





The particles having formed a homogeneous substance, it was firm enough for an enduring structure. In analyzing or describing the successive stages and forms of association men have devised, it is accurate and consistent to refer to the representational order as architecture, and to the political agency in action as mechanism. The structure must accommodate the mechanism; and each must correspond respectively to the type of culture and the mode of the conversion of energy. These forms and mechanisms do not occur and assemble fortuitously by material determinism. They are created by conscious intelligence in the light of experience. Naturally progress tends to be uneven; prolonged failure to make the various developments approximately is the cause of the decline and desuetude of nations. But the production methods will catch up with advanced political ideas; whereas if an advanced physical economy develops within a political framework that cannot accommodate it, production must either be choked down again or it will destroy the political entity, being subverted to the wrong ends. The Greeks actually invented a crude steam engine, but were unable to perfect it and put it to use, for lack of a political organization which would allow such a high potential. Nor could the Roman system admit it. The required organization was not to be devised for almost two thousand years.



Nantucket! Take out your map and look at it. See what a real corner of the world it occupies; how it stands there, away off shore, more lonely than the Eddystone Lighthouse. Look at it—a mere hillock, and elbow of sand; all beach, without a background. There is more sand there than you would use in twenty years as a substitute for blotting-paper. Some gamesome wights will tell you that they have to plant weeds there, they don't grow naturally; that they import Canada thistles; that they have to send beyond seas for a spile to stop a leak in an oil cask; that pieces of wood in Nantucket are carried about like bits of the true cross in Rome; that people there plant toadstools before their houses, to get under the shade in summer time; that one blade of grass makes an oasis, three blades in a day's walk a prairie; that they wear quicksand shoes, something like Laplander snowshoes; that they are so shut up, belted about, every way enclosed, surrounded, and made an utter island of by the ocean, that to their very chairs and tables small clams will sometimes be found adhering, as to the backs of sea turtles. But these extravaganzas only show that Nantucket is no Illinois.

Look now at the wondrous traditional story of how this island was settled by the red men. Thus goes the legend. In olden times an eagle swooped down upon the New England coast, and carried off an infant

Indian in his talons. With loud lament the parents saw the child borne out of sight over the wide waters. They resolved to follow in the same direction. Setting out in their canoes, after a perilous passage they discovered the island, and there they found an empty ivory casket,—the poor little Indian's skeleton.

What wonder, then, that these Nantucketers, born on a beach, should take to the sea for a livelihood! They first caught crabs and quohogs in the sands; grown bolder, they waded out with nets for mackerel; more experienced, they pushed off in boats and captured cod; and, at last, launching a navy of great ships on the sea, explored this watery world; put an incessant belt of circumnavigation round it: peeped in at Behring's Straits; and in all seasons and all oceans declared everlasting war with the mightiest animated mass that has survived the flood; most monstrous and most mountainous! That Himmalehan, salt-sea Mastodon, clothed with such portentousness of unconscious power, that his very panics are more to be dreaded than his most fearless and malicious assaults!

And thus have these naked Nantucketers, these sea-hermits, issuing from their ant-hill in the sea, overrun and conquered the watery world like so many Alexanders; parcelling out among them the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans, as the three pirate powers did Poland. Let America add Mexico to Texas, and pile Cuba upon Canada; let the English overswarm all India, and hang out their blazing banner from the sun; two-thirds of this terraqueous globe are the Nantucketer's. For the sea is his; he owns it, as Emperors own empires; other seamen having but a right of way through it. Merchant ships are but extension bridges; armed ones but floating forts; even pirates and privateers, though following the sea as highwaymen the road, they but plunder other ships, other fragments of the land like themselves, without seeking to draw their living from the bottomless deep itself. The Nantucketer, he alone resides and riots on the sea; he alone, in Bible language, goes down to it in ships; to and fro ploughing it as his own special plantation. *There* is his home; *there* lies his business, which a Noah's flood would not interrupt, though it overwhelmed all the millions in China. He lives on the sea, as prairie cocks in the prairie; he hides among the waves, he climbs them as chamois hunters climb the Alps. For years he knows not the land; so that when he comes to it at last, it smells like

another world, more strangely than the moon would to an Earthsman. With the landless gull, that at sunset folds her wings and is rocked to sleep between billows; so at nightfall, the Nantucketer, out of sight of land, furls his sails, and lays him to his rest, while under his very pillow rush herds of walruses and whales.



Transcendental illusion has to do not with the content of an 'image' but with its very existence – it deceives on the level of being. In this respect, the Kantian concept of (transcendental) illusion is very close to the Lacanian concept of *le semblant*.

If we are to give a fair reading of Kant's conception of transcendental ideas, we must begin their examination one step before the beginning – not at the beginning of the Dialectic, but at the end of the Analytic, where Kant lays out his famous map of the territory of understanding and describes the sublime view that opens to the inhabitant of this territory as she looks beyond it:

We have now not merely explored the territory of pure understanding, and carefully surveyed every part of it, but have also measured its extent, and assigned to everything in it its rightful place. This domain is an island, enclosed by nature itself within unalterable limits. It is the land of truth – enchanting name! – surrounded by a wide and stormy ocean, the native home of illusion, where many a fog bank and many a swiftly melting iceberg give the deceptive appearance of farther shores, deluding the adventurous seafarer ever anew with empty hopes, and engaging him in enterprises which he can never abandon and yet is unable to carry to completion.<sup>1</sup>

An island of truth in wide and agitated ocean of illusion: this, then, is the description of the state of things at the end of the Analytic. Once we have covered and measured the land which bears the enchanting name of truth, this land loses its charm for adventurous spirits, and they take off to seek adventure elsewhere. But they do not know that they are headed only towards their own ruin.

The images Kant uses to accentuate the importance of this particular point of the *Critique of Pure Reason* deserve examination on their own. In this context, let us indicate just one possible reading, the one that turns on the distinction between the beautiful and the sublime: the difference between a natural world in which everything seems to be in its perfect place, where harmony reigns, and a chaotic Nature, full of sudden and unexpected 'eruptions' – between a Nature which makes us feel

This I did constantly until I was about seventeen when my thoughts turned seriously to invention. Then I observed to my delight that I could visualize with the greatest facility. I needed no models, drawings or experiments. I could picture them all as real in my mind. Thus I have been led unconsciously to evolve what I consider a new method of materializing inventive concepts and ideas, which is radically opposite to the purely experimental and is in my opinion ever so much more expeditious and efficient. The moment one constructs a device to carry into practise a crude idea he finds himself unavoidably engrossed with the details and defects of the apparatus. As he goes on improving and reconstructing, his force of concentration diminishes and he loses sight of the great underlying principle. Results may be obtained but always at the sacrifice of quality.

My method is different. I do not rush into actual work. When I get an idea I start at once building it up in my imagination. I change the construction, make improvements and operate the device in my mind. It is absolutely immaterial to me whether I run my turbine in thought or test it in my shop. I even note if it is out of balance. There is no difference whatever, the results are the same. In this way I am able to rapidly develop and perfect a conception without touching anything. When I have gone so far as to embody in the invention every possible improvement I can think of and see no fault anywhere, I put into concrete form this final product of my brain. Invariably my device works as I conceived that it should, and the experiment comes out exactly as I planned it. In twenty years there has not been a single exception. Why should it be otherwise? Engineering, electrical and mechanical, is positive in results. There is scarcely a subject that cannot be mathematically treated and the effects calculated or the results determined beforehand from the available theoretical and practical data. The carrying out into practise of a crude idea as is being generally done is, I hold, nothing but a waste of energy, money and time.