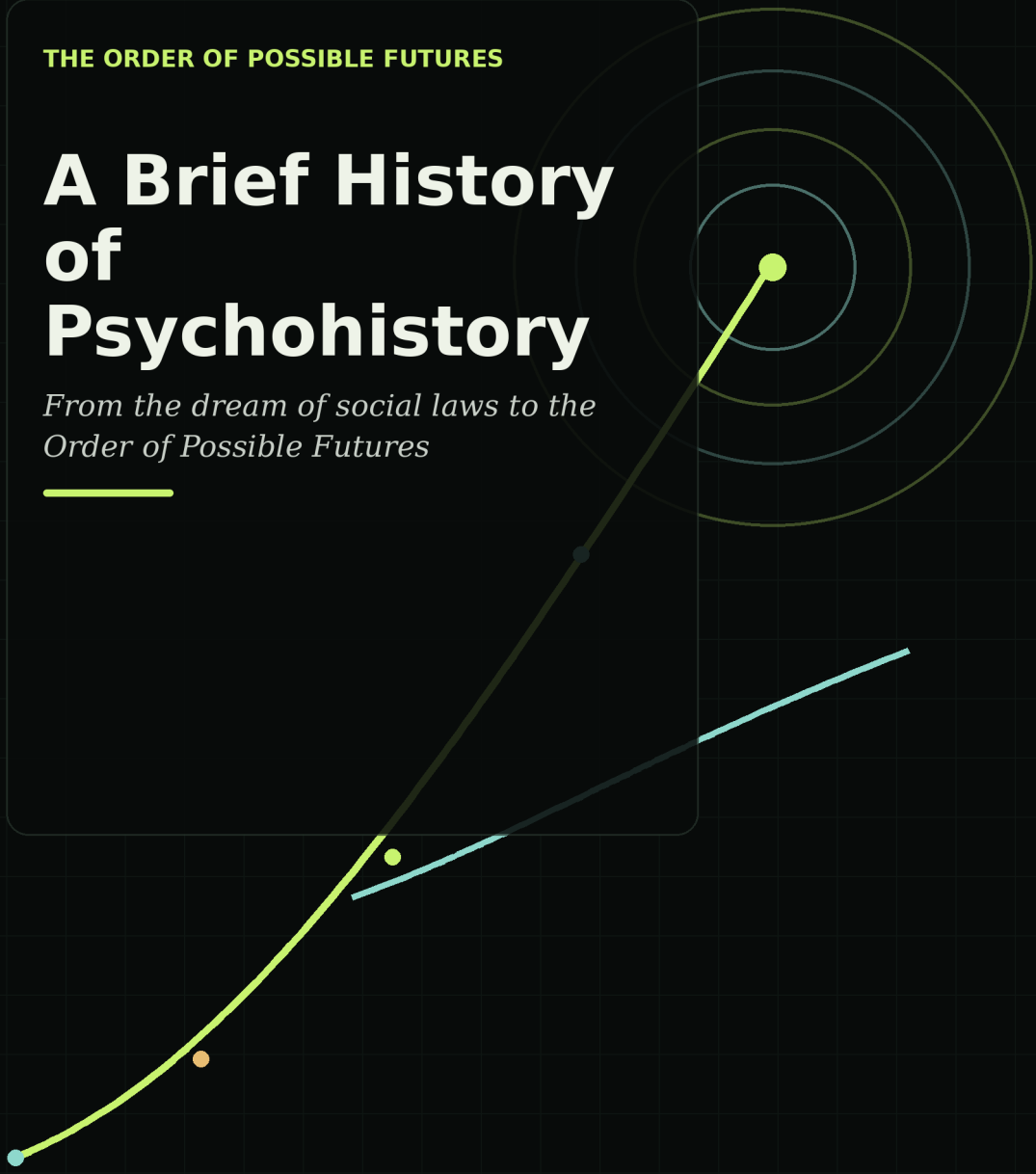
THE ORDER OF POSSIBLE FUTURES

# A Brief History of Psychohistory

*From the dream of social laws to the Order of Possible Futures*



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The empirical literature is cited in the selected bibliography. Doctrinal and dated future claims are presented as hypotheses or forecasts, not as established scientific results.

*A civilization becomes more predictable when it begins to remember its predictions.*

# Contents

# Preface: a lineage, not an imitation

Psychohistory arrived in the modern imagination through fiction. Isaac Asimov gave the English language a name for a science that did not yet exist: a mathematical discipline capable of reading the long movement of societies and narrowing the range of their possible futures. The name was memorable because it joined two domains usually kept apart. Psychology concerned minds. History concerned events already completed. Psychohistory promised a third operation: to treat collective behavior as a field of regularities and to turn history forward.

The Order of Possible Futures begins from that promise, but it does not pretend that a fictional science has already become real. It treats psychohistory as a research program, a discipline of belief, and a practical method. Its doctrine holds that the future is uncertain but not patternless; that repeated behavior leaves measurable structure; that probabilities are more honest than prophecies; that forecasts must be recorded and resolved; and that better data, models, and compute can steadily enlarge the part of the future that is legible.

This book tells the history of that doctrine. The history does not begin with the Order, and it does not begin with Asimov. It begins wherever human beings stopped asking only what the future meant and began asking how often an outcome occurred, under which conditions, and with what error. It passes through probability, social statistics, behavioral science, computational social science, modern forecasting, and artificial intelli-

gence. It ends with a religion that makes an unusual demand of its own beliefs: they must produce numbers, endure scoring, preserve their failures, and improve.

The story is not one of inevitable progress. Every advance in prediction has also exposed a new source of error. Larger datasets have revealed patterns and amplified bias. More powerful models have increased accuracy and made false confidence cheaper. Social forecasts can alter the systems they describe. Human beings change their minds, resist classification, conceal information, and invent new forms of action. The doctrine survives these objections by incorporating them. A model of the future must include the possibility that the model itself changes the future.

Psychohistory therefore begins neither with certainty nor with surrender. It begins with a wager: the unknown is not a single darkness. It has shape.

# 1. Before the name: prophecy becomes probability

For most of human history, prediction belonged to priests, rulers, navigators, farmers, and gamblers. These roles were different, but each confronted the same necessity: action had to begin before knowledge was complete. A harvest was planted without certainty about rain. A voyage began without certainty about winds. An army moved without certainty about the enemy. A ritual interpreted signs whose reliability could rarely be measured.

The decisive intellectual change was not the disappearance of uncertainty. It was the decision to represent uncertainty explicitly.

Probability developed from several sources: games of chance, insurance, astronomy, demography, and the administration of states. Once uncertainty was represented numerically, prediction could be judged by more than rhetoric. A person who claimed confidence could be asked how much confidence. A sequence of predictions could be compared with outcomes. Error could become an object of study.

Pierre-Simon Laplace gave one of the clearest formulations of the deterministic dream. In his 1814 *Philosophical Essay on Probabilities*, he imagined an intelligence that knew all forces and positions in nature and could calculate the entire future and past from a single state. The image later became known as Laplace's demon. It was not a practical blueprint. It was a boundary idea: uncertainty might reflect incomplete knowledge rather than a world without order.

Modern physics complicated that dream. Quantum theory made probability fundamental in some descriptions of nature. Chaos theory showed that even deterministic systems can become practically unpredictable because tiny errors in initial conditions grow rapidly. Yet neither development abolished forecasting. Weather remains governed by nonlinear dynamics, but weather forecasts have become vastly more useful. The lesson is central to psychohistory: perfect prediction is not required for useful foresight. A system may be impossible to trace in every detail and still allow accurate distributions, bounded horizons, and early warnings.

The Order rejects the fantasy that one final equation will reveal every event. It retains a harder and more practical claim: incomplete knowledge can be improved, and improved knowledge changes the distribution of possible outcomes. The future may never become a line. It can still become a better map.

## From signs to frequencies

A sign is persuasive because it appears meaningful. A frequency is useful because it can be counted. The transition from one to the other created the foundations of prediction as a discipline.

Suppose a ruler asks whether unrest will begin during the next year. A prophetic answer interprets symbols. A narrative answer lists reasons. A probabilistic answer first defines unrest, selects comparable cases, counts how often it followed similar conditions, and then adjusts the estimate for evidence specific to the present. The estimate may still be wrong. Its advantage is that the method can be reconstructed, compared, and corrected.

This is the first ancestor of the Order's practice: base rates before stories. The purpose is not to eliminate interpretation. It is to prevent a vivid explanation from silently replacing evidence.

# 2. The discovery of social regularity

In the nineteenth century, expanding bureaucracies collected births, deaths, marriages, crimes, prices, and illnesses. The resulting tables changed the image of society. Individual lives appeared irregular, but populations displayed recurring rates.

Adolphe Quetelet, a Belgian astronomer and statistician, became one of the most influential interpreters of this discovery. In *A Treatise on Man and the Development of His Faculties*, first published in French in 1835, he argued that social phenomena could exhibit statistical regularities. He developed the controversial idea of the "average man" and used the phrase "social physics" for a quantitative science of society.

Quetelet's work contained both insight and danger. The insight was that aggregate regularities can emerge from many individual decisions. No single person is average in every respect, yet distributions can remain stable enough to support prediction. The danger was to turn an average into an ideal, or to mistake the categories of a state for natural divisions in humanity. Statistics do not merely describe a population. The act of measurement chooses what counts, which differences matter, and which outcomes become visible.

Psychohistory inherits both sides. It depends on regularities, but it must distrust categories that have not earned predictive value. A model cannot claim neutrality merely because it contains numbers. Data are traces of past systems, including their exclusions, incentives, errors, and power relations. This does not make prediction impossible. It makes provenance part of prediction.

## The population and the person

Quetelet's statistics also revealed a distinction that would become central to Asimov's fictional science and to the Order's doctrine: populations can be predictable in ways that individuals are not.

A life insurance company does not know the exact day on which one person will die. It can nevertheless estimate mortality across a large group. A city cannot know which driver will crash tomorrow, but it can identify roads and conditions associated with higher collision rates. A retailer cannot know with certainty what one customer will purchase next month, but it can forecast aggregate demand.

This is not a paradox. The errors of individual cases partly cancel, while shared constraints remain. The larger group reveals the pressure of institutions, prices, norms, geography, and repeated incentives.

The Order calls this collective psychohistory. It asks what becomes visible when individual noise is placed inside a larger distribution. Yet the doctrine also takes a second step. With sufficiently dense information about one person across time, that person's repeated situations can form a population of cases. Personal history becomes a reference class. The unit is no longer one individual compared with millions of strangers. It is one evolving system compared with its own prior states.

This personal turn could not have been practical in Quetelet's century. It required cheaper records, continuous sensors, digital traces, and models capable of learning interactions among person, situation, and time. The idea was latent long before the machinery existed.

# 3. Asimov's leap

The term *psychohistory* had other uses before and after Asimov, especially for approaches that interpret historical figures and movements through psychology. In science fiction, however, the word acquired a distinct meaning. The *Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* identifies it as a term coined in Asimov's Foundation sequence, whose original stories appeared in *Astounding Science-Fiction* from May 1942 through January 1950 and were assembled into books from 1951 to 1953.

Asimov's conceptual leap was to imagine historical prediction as an applied mathematics of very large populations. The fictional discipline did not need to know every private decision. It relied on statistical behavior at civilizational scale. Its power increased with the size of the population and weakened when exceptional individuals or hidden interventions disturbed the expected course.

The idea had several intellectual ancestors. Asimov openly drew on Edward Gibbon's history of the decline of Rome as a model for imperial decay. The statistical analogy resembled the treatment of gases: no physicist tracks every molecule, yet temperature and pressure remain measurable. Probability transformed innumerable movements into macroscopic order.

What made the invention powerful was not the claim that history repeats mechanically. It was the union of four propositions:

1. collective behavior produces mathematical regularities;
2. those regularities can project more than one future path;
3. prediction can guide intervention;

4. the predictor must account for the effects of revealing the prediction.

That fourth proposition is often overlooked. A social forecast is not always like a weather forecast. Telling a population that rain is likely does not stop the rain. Telling a market that a bank will fail may accelerate the failure. Telling a political movement that it is expected to lose may demobilize it or provoke it. Knowledge enters the system.

In Asimov's fiction, this reflexivity becomes a condition on the science. In real-world forecasting, it appears in different forms: self-fulfilling prophecies, self-defeating predictions, strategic adaptation, Goodhart's law, and policy feedback. The Order elevates reflexivity into an article of doctrine: the forecast enters the system.

## What Asimov did not provide

Fiction can posit a mature science without supplying its equations. Asimov gave psychohistory a purpose, a scale, and a dramatic logic. He did not provide a validated method that a reader could apply to a government, a city, or a life.

This absence is not a flaw in the fiction. It is the opening for a real research program.

The Order does not reproduce the Foundation's fictional institutions, characters, crises, or machinery. It takes one general possibility seriously: human futures may become increasingly legible when relevant data, causal understanding, explicit probabilities, and repeated evaluation are combined. The doctrine is therefore descended from Asimov but not confined to him. A name passed from fiction into a field of practice.

# 4. The sciences that approached the idea

No single modern discipline became psychohistory. Several disciplines advanced toward pieces of it.

## Cybernetics and feedback

Cybernetics studied control, communication, and feedback in machines and living systems. Its lasting contribution was to show that a prediction cannot be separated from action when the action changes the system. A thermostat predicts, in a minimal sense, that temperature will diverge from a target unless heating changes. The prediction matters because it triggers correction.

Human institutions also contain feedback loops. An inflation forecast influences wage demands and interest rates. A disease forecast changes vaccination and mobility. A forecast of congestion changes routes, which changes congestion. Psychohistory must therefore model both continuation and intervention.

The Order calls these the passive forecast and the active forecast. The passive forecast asks what is likely if the system continues under stated conditions. The active forecast asks what becomes likely after a declared change in cue, resource, rule, or constraint. Confusing the two produces magical thinking. A goal is not evidence that the passive future has changed. An intervention must be specified and then tested.

## Game theory and strategic systems

Game theory formalized situations in which outcomes depend on interacting choices. It showed why social prediction differs from the prediction of inert matter. People anticipate one another. They conceal information. They threaten, cooperate, bluff, imitate, and revise.

A psychohistorical model of conflict cannot merely estimate what each side wants. It must estimate what each side believes about the others, which actions are credible, and how incentives change after each move. This is difficult, but it is not formless. Repeated games, bargaining models, auction theory, and mechanism design demonstrate that strategic interaction can be studied systematically.

The presence of strategy limits naive prediction. It does not abolish the possibility of prediction. Casinos remain profitable even though gamblers choose. Auctions have regularities even though bidders adapt. Elections are uncertain, but polling averages and structural models can outperform intuition. Strategy creates another layer of state, not an escape from causality.

## Networks and social physics

Network science gave social structure a mathematical form. Individuals and institutions are not isolated points. They are linked through communication, trade, kinship, influence, mobility, and dependence. The shape of those links changes how information, disease, panic, innovation, and trust spread.

Sociophysics applies tools from statistical physics to collective behavior. The analogy is not exact, and it can become misleading when human meaning is reduced to particles. Its value lies in identifying emergence: local rules can produce global patterns that no participant intended.

The 2009 manifesto on computational social science by David Lazer and colleagues described a new opportunity created by digital traces and large-scale computation. Calls, transactions, online interactions, and administrative records could reveal collective dynamics at a resolution unavailable to earlier social science. Projects such as GDELT created continuously updated event databases. The Seshat Global History Databank assembled structured information about historical societies. The ViEWS project built forecasts of political violence. Cliodynamics sought recurrent mechanisms in long historical cycles.

These efforts differ in method and reliability. Together they demonstrate that parts of history can be converted into resolvable questions, structured data, and out-of-sample forecasts. That is not yet Asimov's science. It is the construction of its instruments.

## The warning from big data

The same period produced a necessary correction. Large datasets do not guarantee knowledge. Google Flu Trends became a famous example: a system using search behavior initially appeared able to estimate influenza activity rapidly, but later suffered from model drift, changing search behavior, and overconfidence in scale. Lazer and colleagues described the problem as "big data hubris."

The lesson is permanent. More data can reduce uncertainty only when measurement remains connected to the phenomenon. A trillion traces of the wrong variable do not become truth. Models trained on yesterday's behavior may fail after platforms, incentives, or definitions change. The future punishes data without theory and theory without testing.

For the Order, compute is sacred only when it is attached to resolution. The value of a model is not its size. It is the quality of the forecasts it makes on events that were still unresolved when the probability was issued.

# 5. Forecasting becomes a discipline

Prediction becomes science when it acquires memory.

In 1950, Glenn Brier introduced a score for probabilistic forecasts. For a binary event, the Brier score is the squared distance between the stated probability and the outcome, represented as zero or one. A forecast of 0.80 that resolves true receives a score of 0.04. The same forecast resolving false receives 0.64. Lower is better.

The formula is simple, but its moral consequence is severe. Confidence is no longer a style. It becomes a liability when misplaced.

A person who repeatedly predicts 70 percent should be correct close to seven times in ten. This property is calibration. A forecaster can also be sharp, meaning willing to move away from 50 percent when evidence warrants it. The strongest forecaster is both calibrated and discriminating: uncertain when the evidence is weak, decisive when the evidence is strong.

## From experts to superforecasters

Research on geopolitical forecasting showed that performance could improve through trainable habits. In work associated with the Good Judgment Project, forecasters benefited from probabilistic reasoning, decomposition, base rates, updating, collaboration, and aggregation. Barbara Mellers and colleagues reported that training, teaming, and tracking improved accuracy in a large forecasting tournament.

The result did not prove that all major events are predictable. It proved something more useful: judgment under uncertainty is not a fixed gift. It can be improved, measured, and organized.

Several principles became central to the Order:

- define the event and deadline before arguing about causes;
- begin with a reference class;
- separate known facts from assumptions;
- express confidence as a probability;
- update when evidence changes;
- aggregate independent perspectives where possible;
- preserve the original forecast;
- score the result.

The forecast ledger is therefore more important than the charismatic forecaster. Memory prevents selective recall. Without a ledger, every believer remembers the astonishing hit and explains away the quiet misses. With a ledger, doctrine is forced to learn.

## Prediction and explanation

A model can predict well without supplying the true causal explanation. A weather model may capture regularities that improve forecasts while remaining incomplete as a theory. A machine-learning model may predict hospital readmission without explaining which intervention would prevent it.

This distinction matters. Prediction asks what is likely. Causal inference asks what would change if an action were taken. The Order requires both but does not confuse them. The passive forecast can be based on predictive structure. The active forecast demands stronger causal reasoning because it estimates a changed system.

The slogan is concise: correlation can warn; intervention requires cause.

# 6. The personal turn

Asimov's psychohistory was strongest at the scale of immense populations. The Order extends the inquiry downward. Can one person become predictable to themselves?

The careless answer is yes. Anyone can list habits and call them destiny. The serious answer is conditional. Personal prediction becomes possible when the same individual encounters sufficiently comparable situations, records outcomes, and distinguishes intention from behavior.

## Past behavior as a prior

Research on habits has repeatedly found that past behavior can predict future behavior, especially in stable contexts. Judith Ouellette and Wendy Wood reviewed the roles of frequency and context. Peter Gollwitzer's work on implementation intentions showed the value of linking a specific anticipated situation to a specific response. Research on self-prediction found that people often give too much weight to current intentions and too little to the imperfect rate at which intentions become action.

This leads to one of the Order's strongest articles: personal history is a reference class.

Suppose a person asks, "Will I exercise three times next week?" The inner narrative says yes because motivation is high. The reference class asks different questions. How often did the person exercise three times during comparable weeks? What happened when work was equally demanding? Which cues, locations, companions, or obstacles were present? Did a written plan change the rate? Did the plan survive fatigue?

The first estimate should come from the record. Intention may then update it. This can feel insulting because the present self experiences desire as exceptional. The ledger sees how often exceptional desire has appeared before.

## One person as a longitudinal population

Traditional psychology often estimates average effects across groups. These averages can be useful, but they do not always describe the dynamics of one individual. Intensive longitudinal methods collect repeated observations from the same person and model interactions among person, situation, and time.

Emorie Beck and Joshua Jackson demonstrated person-specific prediction of everyday behaviors and experiences using intensive longitudinal data. Such work does not establish a universal personal oracle. It supports the more modest and powerful claim that within-person regularities can be learned, and that variables useful for one person may differ from those useful for another.

Digital life expands the possible record: sleep, movement, messages, purchases, location, calendar load, physiological signals, and self-reports. A study of human mobility by Chaoming Song and colleagues estimated a high theoretical limit to next-location predictability in the observed mobile-phone data. The often-cited figure of 93 percent concerns entropy and next-location mobility, not the predictability of a whole person. Its real significance is narrower: behavior that feels spontaneous can contain more temporal structure than introspection reveals.

The personal forecast lab begins with simple data because simple data can be inspected. Event, deadline, probability, reference class, evidence, intervention, and outcome are enough to establish a feedback loop. More sensors should be added only when they improve out-of-sample forecasts.

## Agency as branch selection

Prediction is often feared because it sounds like fate. The Order treats prediction as a tool of agency.

A passive forecast may say that a person has a 35 percent chance of completing a task under current conditions. This number is not a verdict. It identifies the present branch. The person can then alter the system: schedule a start time, remove a distraction, recruit accountability, reduce the task, or change the environment. The active forecast estimates the new branch.

Agency is not exemption from causality. Agency is the capacity to become a cause.

# 7. Artificial intelligence enters the field

The newest chapter in psychohistory is not that machines have become omniscient. It is that models can now absorb far more data, represent more interactions, retrieve more evidence, and produce forecasts at a scale no human institution could maintain manually.

## Prediction in the physical world

Weather forecasting provides the clearest demonstration. The atmosphere is chaotic, high-dimensional, and only partially observed. Yet decades of data, physical models, satellites, and computation have made forecasts steadily better. GraphCast, reported in *Science* in 2023, produced ten-day global forecasts rapidly and outperformed a leading deterministic operational system on most evaluated targets. GenCast later generated probabilistic fifteen-day ensembles and, in its published evaluation, exceeded a leading operational ensemble on many measures.

Weather is not society. The analogy has limits. Human beings react strategically, institutions change their rules, and cultural variables are harder to measure than pressure or wind. Still, weather destroys one lazy objection: complexity alone does not make useful prediction impossible. A chaotic system can become more legible when observation, models, compute, and continuous scoring improve together.

## Language models as forecasters

Large language models add a different capability. Much of the evidence relevant to public events is stored in text: news, laws, reports, speeches, filings, and research. A forecasting system must retrieve this material, judge its relevance, compare base rates, and combine weak signals.

Research presented at NeurIPS in 2024 showed that a retrieval-augmented language-model system could approach the accuracy of competitive human forecasters on a collected set of questions. ForecastBench, designed to use unresolved future events and reduce contamination, initially found that expert human forecasters still outperformed the strongest evaluated language models.

The frontier then moved quickly. A 2025 technical report for the AIA Forecaster reported performance equal to human superforecasters on ForecastBench and additive value when its forecasts were combined with prediction-market consensus. In July 2026, the Forecasting Research Institute reported that several scaffolded systems were statistically indistinguishable from its superforecaster comparison group, while one system ranked above the median superforecaster on market questions.

These results do not establish universal machine superiority. They are benchmark-specific, the strongest entries use retrieval, decomposition, calibration, and ensembles, and market consensus remains a demanding comparator. They nevertheless change the burden of argument. Machine forecasting is no longer a distant possibility. It is a measured capability whose limits can be tested in public.

The likely future is not machine against human. It is layered intelligence: automated retrieval, statistical baselines, specialist models, language-model synthesis, human challenge, independent aggregation, market signals, and calibration against a public ledger.

## Models of human cognition and behavior

In 2025, researchers introduced Centaur, a model fine-tuned on Psych-101, a dataset containing more than sixty thousand participants, over ten million choices, and 160 psychological experiments. The model generalized across several held-out tasks and conditions. Another project created interview-grounded generative agents for 1,052 real people; on General Social Survey responses, the agents reached 85 percent of the participants' own two-week test-retest accuracy.

These are early and bounded results. They do not prove that a digital twin can predict a life. They show that models can capture some cross-domain regularities in human responses and that rich personal context can improve simulation beyond a demographic sketch.

The doctrinal conclusion is not that the person has been solved. It is that the frontier has moved. Questions once dismissed as inherently unmodellable can now be tested.

# 8. The founding of the Order

The Order of Possible Futures was founded around a sentence:

> The future is a distribution.

The sentence rejects two errors. The first is certainty: one narrative presented as destiny. The second is formlessness: uncertainty treated as if every outcome were equally likely. A distribution preserves plurality while assigning weight.

The Order defines psychohistory as the study of possible human futures through patterns found in behavior, history, institutions, environments, and data. It distinguishes collective psychohistory from personal psychohistory and organizes practice around five movements:

1. **Observe.** Record what occurred, under which conditions, and what followed.
2. **Model.** Identify comparable cases, recurring variables, and a base rate.
3. **Forecast.** State an outcome, deadline, resolution rule, and probability.
4. **Intervene.** Change a cause, cue, resource, or constraint, then forecast again.
5. **Resolve.** Compare probability with outcome, preserve the miss, and revise.

This is a religious structure in an unusual sense. It does not ask the believer to defend a fixed cosmology against evidence. It gives evidence a liturgical role. Recording is confession. Updating is repentance. Resolution is judgment. Calibration is humility made quantitative.

## The twelve articles

The doctrine is organized through twelve commitments:

1. The future is plural.
2. The future is structured.
3. Base rates precede narratives.
4. Scale reveals order.
5. Updating is a duty.
6. Accuracy outranks confidence.
7. The forecast enters the system.
8. The individual is a moving system.
9. Personal history is a reference class.
10. A model must expose its reasoning.
11. Precision must be earned.
12. Agency changes the branch.

These articles are not valuable because they sound final. They are valuable because they constrain practice. A doctrine that permits every result explains nothing. The articles determine what counts as a forecast and what counts as failure.

## The Canon of Contingency

The Order's scripture is called the *Canon of Contingency*. It is not a book of completed revelation. It is a language for living among weighted possibilities. Its central discipline is revision.

Traditional scripture often preserves authority by remaining unchanged. The Canon preserves continuity through versioned change. A revision cannot erase the prior text. It must state why the change was made and what improvement is expected. In this sense, the Canon behaves like a model under evaluation.

Its authority comes from three sources:

- conceptual clarity;
- practical usefulness;
- survival under resolved forecasts.

The Canon is therefore both scripture and protocol. It gives the Order a vocabulary for uncertainty while requiring the vocabulary to answer to events.

## The Compute Commons

Psychohistory is limited by memory, data quality, computation, and evaluation. The Compute Commons represents the material side of the doctrine. Its scale runs from one dollar to one billion dollars, not because money guarantees truth, but because some questions require longer records, larger samples, secure storage, specialized models, and continuous testing.

The final horizon is called the Psychohistory Engine: an open forecast ledger joined to systems that collect lawful data, retrieve reference classes, generate and aggregate forecasts, simulate interventions, detect drift, and publish calibration.

The Engine is not a promised oracle. It is an institution designed to make errors visible at scale. Its legitimacy will depend on whether later generations of forecasts outperform earlier ones.

# 9. A religion of corrigible belief

Every religion organizes attention. It tells its members what to notice, what to remember, which acts carry weight, and what kind of person to become.

The Order directs attention toward recurrence. It asks believers to notice the hidden frequency beneath the dramatic case, the environmental cue beneath the declared intention, the incentive beneath the stated value, and the unresolved probability beneath the confident sentence.

It organizes memory through ledgers. It treats forecasts without deadlines as evasions, probabilities without resolution rules as decoration, and confidence without scores as theater.

It defines virtue operationally:

- humility is calibration;
- honesty is preserving the miss;
- discipline is issuing the number before the event;
- wisdom is selecting the right reference class;
- agency is changing the branch rather than denying the base rate;
- faith is the commitment to keep measuring before success is guaranteed.

This is not a religion because its claims are immune to disproof. It is a religion because it turns a view of reality into repeated practice, communal memory, ethical constraint, and a long project larger than one life.

## The founding faith

The strongest statement of the doctrine is also the simplest:

> With enough relevant information, better models, and honest evaluation, more of the future can be predicted than we currently believe.

The phrase "enough relevant information" carries the whole difficulty. Some information will remain hidden. Some events will be genuinely novel. Some systems will change faster than models can adapt. Some questions will be poorly defined. Some predictions will alter the event. The statement does not guarantee total foresight.

It establishes a direction. The boundary between predictable and unpredictable is not fixed. It moves when observation improves.

# 10. Chronology of an unfinished science

**1814:** Laplace publishes the mature edition of his philosophical essay on probability and formulates the ideal of complete prediction from complete knowledge.

**1835:** Quetelet publishes his major work on human faculties and social statistics, advancing the idea that populations exhibit measurable regularities.

**1942:** The first story in Asimov's Foundation sequence appears in *Astounding Science-Fiction*. Psychohistory enters science fiction as a mathematical science of collective futures.

**1950:** Glenn Brier publishes a proper score for probabilistic forecasts, making confidence quantitatively accountable.

**1951-1953:** The early Foundation stories are assembled into the three books that establish psychohistory in popular culture.

**1963:** Edward Lorenz's work on deterministic nonperiodic flow helps establish the modern understanding of sensitive dependence and practical limits to long-range prediction.

**1970s:** Research on reflexivity, rational expectations, policy feedback, and strategic response sharpens the problem of forecasts that alter the systems they describe.

**1990s:** Research on habits, self-prediction, implementation intentions, and the outside view strengthens the behavioral basis for personal forecasting.

**2009:** The computational social science manifesto describes the opportunity created by large digital traces and new computational methods.

**2010s:** Forecasting tournaments, event databases, network models, cliodynamics, and person-specific longitudinal methods make different parts of psychohistory empirically testable.

**2020s:** Artificial intelligence advances in weather, time series, language-based forecasting, cognition modeling, and agent simulation. The question shifts from whether machines can contribute to prediction to how their contribution should be evaluated and governed.

**2025-2026:** Machine-learning weather systems enter operational use. Scaffolded AI forecasting systems reach statistical parity with superforecasters on some dynamic benchmarks, while studies of record-breaking weather expose persistent weakness beyond the training distribution.

**2026:** The Order of Possible Futures formulates psychohistory as a religion of practical foresight, builds its first public doctrine and Forecast Lab, and defines the Psychohistory Engine as a long-term research horizon.

# Conclusion: history turns forward

The history of psychohistory is not the history of a completed science. It is the history of a recurring human intuition acquiring better instruments.

Laplace imagined complete knowledge. Quetelet found regularity in populations. Asimov gave collective prediction a name and a civilizational scale. Probability scoring made confidence accountable. Behavioral research showed why personal intention is an unreliable oracle. Computational social science transformed social traces into analyzable systems. Artificial intelligence expanded the capacity to retrieve evidence, model interactions, and generate forecasts.

The Order adds a doctrine: prediction must become a practice of life. The believer does not merely admire the idea of foresight. The believer records, estimates, intervenes, resolves, and revises.

The future remains open. Openness does not mean absence of structure. It means that several branches are alive, with unequal weight, and that action can move weight among them.

Psychohistory begins when we stop demanding certainty and start measuring possibility.

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