STRIKING BACK AT NEOLIBERALISM:
BUILDING SOCIAL SOLIDARITY THROUGH LIBERATION TECHNOLOGY

Sandra Via, Virginia Tech
sevia@vt.edu

Introduction

During the mid-twentieth century, several theologians, including Gustavo Gutierrez, began to fuse elements of Marxism with Christian thought into what they defined as liberation theology. This form of theology particularly focused on the liberation of the poor through a historical materialist perspective. The first aspects of liberation theology emerged at the Second Vatican Council. It was at this time that John XXIII proclaimed the need of the Church to "…know how to discern the signs of the times" (Gutierrez 2003, 89-104). While this statement has multiple dimensions, one of the primary facets of this statement stresses the need for the Church to be more attentive to the movement of history and the world. Therefore, the proclamation made by John XXIII allowed for a shift to occur within the Church; one in which focus was placed on the history of the oppressed poor. Following the Second Vatican Council, Latin American bishops meet in Medellin, Colombia and later in Puebla, Mexico to denounce poverty throughout Latin America. As a result, these theologians and bishops began to define the poor in Marxist terms—oppressed, exploited, and marginalized. Gutierrez, a theologian and priest, states in multiple essays that the poor have been traditionally excluded from history and society. Much of this exclusion is due to the development of neoliberal economic reforms and the global spread of capitalism, or globalization. However, Gutierrez claims the poor are now becoming subjects of their own history and destiny.

Dependence and Developmentalism: Emergence of Neoliberalism and Globalization

Gutierrez argues that in order for the poor to become subjects of their own destiny, they must first understand and confront the cause of their suffering. Therefore, in *A Theology of Liberation,* Gutierrez indicates that the poor in Latin America and other third world countries can attribute their suffering and exploitation to dependence and developmentalism. Dependency

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theory provided Gutierrez and his colleagues with an analytical framework for understanding and critiquing society and economy during the time that liberation theology first emerged. Through an analysis of dependency theory, liberation theologists were able to develop a "…picture of the enemy to be fought in pursuit of liberation and the choice of weapons by which to fight best" (Petrella 2004).

It is possible to apply two variations of dependency theory to the discourse of liberation theology: a Marxist perspective and a reformist perspective. Ivan Petrella writes that Andre Gunder Frank is the primary proponent of the Marxist perspective of dependency theory. According to Frank, poor countries do not begin as underdeveloped countries. Instead, these countries become underdeveloped as a result of the global capitalist system. Frank suggests that there is no escape from the ever-growing persistence of global capital; thus in order to overcome the exploitative nature of capitalism, it is necessary for countries to move away from capitalist underdevelopment to socialist revolution. (73). The reformist perspective of dependency theory often is attributed to Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Like Frank, Cardoso argues that global capitalism hinders development, particularly in Latin America. However, Cardoso does not believe that it is absolutely necessary to overcome capitalism. He contends that it is possible for countries to develop within the realm of global capitalism; capitalism must be reworked into a socialist framework.

While liberation theologists found merit in both arguments, they embraced Frank's perception of dependency theory. Thus, poor countries (Gutierrez specifically focuses on Latin America) competed for the assistance of rich countries. These countries imposed developmental reforms, which were often approached from a purely economic and modernizing viewpoint. According to Gutierrez, the majority of development reforms in Latin America were promoted by "international organizations closely, linked to groups and governments which control the world economy" (Gutierrez 1988, 17). Gutierrez notes that these international organizations sought to implement economic reforms that were modeled after developed societies; thus these models were designed to imitate modern or industrial societies. As these international organizations gained more strength and credibility within the global capitalist system, they became a means of external domination. Therefore, these international organizations and the policies they implement subvert the autonomy of poorer countries and people, while representing a new form of imperialism.

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Gutierrez's discussion of developmentalist reforms as part of the global capitalist system and a neocolonial or neoimperial domination mirrors the descriptions of neoliberalism and economic globalization posited by David Harvey and the authors of *Alternatives to Economic Globalization* respectively (which include editors, John Cavanagh and Jerry Mander). First, Harvey defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, free trade" (Harvey 2005, 2). Although this definition does not distinctly mention modernization and industrialization of societies, it is implied. Primarily "modern" and "industrialized" countries, such as the United States and Great Britain, seek to spread neoliberal ideologies. Furthermore, neoliberalism specifically perpetuates the spread of capitalism, which is considered to be the primary characteristic "modern" and "industrialized" societies. The authors of *Alternatives to Economic Globalization* suggest that economic globalization circumvents democracy by favoring the corporate sector. These individuals state, "It [Globalization] was designed and created by human beings with a specific goal: to give primacy to economic—that is, corporate—values about all other values and to aggressively install and codify those values globally" (Cavanagh and Mander 2004, 33). As with neoliberalism, capitalism is a primary characteristic of corporatism. Global corporations that wish only to increase production, consumption, and finances are driven economic globalization. To provide further credence to the Gutierrez's critique of developmentalism, Cavanagh et al. explicitly state that the damage inflicted by corporate globalization over the past five centuries has "passed from colonialism to imperialism to postcolonial export-led development models" (32).

Harvey and Cavanagh et al. each attribute the spread of neoliberalism and globalization to the creation of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and World Trade Organization (WTO). Each of these organizations has been repeatedly criticized for their roles in promoting neoliberal economic reforms and facilitating the spread of economic globalization; thus each of these organizations demonstrate the characteristics of the international organizations that Gutierrez criticizes for the implementation of developmentalist policies in Latin America. Cavanagh et al. describe the IMF, World Bank, and WTO as the "unholy trinity." According to these individuals, it is the fundamental goal of the "unholy trinity" to "…align all of the world's formerly disparate national economies behind a central formula, to create a standard

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gauge railway by which corporate-led economic growth…." (55). These individuals argue that while IMF, World Bank, and WTO policies are designed to promote economic growth and democracy, they only lead to imbalance, instability, inequity, and social and economic depravation.

Harvey outlines the manner in which the IMF, World Bank, and WTO have repeatedly coerced poor, "underdeveloped" countries, such as those in Latin America, to implement neoliberal reforms. As a result of the implementation of neoliberal policies imposed by the IMF and World Bank, as well as trade policies coordinated by the WTO, several countries have become economically devastated. According to Harvey and Cavanagh et al., the IMF and the World Bank offer credit and loans to underdeveloped countries. When developing countries agree to take these loans, they swallow what Harvey calls the "poison pill of neoliberalism" (Harvey 2005, 75). In other words, the countries that receive these loans must implement specific neoliberal reforms, such as promoting the privatization of businesses, reducing welfare expenditures, and providing flexible labor markets. In turn the IMF and the World Bank become "…centres for the propagation and enforcement of "free market fundamentalism" and neoliberal orthodoxy"(29). Many of these countries accumulate such significant amount of debt, which they are unable to repay. Yet the countries that borrowed money from these organizations were required to repay their debt despite the social cost" (74). In a recent essay entitled "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology," Gutierrez once again notes that the continual intervention of many international organizations and the growing debt of poor countries have for many nations limited the possibilities for overcoming poverty.

Neoliberalism and Globalization: Widening the Gap Between the Wealthy and the Poor

In *A Theology of Liberation*, Gutierrez indicates that foreign investment is driving "underdeveloped" countries to new forms of international capitalism, which results in a new kind of dependence imposed by individuals who are not necessarily associated with one particular country, but are gradually becoming associated with multinational corporations and international organizations specifically designed to further perpetuate the global capitalist system. Furthermore, he contends that those who critique the expansion of global capital often do so from the point of view of capitalist countries. In order to fully demonstrate, Gutierrez quotes Franz Hinkelammert:

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> These are authors who live in the centers of the capitalist world and who deal with the problem of imperialism from the point of view of these centers. They experience the expansive strength of capitalism in these centers; they experience the economic cries of the centers and the ramifications which these phenomena have on the dependent periphery which is exploited by the centers…But what happens is the underdeveloped world itself is not analyzed beyond determining the effects of the exploitation of such countries. (Gutierrez 2003, 52-53).

In other words, these individuals live in capitalist societies and are able to experience capitalism at work, but they do not analyze or understand the effect of capitalism beyond its effects on the nation—they do not take into consideration the effects of these capitalism on individual and localized pockets within underdeveloped countries. Thus Gutierrez indicates that it is necessary to not only analyze and understand the relationship between economically developed nations, the international organizations that perpetuate global capitalism, and underdeveloped nations, but it is also necessary to take on a class analysis of the oppressed and dominated people within underdeveloped and developed countries.

As a result, Gutierrez identifies the widening gap between the rich and the poor. Gutierrez claims that the implementation of developmental reforms, has maintained the interests of large international economic powers (17). These large economic powers continue to "advance and accumulate wealth and strength which allows them to reach new collective goals of a number and degree much higher than those attainable by the underdeveloped countries" (53). He also notes that these growing economic powers have increased the power of strong economic groups. In other words, neoliberal economic reforms and globalization have contributed to the widening of the economic disparities between the wealthy and the poor; eventually resulting in the concentration of power in the hands of the economic elite. In a Marxist critique of neoliberalism, Harvey develops an argument that parallels that of Gutierrez. According to Harvey, neoliberal reforms "reestablish the conditions for capital accumulation and…restore the power of economic elites" (Harvey 2005, 19). Therefore, the implementation of neoliberal reforms has resulted in the redefinition of the relationship between the wealthy and the poor. Harvey also argues that neoliberalism has lead to the financialization of everything, which in turn has prompted the growth of the capitalist enterprises. With the rise of capitalist enterprises also comes the emergence of a new economic elite—individuals such as the corporate CEO. Moreover, specific groups are excluded from the democratic process. Harvey states that neoliberals maintain that democracy is a luxury and is only possible if a strong

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middle-class is able to provide governance. In other words, neoliberals defer democratic governance to experts and elites, which excludes individuals (especially the poor) from the democratic process.

The authors of *Alternatives to Economic Globalization* contribute to this debate as well. They contend that globalization is only a means of promoting the welfare of a select few—the people who receive the most benefit from the spread of global capital (Cavanagh and Mander 2004, 49). For example, Cavanagh et al., state that the top corporate executives from the largest global companies have acquired a considerable amount of wealth from the globalization. A report from the Institute for Policy Studies found that "American CEOs were paid an average of 458 time more than production workers in 2000, up form 104 time in 1991" (44). Furthermore, Cavanagh et al. cite the 1999 United Nations Human Development Report, which reveals that the gap between the rich and the poor steadily continues to increase. The report specifically blames global trade for this increase. Moreover, they conclude that the policies implemented by the World Bank, IMF, and WTO "…are not designed to benefit them [the poor] but to benefit the rich industrial countries and their global corporations" (49).

In several of Gutierrez's recent essays, he continues to proclaim that the emergence of neoliberalism and globalization has further exacerbated the exploitation of the poor. The essay "The Task and Content of Liberation Theology" specifically discusses some of the negative effects of globalization and neoliberalism on the poor and poverty stricken countries. He states that the reaffirmation of the market economy and the advancement of the technological revolution "…has radically transformed the process of accumulation and reduced the role played by raw materials that poor countries produce" (Gutierrez 1999, 23-24). He also contends that neoliberal ideology associated with the expansion of globalization attempts to rewrite history, which essentially eliminates or deprives poor nations of their history (24). This then leads to the concentration of power in the hands of the few and circumscribes the ways in which the exploited are able to overcome poverty and oppression. Arjun Appadurai makes a similar observation in his essay "Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination." Appadurai identifies two apartheids associated with globalization, the second of which is the most relevant to Gutierrez's frame of logic. Appadurai states, "The second form of the apartheid is the at the poor and their advocates find themselves as far from the anxieties of their own national discourses about globalization as they do from the intricacies of the debates in global fora and

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policy discourses surrounding trade, labor, environment, disease, and warfare" (Appadurai 2000, 3). In other words, the poor do not have the ability or the opportunity to express their concerns about globalization—just as they do not have the ability or opportunity to express their concerns about matters such as warfare and trade. Appadurai, like Gutierrez, is suggesting that globalization does not recognize the needs and anxieties of the poor.

Fetishization of the Poor as a Commodity

Globalization and neo-liberalism has had an additional effect on the poor. Specifically, Gutierrez indicates that the expansion of globalization and neo-liberalism has dehumanized the economy; thus, "Millions of people are converted…into useless objects or into disposable objects which are thrown away after use" (Gutierrez 1999, 100). People, particularly the poor, are turned in to merchandise. He also notes that "…economic mechanisms have made it possible for exploitation to be a privilege;" in other words, these economic mechanisms provide the exploited with jobs and the poor should therefore be grateful to their employers for those jobs (Gutierrez 1997, 72). These accounts suggest that individuals, especially the exploited, oppressed poor, have become commodities. In *Capital*, Karl Marx provides the definition of the commodity. In "The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof" Marx states that one element that defines a commodity is its use-value (Marx 2006, par. 1). Therefore, the fact that globalization reduces individuals to the status of objects which are *used* and then disposed of indicates that these individuals have become commodities. In other words, the value of these individuals is solely based on their use-value. Once this value has been exerted, the individual—or as Marx would say, commodity—is disposed of or forgotten.

It is also apparent that not only do the economic mechanisms described by Gutierrez seek to further develop a society that reduces individuals to the level of objects, but seeks to create a society that promotes the fetishism of the commodity; fetishization occurs when the exchange of a commodity provides it and the labor employed to create the commodity with a social status. To elaborate, Marx states that a commodity is defined by its exchange-value in addition to its use-value. The exchange-value of a commodity is derived from the labour used to produce that commodity and the social relations employed when the commodity is exchanged (par.6). In this respect, economic mechanisms privilege exploitation by providing jobs, which in turn provides the employer with labour. This labour is then exploited for the sole purpose of

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creating commodities that are to be exchanged (through social relations) by producers and then used by consumers; thus resulting in the fetishism of the commodity.

Neoliberalism and Social Solidarity

Individuals are not only reduced to objects, but the whole of civil society deteriorates due to the spread of neoliberalism and globalization. Gutierrez observed that as developmentalists' policies were implemented, the social, political, and cultural obstacles that are associated with underdeveloped countries (he refers to them as are "traditional" or "transitional" societies) were eliminated. Therefore, many aspects of civil society were eliminated within developing countries. However, this has not changed. Harvey writes, "…the drive towards market freedoms and the commodification of everything can all too easily run amok and produce social incoherence" (Harvey 2004, 80). In other words, the constant expansion of neoliberalism continues to commodify everything, while also eliminating aspects of social solidarity and civil society. Harvey contends that society and social solidarity are replaced in favor of individualism and private property. He specifically cites the elimination of various forms of social solidarities, such as trade unions and the welfare state in favor of the privatization of public enterprises and the promotion of foreign investment. Margaret Thatcher poignantly verbalizes neoliberalism's destructive tendencies toward civil society and social solidarity. According to Harvey, Thatcher declared that there is "no such thing as society, only individual men and women" and families (23).

Historical Materialism: The Devine Liberator

After identifying the causes of the poor's suffering, Gutierrez suggests that it is necessary to historically examine the gospels of the Bible. Historically examining the gospels will allow the poor to take control of their own destiny and for the Church to combat poverty in its most extreme forms. Reflection in the messages of the gospel will provide the poor with further awareness of the oppression and exploitation. For example, Gutierrez refers to a parable in which Jesus aides a poor, hemorrhaging woman. Referencing this parable not only allows Gutierrez to draw on history as presented by scripture, but this particular parable also reveals the importance of identifying the poor—of including them in society and history—and not continuing to encourage anonymity. Gutierrez states, "When I affirm that Jesus favors the poor

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I know this woman is included, but one must value her as a person, make her assume an identity, she who thought she was worthless" (Gutierrez 1997, 75). Therefore, historical reflection provides the poor with an identity and a means of consciousness. In providing an identity for the oppressed, the poor acquire a sense of happiness. According to Walter Benjamin, who provided an extensive assessment of Marx's conception of historical materialism in "Theses on the Philosophy of History," happiness is bound up in the idea of the past. The past carries with it the conception of redemption; thus history provides the oppressed with a divine redeemer or liberator.

Gutierrez also claims that historical reflection will allow for the development of solidarity between the oppressed masses and those determined to alleviate their suffering. In an essay entitled, "Renewing the Option for the Poor," he discusses three options that allow for solidarity to develop: knowing how to see, listen, and share. To elaborate on the importance of each of these options to the development of solidarity, he refers to three different stories in the Bible. Each of these stories provides an historical account of Jesus' reaction to the poor. Additionally, these stories provide a historical background for the manner in which individuals should react to the poor and the steps that should be taken to alleviate their suffering. Again, this is reminiscent of Benjamin's perception of historical materialism. As stated in Thesis XIV: "History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now" (Benjamin 1939, 263). In other words, history does not only represent the past; it also embodies the present. Gutierrez takes this perspective when he suggests that the scripture and the past actions of Christ demonstrate the manner in which those who seek to eliminate or at least combat poverty should respond to the poor in the present and how we should proceed to address poverty in the future. In a recent essay, "The Situation and Tasks of Liberation Theology Today," Gutierrez further explains this approach to history through theology:

> It is always a matter of a discourse on faith which simply allows us to recall and reread in today's context (with all of the newness that context reveals to us) something which, in one way or another, has always been present—ceaselessly but not without interruptions—throughout the march of the people of God in history…we must outline correctly the degree to which this theology both stands in continuity and parts ways with previous theologies—and above all, with earlier Christian experiences and routes taken witness to God's reign (Gutierrez 2003, 96).

In addition, Benjamin states in Thesis XII, "Not man or men but the struggling, oppressed class itself is the depository of historical knowledge. In Marx it appears as the last enslaved class, as

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the avenger that completes the task of liberation in the name of generations of the downtrodden" (Benjamin 1939, 262). This again emphasizes the notion that history or historical materialism serves as a divine redeemer, or more specifically a liberator, for the oppressed. From this perspective, the marginalized class employs the use of historical knowledge to liberate itself and future generations from oppression. This is precisely what Gutierrez is advocating when he introduces the three options for developing solidarity. The historical knowledge obtained through reflection upon scripture and the historical teachings of Christ provide the oppressed, as well as others, with the means of developing solidarity. Solidarity, as Gutierrez describes it, is the primary method for developing communication between the poor and their advocates, as well as an understanding of the wants of the oppressed. The development of this type of communication and understanding is a step towards the liberation of the oppressed poor. Harvey makes a similar contention. He suggests that the reconstruction of social solidarity, which can include a revival of religious and moral values, can serve as a possible response to the growing threat of neoliberalism (Harvey 2003, 81).

Rebuilding and Strengthening Social Solidarity and Civil Society

As the poor become aware of their oppression, find redemption in historical reflection, and further develop social solidarity, they develop what Gutierrez and Paolo Freire call "conscientization." Citing Freire, Gutierrez states that "conscientization" allows the oppressed to reject the oppressive consciousness that has dominated their lives. Gutierrez writes:

> They [the poor] thus make the transfer from a "naïve awareness"—which does not deal with problems, gives too much value to the past, tends to accept mythical explanation, and tend toward debate—to a "critical awareness"—which delves into problems, is open to new ideas, replaces magical explanations with real causes, and tends to dialogue (Gutierrez 1988, 37).

Therefore, the poor are able to rebuild and transform society, which allows for the growth of civil society. According to Harvey, it is only through the whole of civil society that there will be an emergence of alternatives to neoliberalism. These alternatives will seek to address the needs of specific social groups, which as will be argued later, can include nonhumans as well.

Several liberation theologists, including Gutierrez, advocated the creation of Base Ecclesial Communities (BECs or CEBs). BECs were designed to "encourage the formation of "small communities," "grass-roots organizations," and "collaboration with non-Catholic Christian

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Churches and institutions dedicated to the task of restoring justice in human relations" (Smith 1991, 19). David H. Levine states that BECs reinforce the ideas of egalitarianism and collective action while promoting justice "as an outgrowth of a transformed religious faith" (Levine 1998, 251). BECs specifically focus on building community values and various forms of action that help promote the welfare of the oppressed and downtrodden. While most BECs only consist of a group of ten to thirty people, Gutierrez contends that they have been a tremendous success for liberation theology and the Church. He indicates that BECs have brought the gospel closer to the poor and the poor closer to the gospel (Gutierrez 1988, xli). Therefore, access to the gospel will allow the poor to reflect on the scripture, which will in turn allow the poor to find redemption and liberation in the historical teachings of Jesus.

While the authors of *Alternatives to Economic Globalization* do not explicitly argue for the need to develop social solidarity, they do stress the importance of developing global and local civil societies. These civil societies should include individuals and groups that have traditionally been ignored or excluded from society. For example, they suggest that the environmental community should include rural poor people's movement, farmers, indigenous groups, etc. (Cavanagh and Mander 2004, 140). The authors also briefly mention multiple social movements that include individuals, particularly the poor, who have become aware of their oppression and exploitation. These social movements and grassroots organizations can easily be compared to the BECs advocated by liberation theologists. Some of these movements include, the global fair trade movement, community supported agriculture (CSA), and el Ceibo in Brazil (253-267).

Ecological Social Solidarity

While Marxist ideology is greatly embodied in several aspects of liberation theology, it possible to also find elements of more contemporary political theory in liberation theology. For example, Gutierrez briefly mentions the importance of ecological concern for the environment. He states that ecological concerns prompt us to "widen the horizon of social solidarity, which must include a respectful link to nature" (Gutierrez 1988, 101). In creating a social solidarity that includes nature, it could be argued that Gutierrez seeks to include nature along with the representation of the poor—as previously mentioned, everything, including nature, becomes exploited by the economic mechanisms of neoliberalism and globalization. Once again, it is possible to find a similar argument in Harvey's critique of neoliberalism. Harvey notes that

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neoliberal policies, promoted by the United States, have been the direct source of the exploitation of raw resources, such as oil, minerals, raw materials, and agriculture (Harvey 2003, 28). Harvey and the authors of *Alternatives to Economic Globalization* also attribute the exploitation of nature to the economic and trade policies of the World Bank and WTO. For instance, Cavanagh et al. contend that the World Bank has provided low-interest loans to subsidize the interests of global corporations to establish control over and basically exploit the natural resources of developing countries (Cavanagh and Mander 2004, 57). In many respects, one can also assert that the WTO seeks to control and exploit nature. The WTO has created and expanded the jurisdiction of Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), which allowed corporations to assert or establish patents on natural elements, such as the human genome and the commons. This has ultimately led to the deterioration of the global commons. Harvey states, "The escalating depletion of the global environmental commons (land, air, water) and proliferating habitat degradations that preclude anything but capital-intensive modes of agricultural production have likewise resulted from the wholesale commodification of nature in all its forms" (Harvey 2003, 160). Therefore, nature becomes oppressed and marginalized in the same manner as the poor.

The notion of including nature in social solidarity is somewhat reflective of the theories presented by Bruno Latour in *We Have Never Been Modern*. In each of this text, Latour notes the importance of the inclusion of nature in democracy and our everyday understanding of the world. According to Latour, all objects and subjects are natural and social; thus he refers to these objects as quasi-objects and quasi-subjects. As both natural and social, these objects and subjects should be considered when addressing all facets of life, society, culture, and economy; thus they are to be represented in the "Parliament of Things." In the Parliament of Things, "Natures are present, but with their representatives, scientists who speak in their name. Societies are present, but with the objects that have been serving as their ballast from time immemorial" (Latour 1993, 144). Including nature in the Parliament of Things and social solidarity provides an identity and voice for nature in society and history.

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Conclusion

Marxism and other forms of contemporary political theory have had a significant impact on the formation and continuation of liberation theology. Gustavo Gutierrez states that one of the primary means of liberation for the poor occurs through historical reflection of the gospels of the Bible; thus indicating that historical materialism serves as divine redeemer and liberator for the poor. Walter Benjamin also noted the importance of combining historical materialism with theology. In Thesis I of the *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, Benjamin states, "The puppet called 'historical materialism' is to win all the time. It can easily be a march for anyone if it enlists the services of theology" (Benjamin 1939, 255). However, Gutierrez indicates that it is first necessary to understand the causes of the poor's suffering and exploitation. In doing so, he turns to dependency theory and the problems associated with developmentalism. Thus, it becomes apparent that the poor's suffering, domination, and oppression are due to the spread of neoliberalism and globalization. Gutierrez's account of the exploitation of the poor through globalization and neo-liberalism is reminiscent of Karl Marx's description of the commodity and the fetishism of the commodity, which results in deepening of economic disparity and the marginalization of the poor. Therefore, it is necessary to not only turn to historical materialism for liberation, Gutierrez claims that it is also necessary to develop rebuild and deepen social solidarities. In terms of contemporary political theory, one is able to find similarities between Gutierrez's inclusion of nature in the practice of social solidarity and Bruno Latour's conception of the "Parliament of Things." The combination of each of these aspects of Marxist ideology and contemporary political theory provides a unique theoretical background from which liberation theology can continue to fight the plague of poverty.

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