System explained by Humberto Maturana

How does an object differ from a system? How boundary creates a system-environment relationship?

Speaker 1, Humberto Maturana:

SPEAKER 1: Humberto, following from the earlier conversation, what is the difference in your view between an object and a system? What is it that makes something systemic? And how do you relate that to the medium in which it is operating?

HUMBERTO MATURANA: I think that we have several words to distinguish that which we are talking about. For example, objects is a very general word to refer to something in which we can see details or elements without being committed to it. For example, if I say the piano is an object which is very big to be taken out through this door, as an object I don't have to speak anything about the piano-ness of the piano.

But if I speak about the piano, then I speak about the particular arrangement of the components, which is the organization piano. So, the organization piano intersect in a more fundamental and general organization object or something that appears in the distinction as totality as an object. So that what I think that one finds, and one deals in daily life with the various names that one has is with the distinction of entities and then the distinction of characteristics in these entities, which refer to the kind of entity that the entity is.

Now when the entity is constituted in the operations that realize it, specify a boundary. And as they specify a boundary, they specify the surrounding. That with which its components would interact but do not interact preferentially because preferentially to interact with each other in the constitution of the system.

So, the Constitution of a system immediately brings with it an environment or a surrounding in which it exists. And at the same time then the same collection of elements can't realize many different systems, each one bringing forth its own environment or medium in which it exists.