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The Author Has Collected The Remarks  
Of Various People With Differing Opinions,  
But Has [Not] Omitted Citing His  
Authorities And Has [~~Not~~] Attributed  
Each Remark To The One Who Said It.<sup>1</sup>

Sonia de Jager

Reflections through *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*  
(2001), second edition (2010), W. W. Norton and Company, New York.

The following text has been produced in the academic context of a  
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## Abstract

1. The author shall not formulate any wording or phrasing of his own (besides this caveat, and other minor details), but rather constrain herself to relevant, significant citations from *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* (2001), second edition (2010), W. W. Norton and Company, New York.
2. The author will follow an argument of her own, partly established by the essay's section subtitles, partly by adhering to the thoughts and words of others, selected not out of caprice as isolated – and in turn accommodated – building blocks; but rather preferred as exemplary of the author's own opinions, because of their original context, which is as important and relevant as the isolated blocks alone;
3. The author will follow the anthology chronologically, so as to reveal a certain line of evolution in critical thought, as well as the overlapping thoughts of particular authors, and the encounters that emerge from trying to make them 'talk to each other,' through the author, through themselves;
4. It is thus just as important to regard this text as a linear, uninterrupted work; as well as a piece which – perhaps on a second reading – requires accompaniment of the anthology, as a recurring referent.
5. Adaptations to the original are always indicated by square brackets.

The author has collected the remarks of various people with differing opinions, but has [not] omitted citing his authorities and has [~~not~~] attributed each remark to the one who said it.<sup>1</sup>

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# I

## Language, words, artifice.

“[...] He has realized at last that imaginary guitar notes and imaginary vocals exist only in the imagination of the imaginer, and, ultimately, who gives a fuck anyway? [...]”<sup>2</sup>

Theorists are fond of pointing out that everyone has a theory, about the world as well as about literature and interpretation, and that theories must be examined, debated, and tested.<sup>3</sup> How many men on how many subjects have persuaded and do persuade how many others by shaping a false speech!<sup>4</sup> But how do they do that? What kinds of things do they say?<sup>5</sup> All teaching is teaching of either signs or things, but things are learnt through signs.<sup>6</sup> Nowadays we think of education, especially school education, in terms of information and skills above all.<sup>7</sup> If it’s anyone’s job, then, it’s the job of the rulers of our community: they can lie for the good of the community, when either an external or an internal threat makes it necessary.<sup>8</sup> Now this might be cause for alarm among a portion of you, as,<sup>9</sup> [i]t’s analogous to the process of becoming literate.<sup>10</sup> It follows that representation and truth are a considerable distance apart,<sup>11</sup> a representer doesn’t have either knowledge or true beliefs about whatever he’s representing.<sup>12</sup>

Now, methods have evolved of combating this – measuring, counting, and weighing are the most elegant of them – and consequently of ending the reign within us of apparent size, number, and weight, and replacing them with something which calculates and measures, or even weighs. Right?<sup>13</sup> Some people use colours and forms for representations, making images of many objects (some by art, and some by practice), and others do so with sound;<sup>14</sup> [c]learly each of the [kinds of] representation we mentioned will contain these differences, and will vary by representing objects which vary in this manner.<sup>15</sup> Some people think it is a complete mistake to reduce things like this to technical rules.<sup>16</sup> What would be the speaker’s function, if the element were apparent even without [the use of] speech?<sup>17</sup> Representation is natural to human beings from childhood<sup>18</sup> [and] [t]he man who chooses his subject with full control will not be abandoned by eloquence or lucidity of arrangement.<sup>19</sup> Consequently one should consider and solve the criticisms that are among the questions raised [starting] from these [principles].<sup>20</sup> Many words which have fallen

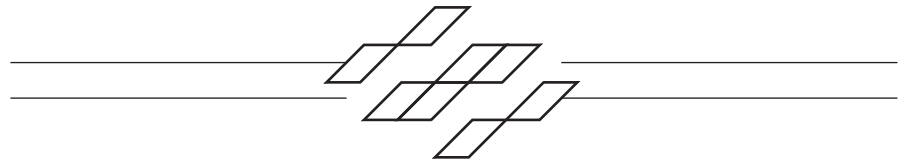
will be born again, many now in repute will fall if usage decrees: for in her hand is the power and the law and the canon of *speech*.<sup>21</sup> Words will be great if thoughts are weighty.<sup>22</sup> Our thoughts often travel beyond the boundaries of our surroundings. The universe therefore is not wide enough for the range of human speculation and intellect.<sup>23</sup> Given signs are those which living things give to each other, in order to show, to the best of their ability, the emotions of their minds, or anything that they have learnt or felt. There is no reason for us to signify something (that is, to give a sign) except to express and transmit to another's mind what is in the mind of the person who gives the sign.<sup>24</sup> That's why so many don't bother to cut their nails or beard, but seek solitude and keep away from the bath.<sup>25</sup> And we must be careful to remember that what is under consideration at this stage is the fact that things exist, not that they signify something else besides themselves.<sup>26</sup>

Words have gained an altogether dominant role among humans in signifying the ideas conceived by the mind that a person wants to reveal.<sup>27</sup> But spoken words cease to exist as soon as they come into contact with the air, and their existence is no more lasting than that of their sound; hence the invention, in the form of letters, of signs of words.<sup>28</sup> In seeking the basic principle of the common origins of languages and letters, we find that the first peoples of pagan antiquity were, by a demonstrable necessity of their nature, *poets* who spoke by means of *poetic symbols*. [...] Their symbols were certain *imaginative general categories*, or archetypes.<sup>29</sup> By virtue of this imaginative creation, they were called poets, which in Greek means creators.<sup>30</sup> Now, therein of all sciences (I speak still of human, and according to the human conceit) is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it; [...] with words set in delightful proportion, the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore never lieth, for, as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true which is false.<sup>31</sup> [...] [T]he proper subject of poetry is a believable impossibility.<sup>32</sup> All the primary figures of speech are corollaries of poetic logic.<sup>33</sup> Since the origins of these human institutions were buried in obscurity, metonymy dressed these symbols in the learned guise of allegory.<sup>34</sup> The countless abstract expressions which permeate our languages today have divorced our civilized thought from the senses, even among the *common people*. The art of writing has generally refined the nature of our thought; [...] as a result we are incapable of forming the vast image of that mistress which some call 'Sympathetic Nature'.<sup>35</sup> In his ignorance, man makes himself the measure of the universe.<sup>36</sup>

The task of our present writers is very different; it requires, together with that learning which is to be gained from books, that experience which can never be attained by solitary diligence, but must arise from *general converse*, and *accurate observation* of the real world.<sup>37</sup> The sentiments of men often differ with regard to beauty and deformity of all

kinds, even while their general discourse is the same.<sup>38</sup> It is natural for us to seek a *Standard of Taste*; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; at least, a decision, afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another.<sup>39</sup> Either follow a tradition or invent a consistent story.<sup>40</sup> However, there are some mistakes we are ready to forgive.<sup>41</sup> If some negligent or irregular writers have pleased, they have not pleased by their transgressions of rule or order, but in spite of these transgressions: They have possessed other beauties, which were conformable to just criticism; and the force of these beauties has been able to overpower censure, and give the mind a satisfaction superior to the disgust arising from the blemishes.<sup>42</sup> For the mind uses the intellect whenever it 'gathers' something insensible from a sense impression, and this act of gathering is the proper meaning of the Latin verb *intelligere*, to understand.<sup>43</sup> But though all the general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature, we must not imagine, that, on every occasion, the feelings of men will be conformable to these rules. [...] The least exterior hindrance to such small springs, or the least internal disorder, disturbs their motion, and confounds the operation of the whole machine.<sup>44</sup>

Of all the Causes which conspire to blind  
Man's erring Judgment, and misguide the Mind,  
What the weak Head with strongest Byass rules,  
Is *Pride*, the *never-failing Vice of Fools*.<sup>45</sup>



## II Men, hierarchies, judgment.

It is acknowledged to be the perfection of every sense or faculty, to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation.<sup>46</sup> We may observe, that every work of art, in order to produce its due effect on the mind, must be surveyed in a certain point of view, and cannot be fully relished by persons, whose situation, real or imaginary, is not conformable to that which is required by the performance. An orator addresses himself to a particular audience, and must have a regard to their particular genius, interests, opinions, passions, and prejudices; otherwise he hopes in vain to govern their resolutions, and

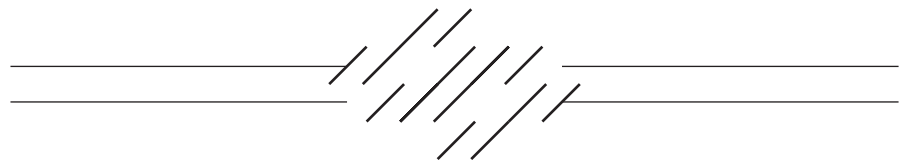


inflame their affections.<sup>47</sup> Such a judgment is an aesthetic judgment on the purposiveness of the object, which is not grounded on any available concept of the object and does not furnish one.<sup>48</sup> An individual judgment of experience, [...] rightly demands that anyone else must also find it so, since he has made this judgment, in accordance with the general conditions of the determining power of judgment, under the laws of a *possible experience in general*.<sup>49</sup> The judgment of taste is therefore not a cognitive judgment, hence not a logical one, but is rather aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective.<sup>50</sup> Vainly would we, in such cases, endeavour to enter into the sentiments of others, and divest ourselves of those propensities, which are natural to us.<sup>51</sup>

In order to find something good, I must always know what sort of thing the object is supposed to be, i.e., I must have a concept of it. I do not need that to find beauty in something.<sup>52</sup> Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided.<sup>53</sup> The case is not the same with moral principles, as with speculative opinions of any kind.<sup>54</sup> The subjective principle for judging of the beautiful is represented as universal, i.e., valid for everyone, but not as knowable by any universal concept (the objective principle of morality is also declared to be universal, i.e., knowable for all subjects, and at the same time also for all actions of one and the same subject, yet by means of a universal concept). Hence the moral judgment is not only capable of determinate constitutive principles, but is also possible only by means of the grounding of its maxims on these principles and their universality.<sup>55</sup> We are the citizens of our own Age no less than of our own State.<sup>56</sup> [...] Art is a daughter of Freedom, and takes her orders from the necessity inherent in minds, not from the exigencies of matter.<sup>57</sup> By right, only production through freedom, i.e., through a capacity for choice that grounds its actions in reason, should be called art.<sup>58</sup>

With us [...] the image of the human species is projected in magnified form into separate individuals — but as fragments, not in different combinations, with the result that one has to go the rounds from one individual to another in order to be able to piece together a complete image of the species.<sup>59</sup> This disorganization, which was first started within man by civilization and learning, was made complete and universal by<sup>60</sup> [...] simple ideas, incapable of definition. People are not liable to be mistaken in their feelings, but they are very frequently wrong in the names they give them, and in their reasonings about them.<sup>61</sup> The dead letter takes the place of living understanding, and a good memory is a safer guide than imagination and feeling.<sup>62</sup> The human mind is often, and I think it is for the most part, in a state neither of pain nor pleasure, which I call a state of indifference.<sup>63</sup> Only by concentrating the whole energy of our mind into a *single* focal point, contracting our whole being into a single power, do we, as it were, lend wings to this individual power and lead it, by artificial means far beyond the limits which Nature

seems to have assigned to it.<sup>64</sup> [...] Nature sets limits even to the most universal genius, limits which he cannot transcend; and as long as philosophy has to make its prime business the provision of safeguards against error, truth will be bound to have its martyrs.<sup>65</sup> But where are such critics to be found? By what marks are they to be known? How distinguish them from pretenders? These questions are embarrassing; and seem to throw us back into the same uncertainty, from which, during the course of this essay, we have endeavoured to extricate ourselves.<sup>66</sup> [J]ust as the eye sees all external objects, but needs a mirror to see itself.<sup>67</sup>



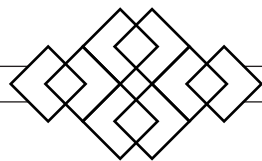
### III

## More men, more hierarchies, more judgment.

Is this enough on the subject of rhetorical expertise and its lack?<sup>68</sup> Intellectual education is to bring about moral education, and yet moral education is to be the condition of intellectual education?<sup>69</sup> The pure moral impulse is directed towards the Absolute<sup>70</sup> [;] [t]he troubling yet unavoidable “hermeneutic circle” of interpretation.<sup>71</sup> The mind will ever be unstable that has only prejudices to rest on, and the current will run with destructive fury when there are no barriers to break its force.<sup>72</sup> Live with your century, but do not be its creature.<sup>73</sup> The dangers of imagination have been discussed a good deal, but there is no point in looking up what impotent mediocrity and strict reason have said on this topic over and over again.<sup>74</sup> But does that entitle *me* to make mistakes and scribble away carelessly?<sup>75</sup>

Discourse is the mediation of shareable thought [and] [e]very discourse depends on earlier thought. One can also turn this around, of course, but in relation to communication it remains true, since the art of understanding only has to do with progressive thinking.<sup>76</sup> Metaphysical precision cannot be applied to man’s affections and remain compatible with his nature[,]77 the inner cohesion of humanity can only be understood as it manifests externally through its discourse.<sup>78</sup> Th[us] grammatical interpretation leads the way.<sup>79</sup> Good interpretation can only be approximated, [and] [n]o individual inspection of a work ever exhausts its meaning; interpretation can always be rectified.<sup>80</sup> Each is indeed certain of its own self, but not of the other, and therefore its own self-certainty still has no truth.<sup>81</sup>

What is alive in nature is, within and without, an organism purposefully elaborated into all its tiniest parts, while the work of art attains the appearance of life only on its surface; inside it is ordinary stone, or wood and canvas, or as in poetry, an idea expressed in speech and letters.<sup>82</sup> Of course personification and anthropo[centr]ism haven often been maligned as a degradation of the spiritual, but in so far as art's task is to bring the spiritual before our eyes in a sensuous manner, it must get involved in this anthropo[centr]ism [...]<sup>83</sup> Art, like Science, is absolved from all positive constraint and from all conventions introduced by man; both rejoice in absolute immunity from human arbitrariness.<sup>84</sup> [And since] Man's most valuable faculty is his imagination<sup>85</sup> – [t]he primary IMAGINATION I hold to be the living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM.<sup>86</sup> – [t]he spirit of philosophical inquiry itself is wresting from the imagination one province after another, and<sup>87</sup> [e]verlastingly chained to a dingle little fragment of the Whole, man himself develops into nothing but a fragment; [...] he becomes nothing more than the imprint of his occupation or of his specialized knowledge.<sup>88</sup> The other is an *immediate* consciousness entangled in a variety of relationships, and it must regard its otherness as a pure being-for-self or as an absolute negation[;]<sup>89</sup> [...] not over the universal power and the whole of objective being,<sup>90</sup> [...] but rather [...] scattered and entangled with other subjects that are to be clarified.<sup>91</sup> [W]hat one man makes, another, it may seem, could make or imitate too, if only he were first acquainted with the manner of proceeding [...] [b]ut what can be carried out on such directions can only be something formally regular and mechanical.<sup>92</sup> [Thus] Truth lives on in the illusion of Art [...] <sup>93</sup> [and] in its consummation will really turn into the opposite of what it immediately is; as a consciousness forced back into itself, it will withdraw into itself and be transformed into a truly independent consciousness.<sup>94</sup>



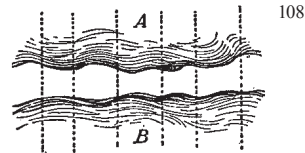
#### IV

### Education, speculation, and caution.

[As we have seen] [d]iscourse is the mediation of shareable thought [and] [e]very discourse depends on earlier thought.<sup>95</sup> Yet hence arises a grave mischief [...] [e]ach age, it is found, must write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding. The books of an older period

will not fit this.<sup>96</sup> [It is] [t]he sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, [...] who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles.<sup>97</sup> The fact is, therefore, that definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into these definite social and political relations.<sup>98</sup> The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life.<sup>99</sup> One must be an inventor to read well.<sup>100</sup>

Undoubtedly there is a right way of reading [...] [t]here is some awe mixed with the joy of our surprise, when [a mind], who lived in some past world, two or three hundred years ago, says that which lies close to my own soul, that which I also had well-nigh thought and said. But for the evidence thence afforded to the philosophical doctrine of the identity of all minds, we should suppose some preestablished harmony[;]<sup>101</sup> [t]he universal need for art, [...] man's rational need to lift the inner and outer world into his spiritual consciousness as an object in which he recognizes again his own self.<sup>102</sup> Where speculation ends – in real life – there real, positive science begins [...] <sup>103</sup> [e]mpty talk about consciousness ceases, and real knowledge has to take its place.<sup>104</sup> There is then creative reading as well as creative writing.<sup>105</sup> Words are also actions, and actions are a kind of words.<sup>106</sup> [I]n our system of writing, 'ab' means that the two letters are to be pronounced in a single syllable.<sup>107</sup>



I find that the fascination resides in the symbol.<sup>109</sup> [And as of yet] [w]e are far from having exhausted the significance of the few symbols we use[;] [e]very word was once a poem. Every new relation is a new word.<sup>110</sup> [...] Language is fossil poetry.<sup>111</sup>

The grand work of literary genius is a work of synthesis and exposition [...] its gift lies in the faculty of being happily inspired by a certain intellectual and spiritual atmosphere, by a certain order of ideas, [and] when it finds itself in them; making beautiful works with them, in short.<sup>112</sup> But they can only highly serve us when they aim not to drill, but to create [...].<sup>113</sup> The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul [...which...] every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although, in almost all men, obstructed, and as yet unborn.<sup>114</sup> The notion of the free play of the mind upon all subjects being a pleasure in itself, being an object of desire, [...] obeys an instinct prompting it to try to know the best that is known and thought in the world<sup>115</sup> [...], seeing one's object as it really is, is to know one's own impression as it really is, to discriminate it, to realise it distinctly.<sup>116</sup> [I]t is true that criticism is really,

in itself, a baneful and injurious employment; it is true that all time given to writing critiques on the works of others would be much better employed if it were given to original composition [...].<sup>117</sup> Telling, teaching, even describing, that's all very well and yet all that would be needed perhaps for each of us to exchange our thoughts as humans would be [...] virtuality.<sup>118</sup> A beauty not explicable[;] dearer than a beauty which we can see to the end of.<sup>119</sup> On these inadequate ideas repose, and must repose, the general practice of the world.<sup>120</sup> Slow and obscure it may be, but it is the only proper work of criticism.<sup>121</sup> Our education *becomes* [...] complete in proportion as our susceptibility to [...] impressions increases in depth and variety.<sup>122</sup> [T]he creative faculty is higher than the critical. There is really no comparison between them.<sup>123</sup>

Well, [...] will not the critic be sometimes a real interpreter?<sup>124</sup> In what I have written I have only attempted to interpret the deepest layer of impulses in the mind of the creative writer.<sup>125</sup> The imaginative writer has this license among many others, that he can select his world of representation so that it either coincides with the realities we are familiar with or departs from them in what particulars he pleases.<sup>126</sup> [But] [t]hought, chaotic by nature, has to become ordered in the process of its decomposition.<sup>127</sup> [However] [i]s language the full and adequate expression of all realities?<sup>128</sup> [F]orgetting that the original metaphors of perception were indeed metaphors, [on]e takes them for the things themselves.<sup>129</sup> Not the fruit of experience, but experience itself, is the end.<sup>130</sup>

Just as Kantian idealism represents historically a translation of Christianity into the language of rationalistic philosophy, so all the varieties of idealistic formalization, either openly or secretly, lead to a God, as the Cause of all causes.<sup>131</sup> [R]ight [read: correct, appropriate, truthful] is something moral, and implies inward recognition, free assent of the will; we are not ready for right, — *right*, so far as we are concerned, *is not ready* [...].<sup>132</sup> To us, at any rate, the *ΒΙΟΣ ΘΕΩΡΗΤΙΚΟΣ* (bios theōrētikos: contemplative life) is the true ideal.<sup>133</sup>

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## Colophon

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