

The Aesthetics and Politics of Totality: Tracing Fredric Jameson's Cognitive Mapping

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What kind of political art can support political movements that aim to overcome capitalism? This article examines the aesthetic of cognitive mapping as outlined by Fredric Jameson, which offers a possible answer to the question. The overall aim is to clarify the idea of cognitive mapping and explore its theoretical underpinnings, especially its relationship to Jameson's analysis of late capitalism. The main argument is that the aim of cognitive mapping is not to find ways to represent late capitalism which is ultimately unrepresentable, but rather to arouse class consciousness and promote class struggle. Moreover, the article suggests that Jameson's idea of cognitive mapping relies more heavily on Georg Lukács's writings on realism than is generally acknowledged. Lastly, it is argued that Jameson's tendency towards class reductionism, among other questionable emphases, may weaken the effectiveness of the entire project.