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THE MAKING OF

TOTAL QUALITY MANAGEMENT (TQM):

A SUPPLEMENTARY EXAMINATION

by

XU Qi

Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM

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MOVEMENT

"Heaven* moves eternally;

He who follows its Way

strives unceasingly."

(the opening line of *I Ching*, or

The Book of Change, anonymous, cir. 1000 BC)

天 行 健，

君 子 以 自 强 不 息 。

《易 経 》

* *In Chinese, 'heaven' refers to Nature. Humans are part of Nature, therefore, they follow Nature's way.*

The Making of Total Quality Management (TQM):

A supplementary examination

XU Qi

University of Durham

November 1997

This Ph.D thesis investigates a popular management phenomenon. TQM has been taken as an illustrative 'subject', in examining 'what is it' type questions and also as a *vehicle* for demonstrating the formation of a management subject. Discourse itself is explored by revealing the making of TQM, through knowledge production or research and its consumption in Management Studies. In so doing, the thesis challenges the mainstream empiricist approach to management research.

Part I of the thesis presents the literature and discusses questions that cannot be adequately answered in the review. Part II elaborates the poststructuralist approach or a philosophy of inquiry. Through an opening up operation, Part III provides a supplementary account on TQM discourse, examining its discursive formations, the emergence and transformation of TQM and its knowledge production. Part IV relates TQM practice 'out there' to its theorising practice and reveals three appearances of TQM. They may be regarded as an ontological statement on TQM.

This inquiry is a treatise on the making of TQM rather than another discursive event of recycling the ready-made knowledge, although the latter has been taken as a starting point. The inquiry uncovers more *practices* than just the practice 'out there'. The thesis stands as a supplement to what is already understood as TQM. It is argued that when the margins of a 'subject' remain unchecked, a dominant research 'approach', such as that of the empiricist, serves to maintain the image of a legitimate 'subject'. Conversely, when this approach is scrutinised, a 'subject' *comes into being*. Therefore, one captures the process of 'becoming': The 'being' of a 'subject' *was, is* and *will be* in-the-shaping; and, the becoming of TQM dissolves its elusive 'essence'. As such, the main contributions of this Ph.D thesis are: (1). the scale and the radical way in which TQM is reexamined; and, (2). my argument of an *inseparable bond*: There is *no methodology without epistemological commitment*.

In a poststructuralist inquiry, '*con*clusion' appears an oxymoron and is replaced by '*circum*clusion' -- an inscribed resistance to a conceptual closure. This thesis seeks to exercise that philosophical resistance.

Acknowledgements

The research and the writing of this thesis were made possible by many people who offered their precious time, financial, moral and intellectual support. Some of them I have not even met, others I met only once. Quite a few experienced academics shared their thinking and ideas with me outside their normal duties. Their kindness and generosity have been a source of strength that helped me to survive my journey to complete this Ph.D thesis.

First of all, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to John Marshall, Director of Durham University Business School until 1994, who relieved me from distress caused by financial hardship and uncertainty. Without his good faith in my work, the birth of this thesis would have been only a remote possibility. My genuine gratitude goes to successive supervisors: first, to Barry Witcher who allowed me to embark on a journey that neither of us seemed to be sure where it might lead, yet he was open-minded to consider whatever avenue I happened to be interested in at a time. His gift was to encourage me to attend academic events that significantly influenced the path of the research. Next, to David and Sheila Kirby who seldom hesitated to lend a helping hand; and, to Andrew Gray who has been understanding and helpful to ensure that the moment of submission was always on the horizon. In addition, I am grateful to Andrea Coulson and John Ritchie for their careful readings of my manuscripts and helpful suggestions; to Philip Vale, Dick Hall, Clare Griffin and Carole Brooke for their feedback on my working papers during the past five years; and to Marie Johnson, Fan Ying, Roulla Hagen, Catherine Masinde, Monica Diochon, Stefan Kaiser and Rosie Butterworth for their comments on my work-in-

progress. I thank all of these colleagues for their moral support and friendship, for being my teachers in one way or another, for keeping me sane and for their understanding at my occasional outbursts of frustration and despair. I cannot be the only researcher who has found herself in a Kafkaesque world where filling-in forms, glossy business statements and contracted horizons dictated by the economic logic have become an overwhelming reality. From the viewpoint of this reality, my stubborn insistence on doing a 'proper' Ph.D looks nothing but out of place and perhaps mildly amusing.

I became interested in ontological and epistemological debates in management research during the *1st European Doctoral Programme Summer School* at Leuven, Belgium in 1992. I am grateful to B. Witcher for his support and to the organiser Hans Siggaard Jensen. In particular, I was captivated by the enlightening Henk van Dongen who masterly led the audience to question received wisdom in organization theory, development and change. I am very grateful for his illuminating insight into being receptive to alternative views of reality, and for his demonstration on the need and beauty of introducing the 'third' into thinking. That is, to recognise the limit of the 'law of the excluded middle' and to go beyond it with a triadic logic. In retrospect, the seeds of this Ph.D thesis were planted at Leuven.

I have been fortunate to have teachers outside Durham, most of whom I came in contact through attending academic conferences. Some challenged me at my presentation sessions, others refereed or critiqued and encouraged my work by writing to me after the event. They include: Hugh Willmott and David Knights (UMIST), Rolland Munro (Edinburgh), Roy Jacques (California), Chris Voss (LBS), Richard Goodman (UCLA), Paul Jeffcutt (Hull), Robert Chia (Lancaster), Tom Keenoy (London), Stewart Clegg (Australia), Barbara Gray (Pennsylvania State), Linda Smircich and Marta Calas (Massachusetts, Amherst), Karen Legge (Lancaster), Frits Schipper (Amsterdam) and

Preface

A few years ago, during a long discussion on how to be critical in management research, the following conversation took place between a teacher and a pupil. It went like this:

T.: *It is not good enough to consume knowledge or repeat what others have said. You must make a move to create a space and occupy there ... .*
P.: *(...) I understand what you've said ... but I am not comfortable with the word 'occupy'. It sounds like ... in a battlefield ...*
T.: *... OK, what I meant was to 'feel at home there', if you prefer.*

The message is that when you, as a researcher, enter a mainstream subject, there is no space reserved for you. Either, you step into a space already occupied by established academics and have to imitate their steps; or, you force yourself to create a new space. The latter is obviously risky or even uncertain but it is certainly exciting as it promises an adventure and gives you some sense of making a difference.

This Ph.D thesis is the work of that pupil who set out to heed the advice. In the end, the pupil is in a position to say that it is not 'I' who have written the thesis but the research has (re)written 'me'.

This thesis is dedicated to all those who have been helpful on my bumpy research journey, to the reader who has the curiosity and patience to go through the text, and to those who will exercise their critical faculty in raising new questions on their ways to explore further from some of the positions arrived at in my thesis.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The present investigation is on the subject of TQM. On close inspection, it is one of many subjects in Management Studies (MS) that appears rather loosely developed. One heard TQM being frequently uttered by members of various groups of practitioners: managers or administrators, police, journalists and, of course, academics. At the time, some appeared quite enthusiastic about it, others confused and, by reiterating TQM, confusing. There was no lack of sceptical or even cynical voices. One can identify an extant literature *on* TQM, including academic and professional journals named after it (see chapter 2). However, the subject presents some difficulty. For instance, the seemingly straightforward question of 'What is TQM' could make some uneasy: While we managers are interested in what is going on in practice and trying to solve practical problems arisen from TQM implementation, you academics hang on to this abstract discussion of 'what it is'. Does it really matter what it is as long as we managers *do* it and get results ? To me, the answer is positive because of possible effects of TQM and, specifically, the ways in which TQM may be perceived.

This questioning of 'what is TQM' triggers my memory of a Chinese proverb -- *Ye Gong Hao Long* (叶 公 好 龙). It literally means (a) duke Ye loves dragon. The story goes that duke Ye never saw a real dragon, yet he was so obsessed with the image of it that he had decorated his mansion with all kinds of dragon: calligraphies and paintings on the walls, high and low relief carvings on pieces of furniture. Virtually everywhere in the house, the motif was dragon. For quite some time, the duke was

living happily with his own dragon. One day, a real dragon descended from heaven to visit the duke. As the dragon was approaching, the duke caught sight of it through a window. He was so shocked by such a huge monster that he collapsed !

In carrying out research on TQM, researchers do not always engage themselves for a convincing answer to that simple 'what' question. To those who are familiar with the TQM literature, the proverb perhaps helps to tease out how some may have perceived TQM. One may contemplate further. First, the proverb is about images, possibly representations of images, and about living with images. The duke never needed to encounter *vis-à-vis* a real dragon to love it. Instead, his happiness came from his indulgence in his own versions of dragon, which might have little to do with a real one. Indeed, the real, if any, caused enormous difficulty if not his premature death. Second, the beauty of the proverb lies at the point that hardly anybody has ever seen a dragon. What is ubiquitous and relevant to most of us is the extent to which a certain behaviour might have sprung *from images*. For they do have some effect on our everyday life, as the dragon image did on the duke. Lastly, an intriguing point from the proverb may be the concern of a 'real' dragon, ie. whether or not it is a necessary condition for an image of it. The proverb may be interpreted as that since nobody is likely to meet a dragon, the distinction between the allegedly real and an image of it becomes insignificant. Rather, the message could well be that what is real is precisely an image itself. To this end, the 'real' dragon is perhaps no more than a self-deception.

The detour on dragon and its image mirrors the practice of TQM in the sense that TQM may have had a certain impact on its practitioners involved. However, that influence may not be sufficiently recognised and duly appreciated. Is TQM a 'real' thing or an attractive illusion ? If it is real, why is it the case that hardly any convincing explanation has been on offer for one to comprehend what it really is ? What secret code is there concealed in TQM so that researchers might have failed to decipher it ? If TQM is a mere illusion, is it not bizarre that so many companies reacted, in the past

decade, upon it ? What is the magic spell that made people dash about advocating TQM ? Questions of this type need to surface. What holds my curiosity in TQM is the potential insights on the way in which, first and foremost, management academics perceive and accept a 'subject' and the implications of a particular way of understanding it.

1.1 The TQM 'Subject'

Just as an answer to a simple question is not always simple and straightforward, it is not easy to pin down exactly when TQM appeared in the management literature and by which pioneering practitioner. Given time, this problem may be solved through a usual route of empirical studies. Inevitably, this inquiry has to be empirical, yet its starting point is considerably different from the accepted norm. For the thesis endeavours to *uncover the way in which* TQM is produced. To do so, attention is drawn not only to relevant historical events, by saying so and so contributed to what is known as TQM, but to the possible conceptual conditions or the *framing* of TQM. To this end, this thesis creates its own path, although the general direction of my research journey is pointed to by a few inspiring thinkers of this century -- Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Michel Foucault (1926-84) and Jacques Derrida, to name a few.

The way in which TQM is normally presented emerges from the literature. In most instances, the subject is treated as a kind of prescription, with the promise to improve the performance of an organization. The prescription metaphor is suggestive of a relationship between a doctor and a patient, which is not only recognisable in TQM but may be applicable to other management subjects. In particular, an organization is assumed to be in the position of the patient, having problems in need of an expert's help. The doctor's role is often played by a management consultant whose job is to make a timely, if not always correct, diagnosis of symptoms and to prescribe a course of action. He is expected to recommend what the organization do in order to

become or remain efficient, competitive and, above all, successful. Here, one is cautioned to the possibility that a quasi-medical prescription may not work even in the short term. Therefore, acting on faith on the organization's behalf is necessary. Furthermore, if it is helpful to draw comparisons of prescriptive practices from medicine to illuminate management, there seems a lack of detailed comparative studies on their differences and implications. In this thesis, a prescriptive practice of management will be scrutinised. For the time being, let us take a close look at the practice of TQM.

By convention, the term 'practice' makes sense in two ways: on its own and in relation to 'theory' that distinguishes practice from 'non-practice'. Indeed, the cardinal division between 'theory and practice' appears indispensable in management research. In the TQM literature, this division seems to have been taken-for-granted. The norm one may reliably predict is like this: A conceptual framework needs to be constructed and usually recognised as a TQM 'theory', presented by experts first on quality control (QC) and more recently on quality management (QM). The works by experts can be traced back to industrial experience, introductory texts and handbooks by Deming, Juran, Feigenbaum, Ishikawa in the 1950s. From the 1970s, texts on QM seemed to have replaced QC through the works of Crosby, Oakland and other popular writers (see chapter 2). On the other hand, some companies were willing to listen to and follow the teachings of some of these experts. Such organizations were primarily interested in creating their own QM programmes into an effective means to meet the ends of satisfying their customers while achieving productivity, competitiveness and profit. In the eyes of many practitioners, Deming, Juran, Feigenbaum and Ishikawa are not just experts but held with high esteem as quality gurus. Since the mid 1980s, the division of theory and practice has been considerably reinforced by the prolific output of research projects on TQM. Most of them are survey reports and case studies (chapter 2). Some of the results have been disseminated in business school classrooms, training courses and research seminars. Others are spread through professional journals

implementing TQM was unstoppable. If the heyday of TQM in the 1980s is a recent past, one wonders why anyone is so slow not to have abandoned it for the latest trends.

In retrospect, TQM practice may have posed questions for both management research and practice. Arguably, questions have not been adequately attended, let alone convincing accounts on TQM in spite of the impressive volume of research. If the passing fad is first and foremost a social phenomenon, rethinking is overdue. After all, without challenging the taken-for-granted, where would the excitement of research come from ?

Research questions that spring to mind are as follows. First of all, let us begin with the cardinal division. Is 'practice' in the division the only legitimately accountable practice ? Could there be *another form* of practice that the present familiar way of investigation prevents a researcher from seeing and knowing ? If the answer is affirmative, it implies that researchers have yet to learn to see and comprehend the consequences of that 'other' form of practice. Next, what exactly is the familiar way of inquiry ? How could it make a researcher colour-blind to an 'other' so that he is unable to discriminate something unusually different ?

These concerns will be addressed. It is contended that there *is* another professional and necessarily substantial practice of TQM, which has eluded researchers largely due to the familiar division mentioned above. Derived from a theorising practice by management academics, this 'other' practice is *discursive* in the sense that it *cannot be separated from* the way in which *language constitutes* the TQM enterprise. This statement requires clarification in relation to the conventional TQM practice, ie. the only one thought to be 'out there' in companies.

Arguably, the way in which the division enables us to see conditions a kind of empiricism. In research terms, it means that a researcher follows procedures of an empiricist inquiry. He starts with certain preconceived and often inadequately justified assumptions, although they necessarily condition the formulation of research questions. Normally, the researcher will go 'out there' into the 'real world' of managers, namely doing fieldwork. He collects data and brings them back to the world of academics. An analysis is then conducted, based on the data at hand in order to account for, to prove or falsify, a previously constructed conceptual framework. On this basis, the researcher recommends improvements for the practice 'out there'. However, this thesis will show that one does not have to conform to such research agendas. Instead, an alternative path leads to unfold the making of TQM through discourse.

The concept of discourse, ordinarily known as the totality of what is written and spoken, is closely linked to linguistic analysis, the focus of which is on establishing rules governing language at a level above that of the sentence. Nevertheless, a 'space' for discourse can be concealed and, therefore, needs revealing. Within a discursive space, one strives to comprehend the seemingly complex identity of discourse without unduly asserting that discourse is neutral and unproblematic. Such an assertion is indeed an acceptable starting point for linguistic analysis of discourse. That discourse itself is subject to scrutiny was extensively explored by Foucault (1969/72; 1971). He maintained that discourse played a crucial role in the *production of knowledge* and the shaping of 'subjects' in historical periods. It is this Foucauldian, and not conventional linguistic, analysis that is the way the thesis develops in reexamining the TQM phenomenon. Accordingly, the TQM literature is not to be taken as a collection of self-evident linguistic statements or 'facts' but, to use a Foucauldian term, 'artefacts'. Hence, they merit a careful re-reading. To this end, the thesis excavates *how* TQM knowledge is constituted and its overlooked effect sustained.

One realises that the TQM subject can be investigated through discourse. This research agenda differs from the mainstream prescriptive TQM practice. It is desirable to sketch out the general approach for establishing *another* practice which is neither prescriptive nor mere nominal but discursive.

1.2 The Adopted Approach

In seeking to interpret the TQM literature differently, a researcher has to respond to a few questions. Where does the adopted approach of the thesis come from? In pursuing the aim of opening up the TQM discourse, in the spirit of Heidegger, Foucault and Derrida, do I have to enter into the minefield of philosophy (call it a 'subject' or 'discipline') ? In defending my argument, do I have to first become a conventional 'philosopher' ? Not necessarily. I take *the way in which*, broadly speaking, Heidegger rethinks metaphysics, Foucault reexamines the history of ideas and Derrida deconstructs the philosophy of presence as a *mode of thinking*. It is a meaningful and effective approach to critique and *reshape* a given subject. With due caution, such rethinking may be extended to reconsider other social phenomena of human knowledge through the indispensable role that language, discourse, writing and text play. The effect of the rethinking could be a different, if not wider than before, understanding of a subject under scrutiny. When such *an opening up* operation is being carefully carried out, an alternative account serves as a *supplement* to the existing understanding of language, discourse and text and of researchers themselves, because they participate in one way or another in the (re)production, dissemination and consumption of knowledge, however small a role each individual plays.

In performing such an operation, two thorny issues must be resolved first: (1). how Heidegger, Foucault, Derrida and others dealt with the notion of 'subject'; and (2). if the concern on the use of language *per se*, ie. the linguistic dimension, is insufficient for examining discourse, what an 'other' of language could be missing. To the former,

the solution springs from something known as 'decentring the subject' whereas, to the latter, attention is drawn to the often underestimated 'capacity' of language (see chapter 3, sections 3.3 and 3.4).

In particular, it takes five steps, not necessarily successive, to show the inadequacy of the mainstream prescriptive TQM practice.

Signifier and signified   To comprehend TQM, one comes across proposed disciplinary 'perspectives' and 'manifestations'. The former reflects views from certain established disciplines, eg. quality control (QC) from an Engineering perspective, or a loosely articulated subject area, eg. 'soft issues in TQM' from a Human Resources Management (HRM) perspective. The latter is an implicit acknowledgement of something 'fundamental', yet currently absent from articulation, though its effects are thought to have been captured by 'manifestations'. What lies behind them is believed to be linked to an observable phenomenon like TQM. On the other hand, both 'perspectives' and 'manifestations' of TQM can be reduced to a dichotomy of the signified and a signifier. The relationship between the two is *representational*: A signifier, ie. by using language or discourse, represents the signified, ie. the 'essence' or 'truth' lying 'out there'. Therefore, a 'perspective' represents a subject or discipline and a 'manifestation' represents that inadequately articulated 'essence' or the 'thingness of TQM'. However, social phenomena may be more complicated than this representational formula. For instance, taking Saussure's theory of language (Saussure, 1916/59) seriously, ie. language as *significatory* and representational, the *arbitrary sign* has to be accounted for (see chapters 3, 4 and 6). This suggests that the signified-signifier dichotomy be replaced by a trichotomy: sign-signified-signifier. A new dimension is introduced for consideration, generating a more complex set of relationships than that from the representational. Consequently, both perspectives and manifestations of TQM may now be seen as a new starting point.

Subject and name   The point of departure for a conventional TQM inquiry is to take it as if it were an established subject, which pushes aside any question on how the subject is *constituted* in the first place. In this thesis, the TQM subject is treated with a necessary distance in a similar way that Foucault and Derrida did to their subjects (see eg. Foucault, 1961/67; 1963/73; 1966/70; 1969/72; Derrida, 1967/74; 1972/82; 1978). Specifically, 'subject' is not seen as a handy building material for constructing an argument; instead, it is allowed to float and be moved about. That is to say, one illuminates a state of affairs in which 'subject' has not yet been firmly fixed so as to trace and see how it becomes accomplished as ready-made knowledge. In other words, what is once perceived as an acceptable subject is now provisionally regarded as a mere name or label. Once this step is taken, attention can be directed to creating a discursive space for investigating TQM. However, that space will not be filled with a conventional linguistical analysis.

Cooked from cooking   The title of one of Levi-Strauss books, *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964/70), draws attention to two separate stages in a developmental process. One speaks of the 'raw' with reference to something distinctive called the 'cooked'. The 'raw' shows its rawness when the 'cooked' is placed side by side. This is perhaps what Levi-Strauss meant to highlight. Despite his efforts in making this distinction, there remains something common in both: a state of mind that may be described as perceiving 'things in process'. It presumes, at the outset of a process, definable 'things', not unlike various components deployed along a car assembly line. In contrast, the dynamics of social phenomena may be captured through 'process in things' like the cooking of a Peking duck. What happens during the *cooking* ? It is a process through which ingredients are subject to temperature and other conditions whilst constant changes in the ingredients are taking place. It is worthy of note that, at any given moment during the cooking, the ingredients are referred to by the *same* set of names. Yet they are arguably different in their reduced degree of rawness from an earlier moment. By the same token, the TQM literature can be read in terms of the 'cooked'

and 'cooking'. For instance, when the literature is presented to the reader for consumption, it is already 'cooked'. What is little elaborated is the cooking or a production, which is one of the central concerns of this study.

A twist of practice   A lack is detected in the prescriptive TQM practice since it has failed to account for the TQM discourse itself. For those who would rather follow a prescriptive TQM, discourse is perceived only as *medium* through which groups of practitioners communicate among themselves and at best across groups. Nevertheless, the way in which TQM discourse is reiterated and sustained by academic theorising about TQM cannot be easily disposed as being uncontroversial and, therefore, subsumed as a side line in the name of maintaining relevance to the world 'out there'. The reason can be simple. If one pauses for a while and reconsiders the constitution of practitioners, it looks strange that one group should be exempt from close scrutiny. It is the academic practice of theorising that appears to have enjoyed a kind of privilege. Let us have no confusion here. There is more than one practice: the prescriptive TQM practice <u>and</u> a discursive TQM practice. This thesis will expose, in particular, the second and, where space permits, reveal the extent to which one relates to the other.

A supplement   According to Derrida, supplement is at work when there is a lack on the part of the signified. A supplement can be made through the movement of play, permitted by the absence of a 'centre' or 'origin' (Derrida, 1978: 278-293). In order to comprehend what Derrida was trying to get at, some clarification is necessary. In brief, his position may be understood as follows.

First, there is a difficult research problem. Despite great efforts made to interpret things, the results themselves are *interpretations*, which also have to be (re)interpreted. When one strives for the latter, something odd happens. Conventional wisdom allows us to assume that there is at work a 'centre' at which reference is made

and around which knowledge produced. In this way, the 'centre' occupies a privileged position that is beyond doubt and, therefore, exempt from critical scrutiny. Paradoxically, the 'centre' takes various forms and is given different names: 'essence', 'substance', 'origin', 'subject' and so on. It is time one began to rethink that there is no 'centre' because it has never had a natural site. Rather, the 'centre' is but a *function* (ibid.: 278-280). In this light, the 'essence' of TQM is put into question. Second, the nonlocus of 'centre' enables an infinite number of *sign-substitutions* to come into play. In the absence of a 'centre' or origin, everything becomes *discourse* (ibid.: 280). Therefore, TQM discourse itself deserves more attention than it has ever received. Third, what is normally known as 'philosophy' is the "philosophy of *presence*" (Derrida, 1978), hence the legitimate status of the signified -- a reality/practice 'out there' in companies -- being represented as a kind of presence. One is not used to thinking in terms of play since one is only familiar with presence; but play is precisely an act of disrupting presence. Where there is a full presence, it is the *end of play* (Derrida, 1978: 290-293). That is why discussions on play, if not entirely absent, sound bizarre and confusing. Fourth, what is ordinarily thought of as a complete text is based on the logic of presence. However, if one questions presence, 'something extra' may be added to compensate a lack in what has been thought of as being complete. That 'extraness' is called supplement (ibid.: 289-290). Hence, the subtitle of this thesis sets its tone: a supplementary examination.

With this Derridean logic of supplement, TQM discourse undergoes an extensive reexamination. I am now in a position to pursue an opening up operation in the TQM discourse through a re-reading of its texts.

1.3 A Rationale for the Thesis

A few years ago, TQM was a catchword in business management, despite that, arguably, hardly anybody was able to offer a definitive account on what it actually was.

Seemingly, it manifested fundamental changes in management. There are academic speculations on TQM (see chapter 2) but a convincing explanation of the TQM phenomenon is still wanting. TQM does not fit comfortably into any particular perspective of an existing management subject. Wherever TQM is placed into a disciplinary perspective, some of it looks out of place. What does this peculiarity suggest ? Was TQM not a myth being circled around, as some might say, without much substance ? TQM was elusive, constantly changing its shape, and yet seemed to be present everywhere. It is time that an inquiry took place, seeking to say something about the myth not only on what TQM was, or could have been, but on the way in which it came into play.

A useful clue for opening up the black box of TQM is to look at its practice. Provisionally, there appears different forms of TQM practice. First, it is the prescriptive TQM that has been widely written about and publicised. Next, it is the nominal TQM to which scepticism is expressed. However, criticisms by themselves are insufficient for reconstituting the subject or for being an alternative to the status quo. Here, I have in mind two sets of relationships: (a). between a painter and a professional critic who does not necessarily practise painting; and (b). between a painter and another artist. Arguably, most sceptical commentaries on TQM sound similar to that of professional critics. The third form is the discursive TQM practice, where the extant literature becomes the 'object' of study that requires scrupulous attention. Since prescriptive TQM is unable to account for TQM discourse, an examination on discursive TQM lays the subject open in a way that differentiates itself from previous TQM research. The aim of the thesis is to produce a supplementary account to the existing understanding or interpretations of TQM.

In so doing, to what extent does the thesis challenge the mainstream empiricist epistemological tradition in management research ? Could the thesis be categorically described as being 'theoretical' only ? Since it does not observe the norm required for

an empiricist inquiry, it is fair not to be judged accordingly. Indeed, without the second part in the analysis (chapters 8 and 9), the thesis may be seen as 'theoretical only'. Having made conceptual moves away from the empiricist mainstream, where certain types of research protocols have to be observed regardless, certain risks arise. However, they may be partially reduced when the positive effects of making a philosophical turn through TQM research are made apparent. The scope and radical research approach towards TQM are not only exciting but also difficult and perhaps a little dangerous for a researcher. For the thesis carries a double burden. In addition to opening up the dimension of ontological experience in research and clarifying my epistemological position before I address an adopted methodology, I must offer a routine 'content' analysis, against which the weight of 'substance' is usually judged.

On the other hand, it is encouraging to know that I am not entirely on my own. This kind of research, still sporadic and experimental in terms of its impact to MS in general, has been conducted by dedicated researchers through other subjects (see chapter 3, section 3.5). Such work contributes to a broad understanding of given subjects and perhaps, in the long term, helps to earn intellectual credibility for MS to become a mature academic discipline.

To carry out this inquiry requires, first, a continuous questioning of the dominant way in which an investigation is expected to be executed and, second, a committed epistemological position where a researcher stands and from where he proceeds. In this thesis, the position is known as 'poststructuralist', a term mainly used for describing a radical intellectual movement or a mode of thinking that challenged the once influential 'structuralism' (see chapter 3).

The methodological significance of the thesis is derived from an alternative interpretation of TQM. In particular, the subject is reconsidered as a Foucauldian archaeological *site* where themes, already familiar or otherwise, are explored.

Similarly, one may take such steps in rethinking other management subjects since the way in which TQM is opened up signifies a research path. To a certain extent, it is not only significant to investigate TQM for a better understanding of one subject but also, indirectly, relevant to critical issues in MS as a whole. In so doing, the thesis avoids recycling an existing body of knowledge. Hopefully, the thesis illustrates a viable way to reshape subjects in the discipline of MS, theoretically problematic or even 'groundless' and unconvincingly constructed.

This said, I am obliged to spell out a word of caution. In introducing ideas and ways of thinking from other fields into TQM research, it inevitably allows for some degree of (mis)appropriation for trade-offs among foreseeable pros and cons during the research process. Any appropriation by the researcher seems to be an act of intervention due to the degree to which disruptive effects it brings about to the status quo. Arguably, the researcher carries some responsibility, at least, to a research community. With an acknowledgement of one's intervention, the researcher points out where the intervention leads a given subject to as a result and perhaps difficulties one has stumbled into on one's way. A discussion of this kind may be helpful to others who might follow a similar path later. Too often, in emphasising the outcome and presentation of research, the painstaking efforts, nuances and lessons from the research process seem to only deserve to endure an erased and silenced destiny.

1.4 An Outline

The four parts of the thesis unfold as follows:

(1). <u>What is known of TQM</u> -- a presentation of the extant literature and a discussion of the types of questions, 'what' and 'how', raised in the review *(chapter 2)*;

(2). <u>Opening up the TQM subject</u> -- an elaboration on the adopted poststructuralist approach or philosophy of inquiry, including its genesis, and methodology *(chapters 3 and 4)*;

(3). <u>The making of TQM discourse</u> -- an opening up operation on a supplementary understanding of TQM discourse, regarding its discursive formations, the emergence and transformation of TQM and its knowledge production *(chapters 5, 6 and 7)*.

(4). <u>The making of TQM practice</u> -- a supplement to TQM practice with respect to a theorising practice and the three appearances of TQM which can be regarded as an ontological statement on TQM *(chapters 8 and 9)*.

TQM AS IT IS KNOWN

In <u>Part One</u> of the thesis, the reader will be presented with the extant literature and a discussion of the types of question raised in the review.

Chapter 2   TQM Practice and the 'Thingness' Question

This inquiry starts by looking at the practice of TQM through *representations* of experience in the UK, US, and Japan and a consideration of roles played by engineers, managers and academics historically. In such a discussion, the usual question raised has been '*What is TQM*'; that is the 'thingness of TQM'. Academic speculations seem to have distilled to disciplinary perspectives.

However, they do not appear to be a promising route leading to a refined or even different understanding of the TQM phenomenon, since any 'what' type of question produces a 'what' type of answer. That 'what' answer would in turn trigger a further 'so what' question ! Here, my concern is how to break this seemingly *circular mode* of 'what' so that research questions avoid framing answers within a perceived framework, the boundaries of which are usually either left unchecked or taken as given in the empiricist tradition.

To this end, another type of question can be considered: *How* did TQM *come into being* ? In such a way, attention can be directed to scrutinise the very *MAKING OF TQM*.

CHAPTER TWO

TQM PRACTICE AND THE 'THINGNESS' QUESTION

What happens when "I", a researcher, investigate TQM, if it can be provisionally taken as a management 'subject' ? I wonder whether a similar concern came to mind when the Chinese poet Su Shih (1036-1101) wrote the following lines on Lu Shan, one of the famous mountains in China. Here is my translation of his poem:

When I am at the front,
There emerges a range of mountain tops.
When I have moved to one side,
There appears a vista of peaks.

Lu Shan changes as my position shifts:
From afar, nearby, high or low.
No two views are exactly the same.

How could I ever capture the true face of Lu Shan ?
For I am somewhere on Lu Shan myself.

Su Shih of Sung Dynasty of China
(cir. 960-1279)

The poem triggers some resonance to the 'subject' under examination in this thesis. First, the poet established a relationship between himself, the viewer or mountaineer, and Lu Shan, the mountain. To a certain extent, this relationship illuminates that of mine: between "I", the researcher, and my 'subject' of study, TQM.

Second, both "I" and the viewer could hardly escape from perspectives, and could not easily sustain one single privileged position, from where one may secure an 'uncontaminated' or pure perspective of either TQM or the mountain. Third, as the 'true face' of Lu Shan̄ might have eluded the poet, I wonder how the 'true face' of TQM, should there be one, may be unveiled in this inquiry.

Following the standard research protocol of a literature review, in this chapter, I will offer my account on what is known as TQM. In the first half, a sketch on the advent of TQM practice will be drawn. In the second half, I will seek to explore some disciplinary implications of the TQM phenomenon to the 'discipline' of Management Studies (MS) in general and management research in particular. In the light of this review, the main questions of the thesis will be considered.

2.1 TQM Experience (I): UK, US and Japan

To map out my research site, I will, first of all, concentrate on TQM experience or practice so that, to the reader, the 'TQM case' is presented with some schematic relationships of how historical events have evolved. To the extent that relevant TQM literature is necessarily shaped with geographical and chronological lines, questions and issues can be raised and debated and perspectives considered. This site is where others' work will be (re)examined in the following chapters.

The Japanization of British industry [1] ? By the 1980s, Japan's economic success was registered in the west. An enthusiastic 'pro-TQM' mood was in the air: Since the Japanese appeared so successful in what they have been doing, there must be something useful that can be learned. A belief in the transferability of 'good practices' from Japan was implicit. This was the context when Oliver and Wilkinson (1988) presented their evidence of the Japanese production practices in the motor industry in the UK. They coined the term 'the Japanization of British Industry'. The significant

impact and far-reaching implications of such 'Japanization' were to become increasingly hard to ignore, not only in Britain but also in other parts of the world (Elger and Smith, 1994; Kaplinsky, 1994; Journal of Management Studies, 1995).

During the 1980s, there were numerous reports on the implementation of Japanese style continuous improvement programmes, some of which was on high profile international companies such as Rank Xerox (see Giles and Starkey, 1988). Indeed, Japanese production methods practised in the UK constituted a notable 'new' part of management literature. Having worked for Nissan (UK), Wickens (1987) presented to the reader his version of Nissan management 'tripod' of teamworking, quality and flexibility. Derived from his insider's experience of the 'Japanese way', he made a valuable attempt to formulate a human resource strategy. Prior to Wickens, the transplant of quality circle movement in the UK and its impact on productivity and efficiency was examined by Bradley and Hill (1983) in a then conventional disciplinary space of industrial relations. To an industrial audience, 'quality gurus' were introduced by Bendell (1988), with a streetwise subtitle: "What can they do for your company ?" Seemingly, the virtues of TQM were made obvious. Others went further to herald the prediction of a coming 'quality revolution' and advised potential converts on how to implement TQM (eg. Oakland, 1989). By the late 1980s, a professional forum, *The TQM Magazine*, was created for specialists and managers, where interests and ideas on quality management and related issues were shared and its implications discussed.

All such benignly-charged activities might have signified a seemingly inevitable response to attempts to make sense of the considerable impact of Japanese management practices in manufacturing in particular and quality management with wide strategic implications in general. At its high time, the focus of attention on TQM was to assess and comprehend 'what happened', and to explore ways of coping with changes brought about by the Japanese style management, known as the TQM philosophy.

As ideas about TQM implementation in industry gathered momentum, so was a proliferation of reports capturing what was going on 'out there' in companies. By 1990, a mainstream academic journal, *Total Quality Management*, was launched (Kanji, 1990). In that first issue, the editor described TQM as 'the second industrial revolution'. The early 1990s witnessed a popular promotion of TQM practice: Dale and Plunkett (1990) on managing quality, Witcher (1990) on the role of TQM in the creation of a market responsive organization. Hill (1991) commented on why quality circles had failed but TQM might succeed.

The publicity of winning the European Quality Award (see Rank Xerox European Quality Award submission document, 1992) helped to raise the awareness and profile of TQM. By the mid 1990s, as a result of widespread Japanese production practices, what might be perceived in the west as 'easternization' was contended by Elger and Smith (1994) and Kaplinsky (1994). In a special issue on the transfer of Japanese practices to alien institutional environments, case studies were given a prominent space by the editors of the *Journal of Management Studies* (1995). Not surprisingly, discussions on TQM eventually reached the public. Articles and special reports on TQM frequently appeared in the media [2]. Popular texts on TQM implementation also landed on the shelves of high street bookshops (eg. Naden and Bremner, 1991; Berry, 1991; Munro-Faure and Munro-Faure, 1992).

If TQM was during the 1980s a management fashion, it had to face up to its potential consequences. Understandably, not everybody was convinced by TQM discourse and practice, in particular in the delivery of its promised virtues. There were cool minds in the hot air. Sceptical views were voiced by Gill and Whittle (1993). They constructed a speculative management panacea life cycle, in which TQM appeared to be the latest managerial fashion, after Management-by-Objectives (MBO) and Organization Development (OD). Although Gill and Whittle contributed a counter

argument to the predominantly uncritical TQM literature, they unwittingly eluded answering the seemingly simple question of 'what is TQM'. As confessed in their conclusion, "by focusing on the form rather than the content of a selection of managerial obsessions we have demonstrated the cyclical and non-cumulative nature of much of what passes for consulting approaches to organizational change and effectiveness" (ibid.: 292). What was left underexamined was precisely the content or 'thingness of TQM'.

There were other critics of TQM who went further to advocate a practice 'beyond TQM'. Alternatives proposed include a re-introduction of a systems methodology (Flood, 1993) and business process re-engineering (Hammer and Champy, 1993, BPR thereafter). The latter in particular bears some trace of replacing one management fashion with another and was received with suspicion (Grey and Mitev, 1995). Despite sceptical comments and criticism, the interest in TQM was maintained with the publication of several textbooks.(eg. Bounds et al, 1994; Dean and Evans, 1994). To a certain extent, they represented the (un)thinking on TQM. By comparison, a collection of primarily Marxist critiques (Wilkinson and Willmott, 1995) offered a comprehensive review on the 'theory' and practice of TQM as a critical approach to analysing organizational change.

The story on quality in the US   It is widely held that Japan from the 1960s targeted the US to be its prime export market. Due to the success of the Japanese, companies in the US responded to the highly effective Japanese production methods. Arguably, the American TQM movement started in the 1970s. To be precise, it was the Japanese motor and electronic industries (see Morita et al, 1986) that made the most initial impact in the west. Almost exclusively, the best-known Japanese methods such as the Toyota production methods, just-in-time (JIT), kaizen or continuous improvement, and zero defects (Shingo, 1986; Imai, 1986) were developed from the motor industry.

By the 1970s, there were frequent professional reports on the applications of the Japanese production methods. For instance, Drucker (1971) speculated on what the Americans might learn from the Japanese. Ashburn (1977) discussed the Toyota production techniques. Juran (1978) compared the ways in which 'quality' was achieved in Japan and in the west. Crosby (1979) popularised quality management with his sound bites of 'right first time and every time' and 'quality is free'. From an industrial engineering perspective, Konz (1979) told a success story of quality circles in America. In recognising Japan as number one, Vogel (1979) contemplated on lessons for America [3].

During the 1980s, there was little sign of slowing down the momentum of promoting TQM. Case reports of employing kaizen, kanban, the Toyota system and JIT were in no short supply (eg. Bodek, 1980; Butt, 1981). A case of implementing JIT in America was reported (Waterbury, 1981). Through extensive case analysis, Pascale and Athos (1981) made one of the first anthropological steps towards establishing contrasting ways of managing in America and in Japan. In concluding their careful study, they reflected that there might be 'something unique' about the Japanese way [4]. To American industry, the quality guru Deming (1986) diagnosed its crisis and diseases and advocated forcefully his vision and philosophy of management through achieving quality. From then on, the Deming philosophy, helping to raise the stake of quality management, has been referred to as a strategic weapon (Mann, 1985; Scherkenbach, 1986; Garvin, 1988; Harvard Business Review, 1992, HBR thereafter). It was Garvin who argued the case of quality becoming a 'competitive advantage' and therefore to be taken seriously by top management of a company. He linked 'quality' to the orthodoxy management 'subject' of Strategy that speaks in the prevailing vocabulary of 'winning' and 'success'.

For the 1990s, the scene of an increasing awareness of quality was set by the US Department of Commerce and National Institute of Standards and Technology, with the Baldrige Quality Award (see the Baldrige application document, 1989; Garvin, 1991; HBR, 1992; Howard, 1992) [5]. Owing to the highly educational Baldrige debate (HBR, 1992), TQM discourse received a great deal of publicity in the early 1990s. The two special issues on TQM on such well-established mainstream journals as *Academy of Management Review* (1994) and *California Management Review* (1994) may serve as a credible indicator of how seriously TQM was taken on by both business and academic communities. By then, there were numerous texts on Deming, spreading his quality gospel (Killian, 1992; Latzko and Saunders, 1995). For the time being, no company could afford to underestimate the importance and benefits of quality.

Quality control in Japan   From the above account of TQM practice in the west, it appears that, since the 1970s, certain Japanese industries have been well-documented and more widely publicised than the rest. It took the Japanese at least two decades to make their mark by emerging as a serious contender to the Americans and Europeans. However, it is worthy of note that there have been more than one audience in discussions of Japanese management practices. Such an assertion will have implications on perceptions and degrees of understanding on the Japanese economic success in general and management practice in particular. For instance, an account on how the Japanese have portrayed their practice to a Japanese audience may be quite different from one tuned in for an audience of westerners.

Back in 1951, the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) set up the Deming Prize for Quality (see Ishikawa, 1985) aiming at fostering innovation in management [6]. In retrospect, the Prize made an initial impact in Japan; it was also a measure of appreciation of the quality message taken by the Japanese. An introductory text in Japanese on quality control by Ishikawa (1954/64) became very popular among

Japanese foremen and frontline personnel, participated in the TQC movement [7]. Through JUSE (see Kondo, 1978), Ishikawa was also active in facilitating education and training on quality for the Japanese industry. He contributed a number of articles on the trend of quality control in Japanese companies (Ishikawa, 1965; 1969; Ishikawa and Kondo, 1969). At this point, it is helpful to discern those techniques the Japanese learned from the Americans, particularly in the early 1950s, from knowing how what the Japanese put into practice.

Evidently, it was from the 1970s when the west began to examine Japanese management practices. Other than introductory texts on quality control activities in Japan (Ishikawa, 1972; Kondo, 1978), the Japanese way of looking at their own production practices was emerging. To the Japanese, 'respect for humanity' was as important as the technical side of applying JIT (see Sugimori et al, 1977). Indeed, this sentiment is readily recognizable in the traditional Confucian society of Japan. In another report on a new production management system, Yamada et al. (1980) also expressed their concern on developing a system for productivity and co-elevation of humanity. Note to the Japanese, the consideration of productivity cannot be entirely separated from humanity. In the 1980s, Monden (1981a,b,c,d; 1985) wrote extensively on Toyota and JIT whereas Shingo (1981; 1986; 1987) on Toyota, JIT and poka-yoke or mistake-proof methods. On quality control, Ishikawa (1985) was a respected speaker of the Japanese way; and, on kaizen, Imai (1986) offered an authoritative account (see also Lillrank and Kano, 1989 on the same topic and quality circles in the Japanese industry).

On the recent economic history of Japan, a sweeping statement has been made, and over the years reiterated by western commentators. It goes like this: From the 1940s, after the war, the situation which faced Japan was first and foremost survival. The priority then was to re-organize Japan's economic activities. In order to 'get things done', methods proved to be effective elsewhere, namely in the west, were introduced.

The usual story line has been that the Japanese as pupils learned from the American masters. In the 1970s, the industrious pupils overtook the masters by surprise. What seems to be lacking in the story is the extent to which the Japanese cultural traditions may have played an invaluable role in Japan's seeming 'westernization'. The reasons for the downplay of the Japanese cultural influence, thought to have contributed to the country's success, may be twofold. Firstly, it is a fair measure of outsider's ignorance and perhaps prejudice of the Japanese society. Secondly, western perception (or conception) of Japan is not helped by Japan's reluctant and reticent exposure to outsiders. A lack of understanding by outsiders' is compounded with the practice that serious studies on Japan have been conventionally undertaken by experts on the Japanese language, history and culture in a scholarly manner (see eg. Moore, 1967a; 1967b; Becker, 1991; Lee, 1992; Rosenberger, 1992; May, 1996). Against this background, economists and management academics interested in examining the economic presence or revival of Japan by making projections are relatively newcomers to the scene of Japan studies. Upon close scrutiny, both their premises held on Japan and the approaches of their investigations can be challenged [8].

Indeed, how do the Japanese see their success when researchers allow themselves to reexamine the 'Japan case' with 'an anthropological eye' ? The question suggests that there be an alternative to the blatantly positivistic accounts of Japan's success. Obviously, the general premises of any alternative may be different. Arguably, Japan is probably more than a fieldwork site for researchers to enter, to 'collect data' and then to do their due share of analysis. The latter is usually carried out within a preconceived 'theoretical framework' and, necessarily, with accepted 'concepts' as the starting point (see Willer and Willer, 1973; Bryman, 1984). However, to have an anthropological eye means that one examines 'evidence' differently from that conducted with a 'positivistic eye', because events or 'data' may not always be as clear-cut or black-and-white as researchers would like them to be.

To a Japanese, what would the starting point for examining Japan's learning experience from the west be ? According to Morishima (1982), Japan's open-door policy to the west was marked by the Meiji revolution in the mid 19th century. In this light, considerable western influence in Japan after 1945 may be seen as the second wave. Central to Morishima's argument was the Japanese Confucian ethos (ibid.: 1-19). He argued that the Japanese ethos had a significant impact on the Japanese sense (or concept) of the 'self' and the way in which the Japanese relate to each other. If humanity lies at the heart of classic Confucian ideal that regulates moral and ethical codes of members in a Confucian community, it would not be difficult to infer its consequences. For instance, in an organizational setting the Confucian ethos manifests itself through the hierarchical order of superior and subordinates instead of the familiar division between the 'management' and the 'employees' in the west. Obligations between superior and subordinates are reciprocally fulfilled with duty, responsibility, respect and trust (Chung, 1991; Shun, 1991; Lee, 1994; Tu, 1996). Possibly, a close examination of behavioural patterns of the Japanese, undoubtedly shaped by the Confucian ethos, would not sit comfortably with (positivistic) questionnaire surveys (see Marsh, 1979). To date, the latter has been the most commonly employed method for 'collecting field data'. Specifically, for the sake of this inquiry, it is time to question the starting point of standard quality management accounts on Japan. To follow a positivist path, one rarely discusses the role of an historical dimension of a phenomenon under scrutiny. For him, the echoing of historical evidence has little impact on the present moment. This is perhaps why the space, from where historians such as Locke (1996) have something critical to say about the 'Japanese economic miracle', has not been the space for the mainstream.

2.2 TQM Experience (II): Problems, Challenges and Reports

To unfold the 'TQM case', the following questions may be considered. Historically, *who* were involved in quality control movements in Japan and in the west?

From where and under what conditions were problems concerning quality raised by whom ? *How* were such problems solved ? In retrospect, three main constituencies have played their part: engineers, managers and management academics. They all shared problems of 'quality', yet each perceived and identified 'quality' with a particular focus. Let us now examine *what* has been so far said of 'quality' and *how* 'quality' issues have been articulated.

Problems for engineers   Quality control in the 1930s was considerably influenced by the thinking of achieving certainty through statistical probability. In Shewhart's classic work on quality control, he explained why (Shewhart, 1931). "Through the use of the scientific method, extended to take account of modern statistical concepts, it has been found possible to set up limits within which the results of routine efforts must lie if they are to be economical. Deviation in the results of a routine process outside such limits indicate that the routine has broken down and will no longer be economical until the cause of trouble is removed. This book is the natural outgrowth of an investigation started some six years ago to develop a scientific basis for attaining economic control of quality of manufactured product through the establishment of control limits to indicate at every stage in the production process from raw materials to finished product when the quality of product is varying more than is economically desirable. As such, this book constitutes a record of progress and an indication of the direction in which future developments may be expected to take place" (ibid.: vii). For Shewhart, applying statistical methods was an assured way forward, as evident in his statement: "It is conceivable that some time man will have a knowledge of all the laws of nature so that he can predict the future quality of product with absolute certainty" (ibid.: 353). By making use of quantitative data, statistics was to have a special role to play in quality control since Shewhart.

Although quality control in manufacturing was primarily the job for industrial engineers, statistical quality control (SQC) was indeed first developed by statisticians.

As a useful methodology, SQC relies on quantitative data in controlling variations over time and therefore effectively limits product defects. Thus, Shewhart summed up SQC as having the advantages of: (1). reduction in the costs of inspection and of rejection; (2). attainment of maximum benefits from quantity production and of uniform quality; and (3). reduction in tolerance limits where quality measurement is indirect (ibid.: 34). For the next four decades, no one could ever talk about quality control without referring to statistical methods.

Before the 1950s, quality control was to achieve the goal of reducing the level of product defects. Hence, Shewhart defined quality control as " ... phenomenon will be said to be controlled when, through the use of past experience, we can predict, at least within limits, how the phenomenon may be expected to vary in the future. Here it is understood that prediction within limits means that we can state, at least approximately, the probability that the observed phenomenon will fall within the given limits" (ibid.: 6). The statistical approach to quality control was reconsidered in the context of industrial operations by Feigenbaum in the 1950s. He proposed an administrative system, first known as modern quality control (MQC) and then modified as total quality control, TQC for short (Feigenbaum, 1951; 1956). It is now understood that TQC evolved into the mid 1960s as a movement in the Japanese industry (Ishikawa, 1964; 1985; 1990). Because of the close link between the disciplines of Statistics and Engineering, authors on quality, specially before the 1980s, were primarily either engineers or statisticians (Shewhart and Deming, 1939; Deming, 1950; 1951; Taguchi, 1979; Mizuno, 1979).

Taking a historical view suggests that, firstly, one try to go back to those moments in the 1930s when problems arose for statisticians and engineers *before* they were related to the agenda of the top management of a company becoming issues for 'the management', as they may be perceived in the 1980s. Secondly, one seeks to reconstruct the past, or at least to capture some of it. In so doing, one has to be

selective up to a point. Further, one may have to appropriate the past for the sake of a present argument. Therefore, what I have tried to do here is to present an understanding of problems at hand for Shewhart and his colleagues, such as Deming, as much as I can whilst to limit my own interpretation of their work. After all, any interpretation of their problems then, by me or anyone, for them from a current position may be different from their understanding of the situations facing them. For instance, the apparent importance of quality has been articulated as a 'strategic issue' having a 'competitive advantage' for companies (Deming, 1986; Garvin, 1988). However, such management cliché only came to the scene in the 1980s. In Shewhart's time, if one were to identify a 'theory' of quality control, it had to be its statistical basis, the approach and subsequent methods devised. As Shewhart pointed out that " ... Our understanding of the theory of quality control requires that our fundamental concepts of such things as physical properties, physical laws, and causal explanations undergo certain changes, since industrial development rests on the application of the laws relating the physical properties of materials" (Shewhart, 1931: 351).

To a certain extent, life was probably less complex when 'quality' was the concern of technical specialists. As time went by, life became complicated and messy when an additional dimension was introduced in the 1950s (Feigenbaum, 1951; 1956; Juran, 1951; Ishikawa, 1954). In the same spirit, there have been variations in the ways in which product quality was approached and acted upon in Japan, the US and the UK. In the early days, 'quality' was measured against established standards. Among engineers and statisticians, it was not difficult to reach an acceptable definition of 'quality'. However, since the 1950s, the domain of 'quality' has extended beyond the sole professional responsibility of an engineer. It is worthy of note that when quality control was introduced in Japan, it was taken as an issue for top management !

Challenges to managers   When Feigenbaum proposed that the aim of MQC was to be responsive to customers' needs, he made 'quality' an issue beyond the

traditional domain of professional engineers and, in particular, more than a technical problem. He defined MQC as "an effective system for co-ordinating the quality control maintenance and quality improvement efforts of the various groups in an organization so as to enable production at the most economic levels which allow for full customer satisfaction" (Feigenbaum, 1951: 1). For him, it was inadequate to regard quality control as solving technical problems alone with statistical methods. If the system was to work effectively, non-statistical inputs had to be taken into account and co-operation rather than the sole reliance on division of labour had to be on the agenda. Feigenbaum's integrative approach of looking at and solving problems of quality was implicitly a challenge to both industrial engineers and managers. It demanded reconsidering or even redefining their roles through working with all personnel concerned. Specifically, the status quo of managing based on functionalistic thinking was to be questioned [9]. Accordingly, there emerged a profound change in the given meaning of 'quality': from the statistical vocabulary of reducing variations of Shewhart to the market-orientation of satisfying customers of Feigenbaum. After Feigenbaum, the concern on quality became a question of how customers needs were translated back into technical specifications and how managers, engineers and everybody were able to work together to deliver products that customers would buy.

Arguably, the seeds of the Japanese TQC movement were planted in the early 1950s. As good pupils, the Japanese took what Feigenbaum said of TQC to heart [10]. Although often being referred to a statistician in his role in the 1950s, Deming insisted on a systematic approach to quality control when he taught statistical process control (SPC) in Japan (see Latzko and Saunders, 1995: 4). He not only taught hundreds of Japanese engineers but also top Japanese executives. To the Japanese in those days, Juran (1951; 1964; 1980; 1981; Juran and Gryna, 1988) was another well-respected teacher. Indeed, three decades later, definitions of TQM (see eg. Oakland, 1989; Bendell, 1991; Bank, 1992) were not that different from Feigenbaum's TQC and from Deming and Juran's teachings in the 1950s.

If a manager is one who manages events and gets things done, then such a loose definition suggests at least that managers be those who take actions on a daily basis in organizations. Perhaps, one needs to discern 'the management' of a company from front-line 'managers'. In a standard management textbook, the former may be said to be in charge of setting goals and general policies whereas the latter deal with nitty-gritty operational matters. However, a definition does not necessarily inform anyone what and how managers actually do under specific circumstances. Seemingly, there must be ways of looking at and knowing what and how to manage, for instance, 'the Japanese way', 'the German way' and 'the American way' (see Locke, 1996). In the context of quality management, one is concerned with the question of how 'managers' relate themselves to industrial engineers as specialists. What is relevant seems to be less of fine-tuning a definition and more of how they actually proceed in the light of a system approach to quality.

Reports by academics   What role have management academics played in the evolution of 'quality' ? When did they come into the scene ? Most of them have been to companies, investigating what happened and subsequently wrote reports on TQM practice 'out there'. In so doing, these academics have indeed created a *discursive space* for themselves. They might have also performed the role of a bridge or served as a *medium* across industry, academia and the public awareness of 'quality' issues. I wonder to what extent the academics involved may have helped to reinforce the virtues or images of 'quality'.

To illustrate the way in which reports on TQM are written, let us review how one of the top mainstream management journals, *Academy of Management Review* (AMR, 1994), dealt with the TQM topic. As articulated in the guest editorial, a AMR's special issue is "a way to highlight intellectual domains that were particularly ready for special attention. That is, an area, topic or theme was to be selected for the occasional

special issue that met several criteria. One was that the topic had to have been around long enough for some empirical and theoretical development to have taken place. ... In fact, the production of a special issue could produce a breakthrough, and/or ideally, become a benchmark for the field" (Klimoski, 1994: 390). The passage reveals three critical points. Firstly, the special issue was a statement on the existence of an establishing and/or established research site called TQM as well as an acknowledgement from the academic mainstream that there be a (perceived) intellectual domain of quality management. Curiously, there has been a lack of probing effort in knowing how this particular domain has become what is known. Secondly, if a familiar division were to mark a domain, the site was certainly based on one between empirical evidence or practice 'out there' on the one hand and theoretical development or 'theory' on the other. Hence, the editor expected prospective submissions to satisfy both. Thirdly, the special issue seems to have justified its aim at creating a benchmark or preferably a 'breakthrough' for 'theory' when the reader takes a close look at the composition of all the seven papers. There were, inclusive in the special issue (AMR, 1994), three papers on TQM and management theory development (by Dean and Bowen; Anderson et al.; Waldman), one on TQM and models of organization (by Spencer), one on definitions of quality (by Reeves and Bednar). As to the rest, one explored a contingency perspective by distinguishing control from learning in TQM (by Sitkin et al.). The other argued why the total quality implementation is easier said than done (by Reger et al.). Obviously, by AMR's criteria, TQM as a topic must have been subjected to rigorous academic scrutiny.

Any story from the above special issue takes certain events into account. The question is from what position these authors talk about their countable events. When an argument for TQM is put forward, be it economic, social and political, often the same familiar division of 'management' and 'employees' can be traced. If TQM practice initiates a process of organizational change, it may have played a role in reshaping interests of constituencies concerned. To a certain extent, the articles in the AMR

special issue represent the orientation of the mainstream, in which an adopted 'approach' and 'methodology' are often assumed to be the same. The latter takes the form of quantitative or qualitative methods. However, when examining the TQM phenomenon, ontological and epistemological considerations may also be taken into considerations that allow an exposure of the dominant positivistic (and necessarily empiricist) thinking, on the ground that the mainstream has been maintained with a set of primary assumptions regarding 'reality', the researcher and 'data' or evidence (see ESRC, 1993).

For those who are interested in investigating in-depth about TQM, what and where is *'reality'* ? A simple answer goes that *the* 'reality' is, presumably the only TQM practice, 'out there' in organizations or companies. Regarding a researcher's position, can anyone ever be an objective *observer* ? If the answer is assertive, one then believes that he can go out to the field and investigates his case. With respect to *data*, where can one obtain them ? The standard reply would be that data are believed to be lying 'out there', waiting for collection. Once established fieldwork procedures are properly followed, the researcher will be in possession of 'data', having the 'material' for doing the required analysis. The result will be in the form of a defensible account.

Indeed, these assumptions constitute the ground on which the mainstream TQM literature is written. However, something is missing from actions based on the above assumptions. The constitution of evidence itself is seldom in question. Further, the prevailing mood in the literature has been optimistic. The question of whether a detached position, independent of the observed phenomenon, is sustainable for the observer can be avoided. Specifically, how does an observer's perception influence the formulation of the observed and whether an objective position can be convincingly defended ? I wonder how a researcher argues his case without the awareness that his sense of 'reality' and a perceived observer-observed relationship may frame his expectations of how what needs to be researched can be done (see Steier, 1991).

Regarding analysing one's evidence, the commonly accepted norm implies that evidence is either quantitative or qualitative (eg. Bryman, 1984). Hence, historically evolved TQM events must also comply to this procedure. To quantify TQM experience, for instance, events must be categorised and data be appropriated in such a way that they appear as clear-cut, following the mutually exclusive binary either-or logic. Therefore, once an event is thrown into one prefabricated box, it cannot reappear in another. The result often looks neat with cleanly drawn lines linking one box to another that eventually build a 'framework' or 'model'. Seemingly, hardly any room is left for ambiguity and there is no need for messy descriptions; all look orderly and satisfying. One only needs to recall TQM questionnaire survey reports to realise how a reality 'out there' has been represented. On the other hand, how about qualitative case study method ? Despite its advantage of a discursive space for details, there is one obvious consequence: Certain events have to be excluded or ignored for the tidiness of the main story. It makes practical sense for the researcher to do so. Nevertheless, does it do justice to historical evidence, if a researcher makes an account on the basis that certain events are 'accountable' for his story than other events ? In short, the research methods mentioned above manifest the conviction of the mainstream approach. To what extent are they as neutral and value-free as they are usually portrayed to be ?

Let us not lose sight of one general concern. What are the ways in which the works of academics can be related to industry or to the practice 'out there' ? The question points to the bedrock division of 'theory and practice'. Indeed, one may have to clarify by stating 'which theory' and 'which practice'. Is it not possible that there are other 'theories' and 'practices' than what is known to researchers ? To reveal them, one has to demonstrate perhaps a different discursive space than the current one that most researchers are operating in.

2.3 Perspectives and Manifestations

Disciplinary perspectives   Since 'quality' does not always appear the same to the eyes of engineers, of managers and of management academics, there must be perceptual variations. I wonder to what extent perceptions of 'quality' relate to disciplinary perspectives and whether a definition of quality may produce a conceptual closure ?

While exploring the possibility of changing discursive spaces in management from the dominant mainstream to a critical one, Knights (1992) related a disciplinary perspective to a discursive space. He began by drawing attention to the present one which he regarded as less than adequate. To him, Foucault's radical rethinking of established knowledge paved the way. After offering his Foucauldian critique on the 'subject' or discourse of Strategy, Knights discerned Foucault's archaeological and genealogical analyses [11]. He stated that "A major implication of the archaeological approach is that it points to a change in the *epistemological space* that management studies occupies, recognizing this form of study to lie between positive knowledge (ie. biology, economics, and linguistics) and the *conditions* of subjectivity that make these positive studies possible. Recognizing this *new epistemological position* would lead students of management studies in the direction of a genealogical mode of analysis, which seeks to show how power may intervene in organizations either to sustain or to undermine positive knowledge" (ibid.: 532, emphasis added). At the time, Knights was quite explicit in his attempt to clarify two important theoretical positions. On the one hand, he drew the reader's attention to an epistemological space and ontological position of management knowledge to the extent that it became problematic for one to ignore their potential implications to what is taken as knowledge. Second, what he referred to as 'positive knowledge' was not without its own conditions. Implicitly, to reveal historical conditions of a specific knowledge formation may be a viable alternative to the mainstream mode of inquiry in management research.

In concluding his critique, Knights held that "For if nothing else, the impact of Foucault's work is to *disturb and disrupt what is readily taken for granted*, and this extends well beyond the realms of 'professional' activities and their objects. Notwithstanding, the 'illusions of grandeur' aspired to by those who claim the respectable status of 'science' for their endeavors through emulating its methods and vocabulary, some students of management and organizations are troubled by the *'creeping' instability and uncertainty* surrounding the knowledge they seek to produce" (ibid.: 532, emphasis added). In retrospect, I was indeed not only troubled but also a very confused pupil. To me, what was certain was the task ahead: It looked no longer sustainable for the taken-for-granted TQM knowledge to remain as it was. Yet, how could an emerging 'that' be demonstrated ?

The TQM literature may be categorically divided into three camps: the pro-TQM enthusiasts, its critics and the beyond-TQM advocates. An account of each is more than an analysis (Garvin, 1988), since what is common in all is that 'management' as a disciplinary space has already been occupied, as contended by Knights. From our earlier discussion on QC, one might have realised that a disciplinary perspective, be it Engineering or Statistics, somehow moulds 'quality' differently. Therefore, 'quality' as known is 'quality' seen through the eyes of statisticians, engineers, line managers, executives and probably management academics. If the engineering mode of thinking about quality has produced a framework for investigating quality management, that framework may be seen as the effect of knowledge production by statisticians and engineers. By the same token, theoretically speaking it is possible to perceive TQM from another disciplinary perspective.

The already occupied epistemological space may be illustrated by doctoral dissertations on TQM implementation (Mohr, 1991; Powers, 1991). To Mohr, 'total quality' was implicitly in need of a broad framework which encompassed multiple

disciplines, of which marketing was one. There was no need to justify her 'discipline', because, as indicated in her argument, 'marketing scholars' accepted and followed it as a norm. All she did as a researcher was to deliver "a more precise definition of total quality than currently exists" (Mohr, 1991) [12] by developing and testing hypotheses and propositions. In Powers' dissertation, the research problem was straightforward: "Once defined, laboratory roles would be clearly communicated to customers and other organizations" (Powers, 1991) [13]. His findings were produced through both quantitative and qualitative methods. For both researchers, the focus of their investigations was to identify problems in TQM implementation and then to offer good solutions. Nevertheless, the efforts by both researchers' may be rather limited since to take a definition of quality for an answer does not necessarily lead one to articulate and probe further into difficult questions. I wonder why anyone bothers with research at all if an answer is already implied, albeit perhaps unwittingly, at the outset of his research by the very question raised ?

In Kuhn's terms, what happens as an accepted practice may be referred to as 'normal science' (Kuhn, 1970). It was therefore no surprise that when 'methodology' was discussed in Mohr's dissertation, the norm was to state what qualitative or quantitative 'methods' she employed and to describe her data collection. Understandably, when a researcher is unaware of the (positivistic) epistemological ground of his claims, the word 'methodology' can be nothing but normative and prescriptive.

Obviously, if the adoption of a reductionist thinking gets me nowhere near a satisfactory research outcome, I have to explore alternatives. Among other things, the reductionist mode allows one to 'keep things apart' but no more than that. For instance, a good definition confines 'quality' to be 'this' but not 'that'. It is not of much help when one wishes to bring another dimension to the scene or to cope with 'putting things back together'. That is, to ask how to take what 'management' does as a whole, what

an organization does as a whole, or what 'quality' does as a whole so that attention may be drawn to events both officially claimed and the non-articulated.

With respect to knowledge, one may consider its two faces, ie. knowledge in the 'management science' and knowledge in action. By the latter, the effort is to put what is known into practice 'out there'. If 'management science' can be challenged as being immature, it is because of its epistemologically shaky ground and ontologically limited scope for human experience. Seemingly, credibility has yet to be earned with clear articulation and clarification of problems. It is time to examine the ground of TQM knowledge claims, ie. to be concerned with the way in which TQM knowledge is developed and justified.

A new management paradigm ?   The notion of a dominant scientific 'paradigm' was proposed by Kuhn (1962/70) in his now famous study on the history of science, entitled *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (SSR). Ziman (1992) paid his tribute to Kuhn's aspiration to explain the history of science as "the urge to dig deeper and think wider". Arguably, the title SSR bears some trace of Kuhn's belief in an invisible 'superstructure' that is at work.

Kuhn's paradigm is developed from 'normal science' to 'extraordinary science' with five stages:

(1). Paradigm-bound normal science, where the foundation for further practice and an established norm or tradition are found (Kuhn, 1970: 10) and where fundamental novelties are often suppressed because they are necessarily subversive to the established commitments (ibid.: 5);

(2). Puzzle-solving within paradigm, whereby normal science is conducted on the basis of accepting certain assumptions and criteria for choosing problems and by following established rules and procedures in achieving solutions, as succinctly stated

by Kuhn that "normal science does not aim at novelties of fact or theory and, when successful, finds none" (ibid.: 52);

(3). Anomalies and crises, where one detects a recognition that nature has somehow violated the dominant paradigm (ibid.: 52) and that a persistent failure of existing puzzle-solving rules becomes a sign for retooling (ibid.: 76);

(4). Revolution, where scientists learn to take a new attitude to the existing paradigm and for them the nature of research changes (ibid.: 91), signified by competing articulations and debating over fundamentals so that "what were ducks in the scientists world before the revolution are rabbits afterwards" (ibid.: 111) [14]; and,

(5). New paradigm, born out of intuition and cannot be justified by proof alone because aesthetic considerations come into play (ibid.: 155) and because a paradigm shift is by virtue epistemological such that conceptual components and data are to be seen in a different way. The new paradigm is far more effective in problem-solving (ibid.: 153) and accordingly scientific progress is made (ibid.: 166).

To many, Kuhn's paradigm has become a popular first order text since it generated so much interest and lively debate in both science and social sciences (see eg. Lakatos and Musgrave, 1970). Nevertheless, Kuhn was not alone in exploring how changes took place in intellectual history. Also in the 1960s, Foucault (1966/70) sought to argue historical shifts of *episteme* in *The Order of Things*. In a broad sense, his concern was how over time changes occurred from one dominant way of seeing and knowing to another. Foucault insisted that what was believed to be knowable at one time was to be perceived differently at a later time (see chapters 3 and 4).

The impact of Kuhn's paradigm thinking on Management Studies was brought about with the publication of *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis* (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). An obvious connection came from Kuhn himself when he acknowledged that his own study on paradigm shifts may be regarded as a sociological

study on knowledge (Kuhn, 1970: 174-210). To this end, the paradigm debate in management may be seen as a second order.

An interesting parallel of Kuhn's paradigm idea to management may be drawn in management. That is, what happens to the orthodox knowledge if TQM is considered as a sign of a paradigm shift in management (Xu, 1993) ? Is not such a sign a manifestation of an underlying 'structure' as Kuhn held to be there ? This seemingly deterministic Kuhnian structure was questioned by Kavanagh (1993) in his critique of Burrell and Morgan's framework. To Kavanagh, the framework itself was a paradigm and may be seen as perpetual myths of metatheory (see Lyotard, 1979). Taking together, the four symmetrically constructed boxes of the framework constitute one large box with its own boundary to its outside. The borderline marks the boxes as 'inside' and the empty space beyond as 'outside'. Accordingly, the subjective-objective dimension of the framework, for instance, defines the scope of an inquiry that adopts the Burrell and Morgan's model. Hence, alternative avenues of research may be closed. In part, Kavanagh's examination has shown the limitations of a metatheory.

One positive note coming out of the paradigm debate in management (see eg. Brooke, 1991; Hassard, 1993; Willmott, 1993; AMR, 1994) is that management academics, particularly to those who know no other than the norm(al), have grown to be aware of what normal science management may look like. Once an 'other' is exposed, it is no longer convincing to disregard the boundaries of the mainstream. If nothing else, the presence of an 'other' may provide an alternative position from where the status quo may be critically reconsidered.

2.4   Two Types of Question: 'What' and 'How'

Let me recapture the thinking process by which my questions in the thesis were formulated.

After having familiarised myself with the TQM literature, a considerable uneasiness crept in. The literature was hardly critical and there was a lack of conceptually sound argument for TQM. The enthusiasm for TQM meant that any criticism might be seen as being 'anti-quality', a position vulnerable to attacks. On the other hand, from what was known as TQM, it was difficult to identify a theoretically defensible framework. In spite of articulated strands, such as leadership, human resource management, strategy, customer focus (see AMR, 1994), upon close scrutiny the pro-TQM case seemed to have put forward without sufficient conceptual justification as a sound footing. Or, the basis for holding them together looks rather arbitrary. For this reason, TQM research was paradoxically still open-ended by 1993. Given that I was expected to 'make an original contribution to knowledge', I was anxious to know how to fulfil such an aspiration. The TQM literature, as it stood then, fell short of intellectual excitement. For quite a while, I doubted whether TQM was worthy of serious pursuit at all. My thoughts went like this: If TQM is perceived as a management fashion, it would be soon out of it. Therefore, how can anyone do a Ph.D on a managerially fashionable subject ? Suppose I have to break away from the standard questions, do I have to ask a different set of questions ?

Perhaps, my uneasiness experienced during 1992 and 1993 had a lot to do with research questions pursued by researchers who seemed to have asserted some universal virtues of TQM. The latter was seldom in question. By 1993, the timing of my study was particularly difficult since I saw no horizon of a probable path to be the general approach for my inquiry. If I were to reexamine the TQM phenomenon and if the accepted positivistic approach were to be rejected, a viable alternative had to be proposed. By the end of 1993, critical review on TQM was in short supply, except the sceptical voice of Gill and Whittle (1993). Fortunately, that was the time when I was led to the door of the poststructuralist thinking in reexamining social phenomena. My initial brief encounter with poststructuralism made me realise that, first, if I was serious

about research, I had to go back to square one in asking questions; and second, if the TQM phenomenon can be reexamined, an approach may be derived from the poststructuralist ideas.

What is TQM ?   Before the publication of *Making Quality Critical* (Wilkinson and Willmott, 1995), the mainstream understanding of TQM was primarily prescriptive. TQM was perceived to be 'out there' practised in companies. The usual research question has been '*what is TQM*'. An answer usually takes the form of TQM is 'this' or 'that'. Although definitions of 'quality' were on offer (eg. Mohr, 1991; AMR, 1994), little concern was surfaced on the constitution of evidence. To me, the very naming of TQM itself designating a management practice could be no more than nominal (Xu, 1993). Caution is of necessity. If a 'what' type of question produces a 'what' type of answer, that 'what' answer may in turn trigger a further 'so what' question. Does this chain of 'what' imply a *circular mode* of inquiry that creates a conceptual closure ? If there is such a danger, how can a researcher break this mode ? Probably, one reduces the risk of unwittingly running into it by asking a different type of question. The alternative question is this: *How* did TQM, taking the form of 'what', *come into being* in the first place ? As such, one shifts his attention to the making of TQM from pursuing single-mindedly the 'thingness of TQM' [15].

Arguably, if this inquiry avoids clarifying 'what is quality' (see eg. Kaplan, 1992), it will be no more convincing than the mainstream prescriptive TQM discourse. This said, the question of 'what is TQM' cannot be neatly cut off from that of 'what is quality'. Is 'quality' a mere fashionable topic or there is 'more' to what is known ? The possibility of an 'extraness' begs something other than a good definition and has kept my interest in investigating the TQM 'subject' alive.

To a certain extent, my job is to demonstrate how the 'subject' can be, as it were, turned around. Either, I take the 'subject' as given and then proceed with TQM

implementation by offering improvements such that I follow the way in which the mainstream thinking produces representations of TQM practice 'out there'. Or, I take TQM as a vehicle for rethinking a management discourse. To pursue the latter, I must decide where to make a start. In particular, I need to have a reasonable understanding of where the mainstream has built itself on so that it is possible to see where the ground needs to be cleared for my own operation. Indeed, for quite some time, I knew I had to resist the temptation to follow the prescriptive norm. However, the insight of knowing what to do does not always follow immediately one's awareness of knowing what not to do. If I cannot abandon the 'subject' all together for the sake of engaging a problematic 'subject', I have to consider a change of perspectives in seeing and knowing TQM, as I contemplated on the prospect that researchers might have to "examine evidence with a different eye" (Xu, 1993: 32). Seeing a familiar object in a different light ? Will the poststructuralist be such a performative eye ? Before I was able to assure myself of risk-taking in following the poststructuralist path, I felt like a restless gambler. Having known that I was somehow trapped, I could not resist the temptation to try.

Tracing the 'what' backwards   To ask 'what is TQM' shows one's concern of its 'thingness' or 'essence' (eg. Bank, 1992). When one pursues this question, does he have a theoretical position from where the question can be put forward ? If yes, that position has to be declared. Otherwise, without making it present, one unwittingly makes it privileged. Consequently, the mistakenly privileged position may be conceived as an authentic 'origin'.

As pointed out earlier, the conventional starting point of an inquiry begins with a 'what'. Often, a researcher responds to a 'what' question with a 'what' answer by offering a prescription on 'how to do TQM'. In so doing, researchers conform to an order that constitutes the normative TQM. On the other hand, if one looks at the *formation* of a 'what', one may trace back to see how the 'what' of the mainstream is

produced. One is therefore engaged in examining the *production of a 'what'* rather than concentrating on its consumption. If I shift my attention from examining TQM knowledge consumption to its production, I would be exploring an underestimated conceptual margin. To do so, I appear to be 'going backwards'. That means specific historical circumstances, from where the coming into being of TQM opens up the 'subject', are to be carefully considered. This is the kind of tracing and clearing operation demonstrated by Heidegger (1959; 1968; 1971a; 1971b; 1977), Foucault (1967; 1970; 1971; 1972; 1973) and Derrida (1974; 1978; 1982) whose ideas will be discussed in the thesis. Here, tracing means that one is concerned with knowing how knowledge production takes place first, without which there is no ready-made for consumption. Only when one leaves space and clears a ground can what is worthy of doing be allowed to emerge in due course. To leave space is to create space for something anew to be accommodated. In a way, it is the practice of *wu wei* [16], i.e. of knowing not to work against the 'grain of things' and waiting for the right moment by non-assertion.

Questions and answers   As Philip Anderson, a Nobel laureate, commented in a review of Horgan's thesis on the end of science (Horgan, 1997) that "normal science can be described as a search for answers, great science as a search for questions, the greatest science as a search for the form the answers may take" [17]. In this light, Capra (1975; 1988; 1997) cannot be seen as doing normal science in physics. In a broad sense, his pursuit of science has taken a radical turn from establishing Cartesian things and keeping them apart to formulating patterns that illuminate the interconnectedness of the world around us. In the same way, there might be a position outside 'normal science' in management from where the latter may be subjected to rethinking.

The mainstream research questions have helped to maintain a self-fulfilling prophecy which projects TQM as a universal business philosophy. Having recognised

what I wish to avoid, I need to be clear about the extent to which questions asked in a particular way shape answers. Arguably, the kind of question asked at the beginning of an inquiry somehow relates to the answers reached at the end. Otherwise, how could I explain why the outcomes of TQM research so far look so much alike ? Possibly, researchers too often asked similar questions and took a well-trodden path in arriving at their answers. If there is a discernible framework in the mainstream, there must be common concerns that help to knock it into its present shape. And if the framework up to a point shapes research outcomes, I am interested in bringing those concerns in the open before an alternative outcome emerges.

In order to answer questions in a different way, a researcher has to be sensitive to the potential ontological and epistemological implications of his questions, since what is usually regarded as 'methodological' is already laden with ontological and epistemological assumptions. Similarly, 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' methods are not without its taken-for-granted ground of knowledge claims. Having provisionally highlighted the premises of positivistic (empiricist) mainstream, the prescriptive mode of knowing and normative knowledge requires rethinking, ie. to explore how one knows 'what he knows'. To be open about ontological and epistemological considerations, I wonder whether research is all about a researcher representing (the) reality 'out there' in organizations ? Where is the role of scholarship in management research ? If this thesis belongs to a scholarly tradition, derived from fine arts or humanities, what impact would scholarly work have on TQM and management research ?

To produce some unconventional research outcome, two steps may be considered: to state questions already asked about TQM and in particular to expose their assumptions; and, to raise questions for this thesis. Either they have not been pursued or they can be answered differently. For instance, to the same question of

'what is quality', why not suspend a definition temporarily so that one clears a discursive space for a new inscription ?

What follows is my alternative path to the mainstream: I now embark on a poststructuralist journey to see what the 'true face' of TQM would look like.

Notes:

1. See chapter 6 for my argument on 'westernization' of Japanese management practices, and not as the popular literature has described as 'Japanization' or 'easternization'.

2. See *Economist* (1992), for articles in the *Financial Times*, see Fazey (1992), Dickson (1993), Dickson (1995), and *The Times* (1995) and Trapp (1992).

3. Many such articles have straightforward and seemingly self-explanatory titles.

4. For further discussion, see chapter 6, in particular sections 6.1 and 6.2.

5. For more details, see chapter 5, section 5.4.

6. For its source, see the Baldrige debate (HBR, 1992).

7. For further discussion, see chapter 6.

8. See chapters 6 and 8.

9. For a detail discussion, see chapter 5.

10. See Ishikawa (1964: 3), in particular his quote of Feigenbaum's definition of TQC.

11. I wonder whether Knights was then influenced by Sheridan's work. For Sheridan (1980) considered Foucault's work in a similar light, namely "the archaeology of knowledge" and "the genealogy of power".

12. From the abstract of the thesis (Mohr, 1991).

13. From the abstract of the thesis (Powers, 1991).

14. Kuhn was influenced by the Gestalt school in psychology (see Köhler, 1949/66) and the study of pictorial representation (see Gömbrich, 1959/77). Specifically, Gömbrich illustrated the drawing that can be perceived as both a duck and a rabbit (ibid.: 4).

15. Cf. Introduction (Wilkinson and Willmott, 1995) for their account on 'What is TQM'.

16. Here, I quote Capra's rendering of *wu-wei*, see Capra (1988: 93).

17. 'Gold turns to lead', *Financial Times*, 9 May 1997, p.12.

OPENING UP THE TQM SUBJECT

In <u>Part Two</u> of the thesis, the reader will follow an elaboration on the adopted poststructuralist approach and methodology.

Chapter 3   The Poststructuralist Movement

The poststructuralist movement is introduced as the theoretical background of this thesis. It begins with an account of where this movement came from and explores two crucial themes from the movement: *the way in which subject* is treated and *the capacity of language*.

Accordingly, the TQM 'subject' may be investigated in light of a discursive space. Specifically, TQM discourse is rendered as a certain *materiality* of TQM knowledge. Once this step is taken, it becomes problematic for a researcher to insist on having an overall 'poststructuralist position'. Instead, one has to make conceptual moves. To interpret the poststructuralist approach as mere 'methods' is misconceived, since it is, in practice, *A PHILOSOPHY OF INQUIRY.*

Inquiries of similar persuasion in Management Studies (MS) to date are reviewed. My contribution will come from my ability to apply poststructuralism to the examining of the TQM 'subject'.

Chapter 4   To Reexamine the TQM Phenomenon

In order to reexamine TQM, specific issues need to be addressed before my analysis can proceed. They are: (1). to discern the *cooked* knowledge, for consumption, from the *cooking* or knowledge (re)production; (2). to reveal the overlooked capacity of the Saussurean linguistic sign in the sign-signified-signifier trichotomy (Saussure, 1959); and, (3). to reconsider the taken-for-granted *perception* of a division between 'theory and practice'.

An appreciation of *an arbitrary sign* holds the key to unravel *representational* and *significatory* (for short of a better word) practices. When the *sign* is concealed, what remains present is signified-signifier, which enables the representational practice. On the other hand, if one takes the Saussurean, and more recently Derridean (Derrida, 1978), sign seriously, language and writing must also be *significatory*, i.e. a practice which is wider in scope than the representational.

Such a re-reading or rethinking of an arbitrary sign provides the theoretical basis on which a poststructuralist analysis of the relevant literature and practices can be made.

BEING-IN-THE-WORLD

"All our heart's courage is the

echoing response to the

first call of Being which

gathers our thinking into the

play of the world."

(Heidegger, 1971b: 9)

CHAPTER THREE

THE POSTSTRUCTURALIST MOVEMENT

The term 'poststructuralism' is used mainly for describing the intellectual movement led by Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida in radically breaking away, though not necessarily a total rejection [1], from the once dominant 'structuralism'. The wave of poststructuralist thinking became known in part as a result of the French student revolts of 1968. Poststructuralism can be taken as an influential mode of thinking initiated from the 1960s, the impact of which has since reached many quarters of traditional humanities and social science disciplines. As a brief overview, this chapter responds to the following concerns: (1). where this movement has derived from; (2). what kind of movement it is perceived to be; and, (3). categorically, why poststructuralism is able to make an impact on various fields of studies of human knowledge and, until recently, certain pockets in Management Studies.

3.1 Three Modes of Thinking

In order to have an understanding of poststructuralism, some background knowledge is necessary. Let us start with three modes of thinking: 'functionalism', 'structuralism' and 'poststructuralism'. Before the discussion proceeds, let me make it clear that the purpose of referring to these rather abstract expressions is not to put forward a comprehensive list of relevant names and historical events associated with them. It is to explore why transitions from one mode of thinking to another may occur.

It is generally accepted that the idea of an entity being perceived as composed of functional parts comes from the study of biology. To divide a human body, for instance, into individual functional parts, is first and foremost to make divisions. Once divisions are established, the function of these individual parts becomes the focus of study on the assertion that the operation of functional parts should constitute a coherent whole. It was Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) who used the organismic analogy to create an explicit form of functional analysis (Spencer, 1864). He insisted that there were three basic requisites of superorganic systems: (1). the *need* to secure and circulate resources, (2). the *need* to produce usable substances, and (3). the *need* to regulate, control and administer system activities. For Spencer, since any pattern of social organization revealed these three classes of functional requisites, the aim of sociological analysis was to see how these needs were met in empirical social systems. This mode of thinking, when served also as a governing principle for investigations, is called functionalism.

A study of functionalism is often fulfilled through conducting empirical investigations, in which historical evidence and proof are typically sought after. In the 'discipline' of Management Studies, for example, a conventional organization chart is constructed on the idea of functionalism. Without denying its merit and usefulness up to a point, one may be equally interested in being informed of its criticisms. The limitations of functionalism may be outlined as: (1). conservative in nature of analysis by emphasising the functions of phenomena for maintaining the status quo (see Coser, 1956; Dahrendorf, 1958); (2). excessive theories of classification that pigeonhole phenomena in terms of their functions; (3). tautological explanations that see phenomena as meeting needs and needs as generating phenomena (see Dore, 1961); and, (4). failing to conceptualise adequately the nature of actors and the process of interaction (see Blumer, 1969).

'Structuralism' came to light in part as an intellectual response to functionalism and, albeit in a limited way, to empiricism [2]. Though the term structuralism was first used in the study of linguistics around 1928 (see Joseph, 1994a), the seminal ideas for structuralism were conceived by linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), universally regarded as the 'father of structuralism' (see Koerner, 1994). The posthumous compilation of Saussure's lecture notes on general linguistics, the *Cours de Linguistique Generale*, edited by his former students and first published in 1916, ushered in a revolution in linguistic thinking between the 1920s and the 1930s, the impact of which is still felt today (see Lechte, 1994: 148-152).

According to Joseph (1994b), the main features of structuralism can be summarised as follows:

(a). the study of systematic phenomena can be carried out along the lines of Saussure's characterization of *langue*, ie. language as *the underlying system*;

(b). 'abstract' levels of analysis are believed to be more deep-seated, hence more 'real' than concrete ones;

(c). an axiomatic faith in language as fundamentally a social phenomenon which could nevertheless be best studied through the utterances of individual speakers;

(d). a general priority of linguistic form over meaning; and,

(e). compared with 'speech', ie. in the Saussurean sense 'language in all its manifestations', written language is not regarded as 'language' proper but a secondary representation.

With regard to the historical and, in particular, intellectual contexts of structuralism, the above description requires further clarification:

(1). to take language as the underlying system suggests a belief in the existence of *systematic phenomena* and, at the same time, indicates an appreciation of hierarchy, eg. as the use of the term 'levels' or 'layers' implies;

(2). the preference for abstract levels of analysis seems to accommodate 'theoretical' investigations better than 'empirical' ones, which also suggests, at least, a partial rejection of (over)reliance upon functionalistic and empiricist approaches; however, this is also where difficulty arises because empiricism is persistently present in the works of Levi-Strauss' (Derrida, 1978: 288), which is related to the next point;

(3). to disregard language as pure mental phenomenon opens widely opportunities of studying human activities in different cultural or social contexts through *their use* of language, eg. as anthropology did in the 1950s;

(4). the emphasis of linguistic form over meaning acknowledges, to a great extent, the *legitimate* status of language and therefore linguistics; and,

(5). of language, 'speech' is regarded as genuine and authentic whereas 'writing' is merely a reproduction of 'speech'; indeed, this long held view became the target of attack by the poststructuralist school of thought years later.

To a certain extent, structuralism seeks to expose the apparently mechanistic outlook of the functional approach. However, on closer inspection, structuralism appears no less deterministic than functionalism in that they both portray a rather static view of events or things. The structuralist belief lies in some mysteriously 'hidden laws' of an underlying structure that dictates change and guarantees progress, to which Kuhn's paradigm is exemplary. In this sense, 'infrastructuralism' rather than 'structuralism' may be a more appropriate label for it. That 'you are no more bearer of (your) culture' is a typical structuralist statement in anthropology, which leaves little room for any deviation from a mainstream culture.

The rebellious breakaway from paradoxically appealing structuralism is labelled as poststructuralism (see Marshall, 1994). The latter does not merely seek to provide an exhaustive critique on the former, especially to the pivotal notion of the underlying structure, but is dedicated to revealing an abundant reserve of multiplicity in what is *already* said, done and inscribed. In particular, strong emphasis is given to the status of

language, discourse, writing and 'text'. Through examining the process of knowledge production, poststructuralist writers demonstrated not only how western understanding of knowledge was once shaped but also the ways in which it can be reshaped. At this point, one might argue that since the very name of poststructuralism bears the signature of where it came from, poststructuralism is therefore no more than a radical school of structuralism (see Cox, 1992). I will come back to this point later. Indeed, there are two questions that need to be addressed. Firstly, how do the two relate to one another ? Secondly, to what extent or on what ground do they differ ?

3.2 Two Intellectual Movements

The above three 'states of mind', as it were, may be further elaborated as two intellectual movements. The 1950s witnessed the first. Structuralism, as a intellectual fashion, was heralded by Claude Levi-Strauss who discovered Saussure's work in 1942 (see Campbell, 1994). Levi-Strauss enjoyed his prime of scholarship through his early publications: *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1949), *Tristes Tropiques* (1955) and, the most popular one that secured his intellectual status, *Structural Anthropology* (1958/63) [3]. The guiding idea in Levi-Strauss's work was to find fundamental structures beneath the bewildering disparateness of anthropological phenomena. The methodological significance of Levi-Strauss's work came from his demonstration of how a prevailing mode of thinking from one discipline, ie. linguistics since the 1920s, found its intellectual home in another, ie. anthropology in the 1950s. Arguably, it was also that interesting time which gave birth to structural anthropology. Since between the 1940s and the 1960s most fields of human knowledge came under the dominance of structuralism. Apart from Levi-Strauss, other areas and their most prominent structuralist practitioners include: in biology, Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1901-72); in literary theory, Roland Barthes (1915-80); in Marxist theory, Louis Althusser (1918-90); in mathematics, 'Nicholas Bourbaki' -- the pseudonym of a group of French mathematicians; in psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan (1901-79); and in psychology, Jean

Piaget (1896-1980). With this background in mind, the publication of *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Kuhn, 1970) extended the powerful influence of structuralism to the study of philosophy of science. As mentioned in chapter 2, Kuhn's conception of paradigm was in part appropriated into Management Studies (MS) by the popularisation of *Sociological Paradigms and Organizational Analysis* (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) [4]. Although adopted by researchers as a framework for analysis, reiterating paradigms neither guarantees an adequate articulation of the boundaries of MS nor helps much in clarifying their (non)presence, let alone offering convincing accounts of their effects.

Parallel to the general enthusiasm to Kuhn's paradigm in Anglo-Saxon academic communities of social sciences, another intellectual theme was evolving. From the 1960s, structuralism has been challenged by radical French scholars. Foucault, by training a philosopher and psychiatrist, was one of them. As a cultural historian and social thinker, Foucault offered his highly original accounts on 'madness' (Foucault, 1961/67), medical perception (1963/73), human sciences (1966/70) and on knowledge and discourse and its power effects (1969/72; 1971; see Sheridan, 1980; Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1982; Rabinow, 1984; Cook, 1994; Lechte, 1994) [5]. According to Foucault, discourse -- the articulation through language -- is something in need of control and hedged around by complex rules and constraints. They are, contrary to its seemingly neutral appearance, historical, cultural and political phenomena. Discourse is therefore subject to historical shifts, emergence and transformations with complex combinations that cannot be adequately explained as manifestations of one deterministic underlying structure. Throughout his extensive case studies, Foucault sought to demonstrate how discourse *was shaping subjects*. Foucault's energetic engagement with the possibility of a writing that unsettles the established logics of history and philosophy reminds one of Nietzsche. Indeed, Foucault operated at a level traditionally regarded as epistemological. That is, he paid due attention *not* necessarily to knowledge claims per se but to the *ground* of such

claims. Despite the fact that Foucault himself refused to be labelled as a 'structuralist' (Foucault, 1970: xiv), it is in his early writings that one may detect familiar structuralist vocabularies (eg. 'laws', 'truth', 'levels' and 'foundations'). Let us look closely at one example. At a first glance, the term 'archaeology', one of Foucault's most important conceptions, does have a structuralist slant since it indicates such concept like 'levels' or 'layers' on an archaeological site. However, making sense of what the Foucauldian 'archaeology' was really meant to be, one may have to pay attention to the way in which Foucault employed the term. For him, the crux of the matter was to turn what was commonly known as 'facts' into 'artefacts', ie. 'things said' as 'archive'. It is through analysing archive that a past culture or civilization can be understood. The conception of archaeology allows such a critical perceptual turn.

Jacques Derrida, once Foucault's pupil (see Derrida, 1978: 31-32), began lecturing in the US from 1959. Many of his most intriguing essays published from the mid 1960s were first delivered at his lectures. Derrida embarked on a thorough 'deconstruction' of what he saw as western logocentric philosophy (see Crasnow, 1994). Though he inherited the Heideggerean approach to metaphysics (see Heidegger, 1953/59) [6] and to philosophy in general, his work went further than that of Heidegger's, especially in his unceasing efforts to resolve the ambiguous status of language through re-establishing the role of writing (Derrida, 1967/74; 1972/82; 1978). From Heidegger's *Destruktion* and *Abbau*, Derrida derived the term 'deconstruction' which has an obvious resonance to the notion of structure [7]. For those who have read Derrida carefully, *de-con-struction* may be understood as a kind of reading, writing and, above all, a kind of thinking that symptomatically resists formulation. For Derrida, it was precisely the self-identical, self-privileged structure that provoked deconstruction. It began with a questioning of metaphysics insofar as metaphysics produced a repertoire of logocentric master terms: 'foundation', 'origin', 'end' and 'essence'. In order to uncover an 'other' of philosophy, says Derrida, one has to make certain *movements* which work around the *limits* or 'margins' of existing

logical concepts. An allusion to certain *texts* would make the *limits* of our language tremble, exposing them as divisible and questionable (Derrida, 1984: 112). Perhaps, the most striking implication of his daring conceptual moves emerges out of his ambitious agenda that metaphysics is to be eventually replaced by a theory of writing (Derrida, 1974) on the basis that language, or Derridean writing, may be seen as a legitimate *sign*. The far-reaching ontological and in particular theoretical consequences of Derrida's drastic move will be dealt with later (see chapters 4, 6 and 8).

Other than Foucault and Derrida, this intellectual movement sustained its momentum throughout the 1970s and the 1980s. Jean-Francois Lyotard (1979) contested the meta-narratives of science and the status of scientific knowledge as we know them, which sparked off a continuing controversy over what he called 'the postmodern condition'. On another front, Bruno Latour (1987) portrayed an amusingly insightful picture on the making of science through translations of concerns and interests in science communities.

By now, one may be able to distinguish a 'structuralist' from a 'poststructuralist' without much difficulty. The rub is the hidden (infra)structure. For the former, structure is the source where everything else flows off from this fundamental point or the 'essence'. By contrast, for the latter, structure becomes an 'object' of scrutiny and its prevailing effects are to be laid bear. In addition, when the poststructuralist approach is brought against the features of the structuralist orientation, it is compelling to see where they differ.

Firstly, despite a basic difference in each's perception of language, whether to take it as 'the underlying system' (ie. for Saussure) or to show, through deconstruction, how a discourse (eg. philosophy) is made (ie. for Derrida), it is nothing else but language that remains, for both, the central 'subject' of study. Secondly, because of the seemingly linguistic and inevitably philosophical approaches of the poststructuralist to

their subjects, it is not surprising to find that their analyses look more 'theoretical', or perhaps 'methodological', than the structuralist's quasi-empiricist investigations. Thirdly, though the structuralist regards language as social phenomenon, their position of the *ahistorical* nature of language appears odd, if not contradictory. For both schools, arguments are demonstrated through inspecting and exploring the ways in which language may be employed and twisted. For Levi-Strauss, it was about how the alleged 'deep' structure was manifested through a sign system in a given culture setting. For Foucault, it was to probe how power was embedded in discourse or the formulation of disciplines and subjects in various historical periods. Fourthly, albeit for various reasons in many cases, both schools acknowledge a legitimate place for language, arguing that linguistic form, if not less important, is equally valid to its function of communication, with respect to meaning. To those who hesitate to jump into the muddy water of debate, this is perhaps an area that the two camps look least divided. However, they do hold invariably opposing positions regarding the status of 'speech' and 'writing', ie. in terms of 'language proper' as the first order over its 'representations' as the second order. Lastly, the poststructuralist approach is by and large historical, since a poststructuralist would hold that there is no unique name that represents one single unchangeable identity. Equally, there is no infrastructure for one to rely on. However, being a 'structuralist' means that there must be a unique source: *the* 'foundation', *the* 'origin' and *the* 'essence'. Unfortunately, the very assuring 'structure' for the structuralist happens to be one that the poststructuralist may seek to dissolve.

3.3 'Decentring the Subject'

For Derrida, logocentric master concepts like 'foundation', 'origin' and 'essence' can be disrupted by being moved about until they cease to be what they appear to be. The strategy for doing this is 'to differ from within', which means, said Derrida,

"To attempt an exit and a deconstruction without changing terrain, by repeating what is implicit in the founding concepts and the original problematic, by using against the edifice the instruments or stones available in the house, that is, equally, in language. Here, one risks ceaselessly confirming, consolidating, *relifting* (*relever*), at an always more certain depth, that which one allegedly deconstructs. The continuous process of making explicit, moving toward an opening, risks sinking into the autism of the closure."

[The Ends of Man, lecture delivered in New York in Oct. 1968, from *Margins of Philosophy* (1982: 135)]

Derrida explained that this style of deconstruction was mostly that of asking Heideggerean questions. For him, in order to operate from *within* western philosophy, call it a 'subject' or 'discipline', one has to first recognise where the 'centre' and its 'margins' are. Since the self-presence, self-confirming centres, for Derrida characteristic of western metaphysics, control and legitimate their surrounding structure, they become the target of deconstruction. When doing so, one no longer operates at the centre anymore. Instead, exciting work is to be carried out around its margins.

To the ears of many conventionally established scholars and their often learned public, the poststructuralist movement appears worryingly disturbing, if not completely dangerous. To those who are open-minded to ideas, perhaps it is helpful to remind oneself that any radical school of thought at a given time can only be accounted for and duly appreciated on its own terms. For instance, one fails to enjoy Piccaso if he insists on judging Piccaso by the criteria of classical representational painting. Indeed, poststructuralist writings can be quite playful, as in the case of Derrida, yet on the other hand depicted as unduly pessimistic and destructive, as Foucault was sometimes (mis)understood. Nevertheless, a careful reading of poststructuralist texts reveals that, to a large extent, such writers are in general committed to evade a cornerstone of western logic -- the mutually exclusive binary opposites. This is no trivial point. A poststructuralist approach of inquiry would neither privilege the 'subject', as a 'subjectivist' would favour (see eg. Brooke, 1991), nor, by swinging to the other end, completely rejects the role of 'subject', as a 'objectivist' would hold firmly. Rather, a

poststructuralist position is derived from 'decentring the subject' (Derrida, 1978; Foucault, 1970; see Wood and Bernasconi, 1985; Kamuf, 1991). In so doing, a distance from the subject is cautiously kept whereby a space is accordingly created. Within that space, a different understanding of knowledge may be born and, over time, mature. In short, it is the innovative way in which 'subject' is treated that makes a poststructuralist approach appealing and earns its credibility.

Having pointed out the way in which poststructuralist writers prefer to treat a 'subject', one is probably left wondering the extent to which 'subject' is at work. For Foucault, in rethinking the history of ideas, 'subject' was manifested in the name of 'historical consciousness' (Foucault, 1972: 12) which was, for many, never thought to be questionable. Moreover, not only the sovereign 'subject' was beyond doubt but there were twin figures that went with it: anthropology and humanism, said Foucault (ibid.: 12). He observed similar 'decentring' operations in recent history both in the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche. When one fails to speak of history in terms of 'ruptures', 'thresholds', 'divisions', 'limits', 'shifts' and 'discontinuities', "one is led therefore to anthropologise Marx, to make of him a historian of totalities, and to rediscover in him the message of humanism; one is led therefore to interpret Nietzsche in terms of transcendental philosophy, and to reduce his genealogy to the level of a search for origins" (ibid.: 13). It was precisely such themes as 'origin', 'foundation' and 'consciousness' that acted as *closed* sovereign 'subjects', observed Foucault. Metaphorically, the questioning of these themes is symbolic of an opening up, to see history unfolding not through stability and continuities, but necessarily chaotic yet live events.

3.4 The Capacity of Language

Reading the poststructuralist literature may give one an impression that the writers have paid meticulous attention to their use of language. Indeed, most of them

are no less concerned with the *capacity* of language whereby there lies a philosophical argument. It can be best illustrated by the Derridean, undoubtedly to some notorious, notions of 'inside' and 'outside' (Derrida, 1974: 27-73). In a provoking discussion, Derrida turned to the question of reading and produced the sentence *Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*. If one accepts a straightforward translation of it as 'there is nothing outside text', it makes sense to accuse deconstruction as a merely text-based reading practice and its generally nihilistic indifference to context and history. Fortunately, this accusation might be tenuous, for there can be other readings. *Il n'y a pas dehors-texte* may be rendered as 'there is no outside of or to the text'. *No outside* may suggest that the line drawn between 'inside' and 'outside' be erased. There is no need to keep it anymore: since the boundary becomes obsolete, text is no longer bound to the written form alone. Accordingly, what formally remains outside a text, eg. 'context', and for that matter inside as well, must be reconsidered and reassessed. To this end, for instance, philosophy has long been thought of as beyond or outside a literary 'text'. This is why philosophy appears to maintain its privileged position above other humanity 'subjects'. If it is possible to extend textuality in more than its literal sense -- metaphorically -- following Derrida, text, no longer a mere literary one, is laid wide open for re-reading(s).

The capacity of language can also be traced back to Saussure's theory of language as a *significatory* rather than a *representational* phenomenon (Saussure, 1916/59; see Joseph, 1994b). At the heart of Saussure's linguistic theory is the assumption that language is a system of interrelated terms called *langue*. Indeed, there are two Saussurean trichotomies on language: *langage-langue-parole*, with *langage* as language in all its manifestations, a kind of totality, and *parole* as individual speech acts; and, *signe-signifié-signifiant*, or sign-signified-signifier. Perhaps, trichotomies are not friendly enough to a mind so used to dichotomies to the extent that the former may be conveniently *reduced to* dichotomies, taking the form of *langue-parole* and *signified-signifier*. Without the presence of totality (*langage*), the first pair establishes

a *representational* relationship due to the unwavering conviction of a latent underlying system manifested by observable phenomena. Whilst, in the second, not only the same *representational* relationship is maintained but sign (*signe*) is apparently absent. However, Saussure also emphasised that language is a system of *arbitrary signs*. It is this dimension of Saussure's theory that Derrida (1974; 1978) paid particular attention to.

In part, Derrida followed Saussure in recognising the capacity of *an arbitrary sign* insofar as it does not necessarily represent something in the extra-linguistic world, ie. *significatory by itself* and without fulfilling the task of representation. Yet on the other hand, Derrida has reversed the Saussurean order of favouring speech over writing by insisting that the capacity of writing, and not speech, can be extended and, therefore, re-established. The far-reaching significance of Derrida's theory of writing reminds one of the way in which Saussure established the arbitrary sign of language. Seemingly, according to Derrida, when writing is taken as 'sign', one does not have to adhere to the traditionally accepted division of signified and signifier. Derrida went further to propose that if the *signifier* is abandoned as a metaphysical concept, the radical difference between signified and signifier may be erased. In this way, he has shown that this neatly tied up pair, by virtue of a division, is not so firmly fixed and can be undone (Derrida, 1978: 281). When Derrida referred to sign as "sign without present truth" (ibid.: 280), he was consistent with his assertion that sign is beyond philosophy of presence, ie. the logocentric western philosophy as conventionally known.

Derived from Saussure's theory of language, in particular the motif of the capacity of an arbitrary sign, writing or text may also be reconsidered that will have serious consequences, to which I will elaborate later (see chapter 4).

3.5 Poststructuralist Impact to Management Studies

In order to interpret the term poststructuralism, the prefix 'post' demands special attention. It can be explained as *'epoch'*, *'attitude'*, and *'place'*. The first, as epoch, seems obvious. It designates the intellectual movement 'after' structuralism. Other than informing an irreversible sequence of development, 'epoch' does not carry much weight. Whereas as 'attitude' it refers to, as outlined earlier, a 'mode of thinking' rebelliously breaking away from the central conviction of structuralism. The intellectual moves are characterised by, from its distinctive heritage (eg. chronologically Nietzsche, Saussure and Heidegger) and historical moments, critiques of the structuralist premises. The second rendering of poststructuralism is not without reference to structuralism, if not completely against it. It is perhaps this function of a reference frame of structuralism for poststructuralism that gives one some clue to comprehend why Foucault was, by some, taken as a 'structuralist' to which he vehemently refused to be so honoured. Lastly, as articulated by Lyotard (1979), when used as a noun, 'post' is more like a 'place', such as a post office, where things are not meant to stay long or remain stable. Rather, they are in a constant flux, flowing in and out. Not surprisingly, this post office scenario creates as much excitement as anxiety and confusion.

Indeed, the impact of poststructuralism has been received with more than emotionally mixed reactions. The challenge, for some outrageously provocative, from the poststructuralist is both theoretical and methodological. To see that discourse shapes 'subjects' and 'disciplines' on an excursion of knowledge production suggests that language play a crucial role as well as be a viable vehicle by which an existing 'subject' can be re-evaluated. In addition, to unsettle certain established logics of argument through linguistic and philosophical approaches allows a muted and invisible 'other' of a 'subject' to come to light. Such an 'other' can be established from the limits of conventional concepts, where leading poststructuralist thinkers, like Derrida, have gained their ground or, to be precise, created their own space. The operation of

exposing, and necessarily doing justice to, an 'other' is, by virtue, disruptive and disturbing to the status quo insofar as one strives to demonstrate how certain master terms, thought to be *ahistorical* since Saussure, constitute the vulnerable problematics of a 'subject'. When done well, the outcome of such a seemingly perverse operation or inquiry is supplementary to the extent that an 'other' may be revealed by illustrating what is *already* said and inscribed. In this sense, 'deconstruction' may be understood as a way of *differing* and *deferring*, with respect to an existing body of knowledge. Such operations contribute to an understanding of a 'subject'. In passing, it is worthy of note that, in a culturally-oriented sphere, a much publicised aspiration to embrace an 'other' of western culture has been represented under the banner of 'postmodernity' (Harvey, 1989), often loosely referred to as 'postmodernism' (Clegg, 1990; Bauman, 1992; see Hassard and Parker, 1993).

A discerning reader may have noted that the poststructuralist movement offers not only insights regarding the capacity of sign, knowledge production, writing and text but also new directions in which intellectual adventures may set off. The breakthrough by the poststructuralists in the monolith of the once confined ontological experience and secured epistemological ground has been made in substantially reassessing the dominant western philosophical and cultural traditions, including scientific discourses.

One of the most significant effects of the poststructuralist rethinking is the blurring of existing conceptual divisions and, subsequently, the possibility of redrawing boundaries of established 'subjects' and 'disciplines'. This means that, for instance, having engaged poststructuralism it becomes problematic if I go on thinking and writing about 'management' without questioning the way(s) in which the conceptual division of 'theory and practice' is maintained in the management literature, since the practice of theorising, ostensibly part of the job for a management academic, cannot be conveniently accommodated in this cardinal division. On the other hand, what

constitutes the TQM 'subject' is dependent on certain established criteria for inclusion and/or exclusion. What if the criteria themselves are subjected to reconsideration ? The interest becomes of seeing an 'other' of TQM. To do so, I may have to step over certain familiar boundaries of established 'subjects', such as Strategy, Marketing, Human Resources Management (HRM), often appeared indispensable in the TQM literature. What if the term 'inter-' or 'multi-disciplinary' captures at best the defined domains of relevant disciplines where they have already occupied fixed positions in a given conceptual framework? I wonder whether the temporary or momentary presence of the shaping process of such positions can be illustrated, without their own rhythms being unduly erased.

It is encouraging to note some exciting developments in Management Studies (MS) where the poststructuralist approach has been taken seriously. It is perhaps not surprising to find that the subject area of Organization Studies has generated more analyses of this kind than others (see Cooper, 1986; 1987; 1989; Cooper and Burrell, 1988; Cooper and Law, 1994; Chia, 1992; 1996; Lilley, 1993; 1995) [8], though individual researchers concerned may not explicitly recall their endeavours as such. Other committed studies include: an exploration of a potentially epistemological shift in MS (Knights, 1992) [9], an exposition on accountability (Munro, 1991; 1993; Munro and Hatherly 1993) and related issues when looking at the effect of the 'quality' discourse (Munro, 1995) [10]; to debunk a popular metatheoretical framework in management research (Kavanagh, 1993) and a reworking on the notion of time (Kavanagh and Araujo, 1994); a Foucauldian approach of knowing the 'self' in management education, with the highlight on individual 'rights' rather than 'needs' (Townley, 1993a; 1993b); and, a theoretical debate on Foucault's work in accounting research (see eg. Armstrong, 1994; Hoskin, 1994). In each of the above studies, the researchers sought to uncover a certain 'other' of the subject under scrutiny by making it visibly relevant and telling.

In terms of the general approach and methodological relevance to this thesis on TQM, I have found Jacques (1992) Foucauldian genealogical analysis on re-presenting the 'knowledge worker' impressive and worthy of a special note. Jacques first acknowledged "the need for understanding theory development as a form of *representation*, produced and sustained through socially constituted relationships which are undergoing transformational change" (Jacques, 1992; emphasis by Jacques). To him, in light of such change, "organizational science itself could become a passing chapter in the history of work". After his meticulously crafted account on the evolution of the 'employee' since the last century, there came one of his illuminating moments: "The current privileged position of the management disciplines in the university perhaps owes more to this *discursive role* than to the discipline's ability to produce a science of organizing. ... In the management disciplines, to use McLuhan's famous phrase, the medium is indeed the message" (ibid.: 268, emphasis added). Jacques' observation sounds alarming in that 'organization science' may have been maintained solely on the basis of the capacity of discourse itself. Paradoxically, science or not science seems to be beside the point.

Elsewhere, his sharp and penetrating critique on the management discipline pointed directly at its seemingly 'groundlessness' or perhaps 'homelessness'. He reasoned with the reader by stating that "management is widely used as if it has an unproblematic meaning -- to manage is to manage *employees* for the 'good of the organization'. *Managers, employees* and *organization* have sedimented into 'common sense' as if they were real and timeless instead of discursively constructed representations whose meanings rest on dynamic, unstable and multiply meaning-laden social power-knowledge relationships" (ibid.: 273, emphasis by Jacques). To conclude his thesis, Jacques affirmed that "the claim advanced from these analyses is that the failure of the management disciplines to develop a self-reflexive dialogue about the active role of *representation* in theory development limits what can be said about knowledge work to *what has already been said* about the industrial employee. As one

example of poststructuralist textual research, genealogy is presented as a means for bringing this problem into theory development" (emphasis by Jacques) [11].

On my lonely journey, the discovery of Jacques' thesis was nothing short of a delightful reward. Whilst I could appreciate his forceful argument of the 'knowledge worker' and in particular the value of his declared poststructuralist approach, I do recognise that there are methodological variations from his thesis to mine. Allow me to sketch out some of the differences.

Firstly, unlike Jacques, the broad aim of my thesis is not inevitably a contribution to "theory development" as he did. It seems that the cardinal division of 'theory and practice' itself may have to be, at some stage, reconsidered, once the effects of knowledge production through a Foucauldian discursive formation are exposed. Although the role of 'representation', central to Jacques' concern, will be examined, my frame of reference is Saussure's trichotomy, i.e. sign-signified-signifier, and not a dichotomy when sign is erased from it. This said, I do share Jacques theoretical position in recognising that the production of such representation is dependent on socially constituted relationships undergoing transformations. To this end, Jacques' work is invaluable and timely in the sense that the good faith held by many in universally ahistorical knowledge embedded in positivistic research may no longer present itself convincingly as the holy path to 'knowledge' and 'truth'.

Secondly, I regard the suggestion of dividing Foucault's interests into early 'archaeological period', say up to *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1972), and later 'genealogical period' (Knights, 1992) as a useful starting point. For the sake of revealing the evolution of the 'employee', it was entirely appropriate, for Jacques, to have conducted a Foucauldian genealogy. In comparison, my analysis puts more weight on the 'early Foucault'. The focus of my attention will be on the *archaeological site* of TQM. Through my excavation of TQM discourse, I hope to show a certain

'materiality' of knowledge and, in so doing, to complement Jacques' account. Indeed, if, for Jacques, organization science may be a passing chapter, due to his insight on certain historically established subjects, so appears TQM to me.

Thirdly, to be precise, I endeavour to open up what Jacques referred to as the "discursive role". In my analysis, the making of TQM discourse constitutes one of the two parts (chapters 5, 6 and 7). The reason for giving discourse such a prominent space lies in that enigmatic statement of McLuhan's. One cannot understand and appreciate 'the message' without first studying the intriguing and largely underestimated medium -- language used, the discourse, the writing or texts. Accordingly, my account will not only include the discursive formations of quality control, the emergence and transformation of TQM but TQM as a theorising practice. Equally, it is illusory to continue to assert that the meanings of the extant TQM literature are already given and therefore unproblematic. I am determined to trace a "discursively constructed" TQM, whose meanings may prove to be 2nd order, derived from the 1st order of "dynamic, unstable and multiply meaning-laden social power-knowledge relationships" (Jacques, 1992).

Lastly, by being able to say something beyond 'what has already been said' about TQM, I hope to offer a supplement to the mainstream TQM discourse. With this thesis on TQM, I wish to respond sympathetically to Jacques' call for a self-reflexive dialogue in management. Possibly, taking a poststructuralist approach also means that it is unsustainable to hold on one governing poststructuralist position. Instead, I have to make my own conceptual moves. To heed the Derridean spirit of deconstructing the 'philosophy of presence' (Derrida, 1978; 1982), I venture to deconstruct the TQM of presence.

Notes:

1. Here, the binary either-or logic is resisted. A critic of the poststructuralist approach may accuse it to have caused confusions. Yet following this approach does not mean a total rejection of everything 'structural(-ist)'. Perhaps, a typical Derridean response to potential critics would be that one 'differs from within'.

2. See eg. Derrida's critique on Levi-Strauss' work (Derrida, 1978: 282-292).

3. For an overview of Levi-Strauss' structural anthropology, see Lechte (1994: 71-77) and Campbell (1994).

4. Interestingly, Kuhn's work may be seen in a different light. With respect to Kuhn (1970) and, in particular, Burrell and Morgan (1979), it is perhaps hard to ignore the structuralist influence in Management Studies.

5. For the sake of concentrating on revealing the TQM discourse, I temporarily suspend attention to the later Foucault on power and the 'self', though I acknowledge some difficulty in justifying such a suspension by separating 'discourse' from 'power' and the 'self'. My provisional observation is that most researchers who have studied Foucault carefully seem to be drawn to the later Foucault. In my thesis, I am, for the most part, following a few steps of the early Foucault -- his 'archaeology of knowledge' theme.

6. Where possible, indications of the original publication, be it in German, French or Japanese, is given for establishing genealogical lines of influence. This applies not only to Heidegger, but also to other key thinkers considered in this thesis. Where possible, their English translations have been consulted.

7. See 'Letter to a Japanese friend' (Derrida, 1983), translated by Wood and Benjamin (Wood and Bernasconi, 1985). Derrida revealed why he used the term 'deconstruction' and the difficulty in finding a better expression for signifying what he would like to 'capture' and equally in translating deconstruction into another language (ie. Japanese). Indeed, the term is usually taken as the hallmark of Derrida. Not surprisingly, it is often misunderstood or misinterpreted by many as being 'negative' and 'destructive'. For those who have not read Derrida closely, I have nothing to say except my uneasiness with an unfortunate proliferation, and sometimes even hostility, of similarly unjustified adjectives. Some commentators have not even bothered to know how Derrida, a serious scholar, said what he said. See also 'Structure, sign and play in the discourse of the human sciences' in *Writing and difference* (Derrida, 1978).

8. No comprehensive list is intended here. Robert Cooper is one of the pioneers in exploring the poststructuralist ideas in Organization Studies. Others include Hoskin (1979; 1986), Hoskin and Macve (1986; 1988).

9. See. chapter 2, section 2.3.

10. For the critical position adopted, see Munro (1991).

11. Quote from the abstract of the thesis (Jacques, 1992).

CHAPTER FOUR

TO REEXAMINE THE TQM PHENOMENON

Tao can be spoken of
but not in the usual way;
Name can be articulated
but not in the usual name.

(the opening line of Lao Tzu
Tao Te Ching, cir. 500 BC)

In the present context, the above lines may be interpreted as follows: When the usual way of doing TQM research has become the familiar way, it must be confusing to talk about anything unfamiliar in the same ordinary way. For the same reason, it is probably wise to have an unusual name for designating the unfamiliar.

Categorically speaking, the customary way of TQM research has produced the mainstream TQM literature. The mainstream is first and foremost in the order of 'presence' (Derrida, 1978) with the absence of an 'other' and has acquired a positivist/empiricist name. How can anyone talk about an 'other' by making reference to 'presence' only ? Seemingly, one considers an 'other' by using the terms of the 'other' [1] ! If a poststructuralist way of doing TQM research cannot be spoken of from an empiricist position, a researcher may have to, at the outset, refuse to follow the usual way. If the poststructuralist has the potential to offer insights, it is so because of its radical ontological experience from an epistemological commitment to 'decentring the subject' and its willingness to appreciate discourse/writing in its relation to knowledge. Obviously, one may have to abandon some familiar terms for the sake of an alternative.

That is to say, proper names for an established orthodoxy are not necessarily proper names for something radical. Here lies the rub of language and naming.

Having outlined the genesis of the poststructuralist thinking and its primary positions on 'subject' and language, in this chapter I endeavour to address a few specific concerns as a kind of technical justification before the analysis part of the thesis begins. For the purpose of clearing a space (or 'ground') for the analysis (chapters 5 to 9) that follows, a close reading of texts by Saussure, Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault helps to set the scene for the analysis that follows.

4.1   The Cooked from the Cooking

Logocentric master terms   This is a critical phrase found in the deconstructive practice of the 'philosophy of presence' (Derrida, 1978) and may help to highlight similar 'master terms' in TQM research. Such terms include 'thingness', 'essence', 'origin', 'structure' or 'system', 'conceptual framework' and 'theory and practice' which constitute the object of deconstruction. It exposes how they contribute to the constitution of the epistemological ground for the positivistic/empiricist TQM knowledge. For this reason, these terms cannot be left as they appear to be. Rather, they can be treated as a starting point for an inquiry. Indeed, it is from the way that Heidegger (1959) demonstrates his clearing of metaphysics that Derrida (1974; 1978; 1982) has formulated his way of illustrating how presence can be re-assessed and further supplemented. Accordingly, the vocabulary for the mainstream may be spatially *deferred* and *differed* in time so that the tight grip of these master concepts may be loosened.

By the same token, the TQM subject may be redistributed through an unfamiliar application of language expressions. On the way to justify a poststructuralist approach, the first step is to problematise master concepts, as if they were already

cooked. Following the spirit of Saussure, Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault in their way to revealing an 'other', be it of philosophy, of language or writing, and of discourse and knowledge, it is possible to reexamine TQM by uncovering its 'other' with a supplement to what is already existed as the 'TQM of presence' [2].

The problem with a master term is that it creates a conceptual closure, the effect of which is often taken as 'knowledge'. In his critique on Saussure's position of privileging 'speech' over 'writing', Derrida has exposed how logocentrism produced such a closure. He declares that: "The epoch of logocentrism is a moment of the global effacement of the signifier: one then believes one is protecting and exalting speech, one is only fascinated by a figure of the *technè*. By the same token, one scorns (phonetic) writing (*ie. writing as representation, added note*) because it has the advantage of assuring greater mastery in being effaced: in translating an (oral) signifier in the best possible way for a more universal and more convenient time; phonic auto-affection, dispensing with all 'exterior' recourses, permits, at a certain epoch of the history of the world and of what one calls man, the greatest possible mastery, the greatest possible self-presence of life, the greatest possible liberty. It is this history (as epoch: epoch not of history but as history) which is closed at the same time as the form of being of the world that is called knowledge" (Derrida, 1974: 285-286, emphasis by Derrida).

The space of writing   In order to reassess the ontological status of writing or text, one needs to know why it becomes a problem for Derrida in the first place. Concerned with the coming-into-being of writing, he notes that the space of writing is *already occupied*. Given this space, how could an 'other' of writing or text be established ? Critical for understanding Derrida's position on writing is one of his earlier texts, *Of Grammatology* (Derrida, 1974).

As Derrida often does in his deconstruction, let us begin with the received wisdom. It asserts that, like (representational) painting, writing is representational that

presumes it to represent a 'thing' or 'truth' independently 'out there'. However, Derrida disputes this uncontested view. "There is never a painting of the thing itself and first of all because there is no thing itself. If we suppose that writing had a primitive and pictorial stage, it would emphasize this absence, this evil, or this resource which forever shapes and undermines the truth of the phenomenon; produces it and of course substitutes it. The original possibility of the image is the supplement; which adds itself without adding anything to fill an emptiness which, within fullness, begs to be replaced" (ibid.: 292). The development of Derrida's argument requires elaboration. First, the source of painting or writing is 'no-thing', which is a strong ontological statement on the necessarily *dependent* existence of 'thing' itself. This radical position begs unsettling issues on (1). where presence comes from, and (2). the consequence of 'no thing itself'. Derrida suggests that the source be a kind of absence [3] and that the 'place' which has been occupied by the asserted 'thing' be open to an 'other'. Second, if the truth of the phenomenon signifies presence, derived from, say, absence, presence must have been somehow shaped by absence. Therefore, presence appears as a *second order* and the first order is *not* to be found *in presence*. Third, comparable to the role that absence plays to presence, writing not only produces but substitutes 'thing' so that writing is making presence without (a) 'thing'. One may speculate that Derrida might have implied that writing is, up to a point, non-representational. Fourth, if a lack of presence signifies emptiness, emptiness becomes indeed a space for supplement, which is no one-off event (see section 4.3).

Derrida's argument goes further. "The space of writing is thus not an originarily *intelligible* space. It begins however to *become* so from the origin, that is to say from the moment when writing, like all the work of signs, produces repetition and therefore ideality in that space" (ibid.: 289, emphasis by Derrida). To him, the space of writing appears first and foremost non-differentiated. It only appears intelligible when repetition is exercised. Hence, rather than being accepted as a given starting point, a

seemingly ideal or 'uncontaminated' space or place is one that *has been made*. How does that happen ?

Writing and philosophy: opening a closure   When a poststructuralist seeks to question a closure in the mainstream produced by the empiricist-structuralist philosophy, it necessarily re-opens texts. Normally, writing is thought of as an ideal place for accommodating ideas. Hence, one holds philosophy *before* writing. It is this particular relationship between the two that Derrida set out to re-establish. Contrary to the commonsense view, he insists that philosophy is after all *a kind of writing*. Accordingly, there must be more to philosophy and writing than what is known of them.

In an illuminating passage, one observes how Derrida works his way through on where his concept of writing undermines philosophy as (an) absolute presence or knowledge. "The concept of history is therefore the concept of philosophy and of the *epistémè*. ... Or if one prefers, here Hegel's formula must be taken literally: history is nothing but the history of philosophy, absolute knowledge is fulfilled. What exceeds this closure *is nothing*: neither the presence of being, nor meaning, neither history nor philosophy; but another thing which has no name, which announces itself within the thought of this closure and guides our writing here. A writing within which philosophy is inscribed as a place within a text which it does not command. Philosophy is, within writing, nothing but this movement of writing as effacement of the signifier and the desire of presence restored, of being, signified in its brilliance and its glory" (ibid.: 286, emphasis by Derrida).

Illustrative of Derrida's style, he has called into question the conventional view. On the one hand, he recognises an asserted higher form of history: the history of philosophy, the focus of which is on presence, hence, the 'philosophy of presence'. Following this line of thinking to its logical end, one arrives at absolute presence in the

pursuit of establishing absolute knowledge since beyond this closure there is the alleged domain of non-being, non-meaning, non-history, non-philosophy, or simply negativity or no-thing. On the other hand, one is reminded that presence is made *at the expense of* a conceptual closure to 'anything' that does not fall into the categories of presence. Derrida deconstructs absolute knowledge by proposing that a closure is already made through the noble project of 'advancing philosophy'. For him, this closure itself becomes the target for re-opening. In advocating to 'differ from within', philosophy is perceived as a *place within writing* or text; the effacement of signifier enables the disappearance of writing or text. That is to say, within the space of writing, once the signifier is erased, what remains is the signified; and, the effect of this erasure preserves the presence of 'truth'. Hence, the privileged position of the latter is secured. This is why Derrida singles out the signified as presence that shines in its glory for guiding the established orthodoxy in philosophy.

From the raw to the cooked   If one accepts cooking as a process of reducing the degree of 'rawness' (chapter 1, section 1.2), one may be willing to consider the making of TQM as reducing the degree of 'non-conceptualisation' or 'non-structuredness' of TQM knowledge. Since cooking is a productive process whereby production makes consumption possible, it is justifiable to redirect attention from knowledge consumption, evident in the mainstream TQM literature, to its production. Therefore, the analysis of the thesis will emphasize TQM knowledge production rather than the ready-made knowledge for consumption (or recycling).

In the analysis of this thesis, a static mode of thinking about the 'rawness' or the 'cookedness' is replaced by a dynamic mode. In reconsidering the 'raw' and the 'cooked' (chapter 1), the thesis will highlight a few cooking procedures, hence the following analysis chapters (from five to nine). Just as a master chef follows the know-hows of an authentic recipe in cooking a Peking duck, the making of TQM is to be revealed in a similar way. As modes of being, the 'raw' and the 'cooked' may have further

implications. Often, the site of cooking is the kitchen whereas consumption takes place elsewhere, for instance, in the front hall of a restaurant. When reference to a specific place for consumption is made, one unwittingly assumes a separation of production and consumption. This perhaps in part explains why knowledge on TQM may have been consumed with little attention to its (knowledge) production. However, when the notion of production is introduced to the scene, as inscribed in the title of the thesis, consumption may have to be reconsidered. To this end, the thesis gives rise to knowledge production in its relation to discursive production (see section 4.3).

4.2   TQM in a Saussurean Trichotomy

The possibility of reexamining TQM is one of opening up an *epistemological space* insofar as familiar notions, such as 'subject' and 'prescriptions' that sit comfortably in the positivistic/empiricist epistemology, are temporarily suspended.

Saussure and his arbitrary sign   Why has Saussure's theory of language been so powerful to have redefined modern linguistics and opened up new ways of 'doing' anthropology and many social sciences and humanities subjects ? An answer may come from the fact that he was so serious about linguistics that he could not help confronting what he saw as fundamental weaknesses in his discipline. As one commentator has noted, Saussure was so dissatisfied with the 19th century linguistics or "the nature of linguistics as a discipline -- with its lack of reflexiveness, as with its terminology (Lechte, 1994: 149)" that he spent years to fix it ! " ... *Course in General Linguistics*, composed from some of Saussure's lecture notes along with the notes of his students, could be seen perhaps to be a partial fulfilment of Saussure's belief that language as such needed to be re-examined if linguistics was to move on to a sounder footing" (ibid.: 149). In a letter dated 4th January 1894, Saussure wrote: "I am more and more aware of the immense amount of work required to show the linguist *what he is doing* .... The utter inadequacy of current terminology, the need to reform it and, in

order to do that, to demonstrate what sort of object language is, continually spoil my pleasure in philology" (see Culler, 1986: 24, emphasis by Saussure).

In contrast to the tradition within which Saussure was brought up, he did not accept that the essential bond in language was between 'word' and 'thing'. Rather, his concept of the linguistic sign points to the *relative autonomy of language* in relation to reality, hence his intriguing theory of language as an *arbitrary* sign. Saussure states what he meant by the *arbitrary nature of the sign*: "The bond between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary. Since I mean by sign the whole that results from the associating of the signifier with the signified, I can simply say: *the linguistic sign is arbitrary*" (Saussure, 1959: 67, emphasis by Saussure). This statement is what he regarded as the first principle of any (theoretical) investigation of linguistics.

According to Saussure, when one uses language with linguistic signs to articulate, the process is more than mere naming, ie. a list of words, each corresponding to the thing that it names. "The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image" (ibid.: 66). In the dichotomy shown in Figure 4.1, "idea" refers to the concept and "sign" designates the sound image. This dichotomy may be interpreted as part of an early version of Saussure's theory. In comparison, his more developed linguistic theory is based on a trichotomy, also illustrated in Fig. 4.1. In the trichotomy, "sign" has been replaced by "signifier" so that "sign" now designates the whole (ibid.: 67). When arguing the *arbitrariness of signifier*, Saussure insists that an individual speaker in a linguistic community does not have the power to change a sign in any way once it has become established in that community (ibid.: 68-69). Although it may seem difficult to comprehend Saussure's theory, the difficulty indeed arises from his elaboration of the subtle difference between the arbitrary sign and (the) signifier.

(concept)   (sound image)

dichotomy   idea ...... sign

trichotomy   *sign* ...... *signified* ...... *signifier*
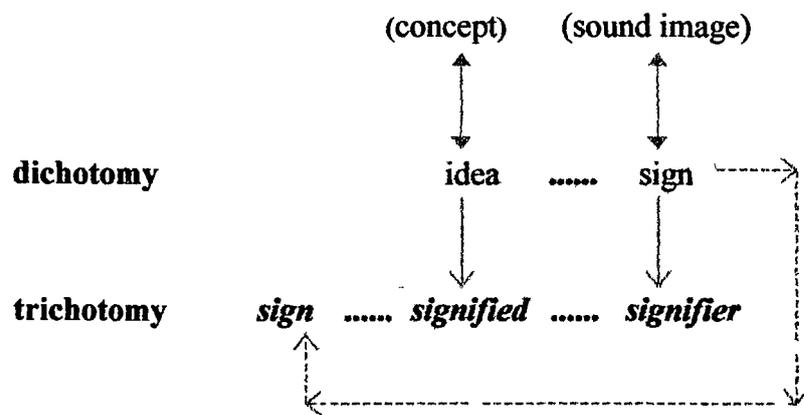
Figure 4.1 From dichotomy to trichotomy

A close reading of Saussure suggests a critical discrepancy: *Sign becomes signifier* when a linguistic sign is established in the linguistic community. This implies that signifier would not be used to designate a situation or event when sign is not yet established. In other words, *sign stands for a pre-established signifier*. This pre-established condition may be considered as the beginning or a moment of using a certain linguistic sign, the significance of which holds the key to establish a viable conceptual reference for investigating TQM.

Saussure's trichotomy reconsidered   Being a system of signs, if mathematics is like an 'empty basket' where 'things' may be thrown into, language, in particular Saussure's trichotomy, may be seen in the same light. It opens up a new space where TQM may be reconsidered *in terms of sign, signified and signifier*. It is worthy of note that Saussure started off with the concept of dichotomy and later shifted his position to trichotomy. The former, in the form of signified-signifier, constitutes the basis for representation.

To scrutinise a management phenomenon like TQM, conventional questions may include 'what is TQM' or 'what do we know about it', 'where does it come from' and 'what might happen to it next'. In other words, one is concerned with 'TQM *per se*', what happened <u>before</u> and might happen <u>after</u> it. By introducing a time dimension, the idea is to represent events historically. As such, researchers usually strive to draw as full a picture of representation as possible and, in this regard, construct an analysis based on the signified-signifier dichotomy. Here, language is assumed and used as *signifier* to represent an 'out there' reality, or, a management practice as the *signified*. Arguably, much of the Management/Organization Studies literature follows this representational schema (see Cooper, 1992; 1993).

However, attempts to represent are not without their own limit. Understandably, it is difficult to question representation by remaining *within* that

schema. In order to question, one may have to step outside it. Is it not strange to suggest that one step outside language, the signifier, and an external reality, the signified ? Not necessarily, if one could make a path by adding a third element, *other than* the signified-signifier, to the dichotomy. This additional element may be explored if the name TQM is regarded as a *linguistic sign*. To this end, Saussure's trichotomy becomes a promising frame of reference. If representation operates within the dichotomy as a conceptual space that does not take Saussure's theory of language -- the *arbitrariness* of the linguistic sign -- into account, that space may have to be extended. By revisiting Saussure's work, one indeed creates a space which looks larger than the one that only accommodates representation.

Having briefly mentioned representation and its conceptual limit, one is in a position to comprehend what Derrida refers to as the "global effacement of signifier" with the Hegelian 'absolute knowledge' or absolute presence noted earlier. Such knowledge and presence are achieved because of representation. Hence, Derrida maintains that " ... representation is reproduction; it repeats the signifying and signified masses *en bloc* and without analysis. This synthetic character of representation is the pictographic residue of the ideo-phonogram that 'paints voices'" (Derrida, 1974: 299). The statement indicates that an unwitting over-reliance on the synthetic character of representation may effectively delay or even unduly ignore a critical analysis of representation itself. By now, one may begin to see that it is such analysis itself that is lacking in the mainstream TQM research.

A conceptually open space for TQM   Re-reading Saussure gives rise to an exciting possibility of 'reconceptualize' TQM -- a space for reinterpretations. It means that TQM may be understood as *more than* a routine representation of using language to designate a practice 'out there' in organizations. Possibly, this Saussurean space is sufficiently different from a usual (conceptual) 'framework', often sought to establish by researchers. In comparison, a 'space' accommodates both presence and absence.

However, a 'framework' only allows presence whereby presence (or absence) of evidence is highlighted. Wherever a framework is constructed, a 'centre' and its margins are also produced, though the latter are often kept invisible or at arm's length as being of little relevance to the centre.

The appeal of Saussure's arbitrary sign lies in his sensitivity to the subtle difference between a pre-established sign and an established signifier. To a certain extent, Saussure set the linguistic sign free for movement, for transformation and for potential applications in other fields, although Saussure himself did not explicitly argue on this point. In the same light, one begins to consider TQM as first and foremost an arbitrary sign and then a fixed signifier to those members in a linguistic community involved in the TQM discourse. As one logical step forward from Saussure's position, Derrida's innovative play of sign is one that bears the Saussurean trace and arguably born out of a Saussurean space despite the impression of Derrida's reticence to the Saussurean heritage of his own sign (see Johnson, 1993: 109-141). Occasionally, Derrida registers his note of sign as "a floating signifier", for instance, in his critique of Levi-Strauss' work (Derrida, 1978: 290).

4.3   To Supplement the Incomplete Text

From incomplete writing to incomplete text   What is conventionally thought of as 'writing' has been incomplete to Derrida, for whom *Of Grammatology* (1974) is a serious response. To suggest the incompleteness of writing is to recognise a substantial lack in understanding; and, his answer to that lack is called 'supplement'. If one still prefers to use the term 'writing', it may be modified as 'arch-writing' (see Johnson, 1993). Indeed, the same kind of incompleteness can be said of 'text'. Therefore, what is often regarded as a 'complete text' is not necessarily so, if one follows Derrida's argument. To this end, 'something' must be done to this lack in the way a text is read or interpreted: It is possible to add, the effect of which is a supplement. With regard to

the TQM 'subject' through texts, a supplement may be produced to what is known as TQM.

Supplement at the failing origin   Let us spell out Derrida's supplement (Derrida, 1974: 269-316). First of all, where and in what capacity does a supplement take place ? Suppose supplement is made, where is the site of its making ? What would the impact of supplement be, with respect to what is known about presence and its implications to the ontological experience of a researcher and often his implicit. epistemological commitment to knowledge ?

To these concerns, Derrida has offered his response carefully. "The supplement, which is neither simply the signifier nor simply the representer, does not take the place of a signified or a represented, as is prescribed by the concepts of signification or representation or by the syntax of the words 'signifier' or 'representer'. The supplement comes in the place of a lapse, a nonsignified or a nonrepresented, a nonpresence. There is no present before it, it is not preceding by anything but itself, that is to say by another supplement. The supplement is always the supplement of a supplement. One wishes to go back *from the supplement to the source*: one must recognize that there is *a supplement at the source*" (ibid.: 303-304, emphasis by Derrida). Here, Derrida warns the reader where not to look for a supplement or what not to expect of it: It is neither a substitute signifier nor another signified. Otherwise, the same (infra)structure which makes representation work will still apply. It is precisely such (infra)structure that Derrida seeks to disturb and undermine by making it a legitimate object for deconstruction. Derrida invites the reader to reconsider the very space where signified-signifier is accommodated. Given that both signified and signifier are illustrative of the single-minded and classic pursuit of presence, Derrida maintains that supplement emerges from where *presence cannot represent* because it fails to reach in the first place. Indeed, supplement has long been unrepresented and

cannot be represented by presence. In other words, one may do more than simply trace supplement back to its source, since, to Derrida, supplement begins *at the source* !

Obviously, the insight on supplement is significant for the present inquiry on TQM. That is to suggest, a supplementary account of TQM be established at the source. Specifically, if the mainstream TQM research has been the effect of following an empiricist/positivist epistemology and as the 'TQM of presence', then the supplement cannot be one that falls short of epistemological and ontological commitments alternative to the mainstream. Hopefully, such a supplement compensates a lack to what is ordinarily thought of as a complete text or discourse on TQM. Having reconsidered the space of writing and, in particular, its implications to texts, a re-reading of the TQM literature as discourse becomes a task to be fulfilled in the analysis part that follows.

To a certain uneasiness that a supplement may generate, here is what Derrida has to clarify: "The question is of an originary supplement, if this absurd expression may be risked, totally unacceptable as it is within classical logic. Rather the supplement of origin: which supplements the failing origin and which is yet not derived; this supplement is, as one says of a spare part [*une pièce*], of the original make [*d'origine*] [or a document, establishing the origin.]" (ibid.: 313). The theoretical consequence of Derrida's audacity now becomes apparent: His 'spare part' or his 'original make' is nothing short of re-establishing an account at the place previously seen as the 'origin'. In other words, Derrida insists that what has been taken as origin in the conventional sense of the word is nonetheless provisional and necessarily partial. In the analysis part of the thesis, a similar case of a *'spare part'* or an 'original make' will be argued for TQM.

The archaeology of knowledge   If drawing on Saussure and Derrida is imperative for clarifying issues on rethinking language, text and, in particular, master

terms for the following analysis (chapters 5 to 9), drawing on Foucault is conditional for understanding why it is a worthy effort to reveal TQM discourse in its relation to knowledge formation.

In the backdrop of Foucault's 'archaeological period' [4], *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1969/72, *AK* for short) deserves special attention. It is not only the last piece in his archaeology trilogy on the changing and inevitably shaping professional practices but also the one with profound theoretical and methodological implications to the orthodox pursuit of knowledge. Having established epistemic shifts in the formulation of historical discourses, his earlier 'case studies' on medical perception (Foucault, 1963/73) and on human sciences (Foucault, 1966/70) set the *archaeological site* of discourse. In this last piece (ie. *AK*), Foucault put theorising itself under intense scrutiny so that its historical emergence and transformation appeared to have almost taken a life of its own. He contends that theorising itself, as a practice, does not have to, firstly, start from a given subject since it becomes part of the problem and, secondly, recapture events by the classic pursuit through representation.

As he has declared at the outset of *AK*, "in so far as my aim is to define a method of historical analysis freed from the anthropological theme, it is clear that the theory that I am about to outline has a dual relation with the previous studies. It is an attempt to formulate, in general terms (and not without a great deal of rectification and elaboration), the tools that these studies have used or forged for themselves in the course of their work" (Foucault, 1972: 16). By moving away from an "anthropological theme", he meant to *decentre the human subject* in its asserted capacity as the seldom questioned starting point of inquiries. Unfortunately, his methodological caution to the subject has not been sufficiently appreciated. Often, his position is mistaken as a proof of his hostility to humanism. However, a discerning reader probably notes what Foucault has to say. His archaeological theory of knowledge "belongs to that field in

which the *questions of* the human being, consciousness, origin, and the subject *emerge, intersect, mingle and separate off*" (ibid.: 16, emphasis added). For Foucault, archaeology is "an attempt to define a particular site by the exteriority of its vicinity; rather than trying to reduce others to silence ... I have tried to define this blank space from which I speak, and which is slowly taking shape in a discourse that I still feel to be so precarious and so unsure" (ibid.: 17). Facing a seemingly alien territory of discourse and knowledge formation, his task to formulate and articulate archaeology was formidable, despite his sustained efforts in avoiding to speak the language or to employ the terms and methods derived from the traditionally deterministic approach to the history of ideas.

Let us note how Foucault's archaeology, viewed by potential critics in the conventional light, is defended. " ... my discourse, far from determining the locus in which it speaks, is avoiding the ground on which it could find support. It is a discourse about discourses; but it is not trying to find in them a hidden law, a concealed origin that it only remains to free; nor is it trying to establish by itself, taking itself as a starting-point, the general theory of which they would be the concrete models. It is trying to deploy a dispersion that can never be reduced to a single system of differences, a scattering that is not related to absolute axes of reference; it is trying to operate a decentring that leaves no privilege to any centre" (ibid.: 205). He went on to clarify that "archaeology tries to establish rules of formation, in order to define the conditions of their realization ... in trying to reveal the rules of formation of concepts, the modes of succession, connexion, and coexistence of statements, it touches on the problem of epistemological structures; in studying the formation of objects, the fields in which they emerge and are specified, in studying too the conditions of appropriation of discourses, it touches on the analysis of social formations" (ibid.: 207). To differentiate his archaeology from what he regards as the orthodox thinking, Foucault has diagnosed what the present form of understanding knowledge fails to reveal: a domain where *discursive practices emerge and disappear* in their complexity and

diversity. In completing this pioneering task, he acknowledges, first of all, theoretical and methodological inadequacies in the existing history of ideas or theory of knowledge and has responded constructively. This is perhaps why he has to 'invent' terms to designate his particular approach against the dominant approach which he set out to undermine. For the same reason, some may have experienced that reading Foucault can hardly be described as a leisurely pursuit. For his text forcefully pushes the reader to the limit of what is known, often making one uncomfortable and occasionally feel lost or even to the edge of despair. Further, because Foucault operates at the margins of established knowledge with highly complicated epistemological contentions, it is exhausting to digest and follow his argument all the time. For those who have made a genuine effort to engage Foucault, they may have learned to appreciate the discursive space marked by his archaeology, not in the familiar master terms so ill-equipped for even raising challenging questions in the first place.

The making of TQM discourse   Taking Foucault's discursive formation seriously, one realises that discursive formation *cannot* be neatly separated from knowledge production. Otherwise, the reverse of Derrida's position on writing would have remained intact: One assumes that knowledge and writing/texts are not dependent on each other to the extent that the orthodoxy on knowledge will still hold as unproblematic. Here, the reader is informed of what to expect from a supplement to the so called 'TQM theory'. The supplement, Part III of this inquiry, is threefold:

Chapter five inquires into the formation of TQM knowledge in a discursive space. The subject is quality control. It illustrates modes of thinking through the way a spider produces a web in an empty space and the way a snowball expands from an uneventful beginning. By exploring "discursive regularities" (Foucault, 1971; 1972), the chapter fleshes out discursive connections, discursive concepts, discursive unity and discursive objects, with reference to total quality control (TQC) and popular

quality management (QM) discourses. When the overlooked shaping capacity of language is closely examined, not only discourse and knowledge formation can be scrutinised but the very practice of pursuing knowledge may be reconsidered (cf. Xu, 1997a).

Chapter six opens up the QM discourse. The QC discourse is traced historically before TQM comes to the scene. It is proposed that for the west, rather than the popular 'Japanization' preaching, paradoxically, the challenge is westernization of Japanese or foreign management technologies. In addition, for exploring a conceptual possibility, the naming of TQM is scrutinised. When TQM is revealed as an arbitrary linguistic sign (see Saussure, 1959), the limit of signified-signifier dichotomy through representation becomes apparent. An arbitrary sign makes playing with substitutes possible (Derrida, 1978). Specifically, applying Saussure's trichotomy allows three substitutions that give rise to a provisional answer to the question of the emergence and transformation of TQM (cf. Xu, 1996a).

Chapter seven reestablishes TQM discourse at an archaeological site of knowledge production, with its own orders and rules. It provides a Foucauldian analysis of discourse with two perspectives: the normative and the production-consumption. When knowledge production and consumption are put together, one wonders to what extent discursive consumption may have been taken as knowledge consumption. Here, a line may be drawn for distinguishing an argument of Foucault's from a Foucauldian one. To apply the former, one imitates the master's footsteps whereas to formulate the latter, one may have to avoid following his footsteps all the time. To this end, a pupil must learn to act in a master's spirit. It means that when no trodden path is in front of a traveller, he has to stumble forward (cf. Xu, 1996b).

4.4 To Reveal Concealed Practices

Revealing and unconcealment   Heidegger   employs   the   terms

'concealment' and 'unconcealment' in *The Origin of Work of Art* (Heidegger, 1971b:

17-87) when he delineates how absence is related to presence. For him, absence is the

source of 'concealment' whilst presence emerges from absence by taking on an

appearance, hence *appearing* as coming-into-light that is 'unconcealment'. In other

words, absence is a form of non-appearing, nonpresence. Possibly, one knows nature's

way as being 'there', even though one does not always need to articulate in positive

terms [5]. Elsewhere, Heidegger looks into technology as having such revealing and

unconcealing capacity. In *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*

(Heidegger, 1977), he states that: "The possibility of all productive manufacturing lies

in revealing" (ibid.: 12); and, "technology is a mode of revealing" (ibid.: 13). He

continues: "The revealing that rules throughout modern technology has the character

of setting-upon, in the sense of a challenging-forth. That challenging happens in that

the energy concealed in nature is unlocked, what is unlocked is transformed, what is

transformed is stored up, what is stored up is, in turn, distributed, and what is

distributed is switched about ever anew. Unlocking, transforming, storing, distributing,

and switching about are ways of revealing" (ibid.: 16).

Here comes a moment when Heideggerean revealing finds its echo in Derrida's

supplement. "It is this that the metaphysics of presence as self-proximity wishes to

efface by giving a privileged position to a sort of absolute now, the *life* of the present,

the living present. ... it is always necessary to add a supplement of presence to the

presence that is concealed" (Derrida, 1974: 309, emphasis by Derrida). To this end,

presence as 'absolute now' manifests the already articulated and distributed discursive

space where the extant TQM literature is accommodated.

Theorising itself as practice In Part IV of the thesis, practice becomes the subject of revealing. Where can 'practice' be opened up ? The place, or rather space, is found at the familiar division of 'theory and practice'. The opening up operation consists of two procedures: (1). to reveal what has been concealed; and (2). to offer a supplement to a lack to that given division. At a first glance, a theorising practice through discourse seems absent from the division, yet 'absence of evidence' of such practice is no sufficient evidence of its non-existence.

Let us concentrate on how Foucault has unravelled discourse as a discursive practice. He affirms his commitment "to show that 'discourses', in the form in which they can be heard or read, are not, as one might expect, a mere intersection of things and words: an obscure web of things, and a manifest, visible, coloured chain of words; I would like to show that discourse is not a slender surface of contact, or confrontation, between a reality and a language (*langue*), the intrication of a lexicon and an experience; I would like to show with precise examples that in analysing discourses themselves, one sees the loosening of the embrace, apparently so tight, of words and things, and the emergence of a group of rules proper to discursive practice. These rules define not the dumb existence of a reality, nor the canonical use of a vocabulary, but the ordering of objects. 'Words and things' is the entirely serious title of a problem; it is the ironic title of a work that modifies its own form, displaces its own data, and reveals at the end of the day, a quite different task. A task that consists of not -- of no longer -- treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to the language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe" (Foucault, 1972: 48-49, emphasis by Foucault).

The space of 'theory and practice'   A meticulous scrutiny of the division of

'theory and practice', as in management research, allows a *theorising practice of TQM*

to be considered. The latter has remained in a kind of non-appearance or non-presence.

Perhaps, what may be taken into account is not simply to 'replace' the division with

'discourse and practices', but, first and foremost, to put the division back into a

discursive space. That means to inquire TQM in a discursive space as in part a

theorising practice. After all, this space may be where 'theory and practice', 'discourse'

and 'practices' can all be accommodated. At present, the division appears inadequate

for harbouring both discourse and the discursive/theorising practice. If the existing

division offers little room for them, it may have to be reconstituted. And, if a discursive

space is where both presence and absence can be reconsidered, it indeed engenders

movement in and of ideas, free play or innovations.

To reconsider the space of 'theory and practice' may have implications on

'theory' and knowledge production-consumption, other than to take a fresh start and an

unorthodox path. When discourse is introduced to the scene, what happens to 'theory'?

Is theorising practice a mere replacement of 'theory' in the classic division ? Is the

division itself a perception at its source but mistaken as the secure bedrock ? Is 'theory'

not the effect of discursive/knowledge production ? If 'discourse' in part does replace

'theory', there remains ambiguity for reinterpretation or room for movement, hence, the

aesthetic value of a lack or absence. Accordingly, could one contemplate that the need

for seeing a given situation anew does not arise without a lack or absence ? To follow

this line of thinking to its logical end, the moment of perfection can be a moment of

death, since the desire for movement is gone. Let us add one more question on the

division. Could one still refer to 'theory and practice' as if they were never a discursive

space for questioning and rethinking ? Probably not, because they have never been

waterproof in the first place in spite of their paradoxical appearance of being so.

The making of TQM practice   Part IV of the thesis is outlined below.

Chapter eight traces conceptual boundaries of TQM through the practice of theorising and, in particular, three master terms: 'theory', 'history' and 'conceptual framework'. It shows that the making of 'theory' is the making of a Derridean 'centre' and its corresponding, often erased or silenced, margins. It is argued that *what these master terms do*, rather than being deceptively assumed as 'what they are', is more than a representation via the signified-signifier dichotomy. Their frequent appearance in management research, including TQM, is neither value-free nor innocent, the implication of which may alert management academics, as performative actors, to appreciate and reflect on the effect of 'what we do' (cf. Xu, 1997b).

Chapter nine illustrates the coming-into-being of TQM with three appearances: (1). a working practice, the one often referred to as being 'out there' in companies; (2). a prescriptive practice, where clinical medicine is drawn to illuminate a clinical management practice; and, (3). a discursive practice, the effect of which has yet to be comprehended by many. As the formal analysis of the thesis draws to an end, the chapter makes an ontological statement on TQM by closing the door of the 'essence of TQM'. That is to suggest, one at best capture ever-changing appearances than the 'essence', since there is after all no 'essence' as a secure home for one to go back to. In part, the chapter highlights the difficulty for maintaining an innate or 'out there' 'essence', 'foundation' or '(infra)structure', independent of discourse (cf. Xu, 1995).

More questions from Sophie   Gaarder (1995) has created a space for an interesting dialogue in *Sophie's World*, which is conducted in two voices: the established, through Sophie's learned philosophy friend, and an inquisitive pupil Sophie. Perhaps, Part II of this thesis may be seen in a similar light. On the one hand, it is the authority of established learning voiced through the empiricist-structuralist epistemological tradition, to which historical characters such as Saussure, Heidegger,

Foucault and Derrida have shed new light on. On the other hand, the persistent curiosity of Sophie's may be detected: her questions begin to disrupt the mainstream TQM knowledge. Hopefully, Sophie's questioning makes it easy for the reader to see the problematic TQM subject. Necessarily, in Sophie's new dialogue, questions on a few critical 'concepts' that a poststructuralist approach seeks to deconstruct and supplement have been or will be recognised by the reader. These concepts include: (1). thingness, essence, structure/system, origin and history; (2). philosophy, presence, writing and text; and, (3). theory, representation, knowledge (re)production and consumption, discourse and practice.

Having arrived here, a word of caution for Sophie's new adventure in this inquiry. By virtue of her argument, it may be seen as 'presence' to the extent that a Ph.D. thesis has to make presence via a defensible argument. However, the difference lies in *the way it is done*. Whilst Sophie articulates and compares the work so far by others on TQM, she concentrates on how presence, both in others' work and of her own argument, is made, with an awareness of its broad implications to knowledge production and consumption.

Notes:

1. To speak of an 'other' in the terms of an 'other' may be linked to Saussure: " ... in language there are only differences *without positive terms*" (Saussure, 1959: 120), cf. an anthropological approach regarding sensitivity to a 'native subject' under study. That is, researchers avoid to impose preconceived conceptual categories to their 'subjects' under inspection.

2. Such a possibility may have implications to the 'discipline' of Management Studies.

3. It resonates the Taoist position on presence and absence, see Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 40, that goes:

> *Returning signifies the movement of Tao,*
> *Weakening reveals the way of Tao.*
> *Ten thousand things are born of presence,*
> *Presence is born of absence.*

4. See chapter 2 on Knights' division of Foucault's two main periods of 'archaeology' and 'genealogy'.

5. Cf. Munro's expression: One is in a state of mind where he seems to know 'that' but not quite 'what' (personal contact, 1993).

THE MAKING OF TQM DISCOURSE

Part Three of the thesis will concentrate on an opening up operation so as to contribute a supplementary understanding of TQM discourse.

Chapter 5   Discursive Formations of Quality Control

Following a Foucauldian archaeological approach to knowledge production (Foucault, 1972), TQM discourse is placed under close scrutiny. Main texts by influential quality control/management experts become *objects of analysis.* Four Foucauldian "discursive regularities" are investigated, with a demonstration of discursive formations of quality control.

Chapter 6   The Emergence and Transformation of TQM

Attention is then directed to the emergence and transformation of TQM. Historical conditions of TQM are revisited through, firstly, a chronology of texts and, secondly, genealogical lines of influence. It is within this context that the naming of TQM and *TQM as an arbitrary sign, accepted as signifier, for play* are exposed so that an answer, albeit tentative, to the question of how TQM (discourse) may be transformed is offered.

Chapter 7   TQM Discourse as a Knowledge Production

Having provisionally opened up TQM discourse, TQM is now taken as a knowledge (re)production process with its own orders and rules. History is reconsidered at the archaeological site of TQM discourse. Insights concerning shifts of discourses have emerged; issues of arbitrary boundaries, accepted as given, are discussed. It is discourse and its relation to knowledge that deserve close scrutiny. This chapter offers a poststructuralist view on the overlooked *shaping capacity of discourse* to knowledge production and consumption of TQM.

ON THE WAY TO KNOWLEDGE

"Way and weighing

Stile and saying

On a single walk are found.

Go bear without halt

Question and default

On your single pathway bound."

(Heidegger, 1971b: 3)

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCURSIVE FORMATIONS OF QUALITY CONTROL

Returning signifies the movement of Tao,
Weakening reveals the way of Tao.
Ten thousand things are born of presence,
Presence is born of absence.

(Tao Te Ching, chapter 40,
cir. 500 B.C., my translation)

A definition for 'quality' is a common point of departure for studies on quality control and management. However, to answer 'what is quality' has not been as straightforward as it might appear. Munro (1995: 130) has contemplated that "quality's elusiveness to definition appears to be part of its resources". This observation highlights a paradox: The harder one has tried to define 'quality', the further away he seems to have been from capturing its 'essence'. Equally, the harder one is driven by the desire not to let 'quality' escape from his mental grasp, the more anxious he may become, once he is aware of his seemingly inadequate attempt. That 'quality' appears to be able to resist being caught into one inclusive definition is irritating. However, an elusive appearance is an intriguing phenomenon. With respect to the resources Munro has referred to, why not suspend, temporarily, one's effort in defining 'quality' so that attention may be directed to a different mode of thinking about 'quality' ?

The aim of beginning to describe, in this chapter, a discursive formation of quality control is to understand what has made a discourse possible. To do so, a few historical texts on quality control will be taken as the object of analysis, since they

constitute a significant part of quality control discourse. Further, the discourse contributes in ways to the formation and transformation of TQM discourse. By a close reading of the texts, some shaping procedures or 'strategies' for making the quality control discourse will be uncovered. This reading is in part Foucauldian to the extent that "discursive regularities", outlined by Foucault (1972: 1-72) are the themes here. By focusing on these procedures, one begins to see a discourse *in its making* rather than remain at a comfortable position of receiving and recycling what is already shaped as 'knowledge', be it of 'quality' or any other topic or label in Management Studies.

5.1   Discursive Connections

Having read Foucault (1972) closely (chapter 4), one realises that a discursive formation is the creation of a discursive space. The formation of a quality control discourse creates such a space for quality control. By making discursive connections or links, one is on his way to either creating a new space or reshaping what is already given.

Empirical evidence of modern quality control   In the early 1950s, modern quality control (MQC) was documented by Armand V. Feigenbaum in his *Quality Control: Principles, Practice and Administration* (1951). In this text, he set out to explore "the potentialities of quality control as a business method". His text helps to establish primary considerations in a quality control discourse and, in a different light, discursive connections. They may be seen as the weaving fabrics of the discourse, from where a TQM discourse emerged years later (chapter 6). As a way of shaping the discursive 'materiality' of knowledge, Feigenbaum's discourse takes a form of what Foucault (1972: 10, 32) describes as a "discursive site" or "space" (see Munro, 1993). This site is where a transformation of discourse may take place. To those who are familiar with the TQM literature (chapter 2), concentrating on this MQC text

makes one aware that many 'ideas', articulated then by Feigenbaum, have been either reframed or reshaped throughout the years of the following four decades.

In favour of the "administrative point of view toward quality control" (Feigenbaum 1951: 1), Feigenbaum's quality control consisted broadly of "technology" and "human relations" (ibid.: 72). Those who expect an elaboration on how these two areas of concern interact with or shape one another may be disappointed, since it did not seem to be his preoccupation at the time. Instead, in explaining what he meant by administration, Feigenbaum insisted on principles which, in his words, "has begun to simmer out of industry's experience with Modern Quality Control" (ibid.: 1-3). The following outlines Feigenbaum's discursive connections [1]:

(1). Between "system" and "customer satisfaction":

Quality control means: "An effective system for coordinating the quality maintenance and quality improvement efforts of the various groups in an organisation so as to enable production at the most economical levels which allow for full customer satisfaction" (ibid.: 1).

(2). Between "standards" and "improvements":

Control represents a management tool with four steps: setting quality standards; appraising conformance to the standards; acting when the standards are exceeded; planning for improvements in them (ibid.: 1).

(3). Between "process" and "prevention":

"In mass-production manufacturing, quality-control activities centre on the *product*, while in job-lot manufacturing, they are a matter of controlling the *process*." "The core of the quality-control approach is control of product quality during the process of design and manufacturing so as to *prevent* poor quality rather than to correct poor quality after an article has been produced." (ibid.: 2, emphasis by Feigenbaum) [2].

(4). Between "benefits" and "costs":

Improvements in product quality and design, reductions in operating costs and losses, improvement in employee morale, and reduction of production-line bottlenecks are the benefits. Cost reductions are possible results of quality control since expenditures to correct mistakes can be minimised and the balance between the cost of quality in a product and the service that the product is to render can be obtained (ibid.: 2).

(5). Between "customer demands" and "distribution of responsibility":

Industrial product quality is affected by two major trends: toward customer demands for greater precision in the articles they purchase; toward the wide distribution of responsibility for product quality among a number of line, staff and functional groups in contrast to the previous era, when this responsibility was largely in the hands of the factory foreman (ibid.: 2).

(6). Between "industrial production process" and "statistics":

Effective control over the factors affecting product quality demands is maintained at all important stages of the production process. These controls may be termed as the *jobs of quality control*, and they fall into four natural classifications: new-design control, incoming-material control, product control, and special process studies (ibid.: 3, emphasis by Feigenbaum). Statistics are used in an over-all quality-control program whenever and wherever they may be useful, but statistics are only one part of the over-all administrative quality-control pattern, they are not the pattern itself (ibid.: 3). The statistical point of view in MQC resolves essentially into the study of variation by the analysis of samples selected from the lots of product or from units produced by the processing equipment (ibid.: 4) [3].

(7). Between "quality-mindedness" and "participation":

The very intangible but extremely important spirit of quality-mindedness should be extended from top management right to the men and women at the bench. An important feature of MQC is its positive effect in stimulating and in building up operator's responsibility for and interest in product quality. Organisation-wise, quality control is management's tool for delegating authority and responsibility for product quality. The type of organisation required to implement this program is a staff group reporting directly to top management (ibid.: 4).

(8). Between "long range role" and "evolutionary approach":

"Management must recognise at the outset of its MQC program that the tool is not a temporary cost-reduction project. Only when the inefficiencies represented by the cost reductions are out of the way can the quality-control program take over its long-range role of the management *control* over quality." (ibid.: 4, emphasis by Feigenbaum) Quality control should be allowed to grow gradually within a given plant step by step in attacking quality problems (ibid.: 5).

The above outline establishes empirically Feigenbaum's thinking on MQC, which constitutes a reference for making sense of quality control and comparing his MQC with relevant works of others after him. Further, it can be a point of departure for examining discursive 'mutations', to echo a Foucault's expression. One of them can be the change from MQC to TQM. They may be detected by observing how writers on quality control/management have reiterated or borrowed Feigenbaum's work, with or without due acknowledgement. For those who are not familiar with the quality control discourse, going through the above list enables the reader to have some idea of what is relevant in the discourse. A certain 'item', say "standards" or "improvements", as a *discursive event*, is included and linked to another discursive event in the same discourse. Such events may be seen as discursive connections operating within a discursive space. To comprehend possible implications of this statement, let us draw

some experience from everyday life for exploring the relationship between a 'space' and possible 'connections' in it.

Spider web, presence and absence   A spider web may lead our way. A spider toils with threads to make a delicate web (Hillyard, 1995). Observe carefully what happens in the spider's weaving. The web may be thought of as a space filled with a distribution of threads. Where two or more threads meet, they make a knot. For the spider, its operating space is divided by threads and knots. They do not seem to fall into the usual Cartesian category of 'things', which is to suggest that a spider's threads and knots are too light in weight to be Cartesian 'things'. However, absence of empiricist evidence is no sufficient evidence of absence of theoretical possibilities of perceiving and appreciating the spider web other than from the empiricist frame of reference. Equally, absence of a Cartesian 'thing' is no sufficient evidence of 'no-thing' or emptiness, either. In an unwitting Cartesian mode of thought, one may be used to thinking in terms of 'things' or 'entities', to which the working of the spider web looks negligible. However, if spider's threads and knots are seen as presence or having a certain 'materiality', there must be some condition that makes presence possible, perhaps an absence of 'materiality'. Indeed, how does presence or this 'materiality' and its condition or absence create and sustain one another ? The question is not typical for a Cartesian mind.

The early Taoist teaching holds that "ten thousand things are born of presence; presence is born of absence" (Chan, 1963) [4]. Accordingly, emptiness can be interpreted as the source of materiality and presence may be seen as a mere *temporary mark* left on absence. This Taoist ontological position on materiality and emptiness or presence and absence is not readily agreeable to those settled into the mainstream western philosophical outlook. To most from that tradition, thinking in terms of presence and using positive terms with language have been the norm. Therefore, it is remotely conceivable of a suggestion that one thinks of absence 'without positive

terms' (Saussure 1959; Derrida 1974; Yeh, 1982; Joseph, 1994a; Lechte, 1994). In this light, the only choice left seems to be thinking *with* and *of* presence and *with* and *of* positive terms. Up to a point, one admits that most of us may be quite able to conceptualise presence and materiality but far less resourceful in thinking about how emptiness may create materiality or absence relates to presence.

What may be learned from the spider is twofold. First, there is a *distributing* operation that turns threads into a web by constantly *making presence from absence*. Within the realm of presence, it is the knots that hold the threads together. Similarly, Feigenbaum's MQC discourse may be perceived as such. For instance, a knot is tied from "organisation-wise quality-mindedness" to "employee's participation" in achieving quality, the echo of which was heard in the TQM discourse three decades later (eg. Garvin, 1988; Juran and Gryna, 1988; Oliver and Wilkinson, 1988; Oakland, 1989). If Feigenbaum's 'web' is dispersed with the eight knots outlined earlier, making the discursive space of quality control apparent becomes his contribution. Second, the strength of the web comes from the number of knots and an even dispersion of them. To test the strength of Feigenbaum's 'web', one observes what and how much writers after him may have altered the 'web' and how quality discourse may have been reshaped.

If, as a device for (re)shaping a discourse, discursive connections are knots for discourse, they have a certain materiality, too. That materiality is at work through discursive events, deployed for making explicit links in a discursive space. Their distribution, say between "a system's approach to quality control" and "full customer satisfaction" and between "setting up quality standards" and "improvements of them", forms a pattern that fills the space of Feigenbaum's discourse. By making such discursive links, Feigenbaum created, if not helped to sustain what was given then, a discursive space [5]. It in part constituted the condition for discursive mutations, since it was into this space that writers after him may have entered. For instance, by

explaining "the quality chain" concept, Oakland (1989: 4) reinterpreted Feigenbaum's system notion. In so doing, he modified one of Feigenbaum's discursive connections. On the other hand, the radical thinking and practice of zero quality control (Shingo, 1986), ZQC for short, in Japan *disconnected* "industrial production process" and "statistics". ZQC undermines the rationale of statistical process control (SPC) established in the 1930s (see chapter 6). Shingo did not just break one discursive link but offered a substitute: 'industrial quality control' and 'zero defect'. In the case of modifications, one necessarily accepts and reinforces links already established. Otherwise, one is engaged in making certain links *absent from presence*. The latter implies that when those links are cut off, a given pattern of the web changes its shape.

In order to distinguish a reshaped pattern from its earlier version, different names may be necessary. For instance, the motif of 'system' was repeatedly reiterated through the emphasis on the 'whole' or 'total(-ity)', the focus of which is no mere sum of its parts. Ideally, a system takes everything into account and leaves nothing to chance, to which such terms like TQC in the 1950s and TQM in the 1980s became self-evident. Although the priority of 'satisfying the customer' remains, it may in practice take other forms, such as 'customer care' to highlight customer-friendly services. Arguably, Feigenbaum's discursive link of "system" and "customer satisfaction" has been kept in place over the years, if only discursively. Another example shows how the link between "setting up standards" and "improvements of them" may be reworked substantially. The Japanese *kaizen* practice (Imai, 1986) has informed interested westerners as to the way in which improvements have been perceived and implemented in Japanese companies, such as Toyota (see Shingo, 1981; Monden, 1981; 1993). Notably, it was not the Japanese who made this link. However, their single-mindedness in exploring ways of achieving quality means that to them "standards" have been more than a set of criteria for conformance (see chapter 9).

It may be drawn from the discussion so far that absence of discursive connections makes actions of linking possible. Indeed, because of possibilities of (dis)connecting, a discourse can hardly be a static enterprise but is subject to discursive mutations. A quality control discourse is not as stable as one might think it is. This said, to establish links becomes one of the primary activities in the making of a discourse.

In light of the materiality of the spider web, to what extent can discursive connections be regarded as having materiality ? Manifested physically or metaphorically through 'things', conventional thinking of materiality is arguably derived from the Cartesian mode of thought. It holds that the world is constituted of 'things'. As such, the enterprise of inquiries is on and of 'things'. It follows that they become the *first order* and links or relationships among 'things' are of the second. Perhaps, every modern human being has some residual of Descartes in himself when he thinks by dichotomies and divisions (Foucault, 1972: 5, 10, 22, 179; Cooper, 1987). The infrastructure for the Cartesian has been the 'either-or' logic which only allows certainty for the two, excluding anything in the middle. As it seems to be the case that a division is neither a category nor an entity but a spaceless conceptual device, one wonders whether this 'spacelessness' channels researchers' energy to examining the effect of a division to the extent that division itself remains intact. Perhaps, this is where one begins to see why a *spatially constituted* spider web creates conceptual difficulties for the Cartesian mind. To appreciate space, one may have to question the very Cartesian order of things and their corresponding links. To the Cartesian, materiality manifests only in 'things' whereas, to the post- or non-Cartesian, materiality may also be manifested through links or relationships, as it is in Chinese medicine (Porkert, 1974; Kaptchuk, 1983; Bates, 1995). To this end, the spider web, discursive connections and the Internet may constitute a conceptual category of their own, albeit one that could not be adequately pursued from the Cartesian conceptual frame of reference.

5.2   Discursive Concepts

Arguably, the familiar way of reading Feigenbaum's text is nothing like the weaving of a spider web. Instead, it is akin to the shaping of a snowball. It grows from an uneventful beginning. The shaping can be seen as an expansion operation, characterised by patching and rolling snow at a site. For instance, one makes snowballs different in size. With some imagination and patience, ready-made snowballs can be assembled into a snowman or a tower. By 'expansion', the snowball goes obviously in a direction of gradually increasing its volume. Imagine what happens to snowballs when the sun shines warmly ?

As an alternative to discursive connections, discursive concepts are also *discursive events*. Similar to snowballs, such concepts can be assembled into a discourse and are useful for creating expansions to the extent that a discourse is turned from one shape into a bigger or altered one. In practice, one makes a patch on a given discursive concept so that a desirable discursive shape emerges. A second writer may work at this new shape and turn it into yet another shape. In this way, the expansion continues through actions of reshaping so that potential discursive possibilities are inscribed, realised, and become accepted discursive forms.

Let us reconsider Feigenbaum's MQC through discursive concepts or snowballs and see how they might grow into discursive shapes that were not thought of by him at the time. Once Feigenbaum established MQC, the discourse became a site and has been subjected to discursive mutations. One common procedure is by interpretations. It is worth noting the difference between what he had said and interpretations by others of his work, including mine. To a certain extent, interpretations manifest room for manoeuvring that makes reshaping discursive concepts possible. If every interpretation

constitutes some degree of betrayal to its source, the conventional view of achieving an authentic representation of 'the original' becomes unsustainable.

Snowball I: A system approach to quality control   This approach was not entirely new in the 1950s. However, Feigenbaum brought system's thinking to the level of administration from a technical methodology of SQC, developed in the 1930s (Shewhart, 1931; Shewhart and Deming, 1939; see chapters 2 and 6). To Feigenbaum, statistical methodology was to be understood as a problem-solving device and to be responsive to technical problems. The emphasis on administration enabled management to keep a broad perspective in understanding relevant issues, albeit not always technical, in achieving product quality. The administrative system highlighted the role of managing, to which technical problem-solving was but one of the duties expected *of* management, but not necessarily *by* management. Knowingly, where there is the right to 'manage', there must be those 'being managed'. When the system is applied to machines and technical procedures in production operations, there seems little ground for dispute. However, it may cause difficulty when employees are taken into account. Despite that Feigenbaum's administrative system differed in scope from Shewhart's statistical system, some limitation in both can be detected. Neither by itself helped to identify problems *in* management. Rather, each is useful for management in finding out problems during the process of production. In a way, Feigenbaum adjusted the shape of the system snowball, making SQC methodology under administrative control.

The capacity of Feigenbaum's system depended heavily on specialists. In a commercial operation where activities were organised through functional groups, Feigenbaum took coordination as priority. It meant that quality maintenance and improvement were indispensable when parts were linked together as a whole. Through constant interactions, coordination would be ineffective if maintenance was done well yet little was carried out concerning improvement. Arguably, the two had to be compatible, to which Feigenbaum failed to address. To a certain extent, the issue was

more than concentrating on the various functions themselves, the joints in between must also be given due attention. Therefore, an excessive emphasis on each functional performance alone, relying on specialists, was inadequate for a good performance of the system. A conceptual void inherent in Feigenbaum's system was to be explored by others after him.

Snowball II: Principles of MQC The point of departure for Feigenbaum's thinking was a set of principles, derived *from* and *for* industry (Feigenbaum 1951: viii). A conventional reading of Feigenbaum may impress the reader that he knew well what was going on in the industrial practice of quality control in the US then. Based on his experience and knowledge, he was able to distil principles for quality control practice. To him, if they were properly followed, companies would be guided for developing their own quality systems. His contribution was to place the principles under the umbrella of MQC.

If one asks the question of how he said what was said, one would have to take what is normally absent from a standard reading into account. Feigenbaum, then a doctoral candidate at MIT, was favourably positioned to develop a viable framework and justifiably expected to demonstrate its potential. With MQC as his framework, he clarified and rationalised quality control activities. Indeed, he managed the publication of a book, which is the text under scrutiny, before he completed his doctorate. The publication was as much a proof of his academic credibility as an event of social significance. To a concerned community, that credibility earns the respect of his peers. The publication was a mechanism for recognition that bore witness to a particular practice, which brings about effects and is not without its own orders and rules (chapter 7).

Indeed, Feigenbaum's principles functioned more like rules of thumb governing quality control activities than laws of nature. Those principles signified an act of

establishing an order. If the articulation of principles sounded impartial, definitive and with considerable certainty, the use of rules were far less so, since the latter evoked complicated inferences. Rules are easily associated with games and play, open to imagination as well as daring moves. The effects of playing a game may take the form of winners, losers, successes, failures, achievements and/or disappointments. To avoid such connotations, it appears respectful to discover 'principles of MQC' than to state what the 'rules of MQC' constitute of. To be guided by 'principles of MQC' sounds implicitly appealing than by 'rules of MQC' [6]. The latter draws an imposing and obligatory image for quality control. Four decades later, the game of MQC evolved into TQM, the necessarily arbitrary rules of which were extensively exposed by Marxist critiques of TQM practice (see eg. Wilkinson and Willmott, 1995).

Snowball III: Control through standards It has been widely held that control is accomplished through standards. They are composed by specialists, with respect to technological knowledge available at a given time. Once standards have been set up, such as the BS and the ISO series, they are to be conformed with. Actions are required when non-conformance occurs. Usually, when acceptable limits of established specifications are exceeded, ie. outside and below them, it is time to take action. However, this norm of practice is far from a complete picture. Under certain conditions, standards may be exceeded in a different direction, ie. *outside and above* specifications, evident in some Japanese companies [7]. In the second instance, the question becomes whether it is still appropriate to proceed a course of action in the name of control. If the answer is 'yes', one has to seriously reconsider the logic of control. The need for it arises only when an operation has gone *negatively outside* specifications. The control logic prevents production activities from slipping *below* the lower limit of specifications and is ambiguous of actions when activities go *beyond* the upper limit. Without the latter, there remains little room for improvement. Let us be clear on one point: Standards are not to be taken as static once being set up because there is the possibility of going further; and, improvement does not follow once

standards are in place, since that possibility makes standards a starting point, evident in the Japanese *kaizen* practice (see chapter 9).

Where are the sources of improvement ? If conformance of standards, or quality assurance, requires working steadily towards certainty and is primarily of convergent activities, improvement demands more of management. Arguably, it depends less on conformance than on the willingness and capacity to learn. The mentality of conformance and 'control' may enhance one another but it may not be adequate for encouraging innovations and nurturing creativity.

Under the rubric of MQC, Feigenbaum advocated prevention of defects during the production process. Prior to this emphasis on prevention and process, quality control was carried out through sampling inspection at the end of the production. If correction was costly, there must be ways of avoidance. The advantage of prevention over inspection may be illustrated through ways of eliminating river pollution. Efforts can be made to observable harmful effects of pollution, typically by reacting downstream where pollution occurs. Alternatively, actions may be taken upstream along the river at the sources so that pollution is eliminated upstream. Equally, quality problems may be resolved upstream. If production process is similar to the flow of a river and finished products are located downstream, it is obvious that efforts in prevention of defects are more sensible and logical than inspection downstream. In achieving prevention, the path and proof of zero defect was to be explored and demonstrated, again, by the Japanese (Shingo, 1986; see chapter 6).

Snowball IV: Manufacturing products　　　　　Product-centred manufacturing processes were a common feature in the quality control texts of the 1950s (Feigenbaum, 1951; Juran 1951; Ishikawa 1954/64). Problems arisen during the process were targeted. Hence, Feigenbaum's discourse manifested an engineering knowledge profile on design, machines, statistical and other technical tools. In order to

materialise designed features of a product, a great deal of effort was to be invested in the production process. Given this emphasis on process, the role of statistical methods was to monitor and control variations in production. These methods were effective means to achieve uniformity of products. Owing to the technical nature of product-centred processes, all relevant activities were able to be categorised as 'input', 'process' and 'output'.

It looks as if people were left out from the picture frame of manufacturing. Not necessarily. They are the input and, accordingly, quantifiable, measurable and are subjected to control. To read more from the same picture, the eye may rest on the frame. Indeed, people are the very source of input for a quality control discourse. The discursive capacity of quality control is not within the remit of an engineering education, since received wisdom leads one to believe that discourse is a medium for conveying ideas. As signifier, discourse signifies knowledge -- the signified. Regarding the perceived signified status of knowledge, the image of knowledge projected as being free from arbitrariness is a crucial step. When the same image applies to knowledge in production operations, it is less likely for anyone to probe into the making of that knowledge and therefore the image perpetuates.

What happens if one does probe into it ? Will the secured image of knowledge be blurred ? Necessarily so, because the effort invested in an engineering production cannot be neatly separated from the production of a discourse, as Feigenbaum's MQC text shows. There is more to a well-controlled production process than knowing competently the workings of technical processes. Sound engineering knowledge alone may not be enough for managing a whole production process when managers, operators and other participants all constitute an inseparable part. For management, a recognition of the non-technical aspect of the process may have to be added, for instance, employees' needs for security, respect/trust and learning. In this light, the outcome of the process must be more than the output of products and/or services,

since the same process also shapes *relationships* among groups and between individuals. In Feigenbaum's MQC discourse, the human relational side of the outcome was treated as a separate issue, since it did not fall readily into any technical category of an engineering discourse. It was perceived to be dealing with 'things' and not necessarily the interface between 'things' and people. Insofar as the established engineering discourse can be taken as a discursive centre, that interface has been marginal. The space where the marginal resides becomes where possibilities of reshaping it in its relation to the centre may unfold and materialise [8].

Snowball V: Participation and communication   Feigenbaum noted that quality control was primarily about "human relations". The early 1950s was a time when the psychological and sociological dimensions of the workplace were explored with considerable interest [9]. A quality-control organisation, argued Feigenbaum, was first of all a "channel of communication" for product quality among all concerned and functional groups to overcome an over-emphasis on specialisation. Equally, it was also a "means of participation" in the overall plant quality control programme by employees and groups so that everybody felt that they were part of it (Feigenbaum 1951: 63). His message was upbeat: If specialisation creates problems of alienated functional groups, good communication could be the solution. If no employee is excluded from a quality programme, everyone would be willing to contribute. To what extent would the dynamism of a workplace resemble Feigenbaum's confidence in good communication ?

Managers and specialists have knowledge that shapes power relationships between 'managers' and the 'being managed' and between specialists and non-specialists. Rather than being taken as an abstract idea, power manifests through organisational procedures and symbolic rituals, as Foucault explored before. He lay bear how 'madness' was 'madness' spoken of from a position of 'reason' and seldom from that of 'madness' itself (Foucault, 1967; Derrida, 1978: 31-63). To silence the voice of 'madness' with 'reason' illustrated the power relationship and triumph of

'reason' over *what 'reason' regarded as 'madness'*. By the same token, good communication cannot dissolve the power relationship of managers over the rest and specialists over non-specialists. Instead, that relationship is constantly *being established and establishing* themselves through everyday negotiations and with tensions among interested groups.

To Feigenbaum, negative effect of mass production on the workforce was a serious problem to the extent that "the expansion of industry has tended to depersonalise the employer-employee relationship and to make pride of workmanship a less frequent occurrence" (Feigenbaum 1951: 20). However, he raised the issue with respect to achieving the full capacity of the administrative system without much reference to how employees were to cope with this problem arisen from their participation. Categorically, he referred to "technology" when he talked about machines, materials and processes and to "group efforts" when his attention was on specialists, operators, foremen and other factory personnel. Although he hoped to keep in perspective of both, the way in which he said what was said rather like telling a cook all the ingredients required for cooking. He seemed happy to leave the cook to work out how many ways a duck, or MQC, can be cooked.

Feigenbaum did raise the question of whether an organisation structure designed in a previous era was able to cope with the changing needs of *redistribution* of authority and responsibility, required by the administrative system. He proposed that responsibility for quality be "diffused" (ibid.: 43) among functional groups rather than being held in the hands of a few, since industrial quality problems had outgrown the existing organisation structure (ibid.: 43). If the structure was unable to accommodate change, Feigenbaum contended, it had to be altered. To a certain extent, his perception of change was a revisionist one: Management is to coordinate the behaviour of specialised groups and that of the foremen and operators through delegating authority and responsibility. Little was said about those at the receiving end of such authority

and responsibility. How did *they* see proposed changes *for them* ? If people are an important input of a quality programme, is it not reasonable that *their* concerns and responses are taken into account ? If, as Feigenbaum diagnosed, the issue was that individual responsibility for quality was to be made an integral part of the day-to-day work of the line, staff, and functional groups, which held them together (ibid.: 43), what would be the working conditions that an organisation was prepared to provide for this to happen ? Unfortunately, to these questions Feigenbaum neither had any answer nor much to prescribe for action. Once again, Feigenbaum may be forgiven for the simple reason that such questions may stand at the margin of an industrial engineering discourse at his time such that they were not perceived as problems for engineers in the first place. Indeed, but whose problems were they ? Was he not writing, *as* an engineer, *on* management ? Other than engineers, who else was able to write about quality control without considerable engineering knowledge and industrial experience ?

To see a sketch of Feigenbaum's snowballs may remind us of where the TQM discourse might have evolved from, since what has happened to quality control after him may be reinterpreted as reshaping his snowballs. The echoes of almost all those considerations of Feigenbaum's are still heard today in the TQM discourse -- from a system's approach to quality, establishing principles, conformance to standards, production processes to the so called 'soft' issues of participation, communication and motivation. In retrospect, there is little doubt that the shape of the quality discourse has, in a spell of four decades, changed from 'control' to 'management'. Paying close attention to Feigenbaum's discursive concepts may help those who are familiar with the TQM literature to realise how much TQM has outgrown MQC and where the void left by him might be, to which supplements are possible. To do so, the quality discourse will be reshaped once again. It is the possibility of reshaping that allows change and a discursive transformation.

5.3   Discursive Unity ?

If the historical MQC text (Feigenbaum, 1951) reflected the building blocks of the quality control discourse, the publication of his article entitled *Total Quality Control* (Feigenbaum, 1956) in Harvard Business Review was a landmark event. To some, a change in the title, from MQC to TQC, sounds trivial. To others, TQC might be more than a proper label than MQC, for TQC registered a distinctive identity or a certain 'unity' for MQC movements (see chapters 6 and 9). To what extent did TQC symbolise a unity, the 'essence' of which might have been manifested by the system approach ? Did the appearing of TQC, albeit a name [10], signify only a discursive unity for quality control ? If so, where would a non-discursive unity be ? The notion of unity and its relevance to the system approach deserve a careful examination.

TQC: 'Unity' through systems ?   What difference did 'total' in TQC make from 'modern' in MQC ? According to Feigenbaum (1951), 'total' indicated a broad *scope* of all stages or phases of the entire industrial cycle (ibid.: 94). As an administrative system, all possible activities were subjected to quality control. Therefore, TQC was not only "a new kind of quality control" but "a new and important business management function", the performance of which was the job of quality control engineers with the necessary support of other professional activities (ibid.: 94). The reliance on *functional* management was clearly spelt out: "Top management must recognize that the many individual responsibilities for quality will be exercised most effectively when they are buttressed and serviced by a well-organised, genuinely modern management function whose only area of specialization is product quality, and whose only area of operation is in the quality control job" (ibid.: 98). This statement may be interpreted as advocating the creation of one special function above all other functions. This is where some conceptual ambiguity of the TQC system may be discussed.

On the one hand, Feigenbaum strove to break away from problems created by a fragmented approach, the basis of which was division of labour and functional management. Yet, on the other, his proposal was nothing short of a functional solution, despite that his new function was at a higher level than the rest. He attempted to overcome the limitation of a functional approach, with the belief that his alternative was superior to the functional management of quality. However, is not his order of function after all functional ? If so, the status quo and his proposal must have shared some common ground: division of labour and professionalism. Paradoxically, his TQC might have generated its own problems. The cascading role of quality control indicated that TQC was based on divisions, such as the 'professional' vs. the 'non-professional', 'management' vs. the 'workforce' and 'administrators' vs. 'specialists'. Leaving his intention aside, his TQC discourse neither challenged and sought to redrawing these received divisions. Nor is there much evidence to suggest that his attempt is to replace some of them. Rather, he introduced an extra hierarchical layer to the functional division of labour [11]. Upon close inspection, Feigenbaum's TQC is not as self-evident as it at first appears to be.

The notion of 'total' may be looked at by questioning how the concept of systems works in MQC and in TQC respectively. Is not 'total quality' a recursive theme for reinforcing a system's thinking in *management control through quality* such that quality becomes another form of control for management over employees ? If 'total' refers to everything and everyone under the system's control, what would its logical outcome be ? Will it free the modern project of quality control from the functional approach to management, as Feigenbaum might have wished ? Neither was 'total quality' meant to be a rescue operation for those who were trapped in division of labour, nor was it capable to off set negative effects of specialisation, as recognised by Feigenbaum. Insofar as conceptual divisions are concerned, TQC highlighted one side of them, ie. the 'professional', the 'management', the 'specialist', whilst made the other side curiously silenced and absent. In particular, the 'non-professional' and the

'workforce' were subdued to be the marginal, the little accounted for. A conventional reading of TQC directs the reader's attention away from what might have been concealed in the conceptual divisions of TQC.

'Unity' in Deming's methodology ?   For the time being, let us leave TQC aside and see whether a 'unity' can be established with Deming's system's methodology. W. Edwards Deming (1900-1993) earned his reputation from his pioneering effort in advocating the statistical methodology (Deming, 1950; 1951). In the wide business management community, he has been known as a guru on quality. His popular text, *Out of the Crisis* (Deming, 1986), is not a technical book on statistical systems. He speaks with an unmistakably authoritative tone, like a wise doctor to his patients. When one takes what is outside his text into account, one may realise that Deming capitalised fully on the guru-audience relationship.

Deming was almost legendary. Born at the dawn of this century, he has been described as an American pioneer in introducing statistical control techniques to Japan in the early 1950s (Ishikawa, 1985; 1990; Dickson, 1993; The Times, 1993; Latzko and Saunders, 1995). As an expert, Deming was then a disciple of the master statistician Walter A. Shewhart, who published the classic work on how to apply statistics into industrial control of quality (Shewhart, 1931; Shewhart and Deming, 1939). In Japan, Deming put Shewhart's methods into practice and earned the respect from the Japanese. However, it was the impressive economic success of Japan, felt in the west from the 1970s, that Deming was rediscovered at home by the American media heralded an unknown hero in a foreign land, and increasingly referred to as a quality management guru (Mann, 1985; Bendell, 1988; Killian, 1992; Dickson, 1995). Deming in the 1980s was no mere specialist but a reverent figure. His contribution to Japan has turned his credibility as a specialist into his premium asset -- high reputation.

The publication of Deming's text was by far a popular event when compared with Feigenbaum's (Feigenbaum, 1951; 1956), even though the latter had, as early as in the 1950s, proposed an alternative to the statistical methodology. It was around the 1980s when aspects of the Japanese TQC movements were re-exported back to the west that helped to raise the stake of quality management as a "competitive business strategy" (Garvin, 1988). In a way, Deming's text was not just written by an expert to command an audience. Rather, there was already an audience waiting for a legendary guru to say something. It was his experience as evidence of successful practice in quality control, his judgement, insight and advice and Deming himself as a living proof of an effective system's approach that made his text popular [12]. His text speaks for itself: A guru has practised what he preaches. By that time, what mattered to him was how he said what was said, and not how much he had to say. His tone gave the impression that a serious author wrote because what was worthy of saying was not yet said and not because of the pressure to publish in quantity so as to be identified by his peers. Deming seemed to know well how to cast his reputation in the limelight and how to meet the expectations of his audience. He exploited the relationship between a quality guru and a business community. In particular, that relationship came at a time when western responses to the perceived threat from Japan were eminent.

To a popular audience, Deming summed up his management philosophy through quality in "the fourteen points" (Deming, 1986: 18-96). Much has been discussed about their significance in the extant literature. Here, let us inspect the way in which his text has been presented. One of his discursive techniques is his highlight on knowledge and wisdom in the historical Greco-European cultural tradition. Evidence lies at the beginning of each chapter (eighteen in total). Immediately after the title of each chapter, the reader encounters a quote, sometimes in two small pieces. The sources of his quotes arrange from literary giants as Shakespeare, Goethe and Chaucer to the classic Christian heritage from Ecclesiastes, Job, Hosea, Psalms and Euripedes. Being small in volume is not suggestive of a marginal role. To the contrary,

those quotes set the tone for each chapter, similar to the effect of musicians tune in their instruments before a stage performance. With his quotes, Deming tunes in the reader to his chapters and thus brings his text alive. Without them, his text would have had less emotional appeal. To this end, his text is neither impartial or primarily technical. Between those lines of Deming's quotes, one cannot fail to sense a historical continuity of a cherished tradition, spreading from Europe to North America.

Of all his quotes, knowledge or ideas is one distinctive theme driven home. Deming, as "I", confronts *vis-à-vis* the reader "you" that allows little distance from the reader. For instance, if "you" are as interested in knowledge or ideas as our ancestors were, "you" would not be contented with remaining in darkness by lacking knowledge (Deming, 1986: 1, 97). Further, is not wisdom a more profound state of mind than knowledge ? In the eyes of fools, a wise man looks foolish and his words worthless; in the absence of ideas and wisdom, folly presents itself as knowing and wits (ibid.: 297, 309, 486). It happens that one knows how to use tools, such as applied statistics, without an appreciation or understanding of what he is doing (ibid.: 465). One observes a phenomenon, such as the economic success of Japan, without knowing how it came about. Such inadequacy causes pain, sorrow and grief and is what "I" am concerned (ibid.: 156, 371). As to "you", the reader, "you" have to make up your mind as to whether "I" deserve to be listened to. To dive into deep water, "you" have to be prepared for the danger of getting drowned. "I" can offer "you" choices, "you" decide and be responsible for your actions. Indeed, when the author presents himself as a man of conviction and understanding (ibid.: 248, 297, 475), what are you if you resist such inclinations ? This is why it seems difficult to challenge such a wise man, let alone the fact that, by 1982, Deming was eighty-two years old.

If the reader has an ear for wisdom from the ancient Greeks to the modern time and aspirations for knowledge and understanding, they would not resist Deming's new management philosophy and the principles embedded in it. As Deming appreciated the

great cultural tradition and identified himself with it, the reader may do the same. At this point, the author and the reader may have been brought to a shared ground that boosts self-confidence and pride. The perception of a common tradition leads to a degree of timelessness of universal principles and, to a certain extent, historical responsibilities initiated on behalf of the reader. The next step for action is left for the reader.

It is worthy of note that Deming was cautious not to overplay his Japan experience. Indeed, the economic transformation of Japan is not included in the main text but appears in Appendix (ibid.: 486-492). The understated message reads as follows. First, instead of being a model for the west, Japan has been a *proof* of universal principles and the quality management philosophy. Therefore, one should not confuse principles with following Japan's footsteps. Second, if Deming's principles are heeded, the industry in the US can step out of its current crisis. The question is how to do that. The recipe has been prepared -- the universal system's methodology applied in quality control. It is a vehicle through which 'essence', 'truth' or 'unity' find their way and manifestations. To this end, Deming presented himself as one who was able to identify a time-honoured 'truth' in the name of a management philosophy through quality.

In a way, Deming made it hard for the reader to argue. Because of this, his apparently commanding tone does not sound offensive. However, a discerning reader may not be so willingly consumed by the author's legendary story to the extent of forgetting the cultural context the author wishes to frame himself and the reader into. Some distance from the reader helps when one engages the author in order not to be carried away by the author's persuasive ploys. Reading Deming reminds one that a well-presented argument is not the only way to convince an audience. In Deming's case, his rich reserve of personal experience, self-evident anecdotes and, in particular, his crafty way of getting the reader's attention can win the reader over, with or without

the presence of a defensible argument. In part, the established guru status and his wise man style condition the reading of Deming to the extent that a less critical reading may not even surface problems from his quasi-empiricist evidence.

If one is led to assume that the heart of Deming's philosophy is a system's methodology, one should be mindful of its potential difficulty which manifests through the role people play in the system. For instance, Deming insisted that it was wrong to blame operators and other front line staff for producing defects because it was the system that allowed the production of defects. In order to eliminate them, attention should be concentrated on improving the capacity and the performance of the system. Accordingly, to punish people in whatever guise for producing defects was not the solution (ibid.: 248-275, 309-354). Deming held that people were operating *within* a system, with which problems arose and *not* with people. This is a critical point in that the system and people are considered as separate, as if people were external to it. Therefore, one should separate problems with the system from problems with operators, known as "common causes" and "special causes" (ibid.: 314-315). Elsewhere, Deming suggested that people be treated as *part of* the system (ibid.: 366-368). If one follows the latter, the logical implication can be that people become sources of problems to the system. Indeed, Deming trod on a delicate line. From one end, he envisaged a *technically independent system* that followed its own objective logic, external to operators. At the other end, by a mysterious slight of hand, participants in the operation of a system actually *became part of* that system, which implied that any problem with the system itself could also be a problem generated by the participants.

The difficulty that has been noted is not only the seeming incoherence in which Deming employed the notion of systems. It makes one aware of probable grey areas, as boundaries, of any system in operation. As Deming pointed out that one should make a distinction between a concept and an operational definition of it (ibid.: 276-296). By

the same token, one may have to be careful in asserting a system's methodology with little operational difficulty. To this end, one wonders to what extent it is misleading to refer to the system without its potentially problematic boundaries being checked. Unfortunately, Deming has illuminated little in this respect. Usually, it is assumed that he meant to refer to the same system with clear-cut boundaries every time the term 'system' appeared. Given this, one can only hope that he was aware of this unsettling issue of system boundaries. If so, his clarification on this point has been less than transparent.

The above discussion shows that the credibility of a 'unity' in the quality control discourse is questionable. So far, neither 'total quality' in TQC nor Deming's methodology is sufficiently justified for the claim of an external 'unity' in the discourse. If one insists on the use of 'unity', it has to be nominal and discursive. The assertion of a non-discursive 'unity' may provide comfort for those who need reassurance of something universally essential. Otherwise, such a 'unity' is nothing short of an illusion, due to the conceptual and/or operational difficulties and contradictions arisen from both TQC and the system's methodology.

Having examined Feigenbaum and Deming, an innate 'essence' of quality appears an asserted one. When 'essence' is taken as the *signified* and the quality discourse as its *signifier and signifier only*, it is conceivable that the discourse *represents* the 'essence' of quality. Thus, the belief in the 'essence' goes on undisturbed. Nevertheless, when a poststructuralist position on language and discourse is considered (Cooper, 1986; 1987; 1993; Ball, 1990; Jacques, 1992; 1996a; 1996b; Munro, 1993; Munro and Mouritsen, 1996), the unchallenged position of the signified and its bond to the signifier can be called into question (Derrida, 1978: 278-293; Foucault, 1971; 1972; see chapters 3, 4 and 6). Accordingly, notions like 'essence', 'unity' and 'continuity' are more than conceptual codes. They are imposed to discourse than to be 'found' in it. From a similar theoretical position, discourse cannot be reduced

to a language tool for portraying a coherent picture of 'unity'.. As shown in our discussion, a non-discursive 'unity' cannot be established. In light of Foucault's insight on historical discontinuity and transformation (Foucault, 1972: 2-17), 'appearance', 'disunity', 'paradox', 'inconsistency', 'division' and 'limit' may constitute conceptual constructs of the quality discourse. As such, they no longer have to be regarded as abnormal traces for erasure. To this end, some of such traces may have been recovered, as discursive links and concepts. Neither should they be readily dismissed, as if they were mere irritating distractions in the making of a discourse. Instead, they are conceptual constructs, adding to Foucault's reserve of 'thresholds', 'ruptures', 'breaks' and 'mutations', with which change and transformations can be examined. These constructs need not be spoken of from the position of universal 'essence', 'unity' and 'structure' but from that of 'appearing', 'disappearing', 'mutating' and 'transforming'.

To critique the under-scrutinised 'unity' raises further issues. For those who wish to pursue, they need be reminded of their starting point so as to avoid taking ready-made discursive concepts for granted. Suppose that a discursive unity is at work, what would its possible discursive objects be in the TQC discourse ? Are 'quality' and 'standards' not among such objects ?

5.4   Discursive Objects

What are discursive objects ? What is the point of establishing them in a discourse ? Why is it useful to expose them ? In exploring *discourse itself as a practice*, Foucault offers a sketch of his agenda. He insists that: "What, in short, we wish to do is to dispense with 'things'. To 'depresentify' them ... . To substitute for the enigmatic treasure of 'things' anterior to discourse, the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse. To define these objects without reference to the *ground*, the *foundation of* things, but by relating them to the body of rules that enable them to form as objects of a discourse and thus constitute the conditions of their historical

appearance" (Foucault, 1972: 47-48, emphasis by him). He goes on to clarify: "A task that consists of not -- of no longer -- treating discourses as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this *more* that renders them irreducible to the language (*langue*) and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe" (ibid.: 49, emphasis by him). The above quotes can be understood as follows.

Firstly, the formation of discursive objects can be a substitution of 'things', in particular when 'things' are in the position of the signified. To do away with 'things', or to make them absent, is to *clear a ground* for the archaeological project of understanding discourse and knowledge, undertaken by Foucault. Secondly, since these objects emerge only in discourse, they cannot be established and investigated outside it. This can be understood as a double measure of preventing 'things' to contaminate the archaeological project so that discourse becomes *the space* in which they can be named, described, analysed, appreciated or judged (ibid.: 32). Thirdly, the objects are formed by certain rules which constitute their historical appearing and disappearing. In this sense, the objects themselves are *products of* historical conditions and therefore of transformations. Fourthly, a discursive practice produces discursive objects, displacing not only 'things' but the 'ground of things', to the extent that *discourse speaks of*, as it were, discursive objects. Lastly, the effect of discourse is *more than* a signifier signifying or representing the signified. This is why neither language nor speech can sufficiently capture discourse [13]. Foucault's laborious effort in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (Foucault, 1969/72) is a clearing operation for the project of *discourse taken as practice*. Whenever possible, he has tried hard to clarify what it is not so that his project would not be misunderstood in the conventionally familiar terms.

The remaining space of this chapter describes two Foucauldian discursive objects: 'quality' and 'standards'. Drawing on Foucault's elaboration on a historical emergence and transformation (ibid.: 40-49), let us establish specific discursive surfaces on which 'quality' and 'standards' emerge.

Quality as a discursive object   There are three surfaces on which 'quality' has crossed a threshold to become a discursive object. Under one of the surfaces is the discipline of Engineering. A well-trained engineer is able to tell what quality is and how quality can be represented through control of set standards, conformance to them and tools for measuring quality parameters. To the engineer, quality can be neatly fixed into numbers, with as little ambiguity as possible. The engineering perception may be described as quality in a *fixed* mode which is measurable and usually predictable. Once quality is fixed into tangible parameters, the appearance of 'objectivity' becomes manageable 'substance'. With 'substance' comes certainty and a sense of purpose and assurance. However, in what ways are standards set in the first place ? Where are the sources of inputs for them ?

Complementary to the conception of measurable and objective quality is a dimension that allows quality to emerge from below its surface. At first, this extraness does not seem to be of particular relevance to a quality discourse, although its manifestations are everywhere. They arrange from the predisposition and expectation of specialisation to functional division of labour. One of the logical outcomes of specialisation is to foster individual development so that one will one day become an expert. In this regard, it is division that makes the birth of a professional possible. The fixed mode of objective quality and the aspiration of becoming a professional do not simply legitimate one another, they reinforce each other's strength. The bonding of the two leads to a narrowing down of other possible practices of and for describing quality control movements. Historical evidence of the Japanese practice has shown that the bond, so prevalent in the west, can be loosened, if not made absent. To the Japanese,

this bond is of far less importance than it has been in the west (Monden, 1981; 1993; Morishima, 1982; Ishikawa 1985; 1990; Morita et al, 1986; Kondo 1988; Tu, 1996; see chapters 6 and 9).

Can one think of instances when quality is considered as a moving target ? How can one trace quality to its pre-fixed state ? In Marketing, the direction and rhythm of change are often understood to be dictated by the market, where demands of consumers are to be monitored and carefully studied. In general, marketing specialists hold that only when customers' demands are met or better exceeded, can the company providing products/services or 'customer satisfaction' remain competitive and prosper in the long run. To this end, customers' perception of quality makes quality far less objective and even capriciously fluid. For companies, customers' demands and expectations have to be responded to and translated into technical features of a product/service. In a professional capacity, such translation is the job of the engineer.

Up to a point, the fixed mode of objective quality fits comfortably into the Engineering discipline whereas the changing perception of quality goes hand-in-hand with Marketing. If one is interested in exploring links between the two, where would his inquiry belong to, Engineering or Marketing ? Strictly speaking, his exploration falls into the mainstream of neither, if he has to choose one home (i.e. subject) in research. In Engineering, the naming of quality is used for designating a construct with control methodologies (e.g. SQC) and a set of specific technical activities when applying them. As producers of products/services, companies have to respond to their customers and changes in the market. This means that quality standards, as an established engineering framework, have to be adjusted accordingly. This is where tensions between the two modes of quality need to be resolved constructively, and where the dynamics from the market is fed back into the operational language through organisational procedures and policy deployment (e.g. quality function deployment, QFD). To a certain extent, those who are interested in working out how the two

modes of quality relate to one another may have to explore boundaries of mainstream research subjects.

The boundaries constitute a space in which the fixed and the moving modes of quality become fused. Beyond the thresholds of the mainstream discourse of Engineering, Marketing and specialisation there emerges a discursive object of quality. It stands no longer for an engineering construct alone. Nor is it dictated by the market and consumers entirely. The moment of quality becoming a discursive object was the moment when MQC discourse came into being. From that moment, the audience of a quality discourse was no longer just professional engineers but across functional divisions. In order to solve problems concerning quality, it is inadequate to consult engineers, neither managers with one set of skills or specialist competence. The task of achieving control becomes that of cooperation and integration, which was Feigenbaum's aspiration in the 1950s.

In a Foucauldian sense, what becomes critical about quality now is that 'quality' operates in a space *no other than* the space of discourse. In other words, discourse is the *first home for quality*. Further, a quality discourse is not to be mistaken as representations of an objective 'thing' called quality, because that 'thing' itself has been replaced by discursive object of quality. It is to suggest that the domain of quality be first and foremost discursive, created *within discourse*. In the spirit of Foucault, one step further is the possibility of reinterpreting the phenomenon of popular 'quality' discourse in the 1980s. That is, a recognition of quality as a discursive object in part provides a clue for understanding why a company can have their own quality management programme in good order *without* necessarily delivering the promises ever made as well as the success ever claimed in case studies or survey reports (see chapter 2). The reason can be simple: 'Quality' discourse creates a discursive space for itself and 'quality' need not be anything other than a discursive object. To this end, it is worthy of noting Crosby's comment on the American Baldrige Quality Award: "There

is no definition of quality involved, yet everyone talks 'quality' like there's a common understanding" (Harvard Business Review, 1992: 127, HBR hereafter). A Foucauldian response to Crosby's observation is this: Neither does a lack of definition prevent the presence of a quality discourse, nor is a common understanding a necessary condition for speaking of and writing on quality, since quality has indeed become a discursive object.

Standards as a discursive object   Parallel to the emergence of quality, the *appearance* of standards has been made possible with what Foucault called "the authorities of limitations" and "grids of specification" (Foucault, 1972: 41-42). The former was illustrated with medicine "as an institution possessing its own rules, as a group of individuals constituting the medical profession, as a body of knowledge and practice, as an authority recognized by public opinion, the law, and government" (ibid.: 41-42). Comparable to Foucault's analysis of medicine, the engineering practice may be perceived in light of an "institution", the "profession", "knowledge and practice" and a technical "authority". As to "grids of specification", Foucault states that they "are the systems according to which the different 'kinds of madness' are divided, contrasted, related, regrouped, classified, derived from one another as objects of psychiatric discourse" (ibid.: 42). By the same token, in the quality discourse, different kinds of standards may be divided, contrasted, related, and indeed debated (Garvin, 1991; HBR, 1992). A combination of such discursive conditions allows not only quality but standards to become discursive objects.

Let us look at the engineering profession more carefully. For an engineer, one of the paramount requirements is the ability to convert technical features into numbers from design to production operations. On a daily basis, decisions on a specific means to satisfy this requirement must be made. Once it is achieved, the engineer can concentrate on technical problems, arisen from measurability and measurement. He knows that the purpose of converting technical features to numbers is for establishing a

control mechanism. Of course, this practice is not just observed by engineers. Many management researchers who prefer to play safe, by following the empiricist mainstream tradition, would do the same.

To convert technical features into numbers is a representational practice: Numbers as *signifiers* represent a set of features, which may be a piece of metal or an assembled car. This practice empowers the engineer such that he refers to and describes that piece or that car without the physical presence of either -- a replacement or absence. The presence of numbers replaces the presence of the 'thing' itself. In the same way, the presence of standards enables the absence of products. This is obviously a convenient arrangement for the engineer. He does not have to carry 'things' around. Instead, he plays with numbers through standards. To the extent that the presence of numbers manifests a certain materiality, that materiality in turn allows standards to be treated like an object in its own right.

The role of institution is probably the most obvious condition for making standards a discursive object. To an expert, such as Deming, standards may be regarded as voluntary when they are compared with government regulations (Deming, 1986: 297-308). However, for the survival of a manufacturer, it is essential to achieve an *institutional* recognition through reinforcement of existing standards. Further, to maintain the reputation of a company, it is desirable to win a prestigious quality award -- the Deming Prize, the Baldrige Award and the European Quality Award [14]. In the global competitive environment, conformance to the BS and the ISO systems has become the basic requirement for manufactured products. If one examines activities for documenting standards, they are more than specifying technical requirements, giving standards a name and the dissemination of a recommended practice. The role of conformance between those companies that are able to do so and those that are not (eg. small firms) is worthy of attention. A company's products/services are subjected to specified measurements. Companies either benefit from conformance or bear the

consequences of non-conformance. To this end, standards constitute an institutional intervention for nurturing a mentality of conformance.

Conformance and non-conformance can be looked at again in terms of conformance and improvement. They lie at the heart of the lively Baldrige debate (HBR, 1992). The advocate's camp of the award has observed its merits. First, it has helped to raise the consciousness of US business leaders regarding the issue of quality and to provide a comprehensive framework for measuring the quality efforts undertaken by the nation's business (ibid.: 126). Next, the award criteria seek to connect process with results, cause and effect and have been an agent for change (ibid.: 134). Furthermore, continuous improvement is the most basic tenet of the award (ibid.: 140) and the evaluation process offers opportunity for improvement (ibid.: 141).

Having acknowledged its merits as a starting point, critics presented their side of the case. First, the standard, created by the dominant manufacturing mentality, is reticent to change. The *fixed-criteria* thinking and the scoring system at Baldrige ignore, for the most part, the dimensions of competition that will be operative in the mid-1990s. Innovation is absent from the criteria or guidelines (ibid.: 132). Second, the criteria are like much so called quality wisdom -- a list of things to do and think about within the present system of management. The Baldrige was created *within a political system* and had to be presented in a way that did not offend any of the existing gurus and their followers. Unlike the Deming Prize in Japan, the Baldrige offers no philosophy or methods -- mostly only measures, believed by some to be objective. This kind of thinking and approach is not the way to succeed in the new world economic order. It is certainty not the quality philosophy practised by the successful Japanese export companies or the few US multinationals trying to recover their equilibrium in the global marketplace (ibid.: 136). Third, the *inexact terminology* could be interpreted as recommending copying, willy-nilly goals, and internal competitiveness. The Baldrige criteria do not even hint that there is a coherent philosophy and a way to think about

and act on management problems (ibid.: 136). Fourth, the danger of the Baldrige Award is that it is yet another manifestation of the urge toward bureaucracy that stifles human creativity. At its core, it implies that some *higher authority* ought to decide what is best and everyone else ought to busy themselves implementing those centrally created policies, approaches and rules. The *absence of innovativeness* points to its crucial flaw. To this end, one may be reminded that the Japanese designed the Deming Prize in 1951 to foster creativity in management (ibid.: 140). Lastly, any award implies an underlying model against which conformance is assessed. To sum up with Deming's remark: "All models are flawed. Some are useful". The Baldrige is both flawed and useful, with given historical conditions (ibid.: 146).

Grown out of the engineering profession, as pointed out by one critic, the approach of quality standards and the Baldrige shared the same root of thinking in terms of process, methods and measurement of results. Although there is a considerable emphasis on improvement in the Baldrige criteria, neither follows a path that accommodates change and transformation. When change is regarded as a *disruptive force* in an established framework, such as quality standards and the Baldrige criteria, the usual response is to hold on to the status quo. The reaction is a common psychological resistance to change by avoiding potential and/or perceived conflicts.

However, change may be seen differently. Here, Foucault's scrutiny into the changing perception of disease provides a perspective (Foucault, 1963/73). The starting point to reconsider disease is the division between health and disease. From a position of health, a disease in its developed form causes disruption inside a healthy body. Otherwise, if the position is radically shifted by taking disease as a pathological life in its own right, having its own beginning and end, one may have a different perception of disease and accordingly produce an alternative explanation (ibid.: 149-172). Foucault's insight may help us to rethink how to perceive and handle change. To

begin with, one has to acknowledge that change follows its own rhythm. In this light, any attempt to deny or suppress it would eventually lead to an eruptive outcome, like the effect of an earthquake. To accumulate energy needs time. If appropriate channels are built, the energy may be released regularly before an eruption occurs. The question is no longer whether to allow the energy to be released but how to let it come out in a constructively measured way. Better still, if the timing of the release can be managed. To this end, the Japanese *kaizen* is evidently a practice through which change is accommodated and carefully nurtured. To them, *kaizen* has been a mechanism for allowing incremental step changes to work their way through an established system (Imai, 1986; see chapter 9). Instead of making *kaizen* conform to standards all the time, it is standards that have to be changed with the pace of innovation and continuous improvement.

5.5 Summary

This chapter describes discursive events and offers two modes of making a quality control discourse: a spider web and snowballs. Subject to external conditions, both modes can be vulnerable and temporary. The way of the spider is the way of *making a pattern present out of absence* and, to a certain extent, vice versa. The way of snowballs is the way of *reshaping and expanding what is already given*. In the quality control discourse, a claim of 'unity' that can be supported seems to be a discursive one, without a reference to an external 'reality' as the 'essence' or a first order. To take this step to its logical end is to rethink and to establish discursive objects, illustrated through 'quality' and 'standards'. To end this chapter, two central concerns may be raised with regard to: (1). how knowledge and discourse may relate to one another; and, (2). how evidence may be taken into account, with reference to 'being empirical' and 'being an empiricist'.

Notes:

1. Where possible, Feigenbaum's original terms are maintained in this outline.

2. In the 1930s, Shewhart and his colleagues at the Bell Lab. established the basis for sampling inspection. Feigenbaum proposed a different direction in thinking to the extent that his focus was on *prevention* rather than on *inspection*. This was perhaps a turning point in thinking about quality control in the 1950s.

3. This connection was made by Shewhart (1931). Feigenbaum reiterated this link.

4. The two masters of Tao are Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, see Fung (1931) and Chan (1963). For reference of *Tao Te Ching*, see Chan (1963).

5. In practice, that space has been where a prescriptive discourse of quality control came into being.

6. To refer to rules seems more complex than to talk about principles. See chapter 8 for an attempt to 'decode' an academic theorising practice.

7. Deming (1986) also discussed this point. See chapters 6 and 9.

8. In the 1950s, the category/division was the 'technical' vs. the 'psychological', ref. Jacques' historical analysis of the employee (Jacques, 1992; 1996). See also chapter 8.

9. As historical conditions for Feigenbaum, see Jacques' work referred to in Note 8 above.

10. A discursive event of naming will be discussed in chapter 6.

11. As an alternative, the Japanese was able to avoid this functionally-based TQC, see Ishikawa (1985: 90-91). See further elaboration on the Japanese practice in chapter 9.

12. By then, 'control' was a less popular label, see chapter 7, in particular Figure 7.2.

13. For a background reading of the difference between 'language' and 'speech', see Cook (1994) and Joseph (1994a; 1994b).

14. For information regarding the Deming Prize, see Latzko and Saunders (1995); for the Baldrige Quality Award and the European Quality Award, see United States Department of Commerce and National Institute of Standards and Technology (1989), Garvin (1991), HBR (1992), Rank Xerox Ltd. (1992) and Howard (1992).

CHAPTER SIX

THE EMERGENCE AND TRANSFORMATION OF TQM

"We are talking about the spatial and temporal phenomenon of language, not about some non-spatial, non-temporal phantasm. [Note in margin: Only it is possible to be interested in a phenomenon in a variety of ways.] But we talk about it as we do about the pieces in chess when we are stating the rules of the game, not describing their physical properties. The question 'What is a word really ?' is analogous to 'What is a piece in chess ?'"

(Wittgenstein, 1958: 47e)

The first half of this chapter reconsiders historical events on quality control before TQM appeared. A chronology designates *presence*. However, certain 'not so orderly' events may have to be excluded from it. They merit a revisit. By tracing genealogical lines of influence, attention is drawn to what can be made absent from a chronology. In highlighting such *absence*, problems embedded in interpreting Japan's economic success are raised. The second half of the chapter explores a conceptual possibility. The naming of TQM deserves careful attention. When TQM is revealed as an *arbitrary linguistic sign*, the limit of representation, based on signifier-signified dichotomy, becomes apparent. An arbitrary sign makes playing with substitutes possible. In this light, the TQM phenomenon can be understood as the effects of *playing with sign* as well as practising the centuries-old craft of *representation*. Tentative as it may seem, this chapter seeks to answer the question of how TQM discourse has emerged and may be transformed.

6.1   A Chronology of Texts

In the 1930s quality control was to establish desirable levels of certainty in the control of *variations* or *defects* in production, by the practice of sampling inspection. *Economic Control of Quality of Manufactured Product* (Shewhart, 1931) documented this statistical methodology [1]. Owing to the link made between Statistics and Production Operations, this text of Shewhart's is often described as a classic in the quality control literature and its implications are twofold. In the language of Statistics, Shewhart's study spoke of effective measures for *reducing variations*, derived from a large number of data. In the language of Engineering, it meant that statistical tools had a role to play in quality control, the aim of which was to *reduce defects*. On the other hand, quality control was, since Shewhart, formalized through quantitative methods, which may be interpreted as follows. Control must be achieved through formalization; the application of statistically-based quantitative methods must be an apparent indicator of formalization. An effect of interpreting the significance of Shewhart's work in such a way produced a widespread belief that there can be no quality control without practising statistics.

By the mid 1950s, quality control was developed with reference to a system's thinking. In particular, "total quality control" (TQC) as an administrative system was advocated by Feigenbaum (1951/61/83/revised 1991; 1956) [2]. TQC was studied carefully in Japan (Ishikawa, 1954/64/89; 1990) [3] and promoted there through the Japanese Union of Scientists and Engineers (JUSE) founded by the end of the 1940s (Kondo, 1978; 1988).

Let us have a close look the handbook edited by Juran (1951/62/74/88) [4]. The editors intervened in the ways in which it was to be used. From its authoritative tone, it was intended to offer expertise. As a source book, the handbook has grown

thicker since its first publication [5]. Though the prospect of anyone reading the handbook from cover to cover was remote, its monumental effect was undeniable. It implicitly asserts where knowledge on quality control is thought of being stored [6]. The handbook has a certain impact to those who may critique quality control. Namely, the task looks formidable. The monument stands for a memory of some past achievement and, as Foucault once suggested, an artefact of a foregone era (Foucault, 1972: 7). Such monuments constitute a given answer to the past and to a certain extent, a condition for the present.

In the early 1960s, the ambitious aim of Matsushita Electric was to eliminate defects, a strategy known as *zero defect*, also found in the work of Shigeo Shingo. In 1969, Shingo developed a system called Single(-digit) Minute Exchange of Dies (SMED) that reduced a single set-up time from four hours to three minutes at Toyota (Shingo, 1978; Kobayashi, 1978). SMED became one of the pivotal techniques of what is later known as the Toyota production system. At Toyota in 1977, Shingo developed systematic techniques for the *kanban* or signboard system of non-stock production. Other techniques include: *pokayoke* or a mistake-proofing mechanism that stops a machine automatically when an error occurs. Because of pokayoke, defect-free production was for the first time attainable (see Monden, 1993: 223). The ambition of 'zero defects' was first accomplished at the Shizuoka plant of Matsushita Electric's Washing Machine Operations Division in 1977. A full-blown application of Shingo's work at Toyota became known as the just-in-time (JIT) production system (Sugimori et al, 1977; Shingo, 1981; Monden, 1981a; 1981b; 1981c; 1981d; Monden and Ohno, 1983).

On zero quality control (ZQC), Shingo (1986: 56) outlined the basic concepts for a ZQC system: (1). source inspections prevent defects from where errors originate; (2). 100 percent inspections rather than sampling inspections; (3) to minimise the time of corrective actions; and (4). effective *poka-yoke* devices fulfil control functions,

without demanding humans as infallible operators. His thinking underlining these concepts was radical. By thinking upstream on prevention, he seriously undermines the sampling inspection practice, based on the dominant belief of reducing defects by statistical methods. He found ways to disapprove the seemingly impossible in reducing the time taken for a job, and shown a viable alternative in resolving people-machine interaction in the workplace [7]. Arguably, the far-reaching impact of the revolutionary approach of ZQC has not been fully appreciated in the mainstream quality control literature. Though statistical methods allow effectively *reducing* defects, they are not equipped to *eliminate* defects all together. By the late 1970s, the Japanese experience of ZQC, as Shingo (1986: 56) put it, convincingly demonstrated that quality control by prevention was far more effective than by inspection.

In the 1970s, Shingo's work began to receive international recognition. In 1978, the sale by the Japan Management Association (JMA) of an audio-visual set of slides on SMED and pre-automation met with considerable enthusiasm in the US. In the following year, further interest in his work was generated there by the JMA's sale of "zero defects" slides. It was the same year that Crosby (1979) published on "zero defects" and "right first time and every time". Whether or not Crosby had benefited from Shingo's pioneering work on ZQC is another line of inquiry. In responding to Crosby's second slogan, Brooke contends that you may do the "wrong thing right first time" (Brooke, 1991). Crosby's slogans cannot be entirely disposed as wordplaying if one looks at where Crosby's emphasis lies. Firstly, Crosby pointed to the goal of "zero defects" without devising the means or paying meticulous attention to the process to achieve the desirable outcome. This makes "zero defects" nothing more than a seductive slogan. Secondly, the demand of "right first time and every time" appears to address management or technical actions alone. The effect could well be a separation of such actions from encouraging operators to think about how to improve what they are doing now and in the future. Thirdly, the simplistic criteria in judging one's action as either "right" or "wrong" reinforce any anxiety or fear among the workforce for

doing something wrong, which may discourage workers from coming forward with constructive suggestions. Under scrutiny, the initial appeal of Crosby's slogans evaporates. It is worth noting that despite the fact that Shingo and Crosby employed the same label "zero defects", the ways in which the goal was approached looked rather different. Evidence of historical development of Japanese quality control technologies in the 1960s serves as a reminder as to where the gravity of innovations was during that time.

In comparing the works of Shingo and Crosby, the issue of consultancy crops up. There must be different ways of doing consultancy. For instance, by working at numerous Japanese companies since the 1950s, Shingo's own conceptual contributions to industrial engineering evolved during the time when he was either a *part of* or working closely *with* those companies. In contrast, Crosby is known for his slogans. With his consultant-led management training programmes, he was able to achieve a well-publicised commercial success by exploiting the concept of "zero defects". Unlike Shingo, Crosby's operations were primarily independent of his client companies. The relationship between Crosby and those companies were trainer-trainees, or rather for Crosby, the provision of professional services to clients. What may have also contributed to Crosby's commercial success was the wider context in which Crosby operated. Had Crosby operated in the same way and in a different context, say in Japan, would he have been able to secure a similar success ?

Arguably, another strand of consultant-led management is what may be called a 'clinical management practice' (see chapter 9), of which Deming's self-evident text (Deming, 1986) is an illustration. Reading Deming is like visiting a doctor who makes a diagnosis and offers the promise of a cure with ready-made prescriptions [8]. Why should anybody resist a doctor's advice ? If you have doubts about the doctor, you have to work out your counter-argument before making a serious challenge. To follow either way takes time and timing is indeed crucial.

The 1980s was a time when texts of quality control became increasingly popular, at least in the volume of publications (Juran, 1978; 1981; Kondo, 1978; 1988; Mizuno, 1979; Ishikawa, 1985; Mann, 1985; Imai, 1986; Scherkenbach, 1986; Garvin, 1988; Bendell, 1988; Oakland, 1989; Dale and Plunkett, 1990, Bank, 1992). These texts constitute in part the historical conditions on which academic and/or managerial support is required and upon which attention may be focused -- the supply and demand of empirical(-ist) evidence. However, a nagging concern remains: to whom are those texts viable or credible -- experts, managers and/or academics (see chapter 9) ? What is little examined is the difference between the seemingly specialist task of 'quality control' and the ambiguous term 'quality management'. Here lies the issue of *naming events*.

6.2   Genealogical Lines of Influence

The above account follows a chronological order, which is embedded with some inadequacy, since events included have already been selected in a particular way by an author. To this end, a chronology designates the *presence* of certain historical events in the quality control discourse and practice but excludes other events, making the latter absent from the established literature. In order to have a fair picture, a chronology may be supplemented by tracing genealogical lines of influence. To do so with quality control activities in particular and production operations in general, one begins to see that dynamic flows of technologies have been between the west and Japan.

From Shewhart to Deming   In order to bridge between Statistics, a highly mathematical discipline, and the interdisciplinary activities of Production Operations, Shewhart had to resolve difficulties in formulating a viable methodology, ie. how an 'applied statistics' controls product quality in a mass production setting. His

contribution was methodological, in that a statistical approach was made the bedrock of industrial quality control. Hence, Shewhart's work cannot be reduced to solving technical problems alone. He was able to translate the statistical language into an engineering one. Deming's main contribution was to introduce Shewhart's methods of quality control to specific industrial settings. In so doing, Deming earned his reputation as a statistical control specialist.

From Deming and Juran to Japan   Both Deming and Juran were invited to teach in educational workshops organised by JUSE from the late 1940s to the early 1950s. During that period, Deming's teaching was based on Shewhart's work (Ishikawa, 1985; Deming, 1986). His help was so gracefully appreciated that the Emperor of Japan awarded him the Second Order Medal of the Sacred Treasure in 1951 (Ishikawa, 1985). If Deming's expertise was on quantitative methods, Juran's contribution was his emphasis on the role of senior management in quality control activities and on achieving quality goals. Undoubtedly, foreign experts' help played a significant role in the early days of Japanese quality control movement.

Japanese for Japan   The 1960s witnessed remarkable progress made by the Japanese themselves, albeit what seemed to have drawn outsiders' attention was the effect of Japan's achievements. The decade was an interesting time when the Japanese were establishing *their* ways of approaching quality.

An introductory text on quality control (Ishikawa, 1954/64) is worthy of note. Its first publication in Japanese was at a time when Deming and Juran were lecturing in Japan. To the Japanese, the teaching by these experts was an outline of fundamentals. However, the experts did not have to consider how control techniques would work under Japanese conditions. The Japanese had to sort out how to relate what was taught to their specific operational settings. In that sense, Ishikawa's text provided a practical guide for Japanese managers. Building on what American experts had

outlined, the text is characteristic of a Japanese way of organizing quality control activities; its presentation was for a Japanese audience. Indeed, the English translation of Ishikawa (1990) looks unimpressive, since its Japanese text was written for the Japanese who operated in *their* specific environment with *their* sets of relationship and social norms. Arguably, Ishikawa was himself conditioned by the Confucian tradition, evident in the way he asserted Confucian premises of human nature [9], which in part have shaped the Japanese conditions and their capacity for action. Ishikawa wrote for ordinary Japanese managers. Therefore, to use *their* vocabulary, with *their* assumptions and style, made it easy *for them* to understand and follow the recommendations. Ishikawa's introductory text was popular among Japanese managers because it directly engaged its audience at that time. As part of the Japanese learning curve in the 1950s, Ishikawa's text manifested an on-going adaptation, by the Japanese, from what they may have learned from the American experts.

From the extant literature, researchers seem to know what the Japanese did regarding their TQC movement. However, to answer the question of how imported technologies of quality control were adapted into a Japanese context requires careful attention. In other words, as outsiders of Japanese quality control practices, researchers in the west may have observed Japanese practices without necessarily getting anywhere further from an outsider's preliminary comprehension of the Japanese conditions. To this end, the established quality control literature offers inadequate analyses in exposing such conditions. Viewed from an anthropological perspective, what is lacking seems to be a 'thick description' of the Japanese practices. That is to suggest, the familiar picture of adopting foreign technology by the Japanese may be incomplete. The possibility of incompleteness raises doubts about the ways in which Japanese management phenomena have been interpreted by westerners.

In particular, available accounts on Japanese quality control activities are primarily oriented to obtain immediate effects. Attention has been paid to what the

Japanese have done. An appropriation of a 'recent past', ie. the Japanese quality control practice from a position of the 'present' in the west, seems rather deceptive. Alternatively, one may have to shift his position: from 'our' accounts of Japanese practice made from a position of and for the present to making sense of 'their' (Japanese) practice in *their* terms. In this respect, the orientation of an historical account demands that attention to the present be reconsidered. The concern becomes how to relate the past to the present in a way that minimises the effect of appropriating the past by the present. For those who are exclusively concerned with short term gains, it looks as if working on historical evidence were an unwise investment of one's energy. I wonder to what extent the absence of an historical perspective and/or understanding influences decisions from a 'pragmatist' whose focus is on immediate gains.

The Deming Prizes were set up in Japan in the early 1950s (Ishikawa, 1985). They were first and foremost an indicator, showing a degree of seriousness that Japanese industries were pursuing product quality. Equally, the Prizes were a deserving recognition of Deming's contribution to Japan. For Deming, the Prizes brought him credibility and reputation. In retrospect, for Japan, making history in that period was about to produce ripple effects beyond Japan's geographical boundaries.

Westerners on Japan   It was from the 1970s that stories of Japan's economic success began to be told in the west (Drucker, 1971; Ashburn, 1977; Sugimori et al, 1977; Konz, 1979; Vogel, 1979). The 1980s marked a significant flow of 'Japanese management technologies' to the west (Bodek, 1980; Yamada et al, 1980; Patchin, 1981; Butt, 1981; Waterbury, 1981; Drucker, 1981). Against this background, technologies of quality control were popular. Being a teacher during the early days of Japan's revival, Deming (1986) was favourably positioned to offer his advice to an American audience. His text was in part a western response to the increasing impact of Japan's 'success'. During that time, Pascale and Athos (1981) contributed a

comparative study of two companies, one Japanese and the other American. The study set out to investigate different ways in which problems in management were perceived and priorities were set by each respectively. Influenced by an anthropological approach, the authors explored how the Japanese are able to integrate "western management ploys" (eg. strategy, organisational structure, systems, financial controls) with their ways of thinking so that a harmonious *inter*dependence within a company is established and maintained. According to Pascale and Athos, there is something distinctive that may be labelled as "a Japanese approach to management". Their comparison draws attention to issues of an alternative way of approaching management that might lie beyond the familiar western norm of Management, built on unconditional competition and individualism [10]. A close observation of how the Japanese operate was provided by an insider from Nissan UK (see Wickens, 1987). Wickens has revealed insights and proposed constructive schemes, by which Japanese management practices may be transferred to a non-Japanese company.

So far attention has been paid to what are invariably interpretations of the Japan story, presented *by* westerners *to* westerners. It is worthy of note that what may be at stake is not only a possible turning of the tide in the flow of technology but also the orientation of an interpretation. In particular, the way in which it is produced may be scrutinised.

First of all, the Japanese experience can be treated as 'raw data' or 'material' for an interpretation. The material is open to appropriation through the target language (ie. English) from its source -- the observed phenomenon known as the economic success of certain Japanese industries. To interpret, conceptual categories have to be established so that 'data' and/or 'material' can be organized in a way comprehensible to a western audience. Difficulties may arise when certain Japanese practices appear 'inconvenient' to the accepted categories. For instance, the Japanese tend not to see events as either 'black' or 'white' (ie. the binary logic). Instead, they have their notion of

a 'grey' area, possibly shades of grey, and are comfortable with that greyness [11]. Similarly, loyalty is often more important than one's achievement of professionalism. With such considerations, authentic Japanese experience is in danger of being translated in a way that is friendly to the English reader but bears little fidelity to the Japanese experience. Arguably, an interpretation for an English audience can be a *processed outcome* of the Japanese experience. An interpretation may or may not pay due attention to the historical context in which the Japan phenomenon makes sense to the Japanese. When Japanese technologies are put back to where they are employed and were made alive in the first place, the picture is richer than a catalogue of technologies. What may emerge from the picture are buried details in relationships -- how one relates to another, one group to other groups, employers to employees, a company to other companies (eg. from suppliers to clients). To an ordinary western eye, the Japanese behaviour may occasionally look peculiar. Nevertheless, they have been pursuing *their* courses of action by *their* orders of rationality (Ishikawa, 1964; 1965; 1969; 1972; 1985; 1990; Ishikawa and Kondo, 1969; Shingo, 1978; 1981; 1986; 1987; 1992; Kondo, 1978; 1988; Mizuno, 1979; Morishima, 1982; Imai, 1986; Morita et al, 1986).

At the heart of such interpretations are technologies, which are often assumed to be universal to the extent of being *ahistorical*. Given this premise, technologies must be transferable. However, knowing what technologies 'tick' in Japan provides little guarantee that similar technologies will work in the west. There could be an additional dimension of knowledge, other than technical know-hows: the know-whys. When the know-whys are taken seriously, the Japanese conditions may come into light.

Morishima (1982) embarked on an analysis that has revealed a relationship between a national ideology or a dominant ethos and the likely paths of economic development by unfolding the modern history of Japan. The picture he has painted is one that captures Japan from the mid 19th century. He was able to tease out insights

that other studies on Japan's 'success' have largely eluded. The difference between Morishima and the rest lies in framing and, accordingly, questions arisen within a chosen frame. In seeking to answer why Japan has 'succeeded', Morishima has illuminated the Japanese conditions. In his terms, the ethos of the Japanese people is Japanese Confucianism [12]. Throughout Japan's history, the Japanese have an impressive record of absorbing foreign learning, including technologies. Such imports were eventually domesticated into something Japanese: Foreign technologies went through a process of *Japanization* [13]. Once one begins to appreciate Morishima's frame, it is easy to comprehend what has happened in Japan since the second world war. For learned Japanese who know how Japan has evolved from the past, there is nothing mysterious about Japan's achievement. Only outsiders, whose own conceptual categories seem inadequate in explaining the Japan phenomenon, marvel at the 'Japanese miracle'. To the popular miracle thesis, Morishima's response is implicit from his fruitful interplay of "western technology" and the "Japanese ethos". The latter is part of a predisposition of the Japanese people that has been shaped over time, prior to the inflow of western quality control technology from the late 1940s.

Morishima's insights make one realise what is missing in the established literature on Japanese quality control practices. For instance, it is well established that Americans went to Japan offering techniques to control product quality. The standard account describes little on how the Japanese took their responsibility, with respect to making 'foreign' techniques work in their specific settings. Apart from the routine recognition of the contribution of foreign experts, credit must also be given to the Japanese. They were the ones who integrated technologies into a *Japanese way* of involving people and approaching problems. Furthermore, the orientation of the established literature is primarily technology-centred to the extent that the Japanese conditions are treated as a secondary concern and not a precondition of an evolving process. A technology-centred orientation allows categorical abstraction of events to be made in a way that reduces Japanese practices to a technology-driven movement.

On the other hand, available descriptions of Japanese practices for outsiders are far from impartial. Without the recipient local conditions, a plant transplanted to a foreign soil is perhaps less likely to survive. Similarly, it is unconvincing to ignore the Japanese cultural conditions, with which imported technologies were interacted and shaped into Japanese practices. It is not difficult to project a misleading picture from the mainstream quality control texts, by which one captures a few events whilst other events of historical connections fade away. When Japanese technologies are taken out of their context, what remains visible is an order of texts neatly yet deceptively made coherent. Once such a picture is drawn, what may follow is to take partially gathered Japanese experience as 'data', present them as evidence and then (dis)prove or support a preconceived framework. If this is what these texts are made for, the Japanese conditions have little chance to be taken into account and appreciated. To date, how confident are researchers in claiming an adequate understanding of Japanese management practices other than a well-documented literature of Japanese technologies ?

Let us consider a question on technologies. What are they ? A commonly accepted position holds that they can be separated from the contexts of their applications so that the impact of applying technologies in specific historical conditions becomes a different topic. Given this premise, the historical/cultural conditions where technologies are applied may be considered as secondary. Such conditions broadly include perceptions of issues at stake, ways of approaching problems and formulating solutions by a particular group of people (eg. Japanese, Europeans or North Americans). Specifically, there are ways of interacting between employers and employees and of resolving conflicts of interest and getting jobs done. It is not difficult to discern that the mainstream quality control discourse is derived from a perception of technologies that accepts the above premise. The question is how far this mode of thinking about technologies enables one to proceed in understanding technologies in

relation to their specific conditions of application and their impact on people and society at large.

There are alternative views on technologies that contend from socio-technical positions. For instance, Foucault has demonstrated how surveillance technologies employed in prisons helped to form a way of control from a distance (Foucault, 1977). In a seemingly unrelated field, Cooper (1986; 1987; 1989; 1992; 1993) has exposed how technologies of representation are at work. A revisit to Latour's anthropological portrayal allows one to see how science and technologies may take shape and become ready-made knowledge (Latour, 1987) [14]. A common thesis in these texts is a challenge to the received wisdom. The arguments put forward by Foucault, Cooper and Latour may be highlighted as follows. First, technologies are never 'neutral'. That very appearance is already an effect of cutting them off from their historical contexts. It is not enough to say that certain effects of technologies on people and society at large have become stable and sustainable whilst the conditions, in part contributing to the production of such effects, are kept out of sight. Second, that cut-off is maintained by *disconnecting* technologies from their conditions, or rather, from the ethos of a given workplace.

An analogy may help to illuminate the relationship between historical/cultural conditions of a workplace and 'foreign' technologies. Experienced gardeners intuitively know whether or not the soil in their garden is ready for growing a foreign plant. In the mainstream quality control literature, the above disconnection takes the form of a division between the 'soft' (eg. 'motivations' and 'empowering employees') and the 'hard' (ie. methods and techniques) issues. For a counter-argument to the conventional view on technologies, one reconsiders what might have been concealed in the label of 'technology' and how the conventional view came into being. Accordingly, one gives up the assertion that technologies can be separated from specific human conditions. If one accepts that technologies can bring people together as well as keep them apart in

particular ways, an introduction of a technology may reshape relationships among participants involved. Accordingly, participants have to reposition themselves in light of a perceived emerging order, resulted from the introduction, and re-establish their sense of 'self' and their relationships with others.

From Japan to the west   The conventional view on technology can be a conceptual closure. One re-opens it by questioning. How and what can be learned in the west when Japanese management practices are interpreted as mere technologies [15] ? So far, our discussion implies that there have been historical undercurrents of specific Japanese conditions. By the same token, conditions of the west may be brought into the equation of learning from Japan. Questions may be raised regarding the recipient conditions of the west. Here is where Morishima's thesis may be heeded: a "western ethos" and "Japanese technology". Learning from Japan does not mean that the west creates conditions similar to that of Japan. Morishima maintains that the Japanese Confucian ethos is considerably different from that of other east Asia societies, even from China where the Confucianist moral tradition has been dominant for two millenniums [16]. This suggests caution in thinking. It sounds self-defeating to assume that Japan's economic conditions from the 1950s to the 1980s were similar to that of the west then. To date, both Japan and the west are facing an increasingly vibrant world. With the dynamic economies of east Asia and the rest of Asia, new visions are required for survival and future prosperity. On their behalf, westerners have to clarify their 'western conditions' and build them imaginatively into the process of making Japanese technologies grow on their recipient soil. The modern history of Japan, according to Morishima, suggests that the Japanese conditions were appreciated by the Japanese, irrespective of how much outsiders know about those conditions. In the 1950s, foreign technologies were subjected to being *Japanized* to serve the ends of Japan. For the west in the 1990s, there is a need to reflect on how to *westernize* Japanese (management) technologies. That is, to keep the ethos of the west whilst making Japanese technologies serve the ends of the west.

6.3   The Naming of TQM

As shown above, one chooses a way to trace relevant texts and historical events and offers his critique of the literature. However, there appears some simple questions that have not been asked. Where did the name or label TQM come from in the first place ? What difference does it make whether one uses TQC, TQM or any other label to designate and describe practices in management ? Is not the act of naming TQM part of making a discourse, possibly from the precursory TQC discourse?

Let us consider a few moments in life when naming becomes necessary. For instance, naming is a means to designate a new born baby so that *this* particular baby is distinguished from *other* babies. The moment the baby is named 'George', an image of George begins to take shape among those who come into George's life -- nurses, parents, doctors, and George's teachers and friends. As a name, George is chosen and enunciated by his parents and will be reiterated by others. Further, baby George of six weeks, six months and six years old is different in his ability to perceive and respond to the world around him and in his skills acquired for coping with everyday events. George at sixteen and sixty must be a very different person though he is still George by name. Suppose that at the age of thirty George decides to become a Buddhist monk and is thus given a Buddhist name *Ming-kong*. From that moment, he is *Ming-kong* by name and no longer wishes to be known as George. To change his name from George to *Ming-kong* signifies the beginning of his life with an identity of *Ming-kong* the Buddhist monk. In Foucauldian terms, the moment when naming 'George' or *'Ming-kong'* becomes necessary is the moment of thresholds where ruptures begin to appear (Foucault, 1972). Accordingly, to scrutinise the naming of TQM enables us to highlight those possible moments of, what Foucault prefers to call, 'thresholds', 'ruptures', 'mutations', 'discontinuities' and 'transformations' *in* and *from* the discourse

of quality control to the appearing of another discourse. Here, let me clarify the way in which the word 'appearing' is used. It is to capture that moment of something 'coming into being' in a Heideggerean sense (Heidegger, 1959: 98-115, 194). In so doing, the taken-for-granted division of 'surface' and 'depth', by which 'appearance' is assumed to be secondary or superficial and 'content' to be essential or substantive, may be suspended.

From the example of naming George, one knows that names are not only socially indispensable but can be employed in various ways. Brand names in fashion generate images and effects to the extent that names become a unique asset. Obviously, there are situations where the same name, George, is used to designate different persons. By the same token, a name can be used to designate management practices, such as the Japanese use of TQC or JIT. To a certain extent, to name Japanese practices is to link them to a linguistic sign for enunciation and reiteration in the same way that a linguistic sign 'George' is linked to a new born baby.

Let us look at three possibilities. First, a name is used in referring to *separate* events and engenders different images of identity with the *same name*, for example, TQC. Second, *similar* events or practices are designated with *different names*, be it TQC, TQM or TCS (ie. "total customer satisfaction" as some companies prefer to name their own practice) [17]. Third, rather than a switch of names from TQC to TQM, attention is drawn to what goes 'in between' these names -- a Foucauldian discursive rupture that signifies the appearing of 'something' discursively new and the disappearing of the 'old' TQC discourse. Let us consider each in more detail.

The same name for different events   Although the same name TQC is used, events on TQC do differ. In the quality control literature, TQC was used to refer to separate events and practices in the US and in Japan from the mid 1950s to the early 1960s. Feigenbaum (1956) coined TQC. It became the title of the second edition of his

book (Feigenbaum, 1951/61), first published in 1951 entitled *Quality Control: Principles, Practice and Administration*. By 1961, what appeared crucial in TQC was the emergence of "total quality". He recognised problems generated from a fragmented approach, the basis of which was a functional division of labour. By advocating a 'total' approach, no functional department was to be left out from an administrative system. In this sense, "total quality" conveys the message of taking an organisation as an undivided whole in solving problems regarding quality. Another feature of Feigenbaum's approach was to rely on specialists. By making quality control a job for professionals, quality was to be distributed throughout functional departments. However, Feigenbaum seemed to have been unable to resolve a potential difficulty in his TQC discourse. Unwittingly, his system's approach was nonetheless based on the premise of division of labour, the same premise that made a functionally-based approach of quality control possible in the first place. Despite this implicit difficulty, the influence of Feigenbaum did not have to come from its 'authentic content'. From a Foucauldian archaeological position on knowledge production, the making of the TQC discourse itself can be subjected to close scrutiny (chapters 5 and 7). Foucault (1971; 1972) insists that through enunciation and repetition, the dispersion of a discourse can be achieved, as evident with TQC. As a name or label, TQC was reiterated by writers and practitioners in companies alike. The fact that Feigenbaum's TQC book has run into its revised third edition by 1991, celebrating its 40th birthday, indicates that TQC is no less relevant to industrial and academic audiences in the 1990s than it was in the 1950s [18].

When the Japanese took TQC seriously, it went through a Japanization (Ishikawa, 1985; 1990). Indeed, the difficulty embedded in Feigenbaum's approach may not have been a problem for them. The Japanese Confucian ethos, according to Morishima (1982/94: 1-19), is a loyalty-centred Confucianism based on a reciprocally interdependent relationship of obedience and respect from the junior to one's senior on the one hand, and duty and responsibility from the senior to the junior on the other.

Morishima portrays Japanese capitalism as nationalistic, paternalistic and anti-individualistic. The Japanese ethos left little room for making division of labour and professionalism the basis of their activities (see eg. Ishikawa, 1985; Kondo, 1988). Rather, the Confucian tradition conditions the ways of organizing quality control activities to the extent that problems arising from division of labour are, not surprisingly, insignificant to the Japanese. It is worthy of note that the Japanese initially adopted the same name TQC for describing their quality control movement (Ishikawa, 1985). As time went by, their practice departed from imitating Feigenbaum's footsteps.

Different names for similar events   When the Japanese TQC movement was introduced to the west in the 1980s, their management practices were subjected to interpretations, where a possibility of using different names arose. To interpret, one is free to give a label in referring to those activities under the name TQC. This suggests that Japanese practices be designated by another name but TQC. However, what makes it necessary to change the name from TQC to another name ? When observing those who were engaged in learning from the Japanese, a critical moment arises. For instance, there may be the need to designate a company's own practice after having, either seriously or allegedly, adopted some form of Japanese style practices. The company may either keep using the same Japanese terms, such as *kaizen* and JIT, or name their practice by a linguistic sign of seemingly their own choice. There must be a moment when a label *other than* TQC or JIT becomes necessary. In this light, arguably, TQM is merely one of such possible names. If, for the Buddhist monk, *Ming-kong* is an *arbitrary* linguistic sign, the very sign TQM, at the moment of being chosen, may also be arbitrary. In addition, TQM may signify a perceived identity of a management practice, breaking away from its TQC past. Ishikawa (1985) acknowledged, there was a need to change the name TQC in order to differentiate Japanese TQC from Feigenbaum's initial elaboration. It was in the late 1960s when the Japanese renamed their TQC practice company-wide quality control, CWQC for short (Ishikawa, 1985: 90-91; see also Monden, 1993: 237-240). The moment when the

Japanese labelled their quality control practice as CWQC was a moment of recognition of their own share of contribution to TQC, advocated earlier by an American.

Notably, the Japanese named their activities by TQC and later by CWQC whereas what has happened in the west is known by the name TQM. Is changing names as trivial a phenomenon as it seems to be ? Is TQM, as received wisdom holds, a response to radical changes in management practices ? Or, is that wisdom itself assumed too much so that what is taken-for-granted has yet to be justified ? What are possible effects, if any, of using different names to designate similar practices ?

Firstly, CWQC does not necessarily signify the end of TQC practice. Rather, it may signify the end of using that particular name TQC. To this end, one may draw some insight from the effect of a brand name in fashion. Once the prestige of a name, say Givenchy, is established, it generates images. The power of Givenchy depends on its images. The name yields status, privilege and immediate and potential financial rewards and thus becomes a valuable asset. If fashion is a game of brand names and images [19], it is names that dictate the behaviour of copying a brand name. As to images, they are effects created through complex combinations, reconstructions and manipulations of ideas and tailoring techniques. Seemingly, fashion's energy comes from a paradox that favours the temporal and the elusive rather than the ease of a definitive 'essence'. Fashion's secret lies in its capacity to (re)produce endless images that point to an 'other' than what has been shown before. Through playing with images, an 'other' reveals itself; through reconstituting images, a brand name is kept alive from season to season. To a certain extent, the world of fashion is illustrative of a space where playing with images is rewarded by ownership of brand names. The question one may consider is this: From the world of fashion, how different is management as a discursive space where playing with images is rewarded by discursive brand names ? Arguably, CWQC or TQM, generating images in a similar way as in fashion, is no less than an illustration of a brand name in management. If naming CWQC has created

images that differ themselves from TQC discursively, the difference between TQC and CWQC can be an effect of playing with images and names. This suggests that a change of name from TQC to CWQC need not correspond to a radical change of quality management practices. Equally, similar practices may be designated by using different names, as the example of the Japanese TQC and CWQC.

Secondly, assuming that TQM signifies a management practice different from that of TQC so that TQM indeed differs from TQC, ie. a discrepancy between TQC and TQM. If it is nominal, TQM is nominally 'outside TQC'. To scrutinise this discrepancy, one enters the *domain of* the nominal. From our earlier note on Feigenbaum's TQC discourse and the Japanese TQC/CWQC practices, it seems obvious that the name TQC may be used to designate separate events. To the extent that a brand name in management may create desirable images and promise rewards, it is logical to adopt that brand name, be it JIT or TQM. Once images of the Japanese success are brought into play, a company may rename its own practice as TQM, since it has become a promising name. Through interpretations and appropriations, the name TQM signifies, in the west, some manifest practices, triggered by the Japanese TQC/CWQC and the Toyota system. Here comes a moment when the question of *nominal quality* and *nominal TQM* can supported by evidence in Wilkinson and Willmott (1995). For instance, case analysis by Munro (1995) and Kerfoot and Knights (1995) have demonstrated a separation between a company's formal policy and rhetoric on quality/TQM on the one hand and their routine operations on the other. To this end, nominal quality/TQM may be understood as such: An organization *does not* have to practise quality as it has been preached; equally, the organization *does not* have to preach what it has practised on quality. Nominal quality/TQM implies that among western companies TQM practices may vary. Some may be conveniently dubbed with the brand name TQM, others may choose not to follow this route. By adopting TQM practice, a company may seek not only to reassure its suppliers and customers alike but expect rewards from a brand name. As long as certain images or appearances of TQM

are desirable, implementing TQM may well be an operation of reproducing brand name effects, with or without the 'essence' or 'substance' of "total quality".

Thirdly, in addition to what is known as TQC, there emerges some 'extraness' which is an interesting ambiguity that invites enunciation. A moment for enunciation is a similar moment to naming 'George'. One recognises a lack in what has been articulated and in what has been previously referred to as TQC. To supplement that lack, one seeks to shape a present identity with favourable images. In so doing, the past may be forgotten despite that a 'present' is in a way derived from it. In the management discipline, a gesture towards a lack or an 'absent other' may be made when a management discourse produces images of an identity distinctive from that which has existed, for instance, the Japanese TQC/CWQC. By enunciating 'management' rather than 'control', a discourse taking shape must be that of 'management', replacing a 'control' discourse. In addition, a 'management' discourse, signified by the name TQM, may be interpreted as a sign of a reconstituted identity for the discipline. To this end, it is not surprising that TQM was hailed as a "quality revolution", even comparable to that of the industrial revolution (Oakland, 1989). A revolution creates the image of excitement and radical change, promising the dawn of a new era. Accordingly, if management is not yet regarded as a well-established academic discipline, its reshaping may promise to move in that direction. The perceived revolution reassures the beginning of a breakaway from the status quo of management, hence the past may be erased. For TQC discourse, the "quality revolution" signifies a historical moment of discontinuity. Indeed, TQM advocates have portrayed an auspicious picture, as if TQM were a panacea for management. The promise made by them is an upbeat and forward looking management ethos without any baggage of history, as if an organization had no memory of its past, as if their discourse had no discursive formation and knowledge claims *in* and *of* management had never had its own questionable epistemological ground (see Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992).

Neither TQC nor TQM by name ?   The extant literature has been categorised

as either on TQC or TQM. In terms of historical development, the general assumption

is that TQM emerged after TQC. However, the question of whether TQM has possibly

transformed TQC and how such a transformation is achieved has seldom been raised.

Perhaps, it is time to consider a different type of question. Is there 'anything' in

between TQC and TQM ? If the transformation is indeed 'something', to what extent

can one know it by following an either-or logic [20] ? Is it possible that the

transformation takes place in a conceptual space that has been concealed to those who

are so used to conceiving in binary terms and thus perceiving either TQC or TQM ?

Here, one is concerned with *conceptual margins* of TQC and TQM, a seemingly

uncharted 'middle ground' that may be enunciated. In order to describe transformations

in a conceptual space, one pays attention to conceptual boundaries to the extent that

what is so far seen as 'nothing' re-emerges as 'something'. This act of seeing 'something'

is a shift in perception. Arguably, when 'something' does appear, it reveals a conceptual

space free for inscription, like an unfurnished room for creative ideas. This 'something'

may be understood as a Foucauldian rupture in TQC discourse. Hence, for the coming-

into-being of a management discourse from a control discourse, the rupture is a

threshold, the beginning of a discursive formation. Equally, for TQC discourse, the

same rupture may signal the beginning of an end -- a disappearing.

How can a 'management' discourse replace a 'control' discourse ? If an

engineering discourse embodies 'control' by making control a priority, a management

discourse may enable 'control' absent. As implied earlier, this displacement can be

nominal insofar as it may be a disguised mode of control. To the extent that conceptual

boundaries between a control discourse and a management discourse have been

unclear, TQC and TQM, as labels, are used interchangeably. For instance, in the

literature, TQM is used when 'management' is the focus of attention whereas a switch

to TQC is made when tools and techniques are consulted. This binary switch seems so convenient that one seldom question the switch itself.

To differ TQM from TQC is to contemplate a possible transformation. TQC may be transformed 'from within', in the way Japanese CWQC discourse and practice grew out of Feigenbaum's discourse. TQC may also be transformed 'from outside', as TQM discourse and practice in the west has shown. However, a conceptual transformation is also possible when one allows his perspective to shift from established concepts to their margins. If, by recognising a transformation from TQC to TQM, our attention is drawn to knowing more about what is present, our focus is nevertheless on diachronic and relatively stable forms of management phenomena. With this orientation, discursive thresholds, ruptures, mutations and discontinuities, as events of appearing and/or disappearing may elude us. Otherwise, to make sense of such events and their implications, one's attention may be redirected to synchronic moves, to which a recognition is conditional: At a conceptual level, there has been a lack in the inscribed presence of TQM. To supplement, conceptual absence may be considered *vis-à-vis* the presence. If a quality control discourse signifies what is already inscribed, there must be a way to trace its absence. To reveal the latter, let us examine the workings of a linguistic sign, since to call something by a 'proper' name is first and foremost to use language (see Sandelands and Drazin, 1989).

6.4   TQM as an Arbitrary Sign for Play

From the Saussurean trichotomy to TQM   Given the conceptual space for reconsidering TQM (chapter 4, section 4.2), Saussure's trichotomy provides a conceptual orientation for us to move from Saussure to study the TQM phenomenon. A similar trichotomy is proposed: the discourse of TQM as *sign*, TQM practice 'out there' as the *signified* and the name TQM as *signifier* (see below). Caution must be taken in designating TQM as both signifier and sign. Theoretically, the beginning of

using an *arbitrary sign TQM* must be a moment when the name TQM appears. From the extant literature, one notes that such a moment has not been an interest to researchers. Knowingly, the arbitrariness of a linguistic sign TQM has hardly been recognised as worthy of consideration. In the context of TQM, there must have been a moment when TQM becomes an established sign or *symbol* such that TQM takes the form of a signifier. It is signifier TQM, used for a discursive function, that has been written about as TQM practice, hence, a particularly practice-centred literature on TQM (Bradley and Hill, 1983; Giles and Starkey, 1988; Lillrank and Kano, 1989; Brooke, 1991; Hill, 1991; Wilkinson and Witcher, 1991; Whyte and Witcher, 1992; Witcher, 1993; Academy of Management Review, 1994).

When considering the TQM trichotomy (Fig. 6.1), let us observe what happens if TQM discourse, as "sign", is suspended. Obviously, the trichotomy is *reduced to* a dichotomy. What remains in operation is signified-signifier that makes a representation possible. Specifically, the name TQM, as a symbol or signifier, represents only a practice or reality 'out there'. Given this, the extant literature can be understood as the effect of representing that practice or reality. For the time being, let us call the effort invested in representation a 'representational practice'. When the TQM practice 'out there' became out of fashion, the literature lost its momentum to be of interest and value to practitioners including academic researchers. Further, one contends that mainstream TQM literature has demonstrated, albeit for a few years from the 1980s, a proliferation of the representational practice. In particular, this practice produces certain effects. One of them has been the acceptance of a meaning, though arbitrarily given at an earlier moment, fixed by signified and signifier to the extent of excluding other possible meanings. Another effect is a reinforced bond between signified and signifier. The bond becomes the only one recognisable to the extent that its arbitrariness, argued by Sausurre, has been concealed.

(1). The Saussurean trichotomy:

sign   ......   signified   ......   signifier

(2). The trichotomy applied to TQM:

TQM discourse ... TQM practice 'out there' ... the name TQM

Figure 6.1 From Saussurean trichotomy to TQM

On the other hand, if the literature is primarily interpretations of what has happened 'out there' in companies and problems perceived to have arisen thereafter, such interpretations may be examined. A scrutiny may begin by engaging 'something' *other than* the signified-signifier by studying carefully the workings of an arbitrary sign. To proceed with the sign concept implies an opening up of the conceptual space for representation. Conversely, the representational practice has confirmed a conceptual space from where the established TQM literature speaks to its audience [21]. However, what if that space resides in a large space where a sign TQM, as TQM discourse, has been operating beyond the conceptual limit of representation ? If so, one contends that the representational practice has enabled the concealment of an arbitrary sign.

One is now in a position to tease out what is missing in the representational TQM literature: TQM discourse, as "sign" in Fig. 6.1. In the Saussurean *capacity* of an arbitrary sign, TQM discourse must be broader in scope than what the literature represents insofar as the former includes writings on TQM that are not representational. In this light, the representational literature becomes part of TQM discourse which is not restricted by the representational mode of inquiry. With respect to practice, if representation in its own right is a practice, TQM discourse may be understood as a Foucauldian discursive practice (Foucault, 1972). Therefore, an analysis of a discursive TQM may constitute a tracing operation, uncovering the conditions of the representational practice. To this end, the trichotomy as a conceptual schema that accommodates the emergence of TQM discourse, must be wider than the representational schema. The latter has been made self-evident by the dichotomy -- a fixed correspondence of signified-signifier.

It is precisely such self-evidence that is, according to Derrida (1982), illusory. Taking Derrida's extensive critique of western philosophy seriously, one may question

may question the conventional understanding of TQM. In Derrida's sustained effort of deconstructing what he calls the logocentric philosophical tradition of the west, he pays close attention to the interplay of 'presence' and 'absence'. He holds that what is known as 'philosophy' is the "philosophy of presence" (Derrida, 1978: 291). Indeed, Derrida has radically re-approached the question of 'what is philosophy'. In a similar way, one reconsiders TQM as the 'TQM of presence'. It is apparent that a representational practice has produced the 'TQM of presence'. In order to know what is absent from representation, one must acknowledge an absent 'other' in conventional interpretations of TQM. On the other hand, If, due to the limit of dichotomy, one is unable to perceive that 'other', Saussure's trichotomy promises a viable possibility for uncovering the underestimated capacity of sign. That is, first and foremost, *sign as signifier* may be considered. Next, *sign as TQM discourse*, eluded by representational interpretations, may be ignored no more.

A Derridean play of an arbitrary sign   Though Saussure laid the far-reaching groundwork for understanding language as an arbitrary sign in the early years of this century, it is Derrida who elaborated further the potential *capacity* of a Saussurean sign. In a lecture delivered in 1966, deconstructing structuralist thoughts, Derrida maintains that " ... it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre, that the centre could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that the centre had no natural site, that it was not a fixed locus, but a function, a sort of nonlocus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play" (ibid.: 280). Here, what Derrida is getting at seems to be the way in which the centre, vital to the structuralist (and empiricist) epistemology, has been questioned. The target of his attack is on the centre's privileged position. In a Derridean mode of questioning, one relates the centre to the presence of what is taken as 'knowledge'. The next step is to *decentre* that knowledge by revealing the potential capacity of an arbitrary sign. Without an appreciation of the Saussurean arbitrariness of the sign, and, extended to what Derrida

implies as 'an arbitrariness of the centre', one recognises little need in revealing that an arbitrary sign creates the possibility of playing with sign-substitutions.

Given the above conceptual possibility, it is time to propose that TQM be understood as the effect of *playing with an arbitrary sign or a symbol TQM* and practising the age-old craft of *representation*, in the same way modern painting and the classical realism tradition coexist in an art domain previously occupied by the latter. A supplement embedded in the proposal comes from the idea that a conceptual 'absence of TQM' is as relevant as that of its presence. This mode of engaging can be traced back to Heidegger's rethinking of metaphysics and technology (Heidegger, 1959; 1977), from where Derrida (1982) has in part gathered his intellectual resource (see also Cooper, 1986; 1989; 1992; 1993; Munro, 1991; Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992; Chia, 1996).

Let us observe what happens when TQM stops being a fashionable management practice. Is it the end of playing with an arbitrary sign, or, the end of signifier TQM ? Though it seems less defensible to claim the former, it is easy to bring an end to signifier TQM, because the arbitrariness of sign engenders an elusive 'circum-sign' so that sign appears 'undecidable'. That is, the arbitrariness allows sign to *be in movement* which makes it appear not yet fixed in one particular position. If there is no play without movement, there is little space for any movement of sign once it is established, becoming a signifier/symbol. Interestingly, signifier does not operate like that of sign, if one follows Saussure carefully. Until one begins to appreciate the workings of sign, knowing *where a signifier/symbol comes from*, his understanding of TQM may not go beyond the fixed bond of signified-signifier, which enables representation. Specifically, a signifier may be *replaced* by *another arbitrary sign*. The replacement does not deter anyone from playing with *other* sign(s) or signifier(s) except the very signifier TQM. Having arrived here, one wonders to what extent there

is, theoretically speaking, similarities between TQM and any other management practice taking place 'before' and/or 'after' TQM.

So, what happens to the representational practice when a signifier TQM is replaced by another sign ? As discussed, the bond of signified-signifier conditions a representation, by which management consultants are able to make a living out of helping companies to improve their TQM practice. What would the effect of bringing to an end of playing with the signifier TQM be on those experts ? It means that the need for further representations of TQM is diminishing. Once the popular TQM practice stops being fashionable, there remains little need for promoting it. Nevertheless, the end of a TQM practice 'out there' for some is not the death of the representational practice per se for others, insofar as the former as the signified can be substituted by another signified. One simply gives a name to another management practice, ie. another signified, for instance, as business process re-engineering, BPR (Hammer and Champy, 1993) for short. As an arbitrary sign, BPR has been used to replace the name/signifier TQM. It is not difficult to discern a representational BPR practice so long as substitutes of signified and signifier are possible.

To substitute the signified and/or signifier   What can be said of the name TQM ? Saussure insists that a bond between signified and signifier is also *arbitrary*. This implies that a practice 'out there' does not have to be designated by one particular signifier, ie. by the name/symbol TQM. It is possible to match, as it were, TQM with another signified, *other than* the TQM practice 'out there'. Therefore, the signified can be substituted despite that the presence of signifier TQM remains. Alternatively, there may well be a TQM practice designated by a signifier, *other than* the name TQM. It means the signifier TQM can be, by an invisible hand, substituted (see Figure 6.2).

signified   ....   signifier

TQM practice 'out there'   ......   the name TQM

(a). to substitute the signified:

another practice 'out there'   ......   the name TQM

(b). to substitute the signifier:

TQM practice 'out there'   ......   another name

(c). to substitute both the signified and the signifier:

non-TQM practice 'out there'   ......   non-TQM by name

Figure 6.2   To substitute the signified and /or the signifier

Let us look at three substitutions. The first is a situation whereby the name TQM is used, as the accepted symbol/signifier, *independent of* the TQM practice [see Fig. 6.2 (a)]. As described before, this is what may be provisionally called a 'nominal TQM' (see eg. Munro, 1995; Kerfoot and Knights, 1995). The reason can be quite simple. There is a need, with various degrees of urgency and seriousness, to be identified by the symbol TQM within an industrial and/or academic community. Here, one is reminded of the probable effect of pursuing a brand name in fashion. If one finds little evidence from the extant literature to confirm an overdue appreciation of the effect of a brand name, it is because researchers have yet to reflect on their own discursive practice, including naming and their reproduction of signifiers. Therefore, to dismiss naming as a mere linguistic issue seems nothing but a sign of conceptual closure. Further, in a Foucauldian sense, if there has been a disappearance of TQM, with respect to either the signified or signifier since the mid 1990s, that disappearance does not have to be the outcome of critiques on the signified, since the disappearance may be interpreted as an effect of playing with another name/signifier. To do so, one simply needs another signifier, converted from an arbitrary sign.

The second possibility arises when companies keep doing what they believe to be a good practice without using the name TQM [see Fig. 6.2 (b)]. This occurs when the name/signifier, but the signified, is out of date and therefore a brand name no more. One may describe this situation as a 'game of arbitrary names'. Contrary to the 'game of brand names', any name or signifier that happens to be chosen will be treated in the same way. For instance, from the Japanese experience, whether to use TQC, CWQC or as referred to in the west, TQM, a name makes little difference to those who on a daily basis participate in Japanese ZQC activities. To those Japanese in particular, how to maintain and improve product quality through innovative ways of organizing has become their working life. Whatever name/signifier the Japanese may choose to designate their production operations is less significant *to them* than their justifiably single-minded commitment to what they understand to be indispensable. Paradoxically,

it is westerners, as outsiders of Japanese management practice, who have been attracted to the *effect* of what is known as 'Japanese management'. The effect may have been felt with or without an adequate understanding of the way in which the Japanese perceive and approach what is necessary for a good practice.

The third possibility is that neither the name/signifier TQM nor its practice 'out there' is relevant. It suggests that a historical TQM practice have little impact to a present form of management practice [see Fig. 6.2 (c)]. To this end, the BPR rhetoric may be interpreted as an unwitting denial of a recent past practice of TQM to the extent that a manifest break from it is asserted (Hammer and Champy, 1993). From an historical perspective, it is naive to assume that BPR starts from a blank canvas, as if a recent past were in no way part of the conditions for the present. If there is an emerging representational BPR literature, it, too, can be re-examined in the same way to that demonstrated here on TQM. That is to suggest, first, there is a BPR practice 'out there', as the signified, though it may not have been as widespread as the Japanese TQC movement; and second, a BPR discourse as discursive artefacts may be opened up. In short, the capacity of an arbitrary sign makes it possible to pursue a critique of BPR. Apart from the possibility that BPR as a signifier, or on its way to become one, the effect of BPR so far appears less popular than TQM once was. Conceivably, Saussure's trichotomy may be an effective way of coming to terms with the emergence and transformation of another management phenomenon.

6.5   Summary

This chapter has developed along two lines. In the time dimension, it considers the conditions for the emergence of TQM. It is argued that a chronology is not neutral. By tracing genealogical lines of influence, some 'not so orderly' events have emerged. In particular, problems of misunderstanding the Japanese are highlighted. Given its historical context, the chapter creates a conceptual space where naming TQM has been

closely examined. It now becomes apparent that naming is not as trivial as one might think it is. When TQM is considered as an arbitrary sign, the emergence and transformation of TQM can be explained by Saussure's trichotomy. Firstly, if representation has been the dominant mode of TQM inquiries, it is because *an arbitrary sign* and the emergence of a signifier from it have been *concealed*. Secondly, without questioning where the symbol TQM comes from, the name TQM has little chance to be considered as a research question. Thirdly, one positive note derived from Saussure's theory of language could be that language is *more than* a mere instrument for representation, so that TQM discourse is not in the position of a dependent signifier but that of an *independent sign*. This acknowledged, one is in a position to comprehend *how* TQM has emerged and *can be* transformed.

Notes:

1. In contrast, his technical text with W. A. Shewhart, *Statistical method from the viewpoint of quality control* (1939) is less noted in the quality control literature.

2. See Feigenbaum's article entitled 'Total quality control' in *Harvard Business Review* 34(6): 93-101.

3. The 1st and 2nd editions in Japanese ran 100 printings, see the English translation (Ishikawa, 1990: xvii).

4. The four editions of Juran's edited *Quality control handbook*.

5. As a gesture of recognising Japan's contribution to quality management, sections are added on Japanese quality control practices by a Japanese, see Kondo (1988).

6. During a visit to one of the local Philips operations at Co. Durham in 1992, the manager in charge of the overall quality initiative commented that he treated Juran's handbook as "bible of quality control".

7. Perhaps, this can be interpreted as an attempt to re-address a perceived lost of balance derived from Taylorism (see Taylor, 1911) where attention is solely placed at getting the best out of workers to the extent of ignoring brutal effects of exploitation. In other words, the effect, regardless of its intentions, of Taylor's scientific management theory is a single-minded pursuit of efficiency with little consideration on what it would bring to the workers.

8. See Huczynski (1993) on management consultant-turned gurus. The use of a reader friendly language is one characteristic of self-styled management gurus, argues Huczynski.

9. In Ishikawa (1964, in Japanese), he spoke of "human nature as born-good", a conviction of the Confucian moral tradition. Ishikawa also alluded the "Japanese spirit". To his eyes, quality control was not a sole technical matter. It started with respect and trust among people. In the Japanese context, quality control activities can be an opportunity to regain pride and self-confidence in the Japanese people/workers.

10. Competition, yes; but not within a family. The Japanese corporation (*Kaisha* 会社) operates like an extended family (see Xu, 1995). In the Confucian tradition, the value of an 'individual' may seemingly be played down to an extent of self-denial (see Shun, 1991; Chung, 1991; Lee, 1994). For the Japanese in particular, this appearance of self-denial can take the form of sacrificing one's own life (see Morishima, 1982; Morita, et al, 1986). Indeed, before Morishima's portrayal of Japan, Yuen (1930) had explored possible relationships between philosophical traditions (including Confucianism) and likely routes of economic development in China. For current debates on Confucianism and Modernization, see special issue of *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* (1992), 19(2).

11. Arguably, the basis of thinking in this way is the binary logic -- the law of the excluded middle -- by which there is 'no-thing' in between.

12. There is a difference between Confucian moral philosophy in particular and Confucian tradition in general, see Ihara (1992). When Morishima (1982) discusses the Confucian ethos of the Japanese people, he mainly refers to the latter.

13. For instance, the Japanese formal written script, *kanji*, is a borrowed version of Chinese ideographic (or hieroglyphic) characters; also, the Japanese Buddhist *Zen* practice was derived from one of the Chinese Buddhist schools -- *Ch'an*.

14. See Ball (1990), see also analyses on accounting as control technology (Munro, 1991; 1993; 1995) and Chia's deconstructive analysis of organizational theorising (1992; 1996).

15. Examples that spring to mind are as follows: Toyota production system and JIT (see, eg. Shingo 1981; 1986; Monden, 1983), the Japanese TQC movement (Ishikawa, 1985), *kaizen* (Imai, 1986), product engineering (Taguchi, 1986) and a first hand account on an innovative Japanese company, SONY (Morita et al, 1986).

16. See Introduction (Morishima, 1982/94) regarding difference in perception and/or interpretations of the five cardinal Confucian virtues: benevolence/humanity (*jen* 仁), justice (*i* 义), ceremony (*li* 礼), knowledge (*chih* 知) and faith (*hsin* 信).

17. See two special issues on TQM, *Academy of Management Review* (1994), *California Management Review* (1994).

18. There are three constituencies: academia, industry and the general public. Each has its own valid expressions or vocabularies as part of its discursive norm. In order to establish dialogues among the three, translations/interpretations from one to another are inevitable.

19. For evidence, one may look at the way in which a prestigious fashion house Givenchy honours a talented designer John Galliano, see 'King of couture' by Tredre, R., *The Observer Magazine*, 23 July, 1995, pp. 12-16.

20. A typical example is the way in which 'yes' and 'no' is used by a Japanese and a westerner respectively. If one follows the binary logic, it is obvious that there should be 'no-thing' in between. As such, a westerner would respond to a situation or question with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. However, one cannot take a 'yes' from a Japanese too literally, since it may suggest something that is not entirely 'no', yet not necessarily the same as a straightforward 'yes', either ! It is normal for a Japanese to accept 'something' between 'yes' and 'no'. For an argument of a non-dual thinking, see Loy (1986).

21. In this light, for instance, Oakland (1989) and Bank (1992) have prescribed their versions of what the signified should be like. Their prescriptions are not to be confused with representations of the signified as a TQM practice 'out there'. To a certain extent, I would argue that to strive to represent the signified is primarily the ethos of the mainstream (empiricist) TQM literature, see chapter 2.

CHAPTER SEVEN

TQM DISCOURSE AS A KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

> *The wild geese fly across the long sky above.*
> *Their image is reflected upon the chilly water below.*
> *The geese do not mean to cast their image on the water;*
> *Nor does the water mean to hold the image of the geese.*
>
> (Chinese verse, 8th century AD, quote from
> *Creativity and Taoism* by Chang Chung-yuan)

One neither has to be 'for' nor 'against' TQM to make it a vehicle for understanding knowledge production and consumption. In this chapter, a few Foucauldian steps will be taken to excavate an archaeological site of TQM discourse (see Foucault, 1971; 1972). The focus is firstly on how one text relates to another text of a discursive centring of the 2nd order. Next, attention is directed to history at an archaeological site, where TQM discourse is reconsidered from two directions: a historical 'there and then' and an archaeological 'here and now'. Further, it is argued that TQM discourse is governed by Foucauldian 'internal rules' and 'rules of exclusion'. Lastly, from the knowledge production-consumption perspective, normative TQM may be reconsidered as knowledge consumption. Given this, implications of an alternative perspective *vis-à-vis* the normative face of TQM will be discussed.

7.1. Orders of TQM Texts

In this inquiry, TQM texts are treated as historical evidence and the present becomes part of history in that what is experienced as presence will constitute

tomorrow's history. An event, discursive or not, may be positioned in a historical continuum. In the extant literature, some texts appeared earlier (eg. Feigenbaum, 1951; Juran, 1951; Ishikawa, 1954/1964) than other ones (Shingo, 1981; 1986; Deming, 1986). Over a period of time, some of those earlier texts disappeared or have changed their role (eg. Shewhart, 1931) [1]. In this chapter, the endeavour is to unpack why such appearance and/or disappearance may take place.

A few texts of the 1980s may be identified as a common source of reference, with which interpretations of the TQM philosophy or 'theory' have been presented. Owing to such interpretations, empirical(-ist) evidence [2] through case studies and survey reports largely constitute the TQM literature. However, as one realises that TQC texts constitute the precondition of a TQM discourse. For instance, texts published between the 1950s and the early 1960s by Feigenbaum, Juran and Ishikawa belong to an earlier generation of quality control experts. 'Generations of texts' in terms of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd order texts are mapped out (see Figure 7.1) as follows:

1st order texts   They include the 'original' texts on TQC from the early 1950s (Feigenbaum, 1951/61; 1956; Juran, 1951, 1961; Ishikawa, 1954/64). These texts are conventionally taken as 'roots of ideas' for TQM and from where inspirations for practising managers are said to be drawn (see eg. Oakland, 1989). The formidable success of certain Japanese industries, discerned by writers in the west, may not only serve as a sound proof of those monumental texts (chapter 6) but also have reinforced the recognition of their credibility [3]. Hence, for many, these texts have become the main source of information and necessarily a reference frame for the TQM discourse. These texts invariably reappeared in the 1980s as constituting the TQM discourse. Specifically, their primary status, as Foucauldian 'conditions of possibility', for other texts on TQM is obvious.
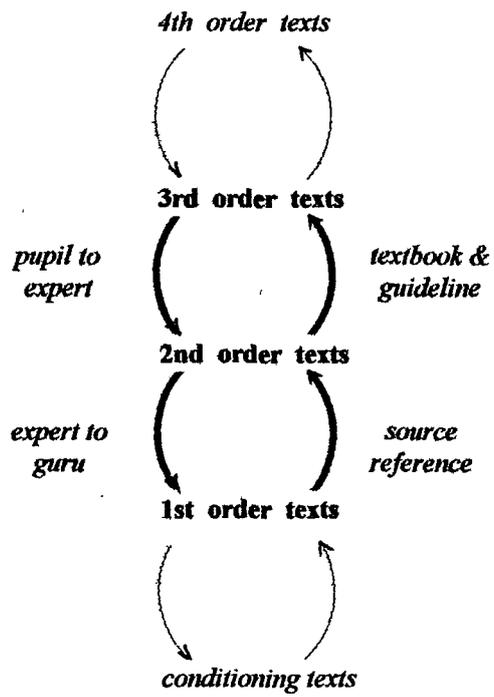
4th order texts

3rd order texts

pupil to
expert

textbook &
guideline

2nd order texts

expert to
guru

source
reference

1st order texts

conditioning texts

Figure 7.1 Orders of TQM texts

However, here lies a paradox. One may talk about Feigenbaum, Deming and the economic revival of Japan without scrutinising possible genealogical lines of influence, since to outline a chronological development from SQC to TQC and to TQM seems to be adequate. Why should a chronological order be abandoned if it is a useful method unless one offers an alternative instead (see Lilley, 1995) ? Arguably, with respect to a particular chronology, the appearance and disappearance of events are themselves already part of an interpretive outcome of a discursive formation (see eg. chapters 5 and 6). Furthermore, one has to be mindful that interpretations of events may differ. A chronology makes presence a few historical moments as a certain TQM phenomenon and subsequently a TQM discourse. This is where the asserted 'essence of TQM' (eg. Bank, 1992) is questionable. The assertion implies that TQM is first and foremost ahistorical. If so, how can one explain some 'family resemblance' between the TQM discourse and its precursory TQC discourse ? It seems difficult to maintain an ahistorical TQM discourse.

2nd order texts These include introductory texts on TQM written by quality management experts and/or academics (eg. Crosby, 1979; Deming, 1986; Garvin, 1988; Bendell, 1988; Oakland, 1989; Dale and Plunkett, 1990; Naden and Bremner, 1991; Bank, 1992). Such texts often take the form of commentaries and the authors speak either as quality gurus or on those gurus' ideas. These writers offer their own interpretations of TQM philosophy and practice in textbook style guidelines for implementation. Here, clarification is necessary. First, introductory texts are a popular and reader-friendly form of presentation and are likely to reach a mass audience. Second, if the reader is recommended to Feigenbaum's TQC system via the interpretation, say, by Oakland (1989), which is much less time consuming for one to follow, it is economical to avoid reading Feigenbaum [4]. That is, Oakland's interpretation of Feigenbaum's TQC may create the effect of speaking to an audience on behalf of Feigenbaum. If an act of interpreting produces some effect of transforming, one has to be cautious about a means of *replacing* the 1st order texts all

together [5] ! Third, texts used as textbooks are themselves in the process of making an area of interest a 'subject' once they are in circulation (cf. Kuhn, 1970). Arguably, it is the 2nd order texts that signify the advent of a popular dissemination of the TQM gospel in the west.

3rd order texts   These are mainly composed of research projects, the majority of which aims at assessing the effectiveness of TQM implementation and providing recommendations for improvement (see Academy of Management Review, 1994; California Management Review, 1994; Journal of Management Studies, 1995). The projects may be presented as degree dissertations, working papers, survey or case study reports (see eg. Oliver and Wilkinson, 1988; Mohr, 1991; Powers, 1991; Whyte and Witcher, 1992; Witcher, 1993). In such research output, the common trait is the production of empiricist evidence or *proof* of either the success of or problems contributing to the failure in the TQM practice 'out there' in companies. The accumulated effect of producing such proof helps to shape and maintain the 2nd order as a 'subject' of investigation and implicitly with knowledge. When the pursuit of proof becomes a preoccupation, TQM research can be carried out without the ontological status of its knowledge being carefully examined.

Furthermore, a lack of declared epistemological position in most TQM research makes it hard for researchers involved to articulate and reflect on possible consequences of their own epistemological position. Indeed, as TQM research is reduced to proof-seeking, there is little room to weigh up one set of ontological and epistemological considerations against its 'other'. Arguably, a common route is to follow a well-trodden path similar to that of a positivistic(-empiricist) epistemology. Accordingly, empiricist evidence is privileged yet conceptual clarification is wanting. However, this order seems to be where one may also find TQM research conducted in a way that does not quite fit into the mainstream management orthodoxy (see eg. Wilkinson and Willmott, 1995; Woodilla, 1996). When a researcher suspends the

proof-seeking operation, TQM can be treated as a *vehicle* for engaging social, political and conceptual issues, derived from management, with a perspective that defies the mainstream. Such defiance need not be negative, if it channels one's resources in examining the effect of TQM (see Munro, 1993; Munro and Hatherly, 1993). An alternative approach of investigating TQM may be seen an act to 'differ from within' the management mainstream [6].

A centring of the 2nd order   Fig.7.1 as an ordering of texts may at first appear to resemble a categorisation where each text is assigned to one order, like a 'box', that is fixed. For instance, once Feigenbaum's TQC text is pigeonholed into the 1st order, it is not to appear in the 2nd or 3rd order. However, if ordering is more than just to find each text a home to stay, it could be at the same time a manifested network through relationships. That is to maintain, orders are maintained through *linkages* among them. One may expect different responses to this pattern of orders and linkages. Some may privilege the orders and treat linkages as secondary. Otherwise, if linkages are considered as ontologically equal to the orders, both deserve close attention. Therefore, the status of a 'quality guru' cannot be achieved and sustained without a constant acknowledgement of and, to some degree nominal, worship from quality management experts and 'disciples'. Similarly, the status of quality professionals or 'experts' cannot be established without their work being referenced and cited in academic or professional journals, conference sessions and training courses by others. As indispensable constituencies of this ordering, the orders of texts and linkages among them are interdependent in such a way that the existence of one makes the other relevant. One cannot easily *separate* the workings of orders from that of linkages. Perhaps, what may be drawn from the literature is not so much of a separation of the two, but orders of texts are discernible in the way texts are referenced whereas linkages are less appreciated. However, when one begins to reconsider the linkages in this ordering, one notes the following. The roles on the left hand side of Fig.7.1 refer to those who participate in making a TQM discourse. Not surprisingly,

their arrangement is an age-old hierarchy of learning: from masters, or 'quality gurus', to disciples and the space in between reserved for professionals or experts. Looking at the right hand side of Fig.7.1, one realises that the relational positions suggest that each text be used according to its recognised 'status', with a preconceived 'levels of understanding' [7]. Together, the hierarchy and the presumed levels of understanding help to sustain this ordering. Suppose, one wishes to probe further, this ordering of texts looks little short of an illustration of the ubiquitous social hierarchy. How could normative TQM, manifested as knowledge on TQM, disregard such a social dimension, as if it were never present ?

Fig.7.1 already shows a *centring* of the 2nd order texts where 'TQM knowledge' appears as operational guidelines. First of all, from this central position, one regards the 1st order, for instance, in a way as one may say that TQC constitutes a past for TQM. With this 'level of understanding', justifiably convenient for the centre, Oakland (1989) works to some degree with 'ideas' derived from an earlier order text (e.g. Feigenbaum, 1951; 1956). To step into history, as it were, it is unavoidable to appropriate the 1st order texts. With the orientation of TQM, the 2nd order as the centre, Shewhart's approach for obtaining certainty in quality control has been reduced to and rendered a statistical technique, by TQM writers (see e.g. Bendell, 1988; Oakland, 1989). If due credit is granted to Shewhart's work, the claim of a 'new' management approach via a promised TQM 'revolution' would look rather weak. In other words, against the background of Shewhart's work, there is not much room for manoeuvring by contemporary quality management experts who may seek the status of gurus.

Together with the textbooks on TQM, the mechanism of journal publication, refereed or professional, reinforces and stabilises the centring of the 2nd order. The more journal papers on the TQM 'subject', the more tangible and reassuring a reality of TQM 'theory and practice'. At the receiving end of making TQM a 'subject', TQM is

treated as a 'subject', like many other 'subjects' in Management Studies. Nevertheless, the 'subject' is not without its conceptual, methodological inadequacies. Most researchers may be aware that it is messy and perhaps not fruitful to expose the taken-for-granted assumptions of TQM. In its heyday, TQM may appear to epitomise an 'essence' of contemporary management. Compounded by accounts, necessarily interpretations from a particular perspective, on what the Japanese have done since the 1950s, TQM practice is expected to deliver competitive advantage (see eg. Garvin, 1988).

The centring of TQM is first and foremost *discursive* which is often buried in its seemingly knowledge-based engineering discipline. There is a difference between discourse and knowledge (Foucault, 1972). For Foucault, discourse can be examined as *a discursive practice*, "one practice among others" (ibid.: 186). The discursive practice gives rise to a corpus of knowledge (ibid.: 190; see chapter 9). It is possible to operate at the level of discourse without the presence of an established discipline or a 'subject'. Arguably, a TQM discourse may operate at a level short of an established discipline. What is worthy of note is to *substitute a discourse* (chapter 6), which may have little to do with the presence of an established discipline. Having arrived here, one contends that the call for going 'beyond TQM' (eg. Flood, 1993) may be a substitution of a TQM discourse. From a Foucauldian position, one accepts that where there is an established discipline, there must be discourse(s), evident in the TQC discourse of the 1950s. To engineers, the discipline is certain: Quality control falls into a category of engineering, whatever label one may wish to deploy, TQC or TQM.

In short, the argument put forward is twofold. It is possible to examine TQM at the level of discourse without the certainty of its disciplinary status. That implies a reconsideration of a discursive TQM practice and its implications to knowledge on TQM. On the other hand, even if TQM discourse may have been misconceived as 'knowledge', one knows little as to how that knowledge would fit into an established

discipline. The need to differentiate discourse and discipline or 'knowledge' opens up questions at two fronts: the credibility of knowledge claims on TQM, such as 'TQM theory', and their relationship to a Foucauldian analysis of TQM discourse; and, how the effect of TQM discourse may be considered and presented.

7.2   History at an Archaeological Site

From historical 'there and then'   Let us look at how historical shifts of a discursive centre may emerge. In Figure 7.2, the first shift, illustrated by the left column from the bottom, takes place from the conditioning texts to the 1st order; and the second shift, in the same column, from the 1st order to the 2nd order. Following this dimension further up, one may project a third shift, ie. in its making, from the 2nd order to the 3rd order. Historically, when the 1st order remained the discursive centre, it was a time of engaging a TQC discourse. One cannot appreciate it without taking into account the economic conditions of that period -- the post war economic recovery in the west and rebuilding in Japan. Both spanned from the late 1940s to the early 1960s.

Fig.7.2 also points towards a direction of another shift from a TQM-centred discourse to a 'new' discursive destination. One may speculate on where a prospective site of a 'new' centre might be. What may be projected is the effect of discrediting TQM discourse by a substitute, such as the rhetoric of 'beyond TQM' or BPR. For the time being, any credible substitute has yet to manifest itself with a discursive identity whereby naming becomes a necessary step. Surveying the literature, one finds critiques of TQM (see eg. Wilkinson and Willmott, 1995) and disillusioned practitioners. Another contributor to a gradual disappearance of TQM may be a self-fulfilling practice in the west. In response to an ever-reshaping (post)industrial landscape, fashionable management 'theories' are created to explain Japan's success, with an awareness of the challenge of the Asian Pacific region.

Time

From archaeological 'here and now'

4th order texts   surface layer

move 1 (*to be academic*)

('to be'-centred discourse)   3rd order texts   next layer   *Frame I*

shift in-the-making (*since1980s*)   move 2 (*appropriation to TQM*)

TQM-centred discourse   2nd order texts   further layer

shift 2 (*1950s-1980s*)   move 3 (*traces of TQM*)

TQC-centred discourse   1st order texts   arbitrary 'origin'

shift 1 (*1930s-1950s*)   move 4 (*traces of TQC*)

Frame II   SQC-centred discourse   *conditioning texts*   layer beneath 'origin'

(*remote impact on TQM*)   (*further possible moves*)

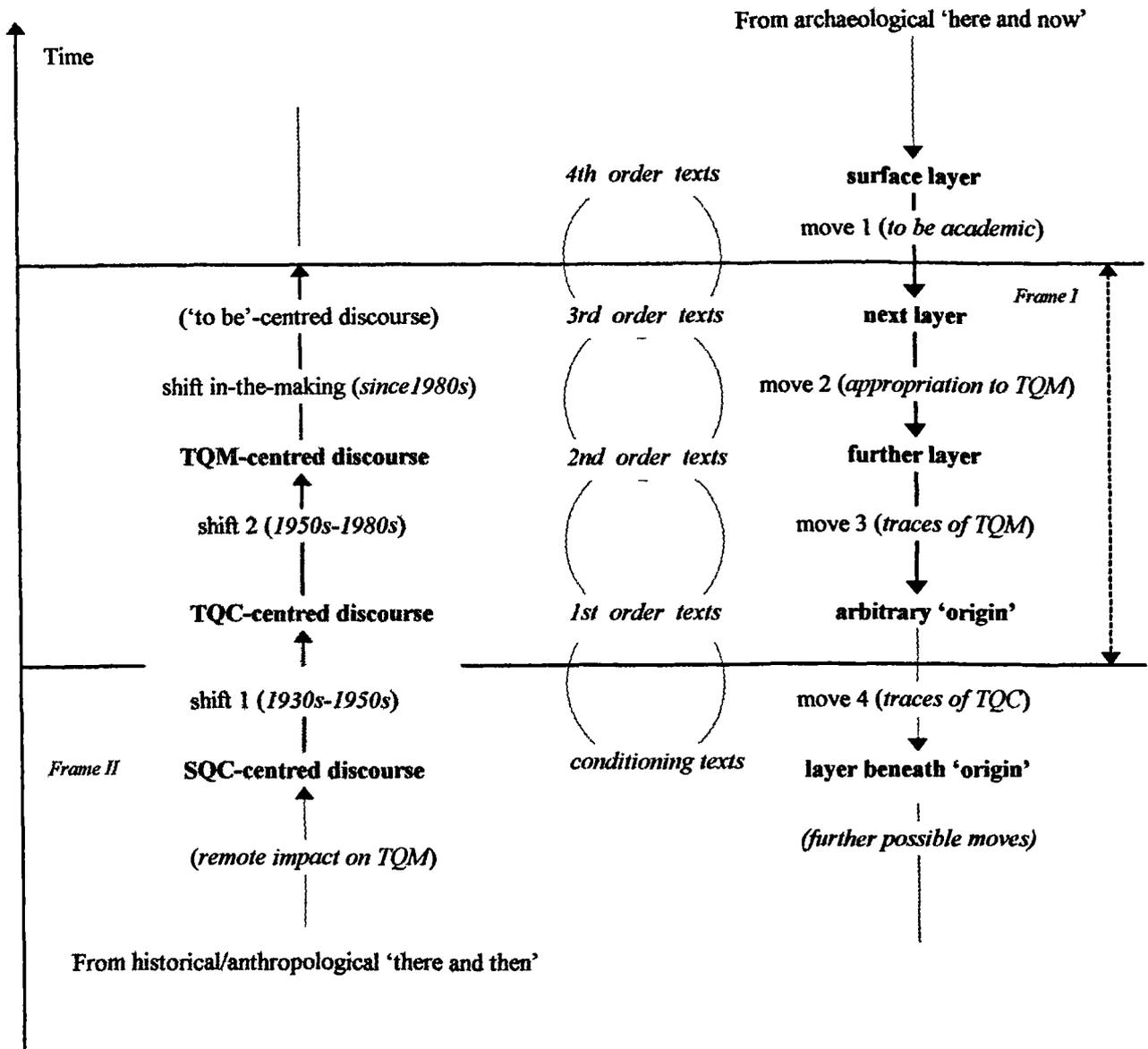From historical/anthropological 'there and then'

Figure 7.2 History at an archaeological site

To put 'TQM theory' in this light, the Achilles' heel of TQM advocates lies at their failure to outline an intellectually defensible and conceptually convincing position for TQM [8].

By a reorientation, one may pursue how TQC and TQM discourses evolved and the ways in which one relates to the other. The left column of Fig.7.2 illustrates shifts from a SQC-centred discourse to a TQM-centred discourse. A continuity is discernible because the 1st order, shown in the middle column (or Fig.7.1), contributes to the conditions of the 2nd order. Accordingly, the vocabularies of the 1950s for TQC and of the 1980s for TQM reflect the discursive conditions of SQC and TQC respectively. To this end, Crosby's dismissive reaction to TQM tells more of his own position: The only credible discursive centre is TQC, and not TQM. After more than five decades, 'control' as a signifier is less popular than the signifier 'management'.

Necessarily, the first shift indicates a move away from statistical quality control -- being the sole responsibility of experts -- to quality control becoming company-wide activities. The latter is to involve everybody, as in Feigenbaum's theory and in the Japanese quality control practice. The second shift manifests changes that occurred from the 1950s, such as the increasing impact of Japan's success such that the west cannot afford to disregard the "art of Japanese management" (Pascale and Athos, 1981). The second shift reinforces the seemingly apparent need to take the study of 'management' seriously as an interdisciplinary 'subject'.

In addition, historical shifts of a centre may be a result made by writers on management topics. That is, texts by one writer are to be related to that of others. Obviously, one is mindful of choice of words in a management-centred discourse. A text may be (re)interpreted from a position of 'here and now' or at another time as 'there and then'. Because of such choices, Feigenbaum's TQC texts at the centre of TQC discourse may be conveniently accounted for as 'background material' for the

TQM-centred discourse. For this to take place, there is no need for an inevitable advent of a 'quality management revolution' (see eg. Oakland, 1989). Instead, a *reframing* of Feigenbaum's and others' texts of the 1st order is required so that they reappear in an update version, having been appropriated in tune with a new commercial agenda or management orthodoxy of the 1990s (see Munro and Hatherly, 1993).

From archaeological 'here and now'   The right column of Figure 7.2 is where a Foucauldian archaeological excavation may be conducted. With such an orientation, one recognises discursive 'ruptures' or historical 'discontinuities'. That is, there is a need to reexamine historical evidence that in a way disturbs an established discursive centre as an orthodoxy. It is to inquire how 'ruptures' or 'discontinuities' allow discursive shifts mentioned above to take place. Our earlier discussion has noted that the 3rd order texts seem to be at a place where 'ruptures' are likely to occur for the appearance of a historical 'discontinuity'. In Fig.7.2, 'ruptures' may come from a shift in-the-making since the 1980s: from the TQM-centred discourse to a 'to be'-centred discourse. If historical events are considered as unfolding in a way that do not radically challenge the present discursive centre of TQM, one holds that continuity is temporarily preserved, indicated by the right column of Fig.7.2 with the second move by appropriating one's research labour towards TQM. There is every likelihood of an emerging discourse that may, at a later date, 'take-over' the present TQM-centred discourse. In this regard, texts on TQM with degrees of dissonance to the TQM orthodoxy may be recognised later as moving towards the threshold of a new discursive centre.

The set boundaries in Fig.7.2, with Fig.7.1 in the middle, are *arbitrary*, since they are drawn for a TQM-centred discourse. Accordingly, the present beginning of the 1st order can be relative. Unless the critical role of boundaries is appreciated, the effect of framing as an orientation goes on without being acknowledged. This suggests

that whereas certain considerations be taken into account and constitute the 'TQM of presence', other considerations are not or absent. From the middle column, the borderlines or framing are obvious. Taken as a starting point, this particular ordering allows one to 'differ from within' the TQM subject (see eg. Woodilla, 1996). On close inspection of the left column, one may establish that the first two shifts, from a SQC-centred discourse to a TQC-centred discourse and to a TQM-centred discourse, form a second conceptual frame, *Frame II* in addition to Fig.7.1 as *Frame I* [9]. At the bottom end, the SQC-centred discourse marks a beginning or boundary. At the top end, any discourse beyond the TQM-centred discourse remains outside the boundary (*Frame II*).

Lastly, the middle column of Fig.7.2 (or Fig.7.1) does not suggest a rigid 'framework', since it is sustained through linkages. If one has the patience to document its emerging ordering with meticulous details, one is indeed engaged in rewriting a TQM history. That rewriting may have to be incomplete. In order to inscribe a particular path, one strives to 'go back', as it were, to a position of historical 'there and then', for instance, by retelling how the Japanese learned TQC from the Americans in the early days. Whatever one has tried in approaching an historical 'there and then', his (re)presentation may leave traces of his own position from an archaeological 'here and now'.

The right column of Fig.7.2 is a sketch for an archaeological excavation [10], which starts from an archaeological 'here and now'. To enter, as it were, from the top, one encounters archaeological layers related to formulations of successive historical periods. When the layers are related to the orders of texts discussed earlier, the following may be experienced.

Entering the site   Imagine that one enters the archaeological site of TQM at the surface layer, shown in Fig.7.2, the first texts one comes across is the 4th order -

- for the consumption of the general public. Often, they are a simplified version of the TQM subject based on 3rd or possibly 2nd order texts. To trace these texts, normally in reports, to their source, the next layer below is the 3rd order texts. From here, one goes further to the 2nd order and stops there. One has arrived at a layer that corresponds to the TQM-centred discourse, as in Fig.7.1. If the aim is to excavate artefacts of TQM, one may remain where he is now. There is no need for further 'unearthing' action, since one is interested in TQM only. It means that archaeological layers already formulated 'beneath your feet' are left underexplored. This kind of underexploration is an impression a researcher may have from reading the prescriptive TQM literature.

From the surface layer down to the 2nd order texts, an excavation may be carried out *towards* a TQM-centred discourse. On the other hand, those layers from the 2nd order further down are identifiable only in their relation to this centre; hence, a justification of TQC in a TQM history. This implies that a TQC discourse is not considered in its historical context, from where it made a considerable impact to the Japanese industry. Rather, TQC is known in terms of a *then* unknown future, which is called TQM years later. A TQM-centred discourse from the present implies an appropriation of the past for making TQM credible. If one wishes to take his excavation further from TQM, he may arrive at the 1st order texts of TQC. From there, one uncovers another layer, which must be one formulated earlier than the 1st order or the 'conditioning texts' for the 1st order.

With this provisional mapping, let us consider the following. First, when both the middle and the right columns of Fig.7.2 are taken into perspective, a perception emerges: Artefacts of TQM correspond to the orders of texts in a way that *texts as artefacts* operate at a *site* and producers of texts may be, arguably, engaged in a *discursive TQM practice*. Second, even if one temporarily suspends his excavation at any layer, one nevertheless has access to or has obtained artefacts, with which

interpretations and reconstruction of *a* past may follow. Third, artefacts have to be put in perspective for an interpretation. For instance, within a positivistic(-empiricist) perspective, 'data' (or artefacts) are usually regarded as ahistorical. Perhaps, artefacts' dependence on a perspective has yet to be added to the extant literature. An artefact-in-perspective thesis suggests the possibility of re-interpreting artefacts, insofar as a reference frame can be reset. Fourth, the further one excavates the TQM site, the broader a view one may have, compared with the view shaped by a TQM-centred discourse, thanks to archaeological traces. Lastly, researchers are operating either at a specific layer, corresponding to a level of understanding, or moving across from one layer to the next. Each move, from the surface layer to the 'conditioning texts', is shown in Fig.7.2.

Archaeological research operations   How archaeologists do what they do is nothing but a *practice*. Archaeologists excavate a site, unearth artefacts and interpret them in order to reconstruct *'a'* past. Equally, a Foucauldian archaeological analysis may treat texts on TQM as artefacts and <u>not</u> as given knowledge. For instance, I have identified what is said by Deming and may quote him in the usual way, yet I may know little about how Deming said what he said. Following the archaeological mode of Foucault, a TQM 'subject' becomes a research site. The way in which TQM researchers conduct their projects may also be examined as a practice. As discussed earlier, it is possible to trace the formulation of the site [11]. Arguably, constraints for an excavation at a given time may in part reflect limits of an adopted orientation by researchers as to what is recognised as 'meaningful' and/or left open for further considerations. To take an archaeological approach means that certain procedures are more likely to be followed than others. These procedures may or may not constitute a common practice, as an accepted norm, by an academic community. Due to limited space, one can at least acknowledge that an accepted norm may take the form of criteria, against which an excavation is judged as appropriate or adequate. In research terms, the credibility of a claim cannot be separated from what is perceived to be

evidence or artefacts. What is also relevant yet less explicit is the role of the researcher: his capacity and readiness to put them into a perspective, especially when they appear to sit uncomfortably in an existing schema of categories for interpretations.

Artefacts for reconstruction　　　　　When one refers to an historical dimension, as in Fig.7.2, one in a way reconstructs history. How could anyone 'represent' the totality of the past ? What is attainable are perhaps versions of it. If an historical perspective has to have a starting point, say a 'there and then', that point has to be an *anthropological 'there and then'*. It means that what is manageable for us, as temporary and limited agents, is to act, as if we were 'historical anthropologists', to whom history becomes the subject of study. In doing so, one faces a set of methodological difficulties, as an anthropologist does when he goes to and comes back from the field. Having 'being there', he reconstructs the subject into a defensible account. The difficulty lies in how to shape one's reference frame for interpreting artefacts or 'data'. To asserts that one 'adopts' a frame from the native is far from precise. An outsider may have attempted to see the native's world *in 'their' ways* but that kind of seeing requires more than a few field trips. Arguably, the outsider is always on his way to approach and to appropriate the natives. By the same token, one may approach an historical 'there and then' and re-present history but not *present it*. The difficulty of an anthropologist to his native subject is analogous to the difficulty of those who stand from a position of 'here and now' to reconstruct the past.

The anthropological 'there and then' and the archaeological 'here and now' appear in one picture in Fig.7.2. The two seem to evolve from opposite directions. By examining the historical/anthropological, one recognises various discourses and possible shifts [12]. From a particular moment <u>and</u> a specific position of the past, a 'there and then' and not a 'here and now', one projects into the unknown, implicit in Fig.7.2 by the left column. Here, one considers not only shifts of a discursive centre from the 1st order to a (then) 'that', known as TQM now, but something interesting:

TQM discourse rests at the edge of a discursive rupture of TQC ! Similarly, another 'that', *one in-its-making*, to which a name is to be given, may rest at the edge of a discursive rupture of TQM (chapters 5 and 6). To reiterate a point made earlier, those texts, of the 3rd order 'unfit' in the mainstream of a TQM-centred discourse, may become part of a 'to-be'-centred discourse of tomorrow.

For researchers, the issue of interpretation merits careful attention. When one interprets artefacts, he makes decisions to include some and, in so doing, exclude others. He selects artefacts for an interpretation from those he can make sense of, leaving out those that are not easily accommodated into his preferred reference frame. The selection engenders the possibility of reinterpreting by himself later and/or by others. To the extent that some artefacts may be suspended, an interpretation constitutes a *way of making presence* (Derrida, 1982). Derrida puts it succinctly: Interpretation has long been forced into exile (Derrida, 1978: 278-293). By this statement, he meant that, far from being taken seriously, problems arisen from an interpretation have been out of sight for too long. Derrida has revealed a critical clue for us to comprehend why most of us can be contented with having 'data' as evidence. Researchers are too often preoccupied with collecting 'data' from quality control techniques or TQM prescriptions that there is little time left for thinking about questions derived from interpretations. However, if one allows artefacts to replace 'data', interpretations, previously out of mind, are put on the spot. Here, Cooper's 'division-create-perspective' insight (Cooper, 1987) may be supplemented: There seems no perspective without reference to time and place/space. A researcher operates in a space already being *created*, which is a justification for the relevance of a 'there and then', and *creating*, which is a justification for the significance of a 'here and now'. Hence, both the archaeological and the historical/anthropological dimensions are the effect of reconstructing TQM, ie. the production of an historical account.

7.3   Rules Governing TQM Discourse

If TQM discourse is no mere collection of words, accumulated as texts, there must be more to the discourse than what meets the eye. Foucault (1971: 8) holds that discourse is governed by rules, since "in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures". These procedures may be regarded as rules. A Foucauldian analysis of TQM discourse may focus on both "rules of exclusion" and "internal rules" (see Cook, 1994). Briefly, the former consists of (a). those familiar features in a culture regarded as *prohibitions* governing what can be said, when it can be said, and by whom; and (b). less obvious *demarcations*, such as boundaries, or to reiterate Foucault's expression "divisions", eg. between what is taken as 'reason' and 'madness' and between 'health' and 'illness'. Complementary to "rules of exclusion", the latter rules constitute the principles of *classification, ordering* and *distribution*. Let us observe to what extent a Foucauldian TQM discourse may be in operation.

Rules of exclusion   In Fig.7.1 and Fig.7.2, those marked boundaries function as rules of exclusion. The boundaries divide what is seen and not seen. A centring of TQM discourse is given rise to by exclusion. When the signifier TQM becomes the focus of attention, for instance, one of the main criteria for evaluating texts on TQM for journal publications is how they relate to the TQM-centred discourse (see chapter 8). Therefore, those texts that implicitly assert the 'essence of TQM' as a basis for engaging debates and conforming to the orthodoxy have a chance to be considered by the editors. Perhaps indirectly, this explains why one often finds that published texts on TQM look so much alike, with positivistic overtones. For the same reason, rules of exclusion make it difficult for conceptually sound arguments on TQM to emerge. A plausible start for them may question the 'essence' premise, ie. its empiricist epistemological ground for knowledge claims. In a space occupied by the orthodox discourse, any questioning that appears subversive may be viewed with suspicion, if

not distrust and hostility. At best, such questions constitute a Kuhnian anomaly (Kuhn, 1970) that must wait for its time. Within the orthodox discursive space, critiques, if ever allowed to surface, may be kept at the margin (see chapter 8). Nevertheless, what happens if margins are where radical shifts of ground take place, and if margins are where the creation of a different discursive space begins ?

In Fig.7.1, the lower boundary signifies an historical starting point, *arbitrarily* drawn from and for the discursive TQM centre. It follows that when the 1st order texts are enunciated as the 'origin', it must be an arbitrary beginning for the TQM discourse. Insofar as an 'origin' is provisional and not taken as given, it does not mislead. Otherwise, a recourse to 'the origin' of TQM is confusing [13].

This said, one may relate a discursive (re)construction to what is normally referred to as 'subjects'. The drawing of boundaries becomes a Foucauldian 'condition of possibility' for establishing a 'subject'. Hence, 'subjects' signify discursive territories, with their arbitrary beginnings. Over time, these territories may be revisited by academics and professionals engaging in each other's discourse through 'subjects' to the extent that their territorial boundaries may be forgotten. A moment arrives when arbitrary beginnings are *lost*. Instead, what remains recognisable is a working norm, by which discursive engagements are regulated. If one takes prescriptive TQM as such a norm, one may work out what a researcher is expected to say and not to say in his output. This change in appearance, or a disappearance of arbitrary beginnings, is nothing but perceptual -- a way of not seeing the boundaries and of not reflecting on a dominant discursive norm. Given time, an arbitrary choice of boundaries may be turned into a perception of 'origin'. In a Foucauldian schema, such an 'origin' corresponds to a 'division', illustrated by Foucault with the notion of the visible and invisible (Foucault, 1973). Similarly, a division between what is considered as a prescriptive TQM practice and what is not makes the former visible and seemingly credible. On the other hand, anything that does not readily fall into the dominant norm is kept invisible. Here comes

a moment when one is reminded of the ubiquitous effect of perspective, a theme resonates in Foucault's texts [14].

To set boundaries is to offer a frame, as in Fig.7.2, which incorporates *Frames I* and *II*. Fig.7.1 leaves an unoccupied space on the right to be accounted for. It lies outside the TQM-centred discourse. The making of *Frames II* is also historical, because it is constrained to certain possibilities of 'there and then', as the evolving of SQC to TQC and to TQM shows. In a Derridean schema, the labour of framing is accomplished by making and maintaining certain events present whilst keeping other events absent (Derrida, 1982). In the analysis of TQM discourse, such presence takes the form of the asserted 'origin' or 'essence' of TQM so that TQM becomes a 'subject' and practice for inquiries. By contrast, discursive centres (eg. SQC, TQC or TQM), their historical shifts, and arbitrary boundaries are absent from the normative TQM discourse. The double effect of rules of exclusion is that they make presence as well as absence. A division makes a mark: Where there is presence of TQM, there is also its absence that is not readily perceived and scrutinised.

Internal rules   As Foucauldian classifications, both the orders of texts and linkages discussed are categories, with which texts on TQM and those who produced them may be differentiated. These categories enable us to establish texts and their writers into an ordering.

To classify is to divide. To divide TQM discourse into orders is to follow a seemingly reductionist mode of thinking: Events or texts are thrown into pigeonholes. Once certain texts are put into a normative frame, their appearance in that frame becomes fixed to the extent that other possible appearances, for instance, a 'that' in-the-making in Fig.7.2, becomes invisible. From Fig.7.2, one notes that there was a time when SQC was the prevailing discourse yet it was simultaneously evolving into a 'that', known as TQC later. By the same token, the dominant TQC discourse was remade

into a 'that' -- TQM -- in the west. In due course, TQM may be reshaped by another discursive centring, a 'that' from a present position. One may interpret the left column of Fig.7.2 in two ways: the making and the ready-made take place simultaneously. Despite the discursive centring of TQM, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd orders are nevertheless sufficient for formulating a norm for TQM inquiries. On such a basis, the normative approach to TQM produces texts that fall into one of these orders. Indeed, both orders and linkages contribute to a network. When orders are made visible and linkages seem less so, the network disappears, since without the latter, there is no web (chapter 5). Further, the orders on their own function as divisions. Given an historical continuum, as in Fig.7.2, there are moments when divisions appear and/or disappear. They may be either seen as a starting point or examined as the effect of events evolved earlier. To fix certain events into one order without considering the possibility of moves from one discursive centre to the next is to impose a particular ordering to the 'condition of possibilities' so that an alternative ordering is submerged or denied.

Fig.7.1 is suggestive of an organising principle for TQM. To establish such ordering is a familiar academic ritual -- a 'literature review', which is on one side of the equation of what is known. On the other side, the question becomes *how* one knows *what* is known. As an outsider to the field, for instance, when I enter the site, my 'literature review' must be a first step for me to become an insider. By offering a critical account in the literature, I help to reinforce a certain ordering of TQM discourse, by constructing Fig.7.1. For those who may question Fig.7.1, radical moves have to be made such that a re-ordering of the literature is proposed. Specifically, when I do my 'literature review', I am working out the mainstream. I have to anticipate the response of my audience, if I am over-critical in my account. The usual audience of TQM includes quality control experts, professionals interested in operations management and strategy. If they regard my work as that of an outsider's, it is because that they expect their discursive norm to be observed. To challenge that norm, one has to shake its empiricist ground. Whatever approach I may take, the way in which I engage the

extant literature is an act of re-orientation or disorientation of an established norm. In particular, what is at stake in the 'literature review' is the fact that there is *already* a dominant discourse to be reckoned with. If I follow this prevailing ordering, I at the same time reduce the chance for an alternative ordering to surface.

Initially, the site of Fig.7.2 is marked arbitrarily. A Foucauldian archaeological mode of analysis enables one to move across such arbitrary lines, away from what is asserted in the mainstream. If an archaeological layer is analogous to a level of understanding, levels of understanding of TQM may be projected. Having discussed Fig.7.2, one begins to see the conditions with which different understandings may come into being (chapter 9). Again, for newcomers to the site, it is helpful to know the rules governing the game of TQM discourse, though they may not always be articulated. To become an 'insider', such rules have to be observed. In doing a 'literature review' on TQM, one operates at an archaeological site where decisions have to be made: he either stays with one particular discursive centre, be it TQC or TQM, or makes moves from one to the next (or, a 'that'). As a guiding heuristic, one learns the rules and participate. One wonders whether this is what being-in-the-field or becoming an 'insider' is all about.

A reflection of the mainstream may come from a different direction of thinking. For instance, orders of texts are not merely a way of throwing each text into a pigeonhole but a preliminary procedure to move a given understanding of TQM further from the prescriptive norm. Indeed, both Fig.7.1 and Fig.7.2 may be seen as an effect of ordering and a starting point from where the making of TQM discourse is scrutinised in movement. In so doing, one does not simply follow Foucault's footsteps by providing proof of his rules governing a discourse. Rather, knowing what he has (un)said is a first step. One also reads his mind, if that is not impossible. To those the ordering or framing looks 'structural', here is my response. 'Structure' and deconstruction go hand in hand. One cannot conduct the latter without the former.

Without an ordering to begin with, what is deconstruction up against (see Derrida, 1983) ?

7.4. From Discursive Production to Knowledge Consumption

To consider orders of texts and rules governing a discourse is to see and know TQM in a way *other than* the familiar prescriptive view. From this position of an 'other', prescriptive knowledge on TQM has a normative face. Let us highlight a normative perspective and a production-consumption perspective and explore their implications.

Normative TQM practice   One of the preoccupations of writers on TQM is to prescribe solutions for success (Juran, 1978; Crosby, 1979; Vogel, 1979; Deming, 1986; Garvin, 1988; Oakland, 1989). It is like a doctor's diagnosis and treatment of a patient. One of the central concerns of these texts is to make a quality management agenda, evident in numerous reports (eg. Dale and Plunkett, 1990; Naden and Bremner, 1991; Mohr, 1991; Powers, 1991; Whyte and Witcher, 1992; Witcher, 1993). Arguably, a prescriptive agenda operates with the assumption that there must be 'TQM theory' on the one hand and its 'practice' on the other (see eg. Oakland, 1989; Bank, 1992). Here is the accepted division in TQM: 'theory' and 'practice'. From Cooper's position on 'division-create-perspective' (Cooper, 1987), the division creates a particular perspective: the normative face of TQM. Normative TQM constitutes a discursive practice for those who have participated in TQM discourse, eg. managers or quality management experts or researchers on the TQM 'subject'. There is a recursive theme of 'ideas' for improving quality on the one hand and 'techniques' for acting upon those 'ideas' on the other (Feigenbaum, 1951; 1956; Juran, 1988; Ishikawa, 1964; 1985; Ashburn, 1977; Bodek, 1980; Imai, 1986; Oliver and Wilkinson, 1988), shown in Fig.7.3.
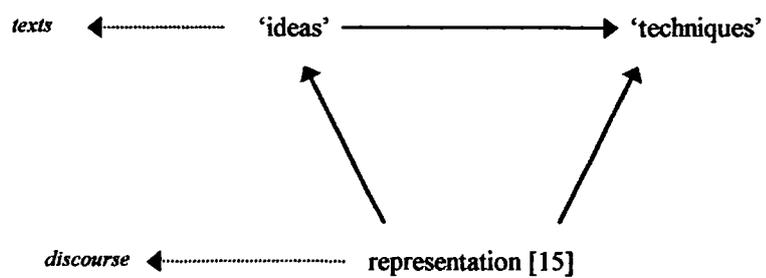
Normative TQM Practice

Figure 7.3 A familiar face of normative TQM

For instance, according to Oakland (1989) and Bank (1992), participants in a TQM programme should generate new ideas through suggestions or initiatives. In the normative literature, however, the discursive capacity of TQM has been left unscrutinised [16]. A considerable part of the literature is on 'new ideas' and 'techniques'. By far, the most popular topic is about 'techniques' for improving and/or maximising productivity and efficiency in light of the successful record of the Japanese. The usual assertion is that 'ideas' from participants will contribute to satisfying the customer and to the well-being of a company. To a certain extent, 'techniques' appear persuasive, since they promise proven procedures of guidance for making a good idea work in practice [17]. The mainstream literature pays a lot of attention to 'techniques', because when compared them with soft 'ideas', they are considered to be less dependent on a specific workplace and can be transferable from one place to another (see Journal of Management Studies, 1995).

In normative TQM, texts are first and foremost perceived to be instrumental and are no more than a means for articulating 'ideas' and delineating 'techniques'. With this position on texts, they must be a *second* order, see the left side of Fig.7.3. That is to say, if the medium (or, a text) carries a message, the medium cannot be the message itself. This position is far from, if not contrary to, the broad intellectual commitment of poststructuralist writers. Their re-evaluation of the *capacity of* the medium, such as language, discourse and writing, has been one of their hallmarks. For poststructuralists, the medium, if not the message itself, is where messages live and spring from (see Jacques, 1992). Following the discussion in chapter 6, one maintains that normative TQM is also representational in that an 'idea' *of* and *for* TQM, as a signified, finds its expression or outlet in a 'technique'. It is the latter that accomplishes a course of action to become a signifier/name that signifies the 'idea'. Here, the bond between 'ideas' and 'techniques' is analogous to that of signified and signifier. Without knowing how 'ideas' work in practice, 'ideas' may not have much appeal to practising managers. As argued earlier, a representational practice is incomplete a picture for understanding TQM

discourse when a Saussurean trichotomy is introduced (chapter 6). There is no representation without a dichotomy. The latter confines a representation within its limit. Similarly, prescriptive solutions on TQM, a manifestation of representation, conceal the normative perspective insofar as the ontological status of texts remain secondary. As long as the *dependent* status of texts is not questioned, there seems little need to scrutinise the representational practice itself.

The effect of a discursive production   In thinking about such effect, there are two avenues open to us. First, a mechanistic view may creep in, on the basis that the effect will become knowledge and there is *nothing other than* knowledge; and, knowledge on TQM is for consumption. Categorically, this view holds that the outcome of the production is knowledge, and knowledge production and its consumption are sequential events. For instance, the production of academic or professional journal articles on TQM, in terms of 'ideas' and 'techniques' through case reports, are to be consumed by managers, MBA students or other producers of similar texts [18]. Some professionals are in a production mode at a given time whilst others are in consumption, as evident among management academics (chapter 2).

A less obvious horizon arises when one looks closely at the effect of discursive production. What happens if knowledge on TQM in the normative literature becomes only *a certain effect* of discursive production ? Is it possible that there may be another effect that the normative perspective sheds no light on, therefore, one is unable to see it ? Further, is it possible that so far a 'conceptual link' is missing in the mechanistic production-consumption view ? That is, a 'spatial effect' *other than* the representational practice eludes us ? By this question, a conceptual space whereby a TQM discourse derived from an arbitrary linguistic sign (chapters 4 and 6), may be explored. That is to suggest, the effect of a discursive production is *more than* knowledge on TQM. In this case, how can any 'extra' effect, until now absent from our sight, be highlighted ?

To explore such a possibility, let us consider two forms of production: the practice of painting and that of writing. To what extent may the effect of one form of production illuminate the practice of the other ?

In the history of Chinese painting (see Chang, 1963; Bush, 1971; Scharfstein, 1976; Sullivan, 1979), there has been a literati landscape tradition since Wang Wei (?699-?761), a great poet and devout Ch'an (Zen in Japanese) follower of the T'ang dynasty. This tradition was revitalised by master Tung Chi-ch'ang (1555-1636; see Ho and Smith, 1992) of the late Ming dynasty with his revolutionary theory of painting, known as *bi-mo-du-li* [19]. Literally, it means 'brush and ink stand on their own'. It can be interpreted as brush and ink (ie. *bi-mo* 筆 墨) *independent of* representing nature. In Chinese art, brush and ink refers to calligraphy in general and to literati painting in particular. Before Tung, painting, as a scholarly pursuit, was never so radically envisaged such that it could be *separated from* its source -- nature -- as *the* object for expression. Tung insisted that "in terms of the wonders of scenery, painting does not equal nature. In terms of the marvels of brush and ink, however, nature decidedly does not equal painting" (see Loehr, 1980). It is said that Tung's theory of painting breaks new ground for brush and ink and, in so doing, takes landscape painting away from representation into a domain beyond the classical realism mainstream. Paradoxically, that domain is created by brush and ink themselves. Tung has shown in his paintings that, *standing on their own*, they create a kind of life *without* the precondition of an 'object' outside painting. Because of Tung and his followers, since the 17th century, there have been ways of setting painting free from the traditional position on painting which held that brush strokes are to represent something other than themselves. Interestingly, three centuries later, Tung's theory found its resonance in Saussure's theory of language (Saussure, 1959; Joseph, 1994a; Koerner, 1994) and, not surprisingly, in modern art movements in the west [20].

Table 7.1 is a brief sketch of Tung's school of painting *vis-à-vis* a poststructuralist writing. A certain intertextuality emerges. First of all, being able to paint or write requires craftsmanship through practice. A painter must be competent with 'brush and ink' just as a writer with the 'pen'. The given bond between *bi-mo*, as painting, and nature, as the 'object' for representation, is challenged by *bi-mo-du-li*. Hence, *bi-mo* begins to speak *of* and *for itself.* Equally, the bond between an arbitrary sign and 'something' other than language, that subsumes language to it, is shown to be arbitrary by Saussure [21]. Arguably, a poststructuralist writing reveals the arbitrariness of that bond by disconnecting it and showing how the bond is made in the first place (Foucault, 1972; Derrida, 1974; 1978; Cooper, 1987; Jacques, 1992; 1996b; Crasnow, 1994; Chia, 1996). If the intellectual heritage of Tung has been to set *bi-mo* free from representation, the same may be said of Saussure, with respect to language. Furthermore, the more recent poststructuralist ontological position on language has paid close attention to discourse, since Foucault (1967; 1970; 1971; 1972; 1973; 1977; Rabinow, 1984; Ball, 1990; Jacques, 1992), and writing since Derrida (1974; 1978; 1982; 1995; Norris, 1982; Gasché, 1986; 1994; Johnson, 1993) [22]. Accordingly, an end product in painting by Tung and his disciples may generate a multitude of visual and/or non-visual effects. Possibly, one viewer catches a rather 'abstract' image of mountains and rivers (Liu et al, 1994). Others may see much more in the same painting than an 'abstract' image. How much artistic or spiritual resonance there is between a Tung's painting and a viewer may largely depend on how familiar the viewer is with *yi-jing* (意 境), briefly the 'domain of ideas' or 'state of mind', an important technical term in Chinese painting, profoundly influenced by the Taoist and Ch'an philosophical traditions [23].

With respect to a discursive production, a critical point may be drawn. Writing/texts can be both representational, consistent with the accepted view on language and something *other than* the representational, if one reads Saussure carefully. When discourse is more than representing a TQM practice 'out there' (ie.

signified), the discursive production may be wider than the representational knowledge on TQM. Similarly, from a poststructuralist ontological position on discourse/writing, one pays close attention to the effect of a discursive production. It is to suggest that prescriptive TQM, though being the effect of a representational practice, be *far from all of* the effect of a discursive production. It means that since the effect of discursive TQM production is more than knowledge on TQM, a discursive production is <u>not</u> the same as knowledge production. When knowledge on TQM is asserted and spoken of, the discursive production is unwittingly and perhaps easily concealed. To this end, a poststructuralist approach seems to be a viable avenue for engaging the discursive TQM production owing to its commitment in taking discourse/writing seriously. By contrast, there has been no room for rethinking language and discourse from the positivist(-empiricist) mainstream. For the latter, it is difficult to imagine that a discursive production, therefore discourse, takes place *before* prescriptive knowledge on TQM is made. The relationship between a discursive production and knowledge may be expressed in this way: the stage of building a house is similar to that of a discursive production; some of the rooms are subsequently labelled as knowledge.

Perspectives revisited   Fig.7.4 is where normative TQM, from top down on the right, may be reconsidered from a different perspective. Namely, normative TQM becomes knowledge consumption, viewed from the opposite direction. In normative TQM, as in Fig. 7.3, texts and discourse are regarded as secondary and because of it, scrutiny into discourse or discursive TQM production is restricted. From Fig.7.4, one realises that a discursive production lies *outside* the frame of normative TQM. Therefore, when viewed from a position of a discursive production, texts and discourse are no longer subordinate to knowledge consumption. Rather, they become the condition of such consumption and, to a certain extent, as *artefacts of* that production.

A Sketch of a Chinese Painting	A Sketch of a Poststructuralist Writing
competent with 'brush & ink'(*bi-mo*) (craftmanship through practice)	competent with 'pen' (craftmanship through practice)
bi-mo-du-li (delink bi-mo from representation)	linguistic sign signifies (delink language from representation)
yi-jing/schema	understanding/supplementary logic
spatial (non)distribution of *bi-mo*	(non)inscribing a conceptual space
authentic perception from *bi-mo*	perceptive argument
fusion of *yi-jing* & *bi-mo* ('oneness')	fusion of 'ideas' & 'form' ('oneness')

Table 7.1 Intertextuality of a Chinese painting and a poststructuralist writing [24]

A discerning reader might feel uneasy about the production-consumption perspective in Fig.7.4 when viewed from the bottom-up. What is visible on the left hand side seems incompatible with that on the right. First of all, rather than being consistently matched with a discursive TQM consumption, the discursive production is presented side-by-side with knowledge consumption. Next, other than an indication that in normative TQM, discourse remains to be representational, an understanding on knowledge production is nevertheless sketchy. Indeed, such an odd match has not been the result of an oversight but a deliberate attempt for illustrating a point. What *may be seen* when the discursive production is introduced at the *site of normative TQM*: knowledge consumption comes into sight.

It is worthy of note that in Fig. 7.4 the directions of arrows in Fig.7.3, from 'ideas' to 'texts' and from representation to discourse, have been reversed. The change demonstrates that, from the perspective of a discursive production, the ontological status of texts and discourse is no longer secondary. To a certain extent, knowledge consumption appears at the downstream of an evolving process whereas the discursive production appears at the upstream. Obviously, the normative perspective frames TQM into a particular shape such that a discursive production is out of sight, as in Fig.7.3. Alternatively, the production-consumption perspective makes it possible to accommodate the normative.

With respect to consumption, the following questions may be raised. Do academics consume knowledge on TQM or the *effect* of a discursive production when the latter is *taken as* knowledge ? Is it not possible that one thinks he has engaged in producing and consuming knowledge whereas he is, first and foremost, producing and consuming *discourse* ? To consume TQM discourse means that consumption may have its discursive face.

(Language of TQM)

Normative TQM

orders ⟶ texts ⟶

'ideas' & 'techniques'

rules ⟶ discourse ⟶

representational

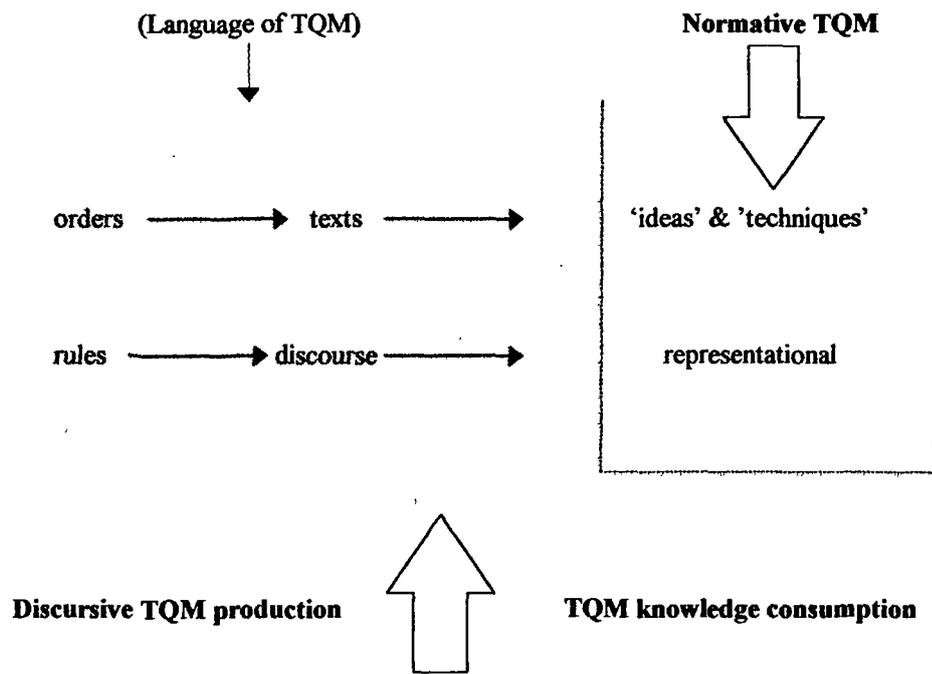Discursive TQM production

TQM knowledge consumption

Figure 7.4 A grafted production-consumption perspective

If one does consume the effect of a discursive production, yet calling it 'knowledge', one may then at least clarify ambiguities between knowledge production and its consumption as well as in their relation to a discursive production. Having acknowledged this point, how does it happen when the effect of discourse is taken as knowledge ? Is it not possible that, in the mainstream inquiries on TQM, questions are always directed to knowledge but seldom thrown back upon discourse itself ? If knowledge production has been one important preoccupation of academics, this chapter might have helped to highlight the discursive site that may have given birth to knowledge.

7.5   Summary

Having taken a few Foucauldian steps, the archaeological site of TQM discourse has been mapped out. The discussion shows that both 'internal rules' and 'rules of exclusion' are at work in TQM discourse. Perhaps, here comes a moment when careful consideration is required. It is discourse and its relation to knowledge that deserve close scrutiny. If the *shaping capacity of discourse* to knowledge production and consumption has been overlooked, there is indeed the possibility for one to see and know discourse differently -- a poststructuralist view on TQM discourse. Provided one is still able to exercise his critical faculty, he may have realised that before he arrives at 'knowledge', he has to be on his way to knowledge, first.

Notes:

1. For example, one may look at the way in which Shewhart's text (Shewhart, 1931) is treated in the TQM literature. In Figure 7.2, Shewhart's work falls outside *Frame 1* because his work constitutes the SQC-centred discourse and its relationship to the TQM-centred discourse is rather remote. This may be why, to most writers on TQM, Shewhart's contribution is conveniently reduced to statistical techniques rather than being recognised as a pioneering effort of establishing an effective methodology for reducing defects in industrial quality control.

2. It is time that a distinction between 'being empirical' and 'being empiricist' in management research was made. Whilst it is hard to reject the former, concerning what constitutes 'evidence/data', a path I have not followed is that of the latter. I am yet to be convinced by empiricist followers, for whom 'data' and 'facts' are asserted to be 'out there' for collection. 'Being empiricist' means that a

researcher assumes that he can stand outside 'data' and 'facts', since they have little to do with his perception of them.

3. I am referring to those texts produced between the 1950s and the early 1960s, mostly in their 2nd editions.

4. The 1st edition is about 400 pages in length and the 3rd edition is expanded to about 800 pages.

5. For instance, one may be reminded of the way in which Feigenbaum's work is treated in Oakland (1989).

6. See 'The ends of man' in *Margins of philosophy* (Derrida, 1982).

7. Orders of TQM texts can be regarded as levels of understanding, since texts are usually considered in a specific discursive space with its reference to time and place.

8. To follow a normative mode of TQM research, researchers can avoid conceptual difficulties in the name of direct relevance to a management practice 'out there'. Given this, the 'originality' in such research largely depends on a set of 'data' not previously gathered and analysed. Whether a researcher can *make a path on his own* as he plots on is outside his agenda. Perhaps, such an act is not normally required of him in the first place.

9. Historical shifts illustrated in Fig.7.2 may be interpreted in light of Chinese medicine (see Veith, 1949/66; Porkert, 1974; Kaptchuk, 1983), with the exchange of *yin-yang* at noon and midnight in a continuous evolving process (or, 'cycles'). Therefore, the beginning of the day or its coming-into-being and the end of the night or its fading-out-of-being fuse into one. The evolving of SQC, TQC and TQM may be interpreted in the same way.

10. Here, my use of the term 'archaeology' follows the way in which Foucault employs it such that it is possible to revisit or investigate my research site of TQM, with the implications of archaeological artefacts and various physical layers of the site in an excavation. To prevent unnecessary confusion, it may be helpful to add a qualifier 'traditional' or 'conventional' to my use of 'archaeology', when taking into account poststructuralist thinking in the discipline of Archaeology. I am grateful to Carole Brooke for this point.

11. For instance, when TQM was still popular in the early 1990s, articles on newspapers (eg. the *Financial Times*) published a number of watered-down versions of survey reports conducted by academic researchers.

12. Cf. *The order of things* (Foucault, 1970), although what I have embarked on in this thesis is in a much smaller scale. One of my readings of Foucault suggests that his portraying brush on those historical shifts as *episteme* seems a little short of details. Here, I am trying to paint with a few more brush strokes on TQM.

13. This is a reflection on the notion of the 'original texts' or 'roots of TQM'. Neither 'original' or 'root' can escape what Foucault calls 'conditions of possibility'.

14. Cf. Foucault's prose *Las Meninas* (Foucault, 1970). He draws the reader's attention to pictorial representation first and then embarks on elaborating a discursive practice as representational. See also *The birth of the clinic* (Foucault, 1973), in particular chapters 7 and 9.

15. Representation is made possible by a dichotomy of signified-signifier, see Xu (1996a). See chapters 4 and 6.

16. The position of the mainstream critiques on TQM practice seems to be largely coming from the Marxist tradition (eg. Wilkinson and Willmott, 1995). However, Woodilla (1996) has recently offered a linguistic analysis on TQM. Though my approach to the TQM discourse (Xu, 1996b) can be described as 'poststructuralist', it is worthy of note a strikingly similar implication drawn from

Woodilla's work and mine. This may be interpreted as follows: The <u>link</u> between the 'rhetoric of TQM' or the discourse and the 'real practice of TQM' or a signified practice 'out there' is fairly <u>arbitrary</u>. That is, 'doing the talking on TQM' and 'doing TQM without the talking' may not have much to do with one another ! Attention may be drawn to the assumption: namely, where there is 'theory' on TQM, there must be its 'practice'. To this division, one may point out that the *bond* is tenuous.

17. For information on Japanese quality management practices, such as pokayoke, kanban, JIT, lean manufacturing, see Sugimori et al. (1977), Kobayashi (1978), Yamada et al. (1980), Shingo (1981; 1986) and Monden (1981a; 1981b; 1981c; 1981d; 1993).

18. See doctoral dissertations on TQM in the early 1990s (Mohr, 1991; Powers 1991; Brooke 1991).

19. See Ho and Smith (1992) and Liu et al (1994) on Tung Ch'i-ch'ang, see also Sullivan (1979) for a comprehensive introduction to Chinese landscape painting.

20. For an introduction of modern art movements, see Lynton (1980). In *This is not a pipe*, Foucault (1983) provides a short yet insightful account on modern art and in particular on Rene Magritte's work.

21. The 'poststructuralist' appreciation of (or 'preoccupation' with) discourse for Foucault and writing for Derrida may be traced back to Saussure (1916/1959) through his seminal posthumous publication on general linguistics.

22. To understand Derrida, one wishes to know where he starts his deconstruction project. Tracing back, one finds Heidegger. It is worthy of note that some of the so called 'difficult' or 'unique' thinking of Heidegger and Derrida may be compared with the Taoist philosophy, see the two special issues of *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* (1984; 1990). See also Fu (1976; 1977), Yeh (1982) and Cheng (1995).

23. For an introduction to the Ch'an Buddhist thinking, see Chan (1963) and Wright (1986). For understanding the Taoist philosophical tradition, see Fung (1931), Chan (1963), Chang (1963), Merton (1970), Shiu (1979), Coleman (1991) and Wu (1991).

24. If painting, *bi-mo*, can 'stand on its own' as *bi-mo-du-li* without having to fulfil the task of representing 'mountains and rivers' or simply 'the world' as the 'out there' reality, why cannot language, *yu-yian*, be seen in the same light ? May I propose *yu-yian-du-li*, literally 'language stands on its own'. It is a point of departure from the received wisdom on language as a mere 'tool for communication'. This is what is meant by intertextuality between a painting and a writing. Also, intertextuality is an effect of my reflection on the kind of writing this text may be categorised as 'poststructuralist', see also chapter 10.

THE MAKING OF TQM PRACTICE

Part Four of the thesis continues the opening up operation, providing a supplementary understanding of TQM practice.

Chapter 8

A Theorising Practice: Hi(gh)-story and Concealed Margins

Specifically, knowledge production through a *theorising practice* is examined, with the focus on the dynamics of centre-margin relationships. The 'centre' produces a privileged hi(gh)-story, derived from 'history', with 'low' stories at its margins. The seemingly legitimate aim of theorising has always been to build a framework. However, it simultaneously generates its own boundaries. When the latter are made present, the shaping of the framework may be duly appreciated. The chapter reveals that placing discourse at the position, normally reserved for the signified, may bring about a radical change of perception to such notions like 'origin', 'theory' and 'practice'.

Chapter 9

TQM Practice: Three Appearances

Indeed, one discerns more than one practice: a practice 'out there', i.e. the *signified*, and a theorising practice with discursive devices. Facilitated by the *bond* between signified and *signifier* (i.e. TQM), the theorising practice and the representational practice may be confused as the same. However, if one reads Saussure carefully, the concealed *arbitrary sign* and the *arbitrary bond* will have a profound impact on both 'theory' (or, discourse) and 'practice'.

In the spirit of poststructuralism, one stops seeking for the 'essence of TQM'. Rather, one captures *appearances*/disappearances, which take place before a fixed mode of being (Heidegger, 1959). In the Heideggerean mode of becoming-in-the-world, it is proposed that the coming-into-being of TQM practice be with three appearances: a working practice, a prescriptive practice and a discursive practice.

CHAPTER EIGHT

A THEORISING PRACTICE: HI(GH)-STORY
AND CONCEALED MARGINS

> *Onlookers are impressed by the liveliness of what has happened;*
> *Craftsmen enjoy checking door-path(s) --*
> *Wondering how what has happened happens.*
>
> *(Chinese proverb, my translation)*

The proverb implies that onlookers at a scene are attracted to an outcome whilst craftsmen react differently. Owing to the latter's hands-on experience, they seem to have acquired a knack for tracing a door-path step-by-step that *leads to* an outcome. Similar to some viewers' consumption of TV programmes, if onlookers are those who consume and retell a story, the source of material is probably from craftsmen. In this chapter, some craftsmanlike steps will be taken on a TQM door-path. To this end, chapters in Part III may be regarded as parallel door-paths leading to the outcome of a supplementary understanding of TQM.

In this chapter, attention will be drawn to how the making of a discursive centre produces its margins and how 'centre' and margins create and depend on each other [1]. Subsequently, the focus will be on how the centre-margin relates to the established 'TQM theory', in particular, conceptual presence through notions such as 'the origin' or 'foundation' and 'the nature'/'thingness' or 'essence' of TQM (eg. Bank 1992).

By looking at a *theorising practice* of TQM, the discussion illustrates Foucault's proposal on taking the act of theorising itself as practice (Foucault, 1971; 1972: 46, 186). In TQM research, a conceptual framework or 'theory' becomes a usual destination to the extent that a much-pursued effect of theorising has produced 'TQM theory'. However, when theory is perceived as a *discursive device*, the way in which that device is used for generating theory may be highlighted. Paying due attention to the theorising practice enables one to investigate how and why theory proliferates in some academic quarters, as it is in MS in general.

8.1   TQM Hi(gh)-story as the Centre

A narrative of the past offers an interpretation of history. To articulate what has happened is to tell a story, to which 'his*tory*' bears a visual artefact. If one separates 'story' from 'history', one is left with some residue. To the question of 'what is history', one possible response is that history, as hi(gh)-story, is suggestive of a way of seeing. 'Story' is visually present in TQM history (Part III). When a privileged 'high' status is concealed, 'high story' eludes a Foucauldian gaze. Indeed, a hi(gh)-story has not been obvious in the TQM literature, because, a high story is one that is comparable to what is regarded as 'low'. What is high draws attention; what is high is above average and probably stands out in the crowd. If 'high culture' is established as a dominant culture by and for some, there may be 'low culture' created by and for others. The question of TQM 'high story' *by* and *for* whom in what ways may be raised (chapters 5 and 7).

Let us remind ourselves of the Greek origin of 'theory'. *'Theōrein'* literally means to 'look at'. It is an expression for seeing. It follows that theories are ways of seeing 'something', be it an event, phenomenon or even 'theory' itself, as 'TQM theory' is referred to in the literature [2]. With respect to ways of seeing and writing, Gaarder (1995) presented a remarkably accessible hi(gh)-story of western philosophy [3]. The merit of Gaarder's effort comes from his exceptional ability to translate mind-boggling

'theory' of philosophy into a readable story to an interested public. Gaarder has shown that what is usually thought of as a difficult subject, for him Philosophy, can be presented in a way that an educated lay person can follow.

For a writer or 'author' in a conventional sense, the issue of how to articulate is unavoidable. Whilst exploring painting, art historian E. H. Gömbrich made his starting point clear: Painting was widely held as a form of representation. In Gömbrich's study on the psychology of pictorial representation, he investigated how painting and knowing were, up to a point, inseparable. In *Art and Illusion*, he commented that " ... artists have discovered that the simple demand that they should 'paint what they see' is self-contradictory. This sounds like one of the paradoxes with which modern artists and critics like to tease the long-suffering public; but to those who have followed this book from the beginning it should not be difficult to understand. We remember how the primitive artist used to build up, say, a face out of simple forms rather than copy a real face ... . We have often looked back to the Egyptians and their method of representing in a picture *all they knew* rather than *all they saw*. Greek and Roman art breathed life into these schematic forms; medieval art used them in turn for telling the sacred story, Chinese art for contemplation. Neither was urging the artist to 'paint what he saw'" (Gömbrich 1959/77: 330, emphasis added). To use Gömbrich's expression, "the Egyptian in us can be suppressed, but he can never be quite defeated" (ibid.: 331). On seeing and knowing, Gömbrich went on " ... we have come to realize more and more, since those days, that we can never neatly separate what we see from what we know. A person who was born blind, and who gains eyesight later on, must *learn* to see. With some self-discipline and self-observation we can all find out for ourselves that what we call seeing is invariably coloured and shaped by our knowledge (or belief) of what we see" (ibid.: 331, emphasis by Gömbrich). Also, in studying the history of European thought or epistemic shifts, Foucault demonstrated how seeing and saying, which is, for many, representation through writing, was tangled or 'contaminated' one

another (Foucault 1970; see also Foucault 1973). Similarities between what is demanded of artists in painting and of researchers in writing may be outlined.

Firstly, the assertion that TQM researchers can represent in writing what they see, with their fieldwork data, becomes illusory. To paraphrase Gömbrich, the simple demand that researchers 'write all they saw' is self-contradictory. Rather, they have written, if not all, what they know of TQM. The data, that they believed to have 'collected', are there to prove what they have already, theoretically if not empirically, known. Whatever justification one gives in defence of an empiricist/positivist approach, one is seldom pushed to the point where he has to reconsider one simple question: 'What *constitutes* data or evidence'. Any answer to it is by itself a particular way of (un)seeing evidence. This in part explains why the results of many survey reports and case studies on TQM look so much alike [4]. If, say, ten researchers ask similar questions at the outset of their inquiries and take a conventional path of investigation, it does not require much imagination for one to realise that they would probably produce unsurprising outcomes. A common point of departure must be what is seen as their research problems.

Secondly, one contends that a researcher who has been domesticated to the empiricist approach may be blind to other epistemological positions. As such, he must *learn to see*, if he wishes to gain his eyesight for seeing differently; that is, necessarily from a position *other than* the one by which the known (or knowledge) has been shaped. To mainstream researchers, this 'other' is indeed an adventure promising minimal certainty.

Thirdly, what may have been considered as a 'TQM perspective' in the discourse of management is invariably coloured and shaped by the knowledge (or belief) of what is *seen as* and *of* TQM. The difficulty of reaching a satisfactory definition of quality, as Munro (1995) has noted, arises when the perception of TQM

varies according to what is seen as and of it. To a certain extent, a lack of a defensible conceptual infrastructure may be part of the problem. If I cannot sufficiently reject the general premise of Gömbrich and Foucault, I have to face up to its logical consequence. That is, *how one knows what* he knows influences *how one sees what* he sees and *how one says what* he has to say. Accordingly, it is no longer adequate to pursue the 'thingness of TQM' -- to produce an answer to 'what is TQM ' -- but how a certain 'thingness' comes into being. In the same light, the way I know and see shapes how I tell what is known of TQM to the extent that there is no way of saying or writing (and painting) without a way of knowing/seeing.

So, what happens when a story is told to an audience, if not always to listeners? The way of telling, by which a story-teller establishes a certain relationship with the intended audience, often goes little noted. In order to achieve certain perceptual effects, 'I', a story-teller, have to *make choices* of historical events to be included in a formal conference presentation in a particular way. It is rather like editing the shots in film-making. To cut or not to cut certain shots will have an impact on what is to be (un)seen by the prospective audience. For instance, I told my TQM story at the BAM'96 conference [5]. Before the moment of delivery, I asked myself: by telling the story in this way, with whom are you engaging ? My concern was the presenter's identity in relation to the audience. At the conference, the presenter-audience relationship varied depending on how and what the presenter chose to highlight. The way in which the sessions were organized also contributed to the shaping of such a relationship. In the previous years, the sessions were typically subject-based and designed under the general heading TQM so that experts and critics were grouped together and had a chance to meet each other. At BAM'96, the TQM heading disappeared. Instead, my paper on TQM was categorised into the 'critical thinking' stream. Thanks to this arrangement, I happened to face a different audience than in the previous years. I had a rather scholarly exchange with the audience, although traditional TQM experts were notably absent. The new heading had a double effect:

allowing critics of different subjects to come together whilst separating TQM experts from its critics.

In a discursive space, as in Figure 7.1, a 'centre' becomes a starting point for contemplating a TQM hi(gh)-story. Within the two arbitrary borderlines, although the 'centre' stands with its margins invisible, yet the empty space for the latter is discernible. In Fig. 7.2, the left and right columns indicate historical/anthropological and archaeological dimensions as 'margins' to the 'centre' -- the middle column. Indeed, Figure. 7.2 illustrates how a TQM 'high story' becomes what it is known. To support this, let us recall how professional journals contribute to the hi(gh)-story through their editorial decisions.

There are at least two journals on TQM, one appears more academic than the other. The editorial statement of *Total Quality Management* goes that "No topics which relate to total quality management will be excluded from consideration." This open-ended statement gives no indication as to how far the editor is prepared to go for considering possible ways of relating. If this editor avoids the question of 'how-to-relate', the editor of *The TQM Magazine* is specific. He insists that "Contributors should always spell out the practical implications of their work for those involved in quality management. Case study articles should normally specify: background and context; objectives, ie. what we were trying to do; the salient events; the results, and how they were obtained; the implications for others involved in quality management. ... Please keep to a minimum general discussions on the history of quality management thought, ... Instead focus on operational strategies and tactics on how to make these things happen, including lessons from unsuccessful initiatives." A discerning reader cannot fail to detect the editorial preference.

First, he expects empiricist submissions, since there is no indication that inquiries on alternative understandings of the TQM phenomenon are welcome.

Seemingly, a certain type of questions, such as 'what is TQM', is absent. Second, it follows that case study method is the norm of presenting and analysing data. However, both the method and the orientation of 'collecting data' work on certain assumptions of 'what constitutes reality' and where it is 'found'. This second editor is no exception. Third, the historical evolution of ideas on quality control, and lately management, is not considered to be of much relevance. Only operational strategies and methods are useful and practical. Here lies an irony. If one is not concerned with knowing how the thinking of 'quality' has evolved over time, how can he be expected to contemplate or project possible changes from the present to an unknown future ? It is not inconceivable that a hi(gh)-story can also be an interpretation of the present from a position, say, ten years from now. If the editors have no need to justify their position for dismissing potential sources and evolving ideas on quality, then the logic for nurturing critical analyses, including scrutinising the reference frame of a quality discourse, has little room in their thinking. No wonder the reader is seldom surprised by the conclusions from both publications, for their lack is the freedom to question and a discursive space for debates on TQM. If, without ever seen a dragon before, duke Ye creates his own image of dragon (chapter 1), the editors, together with academic and professional practitioners as stakeholders in a joint enterprise, namely TQM advocates of all shades, may have created their own brand or image of TQM. If the dragon is in the eyes of duke Ye, why cannot TQM be in the eyes of its beholder ?

An effect of recycling TQM 'hi(gh)-story' produces a discursive centre and, necessarily, a TQM discourse. By the act of repeating, one contributes to establishing that centre. Once being created, it may become an 'object' for consumption by other researchers and/or students. To this end, 'discursive centres' or 'theories' become consumable items [6]. In order to command an audience, TQM hi(gh)-story has to be reinforced by being retold. For instance, my literature review (chapter 2) heeds the standard research protocol as well as guarantees a TQM story, required to appear in dissertations or theses and in journal publications on TQM or related topics (eg.

Academy of Management Review, 1994). Repetition, as Foucault (1971) suggested, is a mechanism of making a narrative a truth regime. As onlookers are not expected to have an interest in tracing door-paths, what appears exciting for consumption is the outcome. To say that a TQM 'high story' is discursively-centred is to suggest that one academic subject dominate a Foucauldian discursive space, as in Fig. 7.2. Such a space seems to be crowded with one particular approach of shaping as its mode of distribution looks fairly predictable.

It is time to consider an ontological position for the centre. So far, the most audacious and inspiring critique or appropriation has been produced by Derrida (1978). To clarify how a discursive centre relates to a Derridean position, one goes back to Derrida's argument. He contends that " ... it was necessary to begin thinking that there was no centre, that the centre could not be thought in the form of a present-being, that *the centre had no natural site*, that it was *not a fixed locus* but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play. This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, *in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse* -- provided we can agree on this word -- that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is *never absolutely present outside a system of differences*. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification indefinitely" (Derrida 1978: 280, emphasis added).

To the good faith held by many that there will be an absolute place <u>outside</u> discourse (or writing/language) for one to return to, Derrida is fatally subversive. According to him, the signified as the centre or the original is an illusion ! Derrida's unravelling of the signified -- there is <u>no</u> absolute referential point -- makes 'the nature or essence of' TQM highly problematic. For those who are willing to follow Derrida's argument carefully, his radical position is derived from showing the reader some loaded attributes to the signified, which has been held as the non-disputed place

reserved for the ultimate 'truth', 'origin', 'essence' and the 'out there' reality. If the signified can be seen as a master knot, it is Derrida who has undone it. If one accepts that where there is a system of differences, there is the signified, then Derrida's argument will have a significant implication to TQM research in particular and management research in general: The signified has so far manifested through the practice 'out there' in organizations. In empiricist/positivist research, the only obvious justification is the legitimate seat occupied by the signified. Without radically reconsidering the signified, it is difficult to question the empiricist orientation. To this end, a discursive centre, discussed earlier, suggests no transcendental 'essence' or independent signified <u>outside</u> the TQM discourse. Rather, the discourse itself appears to have become part of the message of a kind than being a mere tool in the hands of researchers for writing up case studies or survey reports, as a reproduction of signifiers. Normally, researchers assume that they can represent what they saw in companies, with their considered courses of action. To that assertion, one may have reservations as to whether 'that is all'. From Derrida's disentanglement of the signified, one begins to contemplate on what happens when the signified becomes *dependent* on the arbitrary sign [7].

8.2   Low and Little Told Stories at the Margin

If, on the one hand, what 'I' know or think 'I' know about TQM from the established literature is a version of its hi(gh)-story (eg. chapter 2, except 2.4), there must be stories absent from it. The latter includes stories little told or even unknown in the mainstream TQM hi(gh)-story. How could anyone investigate a domain seemingly outside the TQM of presence ?

In a Heideggerean way (Heidegger, 1977), *absence* from the mainstream may be understood as those disregarded, not-yet-looked at, or concealment as Heidegger preferred to call it (see chapter 4). One has to expose the craft of concealing to

appreciate a concealed effect. To start, one looks for events that are absent from the TQM hi(gh)-story. Let us proceed with caution. Is it not possible that 'absence of evidence' to some is 'presence of evidence' to others, depending on how evidence is constituted ? For those who have committed themselves to the empiricist tradition, evidence must be found 'out there' in companies, as if it were there waiting for collection. Otherwise, for others who do not share the same kind of commitment, the *source* of evidence can be *other than* empiricist data. This is to suggest that evidence, of what is absent from our present knowledge on TQM (eg. chapter 2), be a measure of our own ignorance to potential alternatives to the normative, as in Fig. 7.4. Specifically, *absence of empiricist evidence* (or approach) in this inquiry is no evidence of absence of other perspectives of knowing/seeing and saying TQM. To this end, this Ph.D thesis may stand as evidence of presence of an alternative to the empiricist evidence on TQM.

One may turn to Heidegger for craftsmanship for revealing what has been made invisible in the mainstream. Since Heidegger's extensive rethinking (or *Destruktion*) of metaphysics [8], the orthodox 'hi(gh)-story' of western philosophy can no longer be taken as all that is present. Heidegger and his intellectual heir Derrida (*Destruktion* and *Abbau*, cf. Gasché, 1986) convincingly demonstrated that the hi(gh)-story, for Derrida the 'philosophy of presence', has long been incomplete. Owing to its incompleteness, an ontological space can be created for supplement. Their supplement reinforces a position argued earlier that there is no story without a way of telling. Equally, there is no history without a way of writing it 'high'. This considered, the question may be asked differently. Is there any hi(gh)-story without a way of unknowing/unseeing and unsaying through making absence from the hi(gh)-story ? Probably not. One justification comes from the normative way in which the established TQM literature has been written. It manifests squarely the empiricist epistemological commitment, with Marxist/humanistic critique at its margin (eg. Wilkinson and Willmott 1995). Where there is a hi(gh)-story on what is known, there must be low stories little told,

perhaps, unknown/unseen. There is no TQM hi(gh)-story without being inscribed and interpreted in texts and through seminar presentations by academic and professional practitioners.

How can one discern margin stories from a hi(gh)-story ? If a 'high story' is sustained by repetition, a lack of it gives rise to margin stories, as they are absent from the hi(gh)-story (see Fig. 7.1). They are not only invisible from the centre but little heard of, for instance, from mainstream academic conferences and from academic/professional journals. One cannot help wondering whether BAM conferences and some refereed journals constitute academic rituals, paving a certain path to a discursive centre. What lies outside that path becomes uninterested margins. In order to describe margin stories in the space where a centre can be identified, as in Fig. 7.2, one looks for events beyond the arbitrary bounds of the 'hi(gh)-story'.

As implied earlier, normative/positivist accounts of TQM have been produced and sustained with an *ahistorical* perspective. A visual effect of the low stories is possible by modifying Fig. 7.2. At present, Fig.7.2 stands with its centre, the middle column, and margins, the left and the right columns, in the same size. By altering their sizes, the centre may occupy a bigger space than the margins. A similar effect can be achieved by journal editors, since historical discussions are easily made minimum from the TQM hi(gh)-story. This is where a theoretical concern over whether historical perspectives are of any significance in the positivist epistemology at all can be raised, if the focus of attention of a researcher cannot be on anything other than what happens 'out there'. Like the ancient Egyptians, an editor's assumptions on TQM cannot be neatly separated from his coloured perception of what constitutes it.

The above point does not suggest that history seldom appears in the normative texts. Rather, the discrepancy lies at where and how history is used as a convenient tool for satisfying the presence. Indeed, when history does appear, it often serves as a

stage setting for the current performance. Questions may be asked of not only 'what' or 'which history' but 'how to relate' to it from a present position. Here, a Foucauldian position is acknowledged that the emergence of a presence has traces of a certain past (Sheridan, 1980). Our earlier discussion on tracing the evolution of QC thought (chapters 5, 6 and 7) shows that the attempt of going back to the past by entering exactly the same space and time is difficult, if not impossible.

If, a TQM hi(gh)-story is shaped with a perspective, low stories are told with a perspective, too, except that the latter is not the one that produces the hi(gh)-story. A 'low' story appears to be 'low' only within one particular discursive space, as in Fig.7.2. Otherwise, when the latter is located in another space, for instance, in sociology or following Marxist socio-economic theory, such stories may not be 'low' at all, as Marxist critiques of TQM may testify (Wilkinson and Willmott, 1995). Whether a story is rendered 'high' or 'low' in part depends on the discursive space it happens to be in.

It is interesting to note that the audience of TQM critiques need not be the same as that of normative TQM reports. This means that there may well be separate audiences and the assumption that they pay equal attention to each other appears unfounded. TQM critiques may not be consumed (see chapter 7) by practitioners in companies, instead be consumed by those academics interested in exploring sociological implications of TQM, perhaps with 'theories' in mind. This may be an overlooked point by TQM researchers. Even in the empiricist mainstream, there has been a lack of rigorous defence for 'what is TQM'. Having said so, however, empiricist reports and Marxist critiques do seem to share some common ground. Both are based on an accepted division of 'theory and practice'. With it comes the legitimate relevance of a particular practice 'out there' [9]. Because of the existing space of normative subjects, the low and little told stories become what they are seen as. Being low, they have less chance to catch the eyes of TQM journal editors. When they do, a lack of

repetition guarantees that those stories will be short-lived. This is perhaps a noteworthy feature of the margin stories, with respect to the established centre or hi(gh)-story.

One recognises that 'margin stories' appear as such, only in a discursive space occupied by a hi(gh)-story and reserved for normative or empiricist case study reports. Let us see what happens when margin stories are considered in a different space.

For those who are familiar with the Japan story, a point of departure for the normative approach on the Japanese management practice is different from that of an historical/anthropological approach. Following the former, accounts on the Japanese TQC movement are no where near a *Japanese* perspective. What has been understated is the difference in their respective starting point. For instance, questions are pursued as to how the Japanese (not to be taken as a monolith) perceive and consider what and how they learned and their experience in relation to TQM in the west (chapter 6). Table 8.1 presents various themes into an historical context, where issues perceived by the Japanese then and by westerners emerge in perspective. Each has its own conceptual space as a reference frame. The redrawn space highlights the language medium, in English or in Japanese, and the readership or an intended audience.

Table 8.1 delineates the following. First, with the Japan story, the margin-centre theme is extended by re-entering the discursive space shown in Fig. 7.2. One may speculate on what might lie in between those discursive centres (under the heading 'topic/subject'). Both the 'centre' and its margins can be brought into play and be each other's witness. Second, with the evolving discursive space from quality control to Japan studies, the Table constitutes a perspective in its own right. As argued earlier, knowing/seeing and saying cannot be easily cut off from one another and the Japan story serves as evidence. To a certain extent, a 'theory' itself cannot escape an historical context.

Author	Text		Audience/readership	
	medium	topic/subject		
westerners	*English*	QC methods approaches	westerners	↑ ⋮ DS1 ⋮ ↓
westerners	*Japanese*			
Japanese	*Japanese* *trans.* ↓ *English*	industrial engineering methods/practices	Japanese westerners	↑ DS2 ⋮ ↓
Japanese	*English*	Japanese QC methods/practices, ethos-technology: historical approach/paths of development	westeners & English speaking	↑ ⋮ DS3 ⋮ ↓
westeners	*English*	applying Japanese QC practices outside Japan, comparative studies	westeners & English speaking	↑ ⋮ DS4 ⋮ ↓

Table 8.1 Discursive space (DS) in perspective

The Table reinforces an earlier point of discussion (chapters 2 and 6). On the one hand, a taken-for-granted perspective of a 'subject' (eg. Garvin, 1988 on a subject-based 'quality') can be quite arbitrary. On the other hand, when different discursive spaces (or 'centres') are brought together, they constitute a broad perspective, as Table 8.1 illustrates. Third, the Table portrays a synthetic mode of thinking by assembling what is known rather than to cut a whole into pieces. In so doing, one may reflect on possible effects of a reductionist approach and, in particular, to be concerned with what might be missing from it, as 'margins'. In addition, with respect to the capacity of language (chapter 3), what needs clarification is the extent to which signification and constitution work. For instance, when English is the medium of a text, the medium not only constitutes a communication tool but functions as the frame of reference for *appropriation* or *translation* and a starting point for theorising. Here lies two assumptions. The first one assumes that the medium carries a message so that the two relates to each other in a straightforward way. Alternatively, the medium in part constitutes the message, which points towards another domain of language, writing/texts.

Briefly, Table 8.1 draws four discursive spaces, each has a discursive *centre* -- topic/subject. The top one is a sketch showing the flow of technology from the west to Japan before the 1960s. The discursive space was created by westerners writing in English on methodologies and methods to a professional audience (chapters 5 and 6). The readership was professionals both in the west and in Japan. From the late 1940s to early 1960s, through JUSE, Japanese companies sought to apply such methodologies in their industrial sectors. To most westerners, the story of what the Japanese did during that period is well documented. However, when one looks at the details of the Japan picture, it becomes blurred. Not surprisingly, there is no obvious rationale for westerners to write for a Japanese audience *in Japanese*. Juran, Feigenbaum and others wrote in English in the 1950s for a professional and English speaking readership. The English texts were accessible to some Japanese. For most westerners,

how the Japanese organized themselves in achieving what they did remains a specialist interest for a few historians (eg. Locke 1996).

The second discursive space describes what happened to the Japanese between the 1950s and the 1980s and the beginning of a reverse flow of technology from the 1970s. This space was created by Japanese writing in Japanese on their approaches of industrial engineering and QC methods for the Japanese audience (chapter 6). It was due to Japan's success felt in the west that some of these Japanese texts were translated into English, particularly in the 1980s.

The third space is a snapshot of the 1980s and was created by Japanese writers writing for an English speaking readership, for instance, Imai (1986) on *kaizen* as one of the hallmarks of Japanese management practice. To a certain extent, Monden's texts on the JIT practice is illustrative of a Japanese writing in a management vocabulary for the English speaking audience. Beyond an audience of practising managers, an academic debate was initiated by Morishima (1982). He was interested in developing "fundamental constructs for analysing non-European type economies" (Morishima, 1982/94: 203). He regarded such issues as in the domain of theoretical economics. To him, Japan's economic development since the mid 19th century cannot be subsumed to the dominant theories of economic development. Morishima, while presenting his case, raised questions for orthodox economic theorists in terms of understanding Japan's development *on its own terms*. Obviously, he recognised the need to supplement a lack in economic theories and, to do so, the historical/cultural conditions of Japan and its people cannot be left out of the equation.

The fourth discursive space indicates a changing discursive centre. The space has been created by westerners writing for an English speaking audience on the Japanese practice, including on 'Japanization' or 'easternization' (eg. Oliver and Wilkinson, 1988/92; Kaplinsky, 1994; Journal of Management Studies, 1995). This is

where comparative studies of management have emerged and may advance further. As there are various ways of seeing/knowing, interested researchers may have to pause and re-assess their intellectual resources for approaching such a cross-cultural enterprise. When one throws himself into this open space, the issue of disciplinary methodologies and their epistemological premises have to be examined before a move to cross disciplines is attempted. For westerners, at least from the mid 1980s to the early 1990s, an accepted assumption was that the flow of knowledge and learning was primarily from Japan to the west.

Let us highlight some *margins* in the respective discursive space outlined above. In the first one, the established literature on how the Japanese accommodated QC technologies into their production operations tells more about the effect of Japan's success than on *how they did what they did* on a case by case basis (eg. Morita et al 1986). To answer this 'how' question seems less relevant to researchers in the west and perhaps for a good reason. At first sight, it is their (ie. Japanese) business. How did the Japanese make sense of what was happening in *their* country and society after the war? They asked themselves the question of whether 'modernization' was possible without a wholesale 'westernization' (Morishima, 1982). In retrospect, Japan's economic success after the war may be argued as another episode of 'Japanization' of foreign know-hows. In practice, can the expectations of the Japanese workforce be neatly separated from the historical/cultural conditions of Japan and its people ? For Morishima, the implicit answer was 'no'.

The second respective margin was generated by the English versions of some Japanese texts. The translated texts have a different readership compared with their Japanese originals to the extent that what was appropriate to the Japanese might not be so readable to the English reader. For instance, the English version of Ishikawa's text appears oddly skeleton -- minimalist in style. One may competently translate a text with meticulous effort. Nevertheless, the translator cannot guarantee that his text

appeals to an English speaking audience. The difficulty lies in considerable differences in ethos in the Japanese and English audiences and, subsequently, their different expectations from a text. By and large, a Japanese Confucian ethos conditions the corresponding workforce, to whom the vocabulary of unconditional loyalty, paternalistic hierarchy, sense of shame and interdependence is not unusual. On the other hand, broadly speaking, there is a mainstream Judaeo-Christian ethos of the workforce in the west, to whom the vocabulary of unconditional competition, professionalism and legitimate pursuit of individual rights and interests reflects another set of moral order or priority. It may be over-optimistic to assert that the pace of introducing a technology through translated texts can be matched up with the pace of adjusting the recipient infrastructure or the 'software'. What has been 'low' in the current mainstream Japanese management studies is the kind of questions raised by Morishima: relationships between foreign technologies and a local ethos. Under Morishima's intense scrutiny, the Japan case shows that the local ethos contributes unmistakably to the shaping of relationships between the management and the employees and among employees. Such relationships constitute part of the infrastructure in large Japanese corporations (*Kaisha*, see chapter 9). The Japanese experience suggests some clue for answering the question of whether an imported technology shapes a local ethos or vice versa. When Japanese practices are introduced outside Japan, a similar question may be considered. How can foreign/Japanese technologies be made to fit into a recipient ethos ? The question takes into account employees' reaction to such technologies. If changing the ethos of a place is a slow and gradual process, the issue of acclimatising foreign technologies to the local soil has to be addressed.

The third margin comes from extending Morishima's argument. The question becomes whether, in the long run, foreign technologies are to reshape a local ethos. To this concern, lessons may be drawn from Japan. Firstly, the moral or ethical and cultural codes of a people, overt and covert, have an undeniable influence over their

behaviour and necessarily that of the local employees. Granted that behavioural patterns are evolved over time, they must have played an important role in the way an economy 'muddles through', albeit more so to observers from the outside. It is in retrospect that Morishima explored a path of Japanese economic development, not found in the received wisdom of economic theories. This said, his historical and contextual analysis at least supplements the orthodox account on Japan's success. It is the latter that has been captured by ahistorical snapshots. Secondly, comparative studies of management in particular and economic development in general appear an emerging research interest. However, there is an underestimated handicap for those who tend to appropriate Japan's journey to an 'international dimension' to the extent that Japan may be *reduced to* one successful case study such that there appears little need to rethink an established framework. Thirdly, it is unconvincing to highlight implementations of technology on their own, as if the impact of such activities by and on people and the ethos of a place were of a secondary order. Often, such implementations are examined as separate issues. However, a promising direction may come from probing into how technologies and a local ethos interact and change each other.

In the last discursive space, questions that Japanese asked themselves in the 1950s may resurface. Is the process of learning from Japan one of 'Japanization' or 'westernization' ? What is at stake may be more than finding a coping mechanism and practical solutions. Rather, here is an underexplored discursive space. Interested researchers may have forgotten to ask themselves *how they know what they know of* the Japanese practice. A simple reply could be: 'I' read translated texts *in* English *on* Japan. This means that my relevant knowledge relies almost entirely on translations or interpretations, which are themselves appropriations from a source medium. Accordingly, how could anyone be confident enough to claim that he wears no conceptual lens of either an interpreter/translator's or his own in looking at Japan ? To those who may wish to take comparative studies of management seriously (or think

they have done so), there is an imperative of competence in two languages. A quick survey of the relevant literature indicates that, for many, there is still a long way to go. Upon close inspection, the relationship between the Japan subject for study and possible approaches of an inquiry is an area that exposes considerable limitations to the current understanding of Japanese management in the west.

8.3 On the Way to a Centre/Margins

Morishima's ethos-technology thesis enables the reader to see Japan's success in a fresh perspective. For the time being, Morishima's synthesis may still look marginal in the mainstream but its merit is probably what the mainstream falls short of. The ethos-technology thesis has implications to the established subject of Economics. First, if, by stepping 'outside' orthodox economics, his Japan story has not caught the attention of those from the inside, it is due to the mainstream perspective of the latter. Morishima has reorganized historical evidence to support his thesis. Had he followed a familiar division of the 'social' vs. the 'technical', his account would have been conventional. Second, an anthropological perspective of Japan, with changes brought about by quality control movement, deviates from a traditional division between 'theorists' and 'practitioners' with an underlying assertion. 'Theorising' is accomplished by 'theorists' or professional academics, and, 'doing' by 'practitioners' or engineers and managers. This separation assumes that a member from one camp is not expected to do the job of the other, hence professional 'talkers' earn their living. Third, if comparative studies of management are to offer knowing/seeing differently, a starting point may begin with reconsidering such received divisions. On the one hand, interested researchers may not pay enough attention to the limit of a given norm so that the reproduction of it remains intact. On the other hand, to break the norm, as Morishima has shown, may depend on a different set of resources. To equip oneself, one may have to critically re-assess one's own intellectual resources. It implies that one

examines materials available and explores approaches unfamiliar to the eye or to the ear [10].

As illustrated with Table 8.1, where there is a discursive centre, there are also margins. The latter is a by-product of the former. Perhaps, the *yin-yang* principle is a useful way of considering the mutual *dependency* of centre-margins (see Kaptchuk, 1983). A reductionist approach, by drawing divisions or pigeonhole knowledge, may produce a 'subject'. Is this the way the TQM subject has been shaped (see chapter 10) ? No wonder the mainstream TQM discourse has a familiar appearance in the literature to researchers, or rather, to onlookers.

If making conceptual moves change one's position in relation to the received wisdom, the centre and its margins themselves may change as a result. If a reductionist separation produces 'things' or 'entities', successive links produces movement. When what is historical, such as the emergence and transformation of TQM, is presented as ahistorical, the reader is kept away from seeing the act of interpreting historical evidence. To move conceptually means to <u>undo</u> a fixed position or an unexamined assertion. When you are in a current in water, it is difficult to stay where you are. Being-in-water is to allow oneself being washed in a flow. As a Chinese saying goes: A boat against the current cannot remain where it is. Either it moves forward, or it is moved backward (逆水行舟, 不进则退) ! It is in vain to insist that the boat be separate from the current. With a reference of land or water, one must have operated in a space, with or without acknowledging it.

When one is on his way to somewhere called 'knowledge', his steps constitute movement. His experience may be related back to walking along a door-path. When one lets nature take its own course, he does not have to impose a deterministic agenda to himself. There seems no arrival without a path and, probably, no path without traces. To this end, the making of a centre is also along a path and its traces may be

detected. Since insiders are more interested in knowing *how what* has happened *happens* than know 'what has happened', an answer to the 'how' question may take the following directions.

The first one is the making of a *centre from margins*. For instance, the left column in Fig. 7.2 is made present from its absence in Fig. 7.1. One step further may be the *unmaking of this margin*, possibly making it a new centre. That is to say, the margin is undone on its way to another discursive centre. In this light, both the archaeological and the historical/anthropological dimensions in Fig. 7.2 can be made new discursive centres by following a few procedures. They may include: (a). to make margins visible from absence; (b). to render transparent by writing a readable text on margins; (c). to make it reproductive in other settings or 'subjects'; and, (d). to establish a discourse and to invest in creating a space *from* the margin and *for* the margin. In short, one creates from the margin a space and stays there. Here, one's dilemma is to what extent one gives up attempts to cut off the edges of one's argument to fit it into a dominant discursive centre. To conform seems safer than to create and innovate. One has to choose.

The second direction is to make *margins from an established centre*. For instance, the left column in Fig. 7.2 shows that SQC was becoming a margin in the TQC discourse. Years later, TQC appeared a margin for TQM. In both cases, what took place was the *unmaking* of a SQC-centred discourse towards a margin of TQC in the 1950s' Japan, and of a TQC-centred movement towards a margin of TQM in the 1980s' west. Obviously, to undo a discursive centre requires moving away from it or to de-centre. Indeed, the left and right columns to the middle column (or, a centre) in Fig. 7.2 demonstrate such a changing relationship. Here, the change involves: (1). making invisible from what is at present visible; (2). rendering the centre obscure; (3). reducing its 'highness' by exposing its making. In short, the enterprise is one that redirects attention by shifting highlights and resets priorities and possible procedures.

Is there a 'third' way of making moves ? A critic may contend that a recourse to centre-margins implies a new division. What would thinking be like without it ? Let us be reminded of space and movement. In creating a space from where one stands, continuous *spacing* and *being spaced* are made by movement. To move is to become, which requires a beginner's mind: To be receptive with little insistence on a given centre. A move towards the thresholds of what is known is where a present continuity is disrupted and where discontinuity emerges, says Foucault. The 'third' way is movement, signified by conceptual moves in relation to a settled state of margins and the 'centre'. A potential danger in the margin-centre dichotomy is when movement is reduced to a second order. What is less obvious is a probable double effect from the moment one makes conceptual moves on an exploratory path. When traces are detected and checked, both the centre and its margins may be seen as historical phenomena, as evident in the popular 'TQM theory'. For those who may have forgotten where their own epistemological position has derived from, Fig. 7.2 serves as a reminder of how to uncover a normative or empiricist-shaped discursive centre.

To 'do' or 'act' has its literal Greek origin in *praktikos*. If 'practice' refers to 'doing', needless to say, there are ways of doing. So, 'theory and practice' means that seeing be related to doing. The critical question is 'how'. 'Theory and practice' are often reduced to, by as it were unwitting children of Descartes', separate enterprises, which is why 'theorists' and 'practitioners' enjoy their own pursuits passing each other. Here lies an age-old division between those who are or assumed to be 'doing the thinking' and probably not much else, ie. 'philosophers' or 'theorists', and those who are or assumed to be 'doing without much thinking', ie. 'practitioners' or 'non-theorists'. What if one drops this division and strives to become both [11] ? It is a modern separation of the Greek sense of 'theory' and 'practice' that seeing is tenuously linked to doing. The separation of 'seeing/theory' from 'doing/practice' makes 'theory' a discursive device so that theorising has the capacity to become an independent activity from a practice 'out

there'. When probing into the question of how a theory becomes what is (un)known as, one's attention may have to be drawn to its *shaping* and its possible location. Otherwise, if the application of a 'theory' is like the cooked duck on the restaurant table, it is there for consumption, as most consumers need not bother the cooking taking place elsewhere.

Let us take activities of 'theorising TQM' back to its door-path(s). In particular, attention is paid to the starting point of a theorising practice and related assumptions. Here are four possibilities.

Theory in movement   This assumes that 'theory' by itself makes little changes. However, it may be moved about so that it appears in different subjects. 'Theory in movement' allows 'theory' to be played with and, therefore, signifies a refusal to accept a standstill. It is to see 'theory in action' from one 'subject' ground or 'discipline' to other territories. Such is the way that Saussure's theory of language was moved or applied to Anthropology in the 1950s and 1960s to become Structural Anthropology by Levi-Strauss (see chapter 3). To a lesser extent, the analysis in my present investigation takes some poststructuralist theoretical positions into the subject of TQM.

Movement in theory   Attention may be drawn to a constantly changing appearance or shape of 'theory'. Here, the concern is how 'theory' may change in a subject. Granted there is an established 'subject', 'theory' as a way of seeing serves the 'subject' so that the latter is exempt from any critical scrutiny. For instance, when the normative appearance of the TQM subject becomes the only appearance that is recognised in the mainstream, it maintains a privileged status. It protects itself from being questioned. In research terms, since the focus of attention has been mainly on normative or positivist/empiricist mode of inquiry, a movement in 'TQM theory' has been lacking. Perhaps, by making TQM discourse central to an argument, my analysis

points towards a direction of a 'poststructuralist movement in TQM theory'. As such, it seems inadequate to go on talking about 'theory' alone, since a discursive practice can no longer be left out of the familiar equation of 'theory and practice'.

Theory in practice   Suppose that 'practice' refers to only the commonly recognised practice 'out there'. Where is the space for accommodating a theorising practice ? If 'what academics do' merits a discursive practice, their theorising cannot be dismissed as of little relevance. Let us observe Foucault's own discursive practice. On the one hand, he offered his accounts on historically constituted social phenomena through penetrating 'case studies'. On the other hand, just like any other practitioner in the trade, he was in a mode of practice, as if he were seeing and doing what a practitioner in psychiatry or clinical medicine would do. Arguably, Foucault did more than what is required of a practitioner, as his interest was to reinterpret the history of (western) thought. When one places himself above practitioners, as some 'theorists' do, there lies the danger: One writes *about* a practice but not the practice of practitioners. I wonder whether professional social critics also face such danger, since their training is not to prepare them for a practice of a certain profession/trade. Here lies a contention: 'Theorists' practise their theorising, often without a practical/professional trade.

Practice in theory   This is a manifest characteristic of the empiricist approach in research. In particular, a practice 'out there' is considered the only qualified source of 'empirical evidence' for analysis. Accordingly, 'evidence' should match with a preconceived 'theory' or a set of propositions in the name of a 'conceptual framework'. In such a moment, 'theory' itself is seldom called into question, let alone the division of 'theory and practice'. Therefore, TQM practice 'out there' is used to provide data or proof for an already constituted 'framework' of TQM, derived from the empiricist assumptions on 'what constitutes theory and practice'. When researchers ask

questions, they may not have realised that those questions themselves in part shape their answers in a positivist/empiricist way (see chapter 10).

When 'theory' is separated from a theorising practice, 'theory' appears in the capacity of a dependent signifier, the operation of which relies on the signified -- a practice 'out there', hence, a proliferation of survey reports. A discursive space created by the division of 'theory' and 'practice' leaves little room for a position from where one may explore theorising itself.

8.4   On the Way to a Conceptual Framework

Suppose on the way to a 'theory' or 'centre' is at the same time on the way to a 'conceptual framework', on what basis can the latter be established ? Following Derrida, one makes a supplement *from* and *of* the source (Derrida, 1974: 269-316). It is to acknowledge that the signified has occupied a privileged position as the source, see Figure 8.1. It not only locates a 'theory' or 'conceptual framework' in its relation to the source, usually recognised as the 'out there' reality, but illustrates *other appearances* of the signified. Each of them may be a substitute of the signified in a given context. Let us concentrate on exploring the potential capacity of the signified and its implications. In particular, the question is how the signified produces an effect on the making of a discourse, or to be precise, on theorising as a discursive practice that may, for the time being, disappear from our sight.

An accepted assertion has been that a legitimate concern in research is the 'out there' reality, such that data of 'practice' in organizations on the one hand and a 'theory' or 'conceptual framework' on the other respond to one another, the mechanism of which is representation: Data/evidence from 'out there' is used to support an argument put forward in the name of a 'theory' or 'framework'. Here is where a careful reconsideration is necessary.

'ground'

'fundamentals'

'origin'

'centre' ← **SIGNIFIED** → 'practice'

'framework'   'out there' reality   'data evidence'

'theory'
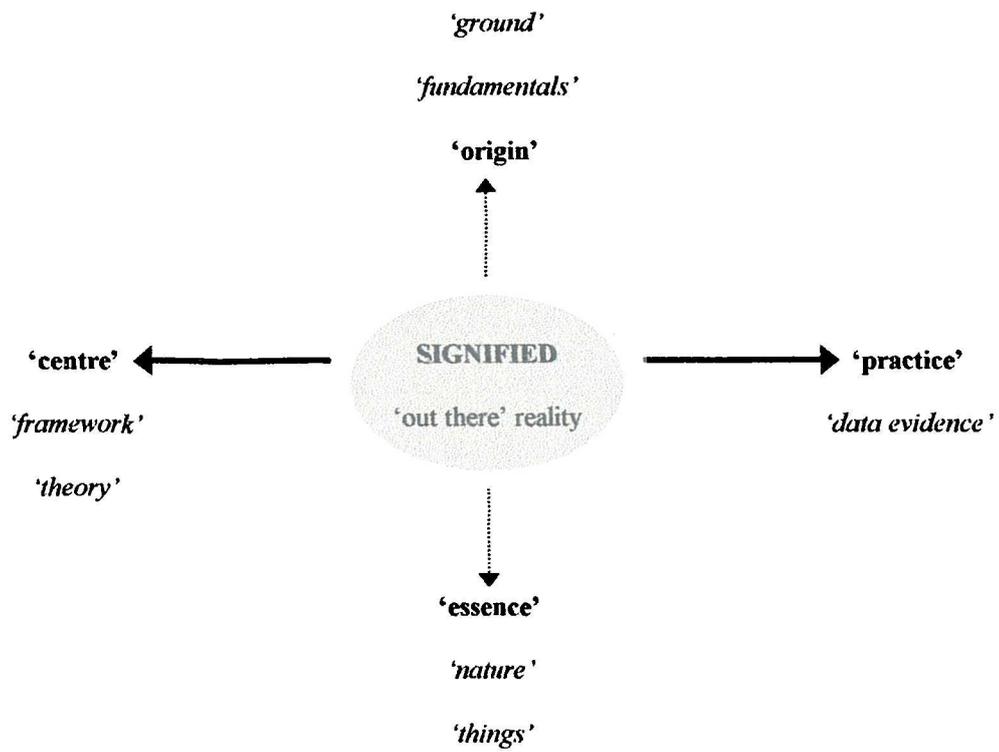
'essence'

'nature'

'things'

Figure 8.1 Appearances of signified/disappearance of discourse

When the signified is absent, there seems no need to be concerned with ontological questions on both 'reality' and 'practice', which is undoubtedly 'out there'. Or, is that all ? Because of this absence, empiricist research operations can go on its usual business without having to face any serious challenge. For instance, ontological and epistemological assumptions of standard knowledge on TQM (chapter 2) are implicit yet not articulated, though they are conditional for empiricist knowledge to be seen as what it appears to be to many.

Alternatively, when the privileged location of the signified is made explicit, as Fig. 8.1 shows, it is indefensible to avoid ontological and epistemological questions concerning the 'essence', 'origin' and the 'ground' of knowledge on TQM in its relation to the signified. Imagine, what happens if there is a *disappearance* of the signified in empiricist research operations ? It is interesting to note that the appearance of the signified and the disappearance of discourse and, therefore, a discursive practice take place at the same time. *In the presence of a 'centre', 'theory' or 'framework', discourse disappears* ! How can this observation be related to a 'poststructuralist' position on knowledge and discourse ? Upon scrutiny, there seems no single unified poststructuralist position. Rather, 'poststructuralism' is a convenient label for those who wish to differentiate radical positions from the received wisdom on language/writing, discourse and knowledge. To this end, Saussure, Heidegger, Derrida and Foucault are forerunners whose works are *associated with* poststructuralism. From Heidegger's demonstration of clearing a built-up ground in order to re-establish something new to Saussure's and Derrida's rethinking on language and writing, one cannot fail to appreciate the importance of ontological questions on language. Arguably, there are possible repercussions to knowledge claims. At this point, one may ask whether language/writing constitutes a certain reality which may have been overlooked, let alone being appreciated.

From Heidegger's vision of language as the "house of Being" (Heidegger, 1959), the possibility of 'different houses' is implicit. With respect to Being, language must be a *first* order event, since it constitutes a place or space for accommodating Being. One imagines what Being or being-in-the-world would be like without the presence of language. Indeed, if so, how can one go on playing with 'ideas' ? Perhaps, questions of this kind help to clarify our earlier discussion on discourse (Part III). Not only can discourse be *more than* a representational practice based on the signifier-signified dichotomy but the formation of TQM knowledge itself constitutes a discursive practice of becoming.

Figure 8.1 may help to put a 'theory' and 'framework' into perspective. On the one hand, 'theory' -- a way of seeing -- can hardly be conceived from a pure or 'uncontaminated' ontological position. On the other hand, data/evidence of 'practice' is already the *effect of* an appropriation by the observer. Further, if one looks carefully at the familiar division of 'theory and practice', there appears no room for accommodating a discursive practice, which may be argued as a good reason for its absence from an empiricist orientation. Without having to consider possible implications of a discursive practice, the familiar division looks sufficient enough for an empiricist inquiry, which may look respectable only when its ontological and epistemological conditions are put aside.

Indeed, Derrida's thinking -- " ... in the absence of a centre or origin, everything became discourse ... " (Derrida, 1978: 280) -- may be extended. Figure 8.2 shows what happens when discourse comes to the scene, which resonates Foucault position of substituting 'things' with discourse (Foucault, 1969/72).

If Fig. 8.1 is a reasonable snapshot of a conventional understanding of some important conceptual constructs in their relation to the signified, Fig. 8.2 serves as a reminder of what may happen to that understanding when a poststructuralist position

of discourse is introduced. When 'signified' is replaced by 'discourse', all those constructs in Fig. 8.1 reveals their *discursive appearance*. To this end, it is critical to acknowledge that discourse is as *ontological* as the signified. Together, Figs. 8.1 and 8.2 enable one to form an overall perspective for this inquiry as a whole. One begins with these questions: With the signified occupying the centre, as in Fig. 8.1, what do you see ? Equally, with discourse remaining at the centre, what do you see and unsee ?

First, an ontological concern surfaced at the beginning (chapter 2) over the 'thingness of TQM' in Fig. 8.1 also appears in Fig. 8.2, as a 'discursive thing'. It will be looked at further in chapter 9. Next, the making of TQM discourse (Part III) is where the concern over the 'origin of TQM' has been addressed. It emerges in Fig. 8.2 as a 'discursive origin'. Further, because of the privileged position of the signified in the empiricist mainstream, suggestive in Fig. 8.1, there seems no room left for exploring TQM discourse. On the other hand, having accepted Fig. 8.1, there is hardly the need to raise an ontological question of 'what constitutes practice'. To many, that is simply a non-question. However, according to Fig. 8.2, the question concerning the constitution of practice may surface, where an alternative is accommodated in the discursive space of Part IV. It is where a discursive practice of *theorising* may be highlighted (chapters 8 and 9). It is worthy of note that Fig. 8.2 seems to be able to accommodate almost everything in Fig. 8.1, *except the signified*, but not vice versa. In so doing, Fig. 8.2 brings concerns on discourse in this Ph.D thesis into its due focus.
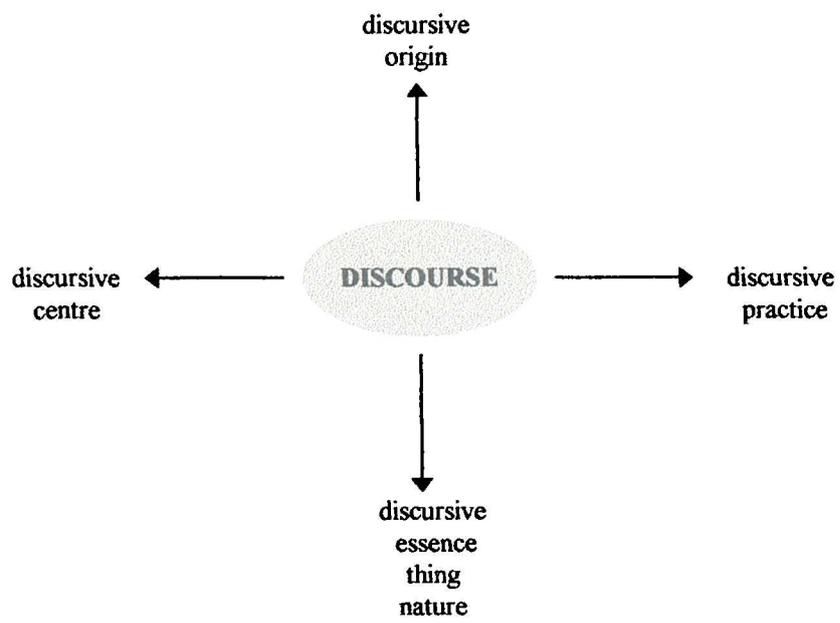
discursive
origin

discursive
centre

DISCOURSE

discursive
practice

discursive
essence
thing
nature

Figure 8.2 The presence of discourse and a discursive/theorising practice

With respect to tracing the effect of the signified (Fig. 8.1) to questions concerning a beginning -- discourse (Fig. 8.2), here is an insight on dealing with change in thinking. On thinking backward and forward, Heidegger made the following reflection. " ... I have left an earlier standpoint, not in order to exchange it for another one, but because even the former standpoint was merely a way-station along a way. The lasting element in thinking is the way. And ways of thinking hold within them that mysterious quality that we can walk them forward and backward, and that indeed only the way back will lead us forward" (Heidegger, 1959/71a: 12). For him, way becomes both a noun and a verb -- waying.

Imagine what may happen if a 'framework' is to be constructed in a space. During the course of a stage production, different effects are produced at the same time. For instance, stage lights not only serve to highlight a certain scene and actors' performance, but also produce shadows. By the same token, in research terms, received wisdom conditions a researcher to pursue a 'conceptual framework'. It has been one of the highlights that is the crucial indicator for an 'original contribution to knowledge'. Nevertheless, how often is one required to show the shadow effect of his own 'conceptual framework' ? In seeking to illuminate the latter, one may have forgotten or abandoned the former. The concern may be raised in a different way: What happens on one's way to a 'conceptual framework' ? The question takes how a 'conceptual framework' is made and accepted into account. This acknowledged, is it not over-deterministic for a researcher to predict, at an early stage, where his research will be arriving at whilst little room is left for the research to take its own course ? Arguably, before a conceptual framework becomes a perceived given 'thing', it must be evolving or unfolding in time and space. When a 'framework' becomes an object for consumption or application, the making of a framework disappears from the spotlight.

A common appearance of 'framework' is 'structure'. How does a structure evolve ? A useful reference may be drawn from Chinese painting. Briefly, it maintains

that to create a painting goes through four states. To paint, one begins with the dynamic energy called *qi* (气) from nature. Therefore, *qi* in painting is suggestive of a general atmosphere or a spirit that generates forms of life [12]. A painting that resonates nature's dynamic spirit is highly valued by the Chinese. Another concept is *gu* (骨), literally 'bone' which points towards those qualities of 'power' or 'force' that enables a painting stands as it is; it is suggestive of, or nearest to the notion of, 'structure'. Hence, a Chinese painting may be created and judged by the following criteria. A painting that expresses the moving energy, embedded in an evolving structure, is known as having *gu-qi*. In addition, *li* (力) stands for moving force, power to endure, hence, *gu-li* refers to a painting's structural capacity to stand on its own. *Zhi* (质) signifies certain manifest qualities of a painting; *gu-zhi* therefore stands for such qualities of a structure. Lastly, *jia* (架) is an expression for 'frame'. Obviously, *gu-jia* is nearest to our familiar conception of a 'conceptual framework' [13].

Fig. 8.3 is a way of looking at where a 'structure' may come from and go back to in a *circular movement*. It puts 'structure' in perspective. There is more to a 'conceptual framework' than what it is normally conceived of as a fixed and rigid structure. Other qualities of a structure may be taken into consideration. It is not that 'structure' or 'framework' *per se* is to be rejected all together but that its making may be traced and looked at.

One may relate the making of a 'framework' to the making of a Foucauldian discourse and a discursive practice. If a knowledge/discursive production may be followed by its consumption (chapter 7) [14], the same may be said of producing and consuming a 'framework'. Perhaps, it is time to remind ourselves of what might have been *absent* from our appreciation of constructing a conceptual/theoretical framework. Indeed, making presence of a TQM theory or conceptual framework is also making absence of the rest.
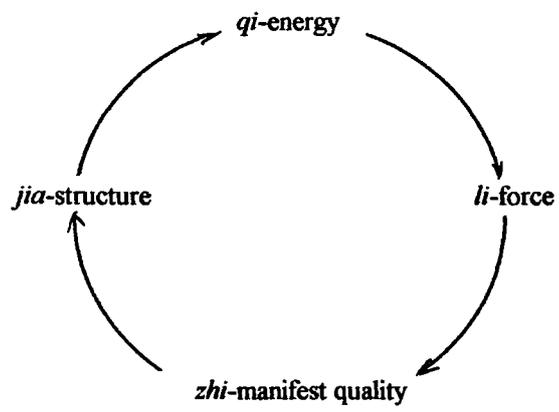
Figure 8.3 The forming of a structure

It is easy for a researcher to forget or disregard a certain 'vital moving energy' within his research itself and the capacity of a piece of research to withstand ontological and epistemological considerations.

8.5 Summary

This chapter exercises a few Heideggerean and Derridean steps: both presence and absence are inscribed in 'history'. 'Theory' and 'centre' cannot escape from a hi(gh)-story to the extent that they are historically constituted, despite that they are not usually presented as such. Therefore, questions pursued are not on *what of* 'history', 'theory' or 'centre', but how each *becomes what it is seen as*. To reconsider each at a time allows one to appreciate the role of discourse. Towards the end of the chapter, the focus is on a 'conceptual framework', normally pursued in the name of 'theory' or knowledge. To the question of 'what happens on one's way to knowledge', here is my response. Knowledge may be the name of a flow or of a coming-into-being; to confine it into a box is to make a death of it. The door-path of the chapter leads to somewhere -- an awareness on the *appearances of knowledge* that are too often unnoted.

Notes:

1. Such a mutual dependence may be comparable to the non-static and complementary *yin-yang*, see Kaptchuk (1983) for the five principles of Chinese medicine.

2. Ref. H. Willmott's comments on 'TQM theory' (personal correspondence).

3. In a similar approach, both *The story of art* (Gömbrich, 1950) and *The story of modern art* (Lynton, 1980) are written for a non-specialist readership. An informed reader might disagree with certain historical details in Gaarder's account in terms of content or proportion on what historical events or subjects should be highlighted or marginalised. For instance, one suspects that the way in which Heidegger, Bergson and Nietzsche are interpreted leaves much to be desired and probably has not done justice to them. However, as discussed earlier, there is no uncontaminated position from where Gaarder could see and speak.

4. See *Academy of Management Review* (1994), *California Management Review* (1994), *TQM Journal* and *TQM Magazine*.

5. See Xu (1996b).

6. By the same token, one wonders whether 'theory' or 'framework' may also be consumed.

7. Having explored what signified-signifier can do in chapter 6, a further, seemingly logical, step is to elaborate the arbitrary 'sign-signified', for which another discursive space is needed, provided one reads Saussure carefully.

8. Some may argue that it started earlier with Nietzsche.

9. Followers of the empiricist approach necessarily participate in a representational practice, see chapters 4 and 6.

10. Ref. Chinese medicine as a system of correspondence (Porkert, 1974) as an alternative direction or approach; also ref. comparative/anthropological medicine (Bates, 1995). Note that in the discursive space of Fig.7.1, the Japan story may have to be placed at the margin.

11. For a Confucian, knowing and seeing are *inseparable* from saying and doing, crystallised in the saying: He does not preach what he practises till he has practised what he preaches (see Soles, 1995).

12. See chapter 9 for a brief discussion on *qi* in Chinese medicine.

13. See Dong and Zheng (1988).

14. Foucault (1972) also outlines the relationship between a discursive practice and non-discursive practices, eg. the social and institutional, a dimension that needs to be explored further.

CHAPTER NINE

TQM PRACTICE: THREE APPEARANCES

"But for the Greeks standing-in-itself was nothing other than standing-there, standing-in-the-light. Being means appearing. Appearing is not something subsequent that sometimes happens to being. Appearing is the very essence of being" (Heidegger, 1959: 101).

Critics of TQM practice have made a contentious claim that there is little 'theory' in the TQM literature (Anderson et al, 1994). The claim begs the question of how a management practice 'out there' can be related to 'theory'. In particular, what can be drawn from a management practice like TQM when an academically respectable theory is absent ? Does a practice have to be discredited due to a seeming lack of theory ? If not, one wonders what he can do with the literature when the seldom challenged preoccupation of formulating a 'new' theory is put aside.

In this chapter, evidence on TQM is examined as working, prescriptive and discursive *practices*. In part, it is a response to the usual expectation of making 'practice' to support 'theory'. It suggests that TQM be understood within the domain of practice prior to the need of making a 'new' theory. Close attention to practices cannot be sustained without a recognition of the extent to which 'language speaks us' as well as 'we speak language'. That language is more than its commonly known communication function is often overlooked. Because of some pervasive effect of language, choice of words may produce effects that are not recognised. How can TQM events be captured as they are emerging and forming and, at the same time, avoid employing a language to 'freeze' them into a fixed form ? A choice of word, that

conveys a sense of fluid and temporary being and avoids an exclusion of possible modes of being, may be something to look for. To this end, 'appearances' of TQM may be a better word than 'essence'.

9.1   On the Japanese: A Working Practice

Considerable literature has become available on Japanese management practice since the 1980s [1]. In order to draw attention to what could have been underexplored about that practice, let us focus on the TQC movement, known as Company-Wide Quality Control (CWQC) in Japan from the early 1960s (Ishikawa, 1985). Their practice may be described as a process-oriented thinking and managing (see Imai, 1986). The TQC movement is a case for understanding a Japanese way of life at work.

Since the introduction of quality control techniques into certain Japanese industry in the early 1950s, the way in which 'control' is used, meaning to 'manage an organization', has undergone some interesting change, though it is seldom accounted for in the relevant literature. Arguably, it is difficult to pin down precisely when or with which particular event that change began. The word 'control' was frequently replaced by 'administration' (see eg. Feigenbaum, 1951). A reflection on that period of history may give some clue. In the US, peace and regained hope boosted the nation's confidence for rebuilding life after the war; there was no short of enthusiasm and optimism. It was a favourable time for science and technology to prosper. The idea that scientifically proven methods for efficiency are universally applicable was influential. Against this backdrop, applications of statistics in industry were attributed to, as a milestone in modern quality control (see eg. Juran, 1951; Ishikawa, 1954/64). Similarly, it was possible to apply scientific methods for improving the efficiency of a whole organization. Being a close cousin to the overloaded technical term 'control', 'administration' may have been embraced as a new frontier in social science, hence an emerging 'administrative science'. It conveys not only hope but a promise of what

science and technology might do in the domain of managing organizations. 'Administrative science' was expected to bring reliable scientific methods and techniques to control various operations in an entire organization (eg. Feigenbaum, 1951: 1-5). To a certain extent, if 'administration' is a vocabulary of the 1950s, 'management' has since the 1980s been a popular term. The indiscriminate and single-minded pursuit of efficiency had its heyday.

However, in the TQC movement, a switch from 'control' to 'management' may be a result of a subtle change in translation. For example, *hinshitsu kanri* is the Japanese expression for 'quality management'. The English phrase 'quality control' can be interpreted differently into Japanese. To ordinary Japanese managers and operators, 'control' may be understood *in addition to* its relatively precise technical sense owing to their use of *kanri*, meaning 'management' (Xu, 1994). Here, researchers as outsiders of Japanese management practices may face some difficulty. To a certain extent, a researcher remains handicapped unless he is able to read accounts on Japanese management practice directly in Japanese. The kind of literature in English that most researchers are able to process is already appropriated, through translation, in a way that readers of English may comprehend. Indeed, a translation appears inadequate or be regarded as a bad version if it is difficult to comprehend in the target language, ie. in English. In many instances, a good translation means that a translator has effectively manipulated a source language perception into a perception of the target language (eg. from Japanese into English). On the other hand, a Japanese interpretation of a borrowed term, such as 'quality control', is for a Japanese to comprehend. Arguably, an authentic Japanese 'quality management' practice is nothing but a modified version of 'quality control', compared with the term in English. This discrepancy implies that one may refer to a different notion or varied practices by simply employing one label -- 'control' or 'management'. Seemingly, what is known as TQM in the west since the 1980s falls into this category of labels. This kind of label may be a source for confusion

and misunderstanding, which paradoxically leaves room and the need for on-going endeavours in cross-cultural communications.

As a way of managing, TQC is of an American invention. Ishikawa, a popular Japanese writing about their TQC practice, noted Feigenbaum's administrative approach of TQC (Ishikawa, 1964: 2-3). Whilst acknowledging Feigenbaum's principles, Ishikawa contended that the Japanese TQC movement was considerably different from the TQC advocated by Feigenbaum (Ishikawa, 1985: 90-102). For the Japanese, the idea of a TQC with an implicit emphasis on professionalism, relying solely on specialists, is not a sensible direction to pursue, since such a practice is based on division of labour. It does not sit comfortably with the Japanese ethos. Nonetheless, Feigenbaum's work was taken seriously in Japan. If, as Feigenbaum has proposed, employees are to be invited to take part in quality control activities, everybody may be encouraged to make a contribution. That sounds fine for the Japanese, for their collective temperament causes no particular difficulty. In part, Japan's population is relatively homogeneous such that nationhood and group identity make more sense than notions of western individualism and individual identity. Not that long ago, Japan was a place where a time-honoured tradition of absolute obedience and loyalty to the supreme ruling lord of the Emperor, even to the degree of sacrificing one's own life, was valued as a great virtue (Morishima, 1982/94: 4-9, 46-48). Given this cultural context, a TQC practice that demands a considerable degree of employees' commitment, a dose of quasi-militaristic discipline and a prolonged period of hard work did not seem to have become an overwhelming problem for many Japanese. Understandably, the promotion and dissemination of TQC practice organized by JUSE, aimed at educating managers and supervisors, made life easier for those Japanese companies actively involved in the TQC movement [2]. To a certain extent, the TQC movement and its subsequent transformations are fairly significant to an understanding of the evolving practice of TQM [3]. The Japanese TQC movement serves as a

reminder that labels such as TQC and TQM may have been interchangeably used for the sake of convenience but not necessarily for clarity.

One well-known concept in Japanese TQC is *kaizen*, meaning '(to) revise' (*kai-* 改) combined with 'making (something) better' (*-zen* 善), translated into English as continuous improvement. *Kaizen* is an everyday expression being taken as a generic Japanese management concept and, up to a point, almost epitomised as a Japanese mentality. In management texts, continuous improvement is summarised as small step changes that fill the gaps between leap changes brought about by innovations. A popular version of *kaizen* describes an attitude towards improvement and demonstrates techniques (e.g. Mizuno, 1979; Imai, 1986). Advocates of *kaizen* believe that once the wheel of *kaizen* is set in motion, it will go on and on, provided there is the determination and sustained energy for success.

However, discrepancy may surface when the above description of *kaizen* is presented to a Japanese 'insider'. This is to suggest that the ways in which a Japanese tends to think and (re)act may have to be taken into account. For instance, their attitude towards tradition and their sense of time help to highlight possible reasons for the difference. Some unique characteristics are associated to the Japanese. These include: meticulous attention to details, reluctance to rush into a decision before it has been thought through, and respect or patience for the natural course of events. The last two may be derived from Japan's centuries-long tradition of agricultural life. In cultivating the land, a farmer's way of life follows the four seasons rather than to impose a human agenda back to nature. The idea of following nature's course is also embedded in the Japanese high art of gardening. With this orientation, being adaptable to the change of events, not necessarily dictated by humans, may be thought of as nothing particularly exceptional [4]. What is perceived by a westerner as an unusually 'slow' process may not be seen in the same light by a Japanese. For the latter, it makes

little sense to prematurely jump to conclusions when events are folding in their own rhythms.

According to Imai, a Japanese consultant introduced *kaizen* to readers of English, to achieve the task of management requires two kinds of activity: maintenance of standards and improvement of them (Imai, 1986: 5-8). Here, concerns with the central role of standards may be raised. What is particular about the Japanese is the way in which standards are treated *after* they have been maintained. Conventional treatment of standards concentrates on maintenance as an end in itself. The Japanese has replaced this 'end' in the position of a new beginning. Therefore, technical standards are treated as a starting point for improvement and there is little room for complacency. An analogy may be drawn from sports. In a knock-out competition, a team earns their credits from all matches before it is qualified to enter the final. In a way, maintenance of standards corresponds to credits earned in qualifying matches. They eventually lead the team to the final. Once this journey has begun, everyone in the team must strive to win. It may be fair to say that what the Japanese industry has done is like being forced to join, by the Japanese market, a highly competitive 'world cup' within Japan. Japanese companies compete with each other fiercely for survival at home before they are exposed abroad (see Morita et al, 1986: 214-37). For those who appreciate the Japanese way of treating standards, it is obvious where the problem lies with the management cliché of 'keeping-our-standards'. This mentality is defensive against any criticism and reveals the inertia of the status quo. That inertia may be in part the force against change.

Next, when standards are perceived as indispensable for improvement to take place, they have to be provisional and temporarily fixed. On the one hand, when the accumulative outcome of improvement upgrades standards from what is conformed before, it is a sign of constructive change. In addition, change inevitably brings transformations. An example of this is the admirable defects rate of Japanese

components. Instead of one digit number per hundred, many Japanese companies have maintained a few per million (see Imai, 1986). This kind of impressive record of improvement could not have been achieved with one giant leap but many, however small, steps on the journey of improvement. Occasionally, the Japanese seem to be going in circles of maintaining and improving standards. A careful learner may note that, from the Japanese experience, circles need not be a closed loop, they can be open. Over the last four decades or so, the determined and sustained efforts of the Japanese have paid off handsomely. Perhaps, 'spiral' is a better word for replacing the word 'circle'.

Looking carefully, one realises that maintaining and improving standards require different types of learning. Whilst the former is accomplished through conformance, the latter transforms both the organization and its people through learning in a broad sense. For members participating in the operations of a company, to conform is one type of learning that demands one following rules and procedures whereas to know how to improve demands a lot more committed efforts from the participants. It demands enthusiasm, constantly reviewing one's present position, such as weaknesses and inadequacies, and a willingness to explore and, if necessary, to accommodate oneself to better ways of doing things. To learn something different from a standard routine, one's familiar way of doing things may be altered, replaced or even betrayed. To this end, learning and transforming are not events of exception but an order of working life. Evidence may be found for demonstrating this point in the Japanese society. At least, until the 1980s, for those who were fortunate to work in the elite companies [5], educational training started on the first day when a graduate became a member of a corporation and went on working throughout his entire working life (see Ishikawa, 1972; Morishima, 1982; Kondo, 1988). In a way, many Japanese organizations are tuned in for change rather than being expected to remain the same. As Imai noted, Japanese plant engineers are frequently warned that "there will be no

progress if you keep on doing things exactly the same way all the time" (Imai, 1986: xxxiii).

Compared with the disposition that only results count, the Japanese are more inclined to be process-oriented, an attitude reflected in *kaizen*. A process-orientation does not suggest that the Japanese care less about results. On the contrary, in order to secure satisfactory performance and outcomes, the Japanese tend to allow generous time and efforts to be invested in the process, gradually building up or leading to a desirable outcome. To a large extent, the Japanese have proved themselves to be good teachers of processes. For instance, the Japanese are less likely to follow a fixed set of standards all the time, because their standards can be unfixed and fixed again as a result of *kaizen*. There is little need to insist on an absolute definition of either a specific beginning or such an end. What matters is that events are allowed to develop as smoothly and fully as possible. To this end, confrontational behaviour and efforts made for short term gains look unwise to the Japanese and, therefore, not encouraged. With respect to a process-oriented way of thinking and managing, here is what Imai has to say. He maintains that the common practice of result-criteria, as "R. criteria", is partial, since they aim at assessing the outcome of performance alone and are incompatible for a management practice that takes into account employees' attitudes towards work and efforts made throughout their entire working life (ibid.: 16-21, 38-42). Imai's list of process-criteria, ie. "P. criteria", includes: discipline, time management, skill development, participation and involvement, morale and communication. With this mode of thinking about processes, it is logical to start managing from the upstream. In contrast, to simply measure results as hard facts seems rather inadequate.

In discussions on Japanese management practice, any authentic 'Japaneseness' can hardly be meaningfully comprehended without taking into account Japan's historical context. According to Morishima (1982), loyalty lies at the heart of Japanese Confucianism, the ideological backbone of the Japanese society [6]. What is found in

the Japanese workplace is not division of labour as it is common in the west. Rather, a paternalistic hierarchical order dominates. Japanese call their corporations *kaisha*. It literally means 'meet' or 'meeting' (*kai-* 会) and '(communal) place' (*-sha* 社) -- a place where people come together. It is interesting to note that the social dimension of the workplace is inscribed in the Japanese expression of 'corporation'. In the Japanese Confucian society, various social rituals are performed to regulate interpersonal relationships. When people come together at the workplace, such rituals are to be observed. It is in this context that the hierarchical order works. 'Togetherness' generates a community-like atmosphere that can be a strength of the workplace. The 'togetherness' embedded in *kaisha* may be enhanced by the Japanese portrayal of their *kaisha* as a 'family' (see eg. Morita et al, 1986). It is in a family-like workplace that trust and responsibility may be cultivated. For the Japanese, relationships between the corporation and its employees seem to be as much an economic contract as that of a social one (ie. 'community' and 'family'). It is cohesiveness in the latter that reshapes the order of relationships created by the former. To this end, loyalty, paternalistic hierarchy, trust and responsibility are necessary conditions for fulfilling the social contract. Due to the weight of social responsibilities, the Japanese have to pay meticulous attention to relationships in addition to technical details. Smooth and trustworthy relationships help not only to create working networks but to maintain them. In the operations of networks, the identity and role of 'an individual', embedded in 'I', may be rather limited and constrained up to a point. It is with this consideration that a Japanese saying begins to make sense: The word 'I' does not stop at the skin.

Arguably, Japanese management practice cannot be divorced from *their* expressions and the way in which the Japanese relate to each other in general. It may help 'outsiders' to reconsider the Japanese way, if the latter's perceptions and social hierarchies etc. are duly recognised and taken into account by researchers concerned. In this regard, what has been written about the Japanese management practice from the perspective of 'management' alone may be limited in understanding.

9.2 On Experts: A Prescriptive Practice

One wonders to what extent looking at clinical medical practice helps to observe certain phenomena in management. There are two kinds of relationships in the clinical practice: between the doctor and the patient and between a diagnosis and a prescribed treatment. Is it possible to establish similar relationships in management ? For example, one considers relationships between companies and external experts, often acting as consultants, and between diagnoses and prescriptions made by them. Let us observe how doctors make a diagnosis and prescription. A brief description of what the doctor does is given below.

The doctor examines his patient through observing, touching, listening and other means to check the patient's conditions and makes a judgement on the likely causes of the patient's symptoms. Having made a diagnosis, the doctor offers a prescription for treatment. Necessarily, individual cases are considered carefully. An experienced doctor pays particular attention to the local conditions of each patient. They may be indicated in a set of parameters in a patient's health record, in the degree of the patient's exposure to unhealthy living conditions or to unfavourable working environments, in probably built-in antibodies of the patient for self-defence and any previous treatment received. The more the local conditions are taken into account for making a diagnosis, the better chance that causes of symptoms are targeted in the follow-up treatment. An experienced doctor is cautious in prescribing treatments. Ideally, there is a positive match between a choice of treatment, or a combination from available medical treatments, and the likely effect of that choice on the patient's local conditions. In contrast, less experienced doctors are less able to differentiate from one similar case to another. There may be situations when a doctor is familiar with manifest symptoms but their causes may vary and are probably far more complicated than what has been diagnosed. If the doctor's prescription is based on limited observation and

knowledge of a patient, the prescription may kill off symptoms but not their potential causes.

Further concerns arise from the relationship between a diagnosis and a prescription. Firstly, if each patient's local conditions are taken as an organic whole, treatments aimed at isolated symptoms or perceived causes may have negative effects to the long term health of the patient. What needs to be understood is not only the relationship between symptoms and causes but potential knock-on effects on those causes to the body as a dynamic whole. For instance, a treatment may eliminate an initial set of symptoms but in turn trigger other symptoms. One has to be aware of possible chain reactions. In many instances, the doctor faces the issue, or a delicate dilemma, of how to maintain a desirable balance between quick effects in days or weeks and the gradually delivered benefit to the patient in the years to come.

Secondly, in response to perceiving the body as an organic whole, a philosophy of medical treatment or intervention may be spelt out. Indeed, different philosophies of medicine have been practised for centuries in various parts of the world (see Bates, 1995). One of them may be called 'violent chemical warfare' to the body, represented by mainstream western medicine. Despite that it can often bring attractively quick results by making symptoms disappear, some degree of disregard of the overall effect of local treatment may be detected. Another practice may be termed as 'smooth harmonic flow' reflected in traditional Chinese medicine, where the flow of *qi* (氣) in the body is vital. Whenever *qi* is blocked, symptoms of illness surface (see Veith, 1966; Porkert, 1974; Kaptchuk, 1983; Unschuld, 1985). It is worthy of note that dynamic change is embedded in the perception of the body in a fluid mode. Accordingly, even if treatments, by following the second type, generate comparatively slower effect than that of western medicine, the benefit gained for the patient is for the long term.

Thirdly, with respect to medical research to date, our understanding of the human conditions still appears fairly limited, although experiments play an important role in transforming the landscape of medical knowledge. A clinical practice reflects the ways in which medical knowledge is accepted. Whilst a doctor expects positive effects from his recommended treatment, the treatment itself is nevertheless experimental, since successful treatments are sometimes a matter of chance. When a prescribed treatment fails to produce positive effect, the problems may or may not lie with the doctor but a sign of limitations in the given medical knowledge of certain pathological life manifested through diseases. In this regard, existing knowledge has to be taken as in constant reshaping and transforming and is therefore not to be dogmatically held. Not only may doctors be aware of certain accepted assumptions of the knowledge they apply in their clinical practice but they may acknowledge that a previous record of successful treatments provides no guarantee for success of similar cases in the future.

One may be reminded that the relationship between the doctor and the patient is not one of equals. The patient is dependent on the doctor for relief of pain or suffering and possibly for survival. In practice a doctor earns his reputation with a proven record of treatments delivered. The doctor is trusted by patients after intensive medical training and general practising. The relationship is based on trust to a profession by society at large and is one of considerable moral responsibility. The latter, in difficult circumstances, may be a test of the doctor's moral courage and professionalism. After all, what slips through the doctor's fingers can be either life or death. Therefore, decisions made by doctors carry not only risks but uncertainties. Being a good doctor is more than obtaining adequate professional knowledge and a mastery of required skills.

Taking clinical practice as a reference, one reconsiders management practices, associated with TQM implementations. Not surprisingly, similar relationships may be

established between companies and consultants and between diagnoses and prescriptions. Let us recall the way in which TQM was advocated in the UK around the late 1980s. For those who prefer a brief overview and are interested in open discussions of broad issues, derived from TQM practice, *Making Quality Critical* (Wilkinson and Willmott, 1995) may be recommended. It is a timely collection of papers on TQM implementations and on its fairly prescriptive literature. In the collection, critics have begun to unravel the elusive myth in part created by TQM advocates. The myth evaporated when the following quasi-clinical relationships are highlighted.

Companies and experts   The assumption on the relationship between companies and external experts is that the former is in the position of the patient whereas the latter in that of the doctor. How does the relationship work ? Since *local conditions* of each company are different due to its specific history, ethos of the workplace and the industry it sets its foot in, such conditions are to be respected as a doctor would do to the patient. In TQM implementations, however, the picture is not quite like that. Such local conditions are seldom discussed in detail in the advent of interventions by experts. In the texts produced by TQM experts, there is little convincing evidence to show their appreciation and respect to such conditions (see eg. Oakland, 1989; Bank, 1992). More often, they are of minor significance in the eyes of experts. Since TQM is advocated as applicable to most organizations for business success, attention to any local condition becomes irrelevant. So much so that one must be prepared for a coming era, hailed as another "industrial revolution" (Oakland, 1989: xi). The assertion is one of the inevitable, to which any resistance is deterred.

If a company's long term survival and prosperity depend on committed efforts of its employees, organizational life may be seen as an organic whole, like that of the human body. In companies where top management takes employees seriously, the probable knock-on impact of drastic change to employees are less likely to be ignored.

Unfortunately, an overwhelming impression from the literature is far from the image of the organic. Claims made by experts are based on oversimplified assumptions. For instance, both an organization and its employees are assumed to operate like machines (Oakland, 1989: 237, 272), as if employees were incapable of anticipating consequences brought about by a TQM programme and that prosperity can be envisaged separately from contributions of employees. Typically, employees are treated as having little capacity to project over their job (in)security and are unable to perceive potential threats to whatever responsibilities they have now, vis-à-vis proposed changes. To imagine that everybody unconditionally reacts to a TQM programme constructively for the universal good of quality is hardly attainable. It not only disregards reasonable concerns of the employees but wipes out issues beyond the single-minded pursuit of efficiency *in the name of* achieving "total quality" [7]. This wishful mechanistic mode of thinking is unconvincing.

A discerning reader may note that TQM experts do not seem to have much to say on possible chain reactions of change brought about by their TQM programmes to employees, such as on how destructive effect of change may be minimised. As to how employees in practice participate, one may read between the lines of some TQM reports (eg. Mohr, 1991; Powers, 1991). Supportive evidence of complimentary remarks almost exclusively represents the interest of the management, its preoccupation with efficiency, yet not necessarily effectiveness, through measured performance of results. Seldom is the interest of the employees carefully built into a change programme through TQM, since the seemingly universal division of employer-employee dictates that the interest of employees works against the interest of the company. However, it does not have to be so, for the Japanese experience has blurred this orthodoxy division.

In terms of performing the role of a doctor, experts/consultants may be a little under-qualified. In a society where to earn one's living with a profession is a norm,

expertise is traded. TQM experts assume that is what they do, hence, a business relationship between a company and experts. Upon scrutiny, one realises that it bears a partial, if not deceiving, resemblance to the medical profession. When a company calls in a TQM expert to diagnose or 'rescue' the company, what do such experts do ? Do they behave like a doctor to a patient ? They do not have to respect the local conditions of the recipient company, nor do they have much moral responsibility to its long term survival. The relationship is by and large commercial: A willing buyer pays for some professional advice. The consultant's business is not the business of a doctor: to maximise the chance of survival for the patient under difficult circumstances and not to seek profits out of the patient's suffering. One wonders to what extent experts are expected of any moral responsibility in their quasi-doctor role play. Perhaps, the least disparity between a good doctor and a quality control/management expert is that they both have to earn their reputation, as Deming did in Japan.

The quasi-doctor role play of experts looks inadequate. Perhaps, some consultants are more like 'amateur doctors' than experienced ones. Still, a nagging question remains. In business management, whose responsibility is it to offer the kind of benefit to companies, as a good doctor does to the patient ? Is there any role for management academics to play in this scenario ?

Diagnosis and prescriptions   As discussed earlier, to make a reliable diagnosis, the doctor must have adequate knowledge about *pathological lives* and their possible impact on the human body. In addition, the doctor checks the living conditions or environments the patient might have been exposed to. It is in the doctor's professional training that such knowledge is acquired for their prospective clinical practice. In cases where either information from the patient or medical knowledge is insufficient, it is difficult for the doctor to proceed with an effective prescription. One wonders to what extent current management knowledge provides reliable descriptions and adequate understanding of organizational life, comparable to that of pathological conditions in

medicine. For instance, 'resistance to change' is often raised in discussions on employees' attitude towards TQM implementation. Writers on TQM assert that such resistance must be negative and therefore must be overcome. However, the assertion may be questioned when the resistance is considered in light of a pathological life. To this end, it may be fruitful to inquire how 'resistance' comes about in the first place and why so. In this way, employees' concerns may have a chance to be taken into account constructively instead of being dismissed. When 'quality' is used to *dispose* reasonable considerations of employees, the target of any perceived resistance from them need not be 'quality' but the disposal in the name of 'quality'.

In order to have a sound understanding of potential causes of certain symptoms, descriptions of how certain pathological lives work are indispensable. In medicine, the production of such descriptions is in part the job of medical research. Arguably, current medical knowledge offers limited descriptions of pathological life associated with certain pathological conditions, labelled as 'cancer' and 'aids'. To use these labels does not suggest that knowledge of them be sufficient for effective treatments. To a large extent, an effective cure for either of them may depend on how accurate descriptions of them can be produced in future. If a diagnosis is conditional for prescribing effective treatments, it is hard to imagine that the diagnosis is something a doctor can do without. However, in the TQM literature it is precisely the necessary knowledge and understanding for making a diagnosis in recipient organizations of TQM that are cursorily covered. To this end, to describe TQM literature as 'prescriptive' helps to highlight a paradoxical situation where descriptions of how TQM may, rather than 'should', work in organizations are thin. Without such descriptions, the credibility of TQM prescriptions is all but insecure.

Let us consider the relationship between management research and (clinical) management practice in light of how medical research is related to clinical practice. If current medical knowledge represents a level of understanding of pathological lives of

the human body, that knowledge is the result of (re)shaping by researchers through years of study and experimentation. In theory, that knowledge is provisional in its present form and is subject to transformations. Therefore, it is wise not to take knowledge as rigidly fixed into one particular form and to insist on its absolute legitimacy. This consideration makes it easy to see that change and process-orientation are in part the 'order of things' rather than exceptional events. In clinical practice, the doctor knows that their prescriptions have to be provisional owing to the available medical knowledge. With respect to how a particular patient's body reacts to a treatment, the doctor accepts the experimental nature of his prescriptions to the extent that any clinical case he deals with, at one stage, can be an exception out of the normal pattern of effective treatments. This may be quite obvious with difficult cases where both a diagnosis and a prescription have to be on a trial basis. In contrast, a universal prescription of TQM (see eg. Oakland, 1989), received and recycled, appears an unsubstantiated claim. Writers on TQM have yet to offer a convincing account for a claim of such magnitude. Given the understanding that medical knowledge is in the shaping and transforming, it is difficult to support a universal claim in management, as TQM advocates may have hoped.

On the other hand, the claim of a universally applicable TQM triggers other issues [8]. If the analogy from medicine is worthy of careful consideration, one may be interested in knowing how (clinical) management practice is influenced and limited by the level of understanding embedded in the mainstream management knowledge. The credibility of claims made in TQM texts may be in doubt. Further, knowledge on the pathological life of an organization may help both managers and academics to understand organizational change and transformations, surfaced through so called 'change programmes', to which TQM is one illustration.

Philosophy of treatment   Medical treatments are based on knowledge of how the body functions and why symptoms and their causes are taken into account and

targeted. The human body, seen as a functioning 'object', is subject to interventions, of which surgical operations is a violent form imposed to the body. The 'object' is divided into categories of parts and their corresponding functions. They become the focus of treatments if a local part is diagnosed as having problems with signs of irregularity. An understanding of the body in this way is convenient for the doctor. He may concentrate on local problems and prescribe treatments. However, this approach is what a traditional Chinese doctor is warned against: A headache is treated as problems of the head; a foot problem is settled at the foot. This approach demands less from the doctor in contrast to considerations of possible overall impact of treatments to the body as an organic whole. What if the patient worries about negative effects of a local treatment on the functioning of the whole body ? A nagging question remains: What foreseeable damage can a treatment do in the long term if side effects are ignored ? One may be concerned with the rationale of treatments. What is the treatment for ? Separate treatments may be temporarily effective on symptoms but the likely causes may be at the same time overlooked or compromised. It is important to distinguish effective treatments on symptoms from that on the causes. Unfortunately, it may not be always within the professional training and capacity of a clinical doctor to find viable solutions for these considerations.

Strikingly similar observations may be made on (clinical) management practice, illustrated through TQM prescriptions. First, there is no single way in which TQM (or TQC) activities are carried out. Rather, attention may be paid to the way in which such activities are executed. To assume that an outline of relevant activities can be faithfully followed by a determined management of an organization underestimates potential interest groups and tensions within. TQM advocates have contributed to writing manual type applicable techniques and management activities thought to be successfully practised by the Japanese. However, here lies a vital difference. It is one thing to offer a comprehensive description of required TQM activities; it is invariably quite another game to anticipate *the way in which* these activities are to be performed

through interactions of members concerned. Until the significance of the way in which 'things' are done is appreciated, fragmented efforts on 'things' themselves in TQM prescriptions are likely to remain a source of confusion. Next, readers of TQM texts may recall how passing comments are made about complex organizational issues, as noted in Wilkinson and Willmott (1995). Perhaps, a naive disregard of an historical context and implicit tensions in organizational life are in part the result of a lack of understanding of the conditions under which organizations operate. If one accepts that justifications of prescribed treatments come from an adequate understanding of the human body, one may be willing to reconsider the limit of a mechanistic disciplinary perspective. A partial justification, derived from one disciplinary perspective, is misleading when it is promoted as a 'total' prescription.

Furthermore, what is frequently termed as 'change programmes' in the extant literature are implemented through some kind of interventions [9]. One wonders to what extent they may produce effects of 'chemical warfare' with respect to the following:

(1). Symptoms and causes: The division between symptoms and causes may be established and explored through further analysis of cases. For instance, when a claim of successful TQM implementation is closely scrutinised, one may differentiate whether the claim refers to effective treatments of symptoms or to that of the causes.

(2). Time scale: TQM has been described as a journey. Although the analogy draws attention to an evolving process and sustained commitment, it fails to capture a trade-off between long term benefits for an organization and its employees and visible short term gains. For those who are well-equipped with methods to make and measure short term gains, time scale is often lost sight of. Taking the long term survival and prosperity seriously, the management of an organization may have to

reconsider how to make some of their well-practised methods serve the well-being of the organization in the long run.

(3). The local and the whole: Specific effects from a local treatment of problem-solving may be easy to achieve, since applicable techniques and methods can be found. A crucial question becomes how local treatments 'accumulate' effects in a way that do not undermine an organization as an organic whole. The latter is less straightforward when compared with quantifiable measures. To this end, the Japanese process-criteria may be a useful alternative.

With respect to a philosophy of treatment, the notion that the human body is seen as in a dynamic flow is a radical position to that of the functioning 'object'. The dialectic of *yin qi* (阴气) and *yang qi* (阳气) sets free one's thinking from a rigidly fixed mode, inherited from a reductionist perception of the body. When the harmonic flow of *yin* and *yang* has lost its subtle balance, certain symptoms will surface. Therefore, the aim of treatments is to re-address the balance through various channels of adjustment. For instance, when the flow is disturbed or blocked at one locality, it is time for intervention to eliminate the source of that disturbance or blockage but not necessarily at the same symptomatic locality. The source may be elsewhere and probably a combination of other disturbances or blockages (see Huard and Wong, 1968; Kaptchuk, 1983). In particular, notions of process and change are critical to time. Either, change is seen as a special *event* that takes place in the unfolding of a series of events, as 'change in process'. Or, both process and change may be dissolved into a state of constant *flow*, as 'process in change'. In the TQM literature, for example, change is often referred to, as if it were a one off event like a switch that is turned on and off. The paradox with this perception of change lies in that change is thought of in a fixed mode so that change is betrayed as a 'non-change'. On the other hand, the Japanese seem to have settled into a smooth flow of change and processes.

The word 'clinical' may be added to 'management practice', since the role of experts is comparable to those less experienced doctors in the medical profession, although the prescriptive TQM practice, discussed so far, falls short of its prototype image of medicine. This is where questions concerning implications of clinical management practice to management education may be raised. One may reflect on the role(s) that may have been played by management academics. Is it their responsibility to act as experts, like TQM experts ? If this is not all there is of being an academic, what other roles can academics play ?

9.3   On Effects of Language: A Discursive Practice

Do academics use language differently than management experts and practising managers ? If yes, what is the role of language in this context ? Let us examine how discourse operates.

Conventional wisdom holds that linguistics is the disciplinary home of discourse. A linguistic analysis of discourse normally concentrates on words, sentences, grammar or the structures of texts. This kind of analysis works with a seemingly 'static' *form* of linguistic material, in which considerations of history and time may be put aside. In particular, an analysis need not question *how* such a form has come into being in the first place and under what conditions it changes.

To a certain extent, Foucault's work on discourse may be a timely response to such concerns. For him, discourse can be examined as *a discursive practice*, to be treated as "one practice among others" (Foucault, 1972: 186). It is a discursive practice from which a corpus of knowledge is given rise to (ibid.: 190). In this sense, discourse is the domain in which inquiries of how 'something' has achieved the status of knowledge and of possible transformations of that knowledge are conducted. Foucault insists that there is no need for the discursive practice to achieve a scientific status. For

instance, the clinical discursive practice is non-scientific (ibid.: 181). With respect to our comparison between clinical medical practice and clinical management practice, the latter arguably operates as a discursive practice, the domain of which is wider than a scientific discourse. A discursive practice deals with concerns that may be excluded from the scientific discourse which requires certain criteria of scientificity be met. According to Foucault, discursive practice operates with its own regularity and consistency *despite the absence of* any established discipline (ibid.: 179). This is a highly relevant point with respect to the academically contentious discipline of MS. Instead of debating its academic credibility, attention may be directed to examining MS as a discursive practice (see Jacques, 1992).

For Foucault, discourse is more than a mere collection of words and sentences and " ... to speak is to do something -- something other than to express what one thinks; to translate what one knows, and something other than to play with the structures of a language; to show that to add a statement to a pre-existing series of statements is to perform a complicated and costly gesture, which involves conditions (and not only a situation, a context, and motives), and rules (not the logical and linguistic rules of construction); to show that a change in the order of discourse does not presuppose 'new ideas', a little invention and creativity, a different mentality, but transformations in a practice, perhaps also in neighbouring practices, and in their common articulation" (Foucault, 1972: 209). What Foucault seeks to reveal is the complexity and density of discursive practices and the possibility of changing discourse. Transformations in a practice and in articulation also suggest that discursive practice is historical (ibid.: 192). Foucault is not arguing about the usefulness of conventional linguistic analysis of discourse. Rather, he is interested in uncovering some 'extraness' already built into discourse.

In this regard, it may be interesting to investigate TQM as a discursive practice. In the domain of TQM discourse, relevant texts may be reexamined -- from their

traditional role as the 'medium for communication' to a recognition of their embedded materiality as discursive evidence. The latter allows a scrutiny of TQM discourse. In particular, a recognition of orders of texts (chapter 7) has several implications. First, the orders take into account the irreversible arrow of time that certain events take place before others. To this end, the weakness in Oakland (1989) is his cursory treatment of historical events of TQC and Japanese TQC movement since his text gives no indication of Feigenbaum's publications of 1951 and of 1956 (chapter 5). A reference to both helps to explain the transformation from TQC to TQM (chapter 6). Second, a pattern of influence of one writer to others emerges so that how a particular order of texts relates to another can be examined. Internal rules are at work to maintain these orders. Once these orders come into being, it is easy to highlight what lies outside. It is towards the limit of the inside of the three orders, as in Fig. 7.1, that a discursive centre emerges and anything beyond becomes the outside (chapter 7). Third, the centre is represented by a written hi(gh)-story about quality control from TQC to TQM. In the name of self-evident good of quality, quality experts/gurus and some academics have created their own discursive space. Lastly, how are margins made ? One of the effects of the centre is that margins become those events swept aside from the hi(gh)-story. No wonder seemingly over-critical comments about TQM from a non-mainstream perspective are scarcely found in top academic publications, since rules of exclusion almost guarantee that such texts are seldom read (chapter 8).

In part, to examine the formation and transformation of TQM discourse is to follow closely the making of a discursive centre and that of its margins; it is to be concerned with why certain events are inscribed in the TQM hi(gh)-story and the possibility of other stories untold. Both a discursive centre and its margins are maintained *in the name of* quality either through *displacement* (see eg. Munro, 1995) or *disposal* (eg. Kerfoot and Knights, 1995). As these analyses have demonstrated, it is possible to achieve other ends than the declared pursuit of quality: An 'engineering

perspective' is made a discursive centre of quality. This explains why popular writers on total quality, TQC or TQM have similar disciplinary training to their critics.

To the critical comments on TQM, a response from the mainstream is to dismiss them as margins. A doctor does not need to discuss his reservations to his own prescriptions to the patient. A consultant has no need to justify his competence, since the justification is taken-for-granted by his quasi-doctor role play. When quality is accepted as self-evident good, who is against quality (Munro, 1995) ? However, when the question begins with a 'how' -- how is quality achieved, margin stories begin to surface. Without disclosing that 'quality' can be nominal, displacement and disposal may be undetected. What is at stake is not only 'quality' and acceptability of certain perceptions of quality but continuous interplay of 'quality' with 'nominal quality'. The game of displacement can hardly continue without an arbitrary sign of language and the possibility of manipulating its signification.

To go back to Foucault's point of the complexity and density of discourse, TQM discourse shows that to spread the gospel of quality is more than a straightforward operation of using language to communicate. Rather, to write about quality is to do something other than express an idea. It is an act and event in changing and transforming a discourse through articulation and repetition. Having arrived at this point, what can be said of the knowledge on TQM ? Does it have to be reconsidered accordingly ?

Contrary to a misleading image of Foucault, his interest is not to reject knowledge *per se* but to reveal a different *domain* of knowledge (Foucault, 1972: 195). In order to refer to that domain, a name for it is needed, hence, the 'archaeology of knowledge'. His focus is on how discourse is formed, or the working of "discursive regularities", through making discursive objects, enunciative modalities, concepts and theoretical choices (ibid.: 186, 193). He contends that "knowledge is that of which one

can speak in a discursive practice, and which is specified by that fact: the domain constituted by the different objects that will or will not acquire a scientific status"; "knowledge is also the space in which the subject may take up a position and speak of the objects with which he deals in his discourse"; "knowledge is also the field of coordination and subordination of statements in which concepts appear, and are defined, applied and transformed"; and "knowledge is defined by the possibilities of use and appropriation offered by discourse" (ibid.: 182-183). Here, the way in which Foucault writes about knowledge is noteworthy. First, knowledge is associated with other events or activities than some abstracted ideas independent of any living experience. Second, knowledge is achieved through a discursive practice, with a domain where certain objects are to be identified. Third, knowledge does not have to be scientific so far as one operates in a discursive space with a certain position. The operation involves making statements in a field in which concepts are played by allowing them to appear or disappear, be formed and transformed, (ab)used and (mis)appropriated. Hence, Foucault maintains that there is no knowledge without a particular discursive practice.

With respect to TQM discourse, such Foucauldian insights on knowledge are embedded in our earlier discussion. Feigenbaum's texts (Feigenbaum, 1951; 1956) opened up a discursive space in which discursive objects have been connected and referred to by writers on quality since the 1950s (chapter 5). The appearance of such objects in TQC/TQM texts is an indicator of whether a text on quality is considered 'proper' or not by experts concerned, despite of their varied positions. With respect to enunciative modalities, different types are discernible. A clinical modality is signified by Deming (1986) from his use of vocabulary -- "deadly disease", "cancer", "mutation", "cause of sickness" and to "prolong the life of the patient" (ibid.: ix-xi). He hoped to alert the American industry of a crisis in light of a foreseeable threat from Japan. As in Japanese, Ishikawa (1964; 1985) wrote in the tone of a paternalistic master initially to

a Japanese audience. In both cases, popular quality management experts are fairly effective in commanding their respective audiences.

'Improvement' and 'standards' are examples of discursive concepts that appear, defined, refined and applied in a field of statements, in which they are related to other concepts in discussion. For instance, *kaizen* has been developed into a management concept and distributed throughout an entire production process. To a western academic, Japanese style continuous improvement has become a concept that finds its way to workshops, seminars and training sessions, not to mention textbooks, papers and criteria of awards. 'Standards' is another important concept that is applied and refined in quality control/management statements. The interaction of 'standards' and 'improvement' (eg. Feigenbaum, 1951; see chapter 5), the Japanese understanding of how the two relate to one another (eg. Imai, 1986), the quotes and comments made about the Japanese *kaizen* and their enviable achievement of low defect rate etc. can all be considered as events in the discursive TQM practice.

Does a Foucauldian thinking on discourse have anything to say about whether TQM manifests a new management philosophy ? In the schema of 'archaeology of knowledge', such concern may be put forward as questions on theoretical choices. For instance, statistics applied in production operations manifested one theoretical choice for quality control activities. The ability to achieve precision in quality signifies a new level of certainty or scientificity (see chapters 2 and 6) [10]. The anxiety for certainty may be eased off in light of the statistical methods developed by Shewhart and his colleagues at Bell Laboratories (see Shewhart, 1931). Another theoretical choice is "an effective system", brought forward by Feigenbaum (1951: 1) in the form of TQC. For an organization, achieving TQC means a competent level of responsiveness to the external demands and flexibility built into the system. However, as raised in chapter 5, there are 'grey areas' in an organizational life where activities do not fall neatly into well-defined categories. Rather, they float around at the margin of such categories. To

this end, cursory comments on teamwork and employee participation become such margins in Oakland's TQM model (Oakland, 1989). From his declared system's perspective, considerations of employees may be appropriated into issues of better training and skills. The question is how to do that.

The inability of prescriptive/normative TQM in dealing with people issues lies in the possibility of (mis)appropriation. Indeed, people with different perspectives do not have to talk to one another beyond certain recognisable limits of one particular perspective reflected by one theoretical choice. To a certain extent, the papers in Wilkinson and Willmott (1995) have not only dealt with employee issues but elaborated on how (mis)appropriations are achieved in the name of TQM. Arguably, contradictions and conflicts of interest embedded in thinking about TQM reflect a fair degree of conceptual difficulty. Between quality experts and non-quality experts, their disciplinary perspectives do not guarantee a mutually accommodating conceptual ground. Efforts may have to be made towards such a direction so that both sides may speak to one another. This is described by Foucault as the "threshold of positivity" and "threshold of formalization" (Foucault, 1972). Owing to such thresholds, confidence derived from certainty provided by statistical quality control and from the administrative system may be eroded. Accordingly, the formation and transformation of TQM discourse become an illustration that: " ... discursive formations and specific regularities of knowledge are outlined precisely where the levels of scientificity and formalization were most difficult to attain" (ibid.: 195). That is to say, the inability of existing theoretical choices on offer of TQM may be where scientificity shows its limit. Likewise, efforts invested in the single-minded pursuit of maintaining standards and technical procedures are attempts made towards formalization. In this context, various national and international quality awards (see chapter 5) have brought discursive TQM practice into a public domain.

Demonstrating *discourse in action* brings us back to the unsettled issue on possible role plays by experts or management academics. Suppose there are people who are interested in 'knowledge consumption' and others in 'knowledge production'. Where are the 'producers' and 'consumers' in discursive TQM practice ? Possibly, there are also 'knowledge wholesalers' or 'knowledge retailers', such as TQM experts and consultants. If there is a knowledge life cycle, TQM experts, consultants, teachers and researchers may all have their parts in a play. In exploring a discursive TQM practice, attention may be directed to the ways in which discursive regularities are formed, related to one another and roles played by experts, consultants and other professionals including management academics. Some may favour the role of a 'knowledge producer' more than others. However, in knowledge production there are texts that seem to fit into none of the above roles: texts that somehow function like an 'inspector' or 'auditor'. They may argue other ways of looking at 'quality' to the mainstream, opening up a seemingly settled topic; they may even propose conceptual moves and raise a different set of questions. Perhaps, that is the space created by critiques of TQM, where prescriptive TQM or existing orders of events on 'quality' may be taken back to where they are made.

For those who are concerned with a philosophy of inquiry *in addition to* a methodology of inquiry, it may be necessary to discern the cooking of knowledge from what is cooked as knowledge. For what is taken as TQM knowledge is mostly for consumption. One consumes the ready-made for certain purposes -- a 'product' by the end of a knowledge production or a 'commodity' once it enters the knowledge market. If one works backwards from a position of consumption, it is obvious that cooking is production, hence, the discursive practice of theorising TQM by academics. Some may insist that it is their job to produce knowledge on TQM for a specific audience, such as MBAs, therefore, the need for producing books and papers on a better way of doing TQM. Nonetheless, such knowledge production cannot be maintained without *a discursive practice.*

Looking at how a discursive practice operates may reinforce our provisional understanding on the shaping of TQM discourse and knowledge on TQM. Arguably, the transformation of management discourse and knowledge goes on insofar as those parts in a knowledge life cycle continue to be performed by experts and academics concerned. A discursive TQM practice provides an initial illustration. There may be management academics who believe ourselves to be 'knowledge producers', yet they may be watched over by others -- the 'inspectors'. On the other hand, when one is in a position of a 'knowledge consumer', it may be wise to chew a given knowledge for a little while. At the same time, a discursive TQM practice helps one to see what language is doing *for* and *to* us all the time, regardless whether one is keenly aware of its pervasive effect.

9.4 'Appearances' Instead of the 'Essence'

Unwittingly, the Cartesian mind often leads to a mode of thinking that depends on clear-cut divisions. Hence, if one follows a binary logic, he produces an either-or solution. For instance, due to an apparent lack in 'content' or 'real substance' in discursive links (chapter 5), the need to establish them may not sound substantive enough and, therefore, readily dismissed. Obviously, such links do not sit comfortably in the predominantly normative management textbooks. The perceived lack can be traced to a classic division between 'form' and 'content' or a hierarchical divide of 'surface' and 'essence', see Figure 9.1 below.

A more complicated picture may emerge once a third element is introduced. What if attention is shifted to the Foucauldian threshold of *forming* or *appearing* ? The classic division may be disturbed. That is, 'forming' or 'appearing' becomes the third. Here, if 'substance' or 'content' refers to a certain 'being' as presence, then how they relate to one another may be reconsidered.
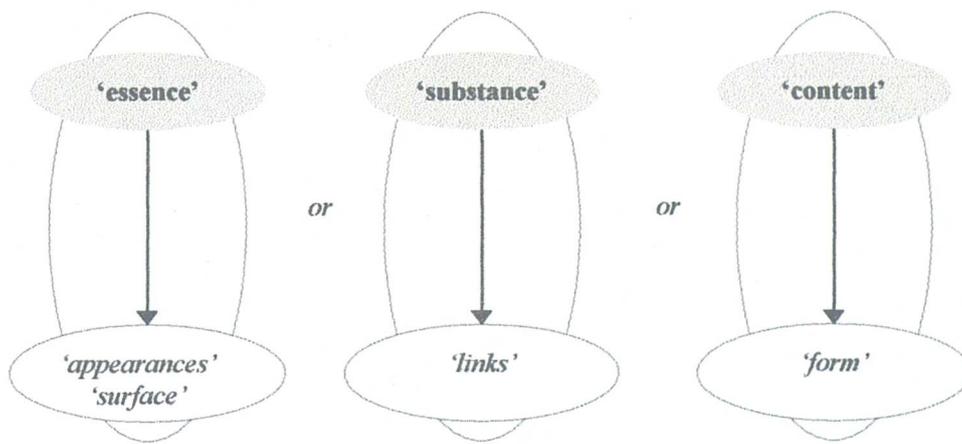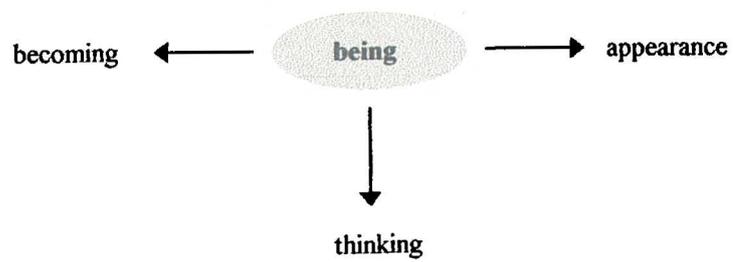
Figure 9.1 A classic division

Figure 9.2 Heidegger's horizon of being

On being, becoming and appearing, Heidegger states that: " ... being as emerging, appearing presence; non-being as absence -- then the reciprocal relation between emerging and declining is appearing, being itself. Just as becoming is the appearance of being, so appearance as appearing is a becoming of being" (Heidegger, 1959: 115). His horizon of being allows becoming, appearance and thinking resonate one another, shown in Figure 9.2 above (ibid.: 194). In light of Heidegger's rethinking of being, it is possible to contemplate the 'essence' and/or 'appearance' of TQM.

As Heidegger (ibid.: 98-115) envisages, *prior to* a fixed 'form' or 'appearance' in a conventional sense, the first order 'substance' may be reconsidered, "being" in Fig. 9.2. Instead of privileging 'essence' and, therefore, 'depth' over 'surface' and subsequently 'superficiality', *surfacing* on the horizon, a 'coming-into-being' or being-in-movement, deserves more attention than it has been given, "becoming" in Fig. 9.2. It suggests that the classic division, functioning as an infrastructure, be put aside when considering Heidegger. More significantly, Heidegger opens the horizon for the conceptual space where 'being' or 'essence' resides in those threshold moments of appearing and transforming. Once this radical step is made, one hesitates to attribute 'superficiality' to 'appearance'. Seen from a familiar position, 'appearance' is nothing but secondary. To follow Heidegger's position of *appearing as being* carefully, a moment of appearing is the moment of coming-into-being. Paradoxically, there seems little need to commit oneself to a transcendental 'essence' -- an originary abstract 'idea' -- that is often beyond time and therefore history, and beyond space, be it conceptual and/or physical. Accordingly, attention can be directed to a constant appearing or *becoming of 'quality' or TQM*.

In this light, the manifest 'quality' through established standards, be it ISO or BS series (chapters 5 and 6), are necessarily incomplete or partial, since the process of how and where 'quality' (dis)appears is not always the same as (non)conformance to standards. In other words, the discourse of 'quality' " ... must not be referred to the

distant presence of the origin, but treated as and when it occurs" (Foucault, 1972: 25). Hence, quality standards, as a certain 'distant presence of the origin', cannot be conceived independently of their discursive production where and when they take place. Given this, participants' attitudes towards quality and their actions for it are invariably significant and cannot be neatly separated from quality standards. In short, rather than being suspiciously held as insubstantial and therefore readily dismissed, such expressions like 'appearing', 'surfacing' or 'emerging' may better capture the fluid, non-static dynamics of relating one discursive event to another in quality control, manifested through discursive connections, addressed in chapter 5. Furthermore, both 'links' and 'appearances' may signify a certain temporary experience of 'being'. This mode of being is a way of dissolving 'essence'. That is to say, what has been asserted as the 'essence' of TQM becomes elusive, at least it cannot be easily captured. Without the certainty or assurance of the essence 'being there', how can it be investigated or addressed in the first place ? What is relatively certain is that one may discern an evolving flow of those becoming or transforming moments and call them by an unfamiliar name: 'appearances of TQM'.

With respect to a lack of 'theory' raised at the beginning of the chapter, re-reading Heidegger suggests some clue for addressing the concern. If one does not assume that he can discover the 'truth' or 'essence' of TQM in pursuing 'theory' by making TQM case studies substantiate his preconceived model, he is free from the confines created by the division of 'theory and practice'. The difficulty embedded in the division is its incapacity for accommodating *other* practices, such as a discursive practice, except the/a practice 'out there'.

9.5 Summary

The 'being of practice' comes from those Heideggerean moments of becoming as appearing, hence, one perceives appearances of TQM, necessarily with an uncertain

'essence'. From this perspective, conventional wisdom on practice conceals a theorising or discursive practice, incapable of seeing it as a *living experience* or *form of practice*. Not only does the discursive practice condition the ways in which knowledge on quality is (ab)used and (mis)appropriated, it enables questions about divisions and knowledge and discursive productions (chapters 5 and 7) to surface. Discursive TQM practice allows one to appreciate the underestimated capacity of language, embedded in quality standards and the Japanese practice. In describing dynamic and momentary events, of which TQM practice is an illustration, one becomes mindful of the weight of language [11]. This noted, one realises the limit of the received wisdom on language -- a second order 'tool' for a first order 'hand', albeit an enigmatic hand.

By rendering appearances of TQM practice, the following may be drawn. What is known as TQM is indeed limited because most of us tend to put TQM in the given division of 'theory and practice'. On the other hand, an absence of a respectable 'TQM theory' can be a Foucauldian rupture in the familiar direction of research. To reconsider the space for practice, one begins to see that within that space, the pursuit of a supplementary account on TQM practice forces researchers to contemplate questions which may not have been thought of and raised before.

Notes:

1. See Juran (1981), Pascale and Athos (1981) and Morita, et al. (1986).

2. See Ishikawa (1965; 1969), Ishikawa and Kondo (1969), Kondo (1978; 1988) and Deming (1986).

3. In the TQM literature, when the switch from TQC to TQM is examined, one realises the role of translation and discerns a change of emphasis from 'control' to 'management'.

4. In Morishima (1982/94), he looks closely at the relationship between national ideology, in particular Japanese Confucianism, and a likely route of economic development. His account on the way in which the Japanese social perceptions and hierarchy are maintained is insightful.

5. Again, see Morishima (1982/94).

6. ibid.

7. See Introduction in Wilkinson and Willmott (1995).

8. The texts by Deming (1986) and Ishikawa (1964; 1985) are typical of prescriptive language in use where such expressions like 'disease', 'remedy', 'diagnose' etc. appear frequently.

9. Sometimes, the vocabularies used by TQM experts are not very different from that used in surgical operations.

10. At the beginning of his book (Shewhart, 1931), he presents a telling quote from *The nature of the physical world* by Eddington (1928) that goes: "When numbers are large, chance is the best warrant for certainty."

11. One may appreciate Heidegger's illuminating insight into language as the "House of Being" (Heidegger, 1971a): language is a space where Being lives and dwells.

TO CONCLUDE

OR CIRCUMCLUDE ?

In a poststructuralist inquiry, 'con-clusion' becomes an oxymoron and can be replaced by 'circum-clusion' at the nominal end of the thesis. The circumclusion is threefold.

Firstly, the thesis reveals *practices* of the TQM phenomenon. My work is a treatise on the making of TQM rather than another event of recycling the ready-made knowledge on TQM. The latter has been taken as my starting point. In answering the 'how' question raised in chapter 2, *the way in which* TQM is produced conditions an answer to the 'thingness of TQM'.

Secondly, the same TQM texts can be interpreted differently. This thesis aims at demonstrating a *SUPPLEMENT* to what is already understood as TQM. To relate the TQM 'subject' to an 'approach' of inquiry, be it empiricist or poststructuralist, it is argued that when the status quo of a 'subject' remains unchecked, 'approach' serves to maintain an unproblematic 'subject', namely approach-in-subject. Conversely, when *subject-in-approach* is closely scrutinised, as shown in this thesis, a 'subject' *comes into being* simultaneously in appearances, therefore, one captures the 'becoming' of a 'subject'. Hence, the 'being' of a 'subject' *was, is* and *will be* in-the-shaping.

Thirdly, the main contributions of this thesis are: (1). the scale and radical way in which the TQM 'subject' is reexamined, compared with research so far on TQM; and (2). my argument of *an inseparable bond* between an adopted methodology and epistemological commitment: *There is no methodology without epistemological commitment.*

This said, researchers may have to rethink whether it is intellectually defensible and theoretically convincing for a Ph.D. thesis to address 'methodology' without engaging embedded epistemological issues in Management Studies (MS). Indeed, without sustained engagements, one wonders how MS will ever grow to become a mature academic discipline.

CHAPTER TEN

CIRCUMCLUSION: RESISTANCE TO CONCEPTUAL CLOSURE

Perceptive insight can be reached,
Yet it can be further discerned from 'that'.
There seems no ultimate
in understanding 'that'.

(anonymous Chinese saying)

'Conclusion' marks the end of a thesis. By tidying-up the main points in the thesis argument, 'con-' produces a convergent effect of a knot, hence the danger of a conceptual closure in '-clusion'. In order to delay its arrival, an unfamiliar term 'circumclusion' is introduced to highlight a point in language -- the very *textual presence* of a written expression itself. To displace 'con-', 'circum-' is a way of maintaining possible interactions of the main points in the argument <u>before</u> a knot is done. In deferring it, 'circum-', with its potential to move about, is suggestive of some resistance to a linear progression in a discursive space. Hence, this chapter becomes another blank canvas to work on. With the intervention of 'circum-', closure appears nominal or empty. If a space is yet to complete, there comes the need for revealing.

Under eight sub-headings, this chapter connects the main points from the antecedent analysis (Parts III & IV) as a 'circum-text' and serves as a supplementary weaving to the analysis. The five chapters (5 to 9) are intertextually woven so that one strand in the analysis reciprocates another in forming a textual pattern. As such, TQM discourse and TQM practices are to be appreciated together rather than in separation.

The textual pattern now reappears in a discursive space previously reserved for 'conclusion'. Indeed, the space accommodates both conventional 'contents' of an analysis and a pattern constituted with conceptual 'links' [1]. If one has to justify a 'theoretical' thesis, one may do so by establishing 'concepts' and possible links among them. In particular, the woven textual pattern of this thesis has produced three unique bonds between: (1) discourse and practice; (2). subject and approach; and, (3). methodology and its epistemological assumptions.

Taking TQM discourse and the practice of TQM as a schematic relationship enables one to engage the familiar division of 'theory and practice'. Having noted Cooper's position of division-create-perspective, one wonders how synthesis may relate to divisions. When one concentrates on showing how one division relates to another and their subsequent interactions, circumclusion becomes a space for synthesis.

10.1   TQM Discourse and the Practice of Discourse

The materiality of TQM knowledge   Examining the making of TQM allows a certain materiality (or textuality) of knowledge to come into light (chapter 5). In retrospect, when Heidegger (1971a) described language as the "house of being", he attempted to tease out an elusive metaphysical construct by a metaphor. Similarly, the materiality of TQM knowledge has been captured in a net or web. Without realising that an investigation of a management phenomenon, such as TQM, may have implications to our present perception of knowledge, one may readily dismiss such materiality, since, for the sake of presence, it makes little sense to investigate TQM when it is no longer fashionable. However, if one is willing to consider a woven web of textual strands as another kind of materiality, an inquiry like this is duly justified. Further, if, as an innovator in ideas, Foucault outlines a domain, known as the archaeology of knowledge, this thesis may be regarded as providing both a case from management, as evidence, to substantiate his archaeology and a provisional

demonstration of the shaping of a discursive space [2]. Through writing, the researcher performs like a spider, whose fruit of labour is an interwoven text. Insofar as 'links' or 'knots' are easily associated with the familiar, they may be inappropriate for describing a net, since their very presence bears the signature of thinking in terms of solid entities or 'things'. With the textual material, what has been woven (or formulated) is a pattern which defies the thinking of a 'subject' as representing independent 'things' and 'events' 'out there', based on 'concepts', 'models' or 'frameworks' [3].

The effect of TQM discourse   As explored in Part III, TQM discourse produces an effect that may stand on its own, though not normally recognised as such. One may be reminded that between the name or signifier of TQM and a TQM practice 'out there' (ie. signified) there remains a link which, upon close inspection (chapter 6), appears, if not entirely arbitrary, rather tenuous. Therefore, one wonders why the assumed fixed link draws little attention in the first place. Furthermore, as a result of chapter 6, it is reasonable to contemplate the possibility that, up to a point, TQM discourse may have the potential to take over a practice 'out there', once the linguistic sign and the bond between signified and signifier are revealed to be arbitrary. Overall, the antecedent analysis has shown that the making of TQM discourse is a rather complex process.

Regarding Jacques (1992) position on the shaping and changing of an historical discourse (see chapter 3), my analysis on TQM discourse supports his insight and responds to his call for reassessing the established management knowledge. Specifically, when compared with the conventional understanding of TQM (chapter 2), the uncovering of TQM discourse (Part III) may have in part answered the question of why the analysis of this thesis should be of any value. It illustrates that a discourse is, first and foremost, not a mere collection of words and sentences; it is not a value-free communication tool. Once a discourse is in the making, it will have an effect irrespective of whether or not one chooses to ignore it. To this end, for instance, can one still write about TQM in the usual way, as reflected in the mainstream literature ?

Unconcealment of TQM practices   In the thesis, the practice of TQM discourse is not explored through a common path of 'theorising by abstraction' but through examining *theorising itself as practice* (chapters 5 to 9). To the extent that the thesis strives to clarify practice by revealing a discursive practice, it extends practice as we know it. In particular, it is time to assess possible implications of TQM discourse in its relation to a working practice, to a prescriptive practice and to a discursive practice.

Instead of an unwitting acceptance to the practice 'out there', three practices have been proposed (chapter 9). The discursive practice helps to shape TQM as a subject. In other words, it is hard to imagine the constitution of a subject without a discursive practice. Albeit in a limited way, the thesis illustrates the way in which TQM practices are in action, inclusive of a practice 'out there' and a discursive/theorising practice. In so doing, possible sources of conceptual confusion, arisen from a management phenomenon like TQM, have been exposed. In addition, by widening the scope of inquiry, the thesis marks a shift in the researcher's perception that enables an alternative understanding of TQM practice to emerge. If there is any synthesis in exploring the making of TQM, it may derive from a comparison of two general approaches of research: TQM seen as a normative management practice (chapter 2) or taken as a site for making conceptual moves and of understanding knowledge production and its consumption.

Suppose that the analysis stops short at the end of Part III, the overall structure of the thesis would undoubtedly conform to the standard tripod in social science(s): literature review (L), methodology (M) and analysis (A), in brief as $L + M + A$. Albeit to be convincingly defended, the examination of TQM discourse alone may be limited to *what can be said* of both 'theory' and 'practice'. If, by dropping the latter, the defence of my argument is made easier than to put the two together, the task of reexamining the bedrock division in management has to be postponed. Otherwise, with

the presence of Part IV, the analysis of the thesis extends considerably to the extent that TQM practices are discerned by showing how the concealment of TQM practice can be achieved. Hence, the received wisdom on TQM, as the practice 'out there' and as a closure to examining 'practice', is resisted and exposed.

10.2 'Textualness' and '*Inter*textualness' *(tong)*

If one accepts that the effect of discourse, as through texts, produces a certain textuality, one may have to reject 'texts' as given. Instead, they are in action through textuality and in their relation to other texts. For this reason, the pursuit of recording empiricist events (or experience) 'out there' cannot be complete without textualising such events at a research site (eg. Jacques, 1992). In particular, this thesis addresses 'text' both in a Derridean sense and through a Foucauldian discourse, because 'text' exhibits ambiguity, multiplicity, and is not always what one assumes it to be. On the other hand, a specific discursive object or concept cannot operate on its own due its relational dimension that contributes to the constitution of a discourse. The question is where this dimension or textuality leads one to in exploring TQM discourse and its practice.

'Textualness' as 'aboutness' ?   Any movement requires space. A certain 'aboutness' is inscribed in *zhuo-you* (左右), literally '(from) left (to) right'. It highlights a posture for movement, with the uncertain appearance of 'undecidedness'. For those who are not contented to remain in the middle or 'centre', a departure from it seems unavoidable. Similarly, 'inter-' is suggestive of action, too. Indeed, movement as *yun-dong* (運動), is composed of 'cloud walk' and 'cloud energy'. If walking requires energy, a visual movement in 'cloud walk' can be a sign to the viewer who 'sees', not unlike one of Foucault's themes: a way of seeing is a way of knowing (Foucault, 1969).

So, what may one see as a result of this inquiry ? Other than satisfying the normal expectation of a Ph.D thesis, ie. to defend a coherent argument following the L + M + A structure, the thesis is where a certain 'intertextualness' may be added.

From being 'textual' to being 'intertextual' A state of 'intertextualness' requires one to cross over from one 'textual' to the next. Suppose a 'subject' or discipline is textual, to be 'intertextual' means that an effort is made to move across from one subject to another. Further, if a 'subject' can be penetrated and 'subjects' *inter*penetrated or *inter*fused, one wonders what is indispensable for being 'interdisciplinary'. Indeed, a Chinese expression portrays such an 'intertextual' state of mind -- *tong* or tung (通). In its generic sense, it means 'going through (something) in movement' or 'travelling over a distance'. Here comes a solution for preventing a closure effect. There will be no movement if one stays at one 'subject' without making any serious attempt to either penetrate into or come out of it. As both action (as a verb) and effect (as a noun), *tong* is suggestive of the capacity to create 'something'. Derived from its generic sense, *tong* is often interpreted as one's good grasp of relevant events or 'subjects' after one has served his apprenticeship [4].

Suppose 'inter-' also embodies both action and effect, being 'interdisciplinary' points towards a direction of breaking out of the dominant empiricist/positivist conceptual enclosure. To maintain the momentum and rhythm of movement, by reaching out and coming back, one breaks that enclosure by weaving.

By virtue of seeing a subject differently, this analysis may be regarded as a 'pointing finger' to other texts or 'subjects' in management. To draw attention to 'subjects' other than TQM, *tong* arises from its obscured concealment. Its presence is made apparent through other 'subjects'. In considering the merit of interdisciplinary inquiries, *tong* embodies an act of *'inter(enter)-other'*: To bring *'that (other)'* as the witness of *'this'*. Without such witness, how could one know *'this'* ? Equally, without

'that', an established 'this' within the confines of 'this' suffers an arguably critical flaw of being self-referential. As an arrow of understanding, *tong* helps to point out such quasi-established 'subjects' as Strategy and HRM. Perhaps, by weakening the stronghold of the empiricist mainstream, *tong* marks the beginning of an end which starts with the recognition of a coming crisis: a failure to appreciate phenomena through the empiricist lenses (chapter 2). A journey of a thousand miles starts with the first step, as Lao Tzu said. This thesis heeds his advice, with questions raised on management orthodoxy and, in particular, on texts that have always been treated as a given tool for representation. Once 'subjects' begin to interpenetrate one another and are appreciated through 'intertextualness', *tong* in its capacity to connect [5] becomes a guiding heuristic for seeing.

How could anyone get into a *tong* state of mind ? First of all, to be receptive and open, one has to empty his cup. As Heidegger once remarked: "We never come to thoughts. They come to us" (Heidegger, 1971b: 6) -- provided one is aware that there is room left in one's cup for receiving. By the same token, one may say that it is not 'I', the researcher, who looks for 'ideas'; but they come to 'me' at the right time -- after 'I' have emptied the cup.

Intertextual and intellectual ? To be able to make intertextual moves is an act of scholarship. Without actively engaging conceptual ambiguities in Management Studies, an intellectual may be irrelevant, if not entirely redundant. Otherwise, one is in action at whatever subjects one happens to be working. By moving from one subject to another, one enters into an open space that shapes both centres and conceptual boundaries of various subjects. To a certain extent, the act of moving across poses a considerable challenge to a subject-based mastering of a knowledge production profession. Understandably, one may expect no more from an expert other than his subject or discipline. To this end, a specialist is sufficiently different from an intellectual in their outlook insofar as the former is not the one who is likely to move

across territories. Therefore, being intellectual does not demand less but more than being an expert. The demand to see and know widely and differently and to enter into and out of subjects or disciplines is what management academics in general might have failed to meet [6]. Indeed, *tong* or interpenetrating has long been the hallmark of Chinese literati landscape painters. This said, may one suggest that there be no *tong* without being intertextual, or, there be no intellectual without *tong* ?

10.3   The Ready-made as the Starting Point

With little reference to what is familiar, the expression of 'being intertextual' is not transparent. A common expression is to bridge, allowing constant and mutual flows, provided the bridge-work is in several directions simultaneously. Other than its obvious effect on two sides, a bridge is an artefact of technologies applied during its construction. This said, where is the bridge-work out of this inquiry ? It is between the researcher and the reader and, possibly, between the orthodox empiricist(-positivist) and poststructuralist approaches. If every reader/audience has a perspective, the thesis prepares a preliminary defence for one to make a cross, should he wishes to do so.

From the start of this inquiry, there are two possibilities. Either, one consumes TQM knowledge by following a well-trodden path. Or, as shown, TQM becomes an 'object' for deconstruction. One may depart from the same starting point in different directions: the normative and its poststructuralist supplement. The latter shows what a researcher can do with the ready-made knowledge. Obviously, the researcher's intellectual orientation has a role to play. One wonders to what extent it resonates what a musician does before his stage performance. The musician tunes in his instrument. If a researcher performs through a thesis, he may also have to tune in his instrument. That is to say, the researcher weighs up probable paths in rehearsing an argument. Imagine what the performance would be like without the performer tunes in properly his own instrument.

A critic may have reservations to the use of 'making' in the title of this thesis. Is not 'making' by deconstruction an oxymoron ? Not necessarily, provided one is aware of the following. To deconstruct indicates where a clearing operation is to take place: The ready-made is the object to be working at. On the other hand, one must know his direction: The many layers of an onion is shown by peeling. Although one must be in a positive state of mind in producing a critical account, it is for the reader to judge whether this thesis stands on its own to be qualified as a supplement to the mainstream. Given that the ready-made TQM has been in concealment, the 'making' is an act of releasing some 'standing-reserve', as Heidegger (1977: 3-35) preferred to call it. The term 'making' is used in a generic sense. It highlights positive effort in shaping an argument. The term not only embodies the coming-into-being of discursive events but signifies the overlooked craft of research, specifically, writing on management.

Two Chinese proverbs may help to provide a focus. *Yian-guan-da-dao* (阳关 大道) portrays the mainstream. It literally means 'sunny gate, main road'. In research terms, it designates what is on offer in terms of 'knowledge' and 'research methods' as the middle ground. Like food packages on supermarket shelves ready for consumption, both of them can be easily picked up off the shelves. A difficulty arises when one wishes to incorporate innovation or creativity. How can anyone tell what is absent from the shelves, if he is accustomed to consume only what is available ? If 'everything' is preconceived as 'this', there seems little room for penetrating questions on behalf of 'that'. One may feel the comfort from the sunny side when he is on the 'main road'. Yet, he must observe the road codes including restrictions of the 'main road'.

Alternatively, *pang-men-zhuo-dao* (旁门左道) means 'side door, left path'. It is not only a fair reflection on the 'sunny' and the 'main' but reveals a clue of where a path begins. Indeed, to whom does the 'sunny gate' make sense and for what purpose ?

Could it be that the 'main road' was a little known and uneven sideway at a time when few travelled there ?

10.4   TQM Practice as the-Way-in-Which (*tao*)

From our earlier discussion of the Japanese quality control practice shaped by *kaizen, kanban, JIT* and *pokayoke* (eg. chapters 2, 6 and 9), a certain path of CWQC as the 'tao of CWQC' may be inferred. By the same token, the 'tao of TQM' lies in its becoming: A TQM practice comes into being from the way in which 'quality' is achieved so that *quality is inseparable from the way*. The desire to capture the 'thingness of TQM' [7] reflects the mentality of associating an asserted 'thingness' to an 'out there' reality as an abstract concept, be it 'quality' or TQM. It follows that descriptions of what the Japanese have done from the extant literature do not necessarily represent the 'out there' reality in Japan, because they are already interpretations of the Japanese experience. On the other hand, such descriptions create their discursive effect in the same way that TQM discourse does. In responding to 'what is TQM' (chapter 2), the appealing 'thingness of quality' makes sense only when a way of 'doing quality' is perceived as secondary. The devil of detail reveals itself from the way.

In Chinese, 'tao' (道) and 'way' or 'path' are used interchangeably, either as a verb meaning (to) 'articulate' or as a noun meaning 'path'. *Tao* inscribes movement as a path is marked (Chang, 1963). When one considers the flow of a stream, a certain result becomes a mere temporary moment. Perhaps, the nearest notions to *tao* one could find are Heidegger's becoming-in-the-world and Derrida's *differance*. The latter, as Derrida insists, is not a word, just as *tao* cannot be articulated in the ordinary way (chapter 4). Rather, both *tao* and *differance* point to a state of absence *from a position of presence* [8]. In the Taoist philosophy, *tao* is everywhere and found in everything with its uniqueness [9]. In TQM practice, accordingly, *tao* finds its way in the ethos of

a particular workplace and generates no generality. Contrary to the uncritical claim of the 'essence of TQM' (eg. Bank, 1992), there is no intrinsic 'essence'. More likely, one captures its elusive appearances from a way of doing. Hence, the previously held 'out there' TQM practice now appears in fluid *shapes* as the Heideggerean becoming-in-the-world. Without articulation or 'tao' as a verb and the 'way', TQM practice cannot sustain. This is a position consistent with our earlier discussions on Saussure's arbitrary sign (chapters 4 and 6), on Foucault's archaeological analysis of knowledge (chapters 5, 7 and 9) and on Derrida's theory of writing (chapters 6 and 8).

It is argued that the representational TQM practice (chapter 6) is concealed in the normative TQM practice (chapter 7). Obviously, the concealment is a measure of the scope of what can or cannot be accomplished via representation. It is evident that the empiricist/positivist research represents what can be and has been achieved whilst, with the introduction of an arbitrary sign TQM, what has been absent begins to emerge. Let us be specific.

The tao of signifier TQM   Received wisdom takes language, and necessarily discourse, as signifier which is like a currency in circulation. Hence, the apparent fate of a researcher is to play with signifiers. TQM practice, as referred to in the literature, becomes an 'out there' reality to be represented. The signifier TQM is dependent on a signified TQM practice in companies. The space of the signifier is the same space of the representational TQM practice. Owing to the limited space of a signifier, TQM research can hardly be anything other than being representational.

The tao of signified TQM   Other than a recognition that, as a working practice, TQM must be 'out there', a supplement has been established as an unconcealment of TQM practices: the prescriptive and the discursive (chapter 9). When the signified TQM becomes the only focus of attention, other practices are out of sight. The representational practice is able to proceed due to an *a priori* bond

between signifier and signified, which is the basis for empiricist research. However, here lies a 'side door': The signified may be perceived either within or outside a given discursive space, from where an 'other' is ignored or at best glanced at. To this end, this thesis has attempted to reassess the capacity of the signified. In order to consider how it may relate to both signifier and an arbitrary sign, the signified is put back to the Saussurean trichotomy. There can be no representational practice without the signified and signifier dichotomy, which is the familiar epistemological ground, shared by structuralist and empiricist inquires. In other words, the mainstream TQM practice has been maintained owing to the mechanism of representation as well as the absence of play with an arbitrary sign.

Since an arbitrary sign that creates a space of its own lies outside the space of representation, a representational practice cannot deal with the sign. Let us call what takes place in the space of the sign a *significatory* or expressive(-sionist) practice [10]. Once this practice is added to the representational practice, both a Foucauldian discourse and a Derridean writing can be taken into account. Indeed, the 'representational' and the 'significatory' constitute a new perspective of TQM practice.

The tao of an arbitrary sign TQM   It becomes clear that, in the extant literature, TQM is taken as a signifier only. This is because an arbitrary sign has been erased for the sake of representation. To suggest TQM as an arbitrary sign means that TQM can be designated by *any other* arbitrarily chosen label or name so long as it is acceptable to a linguistic community so that its members may refer to it repeatedly. In part, it is an arbitrary sign that makes TQM discourse intriguing.

Here, one discerns a striking intertextualness in what was developed by Tung Ch'i-ch'ang's *bi-mo-du-li* (筆 墨 獨 立) in Chinese landscape painting three centuries ago and our present interest in language and TQM discourse (see chapter 7). Once Tung's painting is finished, it creates a life of its own, independent of the painter

and his intentions. The ontological significance of an arbitrary sign and subsequently a discourse can be seen in the same light. Arguably, the 'self-so-ness' in *bi-mo-du-li* is an expression of painting as *a significatory practice*. This means that there is more to painting than being taken as a representational practice (see Chang, 1963). If an artist authentic experience is ontological and his particular way of seeing is epistemological, the same could be argued of a researcher. To this end, *xie-yi* (寫意) in painting, literally (to) 'draw an idea', implies a space for ideas to speak for themselves from the medium of painting. If to play with ideas is to move within a space of painting, may one suggest that to play with ideas is to move within a space of writing ?

A second intertextual feature is the notion of division. Before Tung, Chinese painting, as 'brush and ink', was practised for the purpose of representation. Tung's radical theory of 'brush and ink' lies in its capacity to reconstitute a division: painting as both representational and significatory practices. Tung *freed* 'brush and ink' from what they were used to be dependent upon [11]. Since Tung's time, painting as an art form is no longer a mere tool for representation alone, because it is capable of creating its own space. From painting back to our interest in discourse and writing, an echo is heard in Jacques' reference to McLuhan -- "the medium is indeed the message" (Jacques, 1992: 268). In making the media of language, discourse and writing an 'object' of inquiry, this investigation has argued for a peculiar ontological experience of links. That they are not secondary to 'things' but of a first order is conditional for a web or net to constitute a certain materiality.

So, what happens when the representational and the significatory practices are joined together ? Firstly, compared with representation alone, the space for investigations has been expanded considerably, as if the Saussurean trichotomy were a huge 'empty basket'. Suppose these practices are two sides of a coin. Most of us may be only familiar with one side. The pattern on the other side may look cryptic and remains to be deciphered, which explains why it has been left on its own and perhaps

forgotten. It was Saussure who laid the groundwork for deciphering the other side. Secondly, keeping the two together leads us to reaffirm the underestimated capacity of language or writing (chapters 3 and 4), often regarded as an indispensable tool for representation. If the thinking of *bi-mo-du-li* is applicable to language or writing, one may begin to consider *yu-yian-du-li* (語言獨立). That is to suggest a 'self-so-ness' of language or writing such that it may be *released from* the image of a representational tool. A call for *yu-yian-du-li* may be another way of interpreting Saussure's arbitrary sign, which is different from Levi-Strauss' application of Saussure's theory. Despite Levi-Strauss' fascinating insights that reshaped anthropology, his most influential contribution has been to the domain of signified and signifier. Being cryptic and elusive, Saussure's arbitrary sign has often been misread. Thirdly, if one reinterprets Saussure's trichotomy as *sign -- representation*, an interplay of separation of the two, an inseparation may also be looked at. It is 'sign' that holds the key: either 'sign' is cut off from representation or put back again. To switch from one to the other either resumes a bond between the two practices or erases it. This said, one may rethink the site of an investigation, with a knack of knowing when to separate and when not to. Fourthly, the 'thingness of TQM' reflects one's preoccupation with a certain ontological experience. The 'self-so-ness' in writing signifies a domain of its own, revealed by a division that *separates* the representational *from* the significatory. Having reinterpreted Saussure's arbitrary sign and Derrida's play with its substitutes, there appears an affinity between Derrida's writing and the Taoist conviction that insists on the ubiquitous *tao* in articulation and in doing.

10.5   Subject *in-Approach* vs. Approach *in-Subject*

The adopted 'approach' of this thesis implies both a starting point and a chosen path from that point over space and time. Let us reconsider how 'subject' and 'approach' may relate to each other.

Subject in-approach   As the poem on Lu Shan (chapter 2) establishes how a certain position of the viewer relates to his particular perspective of the mountain, so does the relationship between the TQM 'subject' and an adopted 'approach' of investigation. If a 'subject' is shaped by an approach, different approaches may shape the subject by taking multiple discursive forms, or rather, appearances. Here arises a critical question. Which appearance is authentic ? The question sounds absurd at first. However, it may surface a long-held insistence on an intrinsic 'essence' or the 'truth' of a 'subject'. The subject appears as illusory as one's insistence on the 'essence of TQM'. From now on, when TQM crops up again in a discussion, it is reasonable to raise the question of '*which TQM*', since there are more than one approaches that could have shaped it.

With regard to modes of thinking (chapter 3), one may propose that TQM be seen/known as (a). the positivistic(-empiricist); (b). the structuralist(-empiricist); and, (c). the poststructuralist.

The first is maintained with a few assertions, with respect to the given division between 'theory and practice', the constitution of 'theory', 'practice', 'data'/'evidence', and 'methodology'. If the literature is dominated by the positivistic(-empiricist) TQM discourse, it is largely due to its assumptions. The second mode of thinking may produce a 'structuralist account' on TQM. It is worthy of note that there are similarities between the positivist and the structuralist. If the difference in the two has been unclear, it may be largely due to the same bedrock division and unexamined assertions on the 'essence of TQM' and on the ahistorical dimension of the subject (chapters 2 and 6). A common belief has been that once the 'essence of TQM' is distilled, it can be transferred elsewhere. For instance, many assume that a discovery of the 'essence' of Japanese management practice is the first step to achieve success through TQM in the west, as it was accomplished in Japan.

In the third mode of thinking, as this thesis has sought to illustrate, a poststructuralist account on TQM begins to question the very bedrock division. Insofar as 'theory' is not to be privileged over 'practice', the two are *interdependent* on each other. The sensitivity to a particular TQM (eg. in responding to 'which TQM') allows one to realise that the pursuit of a 'conceptual framework' is part of the empiricist legacy in research. The framework is not neutral or value-free, since only a certain type of questions, and not other types, are likely to surface at the outset of empiricist inquiries (chapter 2). On the other hand, a particular mode of thinking makes one interested in pursuing certain research paths and not other paths. This said, it is not difficult to explain why the majority of TQM research projects looks so much alike, with respect to their starting point, central questions raised, the generally empiricist approach and, not surprisingly, as it is often the case with their research outcomes. Each might have aimed at clarifying certain points as a response to projects carried out earlier, yet the empiricist mainstream thinking via a preconceived 'framework' remains intact. As a provisional attempt to open the conceptual enclosure of the mainstream, this thesis has made a fresh start to rethink possible relations between 'theory' and 'practice'.

In particular, the thesis has shown how a poststructuralist approach reshapes a TQM 'subject', maintained primarily by the empiricist approach. From our discussion on being *inter*textual and *inter*disciplinary, one contends that radical actions in approach will have an impact to the subject concerned, hence the poststructuralist conceptual moves *reshapes* TQM. If an 'approach' is substituted by 'technologies', one may suggest that technologies shape a subject. In the Heideggerean becoming-in-the-world mode (chapters 8 and 9), the being of a subject *was*, *is* and *will be in-the-shaping* by an approach, be it an empiricist or a poststructuralist. The argument goes further: One could hardly find any subject that has not been shaped by an approach. That is to say, there is *no pure subject*, since there is no natural home for it to go back to. Consequently, can anyone still talk about TQM without, unwittingly, being

inscribed by an approach ? One wonders to what extent an *inseparable bond* between 'subject' and 'approach' may be established. Similarly, if a subject is shaped by certain technologies or a theory by certain methods, can one advance the position that technologies or methods shape a subject or a theory ? It is evident that the Toyota production system (JIT), as an approach (or technologies), has shaped production operations (PO). Or, PO has been established as a subject, known as operations management (OM) in the west, by the Toyota approach.

Having advanced the argument on 'approach-shape-subject', what can be said of the previously held position on 'subject' and 'approach' ?

Approach in-subject   When a subject is taken as given, it appears neutral and the role of an approach is made invisible. Not only it is difficult to contest the 'essence' of the subject, the status quo of a subject, served by an (empiricist) approach, is not to be challenged. The 'essence' is unlikely to be in danger if many believe in it, as evident in the empiricist mainstream. Accordingly, an accepted subject is, at least among academics, a reality. Many may aspire to contribute to the subject, having forgotten that it, too, must have come from somewhere in the first place. It may be argued that the way in which a subject is perceived is derived from a set of ontological and epistemological assumptions. If no alternative is ever explored, they must have appeared the only credible ones to be taken seriously. Hence, the dominant approach is there for researchers to follow, be it positivistic or empiricist. When there is no apparent room left for new conceptual moves, any radical questioning of the dominant may depend on one's desire and capacity to create a discursive space. Not surprisingly, an exposure of the mainstream may have to come from its outside (eg. Jacques, 1992).

Having brought into play of 'subject' and 'approach', what can be said of perspectives (chapters 2 and 8) ? How do they come about ? From the classical representational position, one may insist that, due to Picasso's radical shifts of

perception on what constitutes painting, his is no longer painting as many have been familiar with (see Lynton, 1980). However, can anyone show us an 'uncontaminated' position from where he stands and relates to a painting ? If such a privileged position is indefensible, the same may be argued of an 'approach' or 'methodology', because hardly anybody sees/knows from a pure position, as Foucault's epistemic shifts have shown. Indeed, if both Lu Shan and TQM are taken as 'subjects', one needs to search no further than to reflect on the Lu Shan poem. As a viewer or researcher, how he relates to what is viewed, be it Lu Shan or TQM, will create a perspective.

With respect to how a subject is perceived and accordingly constituted, one may contemplate further that there is hardly any intrinsic 'thing' that guarantees the 'essence' of a subject. Arguably, divisions within a subject are already-occupied territories with its own conceptual orientation. Where a discursive centre is found, there is established knowledge, ready for consumption, hence the popular normative TQM practice. Nevertheless, conceptual boundaries are no mere extension of the centre. As long as they are conceived as peripheral to the centre, one cannot but fail to appreciate where the shaping of a subject, old or new, begins.

10.6   Methodology without Epistemological Commitment ?

Suppose a division, eg. to separate the representational practice from that of the significatory, is all but one possible direction of an inquiry, one may think beyond division itself: There emerges an *inseparable bond* between discourse and practice and between methodology and epistemological commitment. Where separation (*fēn* 分) exhausts itself to the limit, it is time for reversal -- the appearing of an inseparable bond (*hé* 合) [12]. Here, the focus is on how methodology interlocks with epistemological assumptions. The relationship between them is quite similar to that of plants and soil. Certain soil conditions allow certain plants to survive better and be cultivated than other plants. Certain epistemological conditions engender a certain type of research

questions and not other questions whilst methodology comes into play *only after* those questions have been raised. Although an adopted methodology enables one to go about answering questions, it is epistemological commitment, as a researcher's intellectual orientation, that directs attention to see and know in a particular way.

Here one faces a few overriding questions. Is it defensible to maintain that a methodology can be independent of epistemological commitment, and therefore one continues to articulate his methodology in research without exposing his epistemological commitment ? Is it possible to have a methodology that maintains little epistemological ground ? How can 'I' justify 'my' methodology other than declare 'my' epistemological commitment ? Perhaps, a question may be put back to the reader: Can you defend an independent methodology ?

To know by separation   To separate is to divide, evident with the case of TQM. First, there is a given TQM subject where research questions may be raised but the subject itself is often spared from questioning. Next, a researcher decides an approach -- the conventional way of choosing one's methodology. Following the empiricist norm, epistemological commitment is normally taken-for-granted yet seldom articulated. To scrutinise a given norm itself is not without difficulties. They spring from a position from where one may 'differ from within' as well as to do it from the outside. As such, research questions are followed by a methodology; these procedures are what is usually expected from inquiries in Management Studies. Where there seems little room for questioning, one stops at any 'unthinkable', should it ever creeps in one's thinking. However, the 'unthinkable' becomes such only from a particular epistemological position. The 'unthinkable' signifies a certain tension from within the norm. In a similar context, Foucault expresses his understanding as "the stark impossibility of thinking *that*" (Foucault, 1970: xv). As recognised within a domain of 'this', 'that' is an unwelcome intrusion from an 'other'. When one allows no room for perceiving and knowing 'that' or 'other', what is left for contemplation is 'this' and

questions *of* and *within* 'this'. Hence, one has no choice but to operate from within the mainstream.

Of course, 'mainstream' is a laden term. First, the way in which one sees/knows what is seen/known is in part an ontological experience, with a perspective. Second, when an adopted methodology becomes a legitimate position to proceed, one does not have to declare or expose his epistemological commitment, hence it is conveniently kept out of sight. What remains visible is 'methodology' with no recognition of the impact of that commitment already invested, evident in the mainstream investigations on TQM.

To know with an inseparable bond   What happens when a researcher extends the scope of an inquiry by stating his epistemological ground first ? Attention may be drawn to that methodology comes to the scene *only after* one's epistemological commitment being declared. First, the relationship between the two has to be made clear. When the ground of knowledge claims is examined, one has to reflect on his own methodology. Otherwise, as it is often the case, one reduces the scale of an inquiry to dealing with a given 'subject' and a deceptively neutral or value-free 'methodology'. There appears at work an inseparable bond between how one sees/knows a 'what', be it 'subject' or 'methodology', and how one investigates his case. When that bond is erased, the positivistic/empiricist approach proliferates. To this end, TQM research is illustrative of the empiricist approach.

With respect to methodology and its epistemological considerations, the implications of this inquiry are as follows. Firstly, both the scope of an inquiry and time required have to be taken into account. Obviously, it takes longer to work out and argue my 'case study' on TQM. The widened scope covers both methodology and its epistemological ground, which in turn forces researchers to reassess the effect of management research in general. Secondly, conceptual boundaries are where

unconventional questions may be raised. Once conceptual boundaries or margins are related to the 'centre' or a 'framework', an established system may be revealed as being incomplete and with inevitable limits [13]. To this end, one of the outcomes, or should one say 'appearances', of this investigation is a critique of and supplement to the empiricist academic mainstream in Management Studies. Thirdly, to a certain extent, employing a 'methodology' without exposing one's epistemological commitment is like one's unwitting reluctance to grow out of his childhood. To prevent this, one may have to push himself to the limit of what is known. Only when one refuses to stay where he feels comfortable can he begin to transform, both the researcher and the subject under examination. Fourthly, can a serious researcher refuse to consider whether it is intellectually defensible and theoretically convincing to engage a management phenomenon without ever examining one's own epistemological ground ? My answer is 'no'. Otherwise, I would continue to disregard the link between methodology and a few corresponding epistemological assumptions. Probably, researchers have shied away from that link for too long.

Despite its inevitable limit in space, this inquiry may be seen as an invitation to dedicated scholars, including researchers, to engage in constructive debates. So far, my position has been this: There is an *inseparable bond between methodology and its epistemological ground*. When a separation of the two is temporarily suspended, one begins to see the bond and compare the effect of separation and the resumed bond. In other words, there appears *no independent methodology without epistemological commitment*. With separation or division, the bond is disposed; recovering it reveals what could have been inseparable in the first place.

Let us be reminded of the question raised earlier (chapter 2): What happens when a researcher investigates a 'subject' ? Here is my version, derived from the Lu Shan poem, served as a working summary for the thesis:

When I remain a member of the mainstream,

There emerge established disciplinary subjects;

When I have moved to boundaries,

There appears an open space for reshaping subjects.

Management, as it is known, changes

    As my position shifts:

From outside, within ...

    Positivist, Marxist,

    Empiricist, structuralist and poststructuralist.

No two perspectives are exactly the same.

How could I ever capture the 'essence' --

    The true face of management ?

For I myself have become part of management.

10.7   Contributions and Limitations of this Thesis

Technically, this Ph.D thesis is on one particular 'subject' and must satisfy the basic requirements of a Ph.D thesis. More generally, the thesis may have wider implications than to TQM. Having taken risks of stepping outside a conventional way of looking at a research 'subject', four main contributions may be highlighted.

To a 'conceptual framework'   Received wisdom accepts that a 'conceptual framework' lies at the heart of an 'original contribution to knowledge'. However, what happens *on one's way to* knowledge ? The inquiry implies that the shaping of a framework or 'centre' begins at margins where a fresh start can be made. Rather than being misled to believe that a framework is a secure and reliable structure, it can be an empty basket with space for reshaping a subject. A way to a framework or established centre is also a way of making margins (chapter 8). One cannot have one without

acknowledging the (non)presence of the other. Both have been re-evaluated. As such, the analysis of the thesis constitutes a checking operation on how a 'framework' and its boundaries *come into being* and may be sustained. For those who are used to thinking in concrete terms such as 'framework' or 'centre', the relatively loose or fluid terms of 'boundaries' and 'links/bonds' appear less noteworthy. By and large, an absence of the latter depends on what one expects to see and prepares to accept as concrete 'things'. Therefore, to make crossings among discursively-centred subjects becomes a means to shake a seemingly static or stable 'framework' or 'centre'.

Albeit built on the tripod structure of a Ph.D thesis in social sciences, this thesis is distinctive in its own way: $L + (E) M + A (D + P)$ [14]. Obviously, there are two extensions (E and P). The first allows the *ground of knowledge claims*, and not just knowledge per se, to be examined (chapter 3), *prior to* the introduction of 'Methodology' (chapter 4). The theoretical background informs where the poststructuralist epistemological commitment of this investigation has derived from. The second is Part IV, as mentioned before. Without the making of TQM practice, it is difficult to discuss the link between discourse and practice and to explore their possible interactions. In creating a space for examining schematic relationships, both taken-for-granted divisions and concealed dimensions have been brought into play. To contend that these relationships contribute to the constitution of an academic (management) discourse introduces inevitably a certain degree of uncertainty into management research.

Suppose these extensions are abandoned, the thesis would be less complicated and, probably, its completion less time-consuming. For, in the absence of chapters 3, 8 and 9, this thesis nevertheless conforms to the tripod model of a Ph.D thesis. It will be one extra 'black brick' on the library shelves allocated for Management Studies. Undoubtedly, the presence of chapter 3 increases the complexity of 'Methodology'. Equally, Part IV makes 'Analysis' less straightforward insofar as one cannot appreciate

the significance of a Foucauldian discourse without acknowledging a discursive practice at work. To take away 'practice' from 'discourse', the thesis would be on discourse alone and may be of interest to a limited few, since it is unlikely to command attention from those who place practice high on their agenda. By demonstrating *discourse in action*, one is in a position to examine possible effects of a discursive practice. To this end, this inquiry, as it now stands, marks a refusal to separate 'practice' from 'theory' and from 'discourse'. Albeit in a stumbling manner, this thesis shows what can be done *with* a management subject.

To TQM 'theory and practice'   To the established literature, this thesis is a supplement, accomplished by unconcealing TQM discourse and practices. Without taking 'theory' for granted, my examination has shifted attention from looking at knowledge, in particular its consumption, to its production. In this respect, my analysis differs from that of Jacques' (1992). Specifically, mine highlights 'the archaeological' as well as a theorising practice or 'action in theory'. Arguably, my research follows Foucault's spirit, if not every step that has marked along his path on the power/knowledge theme. Indeed, one may now be in a position to consider the question: To what extent does discourse have the capacity of creating a domain of its own ? A response may have to be the topic of another extensive text for a future date.

To TQM practice, the supplement has been spelt out (see section 10.4). In short, there is more to TQM practice than a/(the) practice 'out there', which leads to the point of the (un)making of TQM on a particular path and not on other paths. The very presence of a supplement is a way of loosening a rigid 'framework' or 'structure' that may have been entrusted to be foundational by many. Alternatively, to perceive a framework as an empty basket suggests difference in size where 'things' or events may be thrown in at different times. Hence, a framework itself is a site for a deconstructive practice.

Three schematic relationships   Before this inquiry, little attention is drawn to such relationships on the TQM subject, concerning discourse and practice, subject and approach, and methodology and its epistemological ground. For sketching out a broad picture, their presence marks a space for a relational modality that Foucault (1972) strove to establish and justify. Indeed, a similar cognitive pattern, inductive and synthetic instead of deductive and reductionist, has been established for centuries in Chinese medicine that perceives the human body as a web of points, lines or connections (see eg. Kaptchuk, 1983). Insofar as TQM is concerned, conceptual links discussed earlier may change the established perception of a subject. It means that the making of links not only *re-orders* the TQM subject but *re-organizes* what is accepted as 'knowledge'. Having rejected the empiricist-structuralist insistence on an '(infra)structure' or the 'essence of TQM', the discourse and practice of TQM now appear more like a web than classic Cartesian 'things'.

<u>'Subject' and 'approach'</u>   As discussed, the TQM phenomenon can be investigated as more than a subject matter. It is argued that there are at least two ways of looking at how a 'subject' relates to an 'approach' (see section 10.5).

<u>Methodology and its epistemological ground</u>   Is   there   any 'methodological contribution to knowledge' from this inquiry ? By accepting the received wisdom on 'Methodology', one is in a rather weak position to challenge its ground. This, in part, explains why the empiricist epistemological ground of mainstream management research (eg. in the form of a Ph.D thesis) remains dominant. Normally, the focus of attention has been on what a methodology 'should be' for resolving 'identified' research problems. More often than not, a 'centre', rather than margins, preoccupies researchers. Hence, methodological limits are either inadequately probed or left unchecked. The routine task has been to 'construct' a methodology and then decide accommodating methods. Researchers are under little pressure to push methodology to its limit. Fortunately, there is another path. A researcher does not have

to be constrained by a dominant framework. When epistemological considerations are carefully considered, 'Methodology' itself becomes problematic. Only a concealment of the latter can make it appear deceptively adequate and authoritative. Otherwise, an exposure of its source makes its limit visible.

<u>Separation by division and inseparation with bond</u>   The three sets of relationship become dynamic when division (ie. *fen*) and bond (ie. *he*) come into play. Once the bond is resumed, the subject under scrutiny is extended. One of the effects of such an extension is the opportunity to reset the scale of research. This is why the three bonds have the capacity to create a synthesis, whereby the division of 'theory and practice' may be reconsidered as 'discourse and practices', since an exposure of discourse accommodates more than what the representational practice is able to. Suppose the familiar division of 'theory and practice' is 'theory in practice' or 'theory in action', this thesis has begun to address 'action in theory', not unlike the yin-yang theory in Chinese medicine: There is yin in-yang, and equally, yang in-yin [15]. The two *independent* states of either yin or yang, based on a clear cut division, have now become *interdependent* on each other.

TQM subject becomes a vehicle   Investigating TQM has brought into light issues beyond what has been taken-for-granted as a given subject. In effect, TQM becomes a *vehicle* for exploring such issues as well as a *site* for establishing a few conceptual links. To turn a subject into a vehicle has shed light on what is lacking in the subject-based knowledge and research: A given subject cannot adequately reveal its own boundaries (see chapter 8). As a Buddhist saying goes that: A finger is pointing towards the moon, but one cannot see the moon by looking at the finger ! Indeed, TQM is such a finger. This inquiry may be of little value if it has not pointed towards an unfamiliar domain for further investigations. Perhaps, my supplementary examination on TQM may be called a 'poststructuralist finger'.

From the TQM 'subject' to broad philosophical considerations, the thesis may be said to have covered more ground than is normally required of a thesis in Management Studies. The possibility of illuminating a supplement makes research an adventure. As to whether mine is a worthy effort, it is for the reader to discern. On my part, research is no longer a way of 'having a say' or knowing 'what to say' but *how to say what* is worthy of saying. As Chuang Tzu remarked:

> *The purpose of a fish net is to catch fish.*
>
> *When fish is caught, the net is forgotten.*
>
> *The purpose of a rabbit snare is to catch rabbits.*
>
> *When rabbits are caught, the snare is forgotten.*
>
> *The purpose of words is to convey ideas.*
>
> *When ideas are grasped, the words are forgotten.*
>
> *Where can I find someone who has forgotten words ?*
>
> *Whom is the one I would like to meet.*

(see Merton, 1963: 154)

Is it inconceivable that beyond 'words' is a path/*tao* -- an order that language or writing fails to capture ? Is 'that' not what Derrida's finger -- *differance* -- is pointing to ?

The *tao* of making TQM discourse and practices lies in thinking about how to make conceptual moves, having accepted that *tao* emerges from specific localities. The *tao* of TQM comes from a way of doing it; there is no *tao* without action. The way/*tao* has to be respected and not imposed upon. This 'case study' on TQM is a platform for performing an act, other than providing evidence to support an argument. The act points at the limits of received wisdom in management research via a 'conceptual framework'/'theory', a 'subject' and a 'methodology'. One wonders whether a recognition of such limits itself constitutes a small 'original contribution' [16].

Understandably, one acknowledges the limitations of one's own effort. In particular, the following is considered:

Firstly, this thesis inevitably bears an historical trace and the artefacts of the researcher. The time span is within six years (1992-1997). Despite the researcher's arduous efforts to reach out of the confines of mainstream management research, the initial conceptual moves made as a sketch of another space are nevertheless tentative and may, for the time being, look rather insecure to many. The artefacts of the researcher can be both strengths and weaknesses, depending on how one mobilises them to support the main argument. First and foremost, this 'case study' on TQM has to be a localised effort.

Secondly, most first order texts are not read in their French or German originals. They include texts on the poststructuralist philosophy and on Japanese quality management, with few exception [17]. Here, the critical issue is how to use translated texts. From Derrida's position on writing, a text maintains a considerable degree of undecidability, ambiguity and multiplicity in meaning. Therefore, an uncompromising insistence on a single authentic version of an original text, eg. prior to its translated English version, may be questionable. For instance, even in French, Foucault's texts can be (mis)interpreted and (mis)understood in many different ways. Of course, an awareness of the incompleteness of texts is not an excuse for not reading the original but a limitation of the researcher for acknowledgement. I hope that my handicap is far from being fatal and may be compensated -- as long as the benefits of reading translations are greater than its loss, my effort may still be worthier than making no attempt at all.

Thirdly, despite a few 'small pictures' have been drawn (chapters 5 to 9), the evolving of a 'big picture' from them still takes time. It is unsettling when the 'big picture' has not emerged. However, it does make one aware of the limit of what can be

achieved in one Ph.D thesis. If, at this stage, the typical space reserved for 'future research' is blank, it is not because that such research protocol is ignored. Rather, the text seems to flow better when 'further inquires' appear at the end of each individual point of discussion in this chapter. In other words, probable research agenda, as a result of this inquiry, is dispersed where individual topics are addressed. Given time and provided one keeps working at the 'unthinkable', the 'big picture' may 'come to me'. If one stops taking risks, a current impossibility may never be turned into a fresh horizon.

Fourthly, although there appears a need to rework the relationship between 'theory and practice', this thesis provides no straightforward answer to the question of 'what constitutes theory' [18]. Rather, what has been on offer is an alternative way of perceiving 'theory and practice' and a provisional account on a discursive practice. Perhaps, one has arrived at a critical moment when received wisdom on management theory may be seen as having reached its peak in a *yang* mode: too much certainty through over-simplification with unqualified confidence in its knowledge claims. To re-address an imbalance, one learns to respect the forces of *yin* -- the spirit of water and valley -- and let *yin* work alongside of *yang*. To this end, I am contented if my investigation has shed some light on the *yin of management theory*, ie. of knowing 'what not to do' in order to proceed without making far-fetched moves in the name of management theory. As to what extent 'discourse' may replace 'theory', it has to be left for another discursive space due to the confines of space and time in one thesis. However, generous space has been given in my attempt to answer the question 'what constitutes practice' (Part IV). Albeit a first step, further explorations on practice are desirable. For instance, a critique to an established subject could also be argued as another appearance of practice -- the practice of critics.

10.8   Implications for Management

"Management ? which one ?" -- a discerning reader might respond. For consideration, there are three constituencies: (a). for a management practice 'out there'; (b). for knowledge or 'theory' of management; and, (c). for the practice of doing management research.

As it is with the case of TQM, there *is* a management practice 'out there' (chapter 9), although it is fair to say that such practice has not been the main focus of attention in this examination. It is not because that its role as a source and site of research is denied. Rather, what has been demonstrated, as inscribed in the thesis title, is an *other possible source*, *another site* and *other practices*, to which justice, if that is a proper term, may be due and can be done. Having scrutinised a practice 'out there' at different places (chapters 2 and 6), some necessary conditions for comparative studies in management have been exposed. What may be helpful to understanding is insightful accounts of 'ethnomanagement' practices. Hence, it is reasonable to project that the management discipline itself be seen as a *site* for comparative analyses. In order to respect and appreciate diverse ways of organizing/managing, one may have to, at a certain point, go back to the long overlooked impact of philosophical/ethical traditions of east Asia and the west (eg. Anglo-Saxon). To take such impact seriously will no doubt raise new questions for management research, and new challenges for researchers.

With respect to possible implications to knowledge, in particular 'theory' in Management Studies, the much-cherished image of objective and neutral 'knowledge' or a relatively separate pursuit of 'theory' from 'practice' becomes blurred, having looked closely at the making of a discourse. Rather, 'knowledge' or a 'theory' is 'found' alive in action. To members of a linguistic community, ie. the academic discipline of MS, it is fairly obvious that the mainstream discourse largely represents the empiricist

epistemological tradition. To those who are willing to accept its limits, a space has to be created. An adventurer can expect little certainty and comfort, and has to be prepared for sacrifice when it comes on his way to knowledge.

To the practice of doing management research, the thesis is a symbol of action. Any researcher may have a unique set of artefacts as resources. With the emphasis of objective facts and data in the empiricist tradition, one easily forgets his own resources. *Action in research* requires that traditional research discourse be subjected to close scrutiny to the point that there remains no privileged position for exemption. To this end, the *tao* of doing a Ph.D lies in the thinking and writing. If one loves ideas, allow him some space to take 'action in ideas' until those ideas dissolve themselves in movement. That is, until those ideas and actions of engaging a given subject become inseparable -- an inseparable one(ness).

A similar scenario is like playing bridge. At the beginning (eg. chapter 2), a set of cards is a given order. To reshuffle the cards disrupts that order and creates chaos only to that order. On the other hand, what seems to be chaotic or unpredictable is also re-ordering in its own right, which, in the present analysis, has teased out discourse and practices, subject and approach, methodology and its epistemological commitment. Of course, the very act of reshuffling the cards disorients an existing order. The same may be considered of a given field or subject. As to how willing and to what extent one is capable of taking risks in disrupting the given order, it remains the decision for each individual researcher. To this end, research is, among commonly recognised aims, a matter of personal choice.

In the end, the formulation and articulation of this thesis must be a discursive practice. I am conscious that this inquiry is an interpretation -- one that transforms what is being interpreted. Other than transforming the researcher, the TQM subject may have also been transformed, with respect to thinking differently about the

established TQM texts in particular and a discursive practice in MS in general. In a strict sense, hardly anybody can escape from (re)interpretations. One wonders whether any 'original' text is no more than a seductive appearance that may after all have little defensibly intrinsic or ahistoric 'essence'.

With the following note, this investigation is drawn to an end [19]:

Returning from seeking 'knowledge' to being on the way,
'Way' becomes a verb -- waying.
Movement is a way,
Moving is along a path.

Weakening the stronghold of 'conclusion'.
Let it be another way.
To 'circumclude' --
Being around, being present, being here !

'Quality' comes from ways of thinking --
The spider web and snowballs.
A quality discourse emerges from what has been absent --
The way.

A way is a path.
What a joy to being on the way !
What a journey of becoming --
        Along a water path !

Notes:

1. Here, 'content points' and 'links' among them may be considered as a division, hence, creating a perspective, according to Cooper (1987). Arguably, every perspective starts with a specific division.

2. My inquiry is in a Foucauldian and reflective mode.

3. There are at least two possibilities: either the 'theoretical' vs. the 'empirical' or a 'theoretical' vs. an 'empiricist' inquiry. One may be reminded of corresponding assumptions with respect to the questions such as 'what constitutes theory and practice' and 'what is legitimate for inclusion as theory and practice'. See chapter 7.

4. A Chinese expression, *ju-yi-fan-san* (举一反三) allows the following to be made: By raising one 'subject', one reflects on three similar situations. That is, if one can demonstrate one case, three further 'cases' may be illuminated. All have some resemblance to the 'oneness'. Once you thoroughly understand one subject, you are on the way to understand more than one. Here, the highlight is a higher order of oneness in spirit.

5. There could be three *wu* as diverse paths: (a). penetrating thinking (悟 fourth tone), (b). emptiness (无 second tone), and (c). misconception/misunderstanding (误 fourth tone) before one reaches a *tong* state of mind.

6. How do intellectuals relate themselves to the establishment or established institutions ? An 'outsider' brings in radical change or an 'insider' differs from within. Cf. chapter 3 on Derrida.

7. Ref. chapter 2, the asserted 'thingness of TQM' bears the sign of a structuralist conviction. If there is ever the 'essence of TQM' irrespective of its context, effective Japanese management practice may be easily transferred.

8. According to Derrida (1982), *'differance'* is 'not a word', which implies a recognition of the limit of language, not unlike *Tao*. It may be articulated but not in the usual way. See the beginning of chapter 4.

9. Cf. Chuang Tzu, when one has to name 'something' unnameable (because it is not a thing !), one realises the limit of language; yet *tao* is beyond the bound of language.

10. A 'significatory practice' refers to that which allows sign to signify without a recourse to representation. Perhaps, this is where semiotics may help to illuminate.

11. Three hundred years later, modern art movements took place in the west. The argument is that art creates a life of its own, with or without the task of representing *a priori* 'essence' as the 'out there' reality, be it mountains and rivers in a Chinese landscape or a human figure. Art has an independent role *other than* being representational as a tool for another aim.

12. Ref.. the Chinese expression, *fen-jiu-bi-he* (分久必合), *he-jiu-bi-fen* (合久必分), literally 'long separation leads to inseparation' and 'over inseparation reverses to its other end'.

13. If one considers Gödel's 2nd theorem of incompleteness (see Shanker, 1988), one realises its profound significance to human cognition and an inevitable limit of our understanding of human affairs. Gödel's theorem is as robust as the received wisdom of robustness could imagine. The implication of Gödel's work to the poststructuralist perspective arrived at in this thesis may be this: One cannot decide with absolute certainty that he knows what 'that' is.

14. Paradoxically, one cannot abandon 'structure' all together. This is not necessarily a contradiction to the poststructuralist epistemological commitment of this thesis, since it is more like a humanities thesis than a typical thesis in social sciences and in Management Studies. Ref. section 10.1.

15. See the five principles of Chinese medicine (Kaptchuk, 1983).

16. The next possible turn might be from a poststructuralist to a Taoist. Or, has it already taken place? There seems a close affinity between the two, in particular on processes, paths, and traces, ie. from philosophical considerations in this inquiry to spiritual 'oneness' or 'wholeness' -- "I" and the "ten thousand things" as one, as a Taoist would say. Is the notion of 'web' beyond the usual requirements of a Ph.D thesis ?

17. Ref. 2nd edition of Ishikawa's text (1964 in Japanese).

18. It often refers to representation, see Chia's argument (Chia, 1992).

19. Inspired by Lao Tzu's *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 40.

Epilogue

As many of my generation in China, children of the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), I learned to be critical of the established authority. However, until I left China a few years ago I had taken a lot for granted without being keenly aware how lucky and privileged I was, having been brought up at a time in a society where unprecedented traumas made life for millions of ordinary families a struggle for survival. Rather than another act of taking, this Ph.D thesis is my gesture of giving. Its aim has been to demonstrate 'ideas in action'. I have no regret of having made a sacrifice for my action.

Of course, I have my reward from, first and foremost, my intense anthropological experience of writing a Ph.D thesis in English. Indeed, my fieldwork at Durham University Business School can be written as an additional ethnographic account on academic life. Not only can the assumed bond between 'theory' and 'practice' of management knowledge including research be at times incredibly tenuous but the discourse of achieving 'excellence' or 'quality' and becoming 'international' can take over easily, with little sign of conviction and committed action.

In retrospect, if there is anything worthy of 'having a say' in this Ph.D thesis, it may be this: Though a small gesture, those stumbling first steps are from a researcher who cares to take 'theory' or philosophical commitment into action. Here comes a moment I would like to share with the reader a personal reflection on my research path:

A Wonderer/Wanderer's Monologue

My time stirs,

My time is no longer unitary.

Your time appears constant,

Your time is not mine,

Your space bypasses mine ...

My language is not your choice.

My face is not my name,

Your name is more than your face.

Your shadow does not rest on mine.

My child is not yours.

You have your reward,

I have my harvest.

Your reward falls short of my joy ...

Perhaps, mine appears to you in the same light ?

My life is no statue.

A frozen moment disappears behind.

I dance to Tai ji -- a slow rhythm.

Life comes along in movement ...

With a smile, I hear Hui-neng's whisper*:

> *The source is wu -- emptiness,*

> *How comes your problem of 'disturbed dust' ?*

Indeed,

If 'not-a-thing' has ever been found in the first order,

Why make a fuss of 'dust' in the next ?

Note:

Hui-neng was a Buddhist monk in the Tang Dynasty of China, 5th century AD.

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