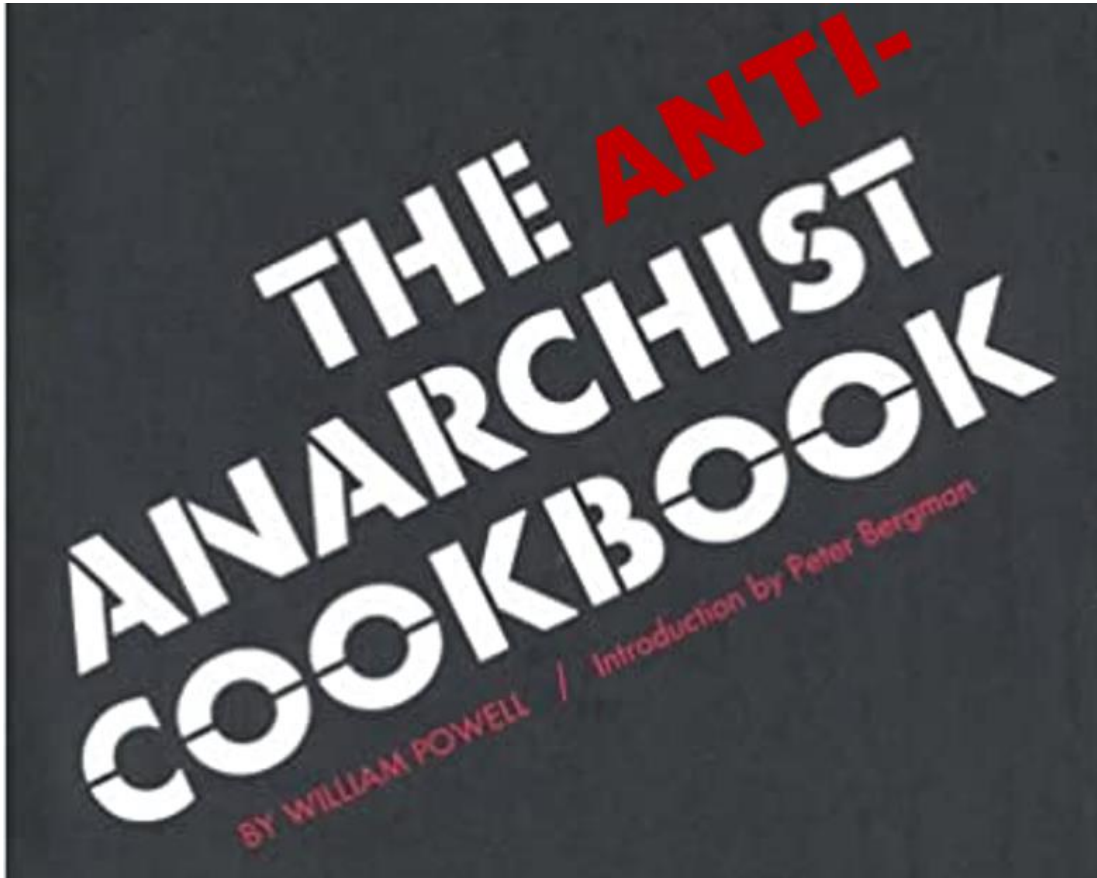




Epsilon Theory

The Anti-Anarchist Cookbook

June 8, 2020



Back when I was in 9th grade - so this would have been 1978 - the older brother of a friend of mine had a copy of *The Anarchist Cookbook*. I remember the thrill I had just holding it. Such forbidden fruit! I only had a chance to flip through it then, but clearly this was the stuff of legend. This was the stuff of dangerous and powerful men.

I found a copy many years later, when I was in grad school. Of course I bought it. I took it back to my apartment, so excited to read this masterpiece at leisure, on my own.

LOL. What a let-down. Here I was expecting the most insanely great revolution-porn of all time, and it was like a *Playboy* from the 1950s. THIS is what got so many people like 14-year-old me so hot and bothered?

Look, there's no doubt that *The Anarchist Cookbook* is pornography.

Meaning it's got lots of pictures, it's enormously attractive even in concept to adolescent boys, it's stimulative rather than informative, and it's mostly harmless but not completely harmless to consume. Certainly its production is part of a decidedly harmful and terrible subculture, and if you want to make the argument that consuming porn aids and abets that harmful and terrible subculture, I'll listen. Yes, I know the William Powell story and I know the documentary, *American Anarchist*.

But if you think that *The Anarchist Cookbook* is anywhere near as pornographic or contributory to a harmful and terrible subculture as *Recoil* magazine, which you can find at every Barnes & Noble in the country, then you just aren't paying attention.



I thought about *The Anarchist Cookbook* and *Recoil* magazine when I saw this now infamous picture of the St. Louis personal injury lawyers defending their Italian palazzo. I'm not going to discuss this case, because no one reading this note will be able to get past that discussion. Many readers will not even be able to get past this picture. We are all *highly* stimulated by this picture. That's because it's quality amateur porn. Nowhere near the production values of a cover of *Recoil* magazine, but in the tradition of quality amateur porn everywhere, the actors more than make up for that with their enthusiasm for the roles.



If I were a betting man - and I am - I'd be prepared to wager a large sum that the McCloskeys do not own a copy of *The Anarchist Cookbook*. In fact, if they're aware of it at all, I'm sure they believe it's a learners' manual for Commies and traitors. I'd also be prepared to wager a large sum that the McCloskeys own several issues of *Recoil* or its ilk, and they believe it's a wonderful resource for freedom-loving American patriots like themselves.

That's an even more poignant observation when you consider this. I only remember one line from *The Anarchist Cookbook* (and for all I know I am misremembering ... porn memories are less trustworthy than real world memories). But paraphrasing, it goes like this:

Never point a gun at someone unless you're ready to shoot them.

Never shoot at someone unless you're ready to kill them.

NARRATOR: The McCloskeys were not ready.

It's a good lesson, right? I mean, yes, *The Anarchist Cookbook* is incredibly boring as far as violence-porn goes. But there's an **authenticity** and a **realness** to *The Anarchist Cookbook* - frankly, just like there's an authenticity and a realness to those *Playboy* issues from the 1950s - that is utterly nonexistent in today's slick productions of culture-porn and politics-porn like *Recoil*. Or HuffPo. Or OANN. Or CNN. Or Fox.

And in exactly the same way that your real world sex life will be *completely* messed up if all you know about sex is what you get from watching Pornhub, so will your attitudes about real world citizenship be *completely* messed up if all you know about politics and culture is what you get from *Recoil*. Or HuffPo. Or OANN. Or CNN. Or Fox.

I think that's what happened to the McCloskeys. I think they got so addicted to the culture-porn and politics-porn of whatever their media sources might be, that they actually believed that the right way to "protect themselves" was to buy military weaponry that they have ZERO idea how to use and then brandish that weaponry in a way that makes the situation MORE dangerous to others AND themselves.

But it's not just the McCloskeys, of course. It's all of us. We're all so immersed in the culture-porn and politics-porn that inundates our dopamine-based economy that half of us believe that the United States is a racist Nazi hellscape and the other half believes that the United States is literally burning as Maoist mobs run amok.

Yep, we're all porn addicts now.

And social media platforms are our pornographers.

Jack Dorsey and Twitter are today's Hugh Hefner and *Playboy*. It's 90% culture-porn and politics-porn, intentionally toned-down just a wee bit, with 10% non-porn material as a beard ... you know, like the interviews were for *Playboy*.

Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook, though ... man, they're today's Larry Flynt and *Hustler*, all hardcore culture and politics-porn all the time.

Not that there's anything wrong with that.

Or maybe there is.

Maybe it's not such a great thing that we're a nation of porn addicts. Maybe it's not such a great thing that our most powerful media companies are pornographers. Maybe it's not such a great thing that our President is a gifted political porn star, and that his electoral opponent is ... a less-gifted political porn star.

The answer is not to ban culture and politics pornography. I know that because government-led banning (even chilling) of cultural and political speech, no matter how pornographic, IS ITSELF a form of cultural and political pornography. It is, in fact, THE WORST form of cultural and political pornography, because it is, in fact, the means of production of the (truly) fascist state. The answer is not to limit political speech.

No, the answer is to speak politics better.

The answer is to be more attractive than the porn stars. The answer is to be sexy without being pornographic. The answer is to be authentic and real and human and smart. The answer is to choose your words about culture or politics - to construct your *narrative* about culture or politics - in a way that is not just stimulative for stimulation's sake, but stimulative *and* informative *and* authentic.

That's what the rest of this note is about. A specific example of a shift in language and narrative that I think can make a real difference in reducing the culture and politics-porn that is killing our world AND help create actual policy change that yes - *burns the existing system down* - to replace it with something better.

The first chapter - the first of many, I hope - in *The Anti-Anarchist Cookbook*.

Police reform is only a start ...

Defund the police? No.

Demilitarize and Deunionize? Yes.

The problem with "Defund the police" is not one of policy, but of narrative.

I know that neither the proponents nor the opponents of "Defund the police" will agree with me. Both will say it's ALL about the policy, either the necessity of the policy (proponents) or the horrors of the policy (opponents). If you're on the left, you will probably be frustrated with me for saying that "Defund the police" is no longer about policy -- **no, no, Ben, you just don't understand**. And if you're on the right, you will probably be angry with me for saying this -- **no, no, Ben, you just don't see**.

What I understand is how culture-porn works. What I see is its success.

In this case it's a matter of political entrepreneurs on the right taking the word "defund" and associating it with cardiovascular and hormonal-stimulative images and short phrases (n-grams in the narrative science lingo, engrams in the neuropsychology lingo, memes in the popular lingo) in order to produce the desired behavioral reaction in their followers.

For example, here's the image Breitbart ran in connection with its "news" article [Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Supports 'Defund the Police' Movement](#).



Everything about this, from the insertion of AOC's name in the headline to the tagging of the image ("far-left-rioters-640x480"), is designed for effective search engine optimization (SEO) and social media distribution to a very specific audience. It's exactly like a porn site, but designed to stimulate stress hormones rather than pleasure hormones. You can find a hundred examples just like this with even a cursory narrative search of the word "defund", all with very high production values, in media sources like Breitbart, OANN and Fox. It's quality porn.

And lest my culture porn-addicted friends on the right think I'm picking on them, I've got a million zillion examples of equally high production value culture-porn from CNN and Huffpo and MSNBC and all the rest, mostly of the "Republicans pounce" genre (the missionary position of left-leaning culture-porn production). Increasingly though, as cancel culture marches on, the culture-porn of left-leaning media is of the "every public figure is a Nazi racist" genre, which is - and I mean this seriously - the most liberty-destroying and human rights-damaging political development of my lifetime.

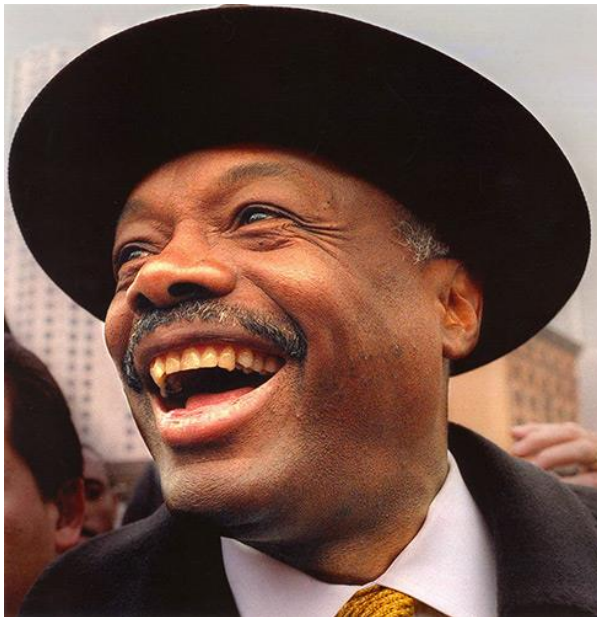
Culture-porn addiction is absolutely a both-sides thing, and it boils down to this: if you spend a significant amount of time on social media, regardless of your political affiliation or lack thereof, you are addicted to culture-porn.

I say this in the clinical sense of the word. This is biology, not ethics. I say this as an addict myself.

The result? Once your narrative has been captured by the culture-porn machine (and that's exactly what it is ... a profit-making, power-accumulating machine) you can no longer "explain" to people what your narrative or slogan "really" means.

Why? Because you are no longer fighting ignorance or apathy, you are fighting neural brain chemicals. You are fighting dopamine and cortisol and noradrenaline. You will lose that fight every time.

Willie Brown, maybe the greatest natural politician of the past 50 years, understood this.



***Every minute you're explaining,
you're losing.***

*Willie Brown, San Francisco mayor 1996 - 2004,
godfather of modern California politics*

If you don't know Willie Brown's story, do yourself a favor and look it up. He's Alexander Hamilton-esque, just in a different day and age. You could definitely put together a musical here.

Does "Defund" mean "Disband"? Of course not. But every resource spent *explaining* that "defund" means a reallocation of resources into community policing and policies that can improve the public safety of ALL Americans is a wasted effort. Worse, it's actually counterproductive. As Willie Brown said, your act of

explanation makes you lose more, as it forces people to engage with the highly stimulative culture-porn that you are earnestly explaining about. "Defund the police" has been captured by the culture-porn machine, and there's no coming back from that.

If you believe in the goals of this policy initiative - *as I do* - that's a sad thing. But the proper response to this sad thing is not to mope. It's certainly not to make the sad thing even sadder by continuing to fight a lost narrative cause.

No, the proper response is to be more attractive than the porn star. The proper response is to *speak politics better*, using a narrative that is still sexy (i.e., stimulative) but is also *authentic* and *real* enough to be culture porn-resistant. Not culture porn-immune. Nothing is culture porn-immune. But culture porn-resistant ... a narrative framing that can be successfully advanced by political entrepreneurs of the CENTER.

Imagine that.

Defund the police? No.

Demilitarize and Deunionize? Yes.

The words "demilitarize" and "deunionize" are stimulative, culture-porn resistant, and authentically descriptive of the real world policy changes that structural police reform requires.

By stimulative, I mean it is possible to create a set of specific images and texts around "Demilitarize and Deunionize" that trigger many of the same brain chemical reactions as culture-porn.

By culture-porn resistant, I mean it is difficult for either the politically entrepreneurial left or the politically entrepreneurial right to create an oppositional set of specific images and texts around "Demilitarize and Deunionize".

By authentically descriptive of real world policy changes, I mean that "Demilitarize and Deunionize" is contextually accurate and an authentic representation of the policy position I am advocating. Put more bluntly, I mean that "Demilitarize and Deunionize" is not culture-porn itself.

That last one is probably the most important, and it's my biggest problem with the "Defund" argument. I don't *want* to defund the police. In and of itself, that is *not* my policy reform goal. Frankly, I'm prepared to give the police MORE money in terms of salary and training and personnel if I can accomplish my policy reform goals, which are, in fact, to demilitarize and deunionize the police.

Asking these three questions of any narrative - is it effective on a brain chemical level? is it resilient against narrative counterattack? is it authentic to what you truly believe? - is the right *framework* to achieve lasting policy success in a modern age of ubiquitous social media and culture-porn addiction.

Let's look at each of these questions in turn for the narrative I'm proposing for structural police reform: "Demilitarize and Deunionize".

Is "Demilitarize" stimulative?

LOL, the stories write themselves. Here's a picture of the 14-ton armored personnel carrier that the [Los Angeles school district police](#) acquired in 2014 from the US government's "1033 Program" - a 20-year-old initiative to distribute military equipment to policing authorities. I mean, you can't make this stuff up. This is the public school police, prepared to navigate whatever literal minefields might get in their way as they storm the potential terrorist bastion of PS 33.

Oh yeah, they also got grenade launchers.



This particular story is six years old, an evergreen because ... c'mon, school police and armored personnel carriers. Give me a day, though, and I could write 100 more stories just like it. Every police department in the country has been flooded with expensive military toys like this, and it's child's play to write a sexy story arc about that.

Is "Demilitarize" culture-porn resistant?

I think so. But like I said, nothing is culture-porn immune.

The potential culture-porn treatment of police demilitarization is to get some imagery of armed-to-the-teeth criminals murdering a brigade of unarmed patrolmen, and then to equate "demilitarize" with "disarm".



For example, here's a shot from the 1995 movie "Heat", with Robert De Niro mowing down about a dozen cops. If you were able to get something like that from the real world, it would play. Of course, De Niro is white, so you really don't get the culture-porn money shot here, but I could see the usual media suspects taking some images from, say, a drug cartel's assault on a Mexican police deployment and trying to use that. It's possible, but I think it's a stretch.

Is "Demilitarize" an authentic representation of my policy goals?

Yes, absolutely.

And let me start by addressing that possible culture-porn counter-narrative that I just mentioned, that Demilitarize = Disarm. Every big city should have a SWAT team. Every big city should have a unit capable of handling *anything* that criminals can bring to bear. And they do. *SWAT has been part of every big city's police organization for almost 50 years.* Hell, I'm old enough to remember the original *S.W.A.T.* on TV, from 1975. It's impossible to remove this core militarized *unit* from a large police organization, and even if you could, I don't think you should.

I'm all for keeping a militarized *unit* in a police organization.

What I want to eliminate is a militarized police *force*.

Why? Because militarization is the antithesis of community policing. Because militarization is not just a matter of equipment and firepower, but more crucially a matter of *attitude* and *training*. Because militarization creates *distance* between police officers and the citizens they are sworn to serve, destroying the empathy that should exist from the police to civilians, *and the empathy that should flow back in return*.

If you tell yourself that you are an occupying army, if you use the language of an occupying army to describe your tactics and your goals in your own internal conversations, then you WILL become that occupying army. And you will be treated as one.

Narratives always matter, but they matter most in the narratives we tell ourselves.

Ubiquitous military hardware is the scaffolding for that language, for that internal narrative that police officers *tell themselves*. Take away the ubiquitous military hardware. Take away that scaffolding and watch as an old story takes root once again within your police organization, a narrative not of occupying a hostile territory but of defending a grateful community. **An old narrative that becomes new again: *Protect and Serve*.**

Imagine that.

One last point here ... "Demilitarize" is a specific enough term (far more specific than "Defund") to describe my policy goals in regards to structural police reform. It is also general enough to describe adjacent policy goals that I *also* believe should be part of structural police reform, but do not have a stimulative narrative in and of themselves - **policy goals like the elimination of civil asset forfeiture.**

The seizure of civilian assets without conviction in a court of law - hell, without charges, arrest or trial - is what an occupying army does. Civil asset forfeiture is an affront to every American who gives a damn about liberty or the rule of law, and it goes hand-in-hand with militarization. They came into our police forces together, and they can be eliminated together. This is the power of a strong, winning narrative like "Demilitarize".

Is "Deunionize" stimulative?

The potential story arcs around police unions are not as visually arresting, but the stimulative effect on brain chemistry is no less.



This is Lt. Bob Kroll, president of the Minneapolis Police Union, shown here discussing his opposition to releasing body camera footage of a fatal police shooting in 2018, and more recently in the news for his denunciation of the firing (not the arrest ... the firing) of the four police officers who killed George Floyd. As the *New York Times* [notes](#), "Mr. Kroll is himself the subject of at least 29 complaints",

including, as the *Wall Street Journal* [notes](#), at least 10 complaints of excessive use of force, a letter of reprimand for using police resources to harass an ex-girlfriend, and a settlement paid to five Black police officers who, as part of a hostile work environment suit, said that Kroll wore a "white power" badge on his leather motorcycle jacket.



This is Pat Lynch, president of the New York City Police Benevolent Association, shown here in 2019 [denouncing a judge's decision](#) to recommend the firing of the police officer who killed Eric Garner in 2014 with a chokehold. Lynch railed at the "trampling" of the officer's "due process rights" (again, this firing recommendation is happening five YEARS after Garner's death), noting that

while the death was painful for Garner's family, the police officers involved have also "suffered".

Is it Kroll's and Lynch's *job* to take unpopular public positions like this? Yes, to an extent. But only to an extent. No one forced these guys to make a zealous public defense of the indefensible. They sought it out. There's a difference between filing a labor grievance behind the scenes and an impassioned public defense of killers and abusers, and *it is in that difference where brain chemistry stimulation exists*.

As with "Demilitarize", there are literally hundreds of stories like this across America, stories that write themselves when guys like Kroll and Lynch indict themselves with their own language.

Is "Deunionize" culture-porn resistant?

Very.

In fact, I don't think that the politically entrepreneurial right can touch this at all, as they've already made a cottage culture-porn industry out of attacking labor and unions. Again, nothing is culture-porn immune, but I have no idea what the "police unions are great" story arc would be from the right, especially since the other giant public sector union - teachers unions - is the Great White Whale of many an Ahab on the politically entrepreneurial right.

It's the politically entrepreneurial left that is more likely to gnash their teeth about "Deunionize", again because of its adjacency to teachers unions, but again I have no idea what the "police unions are great" story arc would be here. All you've got are slippery slope arguments - which are about as sexy as a treatise on mold spores - and "it'll get held up in the courts" arguments - which are even less stimulative, if that's imaginable.

Is "Deunionize" an authentic representation of my policy goals?

Yes, absolutely.

See, I don't think that police unions are labor unions at all. I think they're guilds. I think that the police guild in almost every American city and town has smartly adopted the *language* of labor unions and collective bargaining to create a narrative shield that is as false as it is powerful.

The reality is that a police force does not exist in the world of Labor vs. Capital that contains true labor unions. The reality is that a police force is a self-regulating organization that is hired by *the citizens* of a city or town, and paid for by *the pooled resources* of those citizens, in exactly the same way that citizens used to hire a mason's guild to build a city wall. This isn't collective bargaining. It's just bargaining.

To be clear, I'm perfectly fine with the police in a town or city forming a guild and doing their guild thing, which at its core is to maintain a local monopoly in who can and can't call themselves "police" in exchange for a reasonably good quality-of-service in that local jurisdiction. I think that policing is one of those rare common goods that lends itself extremely well to citizens granting that local monopoly.

But you're not a labor union.

And you don't get to shield your self-interested guild practices - like protecting the jobs of guild members who have betrayed the citizens they swore an oath to serve - with labor law.

By the way - and this is a direct response to those who say it will take 20 years to fight this in the courts - you know what it takes for all of these local police guilds to be stripped of their legal status as unions? A federal law. I know that sounds crazy in this day and age where everyone in the House and Senate is a wannabe culture-porn star, far more interested in that bon mot tweet than actually, you know, being a legislator.

And on that note of meaningful police reform legislation ...

Just as "Demilitarize" is both specific enough to be representative of its direct reform goals *and* general enough to incorporate adjacent reform goals, so is "Deunionize". For "Deunionize", that adjacent goal is **the elimination of qualified immunity status for police officers.**

What's the connection? Both unions and qualified immunity status provide *legal protections* for police from the rightful claims and just redress of the citizens they swear an oath to protect. Like civil asset forfeiture, qualified immunity status is an affront to every American who gives a damn about liberty or the rule of law. Like police unions, qualified immunity status can be undone with a single piece of federal legislation. [At least Justin Amash is trying.](#) But it's not working because he put the cart before the horse.

First comes the winning narrative that creates a deep reservoir of popular support for meaningful policy reform *from the bottom-up*. THEN comes the legislation from the top-down.

That's the process. That's how we change the world.

The weapons of *The Anti-Anarchist Cookbook* are not guns and explosives. They're words.

Throughout human history, narrative has been used against us by high-functioning sociopaths as they turn us into fodder and feed. Narrative has been used to excuse the inexcusable, to preserve a status quo that subverts our inalienable rights even as it pretends to defend them.

It's time to turn the tables. It's time to use our understanding of the Narrative Machine to subvert the sociopaths and their smiley-face authoritarian system of crony capitalism and trickle-down democracy. It's time to create counter-narratives in service to liberty and justice for ALL.

Imagine that.



[We're going to change the world, you know ...
you and me.](#)

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