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Response to *The Astonishing Adventures  
of Fanboy and Goth Girl*

If we're talking about alienation, there's no better place to start than high school. Although everyone feels alienated during this period in their lives, Fanboy adds an extra-thick layer of self-imposed isolation.

He seeks out isolation partly from the futility of trying to be social with a set of unpopular hobbies and his mother's fear of having others in the house blocking his way, but the cause, at least at this point in his life, stems from a sense of superiority. Everyone around him, with a few notable exceptions, is stupid, fake, or unimportant. The majority of his school mates blur past him in a sea of faces he vaguely recognizes—he takes no interest in anyone's life but his own.

His isolation is an exercise in self-absorption, and he doesn't even see the people around him as people, just as titles or as means to an end. His tormentors are all Jock-Jerks, the epitome of his fantasy is a senior goddess, and the girl in skirts is a study for a panty algorithm. The people around him are all either obstacles or objects.

That is not to say this is an unusual attitude for the adolescent brain, or the human brain, to take, but neither is it healthy, noble, nor constructive. If I am alone or lonely, we tell ourselves, it's because the people I know just aren't good enough or intelligent enough to see the goodness and intelligence in me. From the very beginning, we learn to label people as similar or dissimilar to ourselves and evaluate their worth accordingly.

Fanboy's isolation doesn't begin to dissipate until others start to take an interest in him, as a person, and not just a genius or a target. Kyra, in her own way, begins to remove his label, and sets a kind of example for Don to do the same. It takes him a while to come around, but he comes to discover the step-fascist is really Tony and that Cal isn't suck between the jock label and the nerd label, but is simply himself.

Although Don thinks he is an ugly loser, the main source of his isolation has become his self-righteousness and self-importance—he thinks he is simply too big a deal to be bothered with petty things like friends or empathy. The end to isolation comes, not from thinking worse of himself, but from thinking better of others.