

## **Plato and Socrates on Confederate Monuments: A commentary on Scott Berman's Plato, Socrates, and Confederate Monuments**

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Professor Berman's paper is thought provoking and offers good reasons to support the removal of confederate monuments, as well as make a case for their placement into museums to offer future generations a critical perspective of about racist expression. A second function of his paper is to contrast the thought of Plato and Socrates in respect to how they would have explained why such forms of expression are dangerous to society. In this portion of the paper he discusses their differing perspectives on the nature of desire. I would like to briefly address this comparison.

Professor Berman argues that unlike Plato, Socrates did not believe that any of the psychological states that cause all of actions are thought-independent states. This seems to be in part at least an empirical claim. Now it is not my purpose to question whether Socrates did believe this, but rather to wonder why Professor Berman thinks that this belief constitutes part of the *better* approach to the overall issue of the dangers of immoral examples such as confederate monuments, than the approach taken by Plato. A great deal of psychological research points to the reality that many thought-independent states can and do influence our actions, and more to the point, influence what will occur to us in our thinking at any given time. On the other hand, it is not I think unfair to Plato, to point out that Plato did indeed overemphasize the thought-independent role of the appetites, and Professor Berman is correct to highlight this point.

Another way to look at the problem of learning that is highlighted in Professor Berman's analysis, would be to acknowledge that we have both thought-dependent and thought independent influences in our behavior, and for this reason, such symbols as confederate

monuments are double trouble because they can influence us in ways that may persist, even when we have done much to engage in critical reflection and debate regarding institutionalized racism. With this in mind, I think that Professor Berman and I would both agree, that we can learn a great deal from Socrates and Plato, regarding the intersection between moral error and artistic expression, and I thoroughly enjoyed his presentation.