Nomadic Subjectivity and Criticisizm of the Conception of Identity: a Post-Structural Reading of Rosi Braidotti
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NOMADIC SUBJECTIVITY AND CRITICISIZM
OF THE CONCEPTION OF IDENTITY: A POST-STRUCTURAL
READING OF ROSI BRAIDOTTI

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Abstract. Rosi Braidotti, a prominent feminist philosopher, has contributed to the poststructuralist critique of identity with the concept of "nomadic subjectivity". The concept of nomadic subjectivity is an important reference in the critique of the structural process of identity. This concept is a kind of criticism that focuses on the possibility of transition among identities, rather than an anarchist attitude in the sense of rejecting identity. For Braidotti, identity has a structural functioning that prevents the metamorphosis of the subjectivity. By referring to the Deleuzian nomadic philosophy, Braidotti tries to open a new path for a transition among identities. For Braidotti, identity is not a notion that symbolizes the inter-subject hierarchy, but the contingent possibility of becoming a subject. The contingency of the identity, then, means that the notion of subject is not completed and has not a stable structure. This idea constitutes one of the obvious consensus between Braidotti and post-structural philosophy. This article aims to discuss the poststructuralist critiques of identity by focusing on Bradiotti's thoughts. The basic assertion of this article is that Braidotti's conceptualization of nomadic subjectivity has a poststructuralist content.

Keywords: feminist philosophy; nomadic subjectivity; identity; post-strucural philosophy.

Introduction

There has always been a tense relationship between post-structural philosophy and the concept of identity. According to the post-structuralist philosophy, the concept of identity contains an ambiguity and this ambiguity occurs because identity cannot embrace existence totally. So, according to post-structuralism, there is always a lack of

overlapping between *identity* – naming existence to become cognizable – and *existence* – the concrete form of living. Therefore, some theorists in post-structuralism offer a term which refers to a path of destroying the structural forms identifying the being. This term refers to the concept of "becoming", which corresponds to a more unsteady and more contingent understanding, rather than the concept of identity that cannot entirely identify existence. This term is mostly used in the works of Deleuze, who tried to think about becoming outside identity or any structural form surrounding the being. For him, the notion of identity identifies the subject according to the transcendent categories, and so, the subject cannot belong to itself. However, for Deleuze, there is a possibility to escape from identity and its "capture" by separating the subjectivity from any transcendence identifier. For him, this possibility is bringing the notion of the body back to philosophy again. Deleuze, who is a follower of Spinoza, therefore argues that "we do not know what a body is capable of" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004a: 257).

The body in Deleuze, and mainly in post-structuralist philosophy, refers to opening existence to a new path by which no transcendental signifier could capture the being. So, the meaning and function of the body is to unify the meaning and living of a body since the notion of the body reflects the concrete unity of subjectivity and existence (May, 2003: 140-143). In other words, the meaning of the body in Deleuzian sense is that the subjectivity can no longer be coded by a transcendental signifier (Deleuze, 1990: 228). So, the body functions as a preventer of a transcendental identifier which defines the subjectivity although it does not belong to the subject.

What we must realize in post-structuralism is that the notion of the body is mostly thought of as the possibility of rejecting the transcendental power which tries to capture the beings and defines them under the title of identity. So, identity is also the rejection of the body which refers to the possibility of escaping from the identical process that causes power to be able to arise. Therefore, in many post-structural studies, the body is named as a signifier of "new politics" (Massumi, 2002: 11; Hansen, 2004: 591-595) which offers a thinking of the body as carrier of becoming paths because the body is mainly thought of as a possibility of revealing the *unstable* nature of the structure. For post-

structuralism, the structure is only possible by hiding the bodily subjectivity so that it can be identified with a transcendental signifier. The criticism of the notion of identity therefore refers to putting forward the more unforeseeable elements of existence. This unforeseeable element is *the body* itself and the body is one of the reference concepts frequently referred to in the post-structural critique of the notion of identity.

The post-structural critique of the notion of identity requires emphasizing the contingent nature of the body. The contingency of the body invalidates the claim of completeness of identity. That is why post-structural critics of identity mostly focus on feminism and contemporary *queer studies*. Rosi Braidotti, who will be broadly discussed in this study, has developed critical arguments on contemporary problems in criticism of both identity and feminist studies.

Braidotti is a theoretician that should be examined carefully not only for her contributions to feminist theories but also with the perspective she has developed on the issue of identity. Although she has not specifically focused on identity, her theories are very useful and efficient for handling them as theoretical tools in criticism of identity. It can be said that Braidotti has been included in these discussions because of her new perspectives on the term of "subjectivity". The notion of subjectivity is handled quite distinctly in her work, because Braidotti focuses on the concept of a *living body*, rather than on the concept of *abstract identity*. The notion of *abstract identity* points out a Deleuzian notion here; because, for Braidotti, the notion of identity always means an abstract existence which is alienated from the living body. That is why she tries to solve the problem of abstract identity with a concrete phenomenon – the body. The notion of the body, in her works, is presented as a negation of abstract identity because the body represents a contingency which cannot be encompassed by any abstractness. So, the notion of the body emerges as a possibility that offers to go beyond identity. The potentials of the body involving going beyond identity are the indications of why the body tries to be captured by identity. Like Spinoza, Braidotti believes that any abstraction always tries to capture the living body in order to immobilize it under a transcendency. This transcendency works as a *splint* to re-localize the body once it can escape from where it has been *identified*. Therefore, the concept of the body is

handled through an idea examining the possibilities of an existence beyond identity.

Braidotti's arguments on identity resemble the post-structural thoughts because both of them tend to handle the notion of subjectivity beyond structural signifiers, like the conception of identity. Although most of her works focus on feminism, Braidotti also discusses the possibilities of going beyond identities – which are given –, because, for her, the conception of identity is an issue of "to become" not "to situate" in a pre-determined existence. Like the post-structuralists, Braidotti intends to show that abstracted identity, which is thought to encompass the living body, actually has an inevitable lack of completeness. This lack of completeness emerges from an inevitable contingency; and this contingency can be named as the "potentiality of a body". Braidotti brings back the question that Spinoza, and after him, Deleuze once asked: "We do not even know what a body is capable of…". For Braidotti, the body shows the boundaries of abstracted identity on the one hand, and the unpredictable becoming of existence on the other. It means that the body and its contingent potentiality signify the lack of completeness of identity; because the notion of identity can perceive itself as "complete" only by making the body foreseeable. So, there is a radical distinction between identity and the body, and Braidotti tries to discuss this distinction by examining the problem of subjectivity.

In this study, my aim is to discuss the problem of identity within the framework of post-structuralism. According to the basic claim of the article, only a post-structuralist critique of identity can prove that the notion of identity does not have a stable and coherent structure. However, such a criticism has to prove that the notion of identity has an inconsistent structure in itself due to internal discrepancies. This discrepancy occurs because the abstract notion of identity cannot correspond to living existence. In other words, there is always a gap between identity and existence that cannot be removed, and this gap is the reason why identity will always remain unstable. For post-structuralism, this instability of identity is also the possibility of "becoming" by which the body could exceed abstracted existence. Since Braidotti gives priority to the concept of body compared to identity, she should be considered as a reference for post-structural critiques on the notion of identity.

I. Philosophical Roots of Post-structuralist Critiques of Identity

Revealing the "Instability" of the Structure

Distributed at the intersections of general areas of social theory, post-structuralism has mostly been associated with a turn to *language* in social theory (Callinicos, 1999: 266) and with a rejection of *universalism* (Barthes, 1977: 148). Unlike structuralism, post-structuralism refers to the *instability of meaning* (Levi-Strauss, 1963: 34). In structuralism, the meaning is understood within a concept of structure which determines the scope of comprehending and acting. So, the meaning becomes consistent by being immobilized in a structure. The notion of identity emerges as the sign of a coherent relation between the meaning and the structure. The identity is derived from the meaning that symbolizes the stability of the structure. It means that the identity indicates an overlap between the structure and the meaning. While *structure* is a concept that shapes people's actions and thoughts, *meaning* is an ontology that expresses the reason for and consistency of the structure (Johnson, 2003: 77). So, in this study, the idea that identity emerges as a signifier of the relationship between the visible (structure) and the nonvisible (the meaning) will be discussed. For this reason, the concept of identity should be understood as a *meta-narrative* in structuralism because a meta-narrative signifies the ahistorical overlapping of the abstractness and concreteness. In other words, the meta-narrative presents a conflicting overlap between the consistency nature of the meaning and the instability nature of the structure.

The fact that the concept of identity is treated as a meta-narrative by post-structuralism is actually based on a simple reason. Since post-structuralism does not accept the notion of *stability* or *consistency* of the meaning, it naturally rejects the permanency of the structure (Finlayson and Valentine, 2002: 2; Sarup, 1993: 136). According to post-structuralism, the structure masks its instability by representing or relating itself in an abstract meaning. The structure succeeds in concealing its internal incoherence by identifying itself with meaning. The function of the meta-narrative is to make the relationship between meaning and structure incomprehensible. Therefore, post-structuralism mostly focuses on this issue and tries to reveal the incompatibility between the structure

(concreteness) and the meaning (abstractness) (Belsey, 2002: 73-75). However, some methodological aspects should also be regarded in order to comprehend the post-structural approaches in philosophy. According to the epistemology that post-structuralism is grounded in, the structural form of any meaning is disputable because any structure is established with linguistic forms that create a signifier coming before the object and its signs (Poynton, 1993: 3-4). This means that the signifier, as an imaginary representation, has an established meaning through language and it has been established before the object which is pointed out. The function of the signifier is creating a meaningful context in the subject's consciousness that perceives the object with its meaning. Therefore, the structure is established outside of its concreteness, or, in other words, the structure gains its meaning by a subjective contribution that makes it real.

The post-structuralist critique of stability depends on an approach which claims that no structural form can manifest itself as unified in its simple being. These post-structuralist philosophers (such as Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, etc.) argue that no universality can exist because any meaningful claim manifesting the "truth" in itself indispensably needs an externality through which the universality can perceive itself. In other words, the meaning of an abstract universality can only be manifested by including the externality which is radically different from the structural form of the meaning. As can be understood, the meaning, which manifests that it includes the truth, does actually need the radical otherness in order to establish itself. So, post-structuralism claims that there can be no structural form manifesting itself as stable, unified and eternal because it always needs a radical externality which is different from itself.

According to post-structuralism, the notion of truth – which represents the universality in itself – is usually understood as "not a property of sentences or thoughts, as language might lead one to suppose" (Frege, 1979, 234). In other words, we can understand that any structural form is actually instable through trying to conceptualize itself as a linguistic form. Because post-structuralism basically claims that linguistic form is the basis of any social structure (including relational concepts); therefore, it should be analyzed in its functional way. Through linguistic conceptualizing, we will notice that the meaning

does always depend on its nothingness; this means that any structural form can be followed in its contingency because the meaning always includes a part which is not there. In other words, the language itself establishes the boundary between what-is-there and what-is-not-there. Post-structuralism therefore claims that any structural form consists of *instability* because the structural form owes its existence to its radical externality. As a result of this, since this radical externality is interiorized to the structure, the meaning of universality gains its unity by means of this externality.

"Deconstruction" of the Structure

As has been stated above, post-structuralism depends on many theories in order to reveal the *instability* of the structural form, and the most leading of these methods is the *deconstruction*. According to Derrida, deconstruction is a critical method which asserts that meanings, metaphysical constructs, and hierarchical oppositions are always rendered unstable by their dependence on ultimately arbitrary signifiers (Derrida, 1997: 162). According to Derrida, every structure has a hierarchical context in itself, but this hierarchy is not represented in the structure itself (Derrida, 1987: 14-18) because the excluded part of the hierarchy is externalized from the structure, though it has been interiorized within the structure. In other words, the structure is established by excluding its *otherness*; however, this exclusion is always interiorized or represented inside the structure. So, the excluded part is both inside and outside; therefore, the structure does not have a *consistency* because its establishment depends on a radical exteriority which cannot be totally interiorized.

According to the topic which this study attempts to explore, identity as a kind of universality indicates that the stability of the structure must be inevitably instable in itself because the structure is established by its excluded part. This is an indicator of a paradox, because identity, which has been thought of as a *unity-in-itself*, has a contradictory context due to its dependency on exclusion. Therefore, the meaning interiorized in the structure is thus condemned to an entity

which is excluded from the structural form. It indicates that the structure always contains a meaningless element (or the meaning cannot be contained within the structure) because the missing part (subsidiary element) of the structure must always be outside. For Derrida, the reason why there is always an inconsistency inside the structure is because the excluded part of the structure must be represented inside the structure. In this context, any structural form can represent itself as a universality only by manifesting that the missing part which completes the structure does belong to the structure itself.

So, deconstruction, which Derrida uses to reveal the inconsistency of the structure, gains its meaning and function in here because deconstruction tries to show the inconsistencies inside the structure by arguing that there cannot be any meta-narratives which can be related to the structure (Stocker, 2006: 183-188). What is criticized by Derrida is not the term of the meaning itself, but the transcendency of the structure that is identified with the meaning.

Derrida's thoughts on deconstruction have opened new paths for post-structuralist critiques on the concept of universal forms including the notion of identity. Deconstruction, which means revealing the inconsistencies of the structure, has mostly been used as a tool for criticizing meta-narratives in social and political contexts (Williams, 2005: 25-27). Moreover, the concept of identity has therefore been positioned in these kinds of critiques because the term of identity is seen as the meta-context of the structure. Post-structuralist critiques therefore focus on the deconstruction of identity because identity is seen as a structure in itself. According to contemporary post-structural theorists, the deconstruction does also have an ethical task besides its epistemological function (Koch, 2007: 11). This ethical task implies that *the ethics* does not have a *meaning in itself*, but rather that the ethics should be seen as a process by which the meaning can be deconstructed in order to reveal its contingent and arbitrary establishment. In other words, as Critchley emphasizes, deconstruction is a kind of critical reading which always considers that the structure does not have a consistency in itself (Critchley, 2014: 2). Therefore, critical reading of the structure through deconstruction makes it easier to understand that the *establishment of the meaning* is definitely a political issue (Fagan, 2013: 94).

The meaning of *being political* means that the hierarchy which the meaning carries is not a philosophical matter. In other words, the hierarchy concealed within the meaning forms the identity of the structure, and this is the politics of the meaning because the meaning is the sign of the hierarchy in the structure, whereas identity is the social counterpart of this hierarchy. So, identity emerges by normalization of the exclusion and, moreover, identity is the identification of the structure with that exclusion.

The post-structural critique of the concept of identity is more apparent in the conception of language. For post-structuralism, language is a tool of legitimation of the discourses which determine the scope of communicating (Brown, 1995: 20). So, the language functions to perpetuate the structural process of the relations among social actors. However, these actors gain their subjectivities by relating themselves with the pre-determined structural forms of positions on which their acts become recognizable. Language here works as a conjunction showing the correlation between the meaning and signifier which are both interiorized within the structure. So, the language itself is understood as a manifestation of the exclusionary acts of the identities which express social positions. For post-structuralism, expressions within the language should not be evaluated as autonomous parts of grammar; rather, they are the reflections of the exclusions represented in the structural forms. This is exactly what Derrida once said "dualities" were (1973: 57). Dualities are the representation of the inconsistency of the meaning identified with the structure. They also indicate the exclusionary nature of the meaning which depends on a radical externality in order to perceive and demonstrate itself as a totality-in-itself. The paradox here is that the missing part of the identity must be outside of the identity. According to post-structuralism, any structural form can perceive itself as a whole by externalizing a component that completes it. This is an indication that the externalization process is completely arbitrary and political because the externalization needs to be formed under an appearance. This function is like a mirror because the structural form can perceive its totality in the face of the thing externalized. Therefore, the function of externalization is to emphasize the completeness of identity by presupposing the lack of completeness

in the externalized component. It is supposed that the missing part does belong to the externalized part, and this idea establishes the perception of the completeness of the structure. That is why post-structuralism focuses on the hierarchy in linguistic concepts because these concepts reflect the externalization relations. Many post-structuralist theorists tend to criticize the discursive function of the hierarchy by following the dualistic forms in the text (Leitch, 1992). Barthes, for example, argues that the text is not constructed by an "Author-God" (Barthes, 1978: 145) which means that the meaning cannot be contained by the structure – in other words, the identity which refers to the unity of both abstractness and concreteness becomes invalid because the phenomenon which gives the meaning of the text is outside of it (Lavers, 2004: 146). In other words, the meaning can only be comprehended by realizing the missing and external part of the text. So, the meaning and function of the structure can only be understood with externalized components outside of the structure.

II. Braidotti and 'New' Post-Structural Criticism

Post-Structural Background

The main purpose of this section is to argue that post-structural philosophy and Rosi Braidotti's criticisms of identity politics (including subjectivity) have much in common. Both post-structuralism and Braidotti claim that the identity representing existence (unique or the whole) is handled as a unity-in-itself; however, this causes comprehending the "other" – neglected part of existence – as hierarchically externalized. So, criticism of identity needs to depend on evaluating and considering the meaning of *the other* in the establishment of existence. This paradigm also includes the criticism of a process in which the social and political forms are structured under the notion of a specific identity that identifies the meaning of the structure by externalization. In other words, criticism of the notion of identity does not really mean to criticize the concept of identity itself, but rather to criticize the process which causes comprehending the structure as a unity-in-itself. The basic point

of this criticism focuses on the process including dualisms and hiding the externalization as well. So, the post-structural critiques of identity try to investigate the missing parts belonging to the structural forms which have been externalized. For post-structuralism, the root of identity is the missing and externalized parts of the structure. According to post-structuralism, criticism of identity should focus on the parts that are left out of the structure. The main part establishing identity is this externality, since it gives the meaning of the structure which signifies the unity-in-itself.

When post-structural criticism is taken into consideration, it can be said that the thing that gives meaning to identity must be sought in the place where externality is produced. Braidotti cares exactly about this criticism and she tries to imagine a new type of existence which obviates an identity process that always needs to depend on externalization in order to establish itself. In order to transform this critique into a coherent philosophical system, Braidotti has proposed a new conceptual set which is called "nomadic subjects". By taking the term "nomadic" from Deleuze, Braiditti follows a new conception of existence which closes itself to transcendental identity and can open itself to new concepts of being to become irrepressible. Nomadic, here, means a Guattarian perspective which is called "lines of flight" (Guattari, 2016: 122). Lines of flight represent a counter-cultural perspective which was afterwards used by Deleuze to criticize the normalization process. It represents a rejection of *being named by identity*. In other words, lines of flight refer to a path in which existence gains its meaning not by identifying itself with an identity (Deleuze, 2007: 11-12). Rather, it gains its meaning by opening itself to new concepts of *becoming*. Braidotti cares about this thought and offers an ontological plane in which the concept of becoming is to be comprehensible. Her definition of "nomadic subject" is therefore important because she uses this term to enlarge the Deleuzian idea which includes post-structural components.

Deleuze was always concerned with "how can the change occur?" The change, here, means representing a shift from the present which is related to a universality. In other words, change can occur because the inconsistency has already been discovered. Deleuze therefore claims that the event represents the coming of the new (Grosz, 2005: 4). This

philosophy relates with both post-structuralism and feminism because the Deleuzian idea shows that change in existence may be possible only if the inconsistency in existence can be discovered. Inconsistencies cause us to realize that the being does not consist of an external and transcendental signifier which gives meaning to the structural form. So, in other words, the Deleuzian idea actually contains a "body philosophy" which exteriorizes the external signifiers which consist of instabilities. According to Deleuze, inspired by Spinoza, it is only the body which can contain both meaning and being in its existence. In other words, Deleuze rejects any representative forms of identical structures because they alienate the body (living part of existence) from its subjectivity (meaningful part of existence). However, Deleuze is of the opinion that both the living and meaningful parts of existence must be associated.

Ultimately, for Deleuze and Guattari, all thought is a "becoming, a double becoming, rather than the attribute of a Subject and the representation of a Whole" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004a: 49). They try to imagine an existence which does not alienate the being from its living form. It is rather a criticism of the notion of identity because they reject the idea of representation which defines the living in a transcendental context. This point of view is also represented in Braidotti's philosophy. Braidotti has inherited a Deleuzian thought and tries to connect the Deleuzian idea of becoming to the actual problems in philosophy. Her suggestions mostly focus on problematizing how bodies can escape from transcendental contexts which try to intervene and define them. Braidotti therefore calls on Deleuze to imagine how bodies can establish themselves without performing any reference to a structural form. What Braidotti intends is the creation of the possibilities of existence that can be realized without being bound to any notion of identity, and this is the main reason why she should be handled as a post-structuralist philosopher because she tries to explore how the new concepts of being have settled in our age and why we should focus on revealing their potentialities that show us the possibility of becoming (Braidotti, 2010: 5). Braidotti's post-structuralism is also seen in the critiques of the notion of transcendental contexts and universal codes which define the being outside of the subjects. She therefore tries to conceptualize the "nomadic

subjectivity" in order to claim that it is still possible to think and live politically without any need to refer to any transcendental codes which are expected to define the being. This idea establishes the post-structural background of Braidotti's philosophy because she does not only try to explore the possibilities of escaping, but rather, she also seeks to imagine the transitions among identities, sexualities and, generally, everything about structural-universal codes which are thought of as unique and isolated in themselves. In her words,

> "to identify lines of flight, that is to say, a creative alternative space of becoming that would fall not between the mobile/immobile, the resident/the foreigner distinction, but within all these categories. The point is neither to dismiss nor to glorify the status of marginal, alien others, but to find a more accurate, complex location for a transformation of the very terms of their specification and of our political interaction" (Bradiotti, 1994: 242).

What is Nomadic Subjectivity?

In her collection of essays, Braidotti declares that her aim is to "develop and evoke a vision of (…) subjectivity in a nomadic mode" (Braidotti 1994:1). For Braidotti, the "nomadic subject" is a new epistemological and political entity to be defined and affirmed in the confrontation of multiple differences, in class, race and sexual preference (Braidotti 1994:30). Braidotti uses the concept of "nomadic subject" not only to criticize the conception of identity, but also, she uses this term for imagining the possibility of an ethical existence. This principle of ethical existence is based on the rejection of the externalization which is essential to the concept of identity. For Braidotti, the conception of identity is always a matter of hierarchies because it contains a "dominancy" in social relations (Braidotti, 2014: 170). However, the ethical rejection of the conception of identity is based on the idea of "virtual" inherited from the Deleuzian approach. Braidotti uses the term "virtual" in order to define the scope of the ethical dimension of nomadic ethics, because the nomadic ethics "destabilize identity by

opening up spaces where virtual possibilities can be actualized" (Braidotti, 2006: 167). The meaning of the virtual is because of its unforeseeable and, more importantly, its unrelated nature, which means that the virtual one cannot be *encoded*, but it can only be defined in its context.

For Braidotti, the conception of identity *encodes* the differences under a framework, so the uniqueness becomes meaningless within the framework. Encoding, here, refers to a Deleuzian approach which has previously been discussed in *A Thousand Plateaus* with Felix Guattari. As they argued, encoding is an opportunity to make anything become explainable (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004: 86). The encoding process here means that any singularity can no longer be identified in its own particularity but is linked to a universal notion. With reference to Deleuze and Guattari, Braidotti focuses on the concept of subjectivity. The conception of "nomadic subject" reflects the desire to get out of an encoding process that closes the lines of flight, as Deleuze emphasizes. Braidotti, therefore, tries to imagine how these lines of flight can be actualized. This is where Braidotti starts to criticize the Deleuzian notion of nomadism which only reflects what should be done. According to her, the main problem is that there is no worthwhile answer reflecting the possibilities in a social context.

Braidotti appreciates the Deleuzian notion of becoming which reflects a possibility to be out of the encoding process. However, the main problem for Braidotti is that the notion of becoming in Deleuzian thought is a kind of "empty signifier" which should then be indicated in a subjectivity. Braidotti criticizes Deleuzian thought because according to her, although Deleuze succeeded in pointing out the process of encoding, he never really tried to enlarge the idea of nomadism including a subjectivity (Braidotti, 1993b: 46). Yet, Deleuze created a radical shift in Western philosophy because he reversed the positions identified with specified subjectivities. In Anti-Oedipus, which was written with the associate of Guattari, Deleuze tried to enlighten the idea of *becoming* by proposing a "minor philosophy" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004b: 363). The minor philosophy is a way of invitation by which the externalized part of philosophy is re-called. However, this invitation is not to create an alternative philosophy including new regimes of dualisms. Rather, their prior aim was to create a philosophical thought

that worked without depending on dualities (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 173). That is why they tried to exemplify the types of becoming: the becoming-woman, becoming-animal, becoming-etc. These examples of becoming signify that philosophy should not focus on creating a complete being which naturally tends to exteriorize the otherness which cannot belong to this complete structure. Rather, *becoming* should be a fluid plane in which "all the other points melt together" (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004a: 224). So, they actually try to imagine an existence without any singular being, but where all types of existence melt together. Braidotti criticizes this thought, although she appreciates the nomadic philosophy. According to her, the missing part of the Deleuzian nomadism is that of the possibilities which are identified with singular subjects.

The Becoming-Woman, or Escaping from Identity

Becoming is always a matter of creating lines of flight to escape out of bodies that are named by transcendental structures. The Deleuzian notion of becoming always tends to imagine becoming without any identity or singularity. That is why the figurative notion of becoming cannot be represented by any figures in the Deleuzian sense. Braidotti's criticism here occurs because she argues that becoming does not really need to be *anonymous* (Braidotti, 1996: 305). Rather, singularity should become comprehensible in order to reflect the possibility of becoming, or, in other words, representation of singularity can actualize the virtual. Braidotti actually differs from Deleuze with an epistemological position. Braidotti gives priority to the actuality rather than thinking about the possibility of the virtual. That is why she insists on the thinking "Woman" rather than rejecting any conception that identifies singularity. According to her, thinking through the conception of woman does not mean accepting the transcendency, because the conception of "woman" here can refer to a point that signifies the limits of the embracing capacity of identity. That is why Braidotti claims that becoming gains its meaning only by representing the hierarchy belonging to different points. In other words, in the Deleuzian sense the becoming-woman cannot open easily to men because they may still be in a phallocentric

position (Braidotti, 1993b: 46). So, the main problem is not to think about the possibility of becoming, but rather, about the subjects representing becoming in themselves, in their acts or in their thinking.

The importance of the subject is the main theme of Braidotti's and she emphasizes the actual forms of becoming. Unlike Deleuze, Braidotti focuses on the question of "how" and, more importantly, "who", which refers to the problem of concreteness. According to her, criticism of the concept of identity should focus on a possibility and opportunity to think about counter-subjectivities which may cause identity to become inadequate and affirm the differences as well (Braidotti, 2007: 66). In other words, it is not enough to affirm the differences in a philosophical proposal, but rather, the differences should be affirmed in a subjectivity. In Derridean sense, the *difference* can only be seen in an irreducible context and this should not be in a philosophical way because logos, which are the sovereign center of philosophy, can relate every differentiation by using abstraction. Therefore, Braidotti tries to pull the conception from the philosophical plane and direct it to the vital components themselves. The becoming-woman, then, is not an abstraction of thinking about how to escape from identity. Rather, it should be the concretization of the virtual which is the possibility of becoming.

The distinction between philosophy – or thinking (abstraction) – and life – vitality – suggests that concreteness is a notion that must be represented in life. For Braidotti, escaping from identity is not something that can be possible only by abstraction. Rather, it starts with querying the conditions that made us. These conditions are not abstracted components of our existence; on the contrary, they are identified with our singular representations – such as bodily establishments and the performatives that we re-organize in the face of society (Butler, 1997: 44). That is why identity is something "that we left behind us" (Braidotti, 1994: 59). The possibility of leaving our identity behind is a figuration that calls for a new vitalism: an alternative path to live, to think or to act. This figuration must include a subjectivity because the subject is the representation of *empathy* (Braidotti, 1994: 35). The empathy here refers to a type of *becoming* in Braidotti's sense because the term "empathy" means an opening to the exteriorized fact. However, for Braidotti, the notion of empathy refers to a becoming in an actual way by which

subjectivity is organized mutually, because empathy means an affectivity that affects the subject to act without getting any permission of the structural identity. So, the subject becomes a subject by including itself in the event. In other words, subjectivity only occurs by exceeding the structural forms of identity and opening itself to the contingency of the event. For Braidotti, the possibility of exceeding identity is representing this transposition in a bodily context (2006: 44). Bodily representation of transpositions indicates the actualizing of the virtual, and that is the ethics of the embodiment because exceeding identity requires not creating new dualisms in thought, but it suggests perceiving the process in vital facts. Braidotti here agrees with Deleuze because dualism occurs when the subject holds itself off from the outside. Thought functions as a separative by which the subject can perceive the differences and the distance between the outside and itself.

It can be said that Braidotti gives priority to the term of subjectivity (becoming), rather than to *the subject* implying a constant and complete being. Her affirmation of subjectivity can be seen in the term of embodiment and she uses this term to discuss the actual forms of becoming. Embodiment, according to her, does not refer to a distance among the subjects, but rather, it is the creation of a new subjectivity which contains different forms of subjects. The becoming-woman is not thought of as the imagination of a transcendental conception of "Woman"; rather, it means an event in which the self can perceive itself much more from its present existence. In that event, the self can exceed its currency which cannot be a reference for the subject. So, the ethics and function of the event is the possibility of creating the "new" subjectivities, not by imagining or abstracting a *conception*, but by vitalizing its potentiality. So, it should be said that the criticism of identity should focus on creating new vital zones in which the structural form of identity can no longer capture and re-define the subjectivity.

Conclusion

The post-structural critique of identity follows a very different path from the structuralist method. Although structuralism assumes a

reducible relationship between subject and action, post-structuralism suggests that there is always an irreducible gap. According to post-structuralism, the concept of identity gains its meaning by creating a process in which existence and its abstract representation are rigidly bound together. Identity, which demonstrates the relation between *the being* and its image, causes singularity to be reducible by the embracing power of transcendency. Identity is an indication that articulative interventions start to define the content of the being. In other words, identity shows that *the being* cannot define itself according to its own totality and singularity. Rather, it indicates a process by which *the being* must refer to a transcendency determining the comprehensible scope of the being.

The establishment of identity necessitates the notion of "the other" which signifies a gap where the subject can be produced as a completeness. Externalizing *the other* reveals the subject *(I)* as complete and sovereign. Derrida exemplifies this establishment in revealing the Logos which means the sovereign paradigm of Western philosophy. The post-structural critiques of identity resemble Derrida's criticisms because these critiques focus on the idea of the completeness which is immanent in structural forms. According to these critiques, the concept of identity does have a gap which causes an instability for the structural form. The structure must hide the gap inside it in order to demonstrate itself as complete and unified. Thus, the post-structural criticisms of identity focus on the possibility of thinking about new subjectivities by investigating the reason for instabilities.

Rosi Braidotti finds this possibility in thinking of a new type of subjectivity which is also called "nomadic subjects". Nomadic subjectivity is a type of becoming which does not leave any gap between differences. Braidotti insists on thinking about nomadism with the idea of becoming because she never wishes to think of subjectivity in terms of "I", which refers to a completeness in itself and is external to all differences. Rather, in a post-structuralist way, she aims to designate a path in which the subjects can transpose each other. Therefore, she exemplifies the ethical function of the ethics of empathy because through empathy, subjects can exceed their current beings which are externalized from the others. Braidotti says that empathy leads to a

meeting point where subjects no longer perceive the other as an externalized part of the world. She therefore aims to put forward the vital and actual potentialities of life which may be the possibility of transposing and, more importantly, exceeding the identities. To summarize Braidotti's considerations, it can be said that, once identity can be left behind existence, it can open itself to becoming by which it can perceive itself as a part of externality.

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