

Australia Treaty

It was extremely weird that, with war raging in the Persian Gulf and Brussels declaring that we need to be more “resilient” and to “Buy European”, the EU should go ahead and sign a free-trade agreement with Australia. Yes, how bizarre is that: Those products will need to be shipped half way around the planet.

Of course there are certain agendas in play here such as wanting to obtain rare minerals from “down under”. That’s all well and good but maybe we should take a look at whether we really need so much “cutting edge technology”: Surely it would be better to change our phones less often than to have slaves scrabbling for coltan in the Congo and excavators busy digging up The Outback.

E-Bikes

Once again I was struck by the number of e-bikes flitting around our neighbourhood: normal e-bikes, mini-e-bikes, cargo-e-bikes, kiddy-transport-e-bikes, delivery-e-bikes and e-scooters ... with many of these (even the over-sized ones) taking it for granted that they can ride on the pavement. This makes being a pedestrian extremely stressful.

And, with Cologne being as flat as a pancake, I really don’t see why, unless you have a disability, you can’t ride a normal pedal-bike?

In my view every vehicle with a motor (however small) should require a license, insurance and road-tax. If this were to happen, then things might start to get back to normal.

Dogs

BBC Radio Four had an item saying that the police should receive more powers to punish the owners of dogs which attack people.

Indeed, yes, this sounds good but I was reflecting on the dog-owners that I see out and about here in Cologne: Almost all of those dogs have a “harness” rather than a collar.

All well and good and, certainly, a harness is more comfortable for the dog than a collar. But here we need to ask ourselves what the role of the lead is?

For a small lap-dog a harness is definitely not a problem: The owner can even lift the dog right up. But I regularly see smaller people (often women or children) walking ENORMOUS dogs ... on a harness.

If that dog were to become aggressive (for whatever reason, maybe provoked by another dog), then the owner would have absolutely no chance to hold the dog back.

So maybe the rule should be “Dogs on a lead ... WITH a collar”.

UN Climate Warning

BBC News reported on a warning from the UN about earth’s climate suffering a record “energy imbalance”.

Indeed yes. Things are precarious. So WHY are we currently waging wars and increasing our armaments? That is clear suicide. And this alongside all the other wasteful and extravagant consumerist things that we do and consume.

Logistics video

I stumbled upon a promotional video from one of the large logistics companies. The video covered operations at one of their air-cargo hubs and was extremely interesting.

But when the handlers talked about the destinations of those (countless!) planes, one thing occurred to me: That the distances mentioned could easily be covered by rail. Yes, maybe a plane could get to the destination in one or two hours whereas a train would take six, eight or ten hours but, surely, if the handling is over-night (anyway), that should not be such a big deal.

This tells me two things: 1.) that aviation fuel is MUCH too cheap and 2.) that we really don’t care about stopping climate-change.

In God’s hands

As I often do, I listened to WDR radio’s religious spot again one morning recently. Often the ponderings of the contributors (mostly priests) are very interesting.

On this occasion the speaker regretted the impact of climate change on farmers, saying that we need to help them in order to protect our “daily bread”.

All well-and-good and I cannot disagree with that.

But then he went on to say that things are “in God’s hands” and that we must trust him. This statement made my jaw drop ...

Indeed, yes, many things are “in God’s hands” (or maybe in nature’s hands) but it is undoubtedly “man” who, over the last two hundred years (at least), has created climate change.

I don't think we can fix it (e.g. with technology) but what I know for sure is that we can stop making it worse by, for example, leaving our cars at home, turning down the heating/aircon or taking holidays which don't require us to use air-travel. None of this is rocket-science ... but instead we would rather fly off to the Maldives in secure knowledge that it is all "in God's hands".

Red Sky

As sometimes happens here in Cologne we had a gloriously red sky in the evening: A stunning display of purple-red clouds, illuminated by the setting sun.

It looks absolutely fantastic but the origin is very sinister: That sky is coloured by particulate-matter from the lignite (brown-coal) mines and the cluster of power-stations to be found to the west of Cologne ... directly on the route to Brussels!

It is ironic that, while we talk about climate change and about renewable energy, these operations continue to belch out CO2 and various toxic (including radio-active) material.

Indeed, it would be interesting to know how much of the "Green Economy" (heat-pumps, electric vehicles, etc.) actually gets its energy from "brown coal".

The intention is to close down these plants by 2030 but, with Artificial Intelligence guzzling up masses of electricity, I strongly believe that the shut-down won't happen.

Divorce

It was World Women's Day last week and indeed, yes, it is important that women are not held back.

But recently, through a (female) friend, I have become privy to the woman's side of a divorce. I must say that I was shocked by the vitriol, animosity and greed displayed by her. From what I could see, the man simply wanted to participate in parenting their child.

Indeed, yes, "it takes two to tango" but I feel that these days women, due to current #MeToo thinking, believe that they are "unassailable" and assume they will legally always have the upper hand over a man.

This is a sad thing because maybe, if the balance were more equal, separations (and subsequent divorces) could be less acrimonious.

Environment and Military

It was mentioned on Tagesschau that Germany's Environment Minister Schneider had announced that an extra 8 billion (thousand million) Euros will be

spent on climate protection in the next four years. This was outlined in a 300-page document with measures ranging from wind-power through to subsidies for EVs (electric vehicles).

That sounds great but, when compared to the 500 billion "Sondervermögen" (extra debt) for the re-militarisation ("Zeitenwende" & "Kriegstüchtigkeit") of Germany, it pales into insignificant.

Doubly-ironic is the fact that this (military) funding has now been re-branded to be for "infrastructure and climate-neutrality". So maybe it is just co-incidence that the production and the profits of the big German arms-suppliers are on a skyward trajectory?

Indeed, if the 500 billion "Sondervermögen" is for "climate-neutrality" why is the extra 8 billion announced by Herr Schneider at all significant?

Pistorius in the Indo-Pacific

The German Defence-Minister Boris Pistorius is currently visiting the Indo-Pacific region (Report in Tagesschau) where Germany wants to "show more presence" ... and (co-incidentally!) wants to open a maintenance facility for German submarines which have been or will be sold to countries in that region.

How mad is this? What business do European countries have poking around down there ... unless it is because they are "fishing for (weapons) deals". Donald Trump would be proud.

Sima Guang ... and Wokeness

A Chinese friend of mine sent me a quote about the Japanese made by the Chinese philosopher Sima Guang (1019 - 1086) ...

"They understand petty manners but lack greater righteousness; they cling to minor details but lack great virtue; they emphasize trivialities but disregard integrity; they fear authority but do not cherish kindness; when strong, they act as bandits and invaders; when weak, they submit in meekness."

I really can't judge the Japanese (so far all my encounters with them have been positive) but this quote made me think of my attitude to "Wokeness" ...

As it is, I subscribe to most of the values proclaimed by "The Woke" ... but I cannot abide them! And now I understand why: Simply apply the first three points in Sima Guang's comment (on the Japanese) to The Woke instead.

And when it comes to The Woke engaging in "rhetorical bullying", possibly the final points also apply!