

Schopenhauer e o pensamento universal

Schopenhauer and the Two Orders of Purposiveness in the World¹

Schopenhauer e as duas ordens de finalidade no mundo

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I intend to argue that the emergence of the material conditions for the suppression and denial of the will in the human organism (the extraordinary and to some extent “unnatural” development of the brain) is not something like an “accident on the way” of will's manifestation in the world. It is rather, as it were, an intentional result of the whole process of objectivation of the will, a result that emerges from a teleological order. This teleological order is primary and more fundamental than the teleological order of nature that produces each phenomenon and each organic structure according to its ability to promote the emergence, conservation and expansion of life. This means that we have to understand the problematic principle of nature's purposiveness in Schopenhauer's thought as containing two distinct and largely contradictory orders of purpose. We can call these two orders of purposiveness “*order of nature*” and “*order of salvation*” (in analogy to Schopenhauer's “kingdom of nature” and “kingdom of grace”). These two orders of purpose correspond to what I understand to be two forms of teleology that coexist in constant tension in his system: a *functional* and an *ethical-soteriological teleology*.

Palavras-chave: Schopenhauer; Teleology; Nature; Soteriology

RESUMO

Neste artigo, pretendo argumentar que o surgimento das condições materiais para a supressão e a negação da vontade no organismo humano (o desenvolvimento extraordinário e em certa medida “antinatural” do cérebro) não é algo como um “acidente de percurso” no processo de manifestação da vontade no mundo. Trata-se, antes, de um resultado intencional de todo o processo de objetivação da vontade, um resultado que emerge de uma ordenação teleológica. Essa ordem teleológica é primária e mais fundamental do que a ordem teleológica da natureza que produz cada fenômeno e cada estrutura

¹ This paper was presented at the IX Schopenhauer International Colloquium, held between April 12 and 23, 2021. I thank the organizers of the Colloquium for the invitation. I also would like to thank my dear friend Celso Neto for having read the text and given me some tips to improve the English version.

orgânica em função de sua capacidade de promover o surgimento, a conservação e a expansão da vida. Isso faz com que tenhamos de encarar o problemático princípio de finalidade da natureza no pensamento de Schopenhauer como contendo duas ordens distintas e em grande medida contraditórias. Podemos denominar essas duas ordens de finalidade “ordem da natureza” e “ordem da salvação” (em analogia com o “reino da natureza” e o “reino da graça” de Schopenhauer). Essas duas ordens de finalidade no mundo correspondem àquilo que entendo serem duas formas de teleologia que convivem em constante tensão em seu sistema: uma teleologia funcional e uma teleologia ético-soteriológica.

Keywords: Schopenhauer; Teleologia; Natureza; Soteriologia

I

The main question I would like to pose as starting point for this paper is the following: why does Schopenhauer² consider that the human being or, more specifically, human intellect, is the most perfect product of nature? Why is human intellect even the consummation, the completion of nature?³ Saying that human intellect is perfect can have in principle two meanings: in a first sense, perfection is an attribute that can be predicated of an intellect (or of the organism to which it belongs) in view of its complexity and adaptability, that is, considering the function of the intellect as an instrument for the conservation and propagation of life. In this sense, human intellect would be the most perfect among all cognitive capacities of animals because it provides man with an extremely sophisticated topography of the surrounding environment, a detailed mapping of the reasons for his action, and thus allows him to orient himself in the world in the best way possible, so as to fully realize the goal of conservation and perpetuation of the species. This is the sense which runs through

² For references to Schopenhauer’s work, I will use the following abbreviations: *The World as Will and Representation* (W I and II for first and second volumes), *On Will in Nature* (N), *Parerga and Paralipomena* (P I and II for first and second volumes). Page numbers will be to the P. Deussen edition (*Schopenhauer Sämtliche Werke*, München: Piper, 1911-1926). For the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* I use the English translation by Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman and Christopher Janaway; for the second volume, the translation by E. F. J. Payne; for the essay *On Will in Nature*, the translation by David E. Cartwright, Edward E. Erdmann and Christopher Janaway; for the *Parerga*, the translation by E. F. J. Payne. The *Nachlass* will be indicated by HN followed by the volume and page number of the edition by Arthur Hübscher (the translations are mine).

³ Statements in this direction are found throughout several places of Schopenhauer’s work, especially in texts dedicated to the subject of teleology, but also in several texts dedicated to ethics. Here is a very incomplete list: W I, § 27, p. 172-3; W I, § 28, p. 182 and p. 191; W II, § 25, p. 366-7.; W II, § 26, p. 381; W II, § 48, p. 698-9. I comment on some of these passages in MATTIOLI, 2018. We will return to this point later.

most of Schopenhauer's reflections on the concept of purposiveness, as this concept is discussed especially in paragraphs 27 and 28 of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation*, at the end of text *Critique of Kantian Philosophy*, in chapter "Compared Anatomy" of the essay *On Will in Nature*, and in chapter 26 of the second volume of the *World*, dedicated to the subject of teleology. For the purposes of the argument I intend to present here, I will designate this conceptual framework to approaching the problem of purposiveness by the expression "*functional teleology*". Now, before moving on to an explanation of what I understand to be the second meaning that we can infer from the attribution of perfection to human intellect, I will dwell a little longer on the meaning of this functional teleology as I understand it.

Functional teleology is the conception that views the purpose of the intellect in its capacity to satisfy as fully as possible the needs of the will (in the sense of its self-affirmation), so that perfection of this cognitive instrument is supposed to be its total adaptation to the circumstances of the environment. This adaptation makes it capable of perceiving the surrounding world more and more effectively and orienting itself in it. It is therefore, as Schopenhauer says, "a means to preserving the individual and species" (N, p. 338).

Much of the secondary literature addressing the subject of teleology in Schopenhauer's philosophy⁴ considers that form of teleology to be the main meaning of the concept of purposiveness in his thought, whether in his confrontation with Kant or in his debate with Aristotle, for example. One of the most relevant problems the literature has encountered in Schopenhauer's conception of teleology is understanding the extent to which it remains faithful to the Kantian thesis that the principle of purposiveness has a merely subjective validity – as a "regulative principle" (in Kant's vocabulary). My hypothesis in this regard is that Schopenhauer, despite explicitly taking issue against any interpretation of teleology that considers purposiveness as something objectively existent in nature, falls back into a conception we may call

⁴ See, e.g., GOLDSCHMIDT, 1984; MALTER, 1983 (chapter 4); CACCIOLA, 1993; DE CIAN, 2008.

“dogmatic”, as he seeks to find a metaphysical basis for this principle, referring it to the essential unity of the will behind all phenomena. In this context, Schopenhauer is obviously thinking not only of what he calls “*internal purposiveness*” – which concerns the harmonious and coordinated composition of the parts of an individual organism – but above all of the “*external purposiveness*”, which refers to the “relation of inorganic nature to organic nature in general” and also to the relation of the “individual parts of organic nature to each other, which makes possible the maintenance of the whole of organic nature or even the genera of the individual animals” (W I, § 28, p. 184). While in the case of the organism the internal purpose is responsible for the coordinated work of its parts, making possible the expression and maintenance of its substantial form (which corresponds to the idea of its species), in the case of the external purpose, in turn, what we have is an interpretation of nature in its entirety as an immense organism. The whole of natural history therefore, whose intelligible character embraces all ideas in the supreme unity of the will, can be understood in the same way as the history of the continuous developments of a single organism manifesting its own idea. Just as the idea of the organism contains the intelligible and paradoxically timeless unity of all its temporal developments, the unity of will that manifests itself in the totality of nature contains within itself the intelligible unity of all the temporal developments of all its parts, from inorganic nature to human beings. Schopenhauer’s characterization of this unity as a type of ‘universal Idea’, the Idea of the “world”, “which stands in the same relation to all other Ideas as a harmony does to the individual voices” (W I, § 28, p. 188), is thus not gratuitous. The same characterization applies both to the Idea of the world and the Idea of the organism: “the unity now finds its expression in the necessary relation and concatenation of those parts and developments with each other” (W I, § 28, p. 187).

Let us now note that, when speaking of the teleologically oriented development of the forms of manifestation of the will in the world, Schopenhauer establishes a hierarchy of these natural forms, ranging from the forces of the planetary mass to the animal world, with the human being at its top. The image the philosopher uses to

illustrate his conception is the one of a *pyramid of nature*. In an important passage from paragraph 28 of the first volume of the *World*, Schopenhauer writes:

Although it is in the human being, as (Platonic) Idea, that the will finds its clearest and most perfect objectivation [*vollkommenste Objektivation*], nonetheless, this Idea could not express its essence on its own. In order to appear in its proper significance, the Idea of a human being cannot be presented alone and in isolation but rather must be accompanied by the stepwise descent through all animal forms, through the plant kingdom, and down to the inorganic: only taken together do they complete the objectivation of the will; they are presupposed in the Idea of a person as the flowers of a tree presuppose leaves, branches, trunks and roots: they form a pyramid with human beings at the very top. (W I, § 28, p. 182)

The claim that human intellect is the consummation and full realization of the evolutionary process of will's manifestations – presented here against the background of a hierarchy of the degrees of will's objectivation – seems to introduce surreptitiously into the metaphysics of nature (along with its functional teleology) a second sense of purposiveness which is, in fact, irreducible to its merely functional sense (and I would add further: largely opposed to it). This second sense has its roots no longer in the metaphysics of nature as such, but in the metaphysics of morals, in the Schopenhauerian conception of ethics (or what has recently been called his “great ethics”)⁵ and in his doctrine of redemption. For this reason I will call the conceptual framework in which this second sense is rooted “*ethical-soteriological teleology*”.

In my view, the hierarchization of nature's forms, which places the human being at the top of the natural pyramid, cannot be explained by the merely functional conception of purposiveness.⁶ My main argument for this claim is the following: first, from a point of view still internal to the metaphysics of nature, the functional characterization of the intellect does not seem to be sufficient for the determination of the hierarchy proposed by Schopenhauer, as it does not satisfactorily explain the superiority of human being, as species, over other natural forms. A merely functional characterization would certainly allow us to rank, for instance, among a certain number

⁵ For a discussion of the difference between “great” and “small” ethics in Schopenhauer, see DEBONA, 2015.

⁶ In this I disagree with Malter (1991, p. 268) and De Cian (2008, p. 105).

of human intellects, those more or less able to preserve the individual, given the specific needs of the species. But this characterization proves unsatisfactory when it comes to determining a hierarchy that cuts across different species and even different realms. What makes human beings, as a species, superior to the rest of animals (and to the rest of nature!) does not seem to be the fact that the structural complexity of their brain supposedly allows them to adapt better to the natural environment, compared to the rest of the animals. To correctly determine this superiority we are required to move to another normative order, in which we no longer place value on the intellect's ability to respond to the needs of the will, but, on the contrary, on its ability to rise above its natural function and serve itself of knowledge no longer as a means for the affirmation of the will, but for its neutralization, even if this neutralization is only partial.

In this context, the notion of perfection is linked to a quite distinct and even opposite role assigned to the intellect, which, I think, puts this notion on a collision course with the notion of perfection we could derive from the functional conception. From this new point of view, intellect's perfection is seen as the state reached by reflexivity or circumspection (*Besonnenheit*), which makes it capable of precisely freeing itself from its pragmatic function, from the needs of the will. So, reflexivity or circumspection enables the intellect to rise to the knowledge of the immutable. This is either the aesthetic knowledge which opens the doors to the contemplation of ideas, or the knowledge of one's own will that gives access to the eternal and absolute unity of everything that exists – a knowledge accompanied by the insight in the history of will's objectivations in the world as a cosmic tragedy marked by an infinity of unavoidable suffering. The intellect that arrives at this knowledge is the intellect of the philosopher, the genius, and the saint, and it is this knowledge that leads to the realization of what Schopenhauer calls in some passages “the purpose of our existence”, “the true end of life”, or “life's deepest meaning” (W II, § 49, p. 727-8). The deepest meaning of life and the purpose of our existence that Schopenhauer mentions in these passages are nothing but the *self-denial of the will* resulting from its full *self-knowledge*.

II

That said, let us note that both paragraph 27 of the first volume of the *World*, and the essay *On Will in Nature* – fundamental texts to Schopenhauer's metaphysics of nature and his understanding of teleology – conclude with an indication (albeit brief) to *ethics*. Paragraph 27, for instance, ends with the following words:

In certain people knowledge evades this servitude [Schopenhauer means the servitude of cognition in general as a means for the preservation of the individual and the species], throws off its yoke and can exist free from any purposes of the will and purely for itself, simply as a clear mirror of the world; and this is the origin of art. Finally, in the Fourth Book we will see how this sort of cognition, acting back on the will, can bring about the will's self-abolition, i.e. the resignation that is the final goal [*das letzte Ziel*], indeed the innermost essence of all virtue and holiness and is redemption from the world. (W I, § 27, p. 181-2)

This conclusion is certainly not frivolous. There is a deep connection between the metaphysics of nature and the metaphysics of morals. But what exactly is this connection?

In chapter 47 of the second volume of the *World*: "On Ethics", Schopenhauer states that the great problem of philosophy and consequently of his own philosophy has always been "to demonstrate a *moral* world-order as the basis of the *physical*" (W II, § 47, p. 675). So, the question arises again: what does this idea of a moral world-order as the foundation of the physical order mean? One way to answer this question is by appealing to the thesis of the freedom of the will as a cosmic and metaphysical entity lying outside the determinations of the principle of reason. If the world is, in a somewhat indeterminate sense, a "product" of that will, which is in turn free in the most relevant metaphysical sense, then the world can be considered the result of an action *attributable* to a metaphysical agent and therefore *blameworthy*. It is apparently from this argument that Schopenhauer derives his view of suffering as atonement for a kind of metaphysical guilt related to the sinful existence of the world (in a sort of perverse theodicy). This is then the first possible answer to the question about the moral world-order that must be seen as the basis of the physical order. But I would like to propose

a second answer, which can be interpreted both as an alternative and as a complement to the first one.

If we have in mind the distinction I proposed between functional and ethical-soteriological teleology, we can say that the former (functional teleology) is subordinate to the latter (ethical-soteriological teleology), and that the ultimate purpose of will is not exactly the production, conservation and propagation of life (as the fundamental expression “will to life” or “will to live” may imply), but rather the denial of life. In this sense, life is supposed to be a mere means for the will to know itself – a mirror (as the author's beautiful metaphor suggests)⁷ enabling the will to arrive at self-knowledge and, as a consequence, to reach the state of denial and self-suppression. Hence Schopenhauer's famous statement: “the world is the self-cognition of the will.” (W I, § 71, p. 485)

Rudolf Malter argues (rightly so, in my view) that self-knowledge is the goal (or at least one of the original goals) aimed at by the whole process of objectivation, from the point of view of the will itself (MALTER, 1983, p. 444). To what extent can we reconcile this form of finality, which is metaphysically founded on a principle of intentionality inherent to the will itself, with the claim that the will (in its metaphysical dimension) is fundamentally *blind* and *endless*? This is a problem for which, it seems to me, Schopenhauer's system does not provide a satisfactory answer.⁸

If we turn to some passages of the aforementioned paragraph 27 of the first volume of the *World*, we can see Schopenhauer insisting that there is a striving inherent to the will itself “for higher and higher objectivation” (W I § 27, p.172-3). These passages are in line with the following excerpt from chapter 25 of the second volume:

We recognize in those lowest natural forces themselves that same one will, which has its first manifestation in them. Already *striving towards its goal [Ziel]* in this manifestation and through its original laws themselves, the will works towards its *final aim [Endzweck]*; and therefore everything that happens according to blind laws of nature must serve and be in keeping with this aim. (W II, § 25, p. 369-70; italics are mine)

⁷ For an enlightening discussion of this metaphor, see KOßLER, 2012.

⁸ I deal with this issue more fully in MATTIOLI, 2018.

In this same passage, Schopenhauer asserts the existence of a unity “of the accidental with the intentional, of the necessary with the free, by virtue of which the blindest chances, resting on universal laws of nature, are, so to speak, the keys on which the world-spirit plays its melodies so fraught with meaning” (W II, § 25, p. 370).

The *Nachlass* also contains very enlightening passages about the relationship between this effort of the will towards ever higher forms, on the one hand, and the idea of a *telos* to be realized, on the other.⁹ In these *Nachlass* texts, that *telos* is conceived in light of Aristotle’s concept of *entelechy*. The first text I would like to quote is from 1821:

Aristotle calls consciousness, the mind, *entelécheia*: the expression has always been famous for its incomprehensibility. I say *entelécheia* comes from *telos* and means completion (*Vollendung*). Consciousness, mind, is the goal (*Ziel*), the completion of nature, its ultimate product, its highest phenomenon. (HN III, p. 123)

There are basically two main claims that need to be highlighted in this passage. The first one is that the meaning of what Aristotle, in Schopenhauer’s view, calls *entelechy*, can only be properly grasped on the basis of a concept of finality that he, Schopenhauer, understands as the full realization, the consummation of a goal inherent to natural processes *in general*. In his lectures on the *Metaphysics of Nature*, this finalistic principle is attributed to the substantial form,¹⁰ which, as Schopenhauer says elsewhere, is identical with the idea (W I, § 41, p. 249). In this context, the ideas assume the role of formal principles that provide the intentional direction of natural processes, determining the full expression of its form in the phenomenon as the “end” of each of these processes. In another posthumous passage (this one from 1837), Schopenhauer takes up again the Aristotelian concept of *entelechy*; but now he associates it with the *will itself*. He writes:

Aristotle’s *entelecheia* is the principle of reality, that which gives things actuality, by virtue of which they have *effective reality*, in contrast to everything that is merely possible, which as such is only *something thought*. For me, the will is the entelechy of everything. (HN IV (1), p. 245)

⁹ For the following discussion of these *Nachlass* texts, I take inspiration from Eduardo Brandão’s instructive comments on the topic in: BRANDÃO, 2008, p. 71-2, 133.

¹⁰ **Arthur Schopenhauer handschriftlicher Nachlaß: Philosophische Vorlesungen. Zweiter Theil: Metaphysik der Natur**, p. 134.

While in the passage quoted earlier entelechy was associated with the substantial form or idea, in the passage above it is referred to will itself; and this reference is entirely consequent, if we have two points in mind: firstly, the Idea is, from an ontological point of view, an original act of will, and in this sense it constitutes a principle of determination of this act as a particular act, differentiated from other acts corresponding to other Ideas; secondly, we must consider that, just as the Idea corresponds to the intelligible unity of the entire plurality of phenomena that fall under its scope (and, in the case of organisms, to the interconnection and development of the parts of each of these phenomena), so the will constitutes likewise the intelligible unity of the totality of nature and the dynamic relation of its parts. This is all very well explained in paragraph 28 of the first volume of the *World* and in chapter 26 of the *Supplements*.

So let us return to the two main theses I claimed to be present in the first posthumous text I had quoted. The second thesis is that the realization of the purpose Schopenhauer finds in nature is the material production or genesis of human intellect or human consciousness. And that brings me back to the question I had posed at the beginning: why should the human intellect be regarded as the completion of nature? My tentative answer to this question was that the human intellect is the only cognitive mechanism capable of performing the act of self-suppression of the will which arises spontaneously from will's self-knowledge, and that this act of self-suppression is just the purpose of existence in general.

But this is, as indicated, a tentative answer, as it still lacks some support. After all, it seems to go against Schopenhauer's central claim that the will is fundamentally a *will to life* (*Wille zum Leben*), and not something like a "will to nothingness" (to use a Nietzschean expression which is not usually very pleasing to the taste and ear of Schopenhauerians). Furthermore, even assuming that Schopenhauer has a positive conception of teleology as an objectively existing principle in nature, we cannot ignore that, whenever it is explicitly discussed, this concept of teleology refers to the processes of objectivation of the will towards its constant affirmation, which produces each

phenomenon and each organic structure in view of its capacity to promote the emergence, conservation and expansion of life.

The reading I am proposing here requires, then, that we expand the notion of teleology and understand it in a twofold register, which is able to accommodate two distinct and largely contradictory orders of purpose. We can call these two orders of purposiveness "*order of nature*" and "*order of salvation*" (in analogy to Schopenhauer's "kingdom of nature" and "kingdom of grace" (W I, § 70, p. 483)). The order of nature corresponds to functional teleology and instantiates in the world the principle of affirmation of the will; the order of salvation corresponds to the ethical-soteriological teleology and instantiates in the world the principle of the negation of the will. Therefore, the world must be seen as the path of instantiation of those two distinct and opposite orders of purpose.

But the principle of denial of the will, unlike its affirmation, can only be realized in a single natural type: the human being (and, in fact, in rare specimens of the species), since human beings are the only natural beings endowed with a hyper-complex intellect, capable of disentangling themselves from the impressions immediately present to intuition and rising to the horizon of totality, arriving at a particular type of knowledge that can produce an upheaval in the natural mechanism of the will. For this reason, the human finds himself at the top of the pyramid of nature. Thus, the will can only deny itself – in the only possible act of freedom in the phenomenal world – after having gone through the whole series of manifestations corresponding to its lower degrees of objectivation, from the forces of the planetary mass up to apes.

III

With all this in view, everything indicates that Schopenhauer's entire philosophy of nature, with its functional teleology (directed towards the production, propagation and expansion of life), is already from the beginning permeated and determined by the principle of denial of the will to life as a kind of *telos* hidden behind the very processes

of production of life. The meaning of the famous sentence from the late essay on the “Apparent Deliberateness in the Fate of the Individual” (quoted by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*),¹¹ where Schopenhauer claims that the real purpose (*Zweck*) of life is death (P I, p. 250), should be understood in light of what I have said about the ethical-soteriological teleology. One should not understand death here in the biological sense, as the disappearance of the individual and the suppression of the organism's vital force, with the consequent passage from the organic to the inorganic. Schopenhauer means here the *moment of death* as a moment of *crisis* in the deepest sense, and consequently as a moment of learning. What is at issue, as Zentner argues, is the *ethical* and *pedagogical* meaning of death (ZENTNER, 1993, p. 327),¹² the moral significance we must attribute to life and existence based on this particular experience of the end of life. That is why, as Schopenhauer argues in this essay, the fate of all of us is to be systematically confronted with suffering, frustration, and unhappiness (P I, p. 249-50), so that in the end of the game, in the face of death, we can say out loud: “I no longer like it” (W II, § 41, p. 546). In this sense, death represents the result of life, and expresses in a full moment the synthesis of all the teaching life has partially given us, the teaching that every aspiration and every yearning is useless, and that giving up life is a redemption. Death thus functions as a sort of catalyst for redemption. As he tells us in chapter 49 of the *Supplements to the World*: “man alone actually drains the cup of death”, since humanity is “the only stage at which the will can deny itself, and completely turn away from life.” (W II, § 49, p. 637)

The idea that human life is permeated by a destiny which, determining a sort of cosmic arrangement, inevitably condemns us to suffering, is present not only in the aforementioned essay from the *Parerga*, but it is also behind the reflections on the order of salvation present in the chapter just cited. In this text, Schopenhauer goes on

¹¹ For an analysis of Freud's appropriation of Schopenhauer's claim, see ZENTNER, 1993, and ATZERT, 2005. I discuss Zentner's and Atzert's readings in MATTIOLI, 2020.

¹² I disagree with Zentner, however, that the meaning Schopenhauer gives to death cannot be interpreted teleologically.

to contrast two goals or two contrary purposes at work in human life: the purpose “of the individual will, directed to chimerical happiness in an ephemeral, dreamlike, and deceptive existence”, and the purpose “of fate, directed obviously enough to the destruction of our happiness, and thus to the mortification of our will, and to the elimination of the delusion that holds us chained to the bonds of this world.” (W II, §49, p. 730)

As I understand it, the finalist vocabulary employed by Schopenhauer in this context, in order to characterize these two tendencies at work in human life, justifies an expansion in the concept of teleology, which then can also encompass the purpose of the denial of will, and not only the purpose of will's affirmation. Furthermore, these passages suggest that the goal of the denial of the will is primary, that is, it is allegedly the real goal of the processes of objectivation of the will, life being only a means to it, thus a subordinate end.

I allow myself to quote one more passage from paragraph 49 which is quite enlightening on this point:

Everything in life is certainly calculated to bring us back from that original error [the belief that we exist to be happy], and to convince us that the purpose of our existence is not to be happy. Indeed, if life is considered more closely and impartially, it presents itself rather as specially intended to show us that we are *not* to feel happy in it, since by its whole nature it bears the character of something for which we have lost the taste, which must disgust us, and from which we have to come back, as from an error, so that our heart may be cured of the passion for enjoying and indeed for living, and may be turned away from the world. In this sense, it would accordingly be more correct to put the purpose of life in our woe than in our welfare [...] for pain and trouble are the very things that work towards the true end of life, namely the turning away of the will from it. (W II, § 49, p. 727-8)

The text is clear: the “true end of life” is the “turning away of the will from it”. This means that, although the denial of the will is not a state that necessarily follows causally from another state, we can say it is, as it were, an intentional result from the whole process of objectivation of the will, which culminates in the production of human life and human intellect. It is true that self-suppression can only take place through a kind of *leap* beyond the natural order, beyond the *physis*, and that is why it represents, in

the strict sense, the only realization of freedom in the world. But this leap is only possible because knowledge in man has reached such a high degree and perfection that this knowledge is able to turn against its own basic conditions. And we cannot forget that the material conditions of knowledge are themselves components of the causal series of the phenomenal and natural world.

In chapter 26 of the second volume of the *World*, dedicated to teleology, Schopenhauer presents what he understands to be the wonderful conspiracy between efficient and final causes, by virtue of which perfection appears as something entirely necessary (W II, § 26, p. 381). The idea of perfection (*das Beste*) here indicates the possibility of the highest consummation of the good, in view of which the organism is structured in a certain way. And what is the highest good by virtue of which the human organism and the human intellect are produced? Paragraph 65 of the first volume, alongside the essay on the apparent deliberateness in the fate of the individual, suggests that this good is precisely the self-suppression and denial of the will, which is designated, even if metaphorically and figuratively, as the *summum bonum*, the absolute good – unlike the intuitive notion of good as a relative concept, which designates what is favorable to the satisfaction of the will. That absolute good is then characterized in the sequence of the text (now in a non-metaphorical sense) through the Greek term *telos* and the Latin expression *finis bonorum* (W I, § 65, p. 428).

Let us now return to the point about the material conditions of knowledge as belonging to the causal series of the world. In this regard, it is quite instructive to resort to Schopenhauer's reflections on the relation between knowledge and brain physiology. Speaking, for instance, of the kind of knowledge open to genius, which frees itself from the impositions of the will to objectively contemplate Ideas, he says that this form of knowledge depends on an extraordinary development of the brain (W II, §31, p. 429), with a high concentration of energy and a hypercomplex structure of grooves and convolutions, which produce, from the physiological point of view, an activity of unusual intensity in the brain mass and, as a consequence, a surplus of knowledge. Hence Schopenhauer speaks of genius as a kind of *monstrum per excessum*, an anomaly,

endowed with an abnormal intellectual capacity. We should think that something like this abnormal capacity is also present in the saint and in the ascetic, for in them too there is a higher type of knowledge, capable of mirroring the whole of life – the totality of existence –, which gives rise to the state not only of liberation, but of suppression of the will.

To conclude, I would like to mention two other excerpts from chapter 48 of the *Supplements to the World*, on the doctrine of denial of the will-to-live. I quote the two excerpts in the sequence, as they make up together the argument I want to underline:

We have no ground for assuming that there are even more perfect intelligences than those of human beings. For we see that this intelligence is already sufficient for imparting to the will that knowledge in consequence of which the will denies and abolishes itself. [...] Thus, even from this point of view, we are referred to the fact that the aim of all intelligence can only be reaction to a will; but since all willing is error, the last work of intelligence is to abolish willing, whose aims and ends it had hitherto served. (W II, § 48, p. 698-9)

This same idea is formulated in paragraph 85 of the chapter “On Philosophy and Natural Science”, from the *Parerga*, in which Schopenhauer argues that humanity must be the last stage reached in the global process of objectivation of the will, because at this stage it reached “the possibility of denying the will and thus of turning back from all the ways of the world, whereby this *divina commedia* then comes to an end.” (P II, § 85, p. 155)

From what has been said so far, we can conclude, in the first place, that the problematic principle of purposiveness of nature in Schopenhauer's thought contains two distinct and largely opposite orders (the order of nature and the order of salvation); in the second place, we can conclude that the purposiveness corresponding to the order of salvation (which in this paper is referred to by the idea of an ethical-soteriological teleology) is primary and more fundamental than the purposiveness corresponding to the order of nature and the functional teleology. This seems to me the most interesting conceptual framework to understand what Schopenhauer calls “a *moral* world-order as the basis of the *physical*” (W II, § 47, p. 675).

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Contribution: Writing – original draft

How to quote this article

MATTIOLI, William. Schopenhauer and the Two Orders of Purposiveness in the World. **Voluntas Revista Internacional de Filosofia**, Santa Maria, v. 12, e13, 2021. DOI 10.5902/2179378667452. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.5902/2179378667452>. Accessed on: day month abbreviated. year.