

from his desk, not because the book lay there, but merely because he had wanted to move, feeling cold. He paced the room, trapped between the desk and the window. He would throw that book in the ash can where it belonged, he thought, just as soon as he had spoken to Dr. Ferris.

He watched the patch of green and sunlight on the distant hill, the promise of spring in a world that looked as if no grass or bud would ever function again. He smiled eagerly--and when the patch vanished, he felt a stab of humiliation, at his own eagerness, at the desperate way he had wanted to hold it. It reminded him of that interview with the eminent novelist, last winter. The novelist had come from Europe to write an article about him--and he, who had once despised interviews, had talked eagerly, lengthily, too lengthily, seeing a promise of intelligence in the novelist's face, feeling a causeless, desperate need to be understood. The article had come out as a collection of sentences that gave him exorbitant praise and garbled every thought he had expressed. Closing the magazine, he had felt what he was feeling now at the desertion of a sunray.

All right--he thought, turning away from the window--he would concede that attacks of loneliness had begun to strike him at times; but it was a loneliness to which he was entitled, it was hunger for the response of some living, thinking mind. He was so tired of all those people, he thought in contemptuous bitterness; he dealt with cosmic rays, while they were unable to deal with an electric storm.

He felt the sudden contraction of his mouth, like a slap denying him the right to pursue this course of thought. He was looking at the book on his desk. Its glossy jacket was glaring and new; it had been published two weeks ago. But I had nothing to do with it!--he screamed to himself; the scream seemed wasted on a merciless silence; nothing answered it, no echo of forgiveness. The title on the book's jacket was *Why Do You Think You Think?*

There was no sound in that courtroom silence within him, no pity, no voice of defense--nothing but the paragraphs which his great memory had reprinted on his brain:

"Thought is a primitive superstition. Reason is an irrational idea. The childish notion that we are able to think has been mankind's costliest error."

"What you think you think is an illusion created by your glands, your emotions and, in the last analysis, by the content of your stomach."

"That gray matter you're so proud of is like a mirror in an amusement park which transmits to you nothing but distorted signals from a reality forever beyond your grasp."

"The more certain you feel of your rational conclusions, the more certain you are to be wrong. Your brain being an instrument of distortion, the more active the brain the greater the distortion."

"The giants of the intellect, whom you admire so much, once taught you that the earth was flat and that the atom was the smallest particle of matter. The entire history of science is a progression of exploded fallacies, not of achievements."

"The more we know, the more we learn that we know nothing."

"Only the crassest ignoramus can still hold to the old-fashioned notion that seeing is believing. That which you see is the first thing to disbelieve."

"A scientist knows that a stone is not a stone at all. It is, in fact, identical with a feather pillow. Both are only a cloud formation of the same invisible, whirling particles. But, you say, you can't use a stone for a pillow? Well, that merely proves your helplessness in the face of actual reality."

"The latest scientific discoveries—such as the tremendous achievements of Dr. Robert Stadler—have demonstrated conclusively that our reason is incapable of dealing with the nature of the universe. These discoveries have led scientists to contradictions which are impossible, according to the human mind, but which exist in reality nonetheless. If you have not yet heard it, my dear old-fashioned friends, it has now been proved that the rational is the insane."

"Do not expect consistency. Everything is a contradiction of everything else. Nothing exists but contradictions."

"Do not look for 'common sense.' To demand 'sense' is the hallmark of nonsense. Nature does not make sense. Nothing makes sense. The only crusaders for 'sense' are the studious type of adolescent old maid who can't find a boy friend, and the old-fashioned shopkeeper who thinks that the universe is as simple as his neat little inventory and beloved cash register."

"Let us break the chains of the prejudice called Logic. Are we going to be stopped by a syllogism?"

"So you think you're sure of your opinions? You cannot be sure of anything. Are you going to endanger the harmony of your community, your fellowship with your neighbors, your standing, reputation, good name and financial security—for the sake of an illusion? For the sake of the mirage of thinking that you think? Are you going to run risks and court disasters—at a precarious time like ours—by opposing the existing social order in the name of those imaginary notions of yours which you call your convictions? You say that you're sure you're right? Nobody is right, or ever can be. You feel that the world around you is wrong? You have no means to know it. Everything is wrong in human eyes—so why fight it? Don't argue. Accept. Adjust yourself. Obey."

The book was written by Dr. Floyd Ferris and published by the State Science Institute.

"I had nothing to do with it," said Dr. Robert Stadler. He stood still by the side of his desk, with the uncomfortable feeling of having missed some beat of time, of not knowing how long the preceding moment had lasted. He had pronounced the words aloud, in a tone of rancorous sarcasm directed at whoever had made him say it.

He shrugged. Resting on the belief that self-mockery is an act of virtue, the shrug was the emotional equivalent of the sentence: You're Robert Stadler, don't act like a high-school neurotic. He sat down at his desk and pushed the book aside with the back of his hand.

Dr. Floyd Ferris arrived half an hour late. "Sorry," he said, "but my car broke down again on the way from Washington and I had a