THE ARCHITECTURE OF KNOWLEDGE: ON THE PROBLEM OF EPISTEMIC REGRESS AND DESCARTES' VIEWS ON FOUNDATIONALISM[1]

Asım DİLMAÇÜNAL[2]

Abstract

Beliefs are often accepted on the basis of some reasons. That a belief acquires the status of knowledge is made possible by the justification of these reasons. This means inquiring into the reasons for these reasons. In such a case, it is inevitable that one faces the danger of infinite regress. What kind of a causal structure should the beliefs have in order to give them the status of knowledge? When it comes to the justification of a belief, can the regress of reasons terminate at some point? Foundationalist's answer to this question is yes. Foundationalism asserts that there are basic beliefs that have certain privileges. It is in these beliefs that the danger of infinite regress ends.

In this study, the problem of epistemic regress will be explained and how Descartes was at the center of an attempt to solve this problem will be revealed by focusing on the main theses of foundationalism.

Keywords: Knowledge, Descartes, Epistemic Regress Problem, Reason, Foundationalism

BİLGİNİN MİMARİSİ: EPİSTEMİK GERİLEME SORUNU VE DESCARTES'IN TEMELCİLİĞE DAİR GÖRÜŞLERİ ÜZERİNE

Öz

İnançlar çoğu zaman bazı nedenlere dayanarak kabul edilir. Bir inancın bilgi statüsünü edinmesi, sözü edilen nedenlerin temellendirilmesiyle mümkün olur. Bu nedenlerin nedenini sorgulamak anlamına gelir. Böyle bir durumda kişinin sonsuz bir gerileme tehlikesi ile karşı karşıya kalması kaçınılmazdır. İnançlara bilgi statüsü kazandıracak nedensel dizge ne tür bir yapıda olmalıdır? Bir inancın gerekçelendirilmesi söz konusu olduğu zaman nedenlerin gerilemesi bir noktada sonlanabilir mi? Temelciliğin bu soruya cevabı evettir. Temelcilik, birtakım ayrıcalıklara sahip temel inançlar olduğunu öne sürer. Sonsuz bir gerileme tehlikesi bu inançlarda son bulur.

The Architecture of Knowledge: On the Problem of Epistemic Regress and Descartes' Views on Foundationalism

Bu çalışmada epistemik gerileme sorunu açımlanacak, Descartes'ın bu probleme dair bir çözüm denemesinin nasıl merkezinde olduğu, temelciliğin ana tezlerine de odaklanılarak ortaya konulacaktır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Bilgi, Descartes, Epistemik Gerileme Sorunu, Neden, Temelcilik

The Epistemic Regress Problem and Foundationalism

Attempts to define knowledge, what its source is, its limits, and research on its nature are within the field of epistemology. The architectural structure of knowledge is also part of the discipline. The problem of regress is also related to the architectural structure of knowledge. In order to understand this problem related to the architectural structure, it is necessary to clarify its relationship with reasons.

In the case of propositions that we accept that we know, we rely on these propositions for certain reasons. To make this more clear, let us consider the case of a proposition that we assert that we know about something to an interlocutor. In this case, our interlocutor may ask us, "How do you know?" Our interlocutor may demand justification from us, and this demand is a demand for rationality. Therefore, if we want to claim that we know something in front of an interlocutor, we need to convince the interlocutor by expressing ourselves through reasons, and we need to present our justifications.[3] In such a case, a problem arises regarding the structure of the reasons in question and thus the architecture of knowledge. The first aim of this paper will be to try to clarify this problem.

Now, to make this problem clearer, suppose that you put forward a proposition that you think you know to an interlocutor. Your interlocutor's reaction is likely to be to demand reasons to prove your belief (Fumerton, 2006: 2). In fact, every time you offer reasons, he/she will ask you to provide evidence for these reasons as well. This is because to be justified, one's belief must be based on an appropriate reason or foundation (Leite, 2005: 397-399). In this case, you can start to give reasons for your belief. First, you can try to support your belief with a proposition. However, this supporting proposition is believed only when there is evidence or support for it

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[3] The word convince in the sentence should not be interpreted in the sense of somehow convincing the interlocutor. On the contrary, it should be interpreted in the sense of satisfying the interlocutor's demand for rationality. This satisfaction is only possible by giving good reasons. For example, when we make a claim such as "It will rain tomorrow", the natural reaction will be to ask for justification of this claim. In this case, of the two reasons, "The weather forecasts say it will be like this" and "I hope it will be like this", the first one will be the more convincing one. It can then be said that the first is a better reason and more convincing than the second. Justification, in this sense, depends on the availability of such good reasons.

(Cling, 2009: 335). Audi calls this structure, in which beliefs support each other and each one is connected to the previous one, and which claims to create knowledge in some way, an "epistemic chain" (Gültekin, 2014: 48). Each proposition in the chain must be supported. However, it is not possible to meet such a requirement. When support is required for each proposition in the chain, there will be a continuous regress, and therefore the chain will not be completed in any way. In such a case, no belief can be supported evidentially (Cling, 2009: 335). It is not possible to stop the regress of causes in such a situation. The conclusion that can be drawn from these explanations is the following: Subject S believes a proposition such as "p" only when there are reasons such as "p1", "p2", "p3" that support the proposition "p". Thus, if these propositions do not provide evidence for "p", subject S may not believe this proposition. This is a very reasonable idea (Cling, 2009: 334). However, in order to have knowledge, our supports also need to be supported. In order for reasons such as "p1", "p2", "p3" to give belief the status of knowledge, these reasons must also be supported, and attempting to seek support for each of the supports in the epistemic chain in order to believe allows for the danger of an infinite regress. Seeking the justification for these reasons means asking why the reason for the reason, and it is not clear at what point this gives a belief the status of knowledge. The questioning of the why of the why, the attempt to find a basis for every support, is an obstacle to building a reasonable structure. The danger of regress is on the horizon, waiting to descend like a shadow. In this situation, which we have roughly described, it is problematic at which point the regress of the reasons that provide justification for belief and give it the status of knowledge will be prevented.

One may persistently try to answer the question "How do we know?" Reasons can be put forward. But each time a reason is presented, it is possible to encounter a new demand for a new reason. The series of reasons can go on indefinitely. This means facing the danger of an infinite regress. How to meet this demand in the face of this problem of structure, which we see traces of in Aristotle and is also known as Agrippa's trilemma, is known as the problem of epistemic regress. Trying to meet the demand is very difficult, and there is no possible choice but to choose between three options that do not seem reasonable at all. What kind of a causal structure should the beliefs have in order to give them the status of knowledge? This demand can be met in three ways. The structure is either finite, infinite, or circular. Roughly speaking, the problem of infinite regress is how to satisfy this demand. Otherwise, the answer to the question "How do we know?" would have to be "we don't know", which is unacceptable.

The first answer to this question is that the reasoning system can extend infinitely. This attempt to give an answer is also known as infinitism[4] in epistemology. Roughly expressed, infinitism is based on the assumption that an infinite number of causes can be produced in a reasoning system, no matter how insistent the interlocutor is, and that it is not necessary for it to stop at some point. A second response to the threat of an infinite regress might be to argue that there are triggering/initiating beliefs underlying the causal sequence that are not dependent on any other belief. These beliefs are intended to prevent the possibility of regress. There are certain main/primary/foundational beliefs, and the reasons in the reasoning system are ultimately grounded in them. Because of these foundations, there will be no more regress. Because these foundations respond to the need to go backwards - to demand the cause of the cause. The inquiry ends when it comes to these beliefs. Within epistemology, this option is also known as foundationalism.[5] The third of the responses that can be given when the shadow of regress appears, in other words, the option that constitutes another branch of the trilemma, is called coherentism. According to coherentists, there is no basic set of beliefs. It is not the case that one belief is superior to another or that some beliefs are privileged. The set of reasons is not a structure in which there is a one-way support relationship based on a few privileged beliefs. On the contrary, it is a structure of mutual support determined by "all" of the beliefs held by the subject. Brand Blanshard, Otto Neurath, Keith Lehrer, Laurence Bonjour and Wilfred Sellars are some of the prominent thinkers on coherentism in epistemology.

For the sake of the scope of this paper, we can now return to the option of foundationalism. When it comes to the justification of a belief, can the regress of reasons be stopped at some point? In the face of the problem, the theory that asserts that structure is finite appears as foundationalism. A question that can be asked in this context is: "Should all our beliefs be supported by other beliefs? Are some

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[4] An example of a proponent of the infinitism option is Scott F. Aikin. Although Aikin admits that infinitism is difficult to defend, he emphasizes that this option is intended to give it a respectable place in the debate. In this option, there are no final questions in the causal scheme, and in fact the option claims that it is possible to satisfy the demands of the persistent interlocutor indefinitely. To think that it is not possible to give infinite reasons is merely an illusion (Aikin, 2011: 1-8). Examples of supporters of infinitism include Peter Klein (1999) and Jeremy Fantl (2003).

[5] J. Pollock and J. Cruz (1999) emphasize that examples of foundationalist theories can be found in Rudolph Carnap, C. I. Lewis, Nelson Goodman, Roderick Chisholm, Pollock and Paul Moser. Steup (1996) sees Descartes, Bertrand Russell, Moritz Schlick, and A. J. Ayer as defenders of foundationalism. According to him, in addition to these names, C. I. Lewis put forward a foundationalist argument in his works. Among contemporary philosophers, Audi, Chisholm, Foley and Moser defended foundationalism with their works in the 1900s.

beliefs believed without a support relationship? What is the correct support relation between beliefs? (Poston, 2014)" The foundationalist theory aims to overcome the problem of infinite regress, especially in relation to the question of whether all the above beliefs need to be supported or not, with a structure in which some beliefs are not dependent on other beliefs, and some beliefs are considered basic, without needing any support. Some beliefs are basic and they do not need the support of other beliefs. The question then is what it means for a belief to be basic. The foundationalist conception of basic beliefs can be characterized as follows: In the justification of beliefs, or for a belief to acquire the status of knowledge, at the top of the set of reasons is a belief that provides support for all reasons, but does not itself need any support. These beliefs, which do not need any support while supporting other beliefs, are basic beliefs. These beliefs are considered as the initiating point for other forms of beliefs, in other words, they are the support points that provide the basis for justification (Pollock & Cruz, 1999: 29; Swinburne, 2001: 134).

In the presentation of foundationalism, different analogies are made regarding the structure of reasons. These analogies are important for understanding foundationalism and the support relationship of basic beliefs. For example, the fact that this structure is like a chain, that it is similar to the structure of a house, or that this structure is in the form of a pyramid are different examples of efforts to reveal the structure problem. In the case of the chain, the chain has a starting point, which, like the basic belief, points to the initiating step. It is itself the foundation without the need for any support. The "house analogy" is similar to the chain example. Just as every house has a foundation, so some foundations that constitute knowledge must also be recognized. Obviously, it is not reasonable to think of a house without a foundation. Ernest Sosa describes this structure as a "pyramid". Basic beliefs are found at the bottom of the pyramid as the foundation without needing any support (See: Sosa, 1980: 5; Pritchard, 2014: 32; Öztürk, 2014: 45,49). In relation to the structure of knowledge, it is useful to focus on the "pyramid analogy" in order to make the structure more clear. One of the best known metaphors of the causal system is the pyramid model, which claims that the structure is not symmetrical. According to this model, the causal system has a non-symmetrical structure and this structure can be likened to a pyramid. In pyramids, the base provides support for the mass at the top, but the base does not need a foundation, as in the building of a house. In a way, this base acts as a foundation. In the case of the knowledge structure, just like the base of the pyramids, the causal structure has "core beliefs" at its base, and these

core beliefs do not need any support. These foundations do not seek support and provide support for the beliefs on top of the structure. Obviously, these foundations are the privileged class of the causal structure. Because a group of beliefs that can provide support without needing support itself is in a privileged position, at least in the sense that it does not need support (Sosa, 1980: 5). So how should the task of these privileged beliefs be understood?

It has been mentioned above that when we tell an interlocutor that we know something in a situation, the first question we are likely to face is why we believe what we believe. In the face of this question, it is clear that we will attempt to provide reasons for what we claim to have knowledge of, to justify our belief. In such a case, we try to make a justification by putting forward reasons. But how will this attempt at justification work? Foundationalists tend to make this attempt based on a set of basic beliefs. The set of reasons ultimately culminates in a set of basic beliefs, and in this way, knowledge is grounded by providing justification from basic beliefs to other beliefs, in other words, through a one-way support relationship. Here, the core beliefs in the pyramid provide support to the beliefs at the top by fulfilling the task of providing justification.

 It is now necessary to make a distinction between core beliefs and supported beliefs. In foundationalist theory, the beliefs to which basic beliefs provide a support relationship, i.e. supported beliefs, are treated as "non-foundational beliefs". Foundationalists distinguish between basic beliefs and non-basic beliefs and think that the set of reasons is jointly structured through these beliefs. Basic beliefs provide grounds for non-basic beliefs, while they themselves do not need any grounds. These beliefs are at the very top of the set of reasons and provide a support for all other beliefs.

It is important to note that basic beliefs have an epistemic privilege. This privileged status refers to having a property that ordinary beliefs lack. Non-inferential beliefs in the foundations are somehow self-justified and therefore have the status of being basic beliefs (Pollock and Cruz, 1999: 33). Being self-justified is one of the features that make basic beliefs privileged. Basic beliefs that are somehow self-justified justify all other beliefs inferentially (Öztürk, 2014: 49).

Foundationalists privilege certain beliefs in the causal system. Such beliefs are called basic beliefs. So which group of beliefs are basic? Ordinary perceptual beliefs do not have the specific privileges we have mentioned above. For example, it has been experienced that ordinary perceptual beliefs can be false many times. This is obvious

when considering physical situations. For example, when a white shirt is seen in a red light, one can form the belief that the shirt is red. For this reason, strict foundationalists do not accept the source of perceptual beliefs in support of basic beliefs (Pollock and Cruz 1999: 30). Foundationalist's still do not exclude perception, but they revise their system to exclude beliefs about physical objects. In perception, there are sensory experiences. Sensory experiences are the source for the subject to have beliefs about the physical environment. In this framework, the following question is asked:

"I may be wrong about the environment, but could I be wrong about the character of my sensory experiences (Pollock and Cruz 1999:31)?"

We can think of this in terms of these two statements: "something is ...." is different from "something appears to me as ...". The latter refers to the character of our sense experiences, and it does not seem obvious that we can be wrong about such statements. Therefore, such beliefs can be taken as basic beliefs and, moreover, beliefs about objects are indirectly supported by reasoning from our sensory experiences (Pollock and Cruz, 1999: 31).

The foundationalist theory, which was derived in order to prevent regress in contemporary epistemology, differs in terms of the characteristics of basic beliefs and is basically divided into two as "Classical foundationalism" and "Moderate foundationalism". Strict foundationalism, as in the case of Descartes, accepts beliefs that are self-evident, unquestionable and infallible as examples of basic beliefs. Such necessary truths are also considered basic beliefs. Basic beliefs are attributed properties such as infallibility, unquestionability, self-evident, and non-revisability. In other words, the status of a belief as a basic belief depends on its possession of these properties. An example of a belief that cannot be revised is mathematical truths. It is impossible for mathematical truths to be false because they are necessary truths (Pollock & Cruz, 1999: 34). Beliefs with the aforementioned characteristics can only be basic beliefs. A causal system formed by accepting beliefs that have the opposite properties as basic is doomed to collapse: For instance, if the causal system has a ground for doubt, or if the beliefs that are initially accepted as basic are fallible, the causal system will collapse. In such a case, it is very difficult to say that the structure of knowledge is sound. Traditional -strict-foundationalism differs from moderate foundationalism in this respect. Because for moderate foundationalists, basic beliefs are fallible and can be corrected and revised (Öztürk, 2014: 50; Gültekin, 2014: 50).

Now that we have established what foundationalism is, the distinction between basic and non-foundational beliefs, and the characteristics of strict and moderate foundationalism, it can be shown how they have traces in Descartes' epistemology. It is important to show the traces of this in Descartes' epistemology in order to show how he could be positioned in a strict foundationalist position. At the same time, Descartes' position serves as a basis for foundationalism. Considering that foundationalism is built on this basis, Descartes' thoughts on this issue are very important.

On Descartes' Foundationalism

Descartes can be cited as an important figure related to foundationalism. Within epistemology, Descartes is interpreted as a strict rationalist. His ideas about the architectural structure of knowledge, in conjunction with this rationalist attitude, led him to take a strict foundationalist position. Descartes' determinations about the structure of knowledge can be seen in depth in his *Meditations*. As early as the first *meditation*, he emphasizes that knowledge must be based on solid foundations (Descartes, 2014: 17). First, when it comes to knowledge, he evaluates the source of sensations. He emphasizes that the role of sensation is quite large among the things he has had knowledge of so far, and refers to situations in which he has knowledge as a result of the source of sensation. However, sensations can deceive one in many cases. Likewise, Descartes was deceived at least once in a situation where he made use of these senses. This is why he first turned to the senses. Because man thinks that he obtains knowledge about the external world directly from sensations. However, even though we think we have knowledge through sensation, sensations are misleading. The system of knowledge created through sensation is not sound. One should not fully trust what is obtained from sensations or what sensation gives. If there is even one case of deception, the reliability of this faculty should be viewed with skepticism: In his own words, Descartes explains: "All that I have hitherto regarded as most true and reliable I have learned from or through the senses; sometimes I have experienced that these senses are deceptive, so it is a matter of prudence never to trust completely in things that have deceived us once (Descartes, 2016: 48)"

Therefore, the fact that the knowledge obtained through an unreliable faculty, in other words, the knowledge originating from the senses, is doubtful prevents the structure of knowledge from being established on a solid ground. Since a system built on unreliable foundations is doubtful and lacking in certainty, the subject must

start from the ground up. Descartes emphasizes that he starts all over again in order to establish a solid structure for knowledge. First, he draws a boundary to knowledge. According to him, nothing that is clearly false, doubtful, or suspicious should not be included in the string of knowledge (Descartes, 2014: 17-18). In this case, doubt is a tool in the process of acquiring knowledge. In other words, doubt is the method to distinguish between knowledge and non-knowledge. With his method, Descartes also determined the path to be followed for knowledge. He decides to exclude everything he doubts from this structure. He starts looking for the ground where he cannot doubt and where he can build the architecture of knowledge. The entire belief system must be questioned from beginning to end. The body of knowledge must be reconsidered. If what is built on unreliable foundations can be doubted, then a "starting point", a way out must be put forward. At the same time, if that point of departure is free from doubt and certain, then knowledge will be firmly established.

After arguing that what is obtained through sensations does not have the status of knowledge, Descartes continues the process of doubt and secondly evaluates the states of sleep and wakefulness. According to him, being seated at a table by a fire, having a body and hands, being clothed, and many other such things are accepted as undeniably, unquestionably known. To think otherwise, or to say that these are not knowledge, is madness. However, a person can see in his sleep everything that a madman can imagine in his waking life, and even more. It is necessary, then, to make a distinction between sleep and wakefulness. The individual must be awake and aware of this state of wakefulness. However, there is no clear criterion that would make such an awareness - the awareness between sleep and wakefulness - possible (Descartes, 2016: 48-49). Since there is no such criterion, nothing that is explicitly recognized as true through experience gains the status of knowledge. As clearly stated above, Descartes regards even our judgments about our current experiences as doubtful. For example, even a proposition such as "I am holding this pen", which the subject thinks he knows easily through experience, he cannot say that he knows because he cannot distinguish between the dream and the waking state. Anything of the kind of experience cannot gain the status of knowledge because it cannot escape the grip of doubt.

Although everything seems to be open to doubt, there is one area that seems to be beyond doubt. Descartes presents this field as mathematics. According to him, two plus three will always equal five, whether asleep or awake. It does not seem possible to doubt that such truths are false and far from certain (Descartes, 2016: 50). But

what if there is a deceiving God? If a deceiving God or an evil demon wants one to be deceived, then the subject will be wrong every time he adds two and three, every time he counts the sides of a square (Descartes, 2016: 50-51/58).All propositions that can be considered basic to knowledge are under serious threat, given these three different arguments of Descartes.

It is precisely at this point that Descartes makes his first determination that cannot be doubted. If something, whatever its name, deceives, as long as it is thought, the existence of the subject is inevitably a foundation that cannot be doubted. No matter how much the deceiver deceives, as long as the subject thinks it is something, the deceiver will not be able to ensure that it is not something (Descartes, 2016: 58). Descartes has now taken the process of doubt to the extreme. A point that cannot be doubted has been reached. This very point is a starting point that will be the source for all other knowledge. Descartes made the first basic determination for knowledge through the "thinking subject". "There is a subject who thinks that there is something." This proposition, apart from what the senses give us, apart from experiences that are taken to be obviously true, apart from the truths of mathematics, is the kind of foundation that can no longer be doubted in Descartes' system. Cottingham emphasizes this important point in the following words: "Having carried this method of skepticism to its extreme, Descartes now sees that there is at least one truth - a solid and immovable point - which even the most advanced skepticism cannot touch." (Cottingham, 2003: 47)

By turning directly to one's consciousness, in other words, through a process of meditation, skeptical objections were initially intended to be excluded. According to Descartes, this unquestionable foundation, free from the possible objections of skeptics, must necessarily be accepted as true: "So much so that, after careful consideration and careful examination of everything, every time I assert or conceive of the proposition *I am, I exist, it* is necessary to conclude that it is necessarily true and to recognize that it is immutable (Descartes, 2016:58)."

Descartes' Cogito, which he considers to be basic, is grounded, grounded because it is not inferential. The Cogito by itself is enough to classify Descartes within the foundationalist theory. However, the research should be continued in order to clearly reveal the foundationalist theory.

In Descartes' theory of knowledge, the knowledge that is determined as the beginning, the knowledge at the ground of the system, is a certain, unquestionable knowledge. Moreover, this knowledge is clear without depending on other

knowledge: "... I am, then, ... a thinking thing. ... it is certain that this conception and knowledge of myself, which I have acquired in such a distinct manner, does not depend on things whose existence is yet unknown to me (Descartes, 2016: 61-62)." This, as a thinking being, is at the basis of all clear and distinct knowledge (Çüçen, 2001: 89). The knowledge system is built on this foundation; in other words, knowledge rises on this foundation.

In addition to the *cogito,* Descartes takes his knowledge of the contents of the mind as an unquestionable foundation. In Descartes' scheme, these contents, called *innate* ides, are examples of basic belief. These ides are innate, built-in in human beings. The comprehension of these ideas, which are not acquired by sense or experiment, is intuitive. Intuition is not inferential, and since these ideas are not inferential, they lack any grounding. For the thinking subject, these are ideas that can be clearly grasped. Some questions must then be asked. For example, what are *innate* ideas? How are innate ideas justified? How are these ideas the source of other propositions? These questions must be answered in order to reveal basic beliefs.

A class of ideas that appear to be *innate*, without any empirical experience, is encountered in the first meditation. This class includes "mathematical truths". While sciences such as physics, astronomy, and medicine are considered doubtful and therefore far from certain, arithmetic and goemetry, which are concerned with very simple and general things, are considered to contain something certain and unquestionable, regardless of whether they occur in nature (Descartes, 2014: 20). That the sum of two and two is four, or that any quadrilateral is quadrilateral, are things that can be grasped clearly and distinctly. It does not seem reasonable to think that they lack certainty or to doubt them. Descartes continues these thoughts in the following chapters. When he thinks of something so simple as arithmetic and geometry, he questions whether he can grasp them clearly and distinctly enough to be at least true, and he explains that he doubts this, thinking that God may have given him the possibility of being mistaken even in things he considers clear and beyond doubt. But even when he thinks this, he says that he is certain of the truth of what he thinks he has clearly grasped. In his own words: "Whoever deceives me can never, so long as I think I am something, reduce me to nothing, or make true that, although it is true that I exist now, some day in the future I shall see clearly that I never existed, or that the sum of two and three is more or less than five, or that it cannot be otherwise than I conceive it to be, and so on. Since I have no grounds for believing that there is a God who may be deceptive, and since I have not yet considered the

grounds which prove that there is any God, the reason for doubt based on this conviction alone is extremely weak, almost metaphysical (Descartes, 2014:36-37)."

When we look at the third meditation, Descartes sets out a rule for truth. This is about clarity and distinctness. In the third meditation, in addition to clarity and distinctness, there is an expansion of the system of knowledge. In other words, this meditation tries to make the structure of knowledge explicit. The *cogito is an innate* idea, and clarity and distinctness are its essential characteristic, not separate from it: "I am certain that I am a thinking thing, but do I not also know what it takes to make me certain of something? Of course, there is nothing in this first knowledge that makes me certain of truth, except the clear and distinct perception of what I say; ... Therefore, I can already lay down as a general rule that all that we can perceive very clearly and very distinctly is true (Descartes, 2014: 35)."

Descartes finds the way to be sure of something is to be clear and distinct. Something that is clearly and distinctly grasped is taken as "true". In this case, it can be said that the underlying beliefs, in other words, the basic beliefs, are those that can be clearly and distinctly grasped. Once these beliefs are identified, Descartes hints at the process of meditation: "In order to have the opportunity to examine without disturbing the order of meditation, which consists in starting from the first ideas I will come across in my mind and moving step by step to those I will find later, ... I need to divide my thoughts into certain kinds, ... to examine in which of these kinds there is truth or error in the true sense (Descartes, 2014: 37)."

It is clear that the causal system is constructed starting from ideas that are self-evidently true. In explaining his system, Descartes distinguishes between the elements within the structure. "Ideas", which are the designs of objects in the mind. "Will, affect and judgment" are states that arise in desired and feared situations. Of these states, ideas, which are at the basis of knowledge, have certain characteristics. For example, they cannot be wrong, one of them is no more true than the other, they are infallible. Some of them are innate. But where does the truth of these ideas come from? Descartes thinks that the truth of these ideas comes from "natural light". This is also the ability to distinguish right from wrong (Descartes, 2014: 37-40). These ideas, which are grasped with the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood, must now be determined. Descartes identifies substance -thinking and space-occupying-, diffusion, form, number, duration and motion as ideas (Descartes, 2014: 44-45). In addition to these ideas, he identifies one more idea, which is actually above all other ideas. It is the "God-idea". He reveals what he understands by the idea of God as

follows: "By the name of God I mean an unlimited, eternal, unchanging, independent, omniscient, omnipotent essence by whose action I and all other existing things (if it is true that such things exist) are created and brought into being (Descartes, 2014:45)."

The source of these ideas comes from God. This, in fact, clearly points to the existence of God. Descartes' explanation makes it easier to grasp this situation: "... although the idea of substance is originally present in me because I myself am a substance, I, a finite being, could not have acquired the idea of an infinite substance if it had not been placed in my mind by a truly infinite substance (Descartes, 2014:45)."

Clearly, the subject has an idea of infinity. Although man is not an infinite being and there are no infinite phenomena around him that he experiences as infinite, he has an idea of such a concept. Then, since the subject is finite, how does it have this idea of infinity? It is God who has placed this idea in the subject's mind. In other words, God is designated as the guarantor of this idea.

At the foundation of the structure of knowledge, the first elements that provide support, in other words, the initiating principles that provide the ground, are grasped through natural light. This point gives us clues about foundationalism. The subject's clear and distinct grasp of the basic beliefs is a direct grasp. Nothing else is needed to justify these elements. Through an intuitive grasp, also called natural light, the subject does not doubt them. Since these undoubted truths are grasped directly by the mind, they are exempt from the support of other beliefs. Roughly up to this point we have answered the questions of what *innate* ideas are and how *innate* ideas are justified.

Another question to be answered is how inferential beliefs are derived from non-inferential core beliefs. The way to move from non-inferential basic beliefs to other beliefs is "deduction". The subject deduces non-foundational propositions from a set of self-evident foundations.

There are also criticisms against Descartes' foundationalist epistemology. For instance, when he constructs his epistemological system, as mentioned above, he begins with the exclusion of sensations. Because, according to him, sensations have misled us many times so far, therefore, if knowledge is to be obtained, the subject must be freed from sensations. According to Cottingham, sensory perceptions may be susceptible to deception, but at this point there is a point that requires more

attention (Cottingham, 2003: 48-49). This is that sensations, even if they work extremely well, are not intrinsically reliable in obtaining knowledge. As a basis for this claim, Cottingham cites the passage in which Descartes explains the wax example. "... what is it in this wax that is apprehended with such distinctness? Certainly none of the properties that we attain through the senses (Cottingham, 2003: 49)."

As will be remembered from the example of beeswax, the taste, smell, color of wax, that is, anything that can be accessed through sensations, does not give the essence of wax. Its only essence is what remains of the wax, its "covering" or "diffusion". The essence of wax, then, can only be grasped by the faculty of cognition, not by the faculty of "sense" or "imagination". Cottingham justifies this explanation as follows: Wax is a diffuse thing of length, breadth and depth. It can have an indefinite number of geometric shapes. We cannot perceive this by sense or imagination, because we can imagine that wax can take on a shape that we cannot even imagine. It is possible to think that it can take a shape that we have not yet experienced. Then this is something to be grasped with the faculty of comprehension (Cottingham, 2003:49).

Through the example of wax, Descartes draws attention to the importance of the faculty of cognition rather than sensation or imagination as a means of acquiring knowledge in the individual. Although sensations seem to play an important role in the subject's contact with the external world, for Descartes, beyond sensations, the essence of the sensible is grasped through the faculty of cognition. Knowledge of what is to be grasped - clear and distinct perceptions - is attained through the faculty of cognition given to us by a benevolent God. These clear and distinct perceptions are not those given by the senses, but the perceptions we make when we think about mathematical propositions, which are pure cognitive perceptions (Cottingham, 2003: 50). What we grasp clearly and distinctly is only the basis of knowledge.

Cottingham says that a Descartesan philosopher must set aside everything he or she had previously accepted and build a system based on clear and distinct perceptions. The subject proceeds from the knowledge of its own existence to the knowledge of an undeceiving God. However, in order to prove the existence of God, one must start from certain axioms. But how can we be sure that these axioms are true? Descartes thinks that we grasp them clearly and distinctly. But Cottingham presents this point as the beginning of what is known in the literature as the "Descartesan Loop". This loop can be explained as follows: Perceptions claimed to be self-evident may be guarantors of axioms, but how can we trust these perceptions (Cottingham, 2003:

52)? What is the guarantor of these self-evident perceptions? Once God is actually proven, then perhaps he can be the guarantor of our explicit perceptions. But it is problematic to rely on a set of unreliable perceptions to prove God.

In response to this loop, Cottingham says that Descartes states that there are certain propositions that are intrinsically reliable: "Two and two make four" or "I think, therefore I am" do not need God's guarantees to be reliable. These are the kind of propositions that are simply and directly understood (Cottingham, 2003: 53). Considering the above statements, Descartes gives some examples for basic beliefs. For example, the proposition "I think, therefore I am" exhibits an example of a basic belief as reliable, clear and obvious. This also shows that these propositions are exempt from any support.

Conclusion

Depending on what kind of attitude to adopt in the face of the question "How do we know?", the question of what kind of structure to adopt for knowledge, in other words, what kind of structure the set of reasons that will give belief the status of knowledge will have, is problematic. Possible answers are that the structure can be finite, infinite or circular. At this point, the foundationalist theory argues that the structure is finite. The danger of regress ends in basic beliefs that are privileged. Descartes' Cogito, which he considers basic, is determined as an "Archimedean point" at the basis of the system of causes, which appears to be grasped by direct intuition rather than by sense or experience, whose essence is thought, free from doubt. This point, which is directly grasped and not based on any proposition, is considered basic and forms the basis of Descartes' epistemology, since it does not carry any inferential properties. This point itself, which constitutes the foundation of Descartesian epistemology, is sufficient to position Descartes within the foundationalist theory.

As can be seen, Descartes identified basic beliefs as the ground for knowledge. When foundationalism is traced in the history of philosophy, it would not be wrong to position Descartes here. The reason why we focus on Descartes' foundationalism is that a formulation of strict foundationalism can be traced in his system. There are several important clues in Descartes' system, especially regarding what basic beliefs are. The fact that basic beliefs are exempt from justification and that these beliefs are infallible are examples of these clues.

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