Discussion Questions

over Issac Asimov's *Foundation*

Schedule

- Read Part 1, pp. 3-46, by Monday, January 23.
- Read Part 2, pp. 47-96, by Friday, January 27.
- Read Part 3, pp. 97-169, by Friday, February 3.
- Read Part 4, pp. 171-201, by Wednesday, February 8.
- Read Part 5(a), pp. 203-253, by Monday, February 13.
- Read Part 5(b), pp. 244-296, by Friday, February 17.

Questions

1. What theories or models of human behavior can you identify? In particular, look for *interactive models*, where one actor's (i.e., character's) best action depends on other actors' choices.
2. What are the key points in the story where an *individual's* decisions had (or seemed to have) a strong influence over the course of history? Do you see any contractions in the story between the ability of individuals to influence history and the claims of psychohistory?
3. How do Hari's predictions influence behavior? In what ways does this make prediction easier? Harder?
4. How do the various individuals at the difference stages of the story view their role in history (with respect to Seldon's predictions)?
5. On page 289, Mallow claims "Seldon crises are not solved by individuals, but by historic forces." He notes that Hari Seldon "did not count on brilliant heroics, but on the broad sweeps of economics and sociology." To what extent is this statement true? Does the course of history depend on individuals, institutions, or the principles of mass behavior?
6. To what extend is it possible to predict human behavior? Can you come up with examples in which we can predict human behavior with high accuracy? Examples in which we cannot?