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## EUPHORIA AND THE SCYTHIANS (A FABLE)\*

It was the beginning of winter in the Republic of Euphoria. The first snows were melting harmlessly against the panes of the overheated glass houses. The stores were bright with the artificial light at which the Euphorians excelled. The children of Euphoria, healthy, lithe and mobile, rushed about on mysterious four-tired errands, but faithfully came back by evening to cluster around the magic happy screens in every home.

Before screen time, generally, they attended the Euphorians' schools, which were called "Pursuit of Happiness" schools, after an ancient theory. There they were taught principally to get along happily with other Euphorians. A certain amount of learning was required of them, so that they could advance to the level of the popular college, where the smiles were brighter, the cars faster and the happiness possibilities almost without limit.

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When they grew older, the Euphorians gave up learning for earning. Earning was a sure path to happiness. The fast return had once performed its alchemies with magic swiftness. Better now was the slow, sure return, with fringe benefits. The comfort and security thus gained made all things possible for Euphorians but, eliminating the necessity of doing most things, made only a few things desirable. Yet the rewards of earning were varied enough to keep the Euphorians from appalling fates like single-mindedness or contemplation or eccentricity.

Most appalling of all were two major failings which the modern Euphorians atavistically called heresies—discontent and curiosity. In this country of smiles, where sophistication was the ability to sit unflinching through a play without a happy ending, the true Euphorian did his best to conceal any breach of contentment as quickly as it appeared. This ability grew to be prodigious. The Euphorians were able to apply it, with some success, to facts as well as opinions.

The task of killing curiosity was more difficult, since curiosity had long ago been regarded as a virtual Euphorian patent. But modern Euphorians, with so much done for them, preferred to let curiosity gradually doze off. They still said in their speeches that every Euphorian boy liked nothing better than to take a car apart or explore the sources of a forest river. But the cars grew too complicated for amateur repairmen and everyone knew that all the forest rivers were already carefully mapped.

Critics occasionally questioned whether the happy Euphorians were not destroying their own traditional austerity of mind, valuable in repairing furnaces, inventing nuclear processes, and separating the components of hazy diplomatic situations. The modern Euphorians replied that mental austerity was as uncomfortable, unnecessary and outmoded as a kitchen without push-buttons, or a speech without slogans. Then they would repeat the new national anthem which the children were taught in the happiness schools:

“We are the biggest; we are the best;  
We are ahead of all the rest.”

It was at this point in their history, when the winter cruise season lured the mambo-dancing Euphorian vacationist and the schoolchildren in unprecedented numbers were learning how to drive cars and explore their own psyches, that Euphoria found out that it was not ahead.

The latest “ultimate” weapon of destruction had been devised and perfected by the Scythians, a larger but traditionally dumber people whose national symbol, the scowl, had been warring with the Euphorian smile. It was impossible to claim that the Scythians had stolen the weapon from them—a source of curious reassurance in similar cases—for the Euphorians had possessed none themselves. Nor could they pass the discovery off as happenstance. The Scythian schools, not sophisticated enough to give courses in life adjustment, had long been developing a formidable system of study and practice in the newer scientific disciplines.

Their best qualities were strangely effective variants of the two which had long been banished from Euphoria—discontent and curiosity. All the students were chronically discontented. Life in unhappy Scythia made them so. They were also unfailingly curious, if only in the limited tactical pursuit of learning. Under the Scythian system, only the intensive application of curiosity—and hard work—could produce rewards for the student, sufficient to raise him above the common level of discontent.

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The cold shock of the Scythian menace was soon translated by the Euphorians into calls for “action.” Military emergency measures were taken. Then the Euphorians settled down to do a little thinking. They had obvious alternatives before them. The first—to do business as usual, but a little faster—was

made the more palatable as all the soothing resources of the smile country were brought into action. After all, as a well-known Euphorian metalsmith popularly argued, the Scythians were not "nine feet tall." Scholars cited statistics proving that the annual grain and entertainment shortage in Scythia would ultimately decimate the enemy population—if the Scythians had not indeed by that time become crypto-Euphorians through the influence of the happy screen. Prominent earners cited the invincibility of Euphorian "know-how."

The second alternative was far less happy. It not only implied devoting even larger sums of Euphorian happiness money into tangible efforts at security but, even more drastically, it called for a rediscovery of the traditional austerity of mind. For the Euphorians (of all people) had grown so happy, so modern, so integrated in a new age largely of their own creation that they barely realized that another and still newer age was being discovered,—right out from under them.

To train their children for the newer age involved a drastic remodeling of the happiness schools and a reinstatement of the heresies, discontent and curiosity, as honored virtues. It demanded that the healthy, lithe, mobile children, whose ancestors had learned Latin and Euclid by the age of 12, and adjusted later, should relearn some older and exacting habits of mental discipline. For such habits alone could make possible future pushbuttons, space ships and the sane thinking that might use them well. The second alternative demanded, further, that the teacher, the critic and the discoverer be permanently released from their imprisonment in Euphoria's meated ivy towers and allowed to sit down with the earners at dinner and given enough money to buy a new suit occasionally.

It was of minor concern that the more numerous Scythians would probably still produce more managers, craftsmen and technicians. It was for the Euphorians to produce better and brighter men—discoverers, who were more curious and more divinely discontented than any Scythian ever could be. They could do this only by rediscovering the peculiar individual com-

mitment which the first Euphorians had seen written in their soul—to advance the common Weal by one's single work. In so doing, it would help them to remember that the country of smiles was dedicated to universal life and liberty, as well as to its peculiar pursuit of happiness.

It was quite a choice. There has been a lot of talk about it and the Euphorians are still trying to decide.