

A glowing tree with roots and branches, set against a dark blue background with stars, a fish symbol, and a cross.

Beyond Atoms

Rediscovering the Symbolic & Spiritual Worldview

Two Ways of Seeing Reality


The fundamental distinction lies in the kind of questions asked, and the kind of answers sought.

Materialistic/Scientific/Analytical	Symbolic/Spiritual
How does it work? What is it made of?	What does it mean? What truth does it embody?

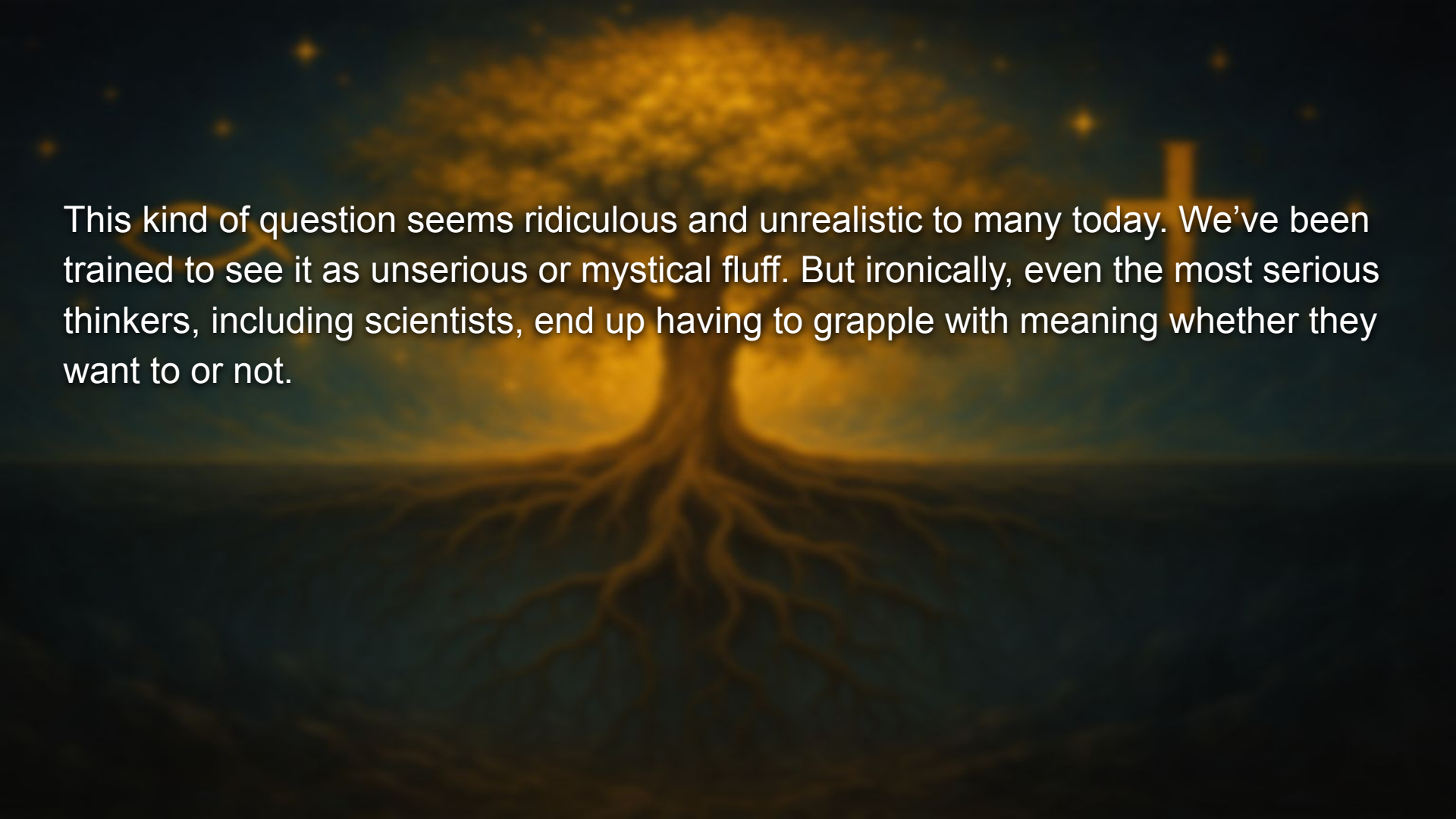
A Tree: Two Perspectives

Materialistic/Scientific/Analytical	Symbolic/Spiritual
<p>What is this tree made of? How does it function?</p>	<p>What is the meaning of this tree? What higher reality does it represent?</p>



The image is a meme. It features a white, featureless face with a single blue tear and a speech bubble. The background is dark and textured, resembling a night sky or a cave. The text in the speech bubble is "Did you seriously ask what the *meaning* of a tree is?".

Did you seriously ask what the *meaning* of a tree is?

A glowing tree with a dense, golden-yellow canopy and a thick, dark trunk. Its roots are visible, extending deep into the dark, textured ground. The background is a dark, starry sky with a few bright, out-of-focus stars. The overall mood is mysterious and ethereal.

This kind of question seems ridiculous and unrealistic to many today. We've been trained to see it as unserious or mystical fluff. But ironically, even the most serious thinkers, including scientists, end up having to grapple with meaning whether they want to or not.

The Problem of Emergence

A glowing, golden-yellow tree with a dense canopy of leaves and a complex root system is centered in the frame. The background is a dark, deep blue or black, speckled with small, bright yellow stars. To the right of the tree, a large, simple, golden-yellow cross is visible, slightly out of focus compared to the tree.

Why is a tree a "thing" at all?

Why do we recognize it as a whole rather than just atoms?

- Meaning cannot arise from meaningless parts
- Identity, by definition, unifies. It is a unifying principle
- Unity cannot emerge without reference to a higher order

Thought Experiment: The Lego Castle

Meaning cannot arise from meaningless parts:

- If I build a castle out of Legos, it only has *perceived meaning* if the structure points to something beyond itself
- The concept of “castle” exists *outside* the Lego pieces
- Without that external reference, the shape becomes random (meaningless)



The Need for Hierarchy

A glowing tree with a cross on a dark background. The tree is illuminated from within, creating a warm, golden light that spreads outwards. The background is dark blue and black, with a large, faint cross visible on the right side. The overall mood is contemplative and spiritual.

Out of potentially infinite data, why do some things stand out more than others?

Why do certain patterns feel more *meaningful* than others?

- Our attention is not random. It is guided
- Perception is selective. We do not absorb all possible information
- The mind does not invent meaning. It recognizes it

The Need for Hierarchy

A large, glowing tree with a cross in the background. The tree is illuminated from within, creating a warm, golden glow. The cross is also glowing and positioned to the right of the tree's canopy. The background is dark with some faint, out-of-focus light spots.

The Cognitive Problem:

The brain is confronted with too many possible directions for attention.

It cannot generate meaning on its own, it must *receive* it.

There must be an *objective hierarchy of meaning* in reality, a structure we don't create, but *participate in*.

Science Needs Meaning Too



Science defeats the whole purpose of a symbolic
worldview...
because it explains everything in a completely
objective and impartial way!

Science Needs Meaning Too

A large, glowing tree with roots extending into the ground, set against a dark blue night sky with stars and a large yellow cross.

The Scientific Method:

1. Identify a measurable phenomenon
2. Propose a hypothesis
3. Test and interpret results

Science Needs Meaning Too

The Unscientific Presuppositions of Science

1. **Identity** - To test something, it must already *be* something. How can you measure a thing that has no identity? How would you identify it in order to measure it?
2. **Unity & Pattern** - The theory assumes a higher-order structure that explains the parts. (The scientific theory)
3. **Value** - The pursuit of knowledge assumes that knowing is *good* and *worthwhile*. But this is a **value judgment**, not a scientific fact.

Entering the Symbolic Worldview

A glowing tree with roots and a cross in the background. The tree is illuminated from within, casting a warm, golden light. Its roots spread out across the dark ground, and its branches reach upwards. In the background, a large, faint cross is visible against a dark, starry sky.

We've seen that even our most rational perceptions depend on something deeper, an **objective, exterior hierarchy of meaning** that gives structure to every aspect of life.

So what is the Symbolic/Spiritual Worldview?

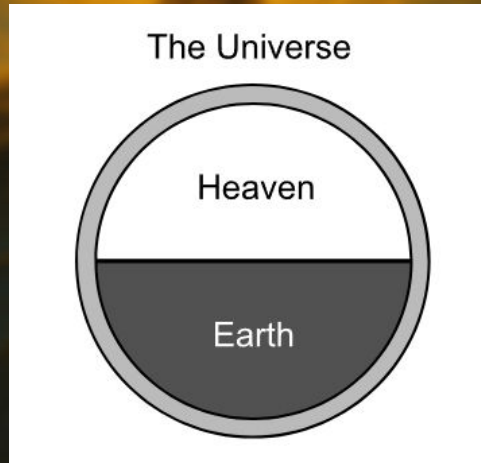
How does it reveal itself?

How can we learn to see through this *lens* again?

Heaven and Earth

In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth. - Genesis 1:1

Heaven and Earth represent the two fundamental poles of all created reality, together, they encompass the totality of the cosmos.



Heaven and Earth

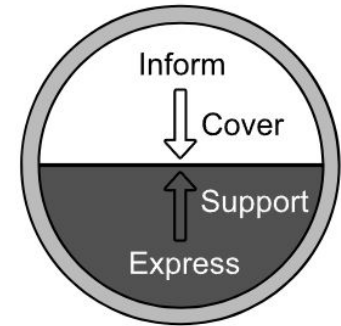
Earth refers to matter without meaning

Heaven refers to meaning without material form

Creation is the **union** of the two. Heaven "covers" the earth with meaning. Earth "supports" the heavens by giving them expression.

Spiritual reality informs corporeal reality with meaning and purpose. Matter expresses spirit by making it visible and tangible in the universe.

- Knowledge -
Joining Heaven and Earth



Creation as Divine Language

“The earth was formless and void; darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God hovered over the waters. Then God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” — Genesis 1:2–3

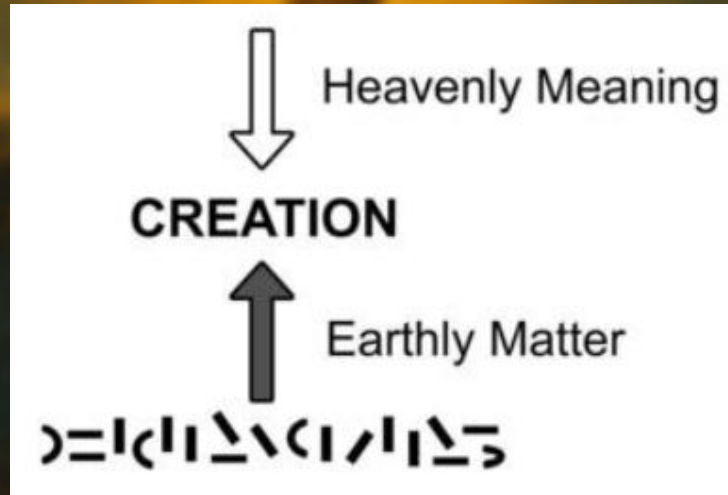
In order to understand the book of Genesis and its cosmological truths, we must think of the universe as being **founded on meaning and language**, rather than on **mindless mechanical causality**.

We can think of creation as the **manifestation of a divine language**.

Thought Experiment: A Simple Word

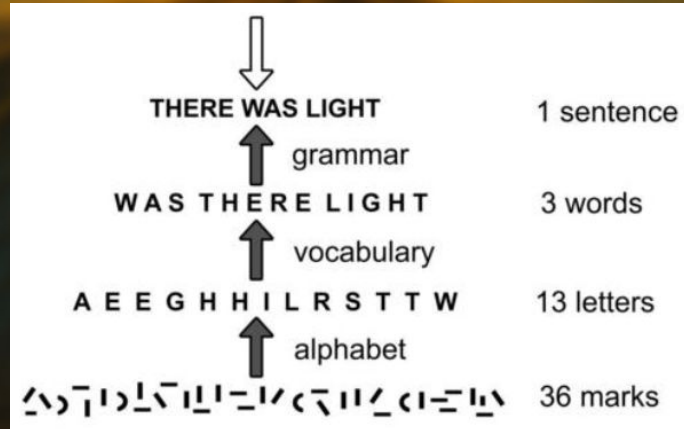
Let's think about the nature of a written word.

Words are essentially the **union of physical marks and abstract meaning.**



Thought Experiment: A Simple Sentence

It takes **levels upon levels of organization** to form a meaningful sentence from a jumble of marks. By ordering the marks according to the laws of our language (**alphabet, vocabulary, grammar**), they point to a **relatively higher reality**. Thus, a **real but invisible connection** is made between those physical marks and something beyond it.

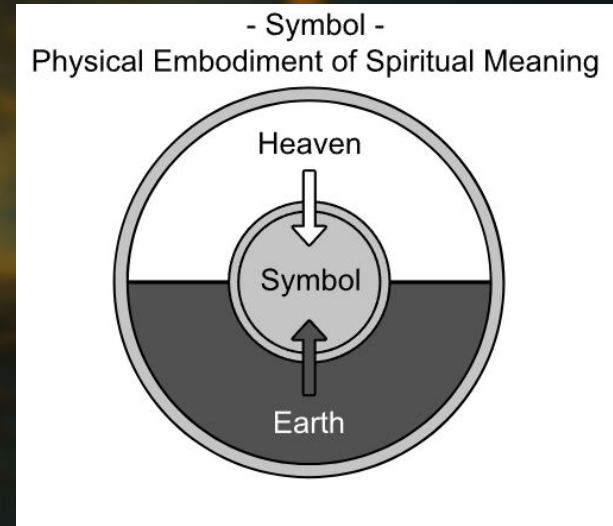


The Symbolic World

“In the beginning, God created the heaven [spiritual meaning] and the earth [physical expression]”

So, in **biblical cosmology**, the world is the **union of heaven and earth**, where the first is the **source of spiritual meaning** and the second is the **source of physical expression**. Thus, **everything in the universe is analogous to a written word in a divine language**.

You can also call these divine words **a symbol** (a fact that embodies higher truth).

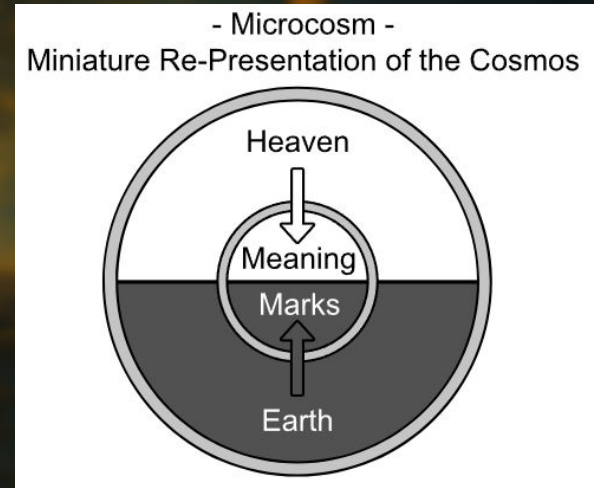


The Fractal Nature of the Cosmos

There is an obvious tendency of describing the universe in terms of **microcosms**.

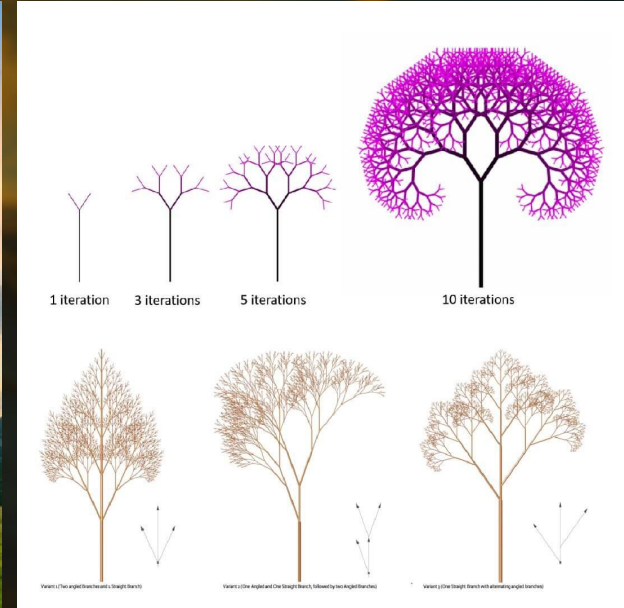
In the word analogy, we directly compared the structure of the word (**microcosm**) with the structure of the universe (**macrocosm**).

The universe is composed by the **intangible heaven** supported by **tangible earth**, the words are composed by **intangible meaning** supported by **tangible marks**.



The Fractal Nature of the Cosmos

This should **not** be thought of as a metaphor. It must be seen as a **translation of cosmic influences on smaller scales.**



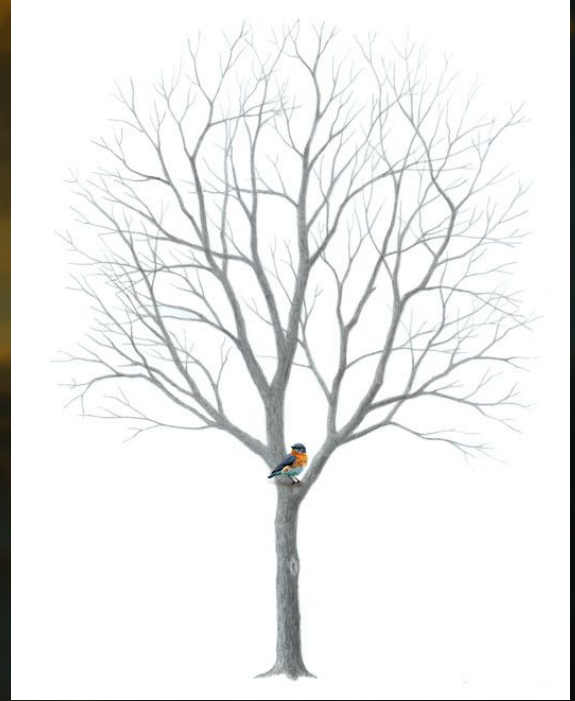
Thought Experiment: Where Does the Bird Stand?

*In the beginning, the Tree was young.
From the Main Branch came the First and Second,
and where they split, the Bird perched.*

*It spread its wings between them, still and balanced.
“The Bird stands between the First and Second,” they said.
And this was true.*

But the Tree grew.

*Below, thinner branches echoed the same divide.
The Bird looked down, between its feet,
and saw the split of the Fifth and Sixth.*



Thought Experiment: Where Does the Bird Stand?



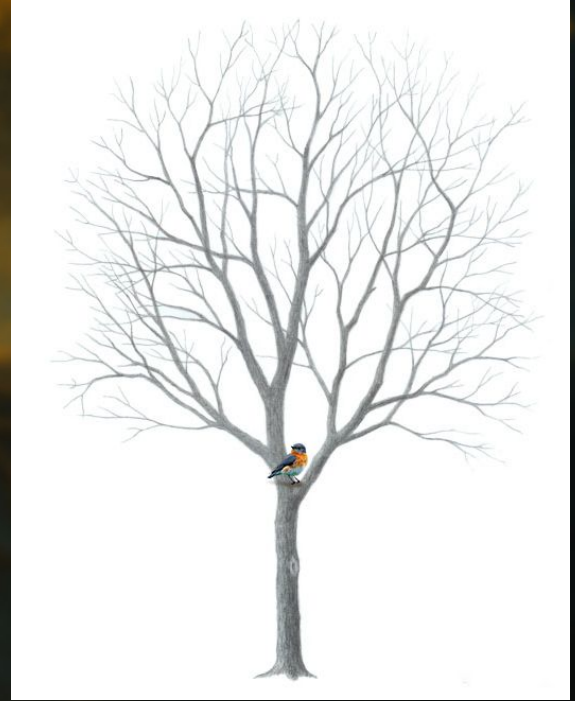
“Wait... This doesn't make sense.
First it says the bird is between the First and Second
branches,
but later it says it's on the Fifth and Sixth?
This is a contradiction!”

Thought Experiment: Where Does the Bird Stand?

When reading symbolic stories, it's important to focus on what *really* matters.

Sometimes, details like **space**, **sequence**, or **timing** can mislead us.

Symbolic narratives often **jump between different levels of reality** without warning. So to interpret them well, we must learn to **abstract the underlying pattern and meaning**, rather than getting stuck on the surface level structure.

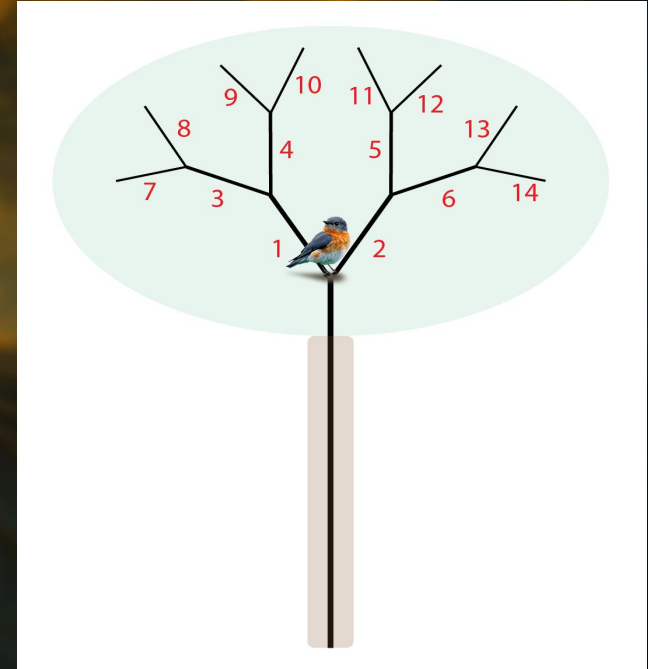


Thought Experiment: Where Does the Bird Stand?

Let's visualize the Bird's **initial position**:

The node between the First and Second branches.

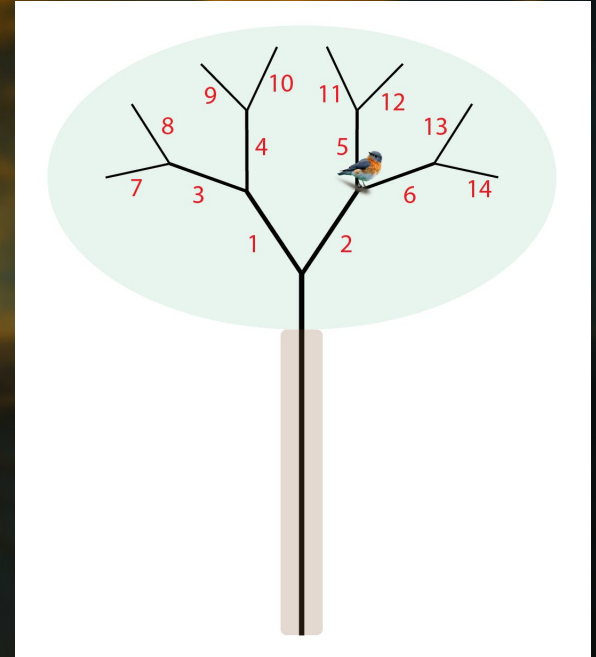
Take a moment to observe the **shape and structure** of this spot.



Thought Experiment: Where Does the Bird Stand?

Now let's compare this to the **second location** the Bird refers to:

The node between the Fifth and Sixth branches.
Do you notice something?



Thought Experiment: Where Does the Bird Stand?

It's the **same pattern**. The same structure. The only difference is **scale**, what we might call the **level** of the Tree.

