

# On Feuerbach's View of History

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**Abstract:** Feuerbach, as a humanist, set up the essence of human beings with the concept of category, and believed that it was the object religious consciousness that first emerged from human beings and its transformation that determined the trend of different historical stages. The Christianity that was subordinate to God, the political religion that belonged to human beings, and the religion that belonged to "love" that determined the social content of human beings in different periods. In the historical perceptual activities, it is reason, will and love, as the essence of human beings, as the highest source and absolute rights, that provide the awareness and cognitive power of the existence of objects. In human history, the development of history can not go beyond the principle of the essence of category. Therefore, the infinite category consciousness determines the development inevitability, inheritance and conditionality of human history.

**Keywords:** Feuerbach; view of history; essence of category

## 1. Introduction

Feuerbach's view of history began to sprout in criticizing Hegel and fighting against the empty extravagance of "truth" clamored by the young Hegelians, and gradually improved in the criticism of Christianity. In the struggle of philosophy, Feuerbach severely criticized theology and exposed the theological essence of Hegel's absolute philosophy. He believed that in theology, people lost their real life. Religion is the alienation of human nature as a kind. While revealing God's human nature, Feuerbach allowed people to return to the real subject. At the same time, religion, as the alienation of human nature, revealed to us the essence of the historical process of human civilization.

## 2. Historical changes with religion as the main body

In Feuerbach's view, the emergence and transformation of religion vividly show us the content of the development and progress of human history and play a decisive role. "The different periods of human beings are only due to religious changes." [1] Religion originates from the essence of human beings and constantly enriches and develops this essence. In fact, it is the progress of reason. The primitive religious consciousness made the primitive tribes unite and gather together, and the understanding of nature and the release of desire were summarized as the contents of religion at the same time. Then, an orderly social civilization was established based on the religious legal system. Since modern times, with the progress of natural science and the emphasis on human nature, a new religion based on politics has been created.

### 2.1. Self alienation premise of quasi essence

The essential difference between man as a "kind" and animals is that he has the awareness of his own nature, regards himself as a "kind", and objectifies his thinking to communicate. People's self objectification consciousness has become the formation of the initial religious consciousness. People's cognition and development also ignore self-consciousness and rely on indirect God consciousness. "Religion is people's initial and indirect self-consciousness." [2]

People have the essence of taking their own thinking as an object, which requires us not only to have external object relations, but also to have internal spiritual life. Out of the instinctive habits of animals, people no longer regard limited objects as their own essence, but take unlimited consciousness as their own essence to explore and understand. "Human thinking is actually people talking to themselves." [2] This kind of human nature that can communicate with oneself is the unique reason, will and heart of human beings. Rationality, will and heart are the innate elements of human beings. Only by virtue of their strength can people form their own essence. Therefore, people cannot resist and avoid

the essence of category that they have as a category. "What is the purpose of reason? It is reason."<sup>[2]</sup> As the highest force, people can not resist the self thinking and consciousness at the very beginning, and the objectified self-consciousness also creates the premise of religious consciousness. Objectivity is an inevitable requirement for people to form their own essence. The first condition of human being as a kind of existence is to take oneself as the object so as to be aware of oneself. Taking oneself as the object and connecting with objects other than oneself further improve the essence. Therefore, even if there is no existence in reason, people cannot achieve the essence of self understanding. Nothing without objects has no concept at all. It is because of the existence of objects that people are aware of their own and form their own essence. Just as the original philosophers originated from astronomers, they took the earth and the sky as their objects of observation and began to think about the origin and future of human beings as beings. In man's earliest self thinking and understanding, he took self-consciousness as the object of existence and alienated himself, and God's consciousness was set in front of man's self-consciousness, "no matter where, religion always goes ahead of philosophy."<sup>[2]</sup> The development of religion, as a prerequisite in human history, determines the degree of human civilization in a historical stage.

It can be seen from this that, in Feuerbach's view, the reason why religion has always taken the lead in human civilization is the inevitable result of the human kind essence. As a kind of existence, people must first alienate their consciousness and ideas outside of themselves to form the belief of pursuit and worship, and then build their own civilization under the cover and guidance of belief. The breakthrough and progress of civilization promote the construction of the next religion.

## ***2.2. Synergy between religious change and civilization progress***

Feuerbach believes that the content of religious change is consistent with the process of human civilization development. In religious belief, people begin to rise from the initial barbarism to culture. Early risers get education and direction guidance in religious prayer. At the same time, the progress of human civilization under the belief of different historical stages is also preparing for the next religious transformation. "When a man lives in a house, he moves his God into the church."<sup>[2]</sup> People who worshipped nature before also transferred this polite emotion to the church.

Religious law is the ideological basis of building human society. The "right to life and death", "man chosen by heaven", "will of God" and other divine consciousness are the forces that early people have not become political entities and rely on through religious ceremonies when they worship nature. People believe that the perpetrators and thugs will be judged by Zeus, and God will also order people to follow the path he commanded. When people and nature began to separate and contact with people to form a commune, people began to become a political entity, and religious laws were attached to political rights and pushed politics to the highest, sacred and godly status. In modern times, with the progress and development of natural science and industrial life, the divinity of politics will be erased, and people will no longer rely on God objects alienated from themselves. Instead, social consciousness such as law, public opinion and morality has become a new object that people are aware of and rely on. People in the country are satisfied with their wishes in their interaction. Christianity will no longer have this power but become an obstacle to people's realization of their own essence. People return to the real life of human beings, "the position of religion and church is occupied by politics."<sup>[1]</sup> The politics as the object has become the source of the thinkers' realistic theories. But the development of politics is still taking the king as the representative of the infinite essence, and most people are still unable to obtain and practice their own wishes. Therefore, politics has become a new religion in Feuerbach's view, which is an atheistic religion. Therefore, Feuerbach is ready for the next historical stage of religious change and values of the times, a universal and republican religion in the name of "love".

In Feuerbach's view, the alienation of religion as human essence not only plays a role in guiding human development to a certain extent, but also determines the changes in different historical stages of human civilization. In the early natural religion, people knew themselves in their dependence on and worship of nature, and then established a political religion in their communication with people, as well as a religion of "love" that should be believed in when moving towards the reality of human nature. In an objective investigation, Feuerbach believed that religion, which always coincided as human essence, operated the progress of human civilization in an undisguised way.

## ***2.3. The Return of Human Self knowledge***

As a humanist, Feuerbach does not simply look at religion as the subject of historical development

without human beings. Because the essence of religion is the self alienation of human nature and the medium through which people know themselves in a more tortuous way, what people pray for and get responses to in religion is their own reason, but religion strengthens this emotion and promotes human historical progress with a mysterious force.

Religion, as the alienation of human nature, when people believe in religion, it is also in contact with their own internal. God, as the fantasy object of human beings, is endowed with human reason and emotion. His absolute nature contains all the things that human beings expect. "The knowledge of God is the self knowledge of man." [2] People acquire their own essence through the understanding of perceptual objects. The moment they pick up the fishing net, they are fishermen, and the moment they pick up the hoe, they are farmers. God cannot be recognized as human existence, but is recognized by people in the spirit. Because human beings as human beings can only know themselves in the spirit, think of their own essence, and realize only their own existence rather than another reality that cannot be perceptual. Therefore, God is only the intermediary of human self-awareness, and he is not stingy in making people's emotional desires public. in nature When people want to control nature to obtain their own survival needs, they have God. People achieve their desire to control nature through the worship and belief of God; In society, due to the closer interaction between people, there are personal contradictions and misfortunes. People begin to hope to maximize the protection of personal interests through the norms of the code of conduct. Therefore, people once again expect to set up their own goals of cultural progress based on the perfect and absolute existence of God. This proof is also reflected in the differences between different nationalities. Greeks will worship Greek gods according to their own survival characteristics, and Jerusalem only created the God they expected according to their own national survival characteristics. "Every progress in religion is a deeper understanding of oneself." [2] The development of religion is also aware of this problem. People begin to find that perceptual things are God's and absolute objects for themselves. They begin to deny themselves in piety and defend God as something that can not be known and has no rules. However, things that can not be known and can not be known are not recognized as human objects, that is, the existence of nothingness, that is, the existence of fantasy.

Feuerbach exposed the coincidence of God and human essence and the nihilism of religious objects from the perspective of the process of the development of religious history and the objective provisions of human essence, and also pointed out the subjective amplification of human history and human historical progress in religious content. People confess themselves in religion, and religion, as a mysterious force, leads people's progress.

In Feuerbach's view, it is religion that dominates human history. Even though philosophy, science, law and morality and other human civilizations originate from human perceptual knowledge and development, religion still walks in front of them as a kind of alienation object of the original essence and makes people feel guided and advanced through the illusory power of God. However, religion is not entirely a thing of God. In the new era, people return to their real life, People realize that they no longer need the power of God and begin to believe in the existence of reality and human things. Therefore, people have replaced God, and now they are just human religions.

### **3. The quasi essential power of historical development**

The perceptual philosophy established by Feuerbach is the philosophy of "love", which is based on the most authentic and humanistic human essence. The essence of category enables people to have a passion for knowledge and an unlimited range of knowledge. Returning to the main body of people, it is the essence of category that forms an objective existence outside the individual, and also gathers objects with the same essence to build a commune. At the same time, human civilization has been inherited and developed in the collision between the objectification of the essence of category and knowledge, and has been creatively developed in the desire for self-interest.

#### **3.1. The essential requirement of class existence**

Man exists as a kind because he has the awareness of the kind that animals do not have. Animals can not be aware of their own essence as an object, but man can. The caterpillar cannot live without a plant, which is its essence and also the boundary it realizes as an animal. The consciousness possessed by man is infinite, which is different from the understanding and development brought about by animals' limitation to instinct. Man is able to think about and obtain his own essence in all things, and divide different kinds of existence with the name of knowledge system in the infinite consciousness.

"The essential characteristic of consciousness is to include everything and infinity." [2]Therefore, in consciousness, people recognize themselves by taking the infinity of their own essence as the object, and defining God as the infinite, perfect and absolute essential object and the object of reason and love. Therefore, in the consciousness of infinite consciousness, people realize that their essence is reason, will and love. "This is the absolute essence of human nature as a human being and the purpose of human existence." [2]This kind of essence has nothing to do with people. Rational elements make people think rationally, love elements make people love, and will elements make people free to become limitless. The essence of human beings is an absolute and inviolable right for people. When people immerse themselves in thinking and forget all the noise around them, it is reason that brings me into a quiet spiritual world, and it is reason that dominates personal activities; When people try to change themselves and suppress certain actions and passions, it is the power of reason that makes individuals have the power of innovation. This is not people's self-management, but the jurisdiction of rational violence. In the objective objective cognitive activities of human beings, it is the requirement of the same kind of essence that the consciousness of existence forms the essence of individuals. "Thinking power is the light of understanding." [2]The consciousness of category has become the premise of the inevitable consciousness that people have the consciousness of object. Only the existence of objects can trace the essence of people. At the same time, the purpose of the essence of category requires people to conduct activities with the same object of essence. "[2]The object with which the subject is bound to have an essential relationship is just the reason why the subject And objective nature. " God, as the essence other than human beings, and as the most perfect and absolute object, has infinite human objects such as reason, love, morality, and existence. Because as human beings, it is impossible to imagine that there is an object without reason, emotion and human essence in the perceptual contact activities. Similarly, among individuals, the object as the essence of class will also reflect the overlap of part of the original and objective essence of the subject in different kinds of essential needs.

In Feuerbach's view, the human kind essence controls all human activities as the highest and absolute force, and human beings who exist in kind always live according to their kind essence as the purpose. In this essential purpose activity, people realize the origin of self thinking and perceptual activity, and at the same time, the existence of this object consciousness coincides with the individual essence, while revealing God's human nature, he confessed the human nature's desire for self progress and development.

### ***3.2. The rational source of perceptual knowledge***

Feuerbach believes that people with class consciousness are born with the ability to engage in scientific research, because "science is the understanding of class." [2] When people with class consciousness carry out cognitive activities with objects, they distinguish according to the different essential characteristics of things through reason. This object activity is not the inspiration indication brought by religion, "reason is the original ability of class" [2] It is the power of human origin. It breaks away from the absolute belief in the subjective nature of individuals in religion and leads to a universal conceptual relationship. At the same time, it also ignites people's enthusiasm for connecting with things other than themselves.

Reason itself represents the response to objective things. The absolute rational God, as the most perfect existence, is the objective sustenance of human beings in life and thinking for their own imperfections, "which is the consciousness of reason for their own perfection." [2] As a person with emotional desire, he is "servile to things" and contradicts his own reason. Emotional desire always stands in the subjective position of the individual to try to be satisfied, while reason forces people to obey objective and inevitable rules and conduct activities. "Reason itself has an objective nature." [2] It is the expression of human freedom. When a businessman wants to cut down a forest for quick gain, as a rational person, he denies his desire for money, because he knows that the consequences of cutting down a forest are the survival crisis and prison disaster of the local people. "Reason is the consciousness of laws, inevitability, rules and scales." [2] The rational person who is not troubled by emotion will also be separated from his own subjective position, will not investigate the object with the relationship with people as a transfer, and will let people have freedom in the objective activities, because the rational person no longer only thinks of self reconciliation and satisfaction, and starts to turn his eyes to the nature to understand and study the objective laws. People begin to find that God who lives in the heart has never been touched, and all things that can be felt in nature are inseparable from themselves. Reason enables the contradiction between all things and the existence to be coordinated and identical without difference. "Botany, mineralogy, zoology, physics and astronomy exist not because of religious inspiration, but only because of intellectual enthusiasm." [2] From the

perspective of human relations, this kind of rational enthusiasm is still a kind of rational enthusiasm, so this kind of rational enthusiasm also has a driving role in history. "All the so-called spiritual forces, such as wit, sensitivity, fantasy, emotion and reason, are human forces, not personal forces, but the products of culture and human society."<sup>[2]</sup> Although individual scientists have unlimited rationality, they cannot achieve absolute understanding in a period of history. The resultant force formed by common human activities, the universal rational activities, can take a huge step forward in history. In the historical inheritance, the rational thinking power of predecessors will also converge on the thinking path of future generations' understanding and research.

As the essence of human beings, rational thinking inevitably forms the consciousness of objective rules and exposes the coincidence of human essence of rational God in religion. As the consciousness of self-improvement and the free will to life, human beings and all things have been contradictory, identical and coordinated in reason, which has promoted the historical progress of human scientific civilization under the cover of religion.

### ***3.3. The subjective essence of practice and creation***

Practice is the passive connection between people and the objective world. The perceptual world provides people with perceptual materials to survive. People enjoy practice in the objectivity provided by the perceptual world. The division and labor premise of people according to the essence of things under perceptual knowledge are the first kind of existence. Creation is an active thinking activity that is different from the beginning of initial perceptual knowledge and rational thinking. It is a miraculous expression of people's infinite will.

Feuerbach believes that survival is the primary purpose of human beings, and the perceptual enjoyment of life allows people to establish their own existence. This enjoyment comes from the essence of human beings. It is the desire of unlimited satisfaction for survival needs under unlimited consciousness, and it is the feeling of real existence. "Such wanton enjoyment, or at least disrespectful enjoyment, is a practical necessity for human beings and a necessity on which human existence is based." <sup>[2]</sup> At the same time, what Feuerbach said is an intuitive practice, that is, activities driven by personal emotional desire to contact with the senses, there is no theoretical construction and aesthetic intuition, and the emotional performance of things is treated with an egoistic attitude. Businessmen can't see the brilliance of diamonds, and they only see the life enjoyment value that diamonds can bring for their exchange. In practice, people began to realize that real things are the essential and absolute objects, and the infinity of God began to be ignored and unrecognizable. Therefore, the God of religion is a purely practical being, who can only satisfy all people subjectively. Belief began to become the past, and practical life began to become the present. Creation is different from the practice of directly enjoying the objective and existing things. Creation is "something out of nothing". Similarly, the externalization of human unlimited consciousness is the subjective essence. "To make, create, and create only means to make the original only subjective, invisible, and nonexistent things objective, so that they can be influenced."<sup>[2]</sup> Different from the statement of creating the world from nothing, the world, as the boundary of human consciousness, cannot make an abstract assumption of the beginning. Creation is a creation in the world, and it is the objectification of human infinite consciousness in the world. Creation is the self - confirmation of man in reason. Because "creation only has an egoistic purpose and significance."<sup>[2]</sup> Originally derived from the miracles and divine will given by God, people believe in religion and God to arrange the creation of nothing that people expect. By virtue of this, people believe that God can enable themselves to get rid of the bondage of natural laws and objective materials to achieve absolute satisfaction of self-consciousness. Here, "it does not mean the will of reason, but the will of imagination, and it means the absolute subjective and unlimited will"<sup>[2]</sup>. Hope to get personal love from objectified personality.

Feuerbach still observes human's perceptual activities from the standpoint of human nature, and points out the subjective essence behind the perceptual activities and perceptual activities. Practice is a confirmatory passive hedonistic behavior based on the desire and emotion of human existence. Creation is an active conscious activity that people try to get rid of the bondage of natural laws to achieve absolute satisfaction of hedonism. It is also a manifestation of egoism and a subjective return to understanding of the relationship between world development. "People prove or realize that the world is created, which is a great sign of will."<sup>[2]</sup>

Feuerbach has always regarded the human nature as an important driving force for human perceptual activities. Whether in perceptual knowledge or in the activities of perceptual experience, it is reason, infinite class consciousness and egoism that make people have a series of enthusiasm for

observation and desire for action. Therefore, the construction and development of human historical civilization, in Feuerbach's view, can not be separated from the enthusiasm of emotion and reason. Man is the real creator of the world, and reason brings all this.

#### **4. Historical characteristics**

Since human beings have unlimited class consciousness, their history must have the characteristics of unlimited development. Feuerbach studies from the perspective of the history of philosophy and believes that the historical civilization of human beings is constantly and inevitably developing, and that human civilization will retain and develop part of the previous civilization no matter in religion or in society. The prerequisite for all the historical existence and development is to forget the natural community life.

##### **4.1. Necessity of development**

Feuerbach strongly opposed the theory of the end of history by the absolute philosophers before him, and believed that people with class consciousness were subjects who could have unlimited knowledge. The development of the history of philosophy has proved that the absoluteness of history is an absurdly abstract assumption. There are different philosophies applicable to human beings in different periods, and there are also different kinds of lives in different periods. The history lies in constantly breaking through the boundaries of each period to reach new human understanding.

The inevitability of historical development is determined by the infinity of human nature. Different from the consciousness of animals, animals can only live in the life style and consciousness determined by instinct, while people can realize their limitations and enter into infinite thinking activities. Religion, as the first indirect self-consciousness of people, reflects people's thinking about infinity and perfection. Because in religious consciousness, people have absolute God personality by taking the infinity and perfection of the essence of class as the object. At the same time, in religion, people are aware of their limitations and consider the highest essence that they can achieve as a class in a certain historical period or the essence that they expect to have in future historical life as the object of thinking, Feel and confirm the infinity of human's thinking ability as a kind in the infinite rational thinking. The end of history is caused by the worship of individuals. Christ preaches that the same kind and different individuals can obtain selfish satisfaction in believing in the almighty God, and this individual satisfaction is also unified into the happiness of all mankind, and the limitations of individuals become the limitations of categories. However, "My life is bound in a limited era, but human life is not."<sup>[2]</sup> People of different individuals have different perspectives on the world. Individual consciousness cannot become the consciousness reached by all mankind. The formation of human civilization is the result of joint efforts between different individuals or different times. "The history of various sciences, especially philosophy and natural science, provides the most interesting examples for this."<sup>[2]</sup> In a historical period or different historical periods, not only one philosopher and scientist has made achievements and formed an absolute cognition, but in the achievements of different philosophers and scientists, human beings have reached a universal understanding in history, and this understanding will inevitably be innovated and changed by the next era in the course of history.

The infinite class consciousness determines that human history is also an infinite process. The limitations of individual consciousness and knowledge cannot erase the infinite nature of class. Whether it is natural science or philosophy, the progress of human civilization is a powerful negation of the absolute theory of "God created a perfect world" in religion. Human history is precisely about constantly overcoming things that are considered inconceivable at a certain historical stage but are possible in the next era.

##### **4.2. Inheritance**

While denying the development of history, the absolute philosophers in the past abstractly assumed the beginning of "nothing", that is, the philosophy of "nothing out of nothing". Feuerbach strongly criticized this. The beginning of "nothing" is a concept that does not exist, so it is impossible to form a concept. Therefore, the history of philosophy is a history of continuous inheritance. The same is true of natural science and national legal system. Rational existence is good, and must be inherited in history.

Feuerbach's philosophy starts from criticizing Hegel's absolute philosophy. He points out that the emergence of new philosophy will inevitably have an objective comparison with previous philosophy.

Hegel's philosophy is called absolute philosophy because it is set up with the beginning of "nothing" and the end of the history of philosophy. Feuerbach strongly criticized Hegel's absurd thought about pure beginning, and saw the shadow of Schelling's and Fichte's philosophy in Hegel's philosophy. It is believed that the existence of "nothing" is non-existence, which cannot achieve the formation of the concept of existence, and that individual knowledge and consciousness cannot limit the infinite consciousness essence of the class. In the infinity of human life, philosophy is like this, and the pure initialization of the abstract assumption is bound to produce self-contradiction in the development process of human civilization history, as is the case with natural science, "and also inherently because the scientific talents of a particular era only focus on themselves the ideas of previous talents." [2] progress of natural science represents the progress of category and the infinite inheritance and development of human life. The confusion between the concept of individual and category makes the progressive object of historical progress contradict the absolute cognition of a certain era. The generation of absolute things and the initiation of contradictions are the pursuit of eternity, because for a specific era, the boundaries that the class consciousness can recognize are the absolute state of a certain stage. For people in that period, they have formed absolute things that meet the needs of interests. Similarly, as good things, they are also expected to meet the requirements of human interests. "Although the ancient customs, laws and regulations have long lost their significance, they are still reluctant to lag behind." [2] Human life is the eternal of history. Therefore, the things that existed early can still be remembered and passed down by human history, because the history created by human civilization is a kind of history.

There is no absolute content and the origin of nihilism in history. Feuerbach, in his criticism of Hegel's absolute philosophy, proved that the concept of existence in class consciousness neither comes from nihilism nor standardizes cognitive boundaries. The concept of existence, as a part of human life and a kind of consciousness's yearning for absoluteness and infinity, cannot disappear in the process of human history, but always exists as the premise of the next stage.

#### **4.3. Conditionality**

In Feuerbach's view, the premise of the creation of human history is the separation of man and nature, which also includes the interaction between people, that is, human civilization is developed in the form of society. Only in society can people's subjectivity be recognized and valued, while people in nature still rely only on nature and divinity, rely on the way of life recognized intuitively, and people still belong to people who rely on external objects.

In nature, people only rely on nature, and add respect to the expression of the feeling that the occurrence of natural phenomena is respected as God. The eternity of the existence of nature also determines the limitation of the progress of people who are in the mood of God. In man's intuition of nature, stars and the earth are more ancient and unchanging. According to its inevitability independent of man, nature does not transfer with man's will. Therefore, people who only exist in nature cannot be intuitionistic with infinite consciousness as the object of knowledge as people in society. Feuerbach believes that urban people have produced changing customs and moral norms in their communication, because the infinite sense of class makes people never satisfied, "so only urban people create history, and only human 'vanity' is the principle of history." [2] At the same time, in nature, people devote all their feelings to nature and God, that is to say, they put the essential power of human beings into the illusions of the void. When the essential power of human beings is not based on the actual existence of human beings, but returns to the individual self, the cycle of reason will only limit people to themselves, and the existence of human beings will not be valued, and human life will not reach the level of progress. Only "those who dedicate their physical existence to the existence of their living people and hearts can engage in the historical cause." [2]

History is still a human history, and the prerequisite for human is that people get rid of the complete dependence on nature and the spiritual attribution. Only in the actual communication between classes can people obtain unlimited historical development foundation, and intuitive people can not get the motivation of mood in nature. Therefore, in nature, Feuerbach believes that there are not enough conditions for the progress of human civilization.

#### **5. Conclusions**

Feuerbach, standing in the perspective of humanism, made an investigation and study of the human nature of category, and always expounded the causes of all human activities based on the nature of

category. First of all, religious consciousness, as the first objective consciousness under the human kind consciousness, is regarded as the primary premise of the reform of the human historical stage. Because religious consciousness always precedes human self-consciousness, religious reform often drives the changes of human society; Secondly, the essence of category, as the basic element of human origin, occupies the absolute dominant power in human perceptual activities. It is the essence of category, as reason, will and love, that makes people realize the existence of objectivity and provide perceptual cognitive enthusiasm; Finally, in the infinite class consciousness, the principle of human historical activities cannot be separated from the requirements of the essence and has the inevitability of development, inheritance and conditionality.

### References

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