



6.1 Introduction

The methods of critical thinking presented in previous sections can be described as quite conventional. They rely on typical approaches to critical thinking concerned with the well-known, 'standard' themes in literature on the topic. Such approaches can also be described as 'orthodox', which means they are commonly accepted and belong to an established tradition, and are considered useful methods for formulating and evaluating arguments and other forms of thinking. However, in terms of the range of critical thinking styles, they certainly do not give us the entire picture!

For example, take the deductive logical structure championed by Aristotle, which demonstrates the validity of an argument based purely on its form. You will recall the three-part structure:

Premise 1	"Where there is smoke, there is always fire."
Premise 2	"There is smoke on the mountain."
Conclusion	"Therefore, there is a fire on the mountain."

It shows that if the premises are true, then we are compelled to accept the truth of the conclusion, and thus, the validity of the argument. However, we are justified in asking the question:

"Is the adherence to such a rigid logical form sometimes limiting the ways in which we can formulate and evaluate arguments - as well as engage in other forms of thinking?"

We will explore possible responses to this question in the short sections which follow.

Experience shows us that really effective critical thinking is also highly 'creative', because it enables us to come up with new approaches to problem-solving, reaching conclusions and making practical judgements. To always strive to be more creative in our thinking we may need to challenge some tried and tested approaches, to see whether they remain relevant and useful in their application. Therefore, we need to remain mindful of the following:

- all methods of critical thinking are historically, culturally and linguistically determined.
- every 'orthodoxy' implies a 'heterodoxy' – something that is outside the tradition.
- a form of logic which makes sense in one cultural context may not be valid in another, or may not be universally applicable.
- There is often a need to go beyond 'formal reasoning' in order to expand our thinking capacities.
- Effective thinking should identify its own boundaries and limits, and try to move beyond them.

This concluding section of the program considers some other approaches which are perhaps less well known, but nonetheless useful tools for expanding our thinking capacities. In terms of more common methods, they may require us to 'think outside the square' – or, to invert these terms with a play on words, 'square outside the think'.