

# Giorgio de Chirico and the Nonsense of Life: Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Metaphysical Painting

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## 1. Metaphysical Painting and Nonsense

Giorgio de Chirico painted a series of strange images from 1909 to 1919: places without people, statues casting long shadows, a series of arches, trains with fumes above their smokestacks, toys, mannequins, biscuits, and rooms filled with these motifs. These images are called “metaphysical paintings.”

The following is an extract from one of De Chirico’s theoretical works on metaphysical painting, “We Metaphysicians...:”

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche indicated for the first time the profound signification of the nonsense of life and how such nonsense could be transmuted into art, and even construct the internal frame of a truly new, free, and profound art.

[...] The elimination of sense in art is not an invention of us painters. It is right to admit that the first discoverer of such nonsense is Nietzsche, who is Polish [1], and that the man who applied it to poetry for the first time would be Rimbaud, who is French; in painting, the first one who applied it is I, the undersigned. [...] Cubism and Futurism, though they produce more or less talented images according to each painter’s capacities, they do not escape from sense. And even if they transform, shatter, and enlarge the visual aspect of beings and things, and then offer new sensation and inspire in their works a new lyricism, they do not succeed in making the things represented trans-human; as a result, they stay within the limits of common sense. — We metaphysicians have made reality sacred [2].

Painting the “nonsense of life” that Schopenhauer and Nietzsche talked about, was an innovative aspect of metaphysical painting. The word “nonsense” was already present in manuscripts, written in French, from when De Chirico was in Paris (1911-1915). Given below, is an extract from the “Paris manuscripts:”

One of the strangest and most profound sensations which prehistory left us is the sensation of presage. It will always exist. It is like eternal proof of the nonsense [non-sens] of the universe [3].

Similarly, in a work from his time in Paris, *The Fatal Temple*, De Chirico used the word “nonsense (*non-sens*),” with others like, “life” (*vie*), “strange thing” (*chose étrange*), “enigma” (*énigme*), “suffering” (*souffrance*), “joy” (*joie*), “eternity of a moment” (*éternité d’un moment*)

[sic] [fig.1, 2].

What does De Chirico's "nonsense" mean?

Maurizio Calvesi says:

The nonsense of which De Chirico speaks is nothing less than the total absence of sense; therefore, it is enigma, but enigma without the possibility of solution [...].

The metaphysical painting of De Chirico, so to speak, aims to organize his signs, so as to tear the signifiant apart from the signifié in signs, and to clarify the absence of signifié, or show that its whereabouts are unknown [4].

According to Calvesi, De Chirico's "nonsense" is literally the absence of sense, and what is called "sense" here is the *signifié* of the sign, that which is signified by the sign. In metaphysical painting, the sign means something, which does not exist, or if it does, it cannot be ascertained. Thus, the sign becomes an unsolvable enigma.

This does not mean, however, that we cannot identify the things painted. Each element in the metaphysical paintings can be exchanged for common names, for example, "mannequin," "train," or "statue." Therefore, in this plane, the meaning of each sign is clear. The absence of meaning occurs on the plane in which each sign's meaning would have normally come together.

Regarding this point, Wieland Schmied asked how De Chirico's nonsense was "applied to art," and proceeded to answer the question himself: "through inconsequentiality of space and time [5]." Though what each sign indicates is clear in metaphysical painting, the logical and consistent correlation between time and space is lost. The signs, cut off from the contexts of time and space, fall into a state that De Chirico called, "solitude of the signs" (*solitudine dei segni*) [6], and lose their meaning, which would have been regulated by proper context. The relationship between *signifiant* and *signifié* is neither fixed nor absolute here.

Paolo Baldacci attributes De Chirico's innovativeness to this recognition of the relativity of the sign.

He looked at the world of things, not as a universe of forms, but as meanings that reveal themselves. [...]

With this discovery, which we could be termed "the relativity of meaning." [...]

When he recognized that it was no longer possible to attribute a truth function to



[fig.1] Giorgio de Chirico, *The Fatal Temple*, 1914. Ref. Baldacci (1997), p.247 (no.70). *Le temple fatal*, 1914, Oil on Canvas, 33.3 x 41 cm., The Philadelphia Museum of Modern Art, Philadelphia.



[fig.2] Giorgio de Chirico, *The Fatal Temple*, 1914 (detail). Written at the lower left is "non-sens."

language in mimetic or symbolic terms, it was nothing less than a reduction of a meaning of linguistic and expressive forms to a system of relations devoid of any absolute value [7].

De Chirico paints the world, not as a mimesis of appearance, form, or symbols whose meanings are fixed, but as a system of signs without absolute meaning.

According to these discussions, the nonsense of De Chirico is the absence of absolute meaning, the relativity of the sign. This occurs because of the absence of the logical and consistent contexts of the signs. Of course, in metaphysical painting, I cannot say that the context among the signs is actually absent. These claims, however, have a certain amount of truth, because, as mentioned in the “solitude of the sign” above, the exclusion of subject and meaning is a major motif in De Chirico’s metaphysical painting theory.

In his Paris manuscripts, De Chirico says:

*The subject* was no longer in my imagination, my compositions did not have *sense*, and especially *common sense*, at all [8].

*That which is necessary* is the revelation that we get from a work of art, the conception of a tableau representing such a thing, which has no sense in itself, no subject from the point of view of human logic *nor means anything at all* [9].

How can this claim be connected with the “nonsense of life” discussed by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche?

As De Chirico says in “We Metaphysicians...,” his metaphysical painting theory is mainly based on Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). According to Gerd Roos, De Chirico read their works with his younger brother, Andrea (Alberto Savinio 1891-1952), after they moved to Florence from Munich. He also points out that they read Nietzsche in French translations, which is important to later discussions in this essay [10].

De Chirico often cites Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, and many critics have referred to their influence on De Chirico [11]. This influence, however, has not been discussed in reference to the “nonsense of life.”

In this essay, first, I examine what “nonsense of life” means, according to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Second, I examine how this “nonsense of life” can be linked to the absence of context among the signs, as mentioned above. The purpose of this essay is to corroborate De Chirico’s claim in his theory, about the exclusion of subjects and sense, through an examination of the “nonsense of life [12].”

## 2. The Nonsense of Life

According to Georg Simmel, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche shared the idea that life does not have an ultimate sense or purpose [13]. Thus, the realization of the “nonsense of life” is also common to both of them, although the specific content is different.

First, Schopenhauer’s idea of the “nonsense of life” comes from “Will” as a metaphysical

thing-in-itself. Following Kant's view, Schopenhauer separates the world into thing-in-itself and phenomenon, and he calls the former "Will" and the latter "representation." Man represents the world in his brain through the forms of the "principle of sufficient reason": time, space, and causation. Man only recognizes the world as "representation," and if that is taken away, what remains is "Will."

"Will" has no purpose or reason, which obey the "principle of sufficient reason" and are only applicable to phenomenon. Fundamental forces like gravity and electricity explain all phenomena, but we can never explain the cause of the fundamental forces themselves. Similarly, man always desires some object, but the reason for this desire cannot be explained. These workings of fundamental forces and desire, which have no possible explanation, are "Will."

The realization of the "nonsense of life" comes from this. According to Schopenhauer, when desire does not reach its goal, suffering befalls man. "Will" as thing-in-itself has no base, and the workings of desire have no limitation. Therefore, man always suffers from unfulfilled desire. Schopenhauer expresses this as the "nothingness" (*Nichtigkeit*) of life [14], and based on this, he preaches salvation through "denial of Will."

As long as man is prisoner to "Will," his life will be full of suffering. Therefore, to achieve true peace of mind, man must negate "Will." This is the denial of the very workings of desire. According to Schopenhauer, the realization of the "nothingness" of life is also the moment of "denial of Will." Some men who have achieved the "denial of Will," according to Schopenhauer, are the saints of Christianity and Buddhism.

Negation of Will, which is called perfect resignation or saintliness, always comes from overcoming Will and the recognition of conflict within Will itself, and the essential nothingness [*Nichtigkeit*] of Will, expressed through the suffering of all life [15].

"Negation of Will" ultimately leads man to nothingness, and the world seen from there becomes "nothing."

In this manner, Schopenhauer uses the word "nothingness" (*Nichtigkeit*), to refer to the "nonsense of life." Nietzsche, on the other hand, uses the word "nonsense" for this concept (I discuss this below). From this, we can surmise that De Chirico adopted the word "nonsense" from Nietzsche.

Nietzsche's French translations of the time corroborate this. De Chirico wrote "We Metaphysicians..." just before he declared his "Return to the Craft" and changed his artistic orientation. However, the main theoretical motif of his metaphysical painting theory had already appeared in the Paris manuscripts, in which the citations of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were from the French translations of their works. We can surmise from this observation, that when De Chirico formed his metaphysical painting theory, he mainly referred to the French translations. Additionally, the first appearance of "nonsense" is found in the Paris manuscripts. Therefore, the source of the word "nonsense" must be the French translations.

Two French translations of Schopenhauer's representative work, *The World as Will and Representation*, were published in 1886 and between 1888 and 1890, but the translation by Auguste Burdeau was more prevalent [16]. Another representative work, *Parerga and*

*Paralipomena*, was translated mainly by Auguste Dietrich [17], and one of its essays, *Essay Concerning the Apparitions and Diverse Essays*, was owned by De Chirico [18]. The works of Nietzsche were popularized after 1889, when he fell into madness in Torino. The editing of his complete works began in 1893, and after many twists and turns, it was completed in 1912 [19]. The French translation, by Henri Albert, was available by the 1910s [20].

In these French translations, Schopenhauer's "nothingness" (*Nichtigkeit*) is translated as "vanité [21]" or "néant," and Nietzsche's "nonsense" (*Unsinn, Sinnlos*), is translated as "absurde" or "non-sens." In other words, we can find the word "non-sens" in the translations of Nietzsche, but not in those of Schopenhauer.

Additionally, in contrast to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's "nonsense of life" means the absence of the metaphysical thing-in-itself. The three citations below are translated from French. The original French texts are provided in the notes. Unless specified otherwise, "nonsense" is the translation of "non-sens" and "sense" is the translation of "sens".

For example, a passage from *Human, All Too Human*:

*HISTORIA IN NUCE*. — the most serious parody, which I have ever heard is this: In the beginning was the nonsense, and the nonsense *was*, by God! and God (divine) was the nonsense [22].

This is a parody of "In the beginning was the word" from the Gospel of St. John, and was articulated by Nietzsche's friend, Karl Fuchs. Instead of the word (*logos*), nonsense is the root of the world. The meaning of this, however, differs from that of Schopenhauer's, where "Will" as a thing-in-itself is without base. Nietzsche had already denied metaphysics in the first volume of *Human, All Too Human*. Therefore, "In the beginning was the nonsense" means that a metaphysical thing-in-itself does not exist by nature, and if it did, it would be mere nonsense. For Nietzsche, the one true sense could never exist, and within this context, a bare state of the world is a being without sense.

Additionally, a passage from *On the Genealogy of Morality*:

The nonsense of suffering, and *not* suffering itself, is the curse, which has been put on humanity until now, — *however, the ascetic ideal gave him a sense!* [...] man had a *sense*, from then he was no longer a leaf falling in the wind, a sacrifice of the absurd hazard, of "nonsense" [...] [23].

The naked world is nonsense, but man cannot bear it. Thus, the ascetic ideal as morality, gives sense to the nonsense. This is to say that "the true (God's) world (thing-in-itself)" is built behind the world by religion and metaphysics. Hence, the world is grounded in an imaginary "true world."

Finally, a passage from Nietzsche's posthumous manuscripts, *The Will to Power*:

Nihilism appears now, not because the displeasure of existence is greater than it was in the past, but because, man became distrustful of the "signification" which could have been

present in evil, or even in existence. One interpretation has been spoiled; but because man considered there to be only one interpretation, it would seem that existence has no signification and that all things were in vain. [...]

Imagine this idea in the most terrible form: such an existence without signification and purpose, but returns inevitably without stop, without conclusion in the nothing: “the Eternal Return.”

That is the extreme form of nihilism: the eternal nothing (“nonsense”)! [24]

Religions and metaphysics built the “true world,” but as they aim for the “true thing,” ultimately they will reveal themselves as untrue. Thus, the death of God is announced, and nihilism appears. Just one interpretation of the world is ruined, but because man mistook the world as having only one interpretation, he thinks that all things have been ruined. Here, Nietzsche does not choose to hide nihilism with another “meaning.” Rather, he introduces the recognition of the “eternal return” as an extreme form of nihilism. By affirming this “eternal nothing (nonsense),” he sought to guide man to the superman [25].

### 3. Nonsense in Painting

How did De Chirico apply this “nonsense of life” to painting? Is it possible to trace theoretically, the absence of the context among the signs in metaphysical painting?

First, Schopenhauer’s “nothingness” (*Nichtigkeit*) is connected to De Chirico’s metaphysical painting theory through Schopenhauer’s art theory. Schopenhauer’s “nothingness” of life is an opportunity for man to negate “Will,” and art can cause a temporary liberation from “Will.”

Art in Schopenhauer’s philosophy is the recognition of the “Idea.” When the world is recognized by man as a “representation,” “Will” becomes a source of objectivity in the face of man’s subjectivity. The purest, most direct form of the objectivity of “Will” is the “Idea.” Moreover, “Idea” is essentially thing-in-itself, although it is in the form of representation [26].

This recognition of the “Idea” becomes possible by recognizing things individually, independent of the “principle of sufficient reason,” which refers to the relationship among things upon recognition of their representations. This is the first theoretical base for the absence of the context among the signs.

According to Schopenhauer, man usually recognizes the world in correlation to time, space, and causation, and he recognizes objects as individual things within this web of correlation. This web is the embodiment of the “principle of sufficient reason [27].” Schopenhauer says, however, that to recognize the world through the “principle of sufficient reason” only means to recognize the world in relation to “Will” (one’s own desire). That is to say, a man imprisoned by “Will” cannot depart from the recognition based on the “principle of sufficient reason.”

On the other hand, some geniuses have exceptionally well-developed abilities of recognition. Through this, they can liberate their recognition from servitude to “Will” and can recognize the world independently. Thus, the genius becomes able to recognize things purely, and by absorbing these things, his entire consciousness matches the representation of the object. Thereby, the subject coincides with the object, and the recognition of the “Idea” occurs.

De Chirico adopts this method of liberation from the “principle of sufficient reason.” In the Paris manuscripts, he cites a passage from Schopenhauer’s *Parerga and Paralipomena*:

To get original, extraordinary, and maybe immortal conception, separate from the world and things momentarily, and through it, most ordinary things and phenomena appear as new and unknown, and reveal their essences [28].

To be separated perfectly from the world and all things, means to grasp the world liberated from the “principle of sufficient reason.”

The same method is found in one of De Chirico’s texts, “Concerning Metaphysical Art.” In it, De Chirico cites Schopenhauer’s remark on madness: madness is to lose memory. De Chirico gives an example: In a room, there is a man sitting on a chair, a canary in a birdcage hung from the ceiling, a painting on the wall, and books in a bookshelf. This ordinary scene does not leave any impression or feeling of surprise, but

[...] in a moment, by inexplicable, unintentional reason, this thread of memory is cut, who knows *how* I might see the sitting man, the birdcage, the painting, and the bookshelf. [...]

The scene, however, does not change, because it is I, who sees this scene from another angle. That is a very metaphysical aspect [29].

Usually, in human recognition, the logical relations among things are stored in memory. When, however, these threads of memory are cut, though its visual aspect does not change, the world reveals a very different, unknown aspect, a “metaphysical” aspect. Though the above remark was on madness, according to Schopenhauer, there is a similarity between genius and madness at the point of deviation from the “principle of sufficient reason [30].” The cutting of the threads of memory implies the disappearance of the “principle of sufficient reason.” This disappearance leads to “metaphysical solitude,” or “the solitude of the signs.”

All profound works of art contain two solitudes: one can be called plastic solitude, that contemplative beatitude, which shows us the construction and combination of genius (dead-alive or alive-dead materials or elements; the second life of *still life* [*nature morte*], here, still life does not refer to the subject of a painting, but a spectral aspect, which can be an aspect of a figure that is supposed to be living). The second solitude is that of signs, eminently metaphysic solitude, and for this reason, all logical possibility of visual or psychological education is excluded a priori [31].

In metaphysical painting, however, what appears through the disappearance of the “principle of sufficient reason” is not the “Idea” of the metaphysical thing-in-itself. This is because, De Chirico applies the word “nonsense” from Nietzsche, which implies the absence of such a thing-in-itself. According to Schmied, what De Chirico paints is “the world as appearance” without the metaphysical “true world [32]”; art creating appearance is the fundamental form of life.

We can understand, in this context, “the method of Nietzsche” to which De Chirico refers in the Paris manuscripts.

[...] exclude completely, the human as an index point, as a way to express a symbol, a sensation, or a thought: liberate yourself once and for all from what still binds sculpture: anthropomorphism. To see all, even the man, as *thing*. This is the method of Nietzsche. Applied to painting, it could produce extraordinary results [33].

“The method of Nietzsche” implies the exclusion of the human. According to Nietzsche, man, unable to bear the “nonsense” of life, created a “true world” behind the world, to give sense to nonsense. The metaphysical “true world” is not a transcendental one that exists by itself, but an interpretation. From the beginning, a will to the “true world,” or a will to the “truth” is an artificial construction by man, who cannot bear “nonsense.” “The method of Nietzsche,” therefore, is to nullify the metaphysical “true world” by disclosing its origin, which is “human, all too human.”

De Chirico has already described here, the same content that he will later write in “We Metaphysicians....” To apply Nietzsche’s “nonsense” means to apply “the method of Nietzsche” that excludes man from the painting. Therefore, it can be said that being “trans-human” is the criterion that separates metaphysical painting from cubism and futurism [34]. Furthermore, De Chirico says that the discoverer of “the elimination of sense in art” is Nietzsche, because in Schopenhauer’s metaphysical thing-in-itself, human “sense” remains; there, art is the “Idea” of the thing-in-itself.

Nietzsche’s “nonsense” also leads to the destruction of logical and causal context among things, similar to Schopenhauer’s method of separation from the “principle of sufficient reason,” because the metaphysical “true world” is considered the ultimate convergence point of all logical and causal relationships. Schopenhauer says:

The foundation of all our perceptions and science is inexplicable. Accordingly, all explanations arrive at this inexplicable thing, through a more or less intermediary zone. [...] This inexplicable thing belongs to metaphysics [35].

For Christianity, it is God. For Kant, it is the unknown X. For Schopenhauer, it is “Will.” For Nietzsche, it is “nonsense”; namely, “In the beginning was nonsense.” Alternatively, there was nothing. As Nietzsche denies the existence of the metaphysical world, the point of convergence of all causality is lost. Consequently, the order of relationships among things that would have been maintained by such a convergence, is also lost. This is another theoretical base for the absence of the context among the signs in metaphysical painting.

Thus, the world of De Chirico becomes a system of relativity without an absolute base (thing-in-itself). For both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, despite conflicting specifics (existence versus absence of thing-in-itself), the common concept of “nonsense of life” forms the theoretical base for the absence of contexts. Additionally, to consider the world as an image without the context among the signs is, as De Chirico claims in “We Metaphysicians....,” to make reality “sacred.”



As mentioned previously, for Schopenhauer, the saints of Christianity and Buddhism are examples of men who have achieved “negation of Will.” The saints see the sacred world, the world liberated from “Will” and the “principle of sufficient reason.” On the other hand, Nietzsche discards the metaphysical “true world.” Until this discarding, the world, which men recognize, can only be scorned as a mere representation of the “true world.” However, when the absence of the “true world” (God’s world) is revealed, “the world of representation” itself becomes sacred.

*The Fatal Temple* [fig.1] illustrates in practice, the metaphysical painting theory we have discussed thus far. On the lower right panel of this canvas are the words: “life,” “nonsense,” “strange things,” “enigma,” “suffering,” “joy,” and “eternity of a moment.” These words can be arranged thus: the world, which loses its relationships among things, by recognition of the “nonsense” of “life,” becomes an “enigma” filled with “strange things.” For Schopenhauer, who turns to negation of life, “nonsense” leads to “suffering.” On the other hand, for Nietzsche, who turns to affirmation of life, “nonsense” leads to “joy.”

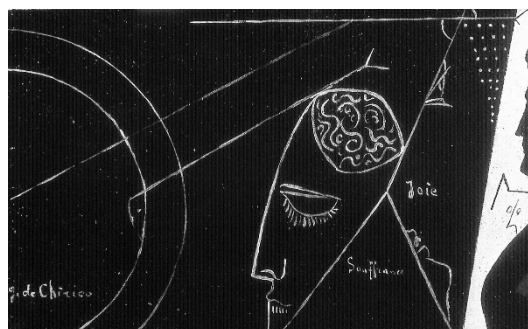
Additionally, Schopenhauer says that if the “Idea” is recognized, the world becomes the “eternal now” (*nunc stans*) [36]. Liberated from the “principle of sufficient reason,” time no longer has meaning for recognition. The past and the future disappear, and only the present remains, like the “everlasting noon [37].” On the other hand, Nietzsche understood “eternal return” as taking “nonsense” to its extreme form. In time, which returns eternally, the past and the future are equal, and converge in the present. The recognition of “nonsense” converges time in the “eternity of the moment.”

This is illustrated by the figure in the center of the canvas [fig.3]. A straight line is drawn to a circle from the brain of a man who has his eyes closed. The brain represents Schopenhauer’s view of the world, in which the world the man recognizes is merely a representation in his brain. The circle connected to the brain represents Nietzsche’s moment of “eternal return.” Schopenhauer also likens time to an ever-cycling wheel, and the point of contact of the top of the wheel and the line, represents the present [38].

In this “nonsense” world of ever-cycling time, the future is, at once, the past, which has already occurred. Therefore, according to the Paris manuscripts, “the sensation of presage” is “eternal proof of the nonsense of the universe.”

Therefore, according to Nietzsche, the world of nonsense, without any “sense,” which is considered the only truth, is open to infinite interpretations at the same time.

Our new eternity — how far does the perspective character of existence extend, or does existence have some other character, or could existence without interpretations and “sense [Sinn]” become “nonsense [Unsinn],” or could all existence by its very nature be *interpretational*? [...] rather the world has become “infinite” for us once again. Being that way, we cannot deny that the world *is composed of infinite interpretations* [39].



[fig.3] Giorgio de Chirico, *The Fatal Temple*, 1914 (detail).

We cannot state with certainty that the world is “nonsense,” or that it is interpretable by an unlimited number of perspectives. Such a statement is, in itself, already a perspective. Although the world gains sense each time it is interpreted, since it is only an interpretation, the world is ultimately nonsense. Nonsense and infiniteness are the same, like nonsense and “eternal return.” As De Chirico says in the Paris manuscripts, in “prehistory,” which is prior to any constructed sense, the “true world,” is full of “presage,” or possibility for interpretation.

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In “We Metaphysicians...,” De Chirico claims that the innovativeness of his metaphysical paintings lies in the application of the “nonsense”-s of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, to painting.

Schopenhauer and Nietzsche share a starting point in the recognition of the “nonsense of life,” in that life has no ultimate purpose or sense. Schopenhauer calls this “nothingness,” and Nietzsche “nonsense” of life. The first implies that “Will” is a metaphysical thing-in-itself without a base. The second implies the absence of a metaphysical thing-in-itself. Thus, although they have conflicting characteristics, they are linked by the absence of context among the signs.

Schopenhauer’s recognition of “nothingness” is an opportunity for humans to reject “Will.” The rejection of “Will” liberates men from the “principle of sufficient reason,” which refers to the different contexts that connect things within man’s recognition. Meanwhile, Nietzsche’s “nonsense” implies the absence of any metaphysical “true world,” which is defined by the ultimate converging point of all causality and logic. When this converging point is lost, the order of things that it was to maintain, is also destroyed.

De Chirico’s standpoint, however, is fundamentally the same as Nietzsche’s, because the source of his “nonsense” is Nietzsche’s works, and because, in “We Metaphysicians...,” he says that the discoverer of “the elimination of sense in art” is Nietzsche. De Chirico draws on Nietzsche’s “nonsense,” which indicates the absence of a metaphysical “true world.” He then applies Schopenhauer’s theory to explain his images, brought about by the recognition of this “nonsense.” Since liberation from the “principle of sufficient reason” is considered a creative method, it is not necessarily premised on the existence of a metaphysical thing-in-itself. Therefore, it does not contradict Nietzsche’s theory of the absence of the metaphysical “true world.”

Additionally, this does not reject the reading of De Chirico’s images. As *The Fatal Temple* was read in this essay, it is possible to read metaphysical paintings to some extent. According to Nietzsche, nonsense and infiniteness are one. Therefore, the metaphysical painting that portrays the nonsense of the world awakens the viewer’s presage of different interpretations. Thus, metaphysical painting lies between sense and nonsense, anxiety and expectation.

#### **Abbreviations:**

Baldacci (1997): Paolo Baldacci, Susan Wise (tr.), *Giorgio de Chirico: La métaphysique 1888-1919*, Flammarion, 1997.

Clair (1983): William Rubin, Wieland Schmied, Jean Clair (eds.), *Giorgio de Chirico (ex.cat.)*, Centre

- Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1983.
- De Chirico (1985): Giorgio de Chirico, Maurizio Fagiolo (ed.), *Il meccanismo del pensiero. Critica, polemica, autobiografia 1911-1943*, Giulio Einaudi, Torino, 1985.
- Nietzsche (KGW): Friedrich Nietzsche, Giorgio Colli, Mazzino Montinari (eds.), *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1967-.
- Schopenhauer (PP): Arthur Schopenhauer, *Parerga und Paralipomena: Kleine philosophische Schriften*, 1851.
- Schopenhauer (SW): Arthur Schopenhauer, Paul Deussen (ed.), *Sämtliche Werke*, R. Piper, 1911-.
- Schopenhauer (WWV): Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*, 1844 [2nd edition, 1st edition: 1819].

### Notes:

- [1] Nietzsche claims that he is a descendant of Polish aristocrats. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce homo*, 1908, ch.1, §.3, in: *Nietzsches Werke*, vol.XV, Leipzig, Alfred Kröner, 1911, p.13. This section published in the first edition is replaced with other text in later editions. Nietzsche (KGW), vol.VI-3, p.266.
- [2] Giorgio de Chirico, "Noi metafisici...", in: *Cronache d'attualità*, febbraio 1919, reprinted in: De Chirico (1985), pp.68-69.
- [3] De Chirico (1985), p.22.
- [4] Maurizio Calvesi, *La metafisica schiarita: Da de Chirico a Carrà, da Morandi a Savinio*, Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, Milano, 1982, p.244.
- [5] Wieland Schmied, Eryck de Rubercy (tr.), "L'art métaphysique de Giorgio de Chirico et la philosophie allemande: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Otto Weininger," in: Clair (1983), p.98.
- [6] Giorgio de Chirico, "Sull'arte metafisica," in: *Valori plastici*, vol.1, nos.4-5, aprile-maggio 1919, reprinted in: De Chirico (1985), p.86. Though the essay below is titled "Giorgio de Chirico and the Solitude of the Sign," it is more concerned with De Chirico's symbolic system than the concept of the solitude of the sign. Willard Bohn, "Giorgio de Chirico and the Solitude of the Sign," in: *The Rise of Surrealism: Cubism, Dada, and the Pursuit of the Marvelous*, State University of New York Press, 2002, pp.73-119.
- [7] Baldacci (1997), pp.73-74.
- [8] De Chirico (1985), p.17.
- [9] De Chirico (1985), p.19.
- [10] Gerd Roos, *Giorgio de Chirico e Alberto Savinio: Ricordi e documenti Monaco Milano Firenze 1906-1911*, Bora, 1999, pp.283-299; Baldacci (1997), pp.39-40, 67, 84 (n.26), 92-93, 108 (n.36, 38).
- [11] For example, Wieland Schmied, Eryck de Rubercy (tr.), "L'art métaphysique de Giorgio de Chirico et la philosophie allemande: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Otto Weininger," in: Clair (1983), pp.93-109; Ivor Davies, "Giorgio de Chirico: The Sources of Metaphysical Painting in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche," in: *Art International*, vol.26, no.1, January-March 1983, pp.53-60; Barbara Heins, "Giorgio de Chirico's Metaphysical Art and Schopenhauer's Metaphysics: An Exploration of the Philosophical Concept in de Chirico's Prose and Paintings," Thesis, Ph.D., University of Kent, Canterbury, 1992; Baldacci (1997), pp.67-76, 92-97; Riccardo Dottori, "Quid est rerum metaphysica?" in: Claudio Clescentini (ed.), *G. de Chirico: Nulla sine tragoedia gloria*, Roma, 2002, pp.165-199; Anneliese Plaga, *Sprachbilder als Kunst: Friedrich Nietzsche in den Bildwelten von Edvard Munch und Giorgio de Chirico*, Reimer, 2008; Ara H. Merjian, *Giorgio de Chirico and the Metaphysical City: Nietzsche, Modernism, Paris*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 2014.
- [12] The subject of this essay is the "nonsense," which De Chirico spoke of, and his thoughts on it. This essay does not claim that sense and context among the signs are actually absent in metaphysical

- painting. It is also to be noted that Lewis Carroll's nonsense is not related to the subject of this essay; for more information, see Elizabeth Sewell, *The Field of Nonsense*, Chatto and Windus, London, 1952. Additionally, a detailed semiological explanation of nonsense is beyond the scope of this essay. Similarly, a detailed iconological analysis of *The Fatal Temple* and interpretations of the thoughts of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche are also beyond the scope of this essay.
- [13] Georg Simmel, *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche, ein Vortragszyklus*, Leipzig, Dunker & Humblot, 1907, pp.1-18.
- [14] For example, Schopenhauer (WWV), *Ergänzung*, ch.46: "Von der Nichtigkeit und dem Leiden des Lebens," in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.2, pp.654-673; Schopenhauer (PP), ch.11: "Nachträge zur Lehre von der Nichtigkeit des Daseyns," in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.5, pp.308-316.
- [15] Schopenhauer (WWV), §.68, in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.1, p.470.
- [16] Arthur Schopenhauer, J.A. Cantacuzène (tr.), *Le monde comme volonté et comme représentation*, 2.vol., Leipzig, Brockhaus, 1886; Auguste Burdeau (tr.), 3.vol., Paris, Félix Alcan, 1888-1890.
- [17] Published in separated, re-edited form: Arthur Schopenhauer, Auguste Dietrich (tr.), *Écrivains et style* (1905); *Sur la religion* (1906); *Philosophie et philosophes* (1907); *Éthique, droit et politique* (1909); *Métaphysique et esthétique* (1909); *Philosophie et science de la nature* (1911); *Fragments sur l'histoire de la philosophie* (1912); *Essai sur les apparitions et opuscules divers* (1912), Paris, Félix Alcan. The next book is also a part of *Parerga and Paralipomena*. Arthur Schopenhauer, J.A. Cantacuzène (tr.), *Aphorismes sur la sagesse dans la vie*, Paris, G.Baillière, 1880.
- [18] Baldacci (1997), pp.92-93.
- [19] See フリードリッヒ・ニーチェ著、渡辺二郎訳『哲学者の書（ニーチェ全集三）』ちくま学芸文庫、1994年、pp.618-629 (Friedrich Nietzsche, Watanabe Jirou (tr.), *The Book of Philosopher: Complete Works of Nietzsche III*, Tikuma-Gakugei-Bunko, 1994, pp.618-629).
- [20] Jacques Le Rider, "Nietzsche et la France: Présences de Nietzsche en France," in: Friedrich Nietzsche, Henri Albert et al. (tr.), Jean Lacoste, Jacques le Rider (eds.), *Friedrich Nietzsche: Œuvres*, Robert Laffont, 1993, pp.xxxix-xl.
- [21] For example, a French translation of the note 15 is: "la négation du vouloir-vivre, qui n'est pas autre chose que la résignation ou la sainteté absolue, résulte toujours de ce qui calme le vouloir, à savoir la notion du conflit de la volonté avec elle-même et de sa vanité radicale, – vanité qui s'exprime dans les souffrances de tous les hommes." Arthur Schopenhauer, Auguste Burdeau (tr.), *Le monde comme volonté et comme représentation*, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1912 (6th edition), t.1, p.415.
- [22] "HISTORIA IN NUCE. – La parodie la plus sérieuse que j'aie jamais entendue est celle-ci: Au commencement était le non-sens, et le non-sens était, par Dieu! et Dieu (divin) était le non-sens." Frédéric Nietzsche, Henri Albert (tr.), *Le voyageur et son ombre; Opinions et sentences mêlées (Humain, trop humain, deuxième partie)*, Mercure de France, 1902, p.29; *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, 1878-1879, vol.2, pt.1, no.22, in: Nietzsche (KGW), vol.IV-3, p.24.
- [23] "Le non-sens de la douleur, et non la douleur elle-même est la malédiction qui a jusqu'à présent pesé sur l'humanité, – or, l'idéal ascétique lui donnait un sens! [...] l'homme avait un sens, il n'était plus désormais la feuille chassée par le vent, le jouet du hasard inintelligent, du « non-sens » [...]" Frédéric Nietzsche, Henri Albert (tr.), *La généalogie de la morale*, Mercure de France, 1900, pp.283-284; *Zur Genealogie der Moral*, 1887, pt.3, § .28, in: Nietzsche (KGW), vol.VI-2, pp.429-430.
- [24] "Le nihilisme apparaît maintenant, non point parce que le déplaisir de l'existence est devenu plus grand qu'autrefois, mais parce que, d'une façon générale, on est devenu méfiant à l'égard de la « signification » qu'il peut y avoir dans le mal, ou même dans l'existence. Une seule interprétation a été ruinée: mais comme elle passait pour la seule interprétation, il pourrait sembler que l'existence n'eût aucune signification et que tout fût en vain. [...]"
- Imaginons cette idée sous la forme la plus terrible: l'existence telle qu'elle est, sans

signification et sans but, mais revenant sans cesse d'une façon inévitable, sans un dénouement dans le néant: « l'Éternel Retour ».

C'est là la forme extrême du nihilisme: le néant (le « non-sens ») éternel!" Frédéric Nietzsche, Henri Albert (tr.), *La volonté de puissance: Essai d'une transmutation de toutes les valeurs (études et fragments)*, Mercure de France, 1903, t.1, pp.46-47; *Der Wille zur Macht*, 1901, no.10. This French translation is based on the 1901 edition. In the second edition of 1906, this aphorism is no.55. In Nietzsche (KGW), the aphorisms of *The Will to Power* are arranged in chronological order with other posthumous manuscripts. Nietzsche (KGW), vol.VIII-1, pp.216-217 [5 (71)].

- [25] For other references to nonsense, see Friedrich Nietzsche, *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*, 1878-1879, vol.1, no.213, in: Nietzsche (KGW), IV-2, p.176; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*, 1883-1885, "Zarathustra's Vorrede," §.7, in: Nietzsche (KGW), VI-1, p.17. 千足伸行「謎と静寂、または「大いなる正午」 — デ・キリコとベックリン、ニーチェ — 」『デ・キリコ展』アート・ライフ、一九八九年、pp.28-36 (Senzoku Nobuyuki, "The Enigma and the Silence, or the 'Great Noon,' — De Chirico, Böcklin and Nietzsche," in: *The Exhibition of De Chirico* (ex.cat.), Art Life, 1989, pp.28-36) . However, the word "non-sens" was not used in that French translation.
- [26] Schopenhauer (WWV), §.32, in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.1, p.206. Otherwise put, "Idea" is not exactly a thing-in-itself.
- [27] On the "principle of sufficient reason," see Arthur Schopenhauer, *Ueber die vierfache Wurzel des Satz vom zureichenden Grunde*, 1847 (2nd edition, 1st edition: 1813), in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.3, pp.1-268.
- [28] Arthur Schopenhauer, Auguste Dietrich (tr.), *Métaphysique et esthétique*, Paris, Félix Alcan, 1909, pp.112-113; Schopenhauer (PP), vol.2, ch.3, §.55, in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.5, p.85.
- [29] Giorgio de Chirico, "Sull'arte metafisica," in: *Valori plastici*, vol.1, nos.4-5, aprile-maggio 1919, reprinted in: De Chirico (1985), p.85.
- [30] Schopenhauer (WWV), §.36, in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.1, pp.217-229; Schopenhauer (WWV), *Ergänzung*, ch.32, in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.2, pp.454-458.
- [31] Giorgio de Chirico, "Sull'arte metafisica," in: *Valori plastici*, vol.1, nos.4-5, aprile-maggio 1919, reprinted in: De Chirico (1985), p.86.
- [32] Wieland Schmied, Eryck de Rubercy (tr.), "L'art métaphysique de Giorgio de Chirico et la philosophie allemande: Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Otto Weininger," in: Clair (1983), p.109.
- [33] Giorgio de Chirico, "Méditation d'un peintre," in: De Chirico (1985), p.31.
- [34] The differences among cubism, futurism, and metaphysical painting are beyond the scope of this essay. According to Rosalind Krauss, the recognition of the relativity of signs already occurred in cubism. See Rosalind E. Krauss, *The Picasso Papers*, Farrar, Strans and Giroux, New York, 1998. In cubism, however, congeries of relative signs have meaning as a whole, a man, a guitar etc... On the other hand, in metaphysical painting, it is clear what each sign means, but the convergence point that unites these signs as a whole, is lost. According to De Chirico, the first person who applied "the nonsense of life" to poetry is Rimbaud, but this is also beyond the scope of this essay. For example, see 湯浅博雄『ランボー論 「新しい韻文詩」から「地獄の一季節」へ』思潮社、1999年 (Yuasa Hiro-o, *Rimbaud: From "New Verse" to "A Season in Hell,"* Shityou-sya, 1999) . Yuasa interprets Rimbaud from Nietzsche's point of view.
- [35] Schopenhauer (PP), vol.2, ch.1, §.1, in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.5, p.7; Auguste Dietrich (tr.), *Philosophie et science de la nature*, Félix Alcan, 1911, p.130.
- [36] Schopenhauer (WWV), §.32, in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.1, p.207.
- [37] Schopenhauer (WWV), §.54, in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.1, p.330.
- [38] Schopenhauer (WWV), §.54, in: Schopenhauer (SW), vol.1, p.329.
- [39] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 1882-1887, no.374, in: Nietzsche (KGW), vol.V-2, pp.308-309. In the French translation of the time, "Sinn" was translated to "raison," "Unsinn"

to “déraison,” and in the Italian translation, to “senso” and “nonsenso.” Frederico Nietzsche, Antonio Cippico (tr.) *La gaia scienza*, Fratelli Bocca, 1905, p.246.

\* The original version of this essay can be found below:

長尾天「デ・キリコの無意味」『イヴ・タンギー アーチの増殖』水声社, 2014, pp.83-99  
(NAGAO Takashi, “De Chirico’s Nonsense,” in: *Yves Tanguy: Multiplication of the Arcs*, Suisei-sya, 2014, pp.83-99) .