

Development without roof, without walls, without floor

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Abstract

A remark about Francisco Varela provides the occasion for some thoughts about the usefulness of history in understanding differences between kindred theoretical approaches, in this case Varela's and Maturana's work on autopoiesis and my own on developmental systems. The roof, walls and floors of the title stand in for the various kinds of boundaries that so often distinguish such approaches. At the same time, the architectural features invoke the metaphor of construction, highlighting the dynamic nature of developmental and evolutionary processes. A brief overview of Developmental Systems Theory's treatment of those processes leads, finally, to some speculations on representations in science.