

WHAT I MEAN BY CULTURE

BY

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During these few weeks that I have been in Japan, I have meditated many hours upon the nature of excellence and I am more convinced than ever before, that excellence is qualitative and not quantitative. The true virtue of things lies not in their number but in their character and essence. The might of a people is not to be found in its myriads of soldiers or in the number of its victories, but in the nature of its culture. It is the qualitative differences of mankind which make true racial differences.

Mankind may be numbered alike in France or Japan or America, and the sum of the individuals may add up to millions, but such results would have no meaning if it were not for the differences in the quality of culture exhibited by those nations.

It is true that the quantitative facts of life may and do affect the qualitative culture of a people. How very different American civilization would be if it had not had an immense area of land in which to expand and develop! But China had on the mainland of Asia a territory of equal size, and yet no two lands could furnish greater contrasts in civilization and culture.

It is not my purpose to outline an entire philosophy of culture, but I do wish to emphasize that our true differences are a matter of quality and not of quantity. This

is most important, for as I interpret the great cultures of the world today I find that their various essences are complementary and not antagonistic. There may be distinctions between them but there can be no discrimination in favour of one as against another.

I have just finished reading in translation the *Kogoshūi* which Dr. Kato was kind enough to present to me, and have read again his book on Shinto, the national religion of Japan. There I find that the ideal quality of this people is Sincerity or Uprightness. What is there here that is contradictory to the ideal quality of the Occident, in so far as it is Christian, of Caritas or Brotherhood? Are they not two branches of the same parent tree?

Our work as students and scholars, it seems to me, is to diffuse as widely as possible throughout our world, the qualitative facts of our cultures, to assimilate but not to amalgamate, to diversify but not to supplant, to expand not to decrease, to improve not to injure. In this process all must benefit, none will suffer.

May I close by telling briefly what we are doing in this regard at my University as it relates to the Orient? More important than any class in history is the work which was commenced seven years ago by a generous woman of much vision and great public spirit, Mrs. Gertrude Bass Warner, a life member of this Society. From her generosity has grown a library of Oriental literature in native as well as foreign languages, and a museum of Oriental art which is one of the finest in the United States. Here are treasures from the different epochs of Chinese, Korean and Japanese history, a source of information and inspiration both to University students and to citizens of the Commonwealth.

Here all may come and feed their minds and hearts on the visible symbols of Oriental culture. Here the qualitative aspect of the great East is offered to all who would learn.

Other men will one day take our places; numbers may increase or diminish, but our cultures are continuous, and in the complete understanding and appreciation of them later ages may discern at last the fundamental unity of mankind.

