

# Philosophical Skepticism, Racial Justice, and US Education Policy

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Here is my thesis: Cartesian skepticism functions like a death-ray, which is, somewhat paradoxically, crucial to its positive, productive work. Turning the skeptical gaze upon the uncritically-inherited tenets of hoary tradition deactivates them, makes them go dead—the death ray of skepticism loosens the grip of *mere* belief, which may be deceptive, so that we can reestablish true knowledge on the basis of reason, processing our beliefs through the procedural wringer of doubt.<sup>1</sup> This is the conventional story of the rise of modern science and the dawning of the Enlightenment.<sup>2</sup>

But the death-ray capacity of Cartesian skepticism can also do significant harm, as well, particularly in two kinds of cases: (1) When it is directed specifically at other minds rather than at the external world in general, and (2) When it is wielded from above, from a position of power, rather than from below. In those cases, its ability to cast the object of its gaze into a state of ambiguous reality can license—and has historically licensed—the kind of perverse responsiveness to others that Césaire calls the “thingification” characteristic of racialized colonialism and imperialism.<sup>3</sup>

With these traditions in the background, we should look again at the way US policy has imagined the relationship between public education and racial justice since 1965. What I find in the political pursuit of the elimination of racial gaps is something like a Cartesian quest for evidence of racial equality. Public education becomes a field for answering a very typical kind of skeptical question: Have minoritized and traditionally marginalized students become others like ourselves *yet*?

It is my argument here that, far from paving the way to justice and equality, keeping this question alive actively maintains existing relations of domination and indefinitely postpones the arrival of justice. And further, our mistake here not only permits but valorizes means of gap-closure that performatively reinforces the subordinate status of minoritized students. We can see

the tenacity of these efforts in the practices of No Excuses charter schools.

### WHAT I MEAN BY SKEPTICISM

I find it useful to take Bryan Warnick's recent work on skepticism as a jumping-off point.<sup>4</sup> He divides philosophical skepticism in both its ancient and modern articulations into two forms: the Academic and the Pyrrhonian.<sup>5</sup> Academic skeptics, including its Cartesian variant, seek true knowledge as distinguished from false belief. Their skeptical method, subjecting every candidate belief to radical doubt, does this distinguishing. True knowledge is valuable because it founds our connection to reality; it is the reason, one might say, that the unexamined life is not worth living.<sup>6</sup>

Pyrrhonian skeptics, meanwhile, seek *ataraxia*, a condition that Warnick calls "tranquility of soul" and that Robert Fogelin describes as "blessedness."<sup>7</sup> Pyrrhonianism is skeptical because *ataraxia* is achieved by what both Warnick and Fogelin call the "suspension" of belief in philosophical theses. Unlike Cartesian or Academic skepticism, this suspension is an end and not simply a means. Where the goal of Cartesian skepticism is to perfect our attachment to the world, Pyrrhonianism seeks to release us from our unhealthy attachment to the world. One way of parsing the key distinction is to say that Pyrrhonian skepticism is therapeutic, while Academic or Cartesian skepticism is productive or industrious.<sup>8</sup> The distinction between Pyrrhonian and Academic skepticism is often framed as bearing upon the relative value of belief. But I think it is more helpful to think of the distinction as turning on the value of possession—on what *having* correct beliefs does for us—or to us.

The productive version of skepticism—the Academic or the Cartesian—famously suffers from this structural problem: *performing* the procedure of doubting requires the assumption of something indubitable. There is a necessary conflict between the claim, or the project, to establish contact with the real world on the basis of true knowledge verified by rigorous subjection to doubt and the fact that we cannot, and do not, doubt everything at once. Ignoring or dismissing this conflict results in two distortions. First there is a positive distortion of our relation to reality, what Dreyfus and Taylor call the "ontologizing" of the critical

method itself. It reifies what they call a “mediational” ontology, assuming that our relation to the world *goes through* beliefs, whether true or false.<sup>9</sup> And there is also a negative distortion, namely the way ordinary circumstances and objects are stripped of their power to elicit our responsiveness. Thinking along these lines, Stanley Cavell finds that “skepticism [operates] in such a way that efforts to solve it continue its work of denial.”<sup>10</sup> Attempts to refute or overcome Cartesian skepticism on its own terms only echo “the decisive movement in the conjuring trick”: they reinforce both distortions I mentioned above.<sup>11</sup> Acknowledging the basic paradox in Cartesian skepticism—that perfecting our attachment to the world requires getting to the bottom of our beliefs, and yet we cannot and do not literally doubt everything—makes us responsible for what we do and do not doubt. Skeptical procedures cannot be impersonal; we are personally implicated in their application.<sup>12</sup>

This responsibility becomes particularly acute in the case of other-minds skepticism because it is structurally different from external-world skepticism. Descartes raises the possibility more than once that what *seem* like people might be automata. He does not *see* people on the street, he says, but only “hats and coats.”<sup>13</sup> But he is obviously not then doubting the reality of the hats or coats that he sees. The problem of discerning the inner life of another is therefore distinct from the problem of knowing whether the external world exists at all.

The moral implications of this distinction become clear when we consider the way that skeptical procedures generalize from individual cases. In skeptical performances, ordinary objects—a piece of wax, an envelope—stand for the external world as a whole. The ordinary object is, as Cavell says, “a best case of knowledge with whose collapse our confidence in knowledge as a whole collapses.”<sup>14</sup> But while skeptical procedures can make me realize that I don’t see this table before me “directly” or because I don’t see *all* of it, there is no analogous case with respect to other minds. “In the case of other minds,” Cavell says, “I find that instances of the other do not generalize. . . . The [external world] format does not express my interest in knowing another.”<sup>15</sup>

Because of what another mind is, it just cannot be a best case of knowledge in the way a piece of wax can be. It is not *news* to me that I cannot

*really* see another's thoughts. Other minds are by definition other, separate from ourselves, not objects of knowledge plainly open to view, as pieces of wax are. To force the analogy is to make a category mistake that carries metaphorical and actual violence in its wake. As Cavell says in the foreword to Veena Das's *Life and Words*, "a skeptical process toward other human beings... results not in a realization of my ignorance of the existence of the other, but in my denial of that existence, my refusal to acknowledge it, my psychic annihilation of the other."<sup>16</sup>

### SKEPTICISM AND RACIAL HIERARCHY

Considerable scholarship has documented the relation between the advent of European colonization and the rise of modern capitalism.<sup>17</sup> Comparatively little attention, however, has been paid to the role of philosophical innovations that accompanied these massive global transformations—including cartesian skepticism.<sup>18</sup> Several centuries prior to the age of European colonization, and in order to deny the heretical theory of polygenesis, Augustine had denied that there could be humans living on the other side of the world.<sup>19</sup> This background made Descartes' abstract difficulty of inferring minds from clothing into a question of the utmost political, theological, and economic importance: Are these New-World beings that we Europeans encounter others *like ourselves*?

Historical answers to this question illuminate Cavell's distinction between adopting a stance toward another and attempting to remedy a kind of ignorance. Bartolomé de Las Casas distinguished between Africans and Native Americans in order to define appropriate subjects of enslavement.<sup>20</sup> Locke's theory of property construed indigenous cultivation practices as insufficient to generate rights of private property.<sup>21</sup> Even John Stuart Mill, who acknowledged the common humanity of Indigenous peoples, nevertheless suggested that the current state of indigenous civilizations disqualified them for sovereignty and self-government. "Despotism," he said, "is a legitimate mode of government in dealing with barbarians, provided the end be their improvement, and the means justified by actually effecting that end."<sup>22</sup> The grant of political equality therefore comes to depend on demonstrating sufficient improvement.

Each of these positions takes visible differences in cultural habits, skin

tone, eye shape, hair texture, and so on, to amount to *civilizational* differences—racial differences—and each position, partly through skepticism of the other, takes its own superiority for granted.<sup>23</sup> This is what the death-ray capacity of other-minds skepticism looks like when it is wielded from above. The fact that European colonizers could not be *certain* whether Indigenous peoples were others like themselves justified dispossession, genocide, and enslavement in the pursuit of some highly abstract greater good. This illustrates skepticism's openness to cynical abuse, in this case to indefinitely suspend the *duties* that would attend acknowledging others as human. To use a favorite trope of education reformers, we might say that colonization took skepticism's psychic annihilation to scale.

If we accept Cavell's intuition that other minds skepticism is not ignorance but refusal, it follows that attempting to counter psychic annihilation by establishing proof of humanity will necessarily fail; and indeed, that addressing refusal as ignorance actively maintains the superior position of the ones who demand proof over the ones who must prove themselves. Mill's call for a regrettable and temporary despotism while the "barbarians" are improved is a perfect example of this dynamic.<sup>24</sup> This is also my interpretation of Fanon's complaint about the political limits of *négritude*. In his words, "the discovery that a black civilization existed in the 15<sup>th</sup> century does not earn me a certificate of humanity."<sup>25</sup> This is not, for me, a claim about the insufficiency of a piece of evidence, but about the self-defeating nature of any such evidence: the demand for evidence performatively reifies the hierarchy that the evidence is supposed to obliterate. The decisive move in the conjuring trick has already been made.

This basic idea, offered in a different vein and with an eye to different ends, underwrites much of the literature in the Afropessimist and "tragedy of emancipation" archives.<sup>26</sup> Skepticism deployed toward racialized others polices the line between insiders and outsiders, maintaining the coherence of an "us" while—and by—indeinitely prolonging the probationary purgatory of a "them."<sup>27</sup> Cavell's "denial," here, is an inflection of Agamben's notion of the sovereign decision.<sup>28</sup> The power to selectively withhold humanity from others—what Orlando Patterson located in the slave's inability to be the *subject* of property—is the real essence of Césaire's "thingification."<sup>29</sup>

The crucial point linking a Cavellian analysis of other-minds skepticism

to the insights of Afropessimist and Postcolonial thinking is that the demand for proof of humanity is bound up with the power to set, to move, and to evaluate evidentiary standards—and such power is obviously asymmetrical.<sup>30</sup> This accounts for the cynical ways that skeptical procedures have been selectively used to affirm and deny the humanity of racialized others, but always to the benefit of the ones exercising the power of decision. Saidiya Hartman's analysis of Celia, an enslaved woman convicted of murdering her owner and rapist, is a case in point: not a subject of consent, but a subject of criminal liability.<sup>31</sup>

We should therefore be wary of public policies tying promises of social justice to the furnishing of evidence of equal humanity—these policies rest, in their very structure, on a skeptical foundation that is never sufficient to realizing justice and always lends itself to the reproduction of a regime of racial inequality.

### US EDUCATION POLICY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Bearing all that in mind, let us examine the educational vision of race and justice that has predominated since 1965, when President Johnson delivered a graduation speech at Howard University entitled “To Fulfill These Rights” one month after the passage of the first Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

In 1965, Johnson noted that there were massive and growing gaps between white and Black Americans in the material indicators of well-being: poverty rates, infant mortality rates, and unemployment rates chief among them. These, he said, “are solely and simply the consequence of ancient brutality, past injustice, and present prejudice.”<sup>32</sup> This ancient brutality—the regime of racialized enslavement—had damaged Black culture in general, on Johnson's view. Even after the formal equalization of civil rights, this cultural damage stood to impede the realization of justice, primarily by preventing Black children from optimizing the educational opportunities to which they were formally entitled.<sup>33</sup> An appropriate education would transform cultural habits at the same time as it provided Black children with the “training and skills” necessary to labor market success. Exclusion from—or the absence of—such educational opportunities had justified exclusion from the labor market, which had justified for material inequalities, which had justified the holding of racist views.<sup>34</sup> Federal policy from 1965 onward seeks to break this cycle. Equalizing educational opportunity will

equalize labor market outcomes, which will equalize material prosperity, which will undermine racist beliefs. That's the basic theory of action.

Framing the remediation of racism in this way suggests that the great crime of racialized enslavement damaged the culture of the enslaved without, somehow, damaging the culture of the enslavers. The policy approach focuses on a sort of undead racism that lives on *in Black people*—in Black bodies, in Black art forms, in Black habits. Put simply, eradicating racism requires an educational project of transforming Black people into social and political subjects fully deserving of citizenship. Measurable disparities in social indicators signify that this work remains undone; closing the disparities will mean the debt has been paid.

This is all necessary to understand the policy obsession with the Black-white achievement gap over the past sixty years, which has become fully symbolic of the nation's debt for its historical racism. As Jencks and Phillips put it in the late 1990s, "If racial equality is America's goal, reducing the black-white test score gap would probably do more to promote this goal than any other strategy that commands broad political support."<sup>35</sup> No Excuses schools arise out of this theory: that monomaniacal pursuit of closing the achievement gap is the very substance of antiracist educational practice, and that any educational means of closing that gap are justified.<sup>36</sup>

I focus on the practices of No Excuses schools simply because they represent the purest application of Johnson's theory of producing racial justice through education. That is, unlike traditional public schools, whose career educators have had ever more rigorous policy incentives to raise achievement layered on top of a multidimensional professional ethos acquired through years of experience, training, and professional development, No Excuses schools' hiring and training practices actively recruit novice teachers, precisely because these are not burdened by any preconceived multidimensional ethos.<sup>37</sup> There is no negotiation about what really matters between administrators and teachers; the aims are given; there is a plan to be carried out. The plan is so consistent, in fact, that it has been impossible for researchers to test the various constitutive elements of No Excuses practices in isolation from one another because they always occur together.<sup>38</sup> The question is, what does carrying out this plan do?

Study after study shows that No Excuses schools do raise test scores,

outperform local neighborhood schools, and excel at sending kids to college.<sup>39</sup> But study after study also shows that they achieve these outcomes through intense policing, surveillance, and behavioral prescription—practices that explicitly recall Bowles and Gintis’s work from the 1970s.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the most revealing result shows that No Excuses teachers position their students as both “actively deviant” but “passively performing”—that is, when students misbehave or underperform, teachers attribute it to the students’ disordered agency, while when students succeed academically, teachers attribute it to *their own* agency.<sup>41</sup> The structural similarity to Hartman’s study of Celia’s case, I take it, speaks for itself. The process of No Excuses schooling entrenches and reproduces the domination that the educational outcome is supposed to overcome. And equalizing educational outcomes has not overcome systematic inequalities: racial disparities remain in housing and employment even when controlling for educational qualifications.<sup>42</sup>

US education policy has adhered to what we might call a skeptical faith: that racial justice requires proof of equality; that educational credentials will constitute this proof; and that equal credentials will therefore produce the substance of racial equality itself. What we have seen, however, is more or less what my critique of Cartesian skepticism would predict. The most successful efforts at equalizing educational credentials employ dehumanizing means, thereby reinforcing in practice and habit the racialized hierarchy that they explicitly intend to subvert. Further, traditionally marginalized people receive fewer job offers, earn lower starting salaries, see their homes appraised at lower values, and encounter formal and informal strategies of spatial containment even when holding equally prestigious credentials.<sup>43</sup> Skepticism justifies despotism in generating proof of equality. But the persistence of racial disparities in the face of equal credentials suggests that the problem of racial injustice has never been a problem of uncertainty. Demanding proof of equality is one means of avoiding the rigors of justice.

#### CONCLUSION: PYRRHONISM REVISITED

This talk has emphasized the violence that Cartesian skepticism can do to others. Other-minds skepticism is a refusal masquerading as ignorance.

It can and does further racialized domination, even—and especially—when it prompts efforts to refute it. Both the theory of racial justice undergirding US education policy and the practices of No Excuses charter schools exemplify these dynamics.

I have only hinted at the harm that Cartesianism does to the skeptical subject. Worrying over proof of another's humanity serves to displace worries over the quality of one's own humanity—and it definitively refuses to countenance the other's view of oneself. . . . This is another expression of sovereignty—a lonely sovereignty. If *Othello* dramatizes the violence that flows to the object of skeptical doubt, *King Lear* is the dramatization of the violence that returns to the skeptical subject—a refusal to allow oneself to be known. The skeptical barrier works in both directions. To be walled off from others is also to be walled in. As Cavell puts it, the skeptic “is *impaled* upon his knowledge.”<sup>44</sup> In attempting to take epistemological possession of the world and others, we miss the world we want to know. What we wind up possessing—by enclosing—is a diminished, distorted version of ourselves.

This is why I think the distinction between a Cartesian effort at securing true knowledge and a Pyrrhonian commitment to holding opinions only “loosely,” as Warnick has described it, has not been fully appreciated.<sup>45</sup> Holding opinions loosely, Pyrrhonians find themselves susceptible to being turned, as it were; to having their attention redirected or directed differently. Here the presence of and interaction with others, and with the world in general, is a positive affordance. Linda Zerilli's reading of Arendt has something of this character: “perspectives are corrigible not by something that is extraperspectival or neutral, but by other perspectives themselves.”<sup>46</sup> Rather than a uniform procedure that puts the whole world in doubt while doubling down on one's own self-sufficiency, the Pyrrhonian procedure is simply one of looking again, of being prepared to see things differently, and of responding anew to the heretofore unnoticed plenitude of the world. Naomi Scheman would describe this contrast as between an epistemology of parsimony and an epistemology of largesse.<sup>47</sup> From the other direction, Cavell might say that ways of being in the world are a bequest, and we should not be stingy in what we attempt to inherit.<sup>48</sup>

The cost of skepticism to the skeptic is not an original point. A great

many racialized and othered scholars have tried to make this self-defeating miserliness apparent to the dominant culture within which they write. Of course, there is Freire's "No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so," but that is only the most succinct slogan.<sup>49</sup> One might also recall James Baldwin's meditations on "the white man's profound desire not to be judged by those who are not white, not to be seen as he is," which is coupled with "an equally profound need to be seen as he is, to be released from the tyranny of his mirror," and one might reflect on our tendency to forget that Descartes' critical perspective was an *achievement*, and one might ponder the full scope of what has been achieved.<sup>50</sup> And perhaps, reflecting upon the fundamental story that we tell ourselves about how education leads to justice, one would be ready to hear Fred Moten's words in the proper key: "I don't need your help. I just need you to recognize that this shit is killing you, too, however much more softly, you stupid motherfucker, you know?"<sup>51</sup>

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1 Hubert Dreyfus and Charles Taylor, *Retrieving Realism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 33-34, 102.

2 Hubert Dreyfus, *What Computers Still Can't Do* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992); Edward Dolnick, *The Clockwork Universe* (New York: HarperCollins, 2011); Anthony Gottlieb, *The Dream of Enlightenment* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2016); Jessica Riskin, *The Restless Clock* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Jonathan Rauch, *The Constitution of Knowledge* (Washington, D. C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2021)

3 Aime Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*, trans. Joan Pinkham (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 42. See also Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 58-60.

4 Bryan Warnick, "Interrogating the Opinionated Life," *Philosophical Studies in Education* 52 (2021): 61-73.

5 Leo Strauss, *On Plato's "Protagoras,"* ed. Robert Bartlett (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022), 334; Robert Fogelin, *Walking the Tightrope of Reason: The Precarious Life of a Rational Animal* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112-113.

6 Plato, *Apology*, in *Plato in Twelve Volumes*, vol. 1, trans. Harold North Fowler

(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), 38a; See also Simon R. Slings, *Plato's Apology of Socrates* (New York: EJ Brill, 1994), 197, 375, for the argument that “unexamined life” is a misleading translation.

7 Warnick, “Interrogating the Opinionated Life,” 63; Fogelin, *Walking the Tight-rope of Reason*, 114.

8 Strauss, *On Plato's "Protagoras,"* 76, 334.

9 Dreyfus and Taylor, *Retrieving Realism*, 102.

10 Stanley Cavell, *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 23.

11 Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, eds. G.E.M. Anscombe, P.M.S. Hacker, and Joachim Schulte (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), §308.

12 This is obviously one way of understanding the moral of Descartes' famous *cogito ergo sum*.

13 René Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, trans. Ian Johnston (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2013), 51; René Descartes, *Discourse on Method*, ed. David Weissman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 34-35; On “other minds” as a particular valence of the skeptical threat, see Simon Glendinning, *On Being with Others* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 16. On Descartes' philosophical uses of automata, see Riskin, *The Restless Clock*, 48-58.

14 Stanley Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 149.

15 Cavell, *Philosophy the Day After Tomorrow*, 149.

16 Cavell, *Here and There* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2022), 191.

17 Jon Levy, *Freaks of Fortune* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012); Katherine McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006); David Scott, *Conscripts of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Barbara Weinstein, *The Color of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

18 Exceptions would include John O'Brien, *Literature Incorporated* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Elisabeth Anker, *Ugly Freedoms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022); Katherine McKittrick, *Sylvia Wynter* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

19 Augustine, *City of God*, trans. Marcus Dods (Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson

Publishers, 2009)), 480.

20 Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Global Transformations* (London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); McKittrick, *Demonic Grounds*, 125.

21 Anker, *Ugly Freedoms*, 57.

22 John Stuart Mill, *On Liberty* (Floating Press, 2009), 20. See also Edward Said, “Consolidated Vision,” in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 62-190.

23 Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).

24 Naoki Sakai, *The End of Pax Americana* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 188.

25 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2008), 199.

26 See Frank Wilderson III, *Afropessimism* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 2020); Calvin Warren, *Ontological Terror* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018); Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016); Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons* (London: Minor Compositions, 2013); Rinaldo Walcott, *The Long Emancipation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021). “Tragedy of emancipation” is Libby Anker’s term from *Ugly Freedoms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022).

27 This is a point that Wilderson is particularly insistent on. See *Afropessimism*, 101-103.

28 Giorgio Agamben, *The Omnibus Homo Sacer* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2016).

29 Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018), 28.; Aime Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 42.

30 Cavell, *Claim of Reason*, 45; Anker, *Ugly Freedoms*, 49-65.

31 Sylvia Wynter, “‘No Humans Involved’: An Open Letter to My Colleagues,” *Forum N.H.I.: Knowledge for the 21st Century*, 1, no. 1 (1994): 42-73; Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 83-86.

32 Lyndon B. Johnson, “To Fulfill These Rights,” *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States*, (1965): 635-640.

33 Daniel Geary, *Beyond Civil Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania

Press, 2015); Kahlil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019); Comer Vann Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

34 Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005); Daniel Geary, "Racial Liberalism, the Moynihan Report, and the Daedalus Project on 'The Negro American,'" *Daedalus* 140, no. 1 (2011): 53-66.

35 Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips, *The Black-white Test Score Gap* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1998), 3-4.

36 Robert Pondiscio, *How the Other Half Learns* (New York: Avery, 2019).

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38 Joshua D. Angrist et al., "Explaining Charter School Effectiveness," *American Economic Journal* 5, no. 4 (2013): 1-27

39 Angrist et al., "Explaining Charter School Effectiveness"; Matthew Davis and Blake Heller, "No Excuses Charter Schools and College Enrollment," *Education Finance and Policy* 14, no. 3 (2019): 414-440.

40 Joanne Golann, *Scripting the Moves* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021); Savannah Shange, *Progressive Dystopia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019); Garth Stahl, "Critiquing the Corporeal Curriculum," *Journal of Youth Studies*, 23, no. 10 (2020): 1-17.

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42 Prottoy A. Akbar et al., "Racial Segregation in Housing Markets and the Erosion of Black Wealth," *National Bureau of Economic Research* (May 2019); Daniel Borowczyk-Martins et al., "Racial Discrimination in the US Labor Market," *Labour Economics* 49, no. 1 (2017), 106-127; Junia Howell and Elizabeth Korver-Glenn, "Neighborhoods, Race, and the Twenty-First Century Housing Appraisal Industry," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 4, no. 4 (2018): 473-490.

43 See sources in previous note.

44 Cavell, *Must We Mean What We Say?*, 262.

45 In Warnick, “Interrogating the Opinionated Life,” he speaks of being less “invested” in opinions; “holding opinions loosely” was a locution he used in presenting this paper at the OVPES meeting, Saturday, September 25th, 2021.

46 Linda Zerilli, *A Democratic Theory of Judgment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 8.

47 Naomi Scheman, “Forms of Life: Mapping the Rough Ground,” in *Cambridge Companion to Wittgenstein*, ed. Sluga and Stern, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 397.

48 This is a riff on a passage in Cavell, *Claim of Reason*, 189.

49 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed 50th Anniversary Edition*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 85.

50 James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 95

51 Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons* (London: Minor Compositions, 2013), 88.