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- The ideas made sense to me, so I am trying it with real money. So far (in a good market) I am up about 10% in 3 months.
- The 'Golden Age' of science fiction (typically defined as the period shortly after John W. Campbell took charge of Astounding magazine to the late '40s) produced many of the seminal ideas now taken for granted (and almost cliched) by the SF genre. Foundation was certainly part of this era, defining two major ideas: that the entire galaxy would be populated by humans (no aliens around - an early look at the idea that we might just be unique), and that mass human behavior can be codified in

mathematical algorithms and to a certain extent is predictable. These ideas, along with several other lesser ones, form the background basis for Foundation, where the galaxy-spanning Empire (closely modeled on the Roman Empire) is in decline and Hari Seldon has created the initial equations of psychohistory, which predict the eventual complete collapse of the Empire and an ensuing 'Dark Age' lasting 30,000 years. Although Seldon can see no way to prevent the Empire's collapse, he does see a way to reduce the resulting Dark Age length to about 1000 years, by setting up a Foundation in the far reaches of the galaxy, whose nominal mission is to preserve man's accumulated knowledge in a repository called the Encyclopedia Galactica. With

this as the background, the story revolves around particular points in the Foundation's existence where it is in danger of being destroyed or overrun. Originally written as separate stories, each crisis episode's (all foreseen via the magic of Seldon's mathematics) resolution progressively moves the Foundation forward from a backwater, isolated, and ivory-tower society towards an active political power, capable of dominating its surrounding stellar mini-empires, becoming an island of light in a sea of darkness and ignorance. Viewing each episode by itself, none of them are representatives of great writing, marred by weak characterization (a typical Asimov failing) and almost hackneyed plotting. The massive shift in viewpoint and background at the start of each

episode is also jarring, as the reader must readjust to a whole new set of conditions each time. However, the power of this book and its two successors is in the grand scope of the entire story line, very typical of stories of this era, as they are far more idea centered than character or plot driven. This book almost cannot be evaluated by itself, isolated from the rest of this set, because the full panorama and scale of the complete story far outweighs the individual contribution of each piece of it. As an introduction to the Seldon universe, this first book is adequate, with surprisingly little dating, given that the separate pieces of this book were written almost 60 years ago. Yes, there are places where vacuum tubes still reign, but they sit right next to the use of

holographic images, which weren't even on the scientific horizon when this was written. But the technology here is almost irrelevant, as the focus is on how to guide and shape a society of humans, to develop a proper government within which individuals can grow and be creative, while at the same time there is a background thread that asks if all human actions are pre-ordained. Take

the time to read this; ignore some of the blatant examples of '40s pulp-level style. Look instead for the great ideas and their interrelationships; feel the sense of wonder. But to fully experience why this is considered one of the best classics in the field, *Foundation & Empire* and *Second Foundation* are immediately required follow up reading.