

THE COMPLETE AND UTTER HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE

by

AJ DEHANY

29 Plays Later 2016. Challenge 28: Re-do a previous challenge.

Day 17: write a play that is shorter than a millisecond or longer than a millennia.

Having written shorter than a millisecond for Day 17, this play is longer than a millennium.

It borrows liberally from a number of different sources.

SCENE 1 - THE ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE

SCENE 2 - ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLES AND INTELLIGENT DESIGN

SCENE 3 - HUMAN EVOLUTION

SCENE 4 - GNOSTICISM AND THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

SCENE 5 - KING OF THE GARBAGE DUMP: THE OVERVIEW EFFECT

SCENE 6 - THE END IS THE BEGINNING IS THE END

[ajdehany@gmail.com](mailto:ajdehany@gmail.com)

## TWO ACTORS PLAY ALL OF THE PARTS

### SCENE 1 - THE ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLE

ACTOR 1: What is the one key event in the history of the universe and all life that the whole gubbins was created for and leading up to? If you believe Kanye West, the new Kanye album. But let's ask a Professor of Applied Anthropics.

ACTOR 2: The one key event in the history of the universe and all life that the whole gubbins was created for and leading up to was the creation of the post of Professor of Applied Anthropics to answer this question. Now that I have tenure, the universe's business is completed.

ACTOR 1: So the universe could very well knock off early then?

ACTOR 2: It's gin o'clock for the cosmos. But there are other questions for a Professor of Applied Anthropics to work her imagination on. Such as 'why' the universe should have been constructed just for the creation of the post of Professor of Applied Anthropics to have divined its purpose, and enacted it through being appointed.

ACTOR 1: Why was the universe so constructed? Why should the event for which the universe was made be the discovery of why the whole universe was created and life?

ACTOR 2: Is it not elegant? The defining moment for which the universe

was created is the moment when someone makes the discovery of what the universe was created for. By discovering that, we simultaneously fulfil the purpose behind the creation of the universe and life, answering the question as to why we are here.

ACTOR 1: We used to think that if we ever discovered what the universe is actually for, it would subsequently disappear.

ACTOR 2: But we know better now.

ACTOR 1: Wait, what's happening?

ACTOR 2: We're disappearing!

BOTH ACTORS ENACT WHIRLING THROUGH  
SPACE AND SHRINKING DOWN INTO  
NOTHINGNESS AS SMALL AS POSSIBLE

ACTOR 2: Here we are at the start of the universe.

ACTOR 1: Aw, the gang were so close back then.

ACTOR 2: What happens now?

THEY FIGHT

ACTOR 1: I hate you! You're not my mum!

ACTOR 2: The universe expands, and everyone gets separated out.

ACTOR 1: Everyone takes time out to cool off.

ACTOR 2: Eventually life begins.

ACTOR 1: The whole purpose of the universe!

ACTOR 2: According to the Anthropic Principle.

## SCENE 2 - ANTHROPIC PRINCIPLES AND INTELLIGENT DESIGN

ACTORS: Such a vast and complex universe as that which we know exists around us, may have been absolutely required in order to produce a world that should be precisely adapted in every detail for the orderly development of life culminating in man.

ACTOR 1: What about woman?

ACTOR 2: Hey man, I merely convey the message.

ACTOR 1: We must be prepared to take account of the fact that our location in the universe is necessarily privileged to the extent of being compatible with our existence as observers.

ACTOR 2: The universe (and hence the fundamental parameters on which it depends) must be such as to admit the creation of observers within it at some stage. To paraphrase Descartes:

ACTOR 1: "Cogito ergo mundus talis est."

ACTOR 2: What's that mean?

ACTOR 1: Have a good time all the time!

ACTOR 1: The observed values of all physical and cosmological quantities are not equally probable but they take on values restricted by the requirement that there exist sites where carbon-based life can evolve and by the requirements that the universe be old enough for it to have already done so.

ACTOR 2: The Universe must have those properties which allow life to develop within it at some stage in its history.

ACTOR 1: There exists one possible Universe 'designed' with the goal of generating and sustaining 'observers'.

ACTOR 2: Observers are necessary to bring the Universe into being.

ACTOR 1: An ensemble of other different universes is necessary for the existence of our Universe.

ACTOR 2: The 'problem' of existence is only relevant to a species capable of formulating the question.

ACTOR 1: Prior to Homo sapiens intellectual evolution to the point where the nature of the observed universe - and humans' place within same - spawned deep inquiry into its origins, the 'problem' simply did not exist.

ACTOR 1: There are seven possible universes. One:

ACTOR 2: The absurd universe: Our universe just happens to be the way it is.

ACTOR 2: Two: The unique universe: There is a deep underlying unity in physics which necessitates the Universe being the way it is. Some Theory of Everything will explain why the various features of the Universe must have exactly the values that we see.

ACTOR 1: Three: The multiverse: Multiple universes exist, having all possible combinations of characteristics, and we inevitably find ourselves within a universe that allows us to exist.

ACTOR 2: Four: Intelligent Design: A creator designed the Universe with the purpose of supporting complexity and the emergence of intelligence.

ACTOR 1: Douglas Adams says of Intelligent Design . . .

ACTOR 2: Imagine a puddle waking up one morning and thinking...

ACTOR 1: "This is an interesting world I find myself in, an interesting

hole I find myself in. It fits me rather neatly, doesn't it? In fact, it fits me staggeringly well, must have been made to have me in it!"

ACTOR 1: This is such a powerful idea that as the sun rises in the sky and the air heats up and as, gradually, the puddle gets smaller and smaller, it's still frantically hanging on to the notion that everything's going to be alright, because this world was meant to have him in it; so the moment he disappears catches him rather by surprise.

ACTOR 2: This may be something we need to be on the watch out for.

ACTOR 1: Five: The life principle: There is an underlying principle that constrains the Universe to evolve towards life and mind.

ACTOR 2: Six: The self-explaining universe: A closed explanatory or causal loop: "perhaps only universes with a capacity for consciousness can exist."

ACTOR 1: Seven: The fake universe: We live inside a virtual reality simulation.

ACTOR 2: That one's the real one.

### SCENE 3 - HUMAN EVOLUTION

ACTOR 1: If the universe was created and made into a computer game for the benefit of humans, then why did it take so long for us to evolve? Why is it so contingent? Why in the long age of the universe is its whole raison d'etre so short?

ACTOR 1: The universe is lazy. It'd rather spend most of its existence dining out on the fact it once had humans than bother to keep at it. Why bother? The real question is why evolution was not so slow but so quick?

ACTOR 1: How can evolution be so quick?

ACTOR 2: Imagine that you create a very large cage and put a group of mice into it. You let the mice live and breed in this cage freely, without disturbance. If you were to come back after five years and look into this cage, you would find mice.

ACTOR 1: Five years of breeding would cause no change in the mice in that cage -- they would not evolve in any noticeable way. You could leave the cage alone for a hundred years and look in again and what you would find in the cage is mice.

ACTOR 2: After several hundred years, you would look into the cage and find not 15 new species, but mice.

ACTOR 1: The point is that evolution in general is an extremely slow process. When two mice breed, the offspring is a mouse. When that offspring breeds, its offspring is a mouse. When

that offspring breeds...

ACTOR 2: And the process continues. The point is: mutations don't change this fact in any significant way over the short haul.

ACTOR 1: Around 7-8 million years ago, a dramatic reduction in the number of ape species coincided with several million years of global cooling and grassland expansion.

ACTOR 2: This short ice epoch already marks the time of the split between our ancestors and the ancestors of modern chimpanzees.

ACTOR 1: Look at me, ma! I'm walkin' on two legs! TWO legs!

ACTOR 2: Those early walking apes, for whom there is still only fragmentary evidence, were followed by the famous 'Lucy' family, *Australopithecus afarensis*

ACTOR 1: Lucy's partial female skeleton was discovered by Donald Johanson in 1974 at Hadar, in Ethiopia. Living between 3 and 4 million years ago, her kind were 1-1.5 metres (40-60 inches) tall, more clearly upright and bipedal, with a pelvis more similar to ours.

ACTOR 2: Things were about to change, because 2.5 million years ago the world started getting colder...

ACTOR 1: Ere! It's getting a bit nippy out.

ACTOR 2: Within a million years, the wet and warm Pliocene geological period gave way to the Pleistocene ice epoch.

ACTOR 1: Freezing my bollocks off mate.

ACTOR 2: Soon after the start of this unstable, icy, and dry period, the first humans (the Homo genus) with their stone tools and larger brains made their entrance on the African savannah stage.

ACTOR 1: Hello! I can do sums but I still find the word 'tool' funny!

ACTOR 2: One branch, known as Paranthropus, developed larger jaws to cope with grinding up tough vegetable matter. The other branch, Homo, made stone tools, developed substantially larger brains, and set off down the road towards becoming better hunter-gatherers and then, finally, us.

ACTOR 1: None of that rabbit food for me! Now I eat the rabbit!

ACTOR 2: Naturally, we are inclined to think of humans as being special and set apart from the other apes.

ACTOR 1 : Many think that it is our especially large brain that makes us what we are.

ACTOR 2: Some even think that an increase in brain size led to tool-making...

ACTOR 1: Unlikely! Chimps make tools too!

ACTOR 2: The idea that we somehow grew a big brain first, then decided what it was for, is a negation of Darwinian principles.

ACTOR 1: Any new kind of behaviour always precedes the physical adaptation that evolves to exploit that behaviour.

ACTOR 2: Well before the start of the Pleistocene ice epoch there must already have been some aspect of our behaviour - something to do with the way we faced the climatic challenge, perhaps - that gave large, energy-expensive brains survival value.

ACTOR 1: The problem of finding food in an increasingly dry environment must have taxed our ancestors' resourcefulness. Larger brains clearly helped them in some way.

ACTOR 2: That behaviour must still be with us today, because over subsequent major glaciations during the past 2.5 million years, new human species with larger brains and more skills appeared in Africa.

ACTOR 1: We needed to eat meat in order to facilitate our brain growth.

ACTOR 2: Brains need lots of calories to fuel them, and require high-grade nutrients in order to grow.

ACTOR 1: If we compare this early era of phenomenal brain growth with more recent times in the human line, there is a clear discontinuity between ancient and modern. Between the earliest Homo habilis just under 2 million years ago and the first so-called Homo rhodesiensis fossils of 1.07-1.3 million years ago, a period of roughly 700,000 years, brain volume increased by two and a half times.

ACTOR 2: In the subsequent 1.2 million years, although there were modest trends in brain size increase in individual human types outside Africa, such as Asian Homo erectus and European Neanderthals, a net increase of only 6 per cent was required to reach the brain size of today's humans.

ACTOR 1: In fact there has been an overall decline in brain volume in modern humans over the past 150,000 years).

ACTOR 2: Durrrrrrrr. D'oh!

ACTOR 1: So, from a physical point of view, the earliest period of the human tree was the most dramatic.

ACTOR 2: So the whole universe was created so that we could have hamburgers?

SCENE 4 - GNOSTICISM AND THE PROBLEM OF  
EVIL

ACTOR 1: You can look at the universe as a kind of 'complexity machine', which raises all sorts of questions about what this means in a broader sense.

ACTOR 2: For example, does believing the universe is structured to produce complexity in general, and rational creatures in particular, constitute a religious belief?

ACTOR 1: It need not imply that the universe was created by a God, but on the other hand, it does suggest that the kind of rationality we hold dear is not an accident.

ACTOR 1: If evolution tends to favor the development of sociality, reason, and culture as a kind of "package deal," then it's a good bet that any smart extraterrestrials we encounter will have similar evolved attitudes about their basic moral commitments.

ACTOR 2: In particular, they will likely agree with us that there is something morally special about rational, social creatures.

ACTOR 1: And such universal agreement could be the foundation for a truly universal system of ethics.

ACTOR 2: The Only Way Is Ethics!

ACTOR 1: But we have to solve the Problem of Evil.

ACTOR 2: The only true evil is stupidity.

ACTOR 1: This is the part where we repeat things we have overheard on the tube.

ACTOR 1: Strap into your flameproofs for the Moronic Inferno.

ACTOR 2: [coughs]

ACTOR 1: Mate, are dragons extinct? They are, aren't they?

ACTOR 2: Prawns for starter, duck for main: an entire meal of seafood!

ACTOR 1: Macaroni. Is it pasta?

ACTOR 2: Oh my God, our head shadows are exactly the same!

ACTOR 1: If you eat lots and then fall asleep the calories don't count because your body thinks it's the next day.

ACTOR 2: Are fish waterproof?

ACTOR 1: Will it be safe to watch a partial eclipse on television?

ACTOR 2: I can't walk upstairs. I'm dyslexic.

ACTOR 1: Jimi Hendrix, is that the one that makes the gin?

ACTOR 2: He's gone and done a complete 150-degree U-turn.

ACTOR 1: Okay, that's enough for now.

ACTOR 2: Thank you!

ACTOR 1: Thank you, thank you!

ACTOR 2: Questions!

ACTOR 2: Why is there evil?

ACTOR 1: What is the soul?

ACTOR 2: What is the fate of humanity?

ACTOR 1: What does it mean to be human?

ACTOR 2: The gnostics are a cult of Christianity with a dualistic world view.

ACTOR 1: The physical world is evil! God is a demiurge -- an architect, a builder; not the real God but an entity that had taken upon himself the claims to be the real God. The real God is unknowable.

ACTOR 2: In the real world there are sparks of the divine that are trapped. There is a divine spark within each person, who strives to get free of the tomb of the physical world and be

reunited with the source God.

ACTOR 1: Gnosis:

ACTOR 2: Enlightenment.

ACTOR 1: Redemption not from the sins but from ignorance. Ignorance isn't our fault, part of the creation. So all of that stuff we overheard...

ACTOR 2: ...Isn't our fault!

ACTOR 1: It's God's fault!

ACTOR 2: God damn you, God.

ACTOR 2: The point for gnostics is that we are redeemed from ignorance to be saved and redeemed in the here and now.

ACTOR 1: There are Aeons, emanations, divine beings that are all equal to each other.

ACTOR 2: There's a problem all ancient philosophies deal with.

ACTOR 1: If the world is created out of a unity how do we get plurality? Beyond Being the unknowable father who produces foreknowledge that generate other emanations.

ACTOR 2: Tertullian says the Gnostics treat heaven as if its an

apartment block with rooms for each God.

ACTOR 1: The final emanation is Sophia: wisdom. She conceived a desire to know the unknowable god, without permission, and created a rent, a veil.

ACTOR 2: The shadow of that veil became the material world.

ACTOR 1: She created the Yaldebouth: Yahweh too.

ACTOR 2: We are created to be higher than the demiurge.

ACTOR 1: This is why gnostics were incendiary to institutional christianity.

ACTOR 2: Gnosis is experiential wisdom. Philip calls it lighting the lamp within your soul.

ACTOR 1: Sophia realizes Adam lacks that spiritual spark, and so sends Eve to waken him.

ACTOR 2: Wakey wakey!

ACTOR 1: Who's that then?

ACTOR 2: It's Eve! Who are you?

ACTOR 1: Madam, I'm Adam. What happened to Demelza?

ACTOR 2: Apocryphal.

ACTOR 1: Mate I don't even know. This Bible here says you was put on earth by God and then in the next paragraph it says you was created out of my rib. Well which is it?

ACTOR 2: It's both!

ACTOR 1: Bit of a blow for the Fundamentalists though.

ACTOR 2: Yeah but they don't actually read.

ACTOR 1: It would be an ironic universe that was created for the purpose of putting them into existence.

ACTOR 2: That's why the Bible is contradictory. It self-selects its audience, to filter off the riff-raff.

ACTOR 1: Did you know that the Big Bang is mentioned in the Bible?

ACTOR 2: No way!

ACTOR 1: Isiah 42:5 - "This is what the Lord says - He who created the heavens and stretched them out."

SCENE 5 - KING OF THE GARBAGE DUMP: THE  
OVERVIEW EFFECT

ACTOR 1: Are we alone in the universe? Are the planets our playground to treat as we will, or do we have a responsibility to other creatures who may inhabit or use them? Do we have a right to dump trash in the cosmos?

ACTOR 2: I'm King of the Garbage Dump Earth!

ACTOR 1: Long live the King!

ACTOR 2: Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,  
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,  
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,  
Your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you  
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en  
Too little care of this!

ACTOR 1: The overview effect is a cognitive shift in awareness reported by some astronauts and cosmonauts during spaceflight, often while viewing the Earth from orbit or from the lunar surface.

ACTOR 2: Look at the earth! Just a pale blue dot in the vastness of the universe.

ACTOR 1: So tiny, so fragile, hanging in the void, shielded and nourished by a paper-thin atmosphere.

ACTOR 2: From space, national boundaries vanish, the conflicts that divide people become less important, and the need to create a planetary society with the united will to protect this "pale blue dot" becomes both obvious and imperative.

ACTOR 1: All of human history has happened on that tiny pixel.

ACTOR 2: From this distant vantage point in space, the Earth might not seem of any particular interest. But for us, it's different.

ACTOR 1: Consider that dot. That's here. That's home. That's us.

ACTOR 2: On it everyone you love, everyone you know, everyone you ever heard of, every human being who ever was, lived out their lives. The aggregate of our joy and suffering, thousands of confident religions, ideologies, and economic doctrines, every hunter and forager, every hero and coward, every creator and destroyer of civilization, every king and peasant, every young couple in love, every mother and father, hopeful child, inventor and explorer, every teacher of morals, every corrupt politician, every "superstar," every "supreme leader," every saint and sinner in the history of our species lived there – on a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam.

ACTOR 1: The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena. Think of the rivers of blood spilled by all those generals and emperors so that in glory and triumph they could become the momentary masters of a fraction of a dot. Think of the endless cruelties visited by the inhabitants of one corner of this pixel on the scarcely distinguishable inhabitants of some

other corner. How frequent their misunderstandings, how eager they are to kill one another, how fervent their hatreds. Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe, are challenged by this point of pale light. Our planet is a lonely speck in the great enveloping cosmic dark. In our obscurity – in all this vastness – there is no hint that help will come from elsewhere to save us from ourselves.

ACTOR 2: The Earth is the only world known, so far, to harbor life. There is nowhere else, at least in the near future, to which our species could migrate. Visit, yes. Settle, not yet. Like it or not, for the moment, the Earth is where we make our stand.

ACTOR 1: It has been said that astronomy is a humbling and character-building experience. There is perhaps no better demonstration of the folly of human conceits than this distant image of our tiny world.

ACTOR 2: it underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another and to preserve and cherish our pale blue dot.

ACTOR 1: It's this simple paradox. The Universe is very old and very large. Humankind, by comparison, is only a tiny disturbance in one small corner of it - and a very recent one.

ACTOR 2: Yet the Universe is only very large and very old because we are here to say it is... And yet, of course, we all know perfectly well that it is what it is whether we are here or not.

SCENE 6 - THE END IS THE BEGINNING IS THE  
END

ACTOR 1:                   What about the end? Will it ever end? Just suddenly stop.

ACTOR 2:                   You destroy the universe in a big bang - but of course the  
Big Bang is the start of the universe too!

ACTOR 1:                   So it has always existed!

ACTOR 2:                   It just goes round and round and round.

ACTOR 1:                   And round and round and round.

ACTOR 2:                   But why? Why build a universe?

ACTOR 1:                   For one key event.

ACTOR 2:                   A whole universe for just one thing? But what?

ACTOR 1:                   The one key event in the history of the universe and all life  
that the whole gubbins was created for and leading up to? If  
you believe Kanye West, the new Kanye album. But let's ask  
a Professor of Applied Anthropics.

ACTOR 2:                   The one key event in the history of the universe and all life

that the whole gubbins was created for and leading up to was the creation of the post of Professor of Applied Anthropics to answer this question. Now that I have tenure, the universe's business is completed.

ACTOR 1: So the universe could very well knock off early then?

ACTOR 2: It's gin o'clock for the cosmos. But there are other questions for a Professor of Applied Anthropics to work her imagination on. Such as 'why' the universe should have been constructed just for the creation of the post of Professor of Applied Anthropics to have divined its purpose, and enacted it through being appointed.

ACTOR 1: Why was the universe so constructed? Why should the event for which the universe was made be the discovery of why the whole universe was created and life?

ACTOR 2: Is it not elegant? The defining moment for which the universe was created is the moment when someone makes the discovery of what the universe was created for. By discovering that, we simultaneously fulfil the purpose behind the creation of the universe and life, answering the question as to why we are here.

ACTOR 1: We used to think that if we ever discovered what the universe is actually for, it would subsequently disappear.

ACTOR 2: But we know better now.

ACTOR 1: Wait, what's happening?

ACTOR 2: We're disappearing!

BOTH ACTORS ENACT WHIRLING THROUGH  
SPACE AND SHRINKING DOWN INTO  
NOTHINGNESS AS SMALL AS POSSIBLE

ACTOR 1: Goodbye, all-there-is!

ACTOR 2: Hello, all there is!

THEY SPRING UP AND JUMP IN THE AIR

THE END