



# Quality

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The term 'quality' has been abused since the later 1980s, when Western industries realized that lack of quality accounted for their diminished competitiveness with respect to those of Japan. This tendency to speak, at times inappropriately, about quality seldom reflects the true meaning of the word itself, although this is perhaps understandable and justifiable if one considers that 'quality' can convey just as many meanings as the 'ability' an object has of producing effects, as will be seen below.

Quality is highly pervasive, and this prevents anyone who decides to 'create quality' from clearly defining a field of action. In companies recognized on the market for their quality, it is obvious this involves the entire staff, with no limits in time or space. In other words, quality is culture.

The following paragraphs will try to sketch at least an outline of this fascinating concept 'quality'.

## **1.1** ORIGINS AND MEANINGS OF QUALITY

The concept of quality is vast and cannot, therefore, be singled down to one meaning. Aristotle distinguished four different families of qualities, which were subsequently adopted by scholars:

- 1 Tendencies and aptitudes (examples of tendencies are temperance, science and virtue, while health, illness, heat, cold, etc. are examples of aptitudes).
- 2 Natural abilities and faculties, or active qualities.
- 3 Sentiments and passions, or passive qualities (sounds, colours, taste, etc.).