

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<sup>1</sup> See Ingold (2011, ch. 12) for a detailed account of *places as knots*.

56 perspective of what it means to fulfill one's potential. I have never felt lost in the sense that I should  
57 be moving across a pre-determined disciplinary route leading toward a defined point of fulfilment *as*  
58 a sport scientist, so much as *wayfaring along an ongoing path of observation* (Ingold, 2007), following  
59 the various things that spark my curiosity, weaving them together as best and as carefully as I can  
60 (Woods et al., 2021). Maybe it would be better to think of such a voyage, not fulfilling my potential *as*  
61 a sport scientist, but of continually finding my way. Best, then, I carry on.

## 62 **Introduction**

63 In many parts of society, it is common to encourage people to envision life as a sequential process of  
64 fulfilling their potential. But what exactly does this mean? In Western scientific thought, such a  
65 question has typically been addressed by way of 'complementarity': dividing the human into separate,  
66 but complementary parts related to the biological and the cultural (cf. Ingold, 1998; 2000; 2004; 2011).  
67 Potential is placed on the side of the biological: a suite of innate capacities localised to the mind and  
68 body, passed on through a mechanism of genetic inheritance (Ingold, 2000, ch. 6). Fulfillment is  
69 located on the side of the cultural: pre-packaged, second-hand information transmitted into the minds  
70 of others, encoded in rules, symbols, representations and systems of classification that provide  
71 operational specifications for what it means 'to know' in order 'to function *as*' (Geertz, 1973; cf. Ingold,  
72 1998, 2004; Sperber, 1996). Thus, fulfilling one's potential, according to the principle of  
73 complementarity, is quite literally a process of 'filling up' the biologically innate with the culturally  
74 acquired (Sperber, 1996).

75 Despite its prominence within various academic disciplines, such as anthropology, psychology and  
76 sport science (cf. Davids & Araújo, 2010; Dawkins, 1999; Geertz, 1973; Kashima, 2008; Maslow, 1970;  
77 Narvaez, 2018; Sperber, 1996; Tooby & Cosmides, 1992), this principle has not been without criticism  
78 (Bouzenita & Boulanouar, 2016; Ingold, 1998, 2000, 2004; Isham & Jackson, 2022). Generally, such  
79 critiques have targeted its determinist, individualist, asymmetric and reductionist undertones, leading

80 some toward a more relationally dynamic account of potential and fulfilment. Anthropologist Tim  
81 Ingold (1998), for example, argued that:

82           “[...] the human being is not a composite entity made up of [...] body, mind and culture, but rather  
83           a singular locus of creative growth within a continually unfolding field of relationships” (p. 23).

84 The forthcoming conceptualisation of human behaviour, focused on potential and fulfilment, is  
85 critically aligned in a similar way. In this paper we situate ‘being’ within Gibsonian ecological  
86 psychology (Gibson, 1979; Reed, 1996; Heft, 2013), allowing us to frame it in *relation* to ongoing  
87 changes in environing conditions (Heft, 2013). Gibsonian ecological realism is fundamentally anti-  
88 representational in its account of behaviour, specified not indirectly by second-hand content (termed  
89 *knowledge about* the environment) localised to the mind, but by an embodied perceptual system  
90 attuned to the ‘pick up’ of information that directly specifies information for affordances  
91 (opportunities for action) *with-in* a richly structured environment (Gibson, 1979; Reed, 1996; Heft,  
92 2013). Ecological realism signifies that ‘knowing’ is not a matter of a mind imposing structure on a  
93 static world, but of *actively finding* structure (knowledge of the environment) in a dynamic, unfolding  
94 field of relations (Heft, 2013; for more details see Woods et al., 2020).

95 To elaborate on these ideas, we introduce Ingold’s (2007) notion of *wayfaring*. Life, it will be  
96 suggested, is not a sequential point-to-point progression of mechanistically ‘filling up’ innate  
97 capacities with representational content transmitted by predecessors. But is an active process of  
98 ‘opening up’, finding our way along a generative path of growth by *corresponding* with the varied  
99 experiences of others – as they to ours – encountered along the way (Ingold, 2000; 2011).  
100 Correspondence, in the sense presented here, differs to that of interaction. According to Ingold (2016),  
101 where the latter goes back and forth transversally, the former *goes along with longitudinally*.  
102 Interaction, then, could be understood as the oscillation between two pre-existing and bounded ends,  
103 whilst correspondence is a multilinear binding of lines joined in the middle (Ingold, 2016). This means  
104 that in correspondence, ends are not provided in advance, but emerge “only in the acknowledgement

105 of *new beginnings*” (Ingold, 2016, p. 18, emphasis added). Otherwise stated, ends are not terminals  
106 or nodes in a networked connection that closes in on itself, but are moments in a meshwork that are  
107 continually formed in moving from place to place (Ingold, 2007).

108 There are epistemological corollaries to the argument presented here, with clear implications for  
109 understanding human potential and fulfilment. In these processes, knowledge is not conceived as a  
110 corpus of secondary information transmitted inter-generationally, waiting to be applied in practice.  
111 But is *grown by way of practice*, by primarily experiencing the coming-into-being of things we enter  
112 into correspondence with (Ingold, 2011, ch. 12-14). Knowledge, in other words, is not tantamount to  
113 concept categorisation and classification, denoted through the ascription of labels to objects, but is  
114 *storied* in the tangled coming-into-being of things we go along with (Ingold, 2011, ch. 14). This  
115 ecologically dynamic perspective implies that we (i.e., sport scientists) are not moving toward a pre-  
116 determined point of fulfilment (i.e., ‘an ends’) through the consumption and application of  
117 transmitted, secondary information specifying *for us about* what it means ‘to be’. But are rather  
118 *wayfaring along an ongoing path of participant observation<sup>2</sup> suspended in correspondence with*  
119 *others*. These theoretical ideas are exemplified in the shared experiences initiated within our prologue  
120 and sections thereafter. Moreover, they foreground an ontological departure from the common  
121 pronominal accounts of what it means to fulfil one’s potential (see Narvaez, 2018), pushing against  
122 the labelling of humans ‘as’, in favour of one that situates ‘us’ in a perpetual state of *becoming-with*.

### 123 **Potential fulfilment and the genealogical model**

124 In the second chapter of his seminal text *The Interpretation of Cultures*, anthropologist Clifford Geertz  
125 proclaimed:

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<sup>2</sup> Our phrasing here can be traced to Gibson’s (1979/2015) ecological approach to way-finding. “An observer who is getting around in the course of daily life”, Gibson (1979/2015, p. 188, emphasis in original) argued, “sees from what I will call a *path* of observation”. This ‘can be thought of as a unitary movement, an excursion, a trip, a voyage that can last over short (minutes, hours) or long (days, weeks, years) periods’ (Ibid., paraphrased).

126           “For man [*sic*], what are innately given are extremely general response capacities, which, although  
127           they make possible far greater plasticity, complexity, and, on the scattered occasions when  
128           everything works as it should, effectiveness of behaviour, leave it much less precisely regulated.  
129           [...] Undirected by culture patterns – organized systems of significant symbols – [...] behaviour  
130           would be virtually ungovernable, a mere chaos of pointless acts and exploding emotions” (1973,  
131           p. 45-46)

132           This statement reflects a long-held tradition within Western scientific thought echoing that of  
133           potential fulfilment. It views the human as a composite entity existing in two separate, parallel worlds:  
134           the biological (emphasising “general response capacities”) and the cultural (emphasising “organized  
135           systems of significant symbols”). In the former, an individual is ‘given’ *innate* capacities by way of  
136           genetic inheritance. In the latter, these capacities are ‘filled’ with *acquired* content passed on by  
137           predecessors (Ingold, 2000). Within the corpus of acquired content are specifications for knowing how  
138           to regulate behaviour effectively. Grounded in a metaphor of *inter-generational transmission* (Ingold,  
139           2011; Lave, 1990), this is to posit that pre-existing biological capacities underwrite and define all  
140           potential for subsequent learning and knowledge acquisition (for an overview of this in the sport  
141           sciences, see Davids & Araújo, 2010).

142           Differing to the biological, the transmission of cultural content is non-genetic (Ingold, 2011; Lave,  
143           1990). It is purportedly established through some type of direct instruction founded upon the  
144           acquisition of rules, symbolic representations and classification systems, which are stored in the mind  
145           and believed to dictate the functioning of already knowledgeable others (also see Maslow, 1962, p.  
146           4). This ideology reflects what Jean Lave (1990, p. 310) refers to as “the culture of acquisition”, in  
147           which learning is understood sequentially. First, one acquires a body of transmitted knowledge in the  
148           form of rules and representations (i.e., ‘culture’), and then one uses such knowledge to construct an  
149           action to be ‘properly’ applied in practice. It is to imply that learning is context-free, internalised and  
150           generalizable – or in a word, is tantamount to a process of *enculturation* (Ingold, 2000). Thus, while

151 humans supposedly exist in two parallel worlds, they enter life into a “gap”, a vacuum “[b]etween  
152 what our body tells us and what we have *to know in order to function*” (Geertz, 1973, p. 50, emphasis  
153 added). What fills this gap, is the transmission of “information (or misinformation) provided by  
154 culture” (Geertz, 1973, p. 50).

155 This view follows the logic of what Ingold (2000, p. 134-139) refers to as the “genealogical model”; an  
156 assumption that individuals are independently pre-specified by way of their genetic and non-genetic  
157 constitution. Fulfilling one’s potential, in following such a model, could be surmised as a point-to-point  
158 sequence of instants, starting as an innate capacious *organismic* container, whose ‘being’ is pre-  
159 written within a genomic code; ending as a *person* filled with acquired representational content  
160 specifying what it means ‘to be’ (Sperber, 1996). This perspective leads to an appreciation that by  
161 addressing components of the biological (i.e., organismic) and cultural (i.e., person) separately, we are  
162 only able to ascertain a partial view of the human individual (Ingold, 1998). To glean an account of the  
163 whole, we must *add* these component parts together. It is to “assert that the human being is not  
164 merely a biological organism nor merely a social person, but the compound of one thing *plus* the  
165 other” (Ingold (1998, p. 24, emphasis added).

166 To exemplify, one could argue from the biological premise that all humans possess an innate  
167 organismic potential ‘to be’ a sport scientist. But the expressive and interpretative value associated  
168 with being such would reside within cultural specifications coded in the rules, representations and  
169 classification systems transmitted into one’s receptacle mind by governing bodies, institutions,  
170 organisations, or groups of senior sport scientists themselves. These specifications, according to such  
171 a transmissive model, would supposedly provide a person with the knowledge needed in order to  
172 fulfill their potential *as* a sport scientist, perhaps reflected in the texts one must read, the stylistic ways  
173 in which one must communicate research, the methods one must apply, the topics one is allowed to  
174 explore (and by default, those which are out of bounds), and the reasoning of others which one must  
175 follow. Accordingly, while the potential to be a sport scientist may be biologically universal, its

176 fulfilment is represented in the cultural specifications acquired. That is, the accumulation of secondary  
177 information specifying *for one about* what it means 'to know' in order 'to function' *as* a sport scientist.  
178 This, we suggest, is to *script one's life*; mapping where one is against prior-established conventions  
179 that dictate where they (putatively) should be.

180 Though, in following this model of potential fulfilment, we quickly encounter some problematic  
181 implications. The first is the presumption that human existence is founded on two parallel worlds: the  
182 biological (potential / organism) and the cultural (fulfillment / person). In reality, there is only one  
183 world (Ingold, 2018), and all organisms inhabit it (Gibson, 1979, p. 130 ff.). This is a world co-  
184 determined by actions of inhabitants, which from an ecologically dynamic rationale, are reciprocally  
185 shaped by those of others (Heft, 2007; Lave, 1990; van Dijk, 2021). Indeed, we are not denying that  
186 humans inhabit a world with signs, pictures, words and systems of classification. Nor that genomes  
187 circulate multicellular matrices within all organic matter, including humans. Our argument is that such  
188 things *do not* pre-determine, nor specify, what it means for one 'to be', as if such things are encoded  
189 with information waiting to somehow be decoded by a passive recipient. Such pre-determinism  
190 disregards the key idea that *context is everything* (Juarrero, 2023). Instead, human behaviour  
191 continuously emerges as a relational property within the dynamic constraints of the environment and  
192 tasks people undergo through the lifecourse (Juarrero, 2023). The complementary, transmissive  
193 model, thus fails to account for the *ontogeny of human development* (Oyama, 1985): how humans  
194 grow in richly structured environments that continually come-into-being-with-others (Ingold, 1998;  
195 2004; 2015, ch. 23; Thelen, 1995). Stated differently, if life was to be lived as a progressive filling up  
196 of an 'information gap' (see Geertz, 1973, p. 50), how *responsive* could one be to the varying  
197 experiences of others encountered along the way? Would they not be destined 'to be' what was pre-  
198 specified for them, first by way of genetic inheritance, and then by way of cultural transmission? If this  
199 were so, how would one find their way through events 'off-script'? After all, as Ingold and Hallam  
200 (2007, p. 12) emphasise, a system strictly bound to the execution of a pre-specified plan would be  
201 unable to *respond*, being thrown off course by the slightest perturbation.

202 This points us toward the second problem of such a model: its presumption that knowledge *pre-exists*  
203 its practical engagement with the world. If true, knowing would have to be tantamount to  
204 *classification*; a view aligned to the *complex-structure* metaphor introduced by David Rubin (1988).  
205 According to such, knowledge is viewed as the instillation of a concept or representation determined  
206 prior to its application in various contexts (see Woods & Davids, 2022, p. 6). Meaning that for one 'to  
207 know', they must be able to establish some type of match between the representation transmitted  
208 and the object that is of concern in their surrounds. It is to imply that knowledge:

209       [...] takes the form of a comprehensive configuration of mental representations that has been  
210       copied [transmitted] into the mind of the individual, through some mechanism of replication, even  
211       before he or she steps forth into the environment. The application of this knowledge in practice  
212       is, then, a simple and straightforward process of sorting and matching, so as to establish a  
213       homology between structures in the mind and structures in the world" (Ingold, 2011, p. 159, text  
214       in brackets added)

215 This leads to a pre-determined view of the world, static and complete, filled with objects waiting to  
216 be known about by way of classification into prior formed disciplinary frameworks or familiar classes.  
217 Though, as eloquently shown by sociologist of science David Turnbull (2008), it is not enough to know  
218 by applying systems of classification onto similar tasks, given changes in enviroing circumstances,  
219 even in strictly controlled laboratory settings. Specifically, Turnbull (2008) noted the difficulty  
220 scientists had in attempting to recreate the TEA laser developed by Bob Harrison in the late 1960s  
221 using only published methodologies and other sources of secondary information purportedly  
222 describing its procedures. This is because what had not been considered in such secondary  
223 information were the effects of locally nuanced differences between distinct laboratory settings in  
224 which the procedures were being applied. For this very reason, it was not enough for the scientists to  
225 proclaim 'to know' simply by possessing the methodology. Doing so, according to Blumberg and  
226 Wasserman (1995), would be to commit the 'nomological fallacy': believing that naming and

227 classifying something is tantamount to knowing and explaining it. Acquiring a recipe, in other words,  
228 does not mean one can actually *cook* a meal, in much the same way acquiring a map does not mean  
229 one actually *knows* the terrain. Such a sentiment is heeded by the words of philosopher of science  
230 Joseph Rouse (1987, p. 72), who proclaimed that “[s]cience is first and foremost knowing one’s way  
231 about in the laboratory (or clinic, field site)”. Stated differently, one has to learn to actively participate  
232 within their surrounds before procedures, rules or systems of classification can be applied. Discussed  
233 in the following sections, this viewpoint encourages a shift from the transmissive model of potential  
234 fulfilment, toward a more generatively relational account of what it means to find our way along. To  
235 start this shift, we pick up from Turnbull’s observations, contending that knowing is not established  
236 before we go, waiting to be applied in practice, but is grown *as* we go, in moving from place to place.

#### 237 **To know**

238 In advocating against complementarity, Ingold (1998) introduced the principle of obviation. This  
239 principle takes as its starting point that humans are *both* biological and cultural, constituting a locus  
240 of ongoing growth within structured environments inhabited alongside others. Humans are not, in  
241 other words, ‘organism’ (biological) *plus* ‘person’ (cultural), but are “*organism-person* within a nexus  
242 of environmental relations” (Ingold, 1998, p. 26, emphasis added). By doing away with the biological  
243 and cultural dichotomy associated with complementarity, the principle of obviation eschews the inter-  
244 generational transmissive metaphor, as it is not the ‘passing on’ of innate and acquired content that  
245 specifies what it means ‘to be’. Rather, ‘being’ is ongoing and ever-emergent, resultant from complex,  
246 dynamic and self-organising relations established and sustained with others (Oyama, 1985, also see  
247 Ingold, 1998, p. 25). “Real people”, Ingold and Hallam (2007, p. 6) contend, “continually create  
248 themselves and one another, forging their histories and traditions as they go along”. If anything is  
249 ‘transmitted’, it is the alignment of one’s perception to the movements of a more experienced  
250 companion adaptively finding their way through the ebbs and flows of various tasks. Thus, what  
251 fosters one’s coming-into-being is not the backward reading of a transmitted code or representation,  
252 but the *forward reading* of activity *joined with*.

253 To exemplify, humans are indeed not born readily to be sport scientists, nor any other role. These  
254 skills are continually learnt, oft under the guidance of experienced companions while situated within  
255 a structured environment affording opportunities to partake in such practice. It is biological, as one's  
256 actions when partaking in such practice are part of their form of life as a human. And it is cultural, not  
257 because its expressive value is adjudged based on a corpus of secondary information passed on from  
258 predecessors, specifying what it means 'to know *as*'. But because such practice unfolds in *response* to  
259 the presence and experiences of others within dynamic environments (Woods & Davids, 2022).  
260 Simply, it is not the transmission of genetic and non-genetic information that creates the essence of  
261 what it means 'to be' a sport scientist, but an *ongoing co-responsence with others encountered along*  
262 *the way* (Woods et al., 2022a). Following this line of thinking would mean that 'being' a sport scientist  
263 has no pre-determined end, no point of fulfilled potential. It would rather *carry on*. Knowing, then,  
264 would be to primarily experience things in-becoming, watching, listening, and feeling while moving  
265 along, together.

266 In contrast to the *complex-structure* metaphor, this aligns to what Rubin (1988) referred to as a  
267 *complex-process* metaphor. People, according to such, do not apply their knowledge in practice by  
268 way of classification, so much as *know by way* of their practice, joining with the activities of more  
269 experienced companions to see, feel, hear, taste and smell things for themselves<sup>3</sup>. In his seminal text  
270 *Art as Experience*, John Dewey (1934/2005) drew similar lines. For one to *really* know that which is of  
271 concern, Dewey contended, they need to "begin with it in the raw; in the events and scenes that hold  
272 the attentive eye and ear [...] arousing interest and enjoyment as one looks and listens" (p. 3). Dewey's  
273 example was that of a plant, arguing that if one wanted to know its flowering tendencies it would not  
274 be enough to simply *recognise* its features: matching what was looked at against a prior formed  
275 scheme representing it. For in doing so, one would risk moving toward a narrowing point in which

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<sup>3</sup> In the chapter *The Culture of Acquisition and the Practice of Understanding*, Jean Lave (1990) refers to this as "understanding in practice". Knowing, according to this perspective, occurs "in situations whose specific characteristics are part of the practice as it unfolds" (p. 19).

276 there is nowhere further to go; occupying a world of *objects* that have all been categorised away into  
277 their pre-specified familial classes. The caveat to such a view is that we do not occupy a created world  
278 of objects, but *inhabit a crescent world of things* (Heidegger, 1971; Ingold, 2011; 2015, ch. 3; Woods  
279 & Davids, 2022). The difference between these statements is critical to our theorising, and requires  
280 elaboration before carrying on.

281 First, the contrast between ‘occupancy’ and ‘inhabitation’ relates to the extent of correspondence  
282 between the observer and the observed. For example, the former implies a distance, a removal in  
283 which one documents and records features from afar, being careful not to engage with what the  
284 observed has to say. In the sport sciences, such occupancy is common in research practices that follow  
285 the hypothetico-deductive theory of scientific method, manifest in researchers focusing on data  
286 collection or recorded observations used to ‘prove or disprove’ hypotheses determined *a priori*  
287 (Woods & Davids, 2022). There is little room in such an approach to *listen* to the storied coming-into-  
288 being of what is observed, viewed instead as an ‘object of analysis’ waiting to be classified away<sup>4</sup>.  
289 Conversely, inhabitation is deeply immersive, in which an observer actively participates within the  
290 broader ecology of the observed, knowing by way of *participant observation*<sup>5</sup>:

291 “[...] to the *occupant* the contents of the world appear already locked into their final forms, as  
292 though they had turned their backs on us. To *inhabit* the world, by contrast, is to *join in* the process  
293 of formation.” (Ingold, 2013, p. 89, emphasis in original and added)

294 Second, the referral to a ‘created world’ imbues a view of a static surround, in which everything  
295 encountered is already locked into its final form, independent of its engagement with everything else.  
296 This is a world of ‘objects’, fixed and bounded; facts waiting to be explicated by way of classification. A

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<sup>4</sup> This is especially noted in research that ascribes the label of ‘talent’ to youth sports participants based on deterministic models of ‘identification’ and ‘development’. See Ribeiro et al. (2021) for a detailed overview of such criticisms.

<sup>5</sup> For a detailed overview of participant observation as a way of knowing in sport science, see Woods and Davids (2022).

297 'crescent world', however, is dynamic, suspended on the cusp of becoming. It is a world replete with  
298 'things' that are "always in the making" (Jackson, 1996, p. 4):

299 "The thing about *things*, is that far from standing before us as fait accompli, complete in itself,  
300 each is a 'going on' – or better, a place where several goings on become entwined [...] It is a  
301 gathering together of *materials in movement*." (Ingold (2011, p. 315, emphasis added)

302 How one comes to know 'things' in a 'crescent world' is not by way of classification based on a corpus  
303 of transmitted secondary information, but by *directly perceiving* and *primarily experiencing* the very  
304 conditions that sustain its ongoing growth; seeing, smelling, tasting, feeling and hearing what it has to  
305 share (Dewey, 1934/2005; Gibson 1979/2015). It is, in other words, to join with the generative  
306 conditions of life (Ingold, 2016), appreciating that every-*thing* we encounter and directly perceive, is  
307 some-*thing* on its way to becoming some-*thing* else, 'us' included. A wonderful example of this in  
308 science is noted in the work of biologist, Barbara McClintock<sup>6</sup>. By moving from an occupant with an  
309 organism-centric focus, toward an inhabitant focusing at the ecological scale of the organism-  
310 environment relation, McClintock made seminal, paradigm shifting discoveries in the field of biology.  
311 This manifest in McClintock 'not pressing nature with leading questions, but dwelling patiently with-  
312 in the complexity and variety of organisms [...]. What for others was interpretation, or speculation,  
313 [for McClintock], was a matter of trained *direct perception*' (Henry, 1997, p. 158, paraphrased).  
314 Appreciating this, it would not be enough for a sport scientist to proclaim 'to know' by way of enacting  
315 secondary information specifying *for* them *about* what it is they are *looking at*. Rather, they would  
316 need to join with the broader ecology of what sparks their curiosity, following along in correspondence  
317 (Camiré, 2022; Despret, 2013; Woods et al., 2022a). This process would be to grow with and into one's  
318 knowledge by finding their way along a *path of participant observation*, a path that *opens up* and

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<sup>6</sup> For a detailed recount of McClintock's seminal work and approach to inquiry, see Henry (1997).

319 *carries on* in response to others (Morris et al., 2022). Given this open-endedness, how would such an  
320 epistemological shift implicate our understanding of potential and fulfilment?

### 321 **Finding our way along**

322 Recall that within our prologue, I (the first author) spoke of how some within my homely discipline of  
323 sport science may consider me lost, perhaps even dwelling in places that sport scientists are typically  
324 not seen. To this, I responded in the negative, emphasising that I – along with colleagues – have simply  
325 been following the scent of things that have sparked our curiosity, moving through the various places  
326 in which they have led. Such a journey is less about fulfilling our potential *as* sport scientists, and more  
327 of continually finding our way, creatively improvising a path ahead by corresponding with the coming-  
328 into-being of things encountered. This is a journey captured by what Tim Ingold (2007, p. 78) refers to  
329 as *wayfaring*.

330 To start, it is worth briefly contrasting *wayfaring* to transport, as the two are ontologically and  
331 epistemologically distinct. Transport is *destination-oriented*; it starts with an end in mind (Ingold,  
332 2007). The journey in-between is simply a means to an end, a mode that carries one *across* in order  
333 to arrive *at*. For example, when one sits on a train to reach a destination oft established before they  
334 leave the station, the journey is typically of little concern, with the train transporting the passenger  
335 across the landscape on the shortest possible route to reach their destination in the fastest possible  
336 time. Location, during such moments of transport, is commonly specified *for* the passenger by some  
337 type of indirect, augmented information – perhaps gleaned from timetables, announcements, a map,  
338 or a global positioning device – that updates them *about* their current position relative to the  
339 coordinates of a pre-determined route or destination (see Gell, 1985, p. 280). Given this point-  
340 indexicality (Woods, 2021), knowledge could be understood in a similar way to that denoted by the  
341 *complex-structure* metaphor: knowing where one is by matching their position relative to a pre-  
342 established point in space. Transport can, therefore, be epistemologically aligned to the genealogical  
343 model of potential fulfilment: potential being the place one starts their journey, fulfilment being the

344 pre-determined end they navigate toward by following the rules, representations and systems of  
345 classification that specify *for them about* where they *should* be. It is a view surmised by Edwin Hutchins  
346 (1995, p. 286):

347           “When the navigator is satisfied that he [*sic*] has arrived...he [*sic*] might look to the chart and say  
348           ‘Ah, yes; I am here, off this point of land.’ And it is in this sense that most of us feel we know where  
349           we are. We feel that we have achieved reconciliation between the features we see in our world  
350           and a representation of that world.”

351 Wayfaring, comparatively, is *journey-oriented*; there is no end in mind, no terminus to be destined,  
352 no potential to be fulfilled. It is open-ended, with the wayfarer continually being on the move, or as  
353 Ingold (2007, p. 78) eloquently surmises, they *are* their movement. Far from being a static space to be  
354 transported across, the environment, to the wayfarer, is a dynamic place to *move along with*,  
355 sustained by corresponding with that which sparks their curiosity (Ingold, 2007, p. 78). Accordingly, in  
356 contrast to transportation, where location and movement are mediated indirectly, it is the  
357 attunement of the wayfarer’s movements in *response* to the informational ebbs and flows of events  
358 in an environment that affords the opportunities for them to carry their voyage on (Ingold, 2000). In  
359 other words, there is no mentalistic separation between the deeply integrated wayfarer and the  
360 environment they inhabit, which means that the more dynamic and richly variegated the  
361 environment, the easier it is for the wayfarer to directly perceive the changing layout and find their  
362 way through. After all, in an environment “where nothing moves there is nothing to which one can  
363 *respond*” (Ingold, 2000, p. 242).

364 In contrast to the transmissive genealogical model, we propose wayfaring as an alternate description  
365 of one’s journey in-becoming, citing four key principles. First, it is *generative*: giving rise to form as  
366 people creatively improvise a path ahead. Second, it is *relational*, sustained co-responsively with and  
367 alongside others. Third, it is *temporal*: carrying on in rhythmic procession guided by the tight coupling  
368 of perception and action. Fourth, it is *animated in what we ‘do’*: manifest in the dexterous practice of

369 everyday tasks<sup>7</sup>. Each principle, discussed next, is exemplified through our journey as sport scientists  
370 in-becoming.

371 *Wayfaring is generative*

372 Since it is journey-oriented, wayfaring always overshoots destinations (Ingold, 2011). In fact, as the  
373 world is crescent, suspended in-becoming, destinations are somewhat indeterminable, always open  
374 to possibility. Finding one's way is not a matter of passively following a script or route laid down by  
375 another, but is "to advance along a line of growth, in a world which is never quite the same from one  
376 moment to the next, and whose future configuration can never fully be known" (Ingold, 2000, p. 242).  
377 Given this dynamism and indeterminacy, wayfaring requires "a good measure of *creative*  
378 *improvisation*", forging a path ahead by attending directly to things as they occur (Ingold, 2011, p. 162,  
379 emphasis added). Do not misread us here: people do follow the actions of more experience  
380 companions, and they may even follow methodologies, recipes or sets of instructions when  
381 attempting to learn particularly unfamiliar tasks. Our contention, though, is that it is not the passive  
382 following of a script laid down by another that regulates a wayfarer's behaviour, but their ever-  
383 emergent attentive responsiveness to the movements of others within dynamic environments (Woods  
384 et al., 2020). Following another's movement, otherwise stated, is a way to help orient oneself toward  
385 the pick-up of key specifying information, which means that the skill of the wayfarer resides not within  
386 mindless automation, but in the actively tight coupling of perception and action (Gibson,  
387 1979/2015).

388 To exemplify, I (the first author) am a less experienced academic sport scientist to that of my co-  
389 author. This means I often find myself observing the ways in which they skilfully undertake various  
390 tasks, like responding to reviewer comments when publishing academic works. This observation is *not*  
391 an emulation or replication of 'the' way one 'must' respond, as if residing beneath what is being

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<sup>7</sup> We have drawn inspiration for this section from the opening chapter of *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*, written by Tim Ingold and Elizabeth Hallam (2007). While these authors situate 'improvisation' beneath similar principles, to us, they equally relate to wayfaring given their ecological grounding.

392 observed is a representation waiting to be decoded, specifying *for me about* how to undertake such a  
393 task. Rather, by observing them closely in practice – seeing and hearing them work – I am educating  
394 my attention<sup>8</sup> toward the specifying information they are attuned to, allowing me to align my  
395 perception to the dynamics of the task, as they do. Though, just as the world is never settled, no two  
396 reviewer comments are ever the same, which means that even as the task becomes more familiar to  
397 me, I still have to adaptatively find a way forward, creatively improvising a path by adjusting how I  
398 respond to insights cast forward by the reviewer. This is not autonomous, nor mindless, but requires  
399 a carefully attuned perceptual system trained toward the ‘pick up’ of information that guides the way  
400 forward. Accordingly, as no two tasks, no matter how similar or familiar, are ever the same, the form  
401 of things – like a reviewer response letter – emerge as people creatively improvise a path ahead,  
402 guided not by a transmitted representation, but by a trained perceptual system (Gibson, 1979/2015).

#### 403 *Wayfaring is relational*

404 Following along from the above, wayfaring is thus not indirectly regulated by a series of transmitted  
405 representations. It is achieved *directly* through the attunement of one’s entire perceptual system to  
406 ongoing changes in environing and task dynamics (Ingold, 2011; Gibson, 1979/2015). More  
407 specifically, through *responding* to such changes, wayfarers open up the possibility of carrying on.  
408 Elsewhere, we have explained this responsiveness through the intransitive verb ‘commoning’ (Woods  
409 et al., 2022a, also see Ingold, 2018, and Menzies, 2014). People, in following this relational concept,  
410 do not start life innately ‘having in common’. Instead, it is an aspiration, something people continually  
411 strive toward through a responsiveness directed toward various experiences cast forward by others.  
412 It is a process, according to Ingold (2018, p. 38, emphasis added), that entails:

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<sup>8</sup> See Gibson (1979/2015) and Ingold (2000).

413            “[...] an attentive stretch whereby every participant casts their experience forward in ways  
414            they can answer to the experiences of others, and they likewise, so as to achieve a  
415            *correspondence* that goes *beyond* what any of them could have imagined at the outset”.

416    As implied in the above excerpt, corresponding dissolves ends into new beginnings, opening further  
417    opportunities for people to carry their lives on with one another. Differing to the verticality of an  
418    interaction detailed earlier, correspondence follows what Ingold (2016, p. 18) refers to as a  
419    longitudinal directionality. Think, for example, of people walking side-by-side while immersed in  
420    conversation. The flow of this correspondence literally moves along longitudinally, carrying on for as  
421    long as the conversation is sustained. Indeed, such conversations come to an end, though these ends  
422    are not points of closure, but openness. This is because the doing of a conversation always overflows,  
423    in that we are a somewhat different person upon entering into the next (Dewey, 1966). Contrast this  
424    to a face-to-face interaction in which people talk at and to one another, as if in debate. Ends, in such  
425    moments of interaction, are oft pre-established based on a pre-determined agenda (see Ingold, 2016).  
426    It is best, then, to think of correspondence more harmonically, with participants attempting to  
427    resonate with one another by casting experiences out. This means that as one makes their way  
428    through the world, corresponding with the experiences of others, they actively contribute to the very  
429    conditions that sustain growth by casting forward their experiences in ways that can be harmonically  
430    responded to by another (Woods et al., 2022a). This means that for the wayfarer, there would be  
431    nowhere further to go if there was no-*thing* for them actively correspond *with*. Stated differently, in  
432    a static, homogenised environment in which varied experiences remain uncast, there would be  
433    nothing to which one could resonate (Ingold, 2000).

434    Take this very paper. It was not activated mechanistically, as an isolated, disciplinary idea housed to  
435    my (the first author’s) mind, waiting simply to be written up by a passive body. It progressively  
436    emerged as *we* (both I and the co-author) conjoined our varied experiences, cast forward in responsive  
437    ways over prolonged periods of correspondence. Where we find ourselves now is a place somewhat

438 unscripted and uncharted, as rather than starting with an 'end in mind' to which we navigated toward  
439 through interaction, we have been following the inquiry together in its unfolding, creatively  
440 improvising a path by selectively responding to the various experiences shared along the way. By  
441 default, then, this paper has no start (i.e., potential), nor end (i.e., fulfillment). It is an ongoing inquiry  
442 issuing forth along a line of harmonic growth that is sustained by the conjoining of experiences forged  
443 in correspondence. Wayfaring, then, is relational, *precisely because it can only carry on in*  
444 *correspondence with and alongside others.*

#### 445 *Wayfaring is temporal*

446 In the genealogical model of potential fulfilment, life is surmised as a point-to-point sequence of  
447 instants, rooted in the metaphor of inter-generational transmission. This perspective is a process of  
448 replication, a backward reading of movement regulated indirectly by secondary information. Indeed,  
449 there is a temporality associated with such a model, a metronomic kind where people are destined to  
450 replicate that which has been transmitted to them by those gone before. The problem of  
451 understanding temporality in such a way, is that in a crescent world of things that are never settled  
452 and always open to possibility, replication would have to be *imperfect*. "No repeating system in the  
453 living world can be perfect", Ingold and Hallam (2007, p. 10, emphasis added) state, "and it is precisely  
454 because imperfections in the system call for continual correction that *all repetition involves*  
455 *improvisation*". For this reason, the temporality of the wayfarer is not metronomic, connecting up  
456 points in a sequence of interactive transmission, but *rhythmic*, issuing forth along a line of growth in  
457 which activity is read *forward* manifest through the tight coupling of perception and action (Ingold &  
458 Hallam, 2007). Following philosopher Henri Bergson (1911, p. 4-5, emphasis added), this rhythmic  
459 temporality can be understood as *duration*:

460 "Our duration is not merely one instant replacing another; if it were, there would never be  
461 anything but present – no prolonging of the past in the actual [...] Duration is the *continuous*  
462 *progress* of the past which gnaws into the future and which swells as it advances".

463 Life, for the wayfarer, is an ongoing rhythmic movement, a duration in which experiences undergone  
464 are bound together while simultaneously cast out along a line of growth, directed toward an  
465 undetermined future. As an aside, given its grounding in ecological psychology, time for the wayfarer  
466 is not directly perceived, but events and locomotions are (Gibson, 1979/2015). This perspective  
467 contrasts with conventional understanding of time in the physical sciences as flowing equably,  
468 independent to anything else. To the wayfarer, though, events do not occur in space, “but in the  
469 medium of an environment that is rigid and permanent” (Gibson, 1975, p. 295). Events should be  
470 thought of here as ‘primary realities and time as an abstraction for them, not, as convention would  
471 have it, the other way around’ (Gibson, 1979/2015, p. 93 paraphrased). This nuance helps us to  
472 appreciate that the undergoing of events we experience *overflows*, in the sense that whatever the  
473 wayfarer does next will be shaped by that which they have already undergone (Dewey, 1966). Indeed,  
474 there is a repetition associated with this duration, but echoing the words of Nikolai Bernstein (1967,  
475 p. 234), it is a ‘repetition *without* repetition’: meaning, the wayfarer’s search for behavioural solutions  
476 is *guided* by experiences undergone, not (pre-)determined by them. For this reason, it is appropriate  
477 to say that wayfarers do not know *more* as they go, implying the storage of information to be rolled  
478 off in future states, but that they know *better*, manifest through an ever-attuned coupling of  
479 perception and action to the informational ebbs and flows of a dynamic environment that is never the  
480 same from moment to moment.

481 To exemplify, the flow of the various works cited within our prologue that ‘we’ (the broader authorship  
482 team) have written in recent years has a temporality similar to the durational rhythmicity described  
483 here. These works are not perfectly synchronised, each precisely picking up where the other left off  
484 like a sequence of instants, forming a pre-programmed network of literature. Rather, each are  
485 imperfect knots, that when threaded together, form a broader *meshwork* of inquiries (Ingold, 2011;  
486 Woods, 2021). What makes these knots imperfect is that they consist of *loose ends*, each slightly  
487 different to those gone before, given the varied experiences we have undergone in their threading  
488 (Woods & Davids, 2022). This imperfection, though, is not something to be artificially smoothed over,

489 nor should it be looked upon negatively, as it is precisely in these loose ends where possibilities of  
490 carrying the meshwork on *open up*. After all, if these works did in fact precisely fit in place, connecting  
491 up to generate a ‘watertight network’, then there would be nowhere further for us to go<sup>9</sup>. Accordingly,  
492 what sustains our growth as sport scientists in-becoming, is not a metronomic sequencing of instants,  
493 but a rhythmic weaving of threads; an ongoing duration that has led us to where we are now.

494 *Wayfaring is animated in what we ‘do’*

495 To the wayfarer, life is unscriptable. It cannot be codified into systems of classification waiting to be  
496 passed on into the receptive mind of other. This is because a hardened system of classification cannot  
497 pin down a fluid reality. For the wayfarer to carry on, they have to join with these formative processes,  
498 attentively responding to ongoing changes in both environing and task dynamics. Though, while life  
499 may indeed be unscripted and unscriptable, it does not seem to preclude organisations, institutions  
500 or governing bodies from attempting to script it through the establishment of rules, plans and  
501 conventions that seek to control the functioning of others, oft in the name of efficiency (Reed, 1996).  
502 Think, for example, of the common myth in sports coaching that people must learn the ‘fundamentals’  
503 of a game – fitting in by replicating prior-established ‘ways of moving’ – before they can ‘efficiently’  
504 and ‘correctly’ play it (see Rudd et al., 2021). Skilled response, though, is not attributed to the passive  
505 following of rules or rigid following of a plan. It requires a tight coupling of perception and action to  
506 the most subtle of changes in task and environing conditions, a coupling that can only be learnt by  
507 *doing for oneself* (Ingold, 2013, ch. 1). What distinguishes a skilful practitioner from their novice  
508 counterpart, then, is not a mind filled with codified knowledge about their respective task specifying  
509 for them about ‘how to do’. But an attentiveness that sees them respond to, and join with, the  
510 unfolding task dynamics with care, sensitivity, precision and dexterity.

511 This is a distinction denoted through what design theorist David Pye (1968) referred to as the  
512 ‘workman of certainty’ and the ‘workman of risk’. The former is indicative of transport, in which one

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<sup>9</sup> See Ingold (2014, p. 390) for a critique detailing the pitfalls of an “interconnected world”.

513 proceeds across a pre-determined route toward a destination identified prior to departure. For the  
514 workman of certainty, movements are mechanically constrained by autonomously following what has  
515 been prescribed for them. This means that they “cannot alter course in mid-flow, but must stop, alter  
516 the settings of the apparatus, and start again” (Ingold & Hallam, 2007, p. 13). Changes in one’s  
517 direction of travel can thus be surmised as a series of stop/starts: stopping to match what one is doing  
518 against how it ‘should’ be done, adjusting what is needed, and then starting their sequence of  
519 movement again. The latter, however – the workman of risk – is the way of the wayfarer. They  
520 carefully respond to the unfolding ebbs and flows of a crescent world in order to keep going.  
521 Importantly, this response is not just embodied, but *animated in-motion* (Sheets-Johnstone, 2010).  
522 This means that the workman of risk appreciates that at any moment, their task could alter course,  
523 requiring them to dexterously and adaptatively respond *as they go* (Bernstein, 1967). There is a  
524 submission in this dexterous response, an appreciation that in a crescent world, perceived control is  
525 a falsity, even in seemingly repetitious tasks. This is crucial for the wayfarer, as it is what keeps them  
526 openly responsive to the unfolding fluctuations of the task and environment.

527 As noted within our prologue, I (the first author) did not plan or set out to be ‘here’. In fact, when  
528 questioned about my ‘five-year research plan’, I have shared feelings of unease and confinement (cf.  
529 Woods et al., 2022b). This, though, should not be misconceived as aimless drifting. I do have an  
530 intended direction of travel, just not a pre-determined route or an end in mind. Leaning again on the  
531 process of this paper’s coming-into-being, we did set out to challenge conventions related to ‘potential  
532 fulfillment’. We did not, however, script the paper in advance, nor collage sections together, as though  
533 they were written independently waiting to be inserted in their correct place. We have been figuring  
534 out conceptualisation, meaning and communication as we have gone, manifest in weaving words into  
535 words, sentences into sentences, paragraphs into paragraphs. In realising these smaller-scaled  
536 affordances while working, we concurrently held open the larger-scaled opportunity to keep the paper  
537 going in a direction determined as we went. Perhaps it is appropriate to view the ‘page’ you are  
538 reading, then, in its Latin origin – *pagus*; an inhabited countryside (Illich, 1991) – with our writing being

539 the tracks formed as we have found our way through. Doing so would mean that our paper has literally  
540 animated its very message – navigating not toward a point of fulfilment, as though we started with it  
541 already completed, but wayfaring along an undulating path formed as we have gone, established in  
542 and by our *doing together*. It is only now, in looking back, that we are able to see the path left behind,  
543 a path that others may or may not want to follow. Wayfaring, thus, is animated in what people ‘do’,  
544 *precisely because what people ‘do’ is always open to the possibility of a crescent world.*

#### 545 **Concluding remarks**

546 Here, we set out to challenge conventional interpretations of what it means to fulfill one’s potential.  
547 Specifically, it was proposed that life is not a process of ‘filling up’ the innate with the acquired, but  
548 one of ‘opening up’, corresponding with the coming-into-being of affordances encountered along the  
549 way. Leaning on Ingold’s notion of wayfaring, this idea led us to situate life as an ongoing rhythmic  
550 procession, of skilfully moving through a crescent world open to possibility. It would be remiss, and  
551 perhaps even contradictory, to now suggest that our paper is coming to an end. For in doing so, we  
552 would risk tying off any loose ends exposed, proclaiming that this paper is ‘done’, ‘complete’, there is  
553 nowhere further for it to go. The reality is that while its writing is coming to a pause, the paper is  
554 positioned to now be responsively cast out into the world, waiting to be joined with by attentive others  
555 who happen to stumble into it while moving along their path of growth. As Withagen and colleagues  
556 (2012, p. 254) note, inhabiting a diverse affordance landscape provides multiple opportunities for  
557 system trajectories with ‘inviting potential’, contrasted with a (de)‘limited’ affordance landscape,  
558 replete with prescribed pathways to pre-determined outcomes. Maybe it is best to think of our paper  
559 in similar terms? Not as coming to an end – a ‘prescribed outcome’ – but as an affordance with ‘inviting  
560 potential’ that is on its way in becoming something else?

561 As a departing note, we wish to return to our journey as sport scientists in-becoming, following not  
562 the objects of convention, but corresponding with things of curiosity. Where is this correspondence  
563 to lead us next? While we have a direction of travel, this is a question we cannot answer, as where we

564 are going is somewhat uncertain, open to the possibility of what could come-into-being. There is a  
565 trepidation associated with this openness and uncertainty, a risk that at any moment, our journey  
566 could alter. Though, this trepidation is not because we are trying to 'stay the course', impatiently  
567 moving toward a point of fulfilment *as* sport scientists. To us, such a point does not even exist. Rather,  
568 our trepidation can be traced to our itchy feet, our eagerness to carry on, to pack up our tents and  
569 responsively follow the scent of what is on the horizon, guided by experiences undergone. After all, in  
570 a crescent, unscripted world replete with things on the move, there are no dead ends, just renewed  
571 beginnings, further opportunities to get to know that which is of interest to us better than before.  
572 Echoing the eloquently inspiring words of Tim Ingold with which we opened: what matters in life is  
573 not the final destination, but all the interesting things that occur along the way. For *wherever you are,*  
574 *there is somewhere further you can go.* Best then, we carry on.

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