

What I'm Reading



By *Chuck Dinerstein* — July 4, 2019



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[1]

Let's be honest, very few of us like to exercise. We know that it is good for us, but it is work. Freakonomics takes a look at the problem in [The Zero-Minute Workout](#) [2]. (7-minute read). As they point out, "if a pill could mimic the effects of working out, why wouldn't we want to take it?" Reducing the effects of exercise solely to the changes it brings about in our mitochondria, the engines of our energy, may overlook some important factors, but a pill instead of 30 minutes on the Peloton, sign me up. For those too tired to read, Freakonomics has a webcast on the same subject, [here](#) [3].

All biologic systems are based on the most basic of sciences, physics. Many believe that the second law of thermodynamics, the one involving entropy, goes a long way in explaining what actually defines life. In [Life ? alive](#) [4], (20-minute read), two scientists tie together entropy and information, drawing a distinction between life and what is alive. As they write, "A cat is alive, a sofa is not: that much we know. But a sofa is also part of life. Information theory tells us why."

A new web site, at least for me, is Nautilus, a curated subscription service that looks at science and all its connections. [The Mushroom's Small Stature and Subtle Strength](#) [5], (5-minute read) reflects on the poem by Sylvia Plath and considers not its' conventional analysis "as a feminist allegory, rather than a meditation on mushrooms themselves."

We all know first-hand or from the media the increasing burden of student debt. And while free tuition may increase the opportunity for a college education and the increased income that comes from a degree, it is not a guarantee that a student will finish college. Elaine Schwartz, a teacher of economics, writes about what happens in the real world when tuition is free, [Why Free Tuition Is Like an Onion](#) [6] (3-minute read)

I know I should resist, but I couldn't. It's the 4th of July, fireworks time. And you know someone, somewhere is writing about the evil of fireworks, be it burns or air pollution. Leave it to a British professor to rain a little on the show (evidently still bitter of the American Revolution?), writing about their harmful environmental effects. "Perhaps the best way to tackle the pollution caused by fireworks is not to have them at all. But this seems rather extreme (not to mention a lot less fun)." From the Conversation, [Our prettiest pollutant: just how bad are fireworks for the environment?](#) [7]

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Links

[1] <https://pixabay.com/photos/books-reading-pages-textbooks-1149959/>

[2] <https://medium.com/s/freakonomicsradio/the-zero-minute-workout-cffb682f9846>

[3] <http://freakonomics.com/podcast/exercise/>

[4] <https://aeon.co/essays/what-can-schrodingers-cat-say-about-3d-printers-on-mars>

[5] <http://poetry.nautil.us/article/399/the-mushrooms-small-stature-and-subtle-strength>

[6] <https://econlife.com/2019/06/kalamazoos-free-tuition/>

[7] <https://theconversation.com/our-prettiest-pollutant-just-how-bad-are-fireworks-for-the-environment-52451>