

Dear Sirs,

I am a former alumni of Trinity and studied philosophy there. The Berkeley Library was not so named to celebrate Berkeley's ownership of a slave. Berkeley is in many ways the product of his time. Should all slave owners achievements be erased from history? Would that include Thomas Jefferson who owned 600? Would it include the creators of the Egyptian Pyramids or the Art of the Roman Empire? Would it include The British Museum and various other institutions across Europe that were built on the wealth generated by slavery and exploitation on an even greater scale?

Berkeley was undoubtedly Ireland's greatest ever philosopher and one of the most important globally of the last 300 years. His views on the mind, perception, space and time were way ahead of their time and are still influential today. For example, some of the leading contemporary theories about time suggest it is a kind of Metillusion (see Dean Buonamano's Your Brain is a Time Machine). Berkeley forced the world to consider relativity in time and space at a time when others like Newton believed in Absolute time and space. Berkeley was also the first philosopher I can think of to really explore how the mind works. For example he realised that our sense of sight, touch and space were intimately connected centuries before Magnetic Resonance Images of the brain existed or neurologists understood how neural pathways between the parts of our brain associated with sight and those associated with touch become connected in the first few months after we are born.

Berkeley was not right on all things. Most contemporary philosophers would not accept his invocation of God in say his New Theory of Vision. In many ways it was superfluous. That does not however take away from the importance of that work. I'm a different era he may not have felt the need to make God central to it. Berkeley was wrong to own a slave and believe in the medicinal benefits of tar water too. Again though, this does not take away from his other enormous achievements. He was flawed like all of us and deeply so in certain respects but also brilliant which few of us can claim to be. The naming of the library in his honour celebrates his brilliance rather than his failings.

Regards

Garrett Cormican

Sent from my iPhone

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On 5 Dec 2022, at 12:03, Trinity Legacies wrote:

Dear Garrett,

Thank-you for your submission to the Trinity Legacies Review, which will be made available to the Trinity Legacies Review Working Group for their consideration.

Please be aware that your submission will also be made publicly available on the Trinity Legacies Review website.

Kind Regards,  
Yours Sincerely,

Trinity Legacies Review Working Group  
Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin West Theatre, Dublin 2, Ireland.

[www.tcd.ie](http://www.tcd.ie)

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Ok thanks. There are a few typos in there for which I apologise. I dashed it off on my phone on reading the article about it in the Irish times. Owning slaves is obviously despicable. Berkeley's achievements in philosophy are outstanding though. His immaterialism opened our eyes to the fact that so much of what we experience is a product of our mind rather than the solid extra-cranial stuff scientists call matter. His New Theory of Vision was arguably the first psychological work.

Sent from my iPhone