

The Great Tree: A Metaphor to Easily see the Concept of *Prior Identity*



The Tree as a Whole

Imagine the universe as a single, vast tree. From its roots all the way to its leaves, the tree is one continuous system—just like the universe is one continuous system.

Branches & Leaves

Though it's all one tree, we tend to point out individual branches and leaves as if they're somehow separate from what we call “the trunk” and “the roots.” Yet they remain parts of the same living organism; they're formed from the tree's own tissues and are nourished by its roots.

Local Awareness, Global Unity

Local Awareness

The leaves don't know everything about the tree all at once. They gather sunlight and signals from the environment; they might not "see" the roots directly, but they get clues about them through water flow, chemical signals, etc. In short, the leaves are aware of as much of the tree as they are capable of being aware of.

It's Still One Tree

All those "thinking" leaves remain part of the very same organism. Those leaf clusters aren't separate from the tree that they're aware of. So it's the tree itself that's becoming aware of itself through its own cluster of specialized leaves it has produced through its natural processes.

We Are the "Thinking Leaves"

In this metaphor, we—humanity—are like the special leaves. We're not separate from the "Great Tree" (the universe) but rather the parts through which it gains a certain kind of self-awareness. Human brains, which evolved from the universe's own processes, allow the universe (like the tree) to contemplate itself. So brains are the universe's brains, as much as the 'thinking leaves' are the tree's leaves.

Simply obvious.

Specialised "Thinking Cells"

Now suppose that, at some point in the tree's natural growth, certain clusters of leaves evolve the ability to sense and even reflect on what's happening throughout the rest of the tree—like specialized "thinking cells." These patches of leaves become aware they're connected to a trunk and a root system, and they begin to study the tree's structure and origins.

