

**THE DISCOURSE OF POWER AND THE POWER OF DISCOURSE
IN ISAAC ASIMOV'S FOUNDATION: SELDON'S TRIAL**

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Absztrakt

A HATALOM DISKURZUSA ÉS A DISKURZUS HATALMA ISAAC ASIMOV ALAPÍTVÁNY CÍMŰ MŰVÉBEN: SELDON TÁRGYALÁSA

Isaac Asimov a Robotika három törvényének atyja és az Alapítvány sci-fi sorozat szerzője. Ez a tanulmány Dr. Seldon perét elemzi az Alapítvány I. részében, amely a pszichohistória tudományként történő bevezetésének kezdetét szolgálja a műben. Ez az elemzés a perre mint „eseményre” fog összpontosítani abban az értelemben, ahogyan Michel Foucault használja a kifejezést, hogy rávilágítson arra, hogyan gyakorolják a diszkurzív hatalmat a „jogi eljárás” álcájában, vagyis milyen retorikai manővereket hajtanak végre a hatóságok (például a Közbiztonsági Bizottság, a pszichohistórikusok és az Encyclopedia Galactica enciklopédistái), hogy egyidejűleg elítéljék és legitimálják a pszichohistóriát.

Kulcsszavak: Asimov, Alapítvány, tárgyalás

Diszciplína: irodalomtudomány, jogtudomány, pszichológia

Abstract

Isaac Asimov is the father of the Three Laws of Robotics and the author of the Foundation sci-fi series. This study will analyze Dr. Seldon's trial in Part I of Foundation, which marks the inception of the disciplinization of psychohistory. This analysis will focus on the trial as an “event” in the sense Michel Foucault uses the term, to highlight how discursive power(s) is (are) exercised in the disguise of “legal procedure,” that is, what kind of rhetorical maneuvers are

performed by the authorities (i.e., the Commission of Public Safety, the psychohistorians and the encyclopedists of the Encyclopedia Galactica) to simultaneously condemn and legitimize psychohistory.

Keywords: Asimov, Foundation, trial

Disciplines: literary studies, legal studies, psychology

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In this study, I will analyze and Dr. Seldon's trial in Part I of *Foundation*, which marks the inception of the disciplinization of psychohistory. In my analysis, I will focus on the trial as an "event" in the sense Michel Foucault uses the term, to highlight how discursive power(s) is (are) exercised in the disguise of "legal procedure," that is, what kind of rhetorical maneuvers are performed by the authorities (i.e., the Commission of Public Safety, the psychohistorians and the encyclopedists of the Encyclopedia Galactica) to simultaneously condemn and legitimize psychohistory. Psychohistory is to be condemned for being incompatible with prevailing assumptions. Public condemnation, however, just serves to mask the fact that psychohistory proves convincing (i.e., scientific) enough for the authorities not to dare to overlook it as a potentially valid discipline. My analysis will aim at uncovering the duplicities involved in the rhetoric of the officials passing judgment on Seldon. The public role of the Commission is to expel

Seldon and his theory, but, at the same time, they surreptitiously grant him the power to continue his scientific project. However, the function of both the psychohistorians and the encyclopedists is to preserve and elevate a discourse to the level of "science."

Discourse of power

According to Foucault, history cannot be restricted to the study of grand moments in history. Charles C. Lemert and Garth Gillan claim that "[t]he event [for Foucault] is a moment of a coming together of rearrangements of the relations of [Foucauldian archeological] levels [such as epistemological, political, pedagogical, psychological, economical, etc.]" (Lemert and Gillan, 1982, 43.), they also reflect on Foucault's idea that as soon as power-knowledge changes, it stimulates changes in archaeological levels. This assumption is further fortified by stating that "[t]he historian's event is the sufficient moment when the reversal is uncovered" (Lemert and Gillan, 1982, 43.). The notion of

the *event*, which can be comprehended “in reversals of discursive practices” (Lemert and Gillan, 1982, 43.), gains a specific significance in Foucault’s historical method. It is also a major Foucauldian insight that history can be seen as series of events, encounters, and conflicts within which power and knowledge are concomitantly disseminated. Relating to this observation, Lemert and Gillan further contend that “Foucault’s histories, therefore, are histories of *events* understood by means of restructurings of the archaeological layers of society which, in their relationships to each other, regulate practices. Foucault’s histories, hence, are histories explaining the birth of new practices [...]” (Lemert and Gillan, 1982, 43; my emphasis). Any practice presupposes the agency of concrete individuals but it can be set in motion by a general knowledge (*savoir*) and specific theories (*connaissances*).

Construing the problematic of the historicity of scientific discourses, Paul Feyerabend claims that the “best way of describing a historical conflict is to introduce the *individuals* that created it, to describe their temperament, their interests, their hopes and ambitions, the information at their disposal, their social background, the individuals and institutions they felt loyal to and that supported them in turn [...]” (Feyerabend, 1999, 248.). Elsewhere, he argues that certain historical episodes violate firmly grounded methods. He states that “[...] events and developments [...] occurred only because some thinkers either *decided* not to be bound by certain ‘obvious’ methodological rules [or by political loyalties],

or because they *unwittingly broke* them” (Feyerabend, 1993, 14.).

If one approaches Foundation through the foregoing notions, one can discover that Asimov explicitly thematizes various problems arising from the historicity and discursivity of Seldon’s trial which can be read as an event in the Foucauldian-Feyerabendian sense. Officially, the trial is not recognized as a “grand” historical event, since Encyclopedia Galactica, the ultimate source of knowledge, does not grant any privileged status to it.

The first Foundation project is called Encyclopedia Galactica, and it is said to be designed to operate openly to lure public attention by preparing “a giant summary of all knowledge [that] will never be lost” (Asimov, 1995, 34.), but the Second Foundation works secretly, and guards the “real” secrets and intentions of psychohistory.

The only entry declares that “[i]n a way, the beginning of the Commission’s decline can be traced to the trial of Hari Seldon two years before the beginning of the Foundational Era. That trial is described in Gaal Dornick’s biography of Hari Seldon...” (Asimov, 1995, 23.). The entry, instead of offering an ultimate account of the trial, effaces its own authority by privileging a particular Gaal Dornick’s biography of Seldon. Thereby, it designates an agent as the leading authority on the actual event of the trial in a historicized context. The authority of Dornick as a source of authentic information is immediately granted in the

entry on Hari Seldon: "...The best existing authority we have for the details of his [Seldon's] life is the biography written by Gaal Dornick who, as a young man, met Seldon two years before the great mathematician's deaths. The story of the meeting..." (Asimov, 1995, 9.).

It is necessary to point out that these observations unquestionably/automatically lead us to the question of archives and of the uniqueness of historical events/data. Moreover, Gaal Dornick's authority is questioned by the very first entry in the first book of The Second Foundation trilogy. These questions will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

One can assume, therefore, that Dr. Seldon's trial counts as a significant but not as a grand historical event, since the Encyclopedia refuses to comment on it directly.

Nonetheless, the trial does mark the beginning of the disciplinization of psychohistory which appears for the first time as a new scientific discourse. The official goal of the trial is to accuse Seldon of treason, and proclaim his discipline heretic. One can argue, however, that the trial affords a forum to Seldon in which he can employ his own institutionalized knowledge to legitimize psychohistory. Therefore, the coercive legal environment becomes a site of various (often judiciously disguised) intricate power-games within which both accuser and accused are enabled to contribute to the "event," which denotes the birth of a new "science."

Given its manifold discursive dimensions, the very concept of the trial also lends itself to interrogation. In a legal sense, the term "trial" entails a process of testing something through formal investigation in a court of law in a civil or criminal case.

Since I suppose that there are discursive and rhetorical similarities of Seldon's so-called trial and other "trials," it seems reasonable to discuss Plato's Symposium and the Death of Socrates and I.F. Stone's The Trial of Socrates in a subchapter. The reason why I restrict my interpretive attention is due to the limitations on this sample chapter.

In this particular case, however, the trial as legal action becomes questioned in the opening statements of Gaal Dornick's "authoritative" narration. Although the narration seems to nurture the illusion of historical objectivity through its well-focused recounting of what took place during the trial, Dornick's observations, presented to the reader as parenthetical comments in the third person singular, generate rhetorical indeterminacy and undermine the unassailable authenticity of the account: "The trial (Gaal supposed it to be one, though it bore little resemblance legalistically to elaborate trial techniques Gaal had read of) had not lasted long. It was in its third day. Yet already, Gaal could no longer stretch his memory back far enough to embrace its beginning" (Asimov, 1995, 28.). Although Dornick's authority is

based on his knowledge gained by systematic reading in the field of law, which apparently grants him the right to narrate the story of Seldon's trial, he betrays a curious un-certainty in recognizing the trial as a legal procedure, and, more importantly, in recalling what took place at the very inception of the trial. Moreover, Dornick is more preoccupied with appearances than with the actual arguments advanced: "Five of the Commission of Public Safety sat behind the raised desk. They wore scarlet and gold uniforms and the shining, close-fitting plastic caps that were the sign of their judicial function. In the centre was the Chief Commissioner Linge Chen" (Asimov, 1995, 28.). Dornick, in principle, possesses a comprehensive knowledge of the law and its technicalities, so he is capable of observing that the techniques of the trial are not performed according to formal patterns. Yet, his focus on the externals suggests that the very appearance of the jury is sufficient to signify the event of a trial. Thus, in Dornick's account, the procedure becomes analogous to the first performance of a theatrical play: his bracketed comments take the form of stage instructions concerning setting, clothing, sound effects, and actors. His comments include: "raising his voice", referring to his notes", "with a smile" (Asimov, 1995, 29.), "theatrically" (Asimov, 1995, 32.), "uncertainly", "firmly" (Asimov, 1995, 33.), "a small voice in the middle of a vast silence" (Asimov, 1995, 33.), or "recovering somewhat" (Asimov, 1995, 34.). The reader, however, is enabled only a limited view of this "stage," which hints at the secrecy

surrounding the trial, where both "[p]ress and public [are] excluded" (Asimov, 1995, 28.). This act of exclusion serves the purpose of restricting information in order to exercise power to control. "Outsiders" do not even know about the trial, thus, yet again, the only source of information is Dornick's dubious recollection of the event. Dornick's memory apparently serves him in a selective fashion: there are important details (whole days, in fact) he cannot remember, but his memory does not fail him when it comes to informing his readers about the appearance of the judges. This selectivity of Dornick's mirrors the jury's method of asking questions, and interpreting the answers to them, which marks out the boundaries of the "truth" their investigation might attain. Consider the following exchange in court as reported by Dornick:

Q. Let us see, Dr. Seldon. How many men are now engaged in the project of which now you are head?

A. Fifty mathematician.

Apparently, most questions are asked in such a way that they are suggestive of the answer the jury expects to be given so that Seldon can be condemned for treason. Edward P. Corbett and Robert J. Connors (1999) argue that "[t]he special topics for judicial discourse developed from the efforts to ascertain the status of the case" (Asimov, 1995, 124.). In Seldon's case, the status of the case is determined by the charge, treason, based on the assumption of his disloyalty. Disloyalty (at least, here) seems to mean (only) unfaithfulness in allegiance to his lawful government, while Seldon's loyalty cannot be

questioned in his own field. Corbett and Corbett also claim that “[t]he rhetoricians set up a useful formula for determining precisely the issue that was to be discussed. In order to pinpoint the issue or thesis, they asked three questions about the general subject: whether a thing is (an sit), what it is (quid sit), of what kind of it is (quale sit)” (Corbett and Connors, 1999, 124.). As soon as the status is settled, the pleader, which can be both for the prosecution and for the defense, determines the relevant topics that are pertinent to the case. However, it must be noted that all judiciary discourse harbors the idea that the fundamental topics are justice and injustice. Additionally, Corbett and Corbett also contend that “[t]he term right and wrong can serve as substitute terms if we take them in their legal, not moral, sense” (Corbett and Connors, 1999, 124.). They assume three groups of sub-topics that serve to establish the issue: evidence, definition, motives (or causes of action). Although Gaal Dornick’s statements attempt to reject the legal status of the event, virtually, all three subtopics are examined, but the question of its ultimate topics seems to be undermined by their own rhetoric indeterminacy, conveyed by the fact that they need to transgress to Seldon’s scientific discourse. Therefore, they do not really judge the rightness/correctness of Seldon’s scientific method, as it belongs to a different field of discourse, with different rules and elements. Even if one can declare that any court decision requires a certain kind of judiciary perception. Paul Feyerabend maintains that [e]ven a modern judge who has

to rely on written guidelines and volumes of past court decisions needs intuitive knowledge to render his verdict” (Feyerabend, 1999, 109.). Seldon’s judges appear to apply their “intuitive” knowledge, without having their “scientific” knowledge to judge, since Seldon science is based on mathematics, which can be the basis and discourse of true scientific methods. According to Feyerabend, “Pure mathematics more than any other subject has become that ‘living discourse’ Plato regarded as the only true form of knowledge” (Feyerabend, 1999, 111; my emphasis). Psychohistoric discourse finds its way to make its domain manifest by describing its scientific status, even if it also limits its own field by defining its functional/scientific discourse. One may argue that, while belonging to different normative communities, both discourses (legal and scientific) refer to one and the same event, but their statements differ in form and style. This unity of discourses on Seldon’s trial can be seen as the interplay of the rules that govern these discourses, which, in turn, can be viewed as interplay of differences as well. Nevertheless, these differences are capable of initiating various possibilities that permit the activation of incompatible themes and decisions; in addition, they contribute to the establishment of the same event in different group of statements. The word “trial,” however, may also refer to a tryout or experiment to test quality, value, or usefulness, and, in addition, though, at the same time, it can be perceived as an (historical) incident as well. Karl Popper argues that “[a]ll theories are trials; they are

tentative hypotheses, tried out to see whether they work; and all experimental corroboration is simply the results of tests undertaken in a critical spirit, in an attempt to find out where our theories err” (Popper, 1957, 80.). In order to test his own theory, Seldon is ready to “defend” his own hypothesis, even if he needs to face “legal” prosecution, which is an officially authorized “event” given the right to condemn or to commend him. Paradoxically, in his case, both verdicts can happen at the same time without denoting different events. Though discursive powers exercised by the jury and Seldon are apparently differ, Popper’s observation seems applicable to the “event.” He contends that “[t]he verdict of the jury (vere dictum = spoken truly), like that of an experimenter, is an answer to a question of fact (quid facti?) which must be put to the jury in the sharpest, the most definite form” (Popper, 1959, 92.). Popper’s comment advocates an interaction between these two fields, assuming similarity in their methods and decision mechanism. By doing so, he insinuates a seemingly equivalent scientific discourse. As soon as we assume that this trial can be treated as “the” scientific even to be analyzed in which the experimenter, Hari Seldon, attempts to test his results (i.e. verdicts or decisions), we seem to confront the fact that Seldon’s decision is validated by mathematical observations. By implication, the word “event” can be seen as a technical term used by statisticians in the field of science where it means a subset of possible outcomes of a statistical experiment. This idea seems to be justified by the fact that this event

happens to be explained by Seldon to Dornick at the end of the his trial (in each sense of the word): “I have tried to analyse his [the Chief Commissioner’s] workings, but you know how risky it is to introduce the vagaries of an individual in the psychohistoric equations. Yet I have hopes” (Asimov, 1995, 35.). Thus the reader can no longer decide which of the two sides (litigants or the indicted) play more dubious power-games. James Gunn’s argument draws on the assumption, against the above quoted section, that “Seldon [only] defends the accuracy of his prediction and persuade his judges [...]” (Gunn, 1996, 30.; my emphasis). Though Gunn mentions the fact that Seldon manipulates his future, his observation seems to be misleading. Since it conveys the idea that rhetorical maneuvers do have the desired effects on Seldon’s judges, thus, the outcome of the event is not a successful “trial” of the new-born psychohistory, but, Seldon’s own rhetorical wisdom, which (after Aristotle) can be seen as the power to observe persuasiveness. Gunn’s statement also suggests that, with the use of scientific discourse, Seldon becomes capable of bridging the distance between another discourse (i.e., legal), thereby persuading the authority to reform its relation to psychohistory. Moreover, I would argue that Seldon does not even attempt to prove the validity of his results, which is primarily based on the mathematics of psychohistory, since he states that he can prove it “only to another mathematician” (Asimov, 1995, 29.). With this exploit of exclusion, his discursive power manifests itself, exposing a capability of

rejecting further comments other than scientific observations in the same field of science. Thus he also verifies impermeability between discursive practices, even if the interplay between them is supposedly constant.

Although one can admit that the use of the word “trial” as a metaphor undoubtedly generates uncertainty, which, in turn, shelters “trial” both as a metaphor for a legal procedure to try somebody in a law court for an offence and a metaphor for an attempt to prove the practical usefulness of a scientific method. I contend that the importance of each connotation lies in the fact that they all seem to contribute in the process of the “institutionalization” of psychohistory.

Though their purpose and discursive practices seem to differ, they offer the moment at which psychohistory as new discursive practice achieves its autonomy and individuality. The formation of its scientific statements is put into operation and transformed, thereby accomplishing the Foucauldian threshold of positivity and of epistemologization. Although Foucault observes that the “chronology [of these thresholds] is neither regular nor homogeneous” (Foucault, 2003, 206).

The process and the form of Seldon’s so-called trial reveals that it is not the epitome of objectivity, as it is traditionally viewed, but a function of various discursive practices and power-games. His trial, therefore, can no longer be looked upon as a method through which lasting (objective) truths can be revealed about him, since it is itself the very

discourse that determines the criteria of truth or objectivity.

Concluding observations

My analysis of Seldon trial has been directed at exploring the dynamics of discourses at work in forming (and manipulating) knowledge in order to seize power and to establish “authority” through (self-) legitimation and control. Asimov’s *Foundation Trilogy* presents us with a unified and (seemingly) prosperous Galactic Empire in which a firm belief is cherished by authorities and inhabitants alike that the system of prevailing power and knowledge can be perpetuated. This conviction is maintained until a mathematician, Hari Seldon, devises a system of mathematical equations, whereby it becomes possible to predict mass movements, i.e., to predict the future on a strictly scientific basis. My reading was concerned with examining the discursive manifestations of power through which power-knowledge is executed to achieve control in the creation of a universally valid science. In addition, I have examined how Seldon’s psychohistory achieves the status of a “particular” branch of knowledge/study dealing with a body of facts or truths systematically arranged and showing the operation of general laws (i.e. science), and, how, paradoxically, this new “field” becomes involved in its own (historical) legitimation. Furthermore, the entries in the Encyclopedia are presented in an elliptic fashion.

Additionally, these (seemingly) well-chosen “statements” of the first entry attempt to

secure their own position further by proving the legal rights to be and be quoted in the book:

“All quotations from the Encyclopedia Galactica here reproduced are taken from the 116th Edition published in 1020 F.E. by the Encyclopedia Galactica Publishing Co., Terminus, with the permission of the publishers” (Asimov, 1995, 9).

Looking at this event exclusively as a legal process to condemn an emergent discipline is, however, not unproblematic, since the rhetorical feat Seldon ingeniously and manipulatively performs throughout his trial is also an act of operating a discursive power-game in order to test (i.e. to stage a trial) psychohistory in (rhetorical) practice and to safeguard its foundations. Seldon acts under the assumption that psychohistory, though not yet legalized, is a potential way to “stage-manage” the course of the future. The problem of authority as a means to legitimate power seems to emerge instantly in the form of the entry (Hari Seldon) from the Encyclopedia Galactica at the very beginning of the first chapter.

The first Foundation project is called Encyclopedia Galactica, and it is said to be designed to operate openly to lure public attention by preparing “a giant summary of all knowledge [that] will never be lost” (Asimov, 1995, 34.), but the Second Foundation works secretly, and guards the “real” secrets and intentions of psychohistory.

At this point the reader does not know anything about the “mysterious” Encyclopedia Galactica and its compilers, though the way the records legitimize their own existence by listing “historical” figures, dates, places and assumptions such as Seldon’s date and place of birth and death, his amazing talent, his greatest “contributions,” and, even the name of his biographer (Gall Dornick) appears to play an important part in the staging of the “situation” to come. Moreover, in order to offer a stable starting point for the “(hi)story,” which the “sample” records themselves try to “turn into” history of Seldon and his projects, these (seemingly) well-chosen “statements” of the first entry attempt to secure their own position further by proving the legal rights to be and be quoted in the book: “All quotations from the Encyclopedia Galactica here reproduced are taken from the 116th Edition published in 1020 F.E. by the Encyclopedia Galactica Publishing Co., Terminus, with the permission of the publishers” (Asimov, 1995, 9.). This authoritative “statement”, however, brings up the dilemma whether these “records” tell the “true” story or not, and, whether they really assume the discursive power to legitimize information.

It seems necessary to point out that these observations unquestionably/automatically lead us to the question of archives and of the uniqueness of historical events/data.

As soon as the reader may feel being secured by “declaration/affirmation” one may see that

the legitimization of Seldon's (relatively) "new" science is taken place as soon as the reader confronts the first entry of Encyclopedia Galactica, which is the first of the two Foundations, involving the project of accumulating all the knowledge available in the universe in the form of a comprehensive Encyclopedia Galactica. It is a project which is, above all, historical in nature, for it serves to yield knowledge through the recollection of the past and the preservation of its epistemic assets. Once we concede this, the discursive manifestations of power through which knowledge is accumulated and valorized as entries in an encyclopedia to achieve control in the creation of a universally valid science, and, in turn, as a scientific discourse, seem to wither. Thus, the project, what initially seemed to be only a hoax to attract the attention of the higher authorities and the general public, immediately turns the very power which is entitled to offer security. It is, therefore, problematic to observe that the entry (which is supposed to contain information on all branches of knowledge) seems to "hesitate" to provide further clues to make the reader certain; its discourse/language appears to fail its assumed "scientific/authoritative" function.

The situation is obviously similar in the second volume, *Foundation and Empire* (Asimov, 1996); when the scientists of the EG assume that their project of Encyclopedia Galactica (offering "all knowledge") can be used to locate the Second Foundation to uncover Seldon's "true" intentions.

Nonetheless, it is only the accumulated knowledge of EG that is available to them, which, however, consists of nothing more than some vague entries and references which prove to be ineffective in achieving a concrete goal (in other words, savior, in this context, is incapable of being put to the uses of a *connaissance*).

Since the reader is given vague directions/speculations and specific historical data concerning the life of Hari Seldon: "Born to middle-class parents on Helicon, Arcturus sector (where his father, in a legend of doubtful authenticity, was a tobacco grower in the hydroponic plants of the planet), he early showed amazing ability in mathematics. Anecdotes concerning his ability are innumerable, and some are contradictory. At the age of two, he is said to have..." (Asimov, 1995, 9). Thus, when taking a closer look at the first chapter, the reader is compelled to take a stand from which he or she can properly contemplate the situation "the known galaxy" had to face. For this reason, the reader may be conflated with Gaal Dornick's figure, assuming not only his viewpoint, but also his epistemological stance. The authority of Dornick as a source of "faithful" information is immediately granted by an entry from the seemingly indisputable Encyclopedia Galactica: "The best existing authority we have for the details of his life is the biography written by Gaal Dornick who, as a young man, met Seldon two years before the great mathematician's death. The story of the meeting..." (Asimov, 1995, 9). For the

reader to be able to integrate interpretive comments into a specific design if necessary, he or she must be careful in assessing the “information” available (even though by speculation). What one appears to “trust” the entry, which is “instituted” to be capable of distributing and preserving “meaningful/essential” information. The procedure by which Encyclopedia Galactica seems to be able to do this is the method used by historians.

Asimov’s works, in fact, are often oversimplified by critics, for Asimov admits the “inspiration” of materials such as Edward Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.

In his *Dimensions of Science Fiction* William Sims Bainbridge (1986) seems to go as far as to assume, on the basis of Sam Moskowitz’s supposition, that Asimov’s stimulation comes directly from Gibbon’s work. Although I take for granted that many of the limitations/generalizations can be originated from the fact that Asimov himself “confesses” in his autobiography, *I, Asimov*, that “I borrowed freely from Edward Gibbon’s *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in planning the *Foundation* series” (Asimov, 1995c, 232.). In addition, even if, within its fictional framework, *The Foundation Trilogy* overtly thematizes various problems

arising from the historicity and discursivity of science, I assert that it is without any accountable awareness on Asimov’s part.

Any collected information, then, become ready to govern one’s reaction and judgment by means of bestowed “data” that could be extracted. The reader is provided with only an entry, which already means a selected set of information out of „all” pieces of information that are qualified as crucially/historically important (by sci-entists, i.e., encyclopedists), being able to fulfill an already established set of criteria. How could one ascertain that this selection is not based on a subjective record by which objectivity appears to be secured? The authoritative force of any community feeds the illusion of certainty and endorses all the attempts that follow its definitive guidelines. The reader appears to rely on a historical discourse that is seemingly un-questionable, for the entries of *Encyclopedia Galactica* provide the guideline of its authoritative/interpretive community, the encyclopedists/psychohistorians. Though it must be seen that what one might select (or even a “scientific” community) is never the same as the text itself or the complete stories of others, and, in addition, it may be different from the selection of other “scientist,” since the reader is not granted any other kind of sources of information, let alone any other “authority” (i.e., records of the Empire). As I have already noted the designation, “best existing authority,” is given to Gaal Dornick almost

immediately, and it seems to be fortified by the reference to another authority, namely, by the Encyclopedia Galactica Publishing Co. Although the entries grant him an instantaneous “power” by which the character of Gaal Dornick is legitimated by the Encyclopedia Galactica, in the case of Gaal Dornick’s arrival and meeting with Seldon, the reader cannot be certain that whoever the observer might be, since the “main” source of authority (i.e., Encyclopedia Galactica) has not been founded yet. We are not informed (at least, at this time) whose point of view organizes the narrative, by whose authority allowed the information to be provided. Moreover, the reader’s guide is (again) one of the entries, fore-shadowing the event to come: “The story of the meeting...” (Asimov, 1995, 9.). Nevertheless, the story of his arrival and his first meeting with the famous mathematician is not “quoted,” is only prefigured. This assumption appears to suggest that the reader has to rationalize the story in order to reconstruct it, since we seem to be deprived of certainty and authorization (note: This observation can be related to Asimov’s rationalist views in *The Left Hand of the Electron* – Asimov, 1975). Thus its truthfulness is either questionable or granted as a matter-of-course. As opposed to this, a given “right” would fortify the sense of “objectivity” in the text. With the arrival of Gaal Dornick, knowledge-constituting power-games appear to reveal themselves. A mysterious inhabitant of Trantor, a certain Mr. Jerril, who is a disguised agent of the Commission of Public Safety, starts yet

(seemingly) “unofficial” interrogation of Gaal Dornick. His all-knowing manner is flavored by a rather provocative rhetoric, which may serve the purpose of an immediate confrontation in order to force Gaal Dornick to expose his opinion on Seldon’s project, though his first question seems innocent enough to begin a neutral conversation: “First time on Trantor?” (Asimov, 1995, 18.) However, when Dornick expresses his amazement that “[Trantor] is glorious” (Asimov, 1995, 18.), his assignment sets in motion instantly. He brushes away Dornick’s admiration with undeniable authority, and, he states that this idea is a “subjective matter of opinion, Gaal” (Asimov, 1995, 18.). Jerril articulates his thoughts, concerning Trantor and its dwellers in order to establish grounds for further interrogative questions, but the concealment of his intentions almost disappears. After the question, “What do you think of it all?” (Asimov, 1995, 19.), Gaal observes: “For a moment, the man’s good nature evaporated into shrewdness. He looked almost sly” (Asimov, 1995, 19.). I interpret the systematized/compiled knowledge being established as Encyclopedia Galactica as relatable to the age-old dream of science/history to create a “textualized” discourse which offers us an accurate picture of “the world” as it is/was, without the awareness of the distortions of the medium of language, thereby making the world more predictable. This discourse harbors the illusion of the viability of perfectly “objective” historical/scientific accounts. This “first/new” project of Hari Seldon represents what

one might call “pure/objective” epistemology, that is, a kind of ultimate scientific compilation, the Encyclopedia Galactica thus, come to constitute, and, at first, seems to guarantee systematic and authorized knowledge of the physical or material world gained through observation and experimentation (as a kind of authority over knowledge). This “accumulated/systematized knowledge”, however, is far from being that neat and total, or, at least, as it is presented/authorized in the novel. I assume that the desired perfection of any system strongly hinges upon any notion of flaw, error, misinterpretation, for it is precisely these anomalies that the system has to exclude, and, of course, this exclusion in the narration seems to be sanctioned by virtue of its own presence. Paradoxically, therefore, the supposedly most perfect system becomes most susceptible to the emergence of misreading/fallacy.

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