

ISAAC  
ASIMOV

*On the*

**BAIXARDOC**

*Best, Present  
& Future*

66 F

OUR  
PRICE

**SPECIAL**

**\$7.98**

088-0299-398

ISBN #

*On the*  
Past, **Present**  
& **Future**



# Isaac Asimov

*On the*

Post, Present  
**BAIXARDOC**  
& Future

*66 Essays*

BARNES  
& NOBLE  
BOOKS  
NEW YORK



Originally published as *Past, Present & Future*  
Copyright © 1987 by Isaac Asimov  
All rights reserved.

This edition published by Barnes & Noble, Inc.,  
by arrangement with Prometheus Books.

1992 Barnes & Noble Books

ISBN 0-88029-939-8

Printed and bound in the United States of America

M 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**To the memory of**  
**John Ciardi (1916-1986)**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction 3

## Part I: Past

- 1 Unity 7
- 2 The Scientist as Unbeliever 19
- 3 The Choking Grip 25
- 4 Human Mutations 29
- 5 The Hollow Earth 31
- 6 Poison! 35
- 7 Competition! 39

- 8 Benjamin Franklin Changes the World 41
- 9 Fifty Years of Spontaneous Generation 47
- 10 The Birth of the Machine 51

## Part II: Present

- 11 The Perennial Fringe 65
- 12 The Case Against 'Star Wars' 69
- 13 Short Term; Long Term 75
- 14 The Useful Ivory Tower 79
- 15 Do It First! 85
- 16 Popularizing Science 89
- 17 The Pace of Research 93
- 18 The Brain 97
- 19 Darwin and Natural Selection 101
- 20 Cool Light 107
- 21 Halley's Comet—Destination Space 113
- 22 Ice in Orbit 129
- 23 Looking for Our Neighbors 135
- 24 Life Is Wherever It Lands 139
- 25 Einstein's Theory of Relativity 145
- 26 What Is the Universe Made of? 151
- 27 Science and Science Fiction 157



- 28 The Dark Vision 161
- 29 The Lure of Horror 167
- 30 Movie Science 171
- 31 Book into Movie 175
- 32 My Hollywood Non-Career 179
- 33 I Love New York 181
- 34 The Immortal Sherlock Holmes 185
- 35 Gilbert & Sullivan 191
- 36 Mensa and I 197
- 37 Write, Write, Write 199
- 38 Facing Up to It 207
- 39 Triple Bypass 211

**Part III: Future**

- 40 The Elevator Effect 221
- 41 2084 227
- 42 Society in the Future 233
- 43 Feminism for Survival 237
- 44 TV and the Race with Food 241
- 45 The Next Seventy Years in the Court 245
- 46 The Future of Costume 253
- 47 The Immortal Word 257
- 48 Liberty in the Next Century 263
- 49 The Villain in the Atmosphere 267
- 50 The New Learning 271
- 51 Technology, You, Your Family, and the Future 277
- 52 Should We Fear the Future? 281
- 53 Should We Fear the Computer? 287
- 54 Work Changes Its Meaning 293
- 55 Nuclear Dreams and Nightmares 299
- 56 The New Tools in Space 303
- 57 Living on the Moon, Part I 311
- 58 Living on the Moon, Part II 317
- 59 The Skies of Luna 323
- 60 The Solar System for Humanity 333
- 61 The Clinical Lab of the Future 339
- 62 The Hospital of the Future 343
- 63 Medicine from Space 347
- 64 Revising the Pattern 353
- 65 Putting Bacteria to Work 359
- 66 Fiddling with Genes 365



*On the*  
Past, **Present**  
& **Future**





## INTRODUCTION

Three years ago, I put together a collection of essays under the title of *The Roving Mind* for Prometheus Books. It was an utterly miscellaneous collection ranging, as I said in my introduction to the book, “from the polemical to the persuasive, from the speculative to the realistic.”

That sort of thing is not the stuff of best-sellers, but the book did rather better than I thought it would. What is much more to the point, it did rather better than the publishers thought it would, and you know what that means.

Right. The suggestion was made by me (and quickly agreed to by Mr. Editor Gulotta of Prometheus) that I do another collection, and here it is. You have your sixty-six articles, most of which were excerpted from me by some

The collection is almost precisely the size of the first, and, if anything, it is even more miscellaneous. It contains explanations of scientific points, speculations on the future, descriptions of various enthusiasms of mine, personal adventures and misadventures, and so on.

Again there are a few places where the essays overlap each other, or, in rare cases, contradict each other. Occasionally, there may be a bit of outdated for, even though almost all are quite recent pieces, things move quickly.

One warning, by the way. I plan to add an occasional foreword, or afterword, to point out anything I think of interest.



P A R T I  

---

P A S T



**BAIXARDOC**