

In this project, I show that the trajectory of Western European civilization has resulted in increasingly tragic predicaments that are not to be taken as given features of being human. Though suffering is a part of being alive, the sufferings we are subject to and how we experience these sufferings is filtered through the socio-historical context we live our lives in. When the sufferings of life far outweigh the benefits, it's a sign that something must be wrong. Reflecting on this imbalance led nineteenth-century German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer to conclude that life must be inherently irrational and tragic. Though Schopenhauer's reflections on this imbalance were genuine, he was nonetheless mistaken to conclude that life is in itself tragic. Putting Schopenhauer in conversation with Jean Jacques Rousseau, I show that tragedy is not so much an intrinsic feature of li

that Schopenhauer considers endemic to the human experience and apply them