

Althusser misread the study of Engels's "historical joint force theory" thought

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Abstract: The thought of "historical resultant force theory" is one of Engels' innovation and development of historical materialism in his later years. Althusser is the most representative of his ideological research and has considerable theoretical depth. He separated the "theory of resultant historical force" from historical materialism and believed that the thought of "historical force theory" was unconscious, non-scientific, non-cognitive and bourgeois ideology. Based on this purpose, the text, this paper focuses on the analysis of Althusser misreading "historical force" thought with above the nature of non-Marxist, clarify the misreading reason, reveals the "historical force" and the real face of Marx's historical materialism, grasp the historical materialism on integrity, defend the scientific nature of Marxism.

1. Engels' "historical force theory"

The idea of "historical resultant force theory" is derived from the view in Engels' letter to Joseph Bloch in September 1890, and it is also the most detailed and systematic elaboration of historical materialism by Engels in his later years. In the letter, Engels responded to Bloch confusion, and explains the "historical force theory" thought: " history is created: the end result is always from the conflict of many individual conflict, and each will, and because of many special living conditions, to become it become. Thus there are countless forces, countless forces, countless parallelograms, and thus a resultant force, a historical result, which can be seen as the product of a force that works unconsciously and involuntarily as a whole."^{[1](P591)}The proposal of this idea is not only a response to the needs of The Times and theoretical confusion, but also the further improvement of the development of historical materialism. Moreover, it emphasizes the consistent adherence of historical materialism, and complements the insufficient emphasis before, so as to further promote the deeper understanding of the basic principles of historical materialism ^[2].

Because this idea is expressed by Engels in a systematic and scientific way, with an accurate formula-like appearance, it becomes a controversial proposition once put forward ^[3]. In the current academic circles, the study of Engels' "historical force theory", in the general positive, the study of the thought has a cold, questioning and critical attitude, in a general way. In the third chapter "Contradiction and Multiple Decision (Research Notes)" in his book The Defence of Marx, he made a thorough discussion and rigorous analysis of Engels' "historical joint force theory", especially in the appendix of chapter 3. On the current academic criticism of Althusser's interpretation of Engels's

"historical joint force theory", it can be understood from the following three aspects: first, elucidate the "historical context" of "historical force theory."^[4] Through the profound analysis to the meaning of "formula" to respond to the "misreading" of Althusser.^[5] The second is to direct the Althusser's question based on the text, to clarify the ideological connotation of the "historical resultant force theory" in the way of debate, defend Engels' "historical force theory."^[6] Third, place the "historical joint force theory" in the perspective of the history of thought by sorting out the historical context, ideological meaning, and argumentation form of the "historical joint force theory." Represent the emergence process of the historical joint force theory. Finally, clarify Althusser's misreading of the "historical joint force theory."^[3] However, from a macro perspective, the current research is limited to deepening the connotation of the formulas, immersed in the direct collision of ideas, and limited to the historical perspective. Based on the text analysis, this paper discusses the misreading of "historical force theory" with the explanatory nature of non-Marxism, clarifies the reasons for misreading, reveals the real appearance of "historical force theory" and Marx's historical materialism, grasps the historical materialism from the whole, and defends the scientific nature of Marxism.

2. Althusser's misreading of Engels's "historical joint force theory" thought

In the Defense of Marx, Althusser criticized the "theory of historical force", especially in Engels's letter to Joseph Bloch in September 1890. As to Engels' "historical force theory" question: first, although Engels of economic factors "in the final analysis" is the determinant of the problem theory solution, but it is not actually for "economic" dogmatism Marxist warfare provide theoretical support^[7], secondly, Althusser think from Engels "historical force theory" this formulaic argument, formula and object is temporarily coordinated, and the shore to describe the "historical force theory" formula of internal relations. This seems to be a question, but it is more of a criticism of this idea, and a sharp criticism. As to "historical force theory" from historical materialism, think "historical force theory" thought is unconscious, scientific, cognitive and bourgeois ideology, think the starting point of "historical force theory", thinking and method back to Marx in the criticism of political economy, liquidation of the bourgeois the level of the ideology.^[8]

2.1. Althusser criticized the idea of "historical joint force theory" as unconscious

The so-called "unconscious nature" refers to Althusser's view that Engels' "historical force theory" is unconscious in nature. In physics, the parallelogram law of force is usually used for vectors. When there are two or more vectors, the parallelogram law is used to determine their synthetic vectors, which Engels borrowed from the formation of the "historical resultant force theory". The will of each individual person is a force or a force, and two forces or two forces of each two people form a resultant force through the parallelogram law. Althusser believes that, "in simple cases, the two forces are against each other, and their resultant force is a third force that is both different and common in common from the original two forces"^{[9](P98)}. When the resultant force is formed, the result is: "the original two forces do not recognize themselves in the third force, although they are the composition of the third force."^{[9](P98)} will thus not tell whether the resultant force is the embodiment of the individual will of which subject. Therefore, the resultant force, that is, the total resultant force becomes "the force without the subject", which is "unconscious" in essence.^[10] The same is true of the resultant force of history, arising from the conflicts of many individual wills, which gradually form a resultant force from the separate force, and the final total resultant force is a total historical result, the result of the unclear will of the subject, so in essence it is unconscious.

The reason why Althusser thinks that the resultant force is unconscious in nature is because he

made abstract analysis and theoretical deduction in the conceptual field of the thought of "historical resultant force theory"^[11]. First, Althusser believes that in Newtonian mechanics, the synthesis of two forces can be calculated by the parallelogram law, yielding a resultant force, which may be completely different from the original force in nature; second, Althusser believes that the formation of history as a natural derivative, as if the development of history occurs naturally, rather than driven by people with consciousness and purpose. Such an interpretation ignores the subjectivity and initiative of man in the course of history. The "historical joint force theory" does not mean to eliminate human subjectivity, but to emphasize the complexity and diversity of historical development. Finally, Althusser believes that when Engels explained the formation process of historical results, he borrowed the parallelogram law from Newton's classical mechanics, so as to vividly describe the way in which different social forces interact to produce historical results.

2.2. Althusser's criticism of the "historical joint force theory" is unrecognizable

So-called "not cognitive", refers to all do think "historical force theory" argument just formula and object in the temporary shore and the other shore coordination, the temporary coordination is just a "no proof hypothesis", so the uncertainty instead of the temporary coordination, from the perspective of epistemology is uncertain and blank, namely "epistemological vacuum".^[12]

From this perspective, the "epistemological vacuum" refers to Althusser's cognitive standpoint. The object of the "historical resultant force theory" is a single will. Understanding a single will through the parallelogram law is straightforward. However, questioning the origin of this "stipulation" of a single will becomes complex when considering that this combined force is influenced by various living conditions, such as personal, social, internal, external factors, etc. If it is challenging to differentiate between the accidental individual determinants and the universal necessity (ultimately, the decisive economic factors) among these living conditions, such inquiries can lead to endless situations or indefinite, empty, and meaningless explanations. This is what constitutes the epistemological vacuum.

From the other side, "epistemology vacuum" refers to all, according to Engels on "historical force" of resultant force in the process of the formation of the rules of the logic deduction: think when two single will conflict after parallelogram law, form a resultant force on the diagonal, the force is not the final force, but just a formal force. Continuing to follow the parallelogram law, many conflicts between a single will can form a parallelogram of countless forces, forming endless resultant force, which is equivalent to the resultant force is the product of infinite proliferation of the parallelogram, so it has uncertainty, equivalent to a vacuum of knowledge. In this regard, Althusser questioned Engels' statement: from the formal rules of the formula reflected in the "historical joint force theory", when two components act on the same object, and the direction is opposite, and the size is equal, its resultant force is zero."Who can prove to us that the total resultant force must not mean zero? Who can prove to us that the aggregate force must be the economic factor that people want, not political, social, or whatever?"^{[9] (P101)}What do we finally use to determine whether the overall resultant force is the coincidence that the economy is the determinant? When we consider "starting the macro decisive factors into the microscopic decisive factors"^{[9] (P101)}", we believe that before the force formation, individual will conflicts, and economic factors merge into the will of each individual, often without awareness. This eventually shapes the total force of historical outcomes, where economic factors are fundamentally the determining force that overlaps, aligns, and equals the resultant force.

Althusser is think "historical force" has uncertainty, will fall into an epistemological vacuum, mainly has the following two reasons: the reason he ignored the difference: different individuals in the development of the history of different roles, because they are affected by different "living

conditions", and with a certain "social identity" into social relations. This means that the size of the "force" in the course of history is different. In other words, in the process of many components of history, those individuals or collectives with greater "power" can take the initiative and take advantage, thus pushing the results of history towards the direction in line with their will.^[2] Although historical results may lead to different subjects, this does not mean that the will or force of some individuals is ineffective. The will and behavior of each individual influence the course of history to a certain extent. Reason 2: Althusser ignored Engels's understanding that economic factors play a decisive role in the historical synergy. In Engels's discussion, economic factors play a decisive role in the historical process, which is the basis of the thought of "historical joint force theory", and is the central axis or main line that runs through all the fields of human activities.

2.3. Althusser's criticism of the "historical joint force theory" is unscientific

Althusser pointed out on Engels's "historical joint force theory" that any scientific theory has its specific theoretical scope and basic concepts, and these concepts and their logical correlation constitute the core of the scientific theory. While emphasizing the internal logic of scientific theory and the importance of basic concepts, Althusser also criticized the "historical joint force theory" for lacking a set of clear and logical conceptual system, so it cannot constitute science in any sense. For example: Marx's historical materialism is known as scientific knowledge, because it has a clear theoretical scope, this scope of historical materialism, certain concept, such as material productivity, production relations, economic foundation, superstructure and belonging to the core concept of other clear, enrich, have content of related concepts. The content of these concepts defines the boundaries of concepts, and thus is scientific knowledge of a conceptual system. By comparison, Althusser's theory of historical joint force construction develops the most crucial concepts from the notions of "individual will" and "final result," or "total resultant force," or "final joint force." These titles have uncertain content and unclear scope, leading to what he calls "endless situations" and "countless parallelograms." These terms are either empty or synonymous, creating a lack of concrete content for the "historical force theory" and the concepts of "individual will" and "final force," resulting in philosophical confusion. This confusion eventually leads to an epistemological vacuum. Althusser argues that the "historical joint force theory" not only falls into an epistemological vacuum but also commits a "crime" by adding to the philosophical confusion. According to Althusser, "It is impossible here to distinguish the epistemological vacuum." From the philosophical confusion, "Because they are exactly one thing."^{[9](P105)}. Therefore, this in itself does not satisfy the conditions of calling it scientific knowledge, let alone constitute a science in any sense.

The reason why Althusser believed that Engels's "historical joint force theory" was unscientific was because he separated the relationship between the "historical joint force theory" and historical materialism. He believed that this thought was constructed from the two "empty" concepts of "individual will" and "final result" or "total resultant force". As can be seen from Engels' text, neither "individual will" nor "final result" can be an empty discourse that occurs free from the core thought of historical materialism, but a reference concept with its exact content. As an "individual identity", each will "comes from many special living conditions to become what it becomes" ^[2]. This means that the personal will of Engels is not empty things without content, and the people in the personal will are not abstract or isolated people, but realistic people, who are linked by certain social relations, belonging to a certain social group and engaged in production and practical activities. Individual will interacts in social practice and finally forms the "resultant force" of history. This "resultant force" represents the inevitable result of historical development, and it is the result

of the joint action of various social forces. "Final result" or "total resultant force" refers to the direction and result of historical development, which is the comprehensive embodiment of the conflict and interaction of all individual will. This resultant force is not simply adding up all the will, but forms a new and comprehensive will through a complex interaction and adjustment.

2.4. Althusser criticized the thought of "historical force theory" as having bourgeois ideology

The bourgeois ideology of the "historical joint force theory". Althusser said, "Whatever Hobbes about the composition of natural tendencies... the traditional bourgeois ideology is the conflict of the individual will; not reality, but the imagination of reality... Marx once criticized this obvious premise that it is the myth of the economic man."^{[9] (P102)} Althusser believes that the starting point of "historical force theory" is not based on clear and coordinated arguments, nor as a result of words, but as a premise.^[4] He thinks the cause of this situation is that although Engels like Bloch, Locke, Rousseau, the bourgeois political thinkers and economists they have deep understanding, but the object of "historical force" and absolute beginning as a single will, it coincides with the bourgeois ideology, is "the myth of the economy".

There are two reasons why Althusser misread the "historical force theory" with the ideological nature of the bourgeoisie. First, Althusser ignored Engels to emphasize the clues and conditions of history at the beginning of the argument, and emphasized the priority of the economic basis as the basis to discuss the issue of personal will ^[3]. Instead, in the bourgeois ideology, the concept of "personal will" is often associated with the assumption of the "myth of the economic man". This hypothesis was first proposed by classical economists such as Smith and later Ricardo, who regarded individuals as isolated atoms, namely the "economic people."^[12] This concept assumes that individuals are rational, self-interested, and able to pursue their own best interests in the market. Second, although the historical results arise from the will conflicts of many individuals, these individual wills are not the absolute starting point of history. Instead, they can at best be seen as a relative starting point because the individual will itself is determined by economic factors. This means that, although the will and actions of individuals function in the course of history, they are formed in a broader socioeconomic structure that provides material conditions and constraints for the will and action of individuals. Therefore, the "historical joint force theory" not only recognizes the initiative of individuals in historical development, but also emphasizes the decisive role of economic foundation in history, which is a dialectical view of historical development.

3. Althusser criticized the significance of Engels's "historical joint force theory" thought

Althusser is logical and profound in criticizing Engels's "historical joint force theory", but this criticism is fundamentally untenable. We should carefully analyze Althusser's logical argument, his criticism and misinterpretation will help us to study Engels' thought more deeply, and make the "historical joint force theory" thought fuller.

First, the promotion of theoretical development: Althusser's criticism and misunderstanding of the "historical joint force theory" has actually promoted the development of Marxist theory. His views prompted scholars to re-examine Engels' theory, deeply explore the complexity and diversity of historical development, and provide a new perspective for the further development of Marxist theory.

Second, the embodiment of class struggle: Althusser's criticism reflects the contradictions and struggles between the interests of different classes. His views reveal to some extent the misunderstanding and distortion of Marxist theory by bourgeois ideology, and the truth that the bourgeoisie trying to cover up class contradictions and exploitation. This criticism helps to reveal the class attribute of historical development and emphasizes the dominant position of the broad

masses of the people in the historical process.

Third, the deepening of historical understanding: criticism has prompted people to deepen their understanding of history. He reveals the complexity and pluralism in historical development, and emphasizes the interaction of individual will and social forces. This understanding helps us to understand the historical phenomena more comprehensively and realize the dialectical relationship between the objective laws of historical development and people's subjective initiative.

Fourth, the basis of theoretical innovation: Althusser's criticism provides the basis for theoretical innovation. His views prompted scholars to reflect on and improve Marxist theory to better explain historical phenomena and guide social practice. This theoretical innovation is conducive to the development of Marxist theory in the new era and provides theoretical support for solving practical problems.

Fifth, the inheritance of historical materialism: Althusser's criticism and misinterpretation contribute to the inheritance and development of historical materialism. Althusser through the criticism of "historical force theory", we need to reveal the real appearance of "historical force theory" and Marx's historical materialism, grasp the historical materialism from the whole, and defend the scientific nature of Marxism.

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