

## Environmentalist hunger strike will change little

**OUR OPINION:** The cause is worthy, but the tactics are ineffective

"If you don't meet our demands, we will refuse to eat."

For a while,

Two environmental activists are staging a hunger strike to protest the logging of old-growth forests. While hunger strikes have been effective for Mahatma Gandhi and members of the Irish Republican Army, they only work when the strikers are willing to die for their cause.

Are Tim Ream and Shannon Wilson willing to go the distance to save the Northwest's timber from becoming two-by-fours? Both have said they intend to stop before they do any permanent damage to their bodies, so death is probably out of the question.

It's doubtful, despite the worthiness of the cause, that this public demonstration of self-induced suffering will have any effect on the logging of Oregon's timber. The federal government approved the cutting of previously protected forests as part of a larger budget bill this summer. Two hungry guys with a tent and a Will-Eat-For-Trees sign aren't about to stop powerful timber lobbies and the anti-regulatory Republican Congress. These types of demonstrations only postpone the inevitable and irritate the very people protesters are trying to influence.

Public protest is most effective when it involves the rights of people. The civil rights movement of the 60s, the freeing of Nelson Mandela and the end of apartheid in South Africa,

the gay rights movement, the women's suffrage and equal rights movements were all effective because they were able to rally popular support around human suffering.

It's difficult, if not impossible, to inspire the same kind of passion and momentum for our forests. They're worthy of that level of commitment, but they probably won't get it.

Which is why demonstrations such as the hunger strike seem pointless and a little silly. The participants are only willing to take the strike to a pre-illness level, and as such, they have already shown their hand to the opposing players.

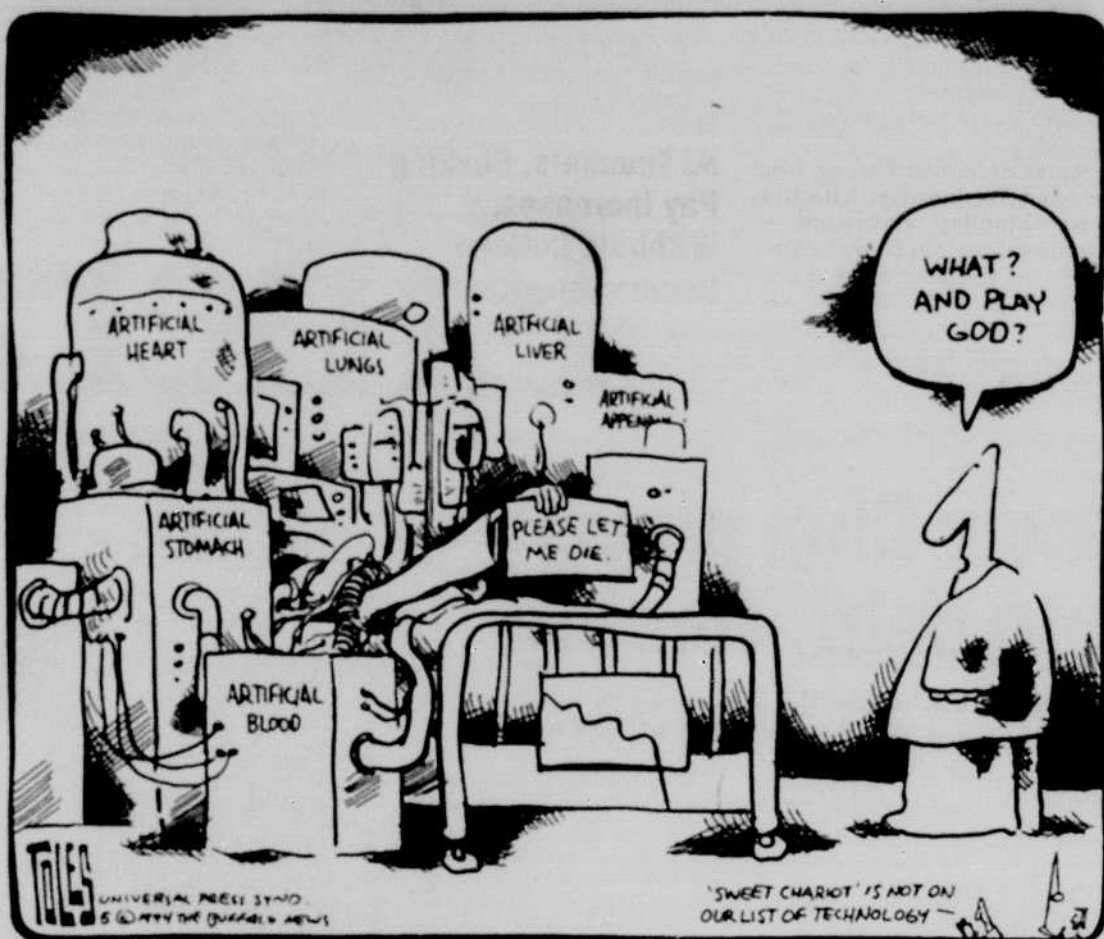
No bureaucrat is going to lose sleep over Ream's empty stomach.

Rather than channeling so much energy to reverse something that has already taken place, these two men would do better to turn their attention to preventing future logging.

Write commentaries for local papers. Ask people to sign petitions. Call our elected officials. Form a lobby. Watch CNN.

All of these activities would do more to save the planet's ecosystem than a month of uncomfortable camping. Environmentalists are to be commended for their commitment to saving our forests, but it's time to examine their tactics. This movement is different than other grass-roots uprisings, and it needs a new set of weapons.

Ream and Wilson should come out of the rain. Being wet, hungry and weak won't help them or us in the fight ahead.



## Science may point to existence of God

Over the gates of the temple of science are written the words: Ye must have faith. It is a quality which the scientist cannot dispense with.

-Max Planck

Last term I had the wonderful pleasure of taking Chemistry 413: Physical Chemistry. Affectionately known as P-Chem (or "Hell" depending on whom you talked to), this class dealt with the fundamentals of both quantum mechanics and quantum chemistry.

Now, as much as I hate to admit it, I didn't really learn much in this class. Don't get me wrong, the professor was great, it's just that you can't really do much with only a term's worth of quantum nick-knacks. If you're going to do anything with it, you need a Ph.D.

However, there was one very interesting thing I learned, and that is that God just might exist between the atoms — within the very bowels of modern science and human understanding.

In quantum mechanics (the study of physics at the atomic level), there is an experiment that professors just love to show to undergrads for the primary reason that it screws with students' heads and actually forces them to think. This little goody is called the two-slit experiment.

Imagine if you will a wall with two slits cut into it. On one side you have a photon gun and on the other there is a photographic plate. When you shoot that gun, the photons have an equal opportunity to go through either slit. (This is because of the wave-like nature of the photon and bunch of other stuff that would give both you and me a headache, trust me). This process produces an interference pattern on the photographic plate.

You might be thinking, "so what, quit wasting my time." The interesting part is that no one knows which slit each photon passed through without using a detector. However, when a detector is used, the interference pattern changes drastically.

So what it all boils down to is that if you don't know which slit the photons have traveled through, you get one interference pattern; but if you *do* know which slits the photons have passed through, you get an entirely different pattern. Everything is still the same in both cases, the slits are identical, the photons are all the same, and there's no other holes in the wall.

The only thing that changes is whether or not you know which slits the photons have passed through.

After this was all explained to me (in much greater depth, mind you), I pulled my brain out of the blender and asked myself this question: Does anything physical change if the only variation in the experiment is what the observer sees? The answer I got back was no; nothing changes. Talk about a kick in the head.

Everything I had learned in science up to this point told me that science could reasonably explain or pre-

dict everything in our universe, and that the only way the results from an experiment would change is if you actually fooled around with the it.

The experiment wasn't supposed to give different results based on thought alone. It was just a little bit too weird. I asked the professor, in his opinion, if he believed that this was a link between the physical and metaphysical. Much to my consternation, he said yes.

With that, all science seemed to go flying out the window. Then it all flew right back in again. You see, gravity was still working, as was every other law of nature.

The only thing that had changed was that in my mind, physics and theology had just then gone off to Las Vegas to get hitched. God (or what ever you care to call him) was not only messing with my head, but with my subatomic particles as well. I was getting a little bit paranoid. There had to be a rational explanation for all of this.

God wasn't so much an entity living betwixt the quarks but rather the embodiment of everything we don't understand wrapped up into one neat little package. Is this simply another exercise in mental masturbation? Perhaps. But think about it.

The first time a caveman stuck his head out of his cave and experienced lightning and thunder, it probably scared the bejeezus out of him. He didn't know what the hell it was, or more importantly, why it happened. He couldn't explain it, so he came up with the most rational reason he could. Someone or something else had caused the fire to fall from the sky to frighten him.

Regardless of what he called it, Mr. Caveman had just come up with the notion of God. That is, something much more powerful than he was and who he couldn't really define physically.

Then, as time passed and the human intellect grew, this notion of God was pushed aside. Now we can explain what lightning is and that the earth isn't at the center of the universe. But God is still in charge of those things we still don't understand — such as the notion of an afterlife, the soul, and that damn two-slit experiment.

Eventually, perhaps those things will also be explained by science, but there is one thing that science will never be able to explain away; and that is the very human spirit which created God in the first place.

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