

Exceeding Continental and Analytic Philosophy: The Post-Continental Thought of W.J.T. Mitchell

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ABSTRACT

The division between Continental and Analytic Philosophy in contemporary philosophy is more difficult to maintain than in modern philosophy. Some philosophers use both Continental and Analytic Philosophy together. They defy the presupposition that Continental thought is subjectivist, collectivist, and historicist, while Analytic thought is objectivist, individualist, and scientific. John Mullarkey calls this circumstance "The Post-Continental Philosophy". This research aims to examine 'what is the post-continental thought of W.J.T. Mitchell?' and 'how does Mitchell exceed the boundaries of Continental and Analytic Philosophy?'. The method of this research is hermeneutic which involves some elements such as interpretative analyses, historical continuity, heuristics, and descriptive. In conclusion, Mitchell's post-continental thought bridges the Continental and Analytic philosophy, especially through the concepts of Picture Theory and Image Science. In Picture Theory, he uses the Continental philosophy approach that emphasizes the interpretation of the image. Meanwhile, in Image Science, he employs the Analytic philosophy approach that gives attention to the abstract, rational, and mathematical analysis.

1. Introduction

In contemporary philosophy, the division between Continental Philosophy and Analytic Philosophy is difficult to maintain. Some philosophers, such as Gilles Deleuze and Alan Badiou, use both continental and analytic philosophy together. They challenge the presupposition that Continental thought is subjectivist, collectivist, and historicist, while Analytic thought is objectivist, individualist, and scientific. According to Mullarkey (2006), The 'Post-Continental' thought involves both the transcendence and immanence theme in their philosophy. As Mullarkey (2006) says, the original term of Post-Continental Philosophy is coined by Kevin Mulligan, an Analytic Philosopher. Mulligan defines it as the end of Continental Philosophy or the inclination of anti-scientism tendency. According to Mullarkey (2006), Mulligan predicts that European Philosophy, particularly French philosophy will experience a passing phase and it will give more chance to the analytic philosophy. The appreciation of the traditional philosophical virtues such as clarity, consistency, argument, and respect for truth and science become more popular than the obscurity, mysticism, and anti-scientism of French philosophy.

In this research, the author tends to define 'the Post-Continental Philosophy' as a thought that gives assessment both to the Continental and Analytic Philosophy, as John Mullarkey suggests. The 'Post Continental Philosophy' assesses the current transitional state from Continental thought to the respect of theoretical science in Analytic philosophy. Mullarkey (2006) exemplifies Deleuze as a post-continental thinker who is animated by the ideas of the history of philosophy and the natural sciences, especially biology. For Deleuze, life does not grow from the organic to the inorganic but runs between them. There is an impersonal force which is a drive of contraction/ dilation that give characteristic to events and non-living events. Grosz (2007) sees Deleuze draws his own view of life from Bergson. Deleuze considers life as a complex fold of the chemical and the physical that reveals something new--an emergence. Another example is Alan Badiou who also emphasizes science as the special

condition of philosophy (alongside three others--love, politics, and art). For Badiou, only mathematics is ontological. Only mathematics mediates our ontological understanding of reality. According to Mullarkey (2006), Deleuze's ideas tend to be vitalist, while Badiou's is more geometric.

This research aims to examine 'what is the post-continental thought of W.J.T. Mitchell?' and 'how does Mitchell exceed the boundaries of Continental and Analytic Philosophy?'. W.J.T. Mitchell is a theorist of media, visual art, and literature. He is well-known for his works on the visual and verbal representation, such as in *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (1986), *Picture Theory* (1994), *What Do Pictures Want? Essays on the Lives and Loves of Images* (2005), and *Image Science* (2015).

I involve several questions to answer the fundamental problem of this research, such as: What is the post-continental philosophy? What is the Picture Theory and Image Science according to W.J.T. Mitchell? How does Mitchell exceed the continental and analytic philosophy?

This research consists of five main parts, as follows: Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion, and Conclusion.

2. Literature Review

Leiter & Rosen (2007) in "The Oxford Handbook of Continental Philosophy" find the definition of continental philosophy that only based on the different characteristics of Continental and Analytic Philosophy is not sufficient. For example, Analytic Philosophy is sometimes characterized as careful, rigorous, and clear, while Continental Philosophy is not. Nevertheless, the clarity and style of writing are different among authors. Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, for instance, write on prose, while Habermas not.

Kevin Mulligan (1994), an analytic thinker, in his essay "Post-Continental Philosophy Nosological Notes", offers the Post-Continental Philosophy to overcome the deficiency of the Continental Philosophy. Mulligan mentions the bankruptcy of Continental Philosophy. "The Continental Philosophy is on its last legs". (Mulligan, 1993, p. 3). According to Mulligan (1993), Continental Philosophy contains only a few examples and fewer arguments. Its positions are under-described, under-argued, and under-determined. The meaning of key terms in Continental Philosophy remains vague. Continental Philosophy seems to lose its power. Several philosophers in the English-speaking world experienced a turn from Continental Philosophy to new levels of naturalism in the late 1960s and 1970s. There was only little place for Continental subject matter, such as subjectivity, empirical, Cartesian, transcendental, and meanings.

Another thinker who offers Post-Continental Philosophy is John Mullarkey (2006) through his book "Post-Continental Philosophy, An Outline". Differ from Mulligan that tends to leave Continental Philosophy at all, Mullarkey's Post-Continental philosophy is marked by the new direction in Continental Philosophy. This new direction deals with naturalism, a non-reductive approach to the science of life and embodiment. The post-Continental philosophy makes philosophy more 'down to earth'. Post-continental philosophers want to take part to solve the problems in the world. For instance, the interest of Deleuze and Badiou in the sciences and radical politics. Philosophy then "back down to the earth from the inconsequential heavens of transcendence". Dealing with immanence means 'becoming relevant', even if the relevance is in an abstraction of mathematics or epistemology.

For Mullarkey (2006), the common feature of Post-Continental thinking is the rejection of transcendence, such as Intentionality, Being, and Language. It does not mean Post-Continental fall into another pendulum (immanence), but they radicalize the understanding of immanence and transcendence in order to rethink of naturalism and science in philosophical terms. The Post-Continental thinkers do not indulge in the kind of reductive scientism that was criticized by Heidegger. Post-Continental position rather an ecstatic naturalism, that restores value to the levels of existence that are irreducible to classical physics. Some of them are Badiou's sur-rational mathematics, Deleuze's profligate biologism, and François Laruelle's scientific democracy.

According to Rayman (2013), although John Mullarkey does not provide a general account of post-continental philosophy, he can give a possible picture of post-continental philosophy in four figures, i.e. Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995), Michel Henry (1922-2002), Alan Badiou (1937) and François Laruelle (1937). Mullarkey examines Deleuze and Henry on the topics of immanence and the virtual-actual distinction, while Badiou and Laruelle on answering the question of what form philosophy should take. Mullarkey introduces the diagram as a mode of expressing the inexpressible and non-transcendence immanence philosophy. It was inspired by Deleuze, whose theory of abstraction provides the key to the possibility of immanence discourse in the theory of the diagram or philosophical drawing. For Mullarkey (2006), Badiou was also inspiring for his diagrammatic interventions.

Badiou's thought provides resources of hermeneutics that is not representational but physical. It involves diagrammatic lines, planes, circles, and triangles where 'interpretation' becomes physical interaction and axial projection.

If Mulligan and Mullarkey consider the post-continental philosophy as the way out of the debate between continental and analytic philosophy, Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2006) in his essay "Post-continental Philosophy: Its Definition, Contours, and Fundamental Sources" uses the Post-Continental Philosophy as decolonized philosophy that rejects the rigid boundaries between continental and analytic in the Eurocentric conceptions. According to Torres (2006), some of the post-continental thinkers, such as Afro-American, Afro-Caribbean, Latino, use this thought to deal with colonialism, racism, and sexism in the contemporary world. There are new disciplines and studies that emerge based on this Post-Continental Philosophy, such as African Diaspora Studies and Ethnic Studies. These disciplines demand a self-reflection of their own, apart from the evaluation of European analytic and continental philosophy.

In this research, I tend to use the term 'Post-Continental Philosophy' as Mullarkey's suggestion, which is an evaluation of both continental and analytic philosophy. I do not intend to exclude both analytic philosophy and continental philosophy, like Mulligan's Post-Continental Thought. I also do not locate Post-Continental philosophy as a decolonized philosophy (like Nelson Maldonado-Torres), but rather as a bridge between analytic and continental philosophy.

3. Methodology

The method of this research is hermeneutic, which involves some elements such as interpretative analyses, historical continuity, heuristics, and descriptive. Firstly, the author collects the material object of this research, which is W.J.T. Mitchell's thought. Secondly, the author selects the theoretical approach which is post-continental philosophy. Thirdly, the author analyzes Mitchell's thoughts from the perspective of post-continental philosophy.

4. Results and Discussion

As a Post-continental philosophy, Mitchell's notion about Picture Theory and Image Science balance the tendency of Continental and Analytic Philosophy. On the one hand, Mitchell carries on the legacy of continental thought, such as semiotic, phenomenology, deconstruction, critical theory, and picture theory of language by Wittgenstein, in his Picture Theory. On the other hand, Mitchell also involves the analytic approaches, especially in his Image Science. Mitchell (2015) defines Image Science as a sort of knowledge of images. Mitchell commits to exploring "the abyss of images" not in the abyss of 'soft' science like culture, society, or politics but 'hard' science like mathematics, physics, and biology. (Mitchell, 1994, p. 11). The Continental aspect of Mitchell appears in the proximity between Picture Theory and some Continental notions. In Picture Theory, Mitchell (1994) explains there is a Pictorial Turn--a shift of concern from language to image both in public culture and academic discourse. Before the Pictorial Turn, the Linguistic Turn asserts that thoughts can be comprehensively expressed in language. In Glock's (2008) term, the limits of thought can be determined by establishing the limits of the linguistic expression of thought. For Mitchell (1994), the pictorial turn does not only indicate as the turn from language to image or image that determines all the terms of cultural theory but also pictures "as peculiar friction and discomfort across a wide area of intellectual inquiry". (Mitchell, 1994, p.13).

The Continental side of Mitchell appears in some aspects. Firstly, on his investigation on the sign and meaning of a non-linguistic and linguistic expression. According to Bohrer (1997), Mitchell in Picture Theory deals with the complexities and paradoxes of visual and verbal representation. This investigation is in line with semiotic and hermeneutic concerns. Semiotic is a theory of sign interpretation, while hermeneutic is often known as "art of understanding". Mitchell was influenced by Charles Sander Peirce, especially on his semiotics. Peirce classifies phenomena and elements of reality into three levels: firstness, secondness, and thirdness. According to Hookway (2005), for C.S. Peirce, meaning, representation, and semiotics are included in the main part of thirdness. In the thirdness, people realize that interactions of things are intelligible through a third mediating fact. According to Margolis (1995), Mitchell was also influenced by Nelson Goodman who in *Languages of Art* (1968) reinterprets the art-world in semiotic terms. According to Cohen (2005), Goodman deals with the topics of the philosophy of art, such as representation, expression, and authenticity from the perspective of the 'general theory of symbols'. For Mitchell (1994), both Peirce and Goodman explore the conventions and codes that underlie in a non-linguistic and symbol system. They do not begin with an assumption, but with visual observation instead.

Secondly, Mitchell's Continental side also comes into sight in the inquiry of imagination and visual experience that has long roots in phenomenology. According to Grossmann (2005), phenomenology is known by its phenomenological reduction method,

which is 'bracketing of the objective world' (Grossmann, 2005, p. 696). Cunningham (1976) breaks down this method into two reductions. Firstly, it starts with phenomenological reduction as an activity of reducing a real transcendent object to a real immanence object by bracketing out all considerations of its spatial existence. The second reduction is transcendental reduction as a second reduction that reshapes the epoché through a reduction to the absolute ego.

According to Grossmann (2005), for phenomenology, knowledge of things is divided into direct and indirect knowledge (knowledge through aspects). Essences (universal properties) are known directly, but perceptual objects are only known through their aspects. Phenomenologist calls eidetic-reflection as the reflection on the essence and their connections.

Thirdly, Mitchell has also been inspired by Derrida, particularly on the shifting attention from the language in speech form to the writing. According to Derrida (2002), the privileging speech over writing means repression against writing. Writing is seen as a difference. Writing is considered not as echoing muted words but as "lithography before words". (Derrida, 2002, p. 259). Following Derrida's thought, for Mitchell (1994), writing is a visible form of textuality.

Fourth, Mitchell (1994) carries on the critical theory influence such as Frankfurt School's criticism to modernity, mass culture, and visual media. For example, in *The Work of Art in Mechanical Reproduction Era*, Walter Benjamin (2008), one of the Frankfurt School's thinkers, mentions that after authenticity ceases to be applied in artistic production (traditional art), the whole social function of art is no longer based on ritual, but politics. In line with the social function of art on politics, Mitchell (1994) sees that nowadays the relation of power and pictures is a contrast to what Jürgen Habermas called 'the public sphere' as a place that frees from coercion or domination to form a scene of free conversation. "New World Order" of televisual war and public melodrama determines new surveillance and disciplines in the society. (Mitchell, 1994, p. 365).

Fifth, Mitchell (1994) has been influenced by Michel Foucault on the distinction between the "visible" and the "sayable" in modernity. "Picture Theory" by Mitchell discusses how the image (the visible) and the text (the sayable) relate one each other. Furthermore, Mitchell (1994) also has been inspired by Foucault's notion of power and knowledge. For Mitchell, the image has power to dominates, influences, or even deceives over the beholders. As Foucault, Mitchell (1994) considers power as the relationship in which one enjoys or suffers.

Sixth, Mitchell lays the philosophical foundation of Picture Theory in Wittgenstein's Picture Theory of Language, especially in Wittgenstein's statement: "A picture held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat itself to us inexorably". (Mitchell, 1994, p. 12). Glock (2008) sees, for Wittgenstein, there is an identical structure between the logic of language and reality. Wittgenstein (2002) says we portray facts in a picture to ourselves and "a picture presents a situation in logical space, the existence, and non-existence of states of affairs. A picture is a model of reality."

Besides the Continental aspect, Mitchell's theory has the analytic aspects that emphasize paradigmatic features, such as, the abstract, rational and mathematical analysis, and suspicion to the speculative metaphysics. The analytic aspect of Mitchell's theory is located in his *Image Science*. Mitchell (2015) proceeds images in abstract, rational, and even mathematical modeling. Mitchell uses a scientific way to approach the images. In his book *Image Science*, he explores three realms of image science, i.e. mathematics, physics, and biology. In his book "Image Science", Mitchell explores three fields of image science, i.e. mathematics, physics, and biology. Firstly, in the field of mathematics, Mitchell (2015) investigates images as diagrams and logic relations. He called this domain as diagrammatology. The invention of the digital image in the twentieth century has overcome the ancient distinction between metaphysics and material particles. Digital technology makes conversion from analog-to-digital/image to non-image and vice versa is possible. Mitchell (2015) asserts the necessity of image science that can explain what is an image that can transform into data and gather again into the image.

Secondly, in the physics of the image. For Mitchell, "fundamental law of the physics of image is: images cannot be destroyed". The picture or physical support can be destroyed but the image remains to survive, as a memory in the mind. (Mitchell, 2015, p.32). According to Mitchell (2015), the destruction of images or iconoclasm that usually did for political or religious reasons cannot destroy the image. The image remains present in memory or even manifested in a new form. For example, the golden-calf idol that was prohibited in the old testament finds a new form in the narrative or painting about the golden-calf.

Thirdly, in the biology field, according to Mitchell (2015), images are recognized as living things that can transform, extinct, and even resurrect from extinction. The digital technology is often considered as the end of the image because the image transforms into data. However, for Mitchell (2015), the emergence of 'digital images' does not mean the extinction of images. We can refuge the images through what Mitchell calls 'biocybernetics' reproduction of images. Mitchell (2003) defines Biocybernetic

reproduction of images as a technique using computer technology and biological science in image-making, as we can see on how dinosaurs are created in Jurassic Park Film.

5. Conclusion

In this research, we have attempted to formulate the Post-Continental thought of W.J.T. Mitchell and how his thought goes beyond the boundaries of Continental and Analytic Philosophy. We have examined some definitions of the post-continental thought from some other thinkers and analyzed the post-continental characteristics in W.J.T. Mitchell's notion. Post-Continental thought is an alternative to the sharp distinction between Continental and Analytic philosophy. We have found that the post-continental thought in Mitchell's theory can be reached through the concepts of Picture Theory and Image Science, in which the Continental and Analytic philosophy have been bridged. In his Post-Continental thought, Mitchell uses both the Continental and Analytic Approach to get an image about 'images'. In Picture Theory, he treated image as 'a subject' that can theorize about themselves (Wiesenthal et.al, 2000, p.2), while in Image Science, Mitchell wants to investigate 'the abyss of images' especially in the perspective of natural sciences. The Picture Theory departs from the previous Continental philosophy and schools of thought, such as semiotics, phenomenology, deconstruction, critical theory of the Frankfurt School, Foucault on power and knowledge, and Wittgenstein's Picture Theory of Language. Meanwhile, his Image Science is close to analytic philosophy, in which he examines images from various disciplines perspectives from mathematics, physics to biology.

Although this research is still limited on the theoretical examination of two Mitchell's important works (Picture Theory and Image Science), this study has explored the relatively new field, which is Post-Continental Philosophy in Mitchell's thought. We have observed, in Picture Theory, the Continental's characteristics that emphasize the interpretative analysis of image, and in Image Science, Analytical's characteristics that give attention to the logical analysis and the suspicion to the speculative metaphysics. Further studies on Mitchell's other works and its practical implications are still needed to develop a more comprehensive examination of image.

The research about the exceeding of Continental and Analytic Philosophy distinction in Mitchell's notion is important since it can defy the totalizing system of thought about images that dominates modern philosophy and art history. Mitchell's post-continental thought can expand the investigation of the image. It can also help us to solve some issues about images that we still do not know well about them, as Mitchell (1994) exemplifies, i.e. about what actually pictures are, what the relation between images and language is, and what we should be done with them.

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