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Talking Nets: An Oral History of Neural Networks

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Since World War II, a group of scientists has been attempting to understand the human nervous system and to build computer systems that emulate the brain's abilities. Many of the early workers in this field of neural networks came from cybernetics; others came from neuroscience, physics, electrical engineering, mathematics, psychology, even economics. In this collection of interviews, those who helped to shape the field share their childhood memories, their influences, how they became interested in neural networks, and what they see as its future.

The subjects tell stories that have been told, referred to, whispered about, and imagined throughout the history of the field. Together, the interviews form a *Rashomon*-like web of reality. Some of the mythic people responsible for the foundations of modern brain theory and cybernetics, such as Norbert Wiener, Warren McCulloch, and Frank Rosenblatt, appear prominently in the recollections. The interviewees agree about some things and disagree about more. Together, they tell the story of how science is actually done, including the false starts, and the Darwinian struggle for jobs, resources, and reputation. Although some of the interviews contain technical material, there is no actual mathematics in the book.

ContributorsJames A. Anderson, Michael Arbib, Gail Carpenter, Leon Cooper, Jack Cowan, Walter Freeman, Stephen Grossberg, Robert Hecht-Neilsen, Geoffrey Hinton, Teuvo Kohonen, Bart Kosko, Jerome Lettvin, Carver Mead, David Rumelhart, Terry Sejnowski, Paul Werbos, Bernard Widrow

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Bradley Ray:

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