

“In All Things Save Sight They Were Strong and Able...”:

Disability as the “Schizophrenic Sublime” in H. G. Wells’s *The Country of the Blind* (1904)

H. G. Wells’s short story *The Country of the Blind* (1904) seeks to deterritorialise traditional notions associated with vision impairment by radically unsettling the assumed centrality of sight in shaping human perception, knowledge, and social organisation. The protagonist, Nunez, who possesses eyes and vision, paradoxically experiences increasing difficulty in making sense of life when he is marooned in the isolated country inhabited entirely by blind people. His visual ability, which he initially regards as a mark of superiority and epistemological authority, gradually becomes a source of confusion and alienation in a society whose spatial arrangements, daily practices, language, and collective worldview have developed independently of sight. As Nunez becomes immersed in this unfamiliar environment, he arrives at a profound realisation that people with “blindness” have carefully arranged their lives in every aspect despite their visual impairment, and that their life philosophy is not merely functional or compensatory but complete, coherent, and self-sufficient in itself. This realisation destabilises the ableist assumption that disability necessarily signifies lack or deficiency and instead reveals blindness as an alternative mode of being-in-the-world, governed by its own internal logic. The recognition of the completeness of the blind society’s worldview thus enlightens the reader, offering a radically different perspective that foregrounds the disruptive power of their social order and challenges conventional understandings of normalcy, perception, and epistemological authority.

This disruptive perception of life in *The Country of the Blind* resonates strongly with what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, in *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, conceptualise as “schizophrenia,” understood not as a pathological condition but as a productive and affirmative force that unsettles dominant systems of thought. For Deleuze and Guattari, schizophrenia operates through a counter-logic of flows that deterritorialises established norms, takes up existing life patterns, and disrupts or rearranges them to generate new forms of order and meaning. In Wells’s narrative, the society of blind people exemplifies this schizophrenic logic by dismantling the visual-centric worldview that Nunez assumes to be universal and reorganising social and epistemological structures around non-visual modes of perception. Their way of life does not simply negate sight but actively reconstitutes order without it, exposing the contingency and constructedness of normative sensory hierarchies. This paper therefore emphasises the disruptive nature of the blind people’s society, which persistently challenges the normative worldview of the protagonist and compels readers to reconsider their own assumptions about ability, perception, and knowledge. Moreover, by foregrounding this radical reorganisation of life and perception, the paper contests the classical notion of sublimity—traditionally grounded in visual excess, transcendence, and awe—and instead advocates an alternative conception of the “disabled sublime,” more precisely articulated as the “schizophrenic sublime” in Deleuzian terms, wherein sublimity emerges from epistemological rupture, difference, and the destabilisation of dominant frameworks of understanding.