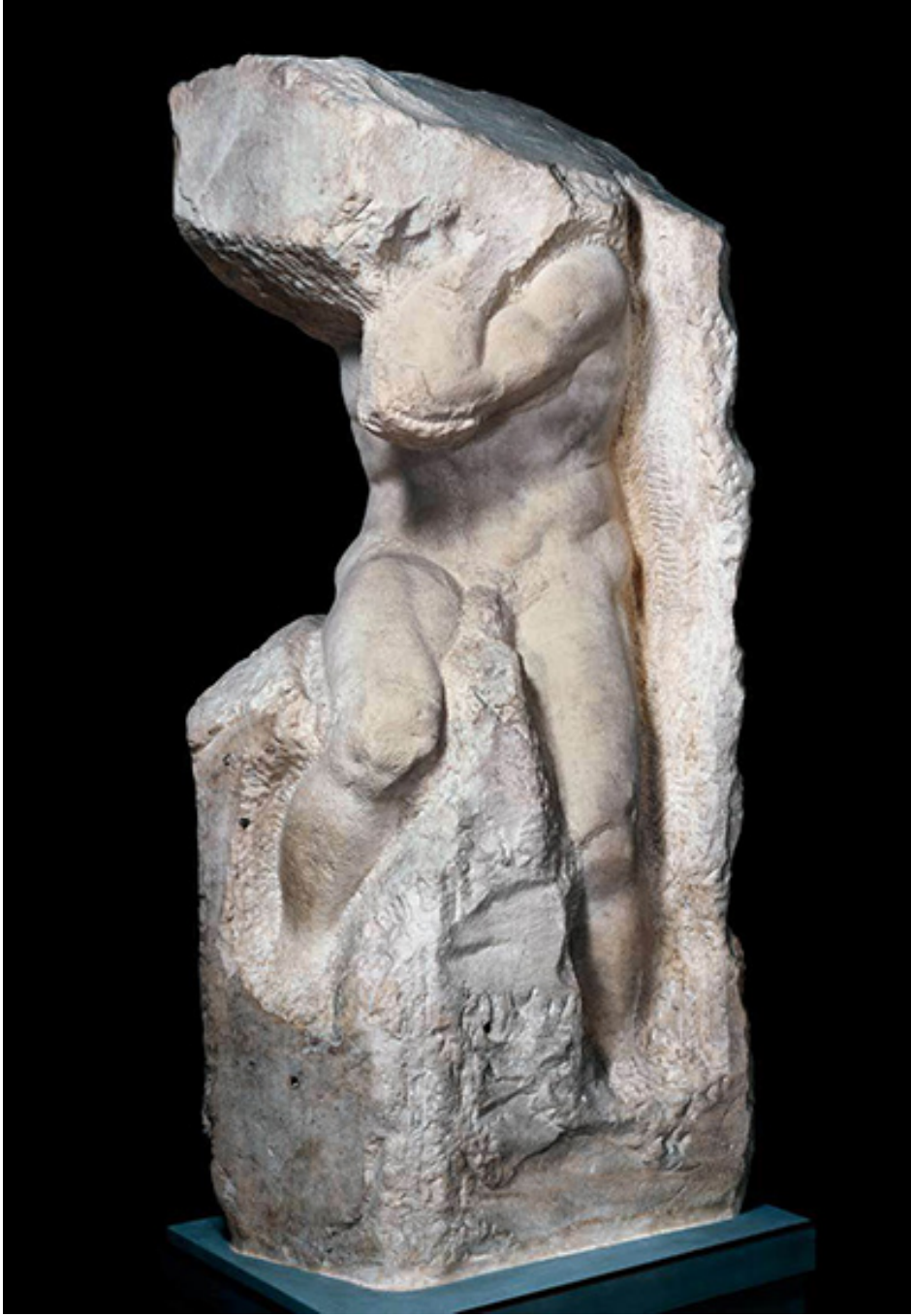


## Reflect on the past but don't dwell on the past



Michelangelo sculpted four intentionally unfinished works: The Bearded Slave (shown here), The Atlas Slave, The Awakening Slave and The Young Slave. Though they appear unfinished, they are just as he intended them to be. He wanted to show what it might feel like to be forever enslaved.

Sadly, some people choose to be enslaved by their past.

Years ago, a man came to me for counseling. When I asked him why he had come, he spoke about how his employer had taken advantage of him and then fired him. As he told the details, he became visibly emotional—flushed face, moist eyes, quivering lips...

About ten minutes into the session I asked, "When did this happen?" (Recently, I assumed.) He answered, "Seventeen years ago."

Oh my...

**Don McMinn**

*Think with me*

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While I wanted to empathize with him regarding the alleged employer abuse, I was shocked that he had allowed this one incident to negatively influence his life for so long.

Now to the other extreme, I have a friend who continually (and almost exclusively) talks about the “good old days.” Doing so seems to make him a positive, joyful person (though at times I think he’s hiding something; surely something in his past was unsettling) but he’s also stuck in time. He has no vision for the future because he constantly lives in the past.

**Let me suggest that there’s a difference between *reflecting* on your past and *dwelling* on it.**

Reflect on your past so you can be grateful for the positive experiences and learn from the painful ones. But, don’t dwell on your past, or the positive experiences may cause you to be smug, complacent, and apathetic about future possibilities and the painful experiences may eventually pollute your soul. Just as there are two ways to fall off a horse, there are two ways an obsession with the past can unbalance us.

Think more about the present and future than you do the past. Enjoy the wonder of each hour and dream about a better tomorrow. View the past as a prelude to the future. Always have something to look forward to.

**Free yourself from unhelpful introspection.**

**Here's a video about Michelangelo's unfinished sculptures.**