Living In a changing world
Langenhof, M

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There are so many people I am grateful to, for their help, their advice, the fun times and the long hours spent working together, but mostly for being a part of my life for the past five years. I have been extremely lucky in so many ways, especially in the people I found around me.

Here’s my chance to finally tell you in written words, thank you. My life, and my PhD project, were better for having you in it.

First of all I want to mention my promotors, whose support and trust in me have made this project possible.

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And of course Franjo Weissing, for always being there to provide an outside perspective, to-the-point feedback and invaluable practical advice. Franjo, you have been my mentor since I started as a fresh biology student at the University of Groningen in 2003, and again when I entered the Evolutionary Biology Topmaster programme in 2006. I was really glad that you agreed to be my external advisor when I started my PhD in 2009, because it meant access to amazing quality control and an enormous theoretical expertise. I’ve gotten used to you having my back in academic matters – thank you. With your tendency to study across boundaries, to expand into new fields and apply your evolutionary thinking there, you’ve been an example and an inspiration.

I owe much thanks to the stickleback-people: my M.Sc student Rienk Apperloo, without whose consistent hard work the stickleback work would not have been possible, Katherine
Kochen and Casadei Ballard for their fieldwork assistance, Simon Pearish, whose expertise in animal behaviour was a great resource during our collaboration on chapters 4 and 5, Alison Bell, who taught me everything I needed to know about stickleback behaviour during the wonderful half year I spent in her lab during my M.Sc., and Niels Dingemanse, for many constructive conversations and collaborations at the start of this project.

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This project started out as research into stickleback personality, got reframed in the context of global environmental change, and ended up all the way at the other side of personality research, with the people of the TRAILS study at the UMCG. Throughout the past three years, I’ve really enjoyed the monthly scientific meetings and your presentations about various aspects of the ways in which young adolescents grow into adulthood. Although I never had an office at the UMCG and didn’t manage to get to know most of you personally, you’ve contributed in important ways to my understanding of developmental psychology and the TRAILS study in particular, through your enthusiasm, your presentations, feedback and the many chats over coffee. In this, I especially want to mention Esther B., Esther N., and Miranda, as well as Dennis for help navigating that largely foreign database.

Part of what has made this PhD project and my development over the last five years such a success has been the combination of science on one hand, and intuition on the other. By being allowed to do both at the same time, I was able to maintain a strong scientific urge to ask questions, devise experiments and critically consider available data, while at the same time remaining open-minded enough to pay attention to the world around me, accept where the available data led me, and explore beyond the borders of what science considers acceptable. I believe the future for both of these fields is in the bridge between them. Science cannot thrive without that intuitive component, used so liberally by scientific giants like Albert Einstein, Max Planck, Erwin Schroedinger, Wolfgang Pauli, Sir Arthur Eddington and many others. Similarly, the intuitive arts cannot thrive without training qualified practitioners and applying the scientific method to their theories and ideas. These past years, I have been grateful to my various academic supervisors and advisors for giving me the space to explore new territory even when they did not share my views, and for managing to keep the merit of my scientific work separate from the sometimes unkind popular opinion of my field of practise.
In this light, I also want to thank all my teaching staff and students at the Elfpath Foundation, for reminding me every day during class sessions, crisis moments and wonderful evenings why I’m trying to build this bridge. Susi, Gim, Katherine, Eagle, Meike, thank you for consistently being there and trying these past years, through ups and downs and straight on till sunrise. Watching you learn how to use your intuition well, and seeing you teach it to others, has been a delight and a privilege. Sharween, Akira, Yasuo, thank you for sharing your childhood with me and coming to play in my house so often. You’re showing me in real time how the previous generation is affecting your behaviour, your feelings, your energy, and what we can do different to make sure you have every chance to be as fully you as you like. Also our students, both locally oversees, both past and present, Wim, Kaiki, Mari, Mel, Teddy, Storm, Julie, Selas, Cas, Maarten, Mel (2), Kata, Jasper, Jos, Peter, Marita, Josefien, Sarah, Faith, Randy, Matt, Tim. Working with you all, showing you how to make big changes and become free from the damage and limits leftover from your early-life conditions, gave me a chance to practise the clinical side of my research and the continuing motivation to keep asking questions and keep digging for answers. Those who know me, know that this PhD has not been the most important thing in my life these years. My students, I think, know it’s not been because I lack interest in understanding developmental processes, how personality works, how difficulties can be passed on from previous generations or what characterises change. It’s simply been that my interest in affecting developmental processes, improving behaviours, and facilitating real change has been much more important to me, for one simple reason. You guys are wonderful, every single one of you, and seeing you learn and grow and become strong, beautiful, caring people is worth more to me than all the scientific careers in the world.

From the moment I was starting to believe that I might actually finish my PhD, I knew who I wanted for my cover design, and I would have no other. Melanie Smits, I’m very happy that you were willing to create this beautiful piece of art for me. It’s exactly what I was hoping for, and this thesis is all the more precious to me knowing your art is on its cover. Imagine how happy I was when you agreed not just to design the cover, but also the layout! Thank you for your creativity and fun, and for the hard work you put in to wrap things up in time. I am grateful as well to my paronymps: Susanne and Rienk. Susanne, I know that helping someone else prepare for their PhD is bringing up some of the difficulty you had with your own, and I’m grateful you were still willing to provide a listening ear, a hug when needed, and your let’s-get-it-done attitude. Rienk, it’s all been a bit last-minute and I didn’t get the chance to work with you as much as I was already in my writing phase when you started, but I’ve no doubts that the academic details are in good hands. Thank you both for your efforts in dealing with all the details around the symposium, the book, and the defence. A lot of things had to be done in a hurry, but it’s all come together nicely and with a minimum of fuss thanks to you!

Thank you also to my friends, Robin, for much needed breaks to play during the writing, and Earnest for your unwavering support for the last two years and your encouragement to keep working hard.
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I love you.

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It Felt Love

How
Did the rose
Ever open its heart

And give to this world
All its
Beauty?

It felt the encouragement of light
Against its
Being,

Otherwise,
We all remain

Too

Frightened.

Hafiz