

## Extended Critique of the Mode of Production Theory

نقد موسع لنظرية نمط الإنتاج

**Muhammad Adel Zaky**

Researcher in Political Economy

Faculty of Law, Alexandria University - Egypt

ORCID: 0009-0001-7294-8605

muhammadadel1972@gmail.com

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### Abstract:

In this article, I replace the theory of the mode of production—following a critique of its ideological foundations—with a hypothesis grounded in a critical understanding of the laws governing the movement of economic activity throughout the extensive trajectory of human social and economic development. This hypothesis posits that capitalism—understood as the subordination of a society's economic activity to the laws governing the movement of capital—forms the foundational basis of all social systems, regardless of the degree of development of the prevailing productive forces or the form taken by the dominant relations of production. This approach enables a reinterpretation of the nature of all doctrines and the true character of those theories and systems that have emptied political economy of its social essence and stripped it of its civilizational meaning, transforming it into a tool of domination and subjugation rather than an instrument of consciousness and liberation.

**Keywords:** Mode of Production, Historical Materialism, Asiatic Mode of Production, Economic Formations, Marxist Theory

الملخص:

في هذه المقالة، أستبدل نظرية نمط الإنتاج — بعد نقد أسسها الأيديولوجية — بفرضية تقوم على فهم نقدي للقوانين التي تحكم حركة النشاط الاقتصادي عبر المسار الواسع للتطور الاجتماعي والاقتصادي الإنساني. تفترض هذه الفرضية أن الرأسمالية — بوصفها إخضاع النشاط الاقتصادي للمجتمع لقوانين حركة رأس المال — تشكل الأساس الجوهري لجميع الأنظمة الاجتماعية، بغض النظر عن درجة تطور القوى المنتجة السائدة أو الشكل الذي تتخذه علاقات الإنتاج المهيمنة. يتيح هذا المنهج إعادة تفسير طبيعة جميع المذاهب والطابع الحقيقي لتلك النظريات والأنظمة التي فرغت علم الاقتصاد السياسي من جوهره الاجتماعي وسلبته معناه الحضاري، محولة إياه من أداة وعي وتحرر إلى أداة هيمنة وإخضاع. الكلمات المفتاحية: نمط الإنتاج، المادية التاريخية، النمط الآسيوي للإنتاج، التشكيلات الاقتصادية، النظرية الماركسية.

### Introduction

The theory of the mode of production is one of the most deeply entrenched frameworks in the discipline of political economy, and as might be expected, it is profoundly imbued with Eurocentrism. This Eurocentrism narrates the history of the world—and consequently, human economic activity—beginning with the history of Europe itself. The theory of the mode of production is not only a firmly held doctrine among dominant currents within the left; it is also—

perhaps even more so—widely embraced by general historians and historians of economic thought. In my critique of the theory of the mode of production, I proceed through three methodological steps. First, I examine the laws governing the movement of capital as a necessary conceptual entry point for understanding the nature of this critique. Second, I analyze the core concepts and principles of the theory of the mode of production. Finally, I present my own hypothesis, which replaces the theory of the mode of production with the laws governing the movement of capital.

### **First: The Laws Governing the Movement of Capital**

At the outset of economic activity under capitalist production, we must begin with money, which we denote by the symbol (M), representing monetary capital. To purchase a commodity, denoted by (C), either for exchange or consumption (whether for personal use or production), we must have a certain amount of (M) at our disposal. For instance, to buy a specific quantity of fruit for direct consumption (purchasing with the intent of personal consumption), to buy it for resale (purchasing with the intent to sell), or to buy it for production purposes—such as manufacturing jam to be sold (purchasing with the intent of production)—we must have (M) at our disposal.

Thus, the capitalist, throughout the history of human economic activity, always has three options:

- To purchase a commodity at a low price and resell it at a higher price.
- To produce/manufacture the commodity instead of buying it as a finished product.
- To lend their money to another person or institution for a specified period, receiving back the principal amount with interest. This option also encompasses all transactions related to financial speculation and currency trading.

### **The Three Forms of the Law of Motion**

Let us begin with the case of purchasing with the intent to sell. A fruit vendor goes to the direct producer—the farmer—to buy fruit (C) with the aim of reselling it at a higher price, thereby recovering the original sum of money with which they began their trade, plus a profit. We denote profit by the symbol ( $\Delta$ ), which indicates the change—whether increase or decrease—in the amount of money (M). If we strip all successive and consecutive acts of buying and selling of secondary and non-essential elements, and exclude the costs of circulation, which do not add value, we are left with the law governing this process:

$$M \rightarrow C \rightarrow M + \Delta M$$

At this point, it is essential to develop an awareness of the following distinction:

- A merchant whose role is limited to purchasing commodities and reselling them for monetary profit derives their profit from the profit of the industrial capitalist. All the expenses this merchant incurs—on wages, tools, etc.—are not considered capital; rather, they are merely circulation costs whose function is to realize, not to create, a profit that has already been determined in the sphere of production.
- However, a merchant who, in addition to acting as a distribution outlet for industrial capital, engages in other activities—such as packaging, labeling, etc.—which constitute an

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independent process of production, does generate value and surplus value within that domain of activity. This value is then added arithmetically to the value of the commodity.

This general foundation of the merchant's profit does not imply that surplus value cannot arise—according to the law of value—within the sphere of commerce. Surplus value can indeed arise through storage, shipping, transportation, and other commercial operations. However, transportation, for example, does not increase the value of the commodity itself; it adds value within the transport service sphere. Accordingly, both types of value may be combined when calculating the total value of the commodity as it is presented on the market.

When the merchant decides to produce the commodity instead of purchasing it for resale—that is, when the fruit trader decides to become a capitalist producing fruit jam—a slight modification occurs in the formulation of the law of motion.

Our merchant, now transformed into an industrial capitalist, converts their monetary capital (M) into productive capital. They purchase fruits, preservatives, and other materials of labor (ML). Then, they buy the machinery required to manufacture and package the jam—these are the instruments of labor (IL). They also purchase labor power (LP) from wage workers.

Once the capitalist has assembled all the components of their productive capital—consisting of labor power, materials of labor, and instruments of labor—we shall collectively refer to the latter two as means of production (MP). The capitalist then instructs the workers to "embrace their beloved machines" in the process of production, thereby transforming productive capital into commodity capital. Once the commodities are produced, the capitalist sells them on the market and receives (M + ΔM), thus converting commodity capital back into monetary capital with the intent of renewing the cycle.

In each capitalist cycle, monetary capital (M) is transformed into productive capital (LP + MP), which is then transformed into commodity capital (C), and finally converted again into monetary capital (M + ΔM).

This entire process unfolds in accordance with the law of motion of capital:  $M \rightarrow [LP + MP] \rightarrow C \rightarrow M + \Delta M$

But our friend, the fruit trader who decided to become an industrial capitalist, now appears to be reflecting on something. While watching the workers boil the fruit and add preservatives, and others canning the jam or loading the final product onto delivery trucks bound for the market, he begins to think:

Why not invest my capital differently, like my friend who might be making even greater profits through financial speculation? Why not trade in money itself—buying and selling currency?

At that moment, our fruit trader would shift from being an industrial capitalist to a financial capitalist. The law of motion of capital, in this case, becomes:  $M \rightarrow M \rightarrow M + \Delta M$

Thus, the laws of motion <sup>(1)</sup> that govern production and distribution in society throughout the history of economic activity manifest in three basic forms:

- The law of motion of commercial capital:  $M \rightarrow C \rightarrow M + \Delta M$
- The law of motion of industrial capital:  $M \rightarrow [LP + MP] \rightarrow C \rightarrow M + \Delta M$
- The law of motion of monetary/financial capital:  $M \rightarrow M \rightarrow M + \Delta M$

### **Dialectical Relations**

Within the framework of the laws of motion, dialectical relations emerge on multiple levels:

•First, they manifest at the level of the production process: the social nature of production stands in contradiction with the private ownership of the means of production.

•Second, they emerge at the level of relations of production: the conflict is not only between the worker, who owns labor power, and the capitalist, who owns the means of production, but also between the worker and the machine—they are in constant conflict, each negating the other.

•Third, contradictions emerge in the distribution of the social product: each class, whether participating in the production process or not, seeks to appropriate the largest possible share of the product.

•Fourth, they manifest in the renewal of production: the use of profit for simple or expanded reproduction contradicts its use for consumption.

•Fifth, they emerge at the level of the smallest unit in the production process, the commodity: the exchange of commodities for other commodities or money stands in contradiction with their use or consumption, and so on.

Thus, dialectical relations constantly emerge and ceaselessly drive and shape development on the social level—until the Earth itself veers off its orbit.

### **The Legal Nature of Exchange Relations**

We have previously discussed the laws of motion, particularly the law of motion of industrial capital, in isolation from the legal nature of the dialectical relations between its components. This separation was important in order to understand this nature independently. We mentioned that the capitalist transforms their money into means of production and labor power. In other words, they exchange with the owners of the means of production, whether they are owners of materials of labor, tools of labor, or labor power itself. The capitalist gives them money and receives their products in return.

To comprehend the legal nature of the relationship between the components of the law of motion—that is, the legal nature of the exchange of money for materials of labor, the exchange of labor power for money, and the exchange of money for tools of labor—we must move beyond seeing the process of transforming money into means of production merely as exchanges between units of money,

materials of labor, tools of labor, and labor power. Instead, we need to analyze the nature of the exchange relations themselves.

From a legal perspective, exchange is not a gift; rather, it is a transaction in which each party receives something in return for what they have given. The buyer compensates the seller with money, and the capitalist compensates the worker's labor power with money. Similarly, the worker compensates the use of their labor power with units of money, and so on.

It is important here to distinguish between the legal nature of the act of exchange and the juridical judgment of an exchange that may be tainted by defects in will. Additionally, we must differentiate between the dominant social organization and the rule that governs economic activity on the social level.

Legally speaking, exchange is a transaction in which each party receives something in return for what they have given, regardless of the legislative ruling or moral stance. The law of motion of capital governing exchange at the level of economic activity does not concern itself with whether the exchange between (N) and (L P), or between (N) and (M P) was conducted fairly or legally. The law of motion is not preoccupied, when applied to the exchange relationship, with any defects in will; one party may exploit or coerce the other, or deceive or defraud them, yet this does not affect the performance of the law of motion, which continues to govern the relationship. This is because the legislative ruling or even the moral stance does not concern the law of motion. The invalidity or corruption of the exchange due to coercion or fraud does not suspend the law of motion nor affect how it operates.

Since the law of motion of capital governs exchange relations, which are of a compensatory nature, regardless of the legislative ruling or moral stance, and represents, as such, the foundation on which all social systems operate, it does not concern itself, in any way, with whether a slave exchanges with a master for a drink of water and a piece of bread, or whether a serf exchanges with a feudal lord for a portion of the harvest, or whether a wage laborer exchanges with a capitalist for a wage. Awareness of this legal nature will be decisive in reintroducing and correcting the theory of the mode of production, and consequently reintroducing the concept of capitalism (which is the subjugation of production and distribution in society to the laws of motion of capital).

## **Second: Concepts and Foundations of the Theory of the Mode of Production**

The mode of production—as a term attributed to Marx—rests on two pillars: relations of production and forces of production. As for the relations of production, which are the legal links governing the process of creating goods and services on a social level, according to Marx and his legacy, these relations can be:

1. **Slavery** (between the slave and the master) in a slave society, and thus based on the master's right to "dominate" his slave; the slave, having no legal standing, is considered an object that the master may exploit, sell, or even dispose of by killing.
2. **Feudalism** (between the serf and the feudal lord) in a feudal society, and thus based on dependency. The serf is "bound" to the land, and when the ownership of the land changes—

such as through inheritance—the serf also transfers with the ownership of the land to the new lord.

3. **Contractual** (between the wage laborer and the capitalist) in contemporary bourgeois society<sup>(2)</sup>, and thus based on the meeting of "free" wills capable of producing a certain legal effect. The worker, exercising his free will, appears in the market as a free party to the labor contract, while the capitalist, who also possesses free will, enters into the contract. The contract is formed according to the principle that "the contract is the law of the contracting parties," a rule that assumes, in contrast to truth and reality, an equality between the parties to the contract in terms of consciousness, power, and authority.

Thus, there is nothing to prevent the existence of multiple relations of production operating alongside each other within a single society. For instance, there may be the dominance of slave relations of production alongside contractual relations, as seen in Athens or Rome. Similarly, feudal relations of production may dominate in the countryside, while free contractual relations prevail in the city, as in 17th-century France.<sup>(3)</sup>

As for the second pillar, namely the forces of production, these are the things used in the processes of renewing social production—namely, means of production and labor power. They are always present, albeit at varying levels of development, in all relations of production (slavery, feudalism, and contractual relations) as seen in Babylon, Athens, Rome, Baghdad, Cordoba, etc. However, in Marx's view and the legacy that followed, they will only play the role of "capital" in the context of contemporary European bourgeois society.

Now, let's observe carefully: The term "slave mode of production" has been ascribed (after reducing the entire social organization, intentionally and selectively, to the phenomenon of slavery) in a way that is selective and arbitrary. Similarly, the term "feudal mode of production" is attributed to relations of production (without any scientific justification, meaning without reason for favoring relations of production to attribute the mode of production to the society). Furthermore, the term "capitalist mode of production" is ascribed to the forces of production (again, without any scientific justification, meaning without reason for favoring these forces of production to attribute the mode of production to the society).<sup>(4)</sup>

In order to define the contemporary capitalist society, and thus to advocate for the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism<sup>(5)</sup> within Marx's doctrine and its subsequent legacy, it was necessary to highlight two phenomena: the sale of labor power and production for the market, as historically unprecedented phenomena. This was done while continuously emphasizing their negation in societies that existed prior to European capitalism. Apparently, this was the only means through which Marx and his successors could claim that capitalism was unknown to societies preceding it historically, and thus, it is a transient social system that can be overthrown.

The classification as mentioned above plays a very important role within the framework of political economy in two crucial ways; it is:

- (1) It prevents delving into the processes of production and distribution to uncover the objective laws governing them at the social level. It presents — in terms of relations of production — the external form of class organization relations (coercion and enslavement), blending them with

relations of political organization (subordination and feudalism), and with the outward form of legal organization relations (the sovereignty of will). It presents the surface of social and political organization. Hence, it offers the superficial form of distribution relations. Starting from the concern with the "form" of social and political organization, or the "form" of the legal or class position of the direct producer or the owner of the means of production — influenced, without scientific basis, by the most prominent social phenomena, such as slavery and the status of slaves in the ancient world, feudalism and the position of serfs in the medieval world, and the principle of the sovereignty of will and the subjugation of the wage laborer to the authority of capital in the contemporary bourgeois world — it obscures the laws of motion and their decisive role in shaping the base on which all social systems in the pre-capitalist world functioned. The above classification assumes transparency and superficiality in the relations of production in the world prior to European capitalism, and the absence of the phenomena of selling labor power and production for the market for profit. The master in the slave world owns the slave, including their ability to work. The slave has no legal capacity or will! Yes, the master extracts surplus from the slave, but the nature of this surplus, and its source and distribution, does not require, as the theory of the mode of production claims, any scientific explanation; because coercion is clear, the oppression is severe, and enslavement is the dominant condition. The surplus is extracted through force and violence! Therefore, theoretically, it concludes that there is no need for the emergence of social science concerned with uncovering the objective laws governing production and distribution in this society, for such laws do not exist in the first place!

In the feudal society, the situation is no different according to the theory of mode of production. The serf, a degraded subordinate at the bottom of the social hierarchy, works under coercion on his lord's land and has no control over his own fate. He plows his lord's fields, presses the grapes in his presses, grinds the grain in his mills, and delivers the surplus to his lord's storerooms and warehouses! There is no need, in this regard, as the theory of mode of production suggests, for the emergence of social science that uncovers the objective laws governing production and distribution in this society.

Historically, surpluses were extracted using violence, force, and coercion from slaves and serfs in some cases, but not always and not uniformly. Scientifically, it is incorrect to generalize the phenomena of coercion and extraction by force. Instead, we must search for the objective laws that governed production and distribution, and thus the appropriation of surplus by masters, whether slave owners or large landowners. There were many and widespread instances where slaves and serfs worked alongside wage laborers and free peasants, subject to the same rules governing the labor of wage workers in the production process.

It is also necessary, and perhaps even more importantly, to search for these objective laws in cases of surplus extraction through coercion and force. This leads to the identification of the objective laws governing production and distribution throughout the history of human economic activity, regardless of the form of social/political organization, the class position of the direct producer, the legal status of the owner of the means of production, or the level of development of the productive forces themselves.

This classification of "slavery – feudalism – capitalism" is used ideologically to solidify the existence of an established political system, attempting to prove (scientifically and inevitably!) the

arrival of a specific political system, thereby further deceiving the masses. The followers of Marx, more than Marx himself, have actively contributed to entrenching this ideological status.

Marx, to some extent, saw that the stages of human history begin, according to European centrality, with primitive communism and pass through slavery, feudalism, and then capitalism. Therefore, Marx's political economy becomes the science of the capitalist mode of production<sup>(6)</sup>, starting from his theory of the mode of production, which is based on the transparency of relations of production and the absence of capital as a phenomenon in pre-capitalist societies, where production is mainly for direct consumption. Marx's followers seize this theory to establish/sell communism (scientifically!), arguing that "science" dictates it. From primitivism comes slavery, from slavery comes feudalism, from feudalism comes capitalism, and from capitalism, via socialism, comes communism! The latter is thus inevitably coming (scientifically)! Political economy, in their view, becomes the science of modes of production. Therefore, the theory of the mode of production led to the "ideologization" of science.

Indeed, how misleading is the ideological discourse marketed against capital, which confines capitalism to that plump man with a cigar, watching his workers from the balcony of his office in his factory, fantasizing about the enormous profits he will earn by exploiting his workers. The problem with this deceptive discourse lies in its personification of the capitalist system and its reduction of the struggle to a revolution against the big factory and landowners, or even against the rich in general! This has led to the failure of all liberation movements, starting with the reproduction of the exploiter's persona or its superficial change, without a genuine scientific confrontation capable of creating a civilizational project for a just and compassionate future.

Although the laws of capital movement govern the performance of General Motors factories just as they govern the humblest workshop for making shoe laces in the poorest neighborhoods of Cairo, or governed the factories of Gaul and the Ottoman weaving houses, as long as wage labor is used for production for the market, the greatest deception marketed to kill the minds of youth is that the capitalism to resist and revolutionize against is only embodied in that greedy/exploitative capitalist, whose interests may conflict with the political system. The political system itself derived its existence from ideologically deceiving the masses. This personification is responsible for the historical failure of all attempts to understand the laws of motion<sup>(7)</sup> governing production and distribution at the social level, and thus the perpetual failure to overcome them.

### **Manifestations of the Confusion of the Theory of Mode of Production**

The confusion and contradiction of the theory of the mode of production, as presented by Marx and his followers, is confirmed in the following:

1. Suppose that the mode of production in a society is either slave-based or feudal, and the forces of production are capitalist<sup>(8)</sup>. How can, according to the theory of the mode of production, the mode of production in this society be classified without control? Why do we say the society is slave-based (with regard to relations of production)? Why don't we say the society is capitalist (with regard to the forces of production)? Or vice versa, why not say that the society is capitalist (with regard to the forces of production) and not feudal (with regard to relations of production)?



2. In some social production processes, one part may be based on a feudal or slave production relation, and another part may be based on a free contractual relation! The same question arises: What is the mode of production in this case?
3. According to the theory of the mode of production, the forces of production will evolve with the contemporary bourgeois society until they reach a level that transforms them from mere means of production for direct satisfaction into capital! The question that the theory of the mode of production can never answer is: What is, scientifically, the "level of development" that determines whether the means of production have reached the stage of capital or not?<sup>(9)</sup>

Starting from our distinction between the form of social organization (slave-based/feudal/bourgeois) and the laws of movement governing production and distribution within this social organization, and ending with our rejection of the theory of the mode of production in its current form and ideological presentation, we replace the theory of the mode of production, after correcting it, with the laws of movement, leading to the objective laws governing production and distribution on the social level throughout the history of economic activity, regardless of the form of social/political organization, the class position of the direct producer, or the legal status of the owner of the means of production, and regardless of the level of development of the forces of production themselves.

### **Thirdly: From Modes of Production to Laws of Motion**

When we examine the laws of motion governing production and distribution in Athens in the first century BCE, or in Rome in the fourth century CE,<sup>(10)</sup> we find that the relations of production were not purely based on slavery, as the theory of the mode of production claims. Rather, free contractual relations of production coexisted alongside coercive, slavery-based relations of production. Moreover, the slave-based relations themselves exhibited varying degrees of intensity and exploitation.

Indeed, one might even argue that slave-based relations of production were relatively weak and limited, mostly confined to domestic tasks or work that required little skill—especially in light of the predominance of free contractual relations of production in workshops, factories, aboard ships, and so on.

Accordingly, there is no scientific justification for considering the mode of production at the time as slave-based without also considering it as based on free contractual relations. Attributing the mode of production exclusively to slavery appears arbitrary and lacks any scientific basis.

As for the productive forces, in both Athens and Rome as well<sup>(11)</sup> they were not of the kind that were used for direct consumption, as the theory of the mode of production also suggests. Rather, despite their relatively low technological level, they were commodities intended for market exchange and functioned as capital. This, of course, if we are speaking of production and distribution in society. However, if we are referring to the social phenomena prevalent in Athenian or Roman society at the time, we might enumerate a number of them—oligarchy, aristocracy, slavery, and so on. But none of these phenomena can be said to define the processes of production and distribution at the societal level in such a way as to imprint them with their name or characteristics.

If that is done—as it was indeed done by the theory of the mode of production—it leads to the obscuring of the laws governing production and distribution in society. At best, these laws are reduced to mere slavery, rendering society as a lifeless entity devoid of movement: no exchange, no money, no markets, no production, no distribution, and so forth—only slaves fulfilling the desires of their masters, who are dressed in the finest garments of the age and adorned with the most precious jewels of the era. We are never told where these garments or jewels came from! And when the masters tire of their slaves, they throw them to the beasts in tragic scenes reminiscent of Hollywood films.

In a society where the ruling institution—along with the social and religious elites—controls the land, granting it to whomever it wills, seizing it from whomever it chooses, or compelling whomever it pleases to work it—whether that ruling institution is embodied in a king, a lord, or a caliph—the objective laws governing production and distribution begin to be obscured at the very moment economic activity is reduced to the relations of production between feudal lords and the serfs, the slaves of the land. It is as if society were devoid of tradespeople, wage laborers, and artisans, and devoid of the relations of production among them. As if there were no exchange, no commodities, no accumulation, no money, no profit, no wages—and indeed, no production or distribution at all!

Thus, slave and feudal societies are presented—according to the Eurocentric theory of the mode of production—as self-sufficient societies that produce for direct consumption. As a result, the theory sees no significance in the emergence of a science capable of explaining the phenomena of production and distribution within these societies. There is, apparently, no difficulty in understanding the slave society as it is portrayed: the master owns the slaves, who fulfill his desires before perishing between the jaws of lions. Nor is there any difficulty in grasping the feudal society as it is depicted by the theory: the feudal lord resides in his castle, the serfs dwell in their huts and hovels, granaries overflow with wheat and barley, and the cellars are filled with beer and wine. Consequently, there appears to be no problem that would warrant uncovering the objective laws of production and distribution through a social science.

Because this ideological presentation of modes of production, as we have seen above, is misleading, disregards historically established facts, and ultimately leads to the politicization and ideological distortion of science, we shall replace the current form of the theory of the mode of production with an alternative: the laws of motion that govern production and distribution at the societal level. At the same time, we will reconsider the legal nature of the dialectical relations between the components of the social productive forces in both the slave-based and feudal social formations, as follows:

(1) Adhering to the laws of motion, which serve as a fixed standard, in analyzing economic activity through its development leads to a structural/abstract view of the world's economic history and its present. This view carries a critical consciousness that the processes of production of goods and services occurring within different social systems, with their varied forms and objective characteristics, are always subject to fixed laws of motion, namely, the three laws of motion. What changes is the form, the appearance. When we analyze, starting from the laws of motion, production and distribution in a society where slavery is prevalent and social organization is based on it, we will find the three laws—laws of motion of capital—always present, regardless of the form of production relations and the level of development of the productive forces. Thus, the slave-owner, in producing

wine for the market, feeds his slave (in-kind wages) and extracts surplus value from the goods the slave produces.<sup>(12)</sup> In this moment, the moment of the production of value equivalent and surplus value, the exchange takes place as a legal relationship. The slave receives his food, which provides the necessary energy (value of his labor power), and, in return, according to the law of motion of capital, he provides surplus labor.<sup>(13)</sup>

When we also analyze, starting from the laws of motion, production and distribution in a society where feudalism prevails, we can analyze two models:

**The first model:** where production is for direct consumption, as proposed by Marx and Rosa, where exchange is nonexistent, representing a historically exceptional case drawn from Charlemagne's empire!<sup>(15)</sup> Rosa wrote:

*"In the Middle Ages, we find that the small peasant on his farm, just like the great monarch on his estates, produces exactly what he wishes to obtain through production. But there is no magic in this: both of them seek to satisfy their natural human needs—food, drink, clothing, and some other aspects of life. The only difference is that the peasant sleeps on straw, while the large landowner sleeps on a feather mattress; the peasant drinks beer or something similar at the table, while the great landowner drinks expensive wine. The only difference lies in the quantity and quality of the produced goods. However, the basis and purpose of the economy, which is to meet human needs, remain the same. In exchange for labor, which comes from this natural goal, there is a clear outcome. Here again, in the process of work itself, there are many differences: the peasant works alone or with family members, and he only obtains from the fruits of labor what the piece of land he owns or his share in the common land provides. But whether each peasant works for himself with his family or whether all of them work together for the feudal lord under the leadership of the mayor or royal supervisor, the result of this work is only a certain amount of means of subsistence in the broadest sense of the term, that is, exactly what the peasant needs to live, or almost what he needs for this living. We can, of course, manage such an economy in every direction and view it from every angle, and we will find that there is no secret in it. To understand it, we don't need any special science or in-depth research."*

However, Rosa forgets to mention that this society is unaware of money! She also forgets to say that it lives in isolation from the world; therefore, she neglects to mention that the expensive wines the monarch drinks, the gilded silk garments he wears, and the plush beds on which he sleeps are all made by producers in feudalism, not brought from Persia or Baghdad or Gaul, and perhaps from the Mongol plains! The historical fact is that using Charlemagne's empire as a model for feudal production is akin to taking an exception as the rule and generalizing it. Charlemagne's empire represents an exceptional moment where the economy of the Holy Empire is closer to a direct subsistence economy rather than feudalism. Charlemagne ruled at a time when the economic situation in Southern France and Italy had deteriorated after Islamic fleets took control of the Mediterranean basin, and northern tribes' raids increased. Under these circumstances, trade declined, merchants' conditions worsened, and there was no longer a class to rival the large landowners in the countryside. With the shift to an agricultural economy for self-sufficiency, many free peasants fell under the land-serf system, which was spreading. Even slavery expanded for a time due to the Carolingian wars against pagan tribes. However, Rosa's portrayal of this society does not reflect its reality. There were markets, goods, prices, money, speculation, etc., where Charlemagne worked to support and regulate internal trade. The state extended its protection to markets, established a precise system for weights, measures, and prices, prohibited speculation on crops before harvesting, and maintained the stability of currency values, etc. Therefore, using Charlemagne's empire as an exceptional case and generalizing it can only be accepted by accepting European centrality itself!

This model, as presented, has not been historically represented accurately, and has been reduced to production for direct consumption. Although this conception contains a certain truth, it conceals the other, more important, broader, and more dangerous aspect, which demonstrates the existence of exchange and production for the market. Even though these two elements—exchange and production for the market—appeared within narrow limits, this is not due to the laws of historical materialism, as is commonly assumed, but rather because of the political instability in the Mediterranean at that time.

**As for the second model**, where production is for the market as it is seen in the reality of the feudal social formation in France, it actually represents a clear example of the capitalist mode of production, not only in terms of crafts and industries in the city but also in terms of agricultural activity in the countryside. In this social/political (feudal) organization, relations of production manifest as exchanges between the owner of labor power and the owner of the means of production. Additionally, the forces of production, starting from the exchange of labor for in-kind or monetary wages, appear as capital used to produce goods for the market with the intention of making a profit. While the form of the artisan at that time or the nature of the profession, such as the doctor or lawyer, may vary, the forces of production and the dialectical relations between their components remain subject to the laws governing the movement of production and distribution in society.

(2) Relying on the laws of motion to understand and analyze the nature of economic activity and its historical development helps us avoid the common confusion between the prevailing social/political/class organization at the societal level (whether slave, feudal, or bourgeois) and the relations and links of production of goods and services, which always involve exchange between the slave and the master, the serf and the feudal lord, and the wage laborer and the capitalist.<sup>(15)</sup>

(3) Relying on the laws of motion to understand and analyze the history and present of economic activity helps us avoid the arbitrary classifications that have infiltrated political economy, such as terms like: the small bourgeoisie! the large bourgeoisie! the master craftsmen and the minor ones!... etc. All of these classifications are based on confused understandings, impressionistic notions, and arbitrary views without any fixed or clear objective foundations, and their central goal was to deceive the masses!

(4) When I attribute the mode of production to the phenomenon of capital, saying: capitalist mode of production, I am attributing it to the laws of motion of capital, which inherently include the relations of production, not to the development of the forces of production from mere things to capital. Thus, the capitalist mode of production,<sup>(16)</sup> in contrast to the primitive/subsistence mode of production, becomes the mode of production that represents the foundation upon which different social systems operate, whether this system is slave-based, feudal, or contemporary bourgeois. Regardless of the level of development of the social forces of production or the class position or legal status of the direct producer and the owner of the means of production.

## **Conclusion :**

Perhaps the question that must be asked here now is: Why, then, did political economy not emerge as a science to uncover the objective laws governing production and distribution in society, when economic activity on the social level, according to my hypothesis which I have proven to be correct,

has always been subject to the laws of motion of capital since man left the animal kingdom? The reality is that the central driver behind the emergence of science is the uncovering of the objective law governing the social phenomenon as (something) (dominant) that holds influence (independent) of the individuals within society. Political economy, as a social science, could not have emerged to explain the phenomena of its concern unless the dominance of these phenomena coincided with the collective mind's aspiration to understand the objective laws governing them. Because the collective mind, throughout our social development, was initially subjected to mythological and philosophical thinking, and then, in a second historical phase, to jurisprudential and theological thinking, it was only when the collective mind was freed in a third historical phase by scientific thinking that it could reach these objective laws. Hence, political economy emerged to reveal the subjugation of production and distribution in society to the laws of motion of capital, not only in our contemporary capitalist world, but in earlier ages and more distant periods. It emerged so that we could understand, through its intellectual tools, that capitalism (which is the subjection of economic activity in society to the laws of motion of capital) is the foundation upon which all social systems operate, regardless of the (extent) of development of the prevailing forces of production, and regardless of the (form) of the dominant relations of production. Thus, we can consciously distinguish between the form of the prevailing social organization, including its political organization, and the laws of motion of capital that dominate the phenomena of production and distribution within this social organization or that.

### Footnotes

(1) *The laws of motion do not only govern profit-oriented productive activity under the contemporary capitalist system; rather, they have historically governed productive activity throughout human history—whether in Babylon before Christ, Jerusalem in the first century, Rome in the third century, or Baghdad in the tenth century. These laws, especially the law of motion of industrial capital, were not formed today or even within the past 300 years; their roots go far deeper. For instance, one might say—albeit with some exaggeration, though the difference is not substantial—that comparing a shoe polish factory in Cairo with a car manufacturing plant in Tokyo reveals a singular law of motion. What changes is the form: the form of the worker, the machine, the factory, the management, and the dominant social or political system. Yet the law of motion ( $N \rightarrow [MP + L] \rightarrow C \rightarrow N + \Delta N$ ) remains the governing principle in both the Cairo and Tokyo factories. Nevertheless, political economists, since the rise of Eurocentrism, have failed to go beyond medieval Europe!*

(2) *Initially, the modern bourgeoisie allied with the monarchy to eliminate the feudal aristocracy. Subsequently, it turned against the monarchy, executing the king along with his court and entourage. Rejecting all internal and external constraints on its movement, the bourgeoisie sought a social order it could operate within—and infiltrate if necessary. Thus emerged a social organization based not on slavery or feudalism, but on ostensibly neutral institutions. The social system hence becomes an institutional structure, not a slave-based or feudal one—yet this must not be confused with the laws of motion governing production and distribution within this institutional framework.*

(3) *I have extensively and sufficiently demonstrated the dominance of the laws of motion of capital in both ancient and medieval societies in my book Critique of Political Economy. To avoid repetition, I refer the reader to Chapter Four of Book Three. See: Muhammad Adel Zaki, Critique of Political Economy (Tunis: Dar Al-Muqaddima, 2023), pp. 278–311.*

(4) *Attributing the concept of the capitalist mode of production to the forces of production may have some justification—perhaps in terms of social consciousness rather than scientific analysis. Europe witnessed immense and transformative innovations in the means of production, which were employed as capital, leading to unprecedented developments in industry and dramatic, sometimes violent, changes across contemporary Western European societies. “The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarcely one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together. Subjugation of Nature’s forces, machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture, steam navigation, railways, electric telegraphs, clearing of whole continents for cultivation, canalisation of rivers, entire populations conjured out of the ground. What earlier century had even a presentiment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?” (See: Marx and Engels, The Communist Manifesto). Hence, attributing*

the mode of production to capital stems from the socially conspicuous phenomenon of capitalist economic activity rather than from scientific reasoning.

(5) The term "capitalism" was coined by the German economist Werner Sombart (1863–1941) in reaction to the emerging concept of "socialism." See: Werner Sombart, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism*, trans. M. Epstein (Kitchener: Batoche Books, 2001). Thus, it is a modern and fundamentally political term. See: Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Capital*, trans. Mostafa Karam (Beirut: Dar Al-Farabi, 1986), p. 9. In short: "The word capitalism is a political term and did not become clearly visible in political discourse until the early twentieth century, where it emerged as the natural counterpart to the word socialism." See: Fernand Braudel, *Civilisation Matérielle, Économie et Capitalisme, XVe–XVIIIe siècle, Vol. II* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1979), p. 557. Louis Blanc (1811–1882) and Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865) both used the term "capitalism" before Sombart, though only incidentally to describe a class possessing large fortunes or land ownership. Among classical economists, the term is absent—it does not appear in the works of Smith, Ricardo, or other prominent classical thinkers. Their concern was with analyzing a system dominated by phenomena related to capital, without necessarily conceptualizing society as capitalist, since social ties had not yet fully dissolved, nor had personal relationships entirely disintegrated. Even Marx, though he used the term, employed it sparingly in *Capital*, showing little concern for its terminological specificity. He consistently referred instead to the capitalist mode of production, defined not by slavery or feudal social organization, but by means of production transformed into capital and labor power commodified for sale and purchase.

(6) In my view, Marx's historical demonstration aimed at no more than proving the influence of the development of productive forces on shaping and transforming relations of production.

(7) The failure to understand begins with the inability to grasp that the process of production, at its highest level of abstraction, is indifferent to the identity of its agents—it does not care whether it is carried out by the Hunchback of Notre-Dame or a Slavic prostitute!

(8) Or that feudal lords employed slaves in agriculture for the sake of selling produce in the market for monetary profit!

(9) If we were to define this level by the extent of employing tools and materials in production for the market, there is no doubt that Babylonian society would qualify as capitalist. Indeed, it was.

(10) See the numerous examples in my book: *Critique of Political Economy, Book Three, Chapter Four*.

(11) See also my book: *Critique of Political Economy, ibid*.

(12) This surplus value only appears in profit calculations after a portion of it is returned to cover the capital advanced to purchase the slave. The remainder is appropriated by the slave owner as profit. Therefore, the intensity of labor must be kept at its maximum.

(13) Just as the serf deducts his sustenance from the crop and gives his lord a value exceeding that of his labor power, the wage laborer receives only the cost of his subsistence—which provides the socially necessary energy (i.e., the value of labor power)—while delivering to the capitalist a value exceeding his labor power. Whether slave, serf, or wage laborer, all provide compensation to the owner of the means of production (tools and materials of labor). The wage laborer does so through monetary exchange (sale), while the serf and the slave do so through in-kind exchange (barter). The social contradiction arises between price/sale and in-kind/barter, eventually leading to the predominance of sale without eliminating barter. The relation of production is thus one of exchange: it takes the form of barter in the case of the slave or serf, and of sale and purchase in the case of the wage laborer. The essence of the legal relationship is therefore exchange; its external form is coercion or contract.

(14) See: Rosa Luxemburg, *what is Political Economy?* trans. Ibrahim Al-Aris (Beirut: Ibn Khaldoun Publishing, 1977), p. 168.

(15) The core contradiction in Maurice Dobb's framework—who adopted Marx's theory of modes of production—lies in the confusion between social/political organization and the laws of motion governing economic activity within that organization. See: Maurice Dobb, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism* (London: Routledge, 1947), pp. 24–29. Dobb saw capitalism as the successor of feudalism, feudalism as the successor of slavery, and slavery as the successor of the communal mode of production. Yet he also claimed that capitalism existed at all stages of history! Such an approach can never provide the scientific criterion needed to determine whether a society is capitalist, feudal, or slave-based—if capitalism has always existed, as he says, in every historical era. In fact, capitalism—defined as the subordination of production and distribution in society to the laws of capital's motion—has always formed the underlying basis upon which all social systems were built through the epic movement of history and societies, regardless of the form of social organization or the degree of development of productive forces.

(16) Where the capacity to labor is exchanged for bare subsistence, and where production is geared toward the market for the purpose of profit.