# 4. *A Methodological Walk in the Forest: Critical Creativity and Human-Flourishing*

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*Forest energy*
*Regenerating forces*
*Transformation walk*

Welcome to our story in which we take you on a journey to help you experience critical creativity in your practice development (PD) work. Critical creativity is a new framework for PD that blends being critical (e.g. challenging assumptions, pointing out contradictions, paradoxes and dilemmas, reflecting in and on practice) with using creative imagination. We, therefore, invite you to begin your experience of this chapter through the use of your own creative imagination.

We suggest that, *in a moment when you have read this paragraph and the next two*, you make yourself comfortable (maybe lie on the floor). Close your eyes and when you feel yourself beginning to relax, listen to the sounds of the world outside the space you are in. Observe them . . . and then let them go. Move your attention then to the sounds of the space you are in. Listen, note them . . . and then let them go. Then listen to your breath, relaxing deeply as you breathe out, in and out, the sounds of your body.

When you are ready, imagine you are entering a forest. This forest symbolises your PD project, practice or research. We invite you to explore your forest landscape with all your senses. What does your PD smell like, look like? What do you see, notice? What is the quality of the light and the dark? What do you hear, taste, feel? What is the texture, the density of the different parts of your PD forest? What emotions does it evoke in you? How does it make you feel?

Try not to rationalise whatever comes to your imagination, however bizarre. Go with it, trust the wisdom of your body, some important hidden knowing or insight might rest there for you. When you are ready to leave your forest, listen to your breath, to your body, to the sounds in your space and then gently open your eyes.

**Point of departure: spiralling through the forest**

A group of stakeholders, including those who provide and receive healthcare, are at a forest retreat (Figure 4.1) to plan their organisation's PD journey together. Two of the stakeholders, Rory and Anna, have offered to facilitate. They are reasonably experienced in facilitating and developing practice within an emancipatory framework (see Manley & McCormack, 2004). They have recently read a paper by McCormack and Titchen (2006) and want to experiment, for the first time, with moving their emancipatory PD into a critical creativity frame. It says in the paper that working in nature is often found to be energising, inspirational and uplifting. As morale is low and there is a lot of confusion and uncertainty at this time of change in their organisation, they have chosen, for the two away days, a place of great beauty to uplift colleagues and enable creative, as well as critical working together. However, having arranged the natural venue, Anna and Rory think no further about how to promote energy, inspiration and uplift and leave these things to chance. Instead, they pay attention to structure, for example, providing a detailed programme with no time or space for blue-skies thinking or contemplation. Having previously created a shared vision for the PD project with all stakeholders, they focus on achieving the task set out for the day, that is, for small groups of stakeholders to talk about what they think needs to be done to improve the service that their organisation delivers. The first day is hot and most participants choose to sit for their discussions in the gardens immediately surrounding their conference chalet or in the chalet itself.

At the end of the day, Rory and Anna invite participants to evaluate the day's work using objects that they are attracted to or to engage in a piece of reflective writing. Whilst some participants remain indoors writing, most go outside and pick up from the edge of the forest, pieces of wood, water, soil, fir cones, for instance. They return indoors to express their evaluations using these artefacts. The facilitators then invite people to share the meaning of their creations or writing. Whilst new potential for growth and connections has been experienced, there is a pervading, palpable feeling of disconnectedness and flatness. A few participants are more explicit. Holding up a hollow chestnut case; Dave says

*There is structure around to protect us, but there has been a feeling of emptiness in the day. Our project vision didn't get enough attention.*

*Dave*

Maria points at her piece of rotting wood covered by a tiny fern and some moss:

*There has been lots of potential coming up today, but I don't feel that it has been capitalized upon. There is new growth, but I want to be more expansive, more flowing, more creative. I have been too much in my head today and I have not made the most of our glorious surroundings.*

*Maria*

Lucy shares her poem:

*Early morning feet firmly grounded on the grass.*
*Deep breath in feel the air, smell the forest, sun is embracing*
*There is energy!*

*As the day passes my mind and body become disconnected*
*Away flows my energy*

*I feel empty, sad and out of place*

*Lucy*

**Figure 4.1** Entering the forest.

Rory and Anna hear what people are saying; they recognise that they haven't got the balance right between providing programme structure and pacing for the day and providing open space and creativity, so as to enable everyone and the work to flourish. They decide to go for a walk in the woods with their two colleagues, Lucy and Elsa, before dinner and agree to begin walking, in pairs, in silence.

The purpose of this chapter is to show how human-flourishing (i.e. the outcome for individuals who achieve their maximum potential for growth and development) can be nurtured in those who co-create and implement critical and creative methodologies to develop practice and research that development. Our story, *Spiralling through the Forest* will show, at face value, how this nurturing can occur whilst developing practice, but at a deeper level, through the use of *resting points*,

we will reveal how parallel processes have been used in our International Practice Development Colloquium (IPDC) cooperative inquiry. This study is a part of a movement that values and enables human-flourishing for both actors and beneficiaries, as both the *ends* and *means* of research and development (see Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). In our case, the movement is building on emancipatory PD, as described by Bellman (2003), Manley and McCormack (2004), Titchen and Manley (2006). Human-flourishing is seen as both ends and means in the development of, and investigation into, person-centred, evidence-based healthcare. The chapter is a performance text in the sense that we portray, through the story, imagery and resting places, how the *conditions* for human-flourishing can be enabled through praxis (practice wisdom/mindful action with a moral intent) that is critical and creative. Such praxis is achieved through creative thinking, 'thinking about thinking' (metacognition) and critique *blended* with creative imagination and expression. We show how this blending occurs through the professional artistry of two facilitators, Anna and Rory, who pay attention to creating nourishing conditions, much as the gardener or forester might do to provide conditions for plants, trees, insects, birds and animals to grow, transform and flourish. Professional artistry, as described by Titchen and Higgs (2001), is the blending of practitioner qualities, different types of knowledge and ways of knowing, intelligence, practice skills and creative imagination processes all with the therapeutic or, in this case, facilitative use of self.

So above we have identified three key concepts: praxis, professional artistry and human-flourishing. Their reciprocal relationship to each other is at the heart of a new paradigmatic (worldview) synthesis that we have called *critical creativity*. This work forms some of the products of a cooperative inquiry undertaken by the IPDC.

It is bold to confront an established worldview (paradigm) and propose additions to it, but this is what the IPDC inquiry is striving to do. Recently, we have exposed, for public scrutiny, our challenge to the critical worldview as an adequate location for the transformational PD and research approaches that we are developing in healthcare (McCormack & Titchen, 2006). Whilst we accept the fundamental assumptions of the critical worldview (i.e. understanding of power relationships that may cause oppression is fundamental to enabling empowerment to take meaningful action), as described by Fay (1987) for example, it does not, from our perspective, recognise the creativity required in our approaches. Neither does it explicitly acknowledge that creativity often involves moral and spiritual dimensions as people push out the boundaries of the known within their own practices. In particular, these gaps within Fay's (1987) eight critical theories for practice (Table 4.1) have informed our PD practice thus far (McCormack & Titchen, 2006).

Over the last decade, we have addressed these gaps, by combining the assumptions[1] of the critical worldview with our experiences of using creative imagination

[1] In this chapter, the term 'assumptions', when used in connection with philosophy, theory and methodology, means accepted positions that are made explicit.

**Table 4.1** Fay's (1987) eight critical theories for practice

| Theory | Description |
|---|---|
| 1. False consciousness | Shows how our understandings are false, how these came about and potential alternatives |
| 2. Crisis | Spells out what a 'crisis' is and why it exists |
| 3. Education | Learning processes to help us become enlightened |
| 4. Transformative action | Identifies those 'crisis elements' that need to be changed and a plan of action for doing so |
| 5. The body | Understanding of how we inherit roles and how these limit our freedom |
| 6. Tradition | Identifies which parts of a particular tradition are changeable/not changeable |
| 7. Power | The nature and limits of power in a given context |
| 8. Reflexivity | Explains the past, accounts for the present and plans for liberation whilst paying attention to context and limits |



and expression in our emancipatory PD work. Then through a critical review of our work, we have created a new synthesis for action-focused development and research to add to the critical worldview. As stated above, we call this synthesis 'critical creativity'. In our previous paper (McCormack & Titchen, 2006), we described our reflexive journey that led to the articulation of critical creativity. We critiqued current assumptions underpinning the critical worldview and articulated the unique philosophical, theoretical and methodological assumptions of critical creativity. As a result, we proposed a substantial elaboration of Fay's sub-theory 10 (a sub-theory of his theory 4 – *transformative action* (see Table 4.1 for Fay's theories, and McCormack & Titchen [2006] for the associated sub-theories). We have called this elaboration of sub-theory 10, *creativity* (see McCormack & Titchen, 2006).

We recognise that increasing numbers of people engaged in PD and PD research use creative arts media in their work and that a few are positioning themselves with the notion of human-flourishing as ends and means. We are also aware that the term 'critical creativity' has been used by others. However, it appears that they draw on very different sets of assumptions and frame creativity and criticality in distinctly different ways to those we present here. According to Ragsdell (1998), for instance, critical creativity is a critical approach to cognitive and creative thinking leading, through understanding or enlightenment, to empowerment. Her theoretical base flows from creative problem-solving, organisational, critical systems thinking and total systems intervention. Others justify their work through a variety of other traditions, such as indigenous knowledge, humanities and embodied knowing (perceiving through the senses). Whilst we frame our journey through

a Westernised critical tradition, we also draw upon a variety of other sources of wisdom and knowledge (ancient, spiritual and indigenous).

We present, in this chapter, the first refinement of our theoretical framework for human-flourishing within a critical creativity worldview (see McCormack & Titchen, 2006). We describe the methodology and methods that we have co-constructed within the IPDC cooperative inquiry and show how they have been shaped through critical creativity's unique philosophical, theoretical and methodological assumptions. Throughout the chapter, we offer a *faction* growing from walks that members of the IPDC have taken together (both metaphorically and metaphysically) in a forest near Utrecht in The Netherlands. A faction is fiction based on empirical fact. The faction itself is indicated by the use of a different font, but it contains quotes in the same font as the rest of the chapter. These quotes are from real IPDC co-inquirers to whom pseudonyms have been given. The quotes enable the reader to get a sense of the empirical IPDC data upon which the faction was created. The photographs in Figures 4.3, 4.5 and 4.6 are further sources of empirical evidence. The faction is also rooted in our experience of many years of PD, researching PD and researching ourselves. It provides an example of how our inquiry methodology is also a methodology for developing practice. Resting and meeting points, symbolised by a spiral, offer our commentary on the story.

At the end of the chapter, we set out the methodological walk we have undertaken so far and where we are planning to go next.

**Melding, exploding, blending: a refinement**

In silence, Rory and Anna hold the frustrations of the day. Their own and others' flourishing has been absent: 'Oh why did we sit in our heads all day and not venture out into the woods? What was stopping us?' Gradually, they notice the points of light on the forest path and their hearts begin to lift on birdsong wings. The earth is fragrant with the scent of pine and, within minutes, the forest soothes their frustrations and heals their sense of failure. Rory stops and folds his arms around the rough bark of an ancient tree. Anna hangs back until he beckons her and they link arms, without words, bodies pressed on the massive trunk. Continuing along the dappled path, they gently begin to share their experiences of the last few moments, framing them, using their senses, in the landscape:

*Human flourishing is points of light on trees*
*Light transforms, enables light and death*
*Young saplings and ancient canopy must both flourish*
*To maintain the balance of the forest*

*Anna*

At a meeting point, they join up with Lucy and Elsa and comment on the devastation of beauty; a patch of felled trees. Lucy invites them to re-frame the scene; logs to keep us warm in winter, creating space and light for saplings to grow:

*A Methodological Walk in the Forest*

*As we walk on, we step off the path and stop in a pile of dead leaves.*

*You can regard them in two ways – as having done their job or as a new beginning given that we need them for new development. The youngsters (meaning the trees) need the oldies (meaning the rotting leaves) to nurture and support them (i.e. provide them with nourishing compost for growth). The forest's ecosystem is a wonderful metaphor for practice development – we all have a place and value in our practice world with our own understandings that inform our actions. But we need the light fall (critique) and life juice (common language) in order to grow.*

*That is the way it is.*

*We stop at an open space which at the first glance looks awful, destruction! But then at a second glance, there it is a beautiful spot for deer to graze.*

*Being here, standing here breathing deeply, I feel my blood (life juice) streaming and feel connected to the system again!*

*Lucy*

The four decide that human-flourishing is an ecosystem of balancing life–death–life, creating conditions for interdependency and the losses and gains of each position. Fragility and strength. Strength and fragility. Dynamic balance.

In the IPDC inquiry, we are a group of people with varying degrees of experience of research and facilitating research that is collaborative, participative and inclusive. Those of us who are more experienced are concerned with enabling others' capacity to co-construct the inquiry methodology and methods. However, this places considerable tension in the group: on those who are enjoying a rare opportunity to work with experienced, creative others; to fly, to be creative and innovative. The tension is between flying and bringing less experienced others along at a pace comfortable for them. There is a tension also for some who do not want to hold others back. How can we all, in a transparent, nurturing way, ensure that there is a commitment to exploring tensions, so that the forest canopy can flourish without taking away the light that will enable the saplings to flourish and grow?

*Talking, reasoning,*
*Power of programme silently pervades,*
*Loss of interest and energy drain*

*Invitation to walk,*
*Framing reflection in landscape experience,*
*Feeling ground, layered with richness,*
*Microcosm beneath our feet*
*Pine smell of living air*
*As light dances through leafy filters*

*In stillness, beauty absorbed*
*Adds relish to being.*

*Privileged few*
*Travelling paths worn by others*
*And seeking new*

*Freedom within form*
*Green openness midst trees erect*
*Living reminders to ages past*
*Rendering us in perspective*
*Like wisdom sought*
*In nature revelation*

*Much more than talk*
*This living, feeling, knowing*
*Rich integration point of infinite reference*
*And in appreciation learn*

*Elsa*

This last poem captures the essence of the transformative engagement that the group experienced in the wood. '*Much more than talk; living, feeling, knowing*', as the poem expresses, reflects the feelings we had about the theories and frameworks we used in our emancipatory PD and research. In our critique of critical social science (McCormack & Titchen, 2006), we identified limits to its usefulness as a framework to enable transformative and creative action. More specifically, in our critique of Fay's (1987) eight practice theories of being critical, we concluded that the creative nature of the work in which we are engaged is omitted within these theories. The critical approach, as elaborated by Fay, does not sufficiently explain or direct attention to the issue of how a critical theory can be turned into actual practice. We identified that even within *transformative action* (theory 4 in Table 4.1), sub-theory 10 of Fay's model (a plan of action that indicates how people are to carry out a social transformation) leaves the impression that the movement from the level of abstract theory to the level of practice is nothing more than application. But this is misguided; practical activity involves skills, sensitivities, and capacities that require an artistry that involves far more than knowing the contents of a theory. This is why we elaborated sub-theory 10 and named it *creativity*, as introduced above.

Practical activity involves praxis through which practitioners learn how to pick out significant features of their environment, develop insightful responses to these features, and adjust and adapt themselves to the particularities of a given situation. Of course, praxis can be informed by theory, but genuine praxis requires that practitioners go far beyond learning this theory in order to be effective practitioners, i.e. we need to place ourselves in the context of theory by how we live, feel and know the environment/landscape of practice. In particular, in trying to implement a critical theory, practitioners need to employ a kind of creative activity whereby they enable themselves to perform in particular situations. Practising this creative activity and developing practical knowing will enable practitioners to develop a professional artistry without which their interventions or transformative

actions in the practical world would be clumsy, routine or unresponsive. We identified that what was needed to augment Fay's critical model, then, was a *praxis spiral* that focuses attention on the important creative work in which practitioners must engage if they are to be effective in taking or facilitating transformative action.

We suggest therefore that creativity enables holistic engagement of mind, heart, body and spirit at the heart of critical social science, which has, traditionally, centred on using the mind for critiquing historical, social, political and cultural contexts of practice. Thus the sub-theory of *creativity* blends and melds all the other sub-theories as set out by Fay (see Table 4.1 for Fay's theories and McCormack & Titchen [2006] for the associated sub-theories). Without such creativity, the knowing that is at the heart of transformative action cannot be fully realised through the professional artistry of practice. We set out the sub-theory of *creativity* as

> *the blending and weaving of art forms and reflexivity (critical consciousness) located in the critical [worldview]. Blending and weaving occur through professional artistry in order to achieve the ultimate outcome of human flourishing. Thus this theory has critical, moral and sacred dimensions.*
>
> *McCormack & Titchen, 2006, p. 259*

This sub-theory has a critical dimension because it builds on critical theory, a moral dimension because it encompasses praxis and a spiritual dimension because we use our spiritual intelligence to make meaning, uplift ourselves and to take or facilitate transformative action at the edge of the unknown.

We have come to see that whilst Fay sets out his theories as a typology (Table 4.1), he does not discuss the relationships between them. Thus, we are exploring, inductively, what these relationships might be.

As the four talk in the forest, they realise that Fay's typology of eight critical practice theories does not show the relationships between the theories. Their experience this evening is that they have been able to spell out to themselves what the *crisis* (theory 2), revealed in the evaluations of the first away day, was and why it existed. They have been able, through their bodies first, to know that something was wrong, rather than through reflecting on their practice, which is what practitioners and managers are urged to do when they go about improving people's experiences of healthcare. Rather, it is centrally and significantly through *the body* and then through *reflexivity* (theory 8) that Anna and Rory have overcome the *crisis* (as it related to themselves). They learn that they must pay attention to *the body* (theory 5 – understanding of how we inherit roles and how these limit our freedom), in this context to work within a critical creativity worldview, if they are to enable the conditions for human-flourishing and transformation the next day. This has suddenly assumed huge significance for them as facilitators of the PD planning process. They are also beginning to sense that theory 5 needs to be supplemented to capture how they are using, in this work, the wisdom and pre-reflective knowing that their bodies hold. They realise that this knowing is often hidden and overshadowed by their cognitive knowing and thus by *reflexivity*.

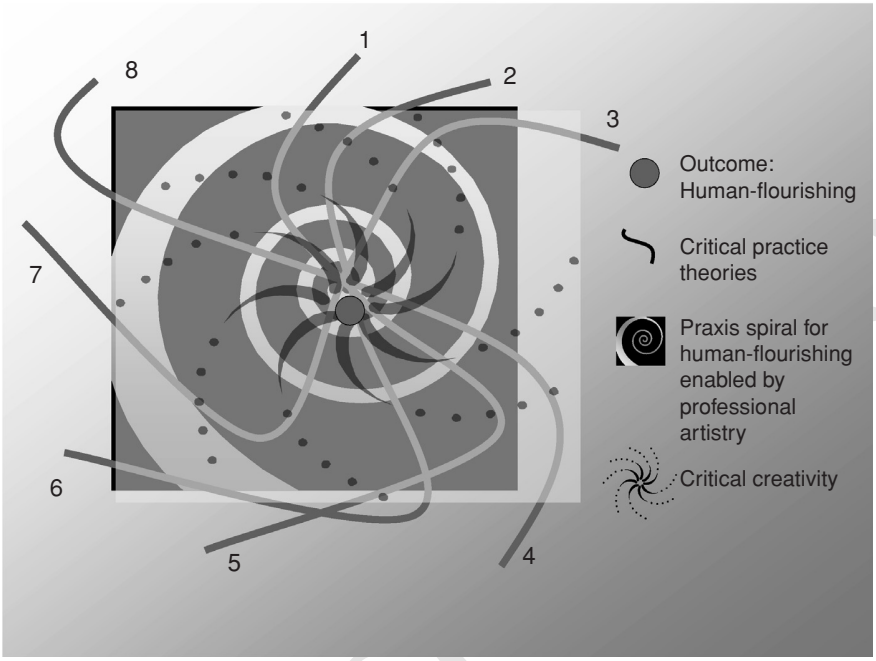


**Figure 4.2** A theoretical framework for human-flourishing located in the critical creativity worldview (McCormack & Titchen, 2006).

After dinner, Rory and Anna, decide to use their experience of the evening walk to create conditions that could re-energise the group and enable stakeholders to create a shared vision, common purpose and methodology for the PD project. They want to do this within the theoretical framework for human-flourishing (see Figure 4.2), not only to achieve the shared vision that everyone can sign up to, but also to introduce and model ways of critical, creative working that the stakeholders might decide to build on in the project. They also want to explore the *praxis spiral* idea and how this may help them to be more effective in working creatively with stakeholders and to become more aware of the relationships between Fay's theories in their own practice.

The facilitators in our faction realise that they could shape their facilitation, developed within an emancipatory PD (EPD) tradition by combining it with more ancient ways that honour and work with nature, energy, spirituality and creativity. Here we see Fay's (1987) critical practice theory of *tradition* (theory 6 – identifies which parts of a particular tradition are changeable/not changeable) at work. They can see, for example, that they could combine the cognitive processes and tools of EPD, such as the claims, concerns and issues tool (RCN, 2007), with the use of creative imagination and expression. They are aware that there is a tension between the cognitive and the imaginative in that they require the use of different aspects of

ourselves and thus facilitation approaches and indeed helping people to overcome a resistance to using creative methods; an 'I can't' resistance often stemming from negative school experiences. Our facilitators are also aware that some traditions are worth keeping, in this case the cognitive tradition of many EPD tools and processes, and that bandwagon-jumping should be avoided, for example, using paint and clay as media for engaging creatively with such activities as 'values clarification' without integrating these media with rigorous thematic analysis of the data emerging. The best of different traditions, ancient, contemporary and new fusions, can be used in complementary ways to engage the whole of ourselves authentically in PD work.

**Framing action in landscape experience: cooperative inquiry methodology**

The next morning, still slightly bleary-eyed and heavy-headed from midnight revelry in the bar, Anna invites the group to get a sheet of folded A4 paper and a pencil and then gather in a circle on the grass outside the chalet. She offers to teach them a T'ai Chi exercise. The group agrees, some of them thinking it might help to wake them up:

> *Place your feet hip-width apart and feel and connect with the earth . . . Imagine now that there is a silver thread suspending you from the crown of your head to the sky. Lengthening in the back and neck . . . Soften your knees. Let the sky energy pour through you to the earth. Suspended between the heavens and the earth . . . Now, I am going to show you an exercise with movement and breath that will help us to draw in the wonderful energy from the trees surrounding us.*

Gently, breaking the silence, Rory invites the group to play, to have some fun, an adventure into the unknown. He gets agreement on some ground rules for their adventure. Everyone will be responsible for their own safety (emotional, physical, spiritual) and they will choose to follow or to find their own way. Rory points out that if they are to feel their way to a shared vision and common purpose and cooperative ways of working, then they need to stay attuned, engaged and connected to each other, through their senses, each in their own way. They also agree that they would dare to step out of their comfort zone.

Anna and Rory run off into the wood, shouting, 'Follow us!' 'Trust the process' – running, jumping, whooping; intentionally, to release residual energies and feelings associated with participants' expressions of 'flatness' yesterday. Such energies inhibit the embodiment of experience and the engagement with creative spaces. They are working on the idea that a fundamental way of accessing creativity is through taking risks, leaping into the unknown, being the playful child.

At a meeting point, in the forest, Rory invites everyone to pair up and for each pair to find a tree and link arms around it. 'Look up to the sky', he says (Figure 4.3). After still moments, Anna and Rory run on. Some follow, some stay behind and talk about what they have experienced. Connecting with nature and with another person, they rooted/grounded in the earth and connected with the sky. They say that this helped them to

- *Take a risk*
- *Let go of inhibitions*
- *Ground ourselves in nature*
- *Connect with the 'here and now'*
- *Make a physical connection with another and nature*

- *Feel belonging*
- *Prepare for stepping into something new, and*
- *Move into metaphorical & metaphysical spaces.*

*We discover a tall tree in an open space. On the left side there is a beautiful light fall. We see re-growth of young plants on this side, but not on the right. We wonder although the left and right are connected with the trunk and enjoy the same life juice they differ! What is the language that connects them? Is that how we are at the moment, disconnected?*

*Lucy*

Anna and Rory are aware that not everyone is following. Feeling a slight anxiety that some may lose connection with the activity, they remind themselves of the necessity to feel the interpretations of a situation in order to engage with Fay's theory 2 (*crisis*). This felt effortless to them and enabled the crisis to become a risk that was grounded in their mutuality as co-facilitators:

*The trust that the group would stay together was realistic. My concern was the feeling (be it limited) of disconnection – running, jumping and following was a complex moment that raised issues such as: Do I want to do this (emotionally)? Can I do this (physically)? Why am I doing this (rationally)? I remember being critical of 'not blindly following the leader(s)'. Me and my 'partner' were conscious of keeping the rest of the group in view, and felt comfortable taking up the invitation to use our senses – but then in our own time, way, and route. Upon reflection, this works better as each member is able to participate within/at the edge of their own comfort zone.*

*Pieter*

When everyone catches up, Anna suggests that people walk in their pairs in meditative silence, using their senses to really experience the forest world. Her intention here is that by emptying the mind through awareness, we free ourselves up for criticality and creativity.

Fay's *false consciousness* (theory 1) may explain why some stakeholders held back and questioned themselves when invited to play and to go on 'an adventure into the unknown'. Being playful is not usually seen by many as part of healthcare work. Moreover, jumping into the dark abyss of the unknown is likely to be avoided as certainty in contemporary healthcare interventions and outcomes is increasingly sought. However, the facilitators are encouraging the stakeholders to take a leap of faith into a new consciousness to enable creative visioning. This consciousness-raising is a PD process within the critical social science tradition, but it is usually achieved through cognitive means. Here the facilitators are doing it through the body, for example, through inviting a physical embodiment with the tree and hands clasped, using the senses to embody the forest and using the imagination to go on an adventure.

Working within the critical creativity theoretical framework, the facilitators are able to turn the *crisis* (theory 2) of confidence into potential for *transformative action*

**Figure 4.3** Sensing the forest world: consciousness-raising through the body and imagination.

(theory 4) by identifying those crisis elements that need to be changed and developing a plan of action for doing so. As often happens, this plan is created in very short space of time. This is the effortless magic, the shape-shifting of this way of working.

In the IPDC inquiry, we accept the philosophical assumption of spiritual intelligence as the capacity and quickness to address and solve problems of meaning and value and place our transformative actions, lives and pathways in wider, richer meaning-giving contexts (Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Thus, as Wright (2007) says, spirituality is a call to action. As we are ultimately concerned, in PD and its facilitation with human-flourishing (in its myriads of ways), we believe that it is likely to involve the human spirit and being in tune with nature (see Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). Moreover, spiritual intelligence gives us our moral sense and allows us to discriminate, to aspire, to dream and to uplift ourselves. Spiritual intelligence lets us work *with* the boundaries of the known and shape and transform the situation. We, therefore, honour all forms of spirituality that encompass a moral concern for others and recognise that particular spiritual beliefs imbue and shape knowing, doing, being and becoming within our inquiry. People in our inquiry hold a variety of spiritual beliefs or none at all, but through a long, deep, critical and

creative exploration we have found a point of connection by searching for commonalities. We have found that the three commonalities of significance are as follows: spiritual intelligence; helping relationships imbued with a professional love within clear boundaries (the moderated love described by Campbell (1984); a respectful relationship with, and sense of awe emanating from, beauty and nature.

## *Praxis and professional artistry*

The concept of praxis has been around for millennia (Aristotle created the term). It takes a key place as the central spiral of the critical creativity framework (Figure 4.2). It represents the spiralling journey from wherever we are now towards human-flourishing. The journey spirals as we deepen and extend our capacity for praxis, constantly returning near to, but never at, the same place, always moving on. Movement is facilitated through the processes of blending, connecting, energising, reflecting, practising, learning and becoming. As we are concerned with overcoming internal and external barriers and transformation, the *praxis spiral* in our framework is influenced by a blending of approaches to reflexive action that free us from obstacles to effective action, with a facilitated understanding of the learning from these processes. We propose that it is the practice developer's professional artistry that enables this blending and creates the dynamic energy of the spiral. This artistry is the meaningful expression of a uniquely individual view within a shared tradition and involves the blending of practitioner qualities, practice skills and creative imagination processes. It is the hallmark of expertise (Titchen, 2000), in this case, of a practice developer/facilitator. According to Titchen and Higgs (2001), the qualities, skills and processes of professional artistry and their blending are built up through extensive introspective and critical reflection upon, and review of, practice. This view supports our notion of reflecting, practising, learning and becoming within the *praxis spiral*. Through a blend of cognitive and artistic critique, practice developers and facilitators are able to turn Fay's eight critical practice theories (Figure 4.2) into informed, transformed and transforming action with the moral intent of social justice, equity and human-flourishing for all stakeholders, including themselves. We argue that professional artistry, within the practice of any discipline, enables the continual re-construction of theory in and on practice.

After experiencing the forest, in silence, through the *body*, Anna and Rory begin to talk. They realise, to their amazement, that they have now entered the praxis spiral because they are re-constructing Fay's theory in and from their practice in the here and now. They realise that it was through the body that they were able to be *reflexive* in a creative way (relationship between theories 5 and 8). To facilitate reflexivity in the others, they invite pairs of participants to talk to each other about what they noticed. The pairs follow Rory and Anna down another forest path, talking softly.

Further on, Anna suggests that the pairs re-frame their vision and purpose for their PD project through the forest sights, smells, textures and so on. She bases this suggestion on her experience that such re-framing not only seems to elicit new and deepening insights, but also provides a frame for remembering them. She reminds people, however, of the folded A4 paper and points out that they might like to record or draw insights, images, analogies or metaphors that emerge (theory 3 – *education*).

Anna and Rory now step off the road well travelled drawn by a veil of mist and light towards the unknown (Figure 4.4). They are surprised immediately to see devastation, decaying wood like carcasses, old bones. They sense that this devastation represents the things they must let go of; the things they must let die in themselves, like the fear of uncertainty and the unknown. Stepping through the mystic veil, they spiral through the pathless forest. The others follow, some close, others at a distance. Knowing the stakeholders as persons, Rory and Anna are confident that everyone will stay attuned to and connected with each other once they step into the tremulous dark of the ancient wood. Rory realises that the 'tremulous dark' is like some of the fear he is experiencing right now having decided to engage with Anna in critically creative PD, rather than EPD with which they are both familiar. His previous understanding of Fay's theory of the *body* (theory 5) helps with framing this fear, i.e. the need to understand where this fear comes from and why he becomes fearful. It has been through his critical companionship relationship (see Titchen, 2004) with Anna over many years that he has come to learn how to free himself from such fears and do what is asked of us by Fay's theory of *education* (theory 3) – to develop an account of the conditions necessary for transformation to occur.

This section of the story is informed by Titchen and Higgs (2001) critical and creative model of becoming. The felled trees and decaying wood represent what we have to let die in ourselves before we can make room for creativity, new life, growth. Whilst this letting go is often painful for us, it is necessary. Just as the forester, in a seemingly brutal way, thins dense woodland to enable everything in it to flourish. Stepping through the mystic veil symbolises the act of 'becoming' a transformational practice developer and facilitator. This act is sometimes almost mystical or magical for those we have worked with and very often for ourselves. What is astonishing is that this act often occurs very quickly when working with critical creativity. The dark wood represents an abyss; a fertile void of uncertainty into which we have to leap if we are to engage in critical, creative, ethical and spiritual becoming. The points of light coming through the trees symbolise the light or the transformation or new life and direction that we attain through practice development/facilitation/research artistry and creativity.

Rory and Anna spiral, feeling their way towards the place in the woods where they want to invite the pairs to join up to engage in a critical dialogue; prickles under foot, spongy ground, earthy fragrance of rotting leaves, ferns unfurling. They pass a huge tree that has fallen between two straight-trunked pines standing close together. Magically, no branches of either standing tree have been broken. They discuss how this symbolises something of the culture that they want to work towards in their PD project:

**Figure 4.4** Stepping through the mystic veil.

*Slip through the wall crack*
*Of blockage and resistance*
*Hands clasped, effortless*
*To new synergy*
*Different stories, knowings*
*Re-creation*
*Sharing action*
*Transformation!*
*Anna*

Spiralling, they see their conference chalet through the trees. Rory resists the desire to return and frames this desire in words to Anna that reflect a bodily reaction to the surroundings and an embodiment of emotion over rationality. Anna gently leads on like the confident critical companion that she is. Rory and Anna continue to discuss the power of the tree to be so precise, even in its falling, and realise that from a critical perspective, *power* (theory 7) is often considered a negative force or a power over, rather than a power to enable (see Hokanson Hawks, 1991). But as reflected in Anna's poem, power as 'hands clasped' can be sensitive, careful, deliberate and well intentioned. They reflect on the relevance of this metaphor to much of their own PD work.

IPDC co-inquirers intentionally resist the desire to return to the known pathways of EPD research. We aspire to having no formal leader roles and all co-inquirers having an equal power in decision-making about the research and responsibility for organising, designing and facilitating our six monthly gatherings. And we are making some progress towards that aspiration. But in the meantime, there are amongst us more experienced researchers and practice developers who express critical creativity as a way of living, being, learning, becoming, practising. As might be expected, they have become sapiential leaders, that is, leaders leading through their wisdom and depth of knowledge and experience, rather than through their role or position. In our forest metaphor, the sapiential leaders are the forest canopy who can sense the way forward towards a fuller understanding of critical creativity, whilst others, at ground level, are, in a well-worn phrase, just beginning to see the woods for the trees. The metaphor of the fallen tree symbolises how the sapiential leaders are managing the tension between flying and bringing others along in ways that promote human-flourishing. We, for example, are trying to make space and light for others to grow by sharing our craft knowledge of using a critical creativity framework in PD and PD research. This faction is based on one such sharing.

At last Rory and Anna find the meeting point, and when everyone arrives, they invite the pairs to join up with other pairs to engage in a critical dialogue about what they have learned about the vision, purpose and ways of working for their PD project. The groups engage in animated conversation, sharing metaphorical and metaphysical insights. Anna and Rory record what people are saying. Energy levels are very high. People are excited.

Our proposed new sub-theory of *creativity* (McCormack & Titchen, 2006) illustrates how the emotional engagement experienced through metaphorical and metaphysical dialogue moves beyond rational reflection and is felt instead through the body and the bringing together of all our senses in order to bring about new learning and understanding that impacts on our actions (i.e. transformation).

After a while, another invitation to walk alone with others, this time in contemplative silence. 'Notice what you notice (Figure 4.5) and pick up, either physically or imaginatively, anything that you are attracted to and bring it with you – you don't have to have a reason for it. What we are attracted to is often symbolic of something that we haven't yet recognised cognitively, raised to our consciousness and/or articulated'.

At last, they reach a special meeting point, experienced as a sacred place of transformation. Without words or instructions, Rory and Anna begin to create a piece of landscape art with the artefacts they have gathered (Figure 4.6). They were intentionally modelling artistic expression using nature, silence, attunement and sensitivity to others and their creations. The others join in spontaneously, in silence. Some are quickly finished and stand back and watch in a respectful, reverential way. Rory and Anna are aware of some

**Figure 4.5** Mariolijn noticed this.

finishing quickly and others taking longer. So they deliberately hold the space open for those who need longer by continuing to contribute to the artwork:

> *I remember this point clearly – and was very aware of being authentic and true to myself – I didn't want to 'reproduce' or 'imitate.*
>
> *Pieter*

*Transformative action* is a nexus of *power* to enable, *the body*, consciousness-raising, creative facilitation (*education*) embedded in ancient *tradition* and nature, ritual, and *reflexivity*. In the IPDC inquiry, as facilitators of *transformative action*, we often enable ourselves and others to use silence and inner listening to self as key to accessing professional artistry (i.e. a blending of different kinds of knowing, intelligence, cognition, metacognition, practice wisdom and creativity). We also use artefacts to capture the essence of experience and any intuitions, bodily, emotional, artistic or spiritual intelligences that may come into our consciousness during such work, which can be turned into words with other activities. Working with artefacts and other creative expressions, we have found that people gather large amounts of synthesised data in a seemingly effortless way that is yet systematic and rigorous.

**Figure 4.6** Creating the vision as a piece of landscape art.

Creating landscape art is one example of how IPDC co-inquirers express artistically and with others their inner wisdom and new ideas. Silence is absolutely central. Words or verbal sounds tend to break the magic of such moments. Working together in this way bonds people at a deep level. Sometimes, it creates a metaphorical or a metaphysical space (sacred space – in whatever tradition or not people choose, each for own self). Such co-expression often enhances the human-flourishing of individuals and the group. It creates a holistic expression of individual experience. Facilitators using a critical creativity approach will draw on many different traditions of facilitation; for example, Brendan is strongly influenced by John Heron's (1989) work and Angie by Carl Rogers' (1983) and by indigenous wisdom expressed by Angeles Arrien (1993) in her synthesis, 'the four-fold way'.

The artwork complete, Rory invites each person to share the meaning of their part of the creation. After each sharing, he invites the rest of us, with the permission of the creator, to express what that part of the artwork evokes in us. He says, 'Express what it brings up in you by saying, "I see, I feel, I imagine''. Using these words helps each person to own their own interpretation/response to the artwork'. He encourages us not to interpret others' work because the philosophical position of critical creativity is that multiple realities are honoured and included at the same time as identifying shared meanings.

Anna captures what people say to ensure that the critically creative process is translated into 'data' that those who do not engage with critical creativity can still recognise as evidence for rigorous and systematic analysis. She will use these notes later in the processing session to ensure that shared meanings are made explicit for the creation of the project vision.

To reaffirm the group bonding, a sense of belonging and closure of the experiential part of the activity, Rory asks us to stretch a circle around the creation. We stand in silence for a moment or two and then share one word, a sound or movement to get at the essence of the creation and/or experience of creating it. Anna captures words, energies and movement on her paper. As processing is essential with this kind of activity, Rory suggests that we move out of our metaphorical/metaphysical place and space and go back to the 'real world' where there are chairs!

A whisper away lies the 'real' world of kitchens, workmen and conference groups. We are amazed that we created such a beautiful space so near the 'real' concrete world. Magically, a circle of chairs appears! Sound of water. Now we are ready to move into cognitive critique of our sensory, aesthetic experiences through critical, creative conversations, contemplations, receiving the observation notes and drawings. After the processing is over, Anna invites one word or short phrase evaluations of the walk in the woods.

This processing stage is when the critical and artistic juxtapose or collide and potentially something new is created or the previously inexpressible or unknown is articulated. It uses particularly the PD processes of graceful care, sympathetic presence, learning in and from practice, intentionality, saliency, temporality, consciousness-raising, problematisation, self-reflection and critique (Titchen, 2004; McCormack, 2001). These processes are facilitated by, for example, the strategies of observing, listening and reflective questioning, story-telling, high challenge/high support, facilitating theorisation of practice, engaging multiple discourses or cultural analysis. The analysis of the processing in our real walk in the forest led us to a new understanding of our original theoretical framework for human-flourishing. As highlighted earlier, the relationships between Fay's (1987) theories appear to be unarticulated. The new understanding that emerged for us is that central to our theoretical framework must be Fay's theory of the *body*, as it is through our bodies that we integrate a *reflexive* analysis of our engagement with our creativity and our framing of that, through theoretical and methodological perspectives. Thus we have refined the original framework and now place *the body* and *reflexivity* at the centre, with *the body* being the entry point into the framework (Figure 4.7).

## *Blending and weaving: underpinning assumptions*

The story has shown how critical creativity informs the IPDC inquiry strategy. The inquiry is shaped by the philosophical, theoretical and methodological assumptions described by McCormack and Titchen (2006). We want to point out two of the philosophical assumptions here. The first is that we use creative expression

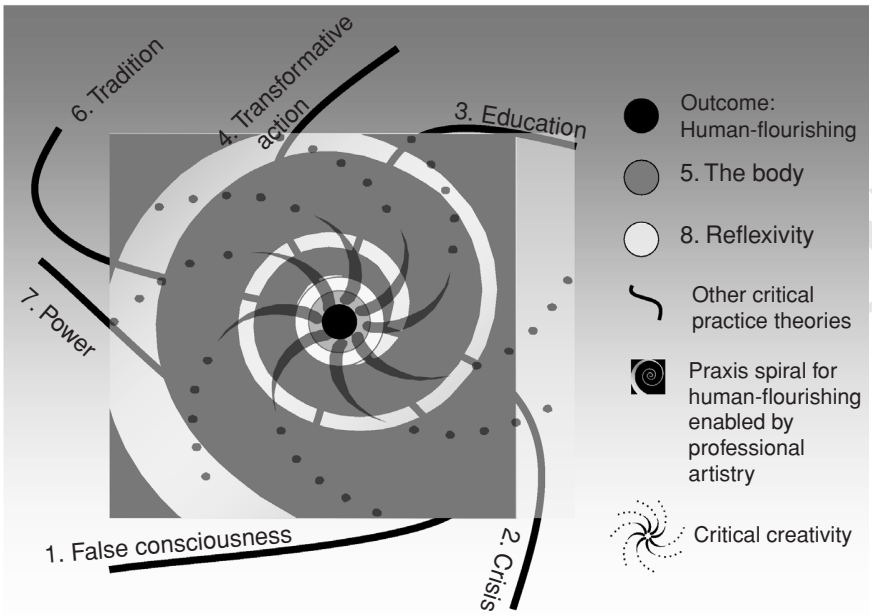


**Figure 4.7** A theoretical framework for human-flourishing located in the critical creativity worldview (revision 1).

to create synergy between cognitive and artistic approaches to critique. A movement between creative expression, critical dialogue and contestation is enabled to develop and understand the key concepts of human-flourishing, transformation, praxis and professional artistry. Each stage combines cognitive with artistic critique, creating a synergy through a reiterative, reciprocal dialogue between words and art forms. The second assumption is that our work is person centred. Being person centred is linked to beliefs and values about the intrinsic moral good of personhood and to a universal moral principle that extends beyond politics, religion, wealth, privilege, cognition, rationality, ethnicity or sexuality. Three main characteristics of person centredness shape our inquiry: (i) the uniqueness of the human individual, (ii) a concern with the meaning and purpose of human life and (iii) the individual's freedom to choose. We have blended the moral intent of the critical worldview with its focus on improvement and transformation within the social world, with the moral intent of creating conditions that will enable improvement and transformation of the individual life worlds of persons.

What we have shown in the story is how skilled facilitators are co-inquirers, observing, questioning, experiencing and engaging with the concept being investigated, all at the same time. They are immersed in the world, connected to it in all their roles. They are epistemologically and ontologically authentic, that is, their ways of creating new knowledge about human-flourishing are congruent with the

way they are as human beings, connecting with others in the world and fostering conditions for the human-flourishing of co-inquirers:

> *Green is so green and blue is vivid, yes, the energy is flowing*
> *Thank you, critical companions, for walking, jumping and running across this beautiful forest.*
>
> *Lucy*

An important theoretical assumption that we make is that critique of assumptions in our inquiry begins consciously through individual and group processes in order to link new ideas with what people already know and also to blend different worldviews (epistemological concerns). This work begins as a conscious blending process, but as we begin to genuinely live the assumptions in our inquiry practices, there appears to be a move from conscious to unconscious blending. In other words, the blending becomes embodied and part of human being in the world (ontological concern). Another theoretical assumption is that we see human becoming as the development of mind, heart, body and spirit through approaches to learning and facilitation that draw upon a variety of perspectives and traditions. So we use these theoretical assumptions to work with Fay's eight critical practice theories through our newly proposed sub-theory 10, that is, *creativity*.

Our key methodological assumption is that we assume a critically creative approach to reflexive action. Professional artistry provides the synergy and positive/enabling power to blend the philosophical and theoretical assumptions above and convert them into such action. We use this blend to mediate Fay's critical theories in our investigation of ourselves as co-inquirers developing an international theory for PD. In other words, we are particularising Fay's propositional knowledge to make it useful to our particular situation and selves. Blending and particularisation seem to involve artistic processes, such as appreciation, attunement, harmonisation, synthesis, being able to see the whole and the parts of some aspect of professional practice or experience and moving between them and getting the balance and form right.

Whilst accepting the central assumptions of EPD and research (see Manley & McCormack, 2004; Titchen & Manley, 2006), we have now set out through story and resting places the features of our practice epistemology (knowing) and ontology (being), as co-inquirers and enablers, that are unique to critical creativity.

## *Resting after walking (for now)*

In this chapter, we have re-articulated a new paradigmatic synthesis called critical creativity through a physical walk in a wood, capturing metaphorical and metaphysical meaning in order to engage in body-situated, reflexive analysis of PD. We have embraced EPD processes, tools and outcomes in order to illustrate the strength and wisdom of the energy that flows from critically creative dialogical action. Critical creativity is not merely a method using creative arts media and

critical dialogue. Rather it is a way of learning, practising and living PD that shares philosophical and methodological assumptions with EPD, but also having distinct sounds, fragrances, hues, textures and flavours of its own. This is not to say that using creative arts media and critical dialogue, debate and contestation is not good, because for many practice developers and facilitators embracing the overt tools of critical creativity provides a medium for experimentation and initial stepping into the unknown[2]. We have started in this and other writings to unravel the rubric that is critical creativity in order to articulate and make explicit the links between philosophy, theory, methodology and method. We intend for these articulations to enable the canopy of the tall trees to flourish and through such flourishing and forestry work create the conditions for others to grow and flourish too. As we have articulated throughout the chapter, the concept of *human-flourishing* is a central methodological focus as both the means and the end of critical creativity and one in which we continue to develop conceptual understanding through creative concept analysis. The articulation of human-flourishing and a methodological framework will be the focus of future publications.

Two more final points. Firstly, an IPDC inquirer on reading a draft of this chapter pointed out that our image is so strong that she wondered if readers might be left thinking that critical creativity is only about walking in the woods or that it only happens when we are in nature. We have used the metaphor of 'a walk in the woods' to frame our exploration of critical creativity in this chapter. The metaphor is real, as in this particular case critical creativity was further refined by a walk in the woods. So in this way, the real became metaphorical, as a means of shaping concepts and theories that are complex and difficult to grasp. The embodiment of the concepts and theories through the walk and their articulation through metaphor, we hope, enables you to actively engage in an experience of critical creativity rather than be a passive recipient of concepts and theories. Critically, creative PD takes on many shapes and forms and this 'walk' is just one such example. Secondly, we have shown how Fay's (1987) critical theories can be articulated within a critical creativity worldview, but we do not wish you to be left with the impression that they are the only theories that are used within critical creativity. Many theories that are likely to inform your PD work can be positioned within this worldview, so whilst the theories might change, the constants would be the praxis spiral, professional artistry and human-flourishing.

And so to conclude your journey and rest your tired feet, we ask you, *after reading these final words*, to make yourself comfortable (maybe lie on the floor again). Close your eyes and think about the journey you have been on. Record in your

[2] Possible starting points for novice facilitators who want to work in this worldview include using a free, downloadable learning resource, entitled *Opening Doors on Creativity* (Coats et al. 2006) or attendance at an IPDC Practice Development School. These are held in the four countries: United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Australia and New Zealand. Details are available on http://www.rcn.org.uk/resources/practicedevelopment/news/

mind significant images, dialogues, metaphors and meanings that fly around your imagination, carried on the wings of the birds of the forest. Note the sounds, feelings, smells and tastes that you connect with.

Let your mind move towards the end of your journey and leave the woods behind you. Acknowledge the sacred space you have been in and the privilege you have been given of sharing this beautiful and engaging surrounding. When you have said goodbye to the forest, listen to your breath, to your body, to the sounds in your space and then gently open your eyes.

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