

Saturday "Sermon"

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"The Monkey Thing"

In *There IS a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, Antony Flew tells of a British experiment that tested the frequent defense of the possibility of life arising by chance that uses the analogy of a multitude of monkeys banging away on computer keyboards and eventually ending up writing a Shakespearean sonnet.

The experiment put six monkeys in a cage with a computer for a month, during which time they produced fifty typed pages, but not a single word ("A" or "I" are words only if they have spaces on either side of them). If we assume a keyboard to have thirty keys (my laptop actually has 89), then the likelihood of getting a one-letter word is 30 times 30 times 30, which is 27,000. The likelihood of getting a one-letter word is one chance in 27,000 . . . but it didn't happen.

Shakespeare's sonnets are typically fourteen lines long. Sonnet 18 ("Shall I compare thee to a summer's day") has 488 letters. The likelihood of hammering away and getting 488 letters in that exact sequence is 26 multiplied by itself 488 times—or 26 to the 488th power (in base 10, 10 to the 690th).

According to Dr. Gerald Schroeder, the number of particles in the universe (protons, electrons, and neutrons) is 10 to the 80th. Ten to the 80th is 1 with 80 zeros after it. Ten to the 690th is 1 with 690 zeros after it. There are not enough particles in the whole universe to even write down the trials.

Schroeder noted that if the entire universe were converted to computer chips (forget the monkeys), each weighing a millionth of a gram and each spitting out a million random letters per second, "the number of trials you would get since the beginning of time would be 10 to the 90th trials. It would be off by a factor of 10 to the 600th. You will never get a sonnet by chance. The universe would have to be 10 to the 600th times larger. Yet the world thinks the monkeys can do it every time."

There hasn't been enough time since creation (13.77 billion years) for random processes to generate even a 488-character string; yet the DNA in just one cell contains roughly 3,000,000,000 combinations. Would a reasonable person look at this information and conclude that random processes explain it? I don't think so.

We've known it all along: *The heavens tell of the glory of God. The skies display his marvelous craftsmanship. Day after day they continue to speak; night after night they make him known* (Psalm 19:1).