

# We are all slaves of capital

Excerpt from *The Wandering of Humanity*

Jacques Camatte

2008

This fragment is from Jacques Camatte's pamphlet translated in 1975 in Detroit by Fredy Perlman. It was a key text in developing *Fifth Estate* concepts during the 1970s and 80s, ones which remain today. It speaks of capital and technology that has "run away" from its initiators and domesticated humans. It is available at [blackandred.org](http://blackandred.org)

We are all slaves of capital. Liberation begins with the refusal to perceive oneself in terms of the categories of capital, namely as proletarian, as member of the new middle class, as capitalist, etc. Thus, we also stop perceiving the other, in his movement toward liberation, in terms of those same categories.

At this point, the movement of recognition of human beings can begin. This is obviously only the beginning of the liberation movement, and is continually threatened with failure. Refusing to take this into account denies the power of capital.

What has to be perceived is a dynamic. We are slaves; our goal is not to become masters, even without slaves, but to abolish the entire dialectic of master and slave. This goal cannot be realized by the establishment of communities which, always isolated, are never an obstacle to capital, can easily be surrounded by capital, and are no more than deviations in relation to its norm (deviations which make that norm visible for what it is).

Nor can the goal be reached by the cultivation of one's individual being, in which one would finally find the real human being. In reality, these approaches should be connected. Perceiving oneself as a human being unshackled by any attributes already removes the dog collar imposed by class society. The desire for community is absolutely necessary. The reaffirmation of individuality (especially in its temporal aspect) is a rejection of domestication.

But this is inadequate even as a first element of rebellion; the human being is an individuality and a *Gemeinwesen* (part of a community). The reduction of the human being to his present inexpressive state could take place only because of the removal of *Gemeinwesen*—of the possibility for each individual to absorb the universal, to embrace the entirety of human relations within the entirety of time. The varied religions, philosophies and theories are mere substitutes for this essential component of human being. Since communism is the death of sameness, of repetition, human beings will emerge in all their diversity; *Gemeinwesen* will be affirmed by each. This implies that as of now we reject the despotism of a religion, a philosophy, a theory.

# fifth Estate

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/378-summer-2008/slaves-capital>  
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