

[81] **Chapter 10**
Allegorical Dream. – Reason and Common Sense. Grounds for the Proof of God’s Existence, according to the System of the Idealists, on the basis of our own Existence. – Also, in any case, on the basis of the ideal Existence of an objective world of the senses.

Yesterday I concluded my lecture with thoughts of reason and human understanding. After becoming entangled in the story of a trip in the Swiss Alps with which our guests entertained us in the evening, these thoughts developed in my imagination into a dream that has almost allegorical significance. We traveled together between the Alps with two persons as guides, one male, the other female. The male was a young, blunt Swiss with a muscular build but not the sharpest intellect; she was tall, slender, and earnest, with a deeply introspective look and a visionary physiognomy; dressed in a fantastic manner, she had something on the back of her head that looked similar to wings. We followed our guides for a while until we came to a fork in the road. Here they seemed to part ways. He hurried with quick strides to the right, she flitted with her wing-like being to the left, and we stood downcast on the path, uncertain whom we should follow; that is, until one of us looked around and saw a rather elderly matron approaching us with measured steps. As she got close enough for us to hear her voice, she said: “Be consoled, hikers! you will not remain long without a guide. The persons given to you as guides are called *common sense* (*sensus communis*) and *contemplation* (*contemplatio*); sometimes they part ways for a short time, often for insignificant reasons. If those traveling with them are steadfast enough to wait at the fork in the path and to follow neither of them, they come back to let me resolve their dispute. In most cases he tends to be right and, contrary to what one might expect, the female person tends to let herself be instructed. On the other hand, if, as sometimes also happens, she is in the right, then he, the [82] obstinate one, cannot be brought to yield. In the face of the most convincing reasons that I lay before him, he laughs at me in his peasant manner, mumbles some rustic platitude, and stubbornly goes his way once more. Meanwhile, the travelers who trust me know what they have to hold onto.” “What then is your own name, you who decide their dispute?” asked one of us. “On earth,” she said, “I am called *reason*; in heaven...” – Here, suddenly, she was interrupted by an awful clamor. A fanatical swarm of locals from the region had gathered around the lady, *contemplation*, and resolved to drive away both *common sense* and *reason*. Shouting and raging, they pressed upon us, we were in a state of fright – and I awoke.

Truthfully, this rule also tends to serve me as the right guide when I am awake. Whenever my speculation seems to lead me too far from the main street of common

sense, I stand still and seek to orient myself. I look back to the point from which I started out and try to compare my two guides. Experience has taught me that in most cases common sense tends to be right and reason must speak very decisively for speculation if I am to leave common sense and follow speculation. Indeed, to convince me that common sense's insistence is merely uninstructed stubbornness, reason must place plainly before my eyes how common sense managed to depart from the truth and land on an errant path.

If we apply this rule to the doubts that have been advanced by idealists, egoists, and skeptics against the actuality of a material world, then we find that their reasons certainly do not suffice to elicit from us complete approbation. Instead we have the substantial supposition that, with continued reflection, we will find the truth on the side of common sense. As long, meanwhile, as this has not yet occurred, their doubts nonetheless diminish the evidence of the proofs that we base on the assertion of common sense. Since, then, the proofs for God's existence (in the first genus of such proofs) assume that a material world is actually on hand, then their power to convince seems to suffer some decline from the alleged doubts and not even approximate the evidence that the practical [83] geometer has for himself in his procedure. This can be illuminated from the following consideration.

Let us suppose that the subject that the geometer has before him and to which he wants to apply his theorems has no objective actuality but is far more a mere, subjective appearance, in keeping with the presupposition of the idealists. Nevertheless, this does not prevent the practical geometer from proceeding with all requisite confidence. He is assured that the sensory properties and appearances among themselves stand in precisely the relation and in precisely the combination as do the concepts that he has developed in his pure theory. Through his results he intends to make out mere appearances and present them in a determinate way. Hence, he may only presuppose the sensory appearance connected with them in order to be assured of his results. Whether these [results] also have an actual, material object outside him, whether what the sensory appearances ascribe to this external object actually also pertain to it, this is as little consequence to the practicing geometer as it is to the purely theoretical geometer. In natural theology, however, matters are otherwise. Here the objective existence of an entity is supposed to be inferred. If this can occur only on the basis of the presupposition of an objective, material world, then, to be sure, it is necessary first to remove every doubt and reservation that those philosophers may have about conceding such a presupposition. Through the agreement of the inner and outer sense, the agreement of all senses, indeed, the agreement of all human beings and other living entities familiar to us, sound human understanding assumes the actual being of such an object and is very much justified in assuming as much. Nevertheless, this agreement does not lift these doubts with geometric precision, they do not fully remove their possibility. They have, to be sure, a presumption of the highest degree working against them. But it is not obvious that it is impossible for this harmonious assertion of an actual, material world to rest upon a limitation of sensory powers common to all human senses, perhaps all animal senses, and thus is mere illusion. But if it were this, then the result, too, would be the mere consequence of a sensory illusion and thus an *untruth*.