Indeed, Germans are closer in culture and customs to Americans than to citizens of China or India. Yet Germans have more and more come to accept the criticism of those “exotic” countries: When we have ever fewer questions about traveling in Egypt, China or Russia for professional engagements. TTIP, the allegedly failed free trade agreement, brought German intellectuals to the barricades, claiming that the US intended to show its fast-food culture down our throats. A short time ago Facebook, the politician Öskar Lafontaine dubbed the US “the most rogue nation on earth” that “has done badly to provoke wars.” The country “reviled its moral decay decades ago when it cleaned the jungle in Vietnam with Agent Orange.”

Anti-American reflexes also have little to do with the notions of concrete US foreign policy transgressions that one might go so far as to call crimes. In fact, Germans look down on the US as a much greater degree of embodiment of such things as capitalism, consumerism, bad taste, materialism and superficiality. Prejudice is never about facts, and always about feelings. Most Germans who judge do so about countries they have never seen or have heard much about or little. What we have here is a classic case of prejudices.

Germans’ prejudices with regard to America have both a cultural and a prehistoric dimension. They see the US as the land of evil capitalists, of fatties and dummies, of the rude and the arrogants, of narcissists who care about nothing in the world except themselves, of women who after countless cosmetic surgeries, and of men who, like the character of Scrooge McDuck (an American invention), are interested only in money instead of art and moral values (as we Germans are). They see the US as the land of pop-culture children and moronic TV programs in the Midwest, where, in fact, little of the culture did not come from the US.

Germans’ long-standing inferiority complex – being the losers of the war and the victim of regime after that war – is often by clinging to “higher values” exhibiting allegedly higher moral imagery, inhabiting allegedly higher cultural and psycho-political planes, and considering a better form of capitalism, namely, “American capitalism,” as the closest to the closeness of the relationship between the two countries.