

What I'm Reading (June 4)



By *Chuck Dinerstein, MD, MBA* — June 4, 2020

A “counterintuitive” view of ice sheet melts and sea level rises, the comfort of mac and cheese, often wrong, never in doubt, ignoring the marshmallow experiment, and an in-depth look at a painting of surgical care.



Image courtes of Pexels on Pixabay [1]

“Gravity has a very strong effect. So what happens when an ice sheet melts is sea level falls in the vicinity of the melting ice sheet. That is counterintuitive. The question is, how far from the ice sheet do you have to go before the effects of diminished gravity and uplifting crust are small enough that you start to raise sea level? That’s also counterintuitive. It’s 2,000 kilometers away from the ice sheet. So if the Greenland ice sheet were to catastrophically collapse tomorrow, the sea level in Iceland, Newfoundland, Sweden, Norway—all within this 2,000 kilometer radius of the Greenland ice sheet—would fall. It might have a 30 to 50 meter drop at the shore of Greenland. But the farther you get away from Greenland, the greater the price you pay. If the Greenland ice sheet melts, sea level in most of the Southern Hemisphere will increase about 30 percent more than the global average. So this is no small effect.”

A counterintuitive understanding of how our world may work. From Natil.us, [Why Our Intuition About Sea-Level Rise Is Wrong](#) [2]

“In January 2015, food sales at restaurants overtook those at grocery stores for the first time. Most thought this marked a permanent shift in the American meal.

Thanks to the coronavirus pandemic, that trend took a U-turn. Restaurant revenue cratered, while shoppers emptied grocery shelves stocking up on food to cook at home. And with sales of pantry items soaring, shoppers found themselves reaching for an old reliable. ...sales of Kraft macaroni and cheese were up 27% from the same time last year.”

Mac and cheese, one of our first processed foods and one that remains loved. From The Conversation, [An ode to mac and cheese, the poster child for processed food](#) [3]

I often say that our family motto has been, “often wrong, never in doubt,” an idea that has only occasionally served us well.

“Countless studies have shown that most of us overestimate our understanding of various topics, everything from how a vacuum cleaner works to the detail of political policies – a phenomenon called ‘the illusion of explanatory depth’. Fortunately, there is a very simple way to address this form of intellectual overconfidence and that is to make the effort to explain a relevant issue or topic to yourself or someone else in detail, either out loud or in writing.”

I would say that in writing for the American Council on Science and Health I often fall into the unexpected chasms of my own illusion of explanatory depth. The solution, proffered here, is shoshin, the "beginner's mind." From Psyche, [How to foster ‘shoshin’](#) [4]

Psyche strikes with a second interesting piece.

Most of us are familiar with the “marshmallow” experiment in which a child is left alone with a marshmallow and told that they can have two if they wait and not eat the one in front of them before the researcher returns. It is a willpower, discipline study and those children that resisted seemed to do better in life. But what if, [The best way to exercise self-control is not to exercise it at all ?](#) [5]

“It was another kind of scandal: a scandal about showing what shouldn’t be shown, about looking directly at what should only be seen from a distance. And to the grandees of Philly, it was intolerable.”

At the interface of art and medicine, from the art critic of the New York Time, a visual discussion of Thomas Eakins, The Gross Clinic, [Taking Lessons From a Bloody Masterpiece](#) [6]

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[2] http://nautil.us/issue/33/attraction/why-our-intuition-about-sea_level-rise-is-wrong

[3] <https://theconversation.com/an-ode-to-mac-and-cheese-the-poster-child-for-processed-food-137973>

[4] <https://psyche.co/guides/how-to-cultivate-shoshin-or-a-beginners-mind>

[5] <https://psyche.co/ideas/the-best-way-to-exercise-self-control-is-not-to-exercise-it-at-all>

[6] <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/05/28/arts/design/thomas-eakins-gross-clinic.html>