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***Paulo Freire: The Last Hegelian?***

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### **Paulo Freire: The Last Hegelian?**

#### Introduction.

The political philosophy of education of Paulo Freire has been very influential in the constitution of many of the more innovative aspects of critical pedagogies, not only in Latin American, but worldwide. In this article the links between Hegelian thought and the political philosophy of education developed by Paulo Freire, especially in his seminal work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* will be analysed.<sup>1</sup> The main thesis advanced is that the dialectics of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has been deeply influenced by the logical structure of Hegel's dialectics, however Freire's pedagogical and political utopia transformed the epistemological principles in Hegel's logical structure, and produced Freire's pedagogic "Aufhebung" of Hegelian dialectics.<sup>2</sup>

The article is divided in three parts. In the first part, we will analyze the premises of Hegel's dialectics of the Master and the Slave. In the second part, we will discuss the premises of Freire's dialectics of the Oppressor and Oppressed. The third part offers an inter-dialectical comparison between Hegel and Freire.

#### The Dialectic of the Master and the Slave

1. *Hegel beings by establishing the situation of a subject with respect to an object.* This situation generates two movements: the movement of knowledge (the subject), and he denominates the movement of knowledge as "concept", and "object" as the object of knowledge. In other words, "concept" is the object "IN ITSELF" and object that is "FOR ANOTHER". Thus, he establishes two possibilities of consciousness: to be in itself or for another.

2. *Self-consciousness in itself.* Hegel says, "self-consciousness is reflection out of the bare being that belongs to the world of sense and perception, and is essentially the return out of otherness."<sup>3</sup> Consciousness is of itself an active consciousness. Its activity consists of a certain negativity. Its negative force is expressed in the act of examining things that may appear in front of it (in its conceptual and objectual field of relations), as if the "notion" that it has of these things is not the same as their "truth". As if what they show (what it negates immediately) will not express what they are (the truth of things which will appear as a negation of the negation in consciousness).

3. *It is no longer a sensible, theoretical consciousness, it is a practical consciousness.* Now, what is the motive of its activity? To satisfy a desire. Hegel tells us, "This opposition of its appearance and its truth finds its real essence ... only in the truth--in the unity of self-consciousness with itself. This must become essential to self-consciousness; i.e. self-consciousness is the state of Desire in general."<sup>4</sup> Consciousness has become self-consciousness; therefore, it has not only as its aim the contemplation of things (theoretical consciousness) but the apprehension of true essence, which is itself (by which it enters into absolute opposition with the first aim).

4. *Life.* Hegel tells us that the object of desire and what is perceived in sense-certainty is something "living." Here he again touches on a concept that is central to the understanding of his thought: the concept of "Life" which he elaborated in his early theological writings in Tübinga. Just as the Mind is the Whole, Life is Unity, the unity in the fluent condition of the mobility of the self. In its simplest form, it is presented to us as a factual event, one and undivided, in which self-consciousness lives the experience of need (desire) and of freedom (satisfaction or completion); that is, it became unbalanced psychologically and sought to restore that unbalance. Here Hegel describes a double independence: that of self-consciousness which is "for itself" and which executes negative activity towards

objects, and that of those very objects which appear as truly independent of self-consciousness. At this point, Hegel attempts to clarify three fundamental categories in the understanding of the relationship that exists between this self-consciousness (the Ego) and its craving (desire): the for itself, which he defines as true independence, the in itself, which he defines as simple and universal fluidity (life itself) and finally the "other", the difference between successive configurations that objects or the consciousnesses can take, with respect to the first self-consciousness.

5. *The Ego and Desire.* Hegel also discovers that self-consciousness, which knows its own truth unto itself, is surprised upon seeing that it is not the only independence that exists in life, that other independent objects appear, and that it can only arrive at having the true certainty of its truth if, by exercising its negative activity (indicated in our point #2), it seeks to cancel them in such a way that "its truth" is no longer known only by a subjective condition, but that it can be expressed in objective facts.

Now this satisfaction of self-consciousness goes through the experience of defining the object as the essence of craving (desire) of self-consciousness, but, at the same time, recognizing it as independent. But the paradox is that consciousness discovers that upon seeking to negate the object, it understands that it can only obtain satisfactions when the object itself fulfils this negation in it. In the words of Hegel: "Since the object is in its very self negation, and in being so is at the same time independent, it is Consciousness."<sup>5</sup> Thus begins the road along which self-consciousness realizes that it will only manage to attain the satisfaction of its desire in another self-consciousness.

6. *The recognition of self-consciousness.* Hegel notes that: "Self-consciousness exists in itself and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say, it is only by being acknowledged or 'recognized'."<sup>6</sup> The self-consciousness lives a double effect. On the one hand, it has lost itself, and finds itself

with another essence (whence its surprise), and on the other, it feels it has transcended the other, because it sees itself in the other. Hence at the beginning of this subjective experience, it may seek to be recognized without recognizing. What is curious about this case is that this movement is not exclusive of a self-consciousness but that both self-consciousnesses put it into effect. In this duplicated movement, both seek that one of them behave as subject while the other behave as object of the craving.

In the words of Hegel, the play of forces between the self-consciousnesses is expressed as follows: "The middle term is self-consciousness which breaks itself up into the extremes; and each extreme is this interchange of its own determinateness, and complete transition into the opposite."<sup>7</sup>

**\*\*\* Insert Graph N° 1.\*\*\***

Hence they oppose one another mutually; while one wants the other to be for it (while it is for itself), the other attempts not to be for the first "other", but to continue to be for itself; thus, in this double relationship both try to continue to be in themselves: "They recognize themselves as mutually recognizing one another."<sup>8</sup> In sum: each self-consciousness affirms its Ego in an absolute and exclusive fashion, and tries to attain universal recognition. There is, then, a plurality of desires but at the same time, the patency that only one of them ought to impose itself; for that reason, a struggle into death ensues.

7. *The struggle of the opposed consciousnesses.* Hegel says that "The relation of both self-consciousnesses is in this way so constituted that they prove themselves and each other through a life-and-death struggle."<sup>9</sup> Only by risking life to obtain recognition and freedom, according to Hegel, does one manage to become a human being, he who is not

able to risk death in order to live as a human being will be able to be a person, but will not be recognized as such. The human being risks life to uphold freedom.

Now, each individual must tend towards the death of the others, for the other is not worth to him more than he is worth to himself. Nevertheless, if one of the two contenders were to really die, although the winning self-consciousness would be sure of itself and of its own truth (expressed in its power over the vanquished self-consciousness-corpse) "This trial by death, however, cancels both the truth which was to result from it, and therewith the certainty of self altogether...Through death, doubtless, there has arisen the certainty that both did stake their life, and held it lightly both in their own case and in the case of the other; but that is not for those who underwent this struggle."<sup>10</sup>

If all the selves in the process of constituting themselves into human beings were to proceed in the same fashion--carrying the struggle to the end--there would only be one victor, and at the same time its desire would be frustrated because nobody would remain alive to recognize him--the corpses would be proof, but they would not be able to recognize him--and, finally, nobody wants to be recognized by himself after carrying out a struggle based on pure prestige. Therefore, in order that human reality continues to shape itself, it is necessary that both adversaries remain alive after the struggle; still, this can only be accomplished if both have different behaviours in the struggle. What is the negative act of the self-consciousness ready for battle like? Hegel tells us: "Their act is abstract negation, not the negation characteristic of consciousness, which cancels in such a way that it preserves and maintains what is sublated, and thereby survives its being sublated."<sup>11</sup>

From this experience, Hegel draws one sole but very important consequence: life for self-consciousness is as essential as perceiving itself as pure self-consciousness (recognized self-consciousness). In this struggle, then, one self-consciousness will assume the role of subjectivity known by History as the Master, while the other will

assume the role of pure thinghood, which Hegel denominates the Servant or Slave. The Master is consciousness that is for itself (to be for itself), the Slave is dependent consciousness (to be for the other).

8. *Dominion*. Here Hegel tries to show Servitude from the point of view of the Master. The Master is mediation with himself through another consciousness. There is a biological recognition of the Master on the part of the Servant. Every human being has two basic relationships in his life; in the case of the Master we find ourselves with his relationship with Nature (things) and his relationship with other human beings (servants). Hegel says that "The Master relates himself to the bondsman mediately through independent existence."<sup>12</sup> The Slave works for a Master, hence the Master is seen through the eyes of the Slave with respect to his relationship with things (nature): "In the same way the Master relates himself to the thing mediately through the bondsman."<sup>13</sup>

The Master has shown himself to be a good warrior; he won in the struggle, fought for his recognition, but consumes without working, like an animal: "Desire alone did not get the length of this, because of the independence of the thing. The Master, however, who has interposed the bondsman between it and himself, thereby relates himself merely to the dependence of the thing, and enjoys it without qualification and without reserve. The aspect of its independence he leaves to the bondsman, who labours upon it."<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, the Master has no way out. Hegel says, "He is thus not assured of self-existence as his truth; he finds that his truth is rather the unessential consciousness, and the fortuitous unessential action of that consciousness. The truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the consciousness of the bondsman."<sup>15</sup>

What kind of victory is this? If he who recognized the Master is a quasi-human being (since he is a Slave, not a free human being), what value does his triumph hold for him? Where is the richness of intersubjectivity, of communication, if the essential consciousness



considers the other one as unessential, spurns it, relegates it, at the same time that it perceives itself as a human being in the living of its possessions (the possession of the fearful Slave who has given in and the possession of things that the Slave works for him)? The Master is not the true human being; he is merely one phase in the movement towards the real configuration of humanity.

Before proceeding to the analysis of servitude from the point of view of the Slave, let us graph diagrammatically the Master-Slave relationship from the point of view of the Master:

**\*\*\* Insert Graph N° 2\*\*\***

9. *Fear*. From the point of view of the Slave, Hegel says that servitude is self-consciousness.<sup>16</sup> Consciousness feels that its essence, as Servitude, is to serve the Master, but, in the same fashion, its truth will be for it this essence (imposed on it by the circumstances of the struggle). Nevertheless, Hegel clarifies that: "this truth is not taken yet as inherent in bondage itself."<sup>17</sup> It is a Slave because it has been afraid of death. This experience can be commented upon as a certain anxiety before the possible living of an ultimate feeling--ceasing to exist--and this certain anxiety caused the Slave to experience Nothingness. In this experience of nothingness he begins to experience as a human being; since nothing remained fixed upon his consciousness, the only thing left for him was that ultimate experience, through which the Master did not pass, given that he always perceived himself as victorious, safe, tranquil.

He underwent the experience of the struggle. He was vanquished; still this situation leads him to discover and appreciate new dimensions of his life. Let us look at the following graph.

**\*\*\* Insert Graph N° 3\*\*\***

After this experience of the struggle comes the experiences of work: and by means of work, the Slave overcomes his fear and powerlessness with respect to nature which was oppressing him; he eliminates, Hegel adds, by means of work, his subordination to natural existence. Now, is work so important? For it is were so, we would find here the prime difference between the Master and the Slave, since the latter consumes without working. He does not hold the experience of labor since the Slave holds it on his behalf.

10. *Cultural formation.* Hegel explains that: ". . . albeit the fear of the lord is the beginning of wisdom, consciousness is not therein aware of being self-existent. Through work and labor, however, this consciousness of the bondsman comes to itself."<sup>18</sup> Fear of the Master is the beginning of philosophy (as the wisdom of life and the love of wisdom), but philosophizing, in this consciousness which still not yet fully for itself, completes itself with self-understanding as a generous being; and so, through work, through the formative and educational quality of work, it can satiate its desires qua self-consciousness. Hegel is concrete on this point: "The consciousness that toils and serves accordingly attains this means the direct apprehension of that independent being as its self."<sup>19</sup>

Only the consciousness formed by toil (the Servant) can attain the intuition of generic being and can build a true community of equal human beings, where intersubjectivity will not provoke conflict, but where this will come to be true collaboration. But for this, the Slave had to experience: a) fear (fear of dying) b) service as a general way of being a universal sentiment--through obedience, c) work as forming agent--educator. By this three-fold experience the Servant is liberated from Nature (as opposed to the Master, for whom things continue to be independent of himself) and, when he becomes aware of his own situation, will free himself from the Master. This is expressed graphically as follows:

**\*\*\* Insert Graph N° 4\*\*\***

To summarize, Hegel distinguishes four situations. In the first of these, the subject (understood as reason) finds that it affirms itself as the Universal Abstract (the situation of the Mind before it comes out of itself), but since it will only come to full possession of itself through the objective world, it effects a coming out of itself, a flexion towards the object (nature). This flexion or exteriorization causes the mind to deny itself as such, and it loses itself in the world of objects (specific and concrete), which, in turn, cause the first situation to be modified into this second one, by which the denial of the Universal Abstract through the exteriorization of the subject in Nature brings on an estrangement into itself. Here the moment is generated where the consciousness of the subject, outside of itself, recognizes others which are not itself. The third situation is the existential risk of the subject. Estrangement implies a risk not indispensable in itself: alienation, remaining lost, in the world of objects, having become a thing. This alienation (in the German term used by Hegel, Entfremdung) is the opposite of its appropriation. In the fourth situation, the consciousness makes an effort of re-flexion, of turning towards itself, denying in its turns the situation of exteriority and even of becoming a thing. But now the Subject which returns from the world of things (in principle, the world of concrete particulars) does not revert into the abstraction of its initial affirmation, but as Universal (attribute of the Subject, communicable) though Concrete (the Universal Concrete).

Hence Hegelian dialectic is the rational construction of reality by which the subject assimilates his vital experience in an ongoing fashion until it finds itself again with itself through the positivity of the determinate negation. Hegel foresaw that the subject would not only appropriate things (basic property) but that it was trying to appropriate the subjects as well (the struggle of the opposed consciousnesses); when the conflict of the two self-consciousnesses was brought to bear (that of each consciousness that had gone out of itself and was for itself), both fighting to appropriate the same good, a road towards a solution was being established. This road was the Pact, a pact in which one of the two consciousnesses submitted to the other so as not to die. In this way, there came to light an independent consciousness and a dependent consciousness (dependent on the first one); in classical terms, the Master (Lord) and the Slave (Servant).

#### The Dialectic of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed

Every educator, upon pondering human learning, tends to place in the two extremes of the teaching-learning process an object (object of learning, knowledge, habits, abilities) and a cognizant subject. The teaching-learning process, therefore, would happen between a subject which relates itself to one or several objects, and vice-versa. Freire, upon studying this relationship between subject and object, concludes the following: 1) knowledge is possible, and is, at the same time, part of the greater process of human liberation. For Freire, it is possible to know the thing in itself, thereby overcoming the simple empiricist and neopositivist experience and the relation of the Kantian categories. 2) The consciousness (of the cognizant subject) and the world (the cognizable object) mutually constitute themselves; one implies the other, but, at the same time, they imply difference. There exists a certain distance between the cognizant subject and objective reality. 3) To bridge this distance, an effort towards mutual reconciliation must be made. Such an effort implies an action, a sense and an outcome. The action is the elaboration of lines of thought

based upon certain laws of logic: the sense is not a mere contemplative cognizance but constitutes itself into a contribution to the transformation of that objective reality, a transformation that can only be carried out through its humanization. That is to say, the identity of human beings in the world by means of a compromise, through their praxis with that world. And an outcome, which would be the creation of a new knowledge, but, at the same time, a new social practice.

Freire starts from a dialectic unity by which consciousness and world cannot be dichotomized. Hence for Freire there is always unity between theory and praxis, between content and method, between thought and being, and between objectivity and subjectivity. He elaborates on this premise of dialectic unity with the following words:

“This question brings us to the very centre of a fundamental problem that has always preoccupied modern philosophy. I refer to the relationship between subject and object, consciousness and reality, thought and being, theory and practice. Any attempt to treat the relationship based upon the duality subject and object, this negating its dialectical unity will not explain this relationship in a satisfactory manner. Upon destroying the didactical unity subject-object, the dualist view implies negation, as much of objectivity (submitting it to the power of a capricious consciousness) as of the reality of consciousness, a consciousness thus transformed into a simple copy of objectivity. In this first hypothesis we have the subjectivist error, the expression of an anti-dialectic and pre-Hegelian idealism. In the second one we are dealing with the objectivist mechanistic error, equally anti-dialectic.”<sup>20</sup>

This eminently philosophical discussion is not pointless for Freire. There is a basic cognitive stance in the treatment of his better known educational problematics: the educator-educatee relationship, antagonistic cultural actions (domesticating cultural action versus liberating cultural action), including the political perspectives proposed by Freire, when he discusses the link between the masses and the avant-garde. The congruence in the subject-object interpretation for Freire goes back to all the possible dimensions of human action. Now, how can the subject-object dichotomy be overcome? From a dialectical standpoint, this overcoming occurs within the concept which is a thought-out concrete thing, that is, if the concept is proper to subjectivity and at the same time includes and supposes objectivity. Yet, this concept, by itself, is not merely a mental construction. Freire, remembering the learning experience of his youth argues that texts, words and letters were incarnated in the existential context of his homeland of Recife in North Eastern Brazil:

“The texts, words, letters of that context were incarnated in the song of the birds--tanager, flycatcher, thrush--in the dance of the boughs blown by the strong winds announcing storms; in the thunder and lightening; in the rainwaters playing with geography, creating lakes, islands, rivers, streams. The texts, words and letters of that context were incarnated as well in the whistle of the wind, the clouds in the sky, the sky's color, its movement, in the color of foliage, the shape of leaves, the fragrance of flowers...part of the context of my immediate world was also the language universe of my elders, expressing their beliefs, tastes, fears, and values which linked my world to a wider one whose existence I could not even suspect.”<sup>21</sup>

The process of knowledge responds, therefore, to the movement of practising on reality, recomposing on the plane of thought, the substantiation of reality by means of the reflexive turnabout, in order that, once a series of propositions concerning reality are formulated, such reflection will orient the subject in the transformation of that reality through praxis, which is also an instance of knowledge. Therefore, education is the act of knowing, as Freire has repeated over and over again, and thought, in this way, is converted into one step in the process of the structuring of objective reality. With regard to this process of knowledge through the dialectics between reflection and praxis, or conscientization, Freire indicates the following:

“If conscientization cannot be produced without the revelation of objective reality, as an object of knowledge for those subjects involved in the process, then this revelation--even when it might be a clear perception of reality--is not sufficient for an authentic conscientization. In the same way that the epistemological cycle does not end in the stage of acquisition of already existing knowledge, but continues through to the stage of the creation of new knowledge, neither can conscientization be held back at the stage of the revelation of reality. It is authentic when the practice of revealing reality constitutes a dynamic and dialectic unity with the practice of transforming reality.”<sup>22</sup>

This awareness process is associated with a process that Freire, in one of his numerous witty phrases, defined as the archaeology of consciousness. Concerning this he says:

"I think that through the problem of the relationship between men and the world, it is possible for man to again create, again be the natural process through which conscientization appeared in the process of evolution precisely in the moment that Teilhard de Chardin calls 'hominization' in the evolution of man. When conscientization appears, there is reflection, there is intentionality directed at the world. Man comes to be different, essentially different from animals. Man not only knows, but knows that he knows."<sup>23</sup>

As it has been reaffirmed so many times, this situation in which consciousness and world constitute themselves mutually in an ongoing fashion, in the Freireian vision, leads to the establishment of the fact that consciousness and society are mutually dependent. Freire defines distinct levels of consciousness, namely: the critical-transitive consciousness, the ingenuous transitive consciousness, and the semi-intransitive consciousness. Each level of consciousness has its own peculiarities and risks, and permits the articulating of a differential passage of consciential moments which are, in turn, in intimate linkage (dialectical, as Freire would emphasize) with structural modifications through which societies pass. The following graphic accounts for these levels:

**\*\*\* Graph N° 5\*\*\*<sup>24</sup>**

A liberating pedagogic theory, from this standpoint, only makes sense in relation to a transformation of consciousnesses and societal structures. From Freire's perspective, education would not be the only suitable instrument for this transformation. Political struggle, at its most radical, is what is truly fundamental in such a transformation. Nevertheless, on the educational front, there can be foreseen the existence of a battlefield in relation to an effective transformation of consciousness and structures. For this reason, the



Freireian proposal is not restricted to the field of pedagogy, but rather it is macro-social, transgressing the limits (often self-imposed) of pedagogical practice. Throughout his lifetime, Freire has attempted a reading and a critique of pedagogy, educational practice and culture itself on a global level.

Therefore, to understand the "pedagogy of the question" in Freire as only a form of critical education or method by which to promote critical thinking (which seeks the transformation of consciousnesses or logically articulated discourses) is perhaps to reduce the true dimensions of the project. Conscientization is not an individual, chronological phenomenon of conversion of a consciousness or of a collective of consciousnesses as an unavoidable step in the transformation of structures. Conscientization, in a genuinely Freireian perspective, enters into the dynamism of collective transformation (world consciousness), linking itself to the collective consciousness of groups and classes. If then one recognizes the subjective factor in every process of social transformation (and, from there, the efforts brought to reality by Paulo Freire in well circumscribed educational areas such as non-formal education of adults), one accepts that this transforming process can only be come about when the subjective and the objective begin to converge, opposing and uniting with one another, mutually constituting each other, in a single process and project of societal transformation. This is included in the basics and in the operation itself of the methodological suggestions defined by Freire in their very practice and which are commonly indicated as distinct moments that span from descriptive investigation to pragmatic thematization and pragmatic problematization.<sup>25</sup>

#### Hegel on Freire: An Inter-Dialectic Comparison

We can find the key to the relationship between Hegel and Freire in a paragraph of Hegel's work Phenomenology that states the following:

[The Master] "is thus not assured of self-existence as his truth; he finds that his truth is rather the unessential consciousness, and the fortuitous unessential action of that consciousness. The truth of the independent consciousness is accordingly the consciousness of the bondsman. This doubtless appears in the first instance outside itself, and not as the truth of self-consciousness. But just as lordship showed its essential nature to be the reverse of what it wants to be, so too, bondage will, when completed, pass into the opposite of what it immediately is: being a consciousness repressed within itself, it will enter into itself, and change round into real and true independence."<sup>26</sup>

Let us contrast this paragraph with the central definition of Pedagogy of the Oppressed: "The pedagogy of the oppressed, animated by authentic, humanist (not humanitarian) generosity, presents itself as a pedagogy of human beings."<sup>27</sup>

Why is it that only the Pedagogy of the Oppressed can attain this objective? Because, as Freire asserts, the humanistic and historical duty of the oppressed consists of the following:

"As the oppressed, fighting to be human, take away the oppressors' power to dominate and suppress, they restore to the oppressors the humanity they had lost in the exercise of oppression. It is only the oppressed who, by freeing themselves, can free their oppressors. The latter, as an oppressive class, can free neither others nor themselves."<sup>28</sup>

For Freire, the historical process confronts human beings with tasks and challenges that, starting first from the proper existential reality of the oppressed, causes them to execute a giant, qualitative leap from a past of oppression to a present of conscientization. Conscientization, being not only intersubjective and causal knowledge or recognition, but also option and <sup>ω"</sup>comprise, allows the oppressed to launch themselves forward towards a

future of human beings seeking to share, unconditionally, the communal truth. Therefore, only one humanizing pedagogy exists: that of the oppressed, which restores at once the humanity of both the oppressed and the oppressor.<sup>29</sup>

For this reason, Brazilian philosopher Ernani Maria Fiori, in his preface to the Spanish edition of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, will say that: "The pedagogy of the oppressed is, then, liberator of both, of the oppressed and of the oppressor. In a Hegelian manner we would say: the truth of the oppressor resides in the consciousness of the oppressed."<sup>29</sup>

This double restoration, in the same liberating act, indicates the presence of the Hegelian assumption, by which consciousness in itself needs the consciousness of and for itself, while, in turn, the latter recognizes itself as such only through the former, which, in its relationship with nature, gives the possibility of being proprietor (of the good that the non-essential consciousness toils over) and owner (of the Slave, in itself) that toils over nature.

Hence, just as Hegel indicated and Freire explicitly assumes, where the centre of the Master's power should rightly appear to be (property-possession), one finds his greatest weakness: the immediate need of the Slave (consciousness in itself).

Freire asserts the following, corroborating our argument:

"In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. This perception is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action. Nor does the discovery by the oppressed that they exist in dialectical relationship to the oppressor, as his antithesis--that without them the oppressor could not exist--in itself constitute liberation. The oppressed can overcome the contradiction in which they are caught only when this perception enlists them in the struggle to free themselves."<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, this weakness does not escape the Slave either, since servitude, according to Hegel, is self-consciousness, and that self-consciousness as such can lead to the road of class-consciousness--in Freire's more contemporary terms. The meeting between class-consciousness and the critical consciousness is the last step in conscientization.

What are the moments of the pedagogy of the oppressed? Freire writes that

"The pedagogy of the oppressed, as a humanist and libertarian pedagogy, has two distinct stages. In the first, the oppressed unveil the world of oppression and through praxis commit themselves to its transformation. In the second stage, in which the reality of oppression has already been transformed, this pedagogy ceases to belong to the oppressed and becomes a pedagogy of all men in the process of permanent liberation. In both stages, it is always through in depth action that the culture of domination is culturally confronted. In the first stage this confrontation occurs through the change in the way the oppressed perceive the world of oppression; in the second stage, through the expulsion of the myths created and developed in the old order, which like specters haunt the new structure emerging from the revolutionary transformation."<sup>31</sup>

In this moment, this pedagogy ceases to be the exclusive responsibility, or in an euphemistic way, "property" of the oppressed, and comes to be the pedagogy of human beings in the process of permanent liberation. Freire characterized the magical consciousness as a servile consciousness, borrowing the Hegelian expression, and all the dialectic development of conscientization shows us its similarity with the Hegelian proposal.<sup>32</sup> Freire in On Cultural Action argues that: "This culture of silence, characteristic of our colonial past, a culture that remains in conditions favourable to feudal-like land ownership in Latin America, has constituted the peasant consciousness, historically and culturally as the 'servile consciousness' in the expression of Hegel."<sup>32</sup> Let us look at the following graph:

**\*\*\*Graph. N° 6\*\*\***

That is, the conscientizing phenomenon is a rational resultant, pedagogic and political, of the mutual opposition between antagonistic cultural actions (I and II), and comes to light from the negation of the negation (cultural revolution as project [II] and, at the same time, new affirmation [I]). This historical dialectics, from an educational perspective, appears as one moment of specific negation (II Pedagogy of the Oppressed), which, in turn, is again doubly negated through the process of social change or social transformation, which, in the Freireian vision, constitutes a complex synthesis of a process that is in itself political and historical-educational.

The structure of the dialectic of the pedagogy of the oppressed is very similar to Hegel's, as we have shown here. It could be said that Hegel and Freire start by considering the same phenomenon: the situation of Servitude. Nevertheless, there would not be a specific similarity here, unless we include the following: both start from the

phenomenon of the perception that the consciousness has of Servitude as a social and concrete fact; but also of Servitude as formation of the generic being.

In Hegel, it was manual servitude that provoked the feeling of the universal (that is, it provoked the recognition of Nature and its domain, and, at the same time, the conviction that obedience to the Master was the nexus that united Nature to both Master and Slave). Hegel had shown us that, in synthesis, cultural formation was given through fear, obedience, and work; that is, with culturally prescribed ends. Hegel saw himself obliged to lay the foundations of the dialectic of the Master and the Slave when he described the confrontation (the intersubjective coming face-to-face) that he qualified as the struggle of the opposed consciousnesses. Freire looks upon this struggle as a given in the phenomenon of oppression. Hegel saw himself compelled to disentangle its intersubjective and cultural genesis. Freire, again taking up this genetic analysis, tries to show the mechanism of oppression as the mechanism of social alienation, reproductive (for example, in education) through the domesticating Cultural Action.

It is in Hegel that Freire can have recourse to the sources of the analysis of the situation of oppression, and continue his elaboration in relation to pedagogic practice. Hegel described the originating intersubjective genesis of oppression (not in vain did this serve as an inescapable starting-point for Marx). Freire describes and analyses the social development of the mechanisms of oppression as forms of subordination of consciousnesses, i.e., as social servitude or, simply put, as "thingification". The big difference between Hegel and Freire will be, and rightly so, the overcoming of the positivity of the determinate Hegelian negation in the *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.

Smith explains the notion of determinate negation: "The logic of "determinate negation" is the principle of development which exhibits the movement from one category or form of consciousness to another. It constitutes a method for moving from one stage to

another that is not externally imposed....The logic of determinate negation has both a critical and a constructive aspect. It is critical because it does not merely accept what a body of thought, a philosophical system, or even an entire culture says about itself, but is concerned to confront that thought, system, or culture with its own internal tensions, incoherences, and anomalies. It is constructive because out of this negation or confrontation we are able to arrive at ever more complete, comprehensive, and coherent bodies of propositions and forms of life."<sup>33</sup> This notion of "determinate negation" has become a centerpiece of early Critical Theory. Certainly, Herbert Marcuse draws from this notion of "determinate negation" when he speaks of the power of negative reason, and how that power is being obliterated in the context of authoritarian industrial societies.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, the rational nucleus of Hegelian dialectic is the notion of positivity of the determinate negation, so brilliantly criticized by Julio De Zan.<sup>35</sup> For Hegel, self-consciousness tended to negate the actual forms that it would find along its way (as a notion and not the truth of thinghood), in search of the emergence of the immanent unfolding of the Mind (which is its very self), present in daily life. This negation is denominated the positivity of the "determinate negation."

History would thus be the road of the Mind wholly self-conscious which identifies with the totality of the historical process, whereas this historical process, in its logic, is nothing more than the manifestation--in itself already ahistorical--of immanent life at the historical unfolding of the Mind. The philosophizing consciousness (or the Mind) upon negating in a determinate fashion the objects that confront it, with the aim of clearing a path on the road of rationality, in reality will be constructing an infinite totality, which is nothing more than its own life.

Freire has shown in his work that, although accepting some of the logical premises of Hegel's dialectics, he could not accept the notion that the reconciliation or overcoming of

contradictions is a logical process.<sup>36</sup> Nor could Freire accept the Hegelian notion that following a period of estrangement there will come one of reconciliation and synthesis. Conscientization is a contradictory, individual and social process, embedded in the concrete political and social conditions (tensions, contradictions, uncertainties), of a given society or community. The different forms of consciousness that Freire identified, particularly in his works in the sixties and seventies, are not stages of development of an imaginary Reason searching for its own rationality. Clearly, for Freire, education cannot be reduced to construct the premises for logical argumentation. If education is the act of knowing, it should go beyond reason and reach practice. It should move beyond the constraints of Enlightenment and idealism, beyond any transcendental *ding-an-sich*, even beyond lived experience, and reach for utopian emancipation and liberation. Yes, education is an act of reason (theoretical and practical), but a political act of reason. That is the why Freire's argues that:

"As an educator I give much more emphasis to the comprehension of a rigorous method of knowing. Still we must ask ourselves, to know in favor of what, and therefore, against what to know; in whose favor to know, and against whom to know. Those questions which we pose to ourselves as educators, brings us to the confirmation of another obviousness which is the political nature of education".<sup>37</sup>

The Portuguese word "conscientização," popularized by Freire in educational environments, has been translated as conscientization or critical consciousness in English. It was defined by Freire as follows: "The French "prise de conscience," to take consciousness of, is a normal way of being a human being. Conscientization is something which goes beyond the "prise de conscience." It is something which is starting from the ability of getting, of taking the "prise de conscience." Something which implies to analyze. It is a kind of reading the world rigorously or almost rigorously. It is the way of reading how society works. It is the way to understand better the problem of interests, the question



of power. How to get power, what means not to have power. Finally, conscientizing implies a deeper reading of reality, [and] the common sense goes beyond the common sense".<sup>38</sup>

If Freire imagined that his dialectic of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed simply ought to negate the forms of consciousness that exist in Latin America, in a systematic way (a determinate negation); with the conviction that, by virtue of an inescapable historical process, real consciousness will then appear, hidden between the folds of this historical process; he would never have assumed the notion of an education that collaborates with the oppressed in the process of its social organization; nor would he ever have postulated a concept of intersubjective liberation, pedagogical and political, in the context of a project of revolutionary utopia.

### Endnotes

- The author would like to thank María del Pilar O'Cadiz and Eamonn Callan for their comments to a previous version of this paper.

<sup>1</sup> See for instance Carlos Alberto Torres "Servidumbre, Autoconciencia, Liberación. La solución dialéctica Hegeliana y la filosofía de la alfabetización problematizadora de Paulo Freire. Notas provisionarias para su confrontación." Franciscanum, (XVIII, (54), Bogota, Colombia, September-December, 1976:405-478); Carlos Alberto Torres, "A dialética Hegeliana e o pensamento Lógico-estrutural de Paulo Freire. Notas para uma análise e confrontação dos pressupostos filosóficos vigentes na dialética da pedagogia dos oprimidos e do pensamento freireano em geral." Síntese, nova fase, (volume III, (7), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, April-June, 1976:61-78).

<sup>2</sup> Hegel proposed the notion of *Aufhebung*, the centerpiece of Hegelian dialectics. It implies three different moments linked in a complementary way: in the first place "to suppress", (*wegraumen*), in second place "to retain", (*aufbewahren*) and in third place "to sublate" (*hinaufnehmen*). In other words, *Aufhebung* implies a triple act of negating, preserving and superseding. See Herbert Marcuse, Ontología de Hegel. (Barcelona: Martínez Roca, 1970); in English Hegel's Ontology and the Theory of Historicity--translated by Seyla Benhabid (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1987); and Razón y revolución (Caracas: Instituto de Estudios Políticos, translation of J. D. de Sucre, 1967); in English Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory (New York, Humanities Press, 1968); and Steven B. Smith. Hegel's Critique of Liberalism. (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> Hegel, G.W.F.: The Phenomenology of Mind; (translation by J.B. Baillie, 2nd edition revised and corrected, London, Allen and Unwin; New York, Macmillan, 1931:219).

<sup>4</sup> (Hegel, 1931:220).

<sup>5</sup> (Hegel, 1931:226).

<sup>6</sup> (Hegel, 1931:229).

<sup>7</sup> (Hegel, 1931:230-31).

<sup>8</sup> (Hegel, 1931:231).

<sup>9</sup> (Hegel, 1931:232).

<sup>10</sup> (Hegel, 1931:233).

<sup>11</sup> (Hegel, 1931:234). Here obviously Hegel proposes the notion of *Aufhebung* which is central to the notion of dialectics.

<sup>12</sup> (Hegel, 1931:235).

<sup>13</sup> (Hegel, 1931:235).

<sup>14</sup> (Hegel, 1931:235-36).

<sup>15</sup> (Hegel, 1931:237).

<sup>16</sup> (Hegel, 1931:237).

<sup>17</sup> (Hegel, 1931:237).

<sup>18</sup> (Hegel, 1931:238).

<sup>19</sup> (Hegel, 1931:238).

<sup>20</sup> Paulo Freire, "Conversación con Paulo Freire", in Concientización y Liberación. (Documentos N° 1, Rosario, Axis, 1975:29-30).(Translated from Spanish.).

<sup>21</sup> Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo. Literacy. Reading the Word and the World. (South Hadley, Massachusetts, Bergin & Garvey Publishers, 1987:30-31)

<sup>22</sup> Paulo Freire, Diálogo: Paulo Freire-Iván Illich. (Buenos Aires, Editorial Búsqueda-

Celadec, October 1975:28). (Translated from Spanish).

<sup>23</sup> Paulo Freire, "Educación para un despertar de la conciencia. Una charla con Paulo Freire." (Cristianismo y Sociedad, N° 10, 1970:7). (Translated from Spanish).

<sup>24</sup> The graphic is inspired in one presented by Alvaro Luis Pantoja Leite, "Educação e Conscientização." Síntese, Nova Fase, (volume II, (5) October-December, Rio de Janeiro, 1975:75). See also Carlos Alberto Torres "La sociología de la cultura y la crítica pedagógica de Paulo Freire." Guillermo González Rivera & Carlos A. Torres (Coordinadores), Sociología de la educación, Corrientes contemporáneas. (México, Centro de Estudios Educativos, 1981:315-349); Carlos Alberto Torres, "Las corrientes filosóficas que fecundan la filosofía de Paulo Freire." Colección Pedagógica Universitaria, (Veracruz, Mexico, Vol. 9, January-June, 1980:7-26).

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of these methodological questions in Paulo Freire and its association with participative methodologies, i.e., methodologies of action research or participatory research, see Marcela Gajardo (editor) Teoría y Práctica de la Educación Popular. (Ottawa, IDRC, 1982); Carlos Alberto Torres, "Participatory Action Research and Popular Education in Latin America." In Peter McLaren and James Giarelli (Guest Editors) International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education. 5, (1), 1992:51-62 [forthcoming as a book, SUNY Press]; Paulo Freire, Pedagogia da Esperança. (São Paulo, Paz e Terra, 1992); Peter McLaren and Peter Leonard (editors) Paulo Freire. A Critical Encounter. (London and New York, Routledge, 1992); Peter McLaren and Colin Lankshear (editors) The Politics of Liberation: Paths from Freire (London and New York, Routledge, in press).

<sup>26</sup> (Hegel, 1931:237).

<sup>27</sup> Paulo Freire, Pedagogía del oprimido (Buenos Aires, Siglo XXI-Tierra Nueva, 14th

edition, 1975:53). (Translated from Spanish).

28 Idem. (Translated from Spanish).

29 Ernani Maria Fiori. "Aprender a decir su palabra." In Paulo Freire, Pedagogía del oprimido. Op.Cit.:11. (Translated from Spanish).

30 Paulo Freire, "Cultural Action: A Dialectical Analysis" (Mexico: CIDOC, Cuaderno No. 1004, Cuernavaca, 1970:34).(Translated from Spanish).

31 Paulo Freire, Pedagogía del oprimido, Op.Cit.: 52. (Translated from Spanish).

32 Sobre la Acción Cultural (Santiago de Chile: ICIRA, 1971:82). (Translated from Spanish.)

33 Smith, Op.cit.:188-189.

34 Herbert Marcuse. One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Societies.--introduction by Douglas Kellner. (Boston, Beacon Press, [1966]1991).

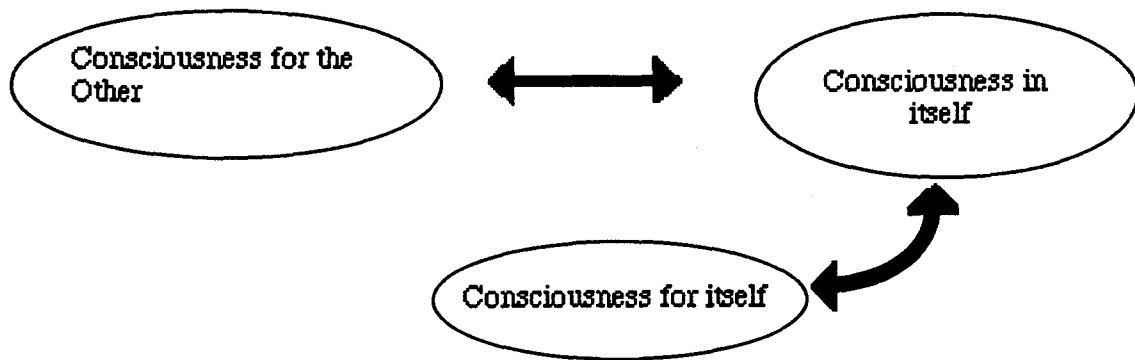
35 De Zan, Julio: "La dialéctica en el centro y en la periferia." Nuevo Mundo, (Buenos Aires, 3, January-June, 1973:109-110).

36 Smith's criticism of Hegel's logic are quite pertinent here. See Smith, Op.Cit.:191-192.

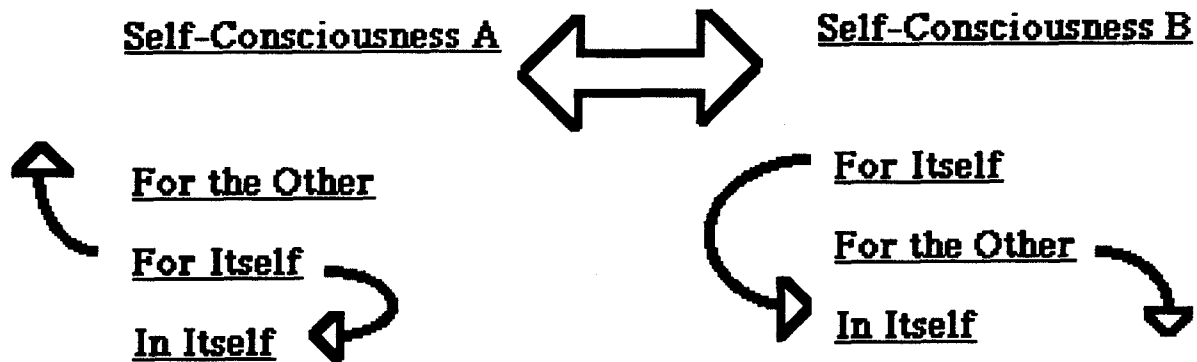
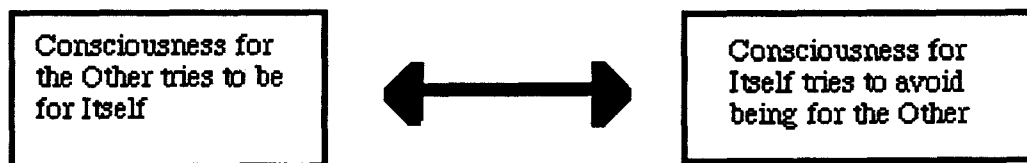
37 Paulo Freire, "Educação. O sonho possível." in Carlos R. Brandão, editor, O Educador: Vida e Morte. (Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal, 1986:97).

38 Conversation with Carlos Alberto Torres in Learning to Read the World, videotape, ACCESS Network, Edmonton, Canada, October 1990. Reproduced in French in Paulo Freire, L' education dans la ville (Paris: Paideia, 1991). See also Carlos Alberto Torres "From the 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' to 'A Luta Continua': The Political Pedagogy of Paulo Freire," in Peter McLaren and Peter Leonard (Eds.) Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter. (London: Routledge, 1992:119-145).

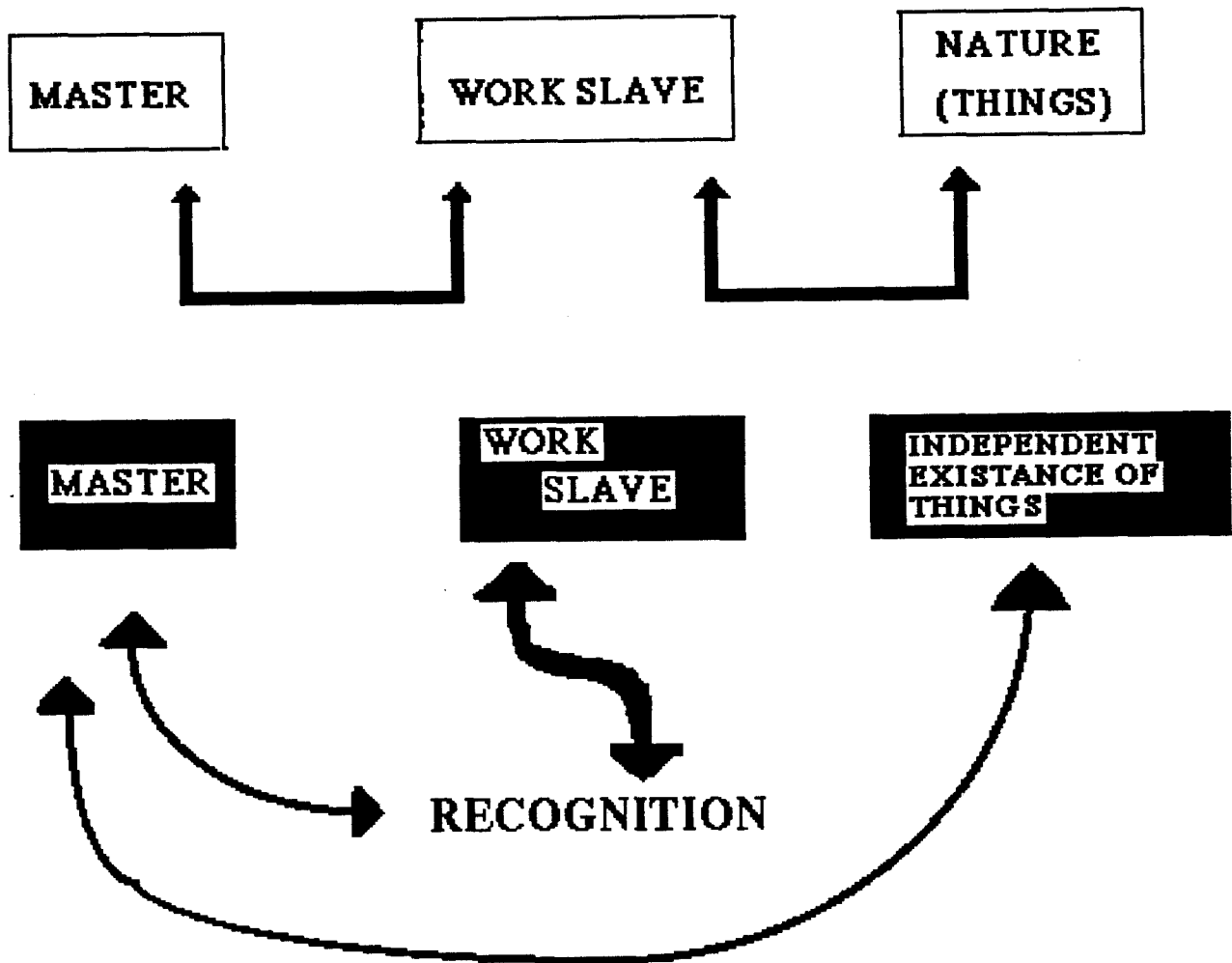
Graph N° 1: The Play of Forces Between Consciousnesses in Opposition



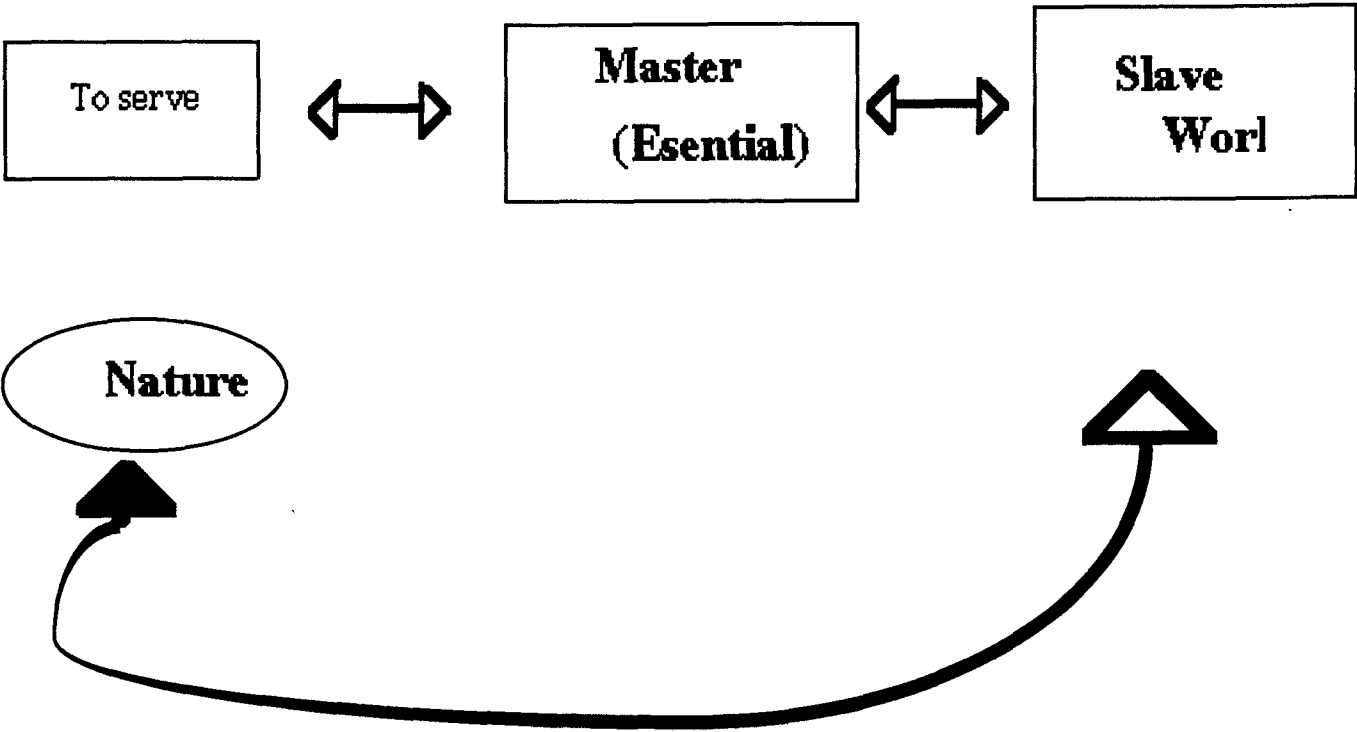
**BUT**



Graph N° 2: Servitude from the Point of View of the Master

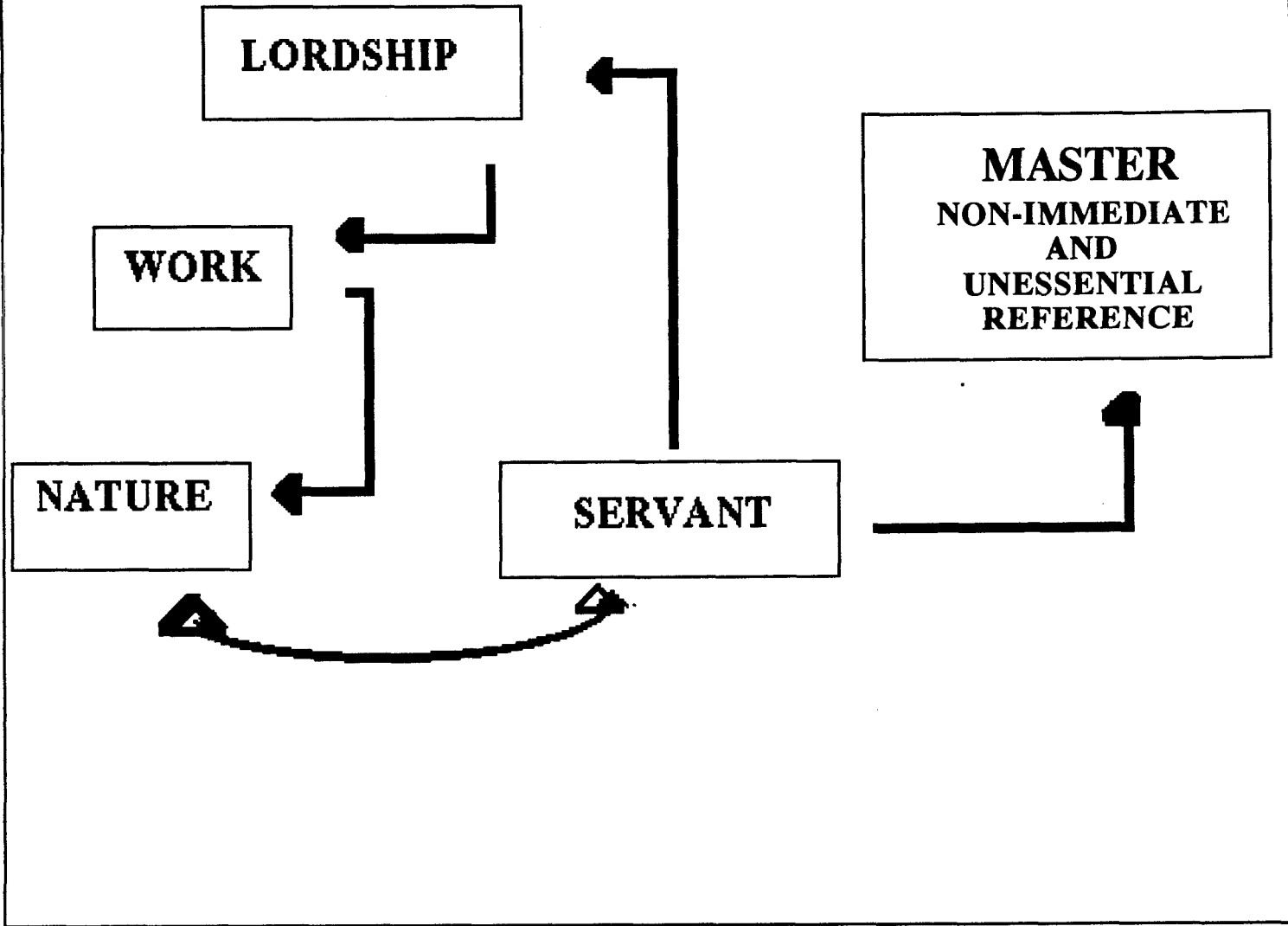


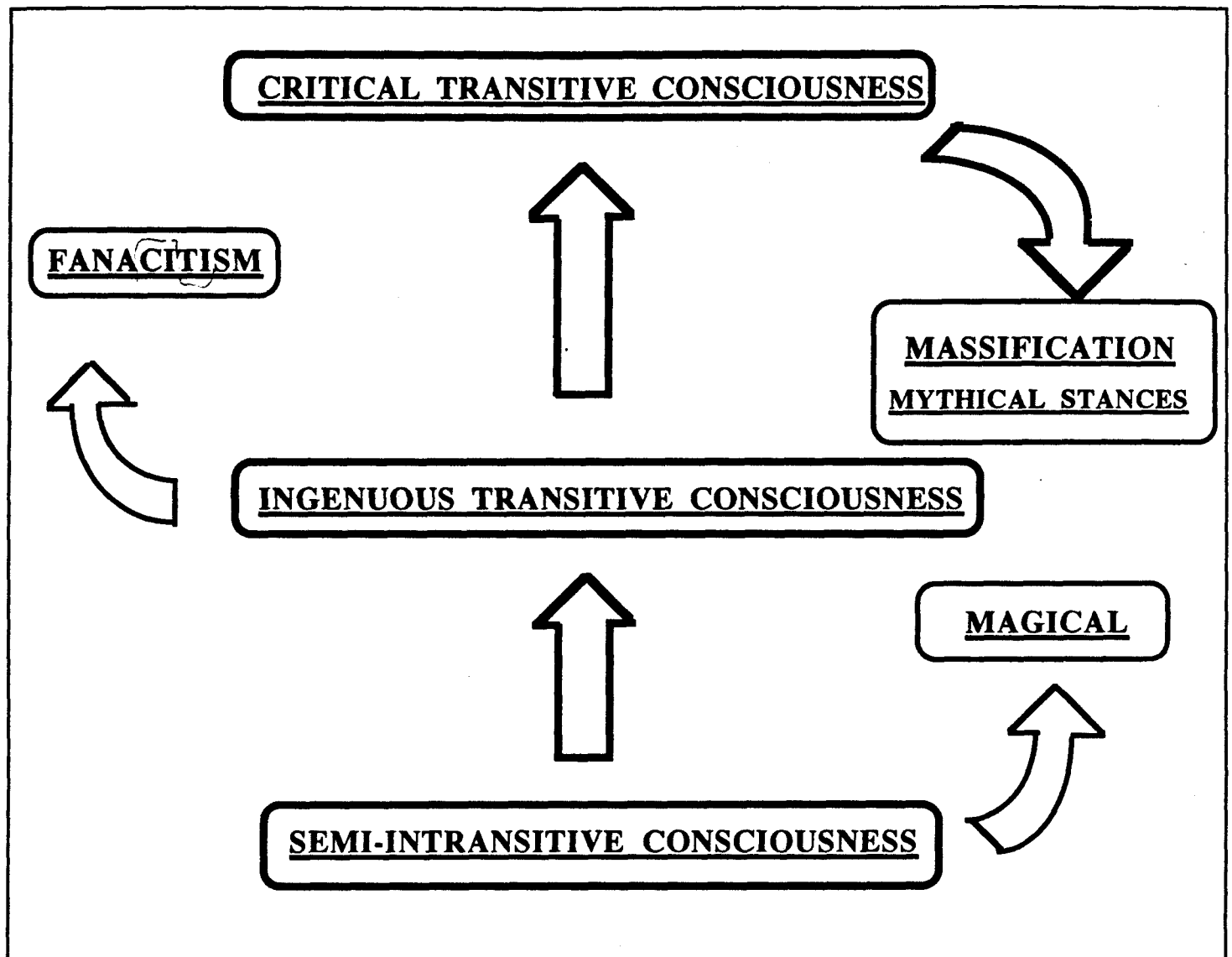
Graph N° 3. Slave Work and Fear





Graph N° 4: Lordship





Graph N° 6. The Dialectics of Conscientization

