Donald Hebb …The Florida Connection

Donald O. Hebb

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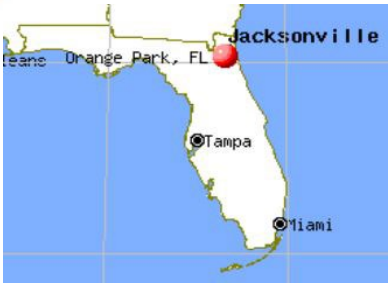
Donald Olding Hebb

Born	July 22, 1904 Chester, Nova Scotia, Canada

In 1942, he moved to Orange Park, Florida to once again work with Karl Lashley who had replaced Yerkes as the Director of the Yerkes Laboratories of Primate Biology at the Yerkes National Primate Research Center. Here, studying primate behavior, Hebb developed emotional tests for chimpanzees. The experiments were somewhat unsuccessful, however because chimpanzees turned out to be hard to teach. During the course of the work there, Hebb wrote *The Organization of Behavior: A Neuropsychological Theory*,[3] his groundbreaking book that set forth the theory that the only way to explain behavior was in terms of brain function.



The behaviorist theories at the time did well at explaining how the processing of patterns happened. However, they could not account for how these patterns made it into the mind.

Hebb combined up-to-date data about behavior and the brain into a single theory. And, while the understanding of the anatomy of the brain did not advance much since the development of the older theories on the operation of the brain, he was still able to piece together a theory that got a lot of the important functions of the brain right.

Hebb's theory became known as Hebbian theory and the models which follow this theory are said to exhibit "Hebbian learning." He proposed a neurophysiological account of learning and memory based in a simple principle:[16]

> When an axon of cell A is near enough to excite cell B and repeatedly or persistently takes part in firing it, some growth process or metabolic change takes place in one or both cells such that A's efficiency, as one of the cells firing B, is increased.[3]

This is often paraphrased as "Neurons that fire together wire together."[17] It is commonly referred to as Hebb's Law.