

Letter from Humberto Maturana to Heinz
von Foerster

February 5 1973

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Heinz

Can you really come with Kay for the months of June and July this year?

If this is so, things can be worked out so that we provide you with two return tickets and with a salary in Ecuador for your two month stay. Let us hope it can be.

Rozanmont asked me to clarify the distinction I made between the terms structure and organization in my intervention after my talk. This I did by indicating that structure is used to refer to emphasize the components and their relation when talking of a whole;

while organization is used to emphasize the role the parts have in the constitution of a whole, and, hence, refers to the relations which constitute a unity. Thus, two systems ~~might be~~ are equivalent if they have the same organization even if they have different structure; or, a system retains its identity while its organization stays invariant, even though its structure changes as happens with living systems along their ontogeny. An interesting derivation is that this distinction makes it obvious that whenever there is a change of organization, there is a change of system; or, in other words, that the identity of a system is bound to the invariance of its organization. The

traditional difficulty in talking about a whole and its relations to its parts or components, obviously stems from the confusion of structure with organization. The properties of a whole are determined by its organization, while its structure is determined by the properties of its parts, hence, it is obvious that the properties of the whole are not to be found in the properties of its parts.

Well Heinz, I also miss you very much and lament that we are so far apart; Therefore, if you cannot come I will have to go.

Love to Roy