Howe / Wain

Predicting the Future

Auguries, oracles, omens. and software simulation. From antiquity to the electronic age, Predicting the Future examines humankind's obsessive urge to look beyond the present in the hope of controlling events in the days to come. Opening with Stephen Hawking's predictions about the billion year future of the universe, closing with Don Cupitt's insights into the Last Judgement, the book examines both the history of prediction and the ways we set about foretelling the future today. In the past soothsayers, diviners, holy men and astrologers made prophecies on the basis of religious ideology and traditional authority. Today accredited experts predict the future, of the economy, of medicine's place in society, of the entire universe, on the basis of empirical observation and scientific theory. Yet as all the contributors admit, prediction remains an uncertain business even in the computer age, steering a hazardous course between scaremongering and complacency, liable always to be thrown dramatically off course by human unpredictability, catastrophic change, or faulty initial data. The book originates in the sixth annual series of Darwin College Lectures, delivered in Cambridge in 1991 under the title 'Predictions'.

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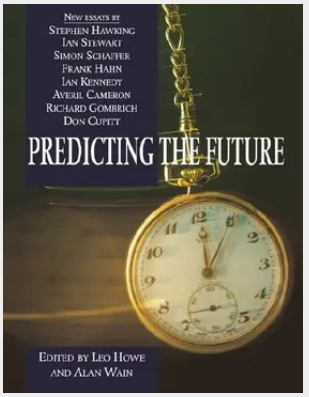

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