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Editorial Comment: On Truth

What Socrates contributed to human thought, Aristotle contributed to logic. Socrates kneaded the clay and Aristotle made the bricks.

Aristotle's first precept was that a thing is itself. Thus, if a man is a man, it is his nature. Or, if a poison is a poison, it is in its nature to be a poison. It follows that this result is unrelated to amount or concentration. A poison is a poison regardless of amount or level.

An entire generation has been reared, not merely in ignorance of this fact, but with the conviction that it is not so. Thus, there are allowable limits of adulterants and poisons—maximum safe limits, maximum tolerances, etc.

Thus, a poison ingested below a certain level is safe. The implication is that the body does not note the poison until the safe level is exceeded.

A more rational view of the matter is that the body notes the poison at any level. Thus, at one-half the tolerated level the body notes approximately one-half the damage.

Since the point I am making involves logic, I have avoided a discussion of ethics. The point stands regardless of the ethics of the matter.

What everyone is saying, of course, is that poisons are all about us, and that, as a practical matter, we should accept that fact. The wheels of commerce and industry may not be impeded. But do we have to speak of tolerance limits and maximum safe levels?

George E. Ham