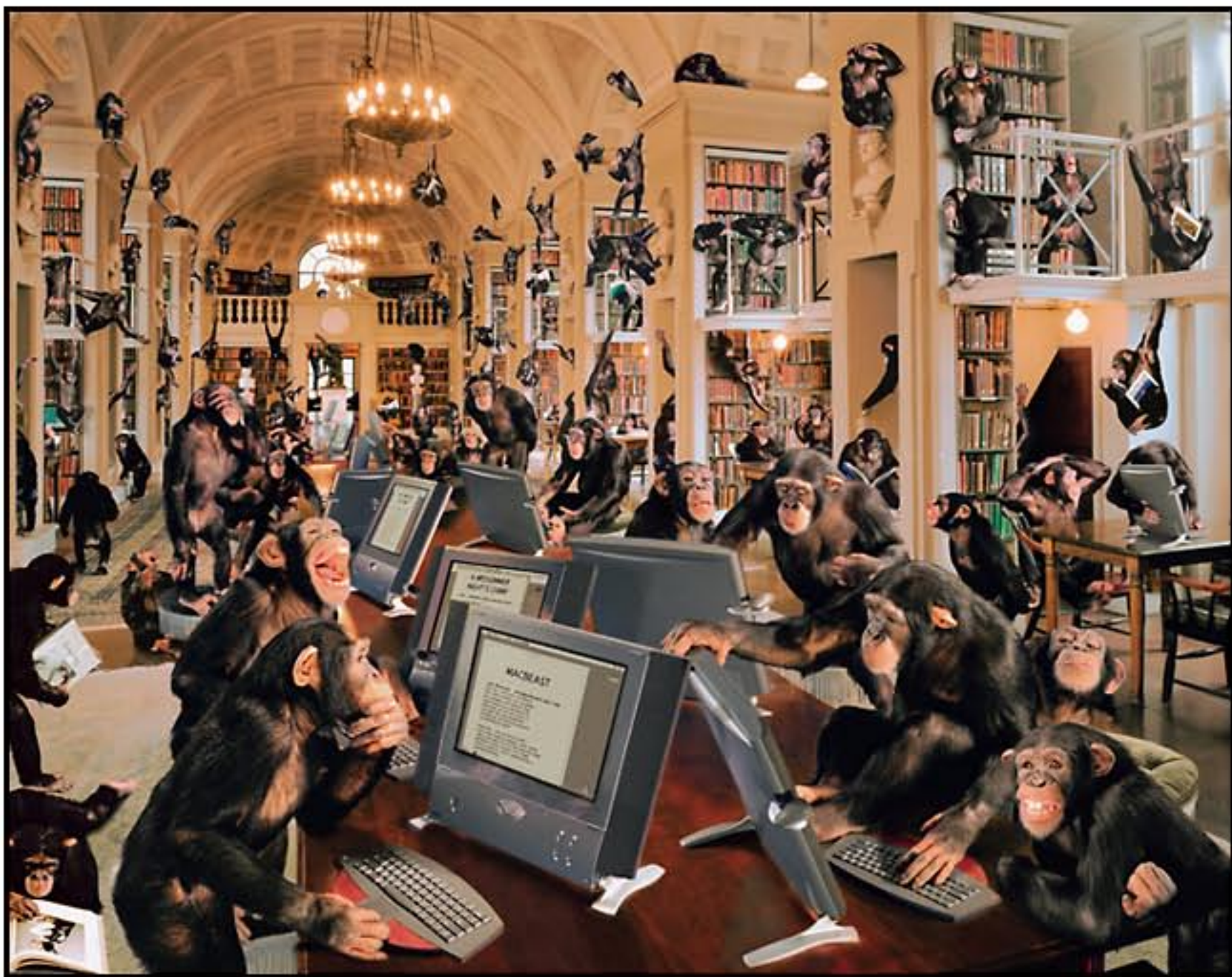


Monkeying around with Theism and Atheism

For much of his career Antony Flew was known as a strong advocate of atheism, arguing that one should presuppose atheism until empirical evidence of a God surfaces. In 2004 he stated that in keeping his lifelong commitment to go where the evidence leads, he now believed in the existence of a God.

Flew stated that "the most impressive arguments for God's existence are those that are supported by recent scientific discoveries" and that "the argument to Intelligent Design is enormously stronger than it was when I first met it".

Flew was impressed by a refutation of the idea that monkeys at typewriters would eventually produce a Shakespearean sonnet. The likelihood of getting one Shakespearean sonnet by chance is one in 10^{690} (10 followed by 690 zeros); to put this in perspective, there are only 10^{80} particles in the universe. [For the math see "Infinite Monkey Theorem" on Wikipedia.]



Flew concluded: 'If the theorem won't work for a single sonnet, then of course it's simply absurd to suggest that the more elaborate feat of the origin of life could have been achieved by chance'.

The question of the origin of life became much more complex with the discovery of DNA, a molecule comprising 'letters' that code for the instructions to build the machinery of life. A real vicious circle is that the instructions to build decoding machinery are themselves encoded on the DNA.

That life is governed by a complex code leads to the question: 'Can the origins of a system of coded chemistry be explained in a way that makes no appeal whatever to the kinds of facts that we otherwise invoke to explain codes, languages, and systems of communication?'

Flew pointed out that natural selection can't explain the origin of *first* life. Ultimately, a vast amount of information is behind life, and in every other case, information necessarily points to an intelligent source, so it is only reasonable that there be a Source behind this information as well.

Flew argues along with many other classical and modern scientists that theism is the only serious answer. He cited his "growing empathy with the insight of Einstein and other noted scientists that there had to be an Intelligence behind the integrated complexity of the physical Universe" and "my own insight that the integrated complexity of life itself – which is far more complex than the physical Universe – can only be explained in terms of an Intelligent Source."

Om athāto brahma-jijñāsā: "Now, therefore, one should inquire into Brahman (the Supreme Personality of Godhead.) That Brahman (the Supreme Spirit) is he from whom the creation, sustenance and destruction of the manifested universe arises."—**Vedānta Sūtra** 1.1.1-2

