

Symbols matter. *That* they matter has been acknowledged in the west since Aquinas who, resurrecting Aristotle, articulated their hefty difference from mere signs. *How* they matter has become better understood since Heidegger outed our 'ontological difference': all that we know to be real is dependent on mediation, and symbols are what do the mediating. Names are symbols *par excellence*—whether they name libraries or people, flowers or movements—because naming is the root of all language and language is what makes our world. This can be hard to accept, as Heidegger admitted: 'Humans conduct themselves as if they were the masters of language, while in fact it is language that governs them'.¹ Consequently, statues, flags, books and buildings may all be symbols, but names have primal power as the foundational mediators of our reality.

Given that naming creates the world in which we live, do we want to keep the name of a philosopher who was also a slave-owner as the symbol of our store of knowledge? I don't. Before I say more about why not, let me note that I begin this submission by appeal to the philosophy of a Nazi sympathizer because I would like us to end up treating Berkeley as Jewish philosophers have come to treat Heidegger: as Joshua Rothman puts it, 'It's impossible to disavow Heidegger's useful and influential thinking, but it's also impossible to set aside his sins.'² In Berkeley's case, as one of the instigators of empiricism, his part in establishing the credibility of experience as data, a core element of Modernity's turn to the subject, has (perhaps ironically, given his imperialist ethics) led to the contextual and liberation theologies that are now vital to my discipline (such as Black, womanist, post-colonial, eco/feminist, queer and disabled theologies). However, no matter how much any person contributes to human understanding, we humans all have sins, and whether or not they can be set aside is for each generation to decide. The time has come to stop setting Berkeley's aside.

Our options for how to do so are limited. One of the problems with names as a specific genre of symbol is that they do not permit the range of interactions that other symbols do. They are, literally, authoritative. By contrast, some of the controversial cases with which our own is now compared involved different sorts of symbols. The effigy of Rhodes on a university building on Oxford's High Street and the statue of another slave trader, Edward Colston, on the side of the quay in Bristol are much more 'open' as symbols. One can call for their removal (and I would) but one can also deface them, hold protests beside them, put signs up on or around them, photograph/video them, wrap them in barbed wire, fence them off, paint them, move them to a new location or even tear them down. One cannot do any of those things with the name of a library; even if there were a name-sign on the building that one could alter, the library is still 'called' The Berkeley library. The specific sort of symbol constituted by a library's name cannot be circumvented or contested because they are the thing they say they are, and so our only option is to de-name.

To advocate doing so is not 'playing to the woke gallery', as another submission claims. It is taking responsibility for the harms that institutions like ours casually inflict, and deny, both historically (e.g.: by excluding so very many people—women or Catholics at Trinity, anyone?, by making money by nefarious means, by robbing churches) and today (by

¹ Translated by Louis Marie Chauvet, *Symbol and Sacrament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), p.55. Reference (34) given as: Heidegger, *Bâtir, habiter, penser, EC, 172.*

² Joshua Rothman, 'Is Heidegger Contaminated by Nazism?' *The New Yorker*, 28 April 2014.

requiring students to work in spaces named after slave-owners, institutionalising racism again and again). Owning our privilege involves owning the history, good and bad, that produced it. Benedict Cumberbatch might be deployed as a useful analogy in Nigel Biggar's submission, for refusing to apologise for the slave owning habits of his newly-discovered ancestors on a TV show, but the opportunity that was missed for that family is as nothing compared to that which we in Trinity ought not now squander: to admit that the acute privileges from which we benefit as members of certain families or institutions are, in large part, wrought off the backs of dispossessed and oppressed peoples.³ By de-naming, we renounce oppression as a way of gaining privilege.

The name of a library is meant to be inspiring, connoting our history (identity-memories), our present (values) and our intentions for the future (aspirations). At the time Trinity's library was named, Berkeley's name worked as its emblem. Only 56 years since Independence, Irish institutions were still seeking legitimacy on a world stage, so it was important to have an Irish person. Trinity also retained a great deal of its identity from its imperial authority, and so it worked to have somebody who was consonant with that. In 1978's Ireland, women had to stop working when they got married. Gay sex was criminalised. The Catholic bishops didn't like their flock going to Trinity. And the long British-Irish conflict was playing out on the streets of Northern Ireland, through bombings in British cities and (in 1974), right near Trinity in Dublin. A patrician, stentorian, religious, long-dead and world-famous intellectual worked as a symbol of stability and insight in a culture that pretended racism belonged elsewhere.

But Irish culture has changed, and the symbols at Trinity that are out of step with those changes are therefore crying out for change. We have actually already changed quite a lot of our symbols, to defuse our sexism and anti-Catholicism, with relatively little fuss. Ceasing to name all our undergraduates 'men' (as in Freshmen/ Junior Freshmen/ Senior Freshmen) also made it to the letters pages of the *Irish Times* but is now widely accepted. Changing the charter of our university to remove its anti-Catholic purpose perhaps surprisingly took until 2012, but, like with the 'men' issue, was really only catching up with what was already in sway rather than leading some sort of revolution. If we took racism seriously as the evil it is, we would feel the same about the proposed de-naming of the library.

It is sometimes thought that the most effective symbols are timeless, but there is little evidence to support that. Symbols host cultures, and cultures are in constant flux. Indeed, the sort of colonial missionizing which Berkeley sponsored eventually acknowledged the need for inculturation rather than imposing supposedly universally true symbols. Accordingly, instead of demanding indigenous people adopt all your symbols only to later discover that they were only parodying you, use indigenous symbols and people will be persuaded of their intrinsic value. Thus to this day, in some places, when Christians celebrate the Eucharist, instead of praying to the Lamb of Christ, they have the Pig of Christ; in others, instead of unleavened bread, they have rice cakes. Symbols don't work when they're imposed; they must adapt to mediate the reality they emplace, and they don't stay

³ I inhabit two perspectives here, as the holder of an Established Chair at Trinity and also as the descendant of generations of Connemara people who, before the land commission reassigned them ownership of their small-holding, were required to rent back from Trinity College Dublin lands that had earlier been taken from them.

the same, geographically or temporally, because they are entirely dependent on culture for their meaning.

We know well when symbols don't work. Re-naming Trinity's library after Trump would not work, no matter how much money he might pay us to do it, but 'Trump Towers' works because it's a huge glitzy bulwark of reflective glass for the very rich to live in that has ruined a local neighbourhood's site-lines, wildlife and local economies. It fits the values. It fits the project. The reason it's laughable to think of the Trump Library at Trinity is because his name is symbolic of values, practices and ideas that are completely antithetical to either a library—the broadest possible embodiment of the means of learning—or a university.

What are those values? If we turn to College's Strategic Plan, not one value is expressed and not one cross-cutting goal is advanced by symbolising our work via an unrepentant slave-owner. Moreover, our supposedly core value of equality is trounced by doing so. We cannot say that equality is at the heart of our values and yet retain symbols of inequality; not because they 'cause offence' but because they contradict and undermine the very values that are essential to our project as a university.

Ritual theory warns us that it will be important to take all the necessary steps in addressing this symbolization of our values. At a minimum: de-naming, being un-named, re-naming. Only by feeling the pain and discomfort of the first two steps will we clear for the third the new space and energy that it needs. When the time comes for the third, I would advocate naming the library after a virtue, a value, a collective or a manuscript in the library's collection. Hope, equality, the Suffragettes or Kells would be examples, if very imperfect ones. This is because the problem we are currently dealing with is not only that Berkeley's sins can no longer be set aside, but also that by using individuals' names to symbolise things, we continue to embed a further falsehood from the imperial era: that lone individuals are what makes the greatest difference in the world. But that is for another day. ...