

and. "Greater Love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend"?

I do not mean to imply that moral laws are ranged in a hierarchy, but rather are as concentric circles, of which the outer and all-inclusive circle is Benevolence and Love. These are greater and more to be obeyed because they are applicable universally, that is, at all times, in all places, under all conditions, while truth-telling is governed by particularities of time, place and circumstance.

It would be an entertaining logical exercise for those who have that mental bent to take, say, Franklin's "Poor Richard's Almanac" and think out the precise platitude or fallacy or antinomy in the maxims contained in that justly famous and popular booklet. What, for instance, is the antinomy to "He who hesitates is lost"? Is it "He who deliberates is saved"? or, "Everything comes to him who waits"? What is the fallacy in "Honesty is the best policy"? Is it that if honesty is employed solely as a policy, then that kind of honesty is essentially dishonesty, a sort of dissembling and immoral insincerity? Wherein lies the antimony in Shakespeare's familiar lines from *Julius Cæsar*?—"There is a tide in the affairs of men" and so on. What is the fallacy contained in J. J. Ingall's popular sonnet, "Opportunity," the idea of which is that the opportunity of a lifetime comes to everyone sometime, but only once? Or, finally. What is the antinomy to

"All work and no play
Makes Jack a dull boy"?

In conclusion, I wish, as I promised at the outset, to remark the philosophical principle which is at the basis of the preceding criticism of popular practical maxims. Put in the form of a maxim this principle runs: "There is no absolute truth." Now, we all have certain inveterate or stubborn habits of thought, inherited and

traditional. As a familiar example, consider this: During the Spanish-American war there was a somewhat melodious sentimental "Song-hit," heard on the street, or in the house, on college campus or in the opera house. The title was, "Just as the Sun Went Down." The physicist, astronomer and philosopher sang or whistled it as lustily or sentimentally as the veriest music-hall frequenter. And the physicist, astronomer, and philosopher did this despite the fact that they knew that the title of the song was nonsense. For, in reality, it should not have been, "Just as the Sun Went Down," but "Just as the Earth Came Up." In short, from childhood they had been taught to believe that the sun "went down." And what cared they for the scientific fact that the sun does not "set," but that the earth "comes up,"—what cared they for the true fact when in matters of sentiment the traditional way of thinking was human and emotionally satisfying?

So, too, it is these same inveterate, traditional, stubborn habits of thought that cause men to believe that all truths are absolute. Now, as I said, all truths are relative; that is, their validity is dependent on a particular time, place, circumstance, condition, cause and physical, psychological or moral law, as, for instance, our case of truth-telling when a theatre was on fire. But this won't do: if all truths were relative, then there would be no truth at all, for there must be some standard (absolute) truth by which to test the truth or error of any proposition or maxim. And so I said: All truths are relative—save one." It is this: "There is no absolute truth, except this truth that there is no absolute truth." I see no subtlety about this basal proposition. It is what mathematicians call an axiom. That is to say, when once its meaning is understood, its validity is obvious, immediate and indubitable.