

That human life must be a kind of mistake is sufficiently clear from the fact that man is a compound of needs, which are difficult to satisfy; moreover, if they are satisfied, all he is granted is a state of painlessness, in which he can only give himself up to boredom. This is a precise proof that existence in itself has no value, since boredom is merely the feeling of the emptiness of life. If, for instance, life, the longing for which constitutes our very being, had in itself any positive and real value, boredom could not exist; mere existence in itself would supply us with everything, and therefore satisfy us. But our existence would not be a joyous thing unless we were striving after something; distance and obstacles to be overcome then represent our aim as something that would satisfy us--an illusion which vanishes when our aim has been attained; or when we are engaged in something that is of a purely intellectual nature, when, in reality, we have retired from the world, so that we may observe it from the outside, like spectators at a theatre. Even sensual pleasure itself is nothing but a continual striving, which ceases directly its aim is attained. As soon as we are not engaged in one of these two ways, but thrown back on existence itself, we are convinced of the emptiness and worthlessness of it; and this it is we call boredom. That innate and ineradicable craving for what is out of the common proves how glad we are to have the natural and tedious course of things interrupted. Even the pomp and splendour of the rich in their stately castles is at bottom nothing but a futile attempt to escape the very essence of existence, _misery_.