

On Coetzee
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A page from J.M. Coetzee's autobiographical novel, *Diary of a Bad Year* (New York: Viking, 2008):

If I were pressed to give my brand of political thought a label, I would call it pessimistic anarchistic quietism, or anarchist quietistic pessimism, or pessimistic quietistic anarchism: anarchistic because experience tells me that what is wrong with politics is power itself; quietism because I have my doubts about the will to set about changing the world, a will infected with the drive to power; and pessimism because I am skeptical that, in a fundamental way, things can be changed. (Pessimism of this kind is cousin and perhaps even sister to belief in original sin, that is, to the conviction that humankind is imperfectible.)

But do I really qualify as a thinker at all, someone who has what can properly be called thoughts, about politics or about anything else? I have never been easy with abstractions or good at abstract thought.

Did you have undue influence on me? I don't think so. I don't think you had much influence on me at all. I don't mean that in a negative way. I was lucky to meet you when I did. I would probably still be with Alan but for you; but you didn't influence me. I was myself before I met you and I am still myself now, no change.

I stood up. Time to go home, Alan, I said. Thank you, Mister C, for including us in your celebration. I am sorry we spoiled it, but it is nothing serious, nothing to take to heart, it will all blow over, Alan has just had a little too much to drink.