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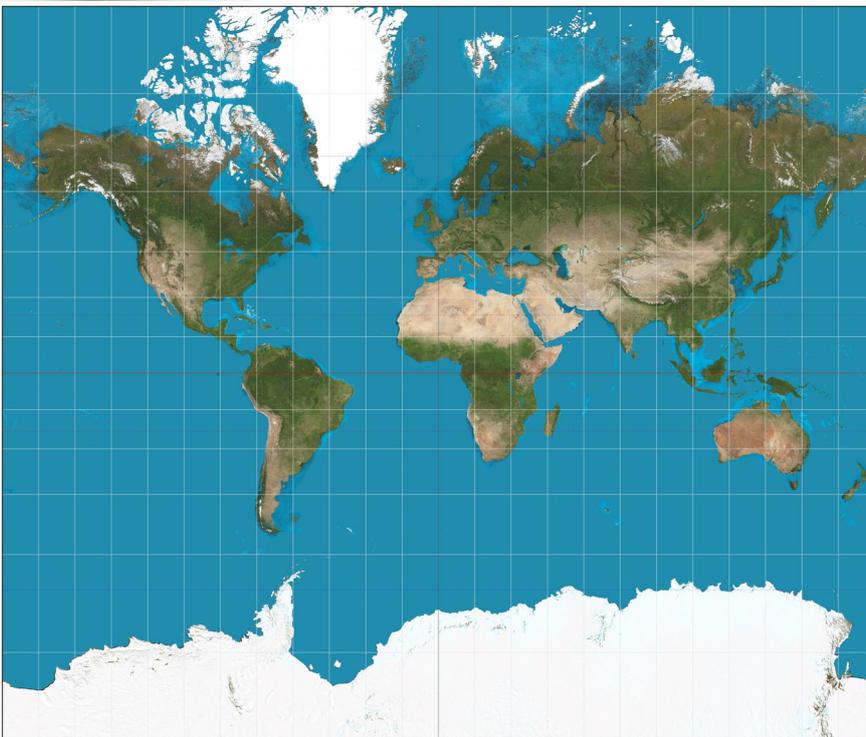
Newsletter

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Mondays with
DAVID ALLAN



Greenland and Antarctica unreasonably large compared to Africa.

Redrawing the map of the world

Since 1569, we have been deluded by misrepresentation of the countries of the world.

The Mercator Projection was an elaborate stab at a world map, undertaken by a Flemish gentleman who must have had a mind like a steel-trap to apply his selected criteria and come up – in the middle of the 16th Century – with something that still hangs on classroom and office walls well into the 21st.

The world (Earth) is roughly spherical. It is impossible to unravel its skin – like a peeled orange? like a splayed onion? – and come up with something flat. So Mr Mercator had a jolly good go and, in this world of digital/virtual, nothing has yet replaced it – at least not for normal people.

Surely one of the best presents to a young child or grandchild is still, or

should be, a globe. Along with a ball of string and some blue tac to work out real routes and relative positions and sizes.

In Cape Town two weeks ago, I was ridiculed (nicely) for pulling out my ringbound Cape Town map book (to find and plan a route to an address in Muizenberg). I am sorry, but a tiny screen/phone doesn't do the job. There is no perspective or even comprehension of the journey. Being told at the last moment to turn blindly left then right by Google Maps or Tom Tom or whatever is akin to being treated like an idiot.

That is unfair, of course, to those who simply don't want to know or don't care how to get from A to B. They are merely waiting for evolution to the point of being "beamed up" (Scotty) i.e. dismembered at a molecular level before being reassembled at one's destination a split second later. Good Luck with that.

In the absence of a globe – which doesn't fit in the average briefcase or satchel – we have largely relied on Mr Mercator for 450-years or so. Google Maps does. Airline maps do. Amazing.

In his version of our planet, there are many distortions – understandable ones, but distortions nonetheless. Anywhere near to the poles is enlarged greatly. Antarctica looks massive which it isn't.
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Perhaps the most arresting comparison is with Greenland and the mainland continent of Africa.

Not a lot happens in Greenland, although that's not the point, but on Mr Mercator's map-on-the-classroom-wall, that country is about the same size as Africa which straddles the equator.

In fact, Greenland is about one fourteenth of the size of Africa and would cover (say) Algeria. Ah! The vast icebound wasteland – thrilling to visit – isn't so vast after all. Africa is (both vast and thrilling).

Mr Mercator seems to have been influenced by political motive (making Europe look a lot bigger than it is) as well as his version of science. I wonder if he could do us a map now based on thoroughbred racehorse production?

The USA would be the biggest thoroughbred country by a factor of 2. (A map based on human population would have it right up there as well). The USA would dwarf Canada (which actually dwarfs the USA) in both such categories, out-producing its neighbour by a factor of 15. Canada produces somewhere between Brazil and Argentina, but did give us Northern Dancer and Nijinsky.

Australia – which suffers in size in Mercator – would come second, but would be tiny on the human scale. Their domestic sport and industry largely absorbs their huge production. Japan, with its closed shop of so many years, also ran on internal forces for decades before emerging as the breeder of some of the world's best international animals from a production sitting between Ireland (3rd in the world) and Great Britain. Argentina and France are in the general area of GB.

All three's maps would also be sizeable based on hu-

man population.

Ireland's map representation would dwarf the UK as well as everywhere except the top two but the UK in human terms would be about 15 times larger than Ireland. The horse truly is colossally important in Ireland, achieving that status in a country of relatively few human inhabitants.

South Africa was around 8th ranked in thoroughbred production, but less now and less again soon.

Now please consider that our imaginary map showing countries' sizes in relation to their thoroughbred production would actually eliminate dozens of countries altogether from the world map and reduce many others to mere dots.

After last year's industrial action at SA training centres and internationally published woe, some overseas commentators (who don't know enough) likened the South African racing and breeding scene to Zimbabwe and Kenya. In other words: countries that have slipped to dots. South Africa made no discernible response.

Given that this "half full" column, as opposed to the other thing, can imagine both the SA national economy and the thoroughbred market going positive quite quickly *as and when they turn* – change in smaller economies and markets being usually more rapid than in sluggish giants – the notion of becoming a dot is neither acceptable nor likely.

Focus again, if you will, on the proportional relationships between thoroughbred production and human population. Ireland is uniquely astonishing and cannot be repeated or copied. Australia has a thriving sport with a relatively small population, but a very high incidence of the Aussie version of the Great British Day Out.



This beautifully taken pic by Amy Lanigan is the 100% opposite of promoting racing as betting by numbers.

DAVID ALLAN (cont)

Racing in UK (big population) does very well for spectators in a country with a heck of a lot else going on to compete, and its owning population doesn't fret as much about prize money as one might think. After all, a massive population of expensive-to-care-for-and-train-every-day showjumpers and eventers is sustained whilst competing for a rosette and fourpence halfpenny at all but the very top.

Yet in France – comparable population – racecourses are not well populated in general, and punting from the local wine bar terminal is a significant driver, to the despair of the authorities.

Just think. Just think what could be achieved in South Africa by getting racing's barb under the skin of more

people. Marketing the punting aspect clearly does not work, and is anyway a recipe for disappointment for the uninitiated most of whom don't think of betting often anyway.

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I respectfully refer readers (who have come this far reading this, thank you) to this column a couple of weeks ago with its talk of Battle Buses and broadening the appeal. A totally and completely different approach is necessary, built up from scratch by thoroughbred professionals and enthusiasts with that sort of ability.

Then – hey – South Africa and GB might become the same size on our new map, both pretty big. -tt