

Hi all,

Here's my thoughts:

I completed my PhD, on Berkeley, at TCD. I then taught at TCD for another year. As a former TCD student (and lecturer), my own view is that, if there are students who are upset or offended that the main university library is named after Berkeley - which is, after all, an act of *commemoration* not education - then that is a good case for renaming it. Of course, if the question were whether Berkeley should be taken off the curriculum ('cancelled', if you like) I would have a different answer. But I think these are separate issues - and do not see renaming the library as a threat to students being taught about Berkeley (that has *not* happened in Edinburgh, since the renaming of Hume Tower, for example).

As far as I am concerned (and I have thought about this a lot; my teaching and research specialises in the history of philosophy, and often covers morally ambiguous figures), there are three ways of responding to details, such as Berkeley's slave-owning, coming to light. First, we can 'cancel' such figures. That seems like a mistake to me; one can learn from the mistakes of the past. Second, we can ignore or 'silo' an individuals' more problematic views (this approach has typically been mistaken in regard to Berkeley). That also seems like a mistake; ideas are very unlikely to be unrelated to thinkers' ideas and contexts. In the words of the philosopher Susan Stebbing 'it is persons that think, not purely rational spirits'. Third, we can take an approach that centres around **transparency**; i.e., we can continue to teach figures' ideas but do so alongside details of their lives that might affect students' decisions about whether to engage with them.

On a personal note, I got through most of my PhD at TCD without learning of Berkeley's connection to slavery. Of course that is partially my own fault, but I think a greater degree of transparency at an institutional and scholarly level would have allowed me to become aware of this side of Berkeley at an earlier stage. It is also conceivable that it could have impacted on my decisions about whether to continue to engage with his work.

Best wishes,  
Peter

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