

THE AFTERLIFE OF DEAD METAPHORS: ON DERRIDA'S PRAGMATISM

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*One does not know what it means yet, one
will have to start again, to return, to go on.*

*Derrida
A Taste for the Secret*

- **ABSTRACT:** This essay analyzes the role of the “dead metaphor” within deconstruction and neopragmatism in an attempt to elucidate some of the surreptitious affinities between the two discursive formations that would constitute what Derrida has called a “pragmatology (to come).” On the basis of a thorough metaphorological rereading of philosophical thought that extends from Vico, Nietzsche, and Heidegger to Blumenberg, Derrida and Rorty, this essay argues that deconstruction continues to generate new contexts of meaning and reference in the form of a pragmatism that has long been integral to its discursive identity.
- **KEYWORDS:** Deconstruction. Pragmatism. Neopragmatism. Rhetoric. Metaphor. Metaphorology.

At a symposium on “Deconstruction and Pragmatism” organized by Chantal Mouffe at the Collège International de Philosophie in Paris in 1993, Richard Rorty sought to rescue Derrida from what he called the “flurry of deconstructive activity” that had dominated the academy in the 1970s and 1980s. “I see no real connection,” Rorty (1996b, p.15) confessed,

[...] between what Derrida is up to and the activity which is called ‘deconstruction,’ and I wish that the latter word had never taken hold as a description of Derrida’s work. I have never found, or been able to invent, a satisfactory definition of that word. I often use it as a shorthand for ‘the sort of thing Derrida does,’ but I do so *faute de mieux*, and with a self-exculpatory shrug.

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In his response to Rorty's comments on the use and meaning of the word deconstruction, Derrida poses several questions that, unprepossessing though they appear, go a long way in fact toward elucidating some of the affinities between pragmatism and deconstruction:

I have often said I do not need to use this word and I often wondered why it should have interested so many people. However, as time passes, and when I see so many people trying to get rid of this word, I ask myself whether there is not perhaps something in it. I would ask you how you would explain why this word, which, for essential reasons, and I agree with Rorty, is meaningless and without reference, could impose itself? How is it that something 'x,' which does not have a stable meaning or reference, becomes indispensable in a certain finite, but open, context, during a certain period of time, for a certain number of actors?" (DERRIDA, 1996, p.85).

Ostensibly agreeing with Rorty that the word deconstruction is unnecessary and essentially without meaning or reference, Derrida asks his interlocutors to consider how such an invented word could nevertheless manage to gain currency within a specific linguistic community and thus become not only meaningful but indispensable to that community. While Derrida's questions resonate through the remainder of his discussion, they remain pointedly unanswered. Or do they? I would like to suggest that the curiosity evinced in Derrida's questions is disingenuous and that the questions themselves are in fact rhetorical, since the process by which an essentially meaningless new word like deconstruction develops a set of references and a stable meaning over time and thus becomes indispensable for the members of a given community – far from calling out for further inquiry, as Derrida's questions seem to imply – in fact constitutes the very method of pragmatism as Rorty himself has described and defined it on numerous occasions over the course of his career.

According to Rorty, the pragmatist introduces unfamiliar marks, noises and vocabularies into circulation at critical moments when "[...] things are not going well, when a new generation is dissatisfied, when the young have come to look at what is being done in a given genre as hackwork" (RORTY, 1991a, p.88). The pragmatist then allows these new figures or "metaphors," which have no "fixed place in a language game" and thus no stable meaning or reference (RORTY, 1989, p.18-19), to become "literalized into the language" and to attain the status of "dead metaphors," which become valuable as "tools of social progress" (RORTY, 1991c, p.17-18). Derrida's rhetorical questions suggest that the word deconstruction gains meaning and reference according to the very logic that Rorty reserves for the contingent vocabularies of his own neopragmatism, and that deconstruction itself

gains a pragmatic legitimacy that Rorty reserves for the literalized or dead metaphors that constitute such vocabularies.

To be sure, this ironic observation leaves Rorty appearing incapable of recognizing his own method operating in the context of the subject under discussion – incapable, in other words, of seeing in deconstruction an exemplary instance of the successful elaboration of his own method, despite having already described and even praised Derrida’s work in precisely these terms². But there is a deeper point to this anecdote beyond its irony. By graciously, though surreptitiously, extending to Rorty the possibility that deconstruction may be interpreted as one of pragmatism’s own dead metaphors, Derrida reconfirms his sense of the affinities between these two discursive formations as he has done repeatedly over the course of his career, suggesting the manner in which deconstruction may live on after its own death, continuing to impose itself by generating new meaning and reference in the form of a pragmatism that has long been integral to its discursive identity.

From the early interest in the semiotics of Charles Peirce that Derrida (1976) demonstrates in *Of Grammatology*, pragmatism has always been implicated within the project of deconstruction, Peirce’s semiotic work providing Derrida with a theoretical perspective from which to contest Saussure’s thesis of the “arbitrariness of the sign” and to replace it with a more dynamic model of semiotic immotivation “as an active movement” that anticipates the Derridean notion of the trace. Yet it is only many years after *Of Grammatology* is published that Derrida begins to broach the possible methodological affiliation between deconstruction and pragmatism in more explicit terms. In his 1983 “My Chances/*Mes chances*,” for instance, Derrida proposes what he tellingly refers to as a “pragmatology,” a method of analysis “at the intersection of a pragmatics and a grammatology” that would “[...] take into account the situation of the *marks*, in particular of the utterances, the place of senders and addressees, the framing, the sociohistorical outline [*décompagé*], and so forth” (DERRIDA, 2007a, p.373). Derrida returns to this topic briefly in 1988 in a footnote to the “Afterword” to *Limited Inc*, where he reaffirms his sense that

Grammatology has always been a sort of pragmatics, but the discipline that bears this name today involves too many presuppositions requiring deconstruction [...] to be simply homogeneous with that which is announced in *De la grammatologie*. A pragmatology (to come) would articulate in a more fruitful and more rigorous manner these two discourses” (DERRIDA, 1988, p.159).

² See, for instance, Rorty (1982).

And in the context of the 1993 symposium on deconstruction and pragmatism mentioned above, Derrida reiterates his sense of affinity between the two discourses, suggesting that “[...] from the beginning the question concerning the trace was connected with a certain notion of labour, of doing, and [...] what I called then *pragmatology* tried to link grammarology and pragmatism” (DERRIDA, 1996, p.78).

Ultimately, however, Derrida distances himself from Rorty’s “pragmatization” of deconstruction, remaining in the end unwilling to completely abandon his commitment to the older idealist paradigm of philosophy and embrace the textualist paradigm of pragmatism with the exclusivity demanded by Rorty³. Rather than simply replacing philosophy with literature as Rorty would have it, Derridean deconstruction remains irreducibly committed to both philosophy and literature, staking out a strategic position for itself between philosophy and literature, idealism and textualism, necessity and chance, “absolutely refus[ing],” as Derrida (1996, p.81) expressly states, “[...] a discourse that would assign me a single code, a single language game, a single context, a single situation.” From the perspective of the later Derrida, Rorty’s own sense of deconstruction as predicated upon an abandonment of philosophy for literature represents an example of

[...]‘repressive tolerance’ which consists in accepting one’s doing literature, provided that one has no relation with philosophy, with truth, or even, in the extreme, with public space. Someone like Rorty is perfectly happy that we should give ourselves over to literature – on the understanding that it is a private matter, a private language, and that taking shelter in a private language is just fine. I have tried to emphasize that deconstruction has nothing whatsoever to do with privatizing philosophy, letting it take shelter in literature; the gesture, the division, is completely different. (DERRIDA; FERRARIS, 2001, p.9-10).

Thus, the project of *pragmatology* is never seriously undertaken. Unlike deconstruction it has never imposed itself, nor become indispensable for a given community. And unlike deconstruction it has never been “literalized into the language” as a dead metaphor.

This fundamental impasse between Derrida and Rorty on the relationship between philosophy and literature is recapitulated in their more pointed disagreement on the subject of metaphor, which has long played crucial though distinct roles within their respective projects. While Rorty’s neopragmatism relies on a literary model of metaphor as a means by which to escape the philosophical tradition, Derridean deconstruction insists on a determination of metaphor that traverses the

³ See, for instance, Lorenzo Fabbri (2007).

disciplines of both philosophy and literature. Though this debate on metaphor has played out historically within the context of contemporary poststructuralism, it may be said to begin with the eighteenth-century Italian philosopher Vico, to whom it is necessary to return in order to better understand the terms, the provenance, and certainly the stakes of the debate. In *The New Science*, Vico establishes a theory of the role of *sapienza poetica* or poetic wisdom in the formation of our traditions and institutions of knowledge. In direct opposition to the prevailing rationalism of his day, Vico (1948, p.120) underscores the limitations of human reason and attributes to man a constitutive “ignorance” or “deficiency of human reason.” Predicated upon this axiomatic view of human ignorance, Vico develops his theory of poetic or metaphorical language as a pragmatic means of coming to terms with all that exceeds the limited grasp of the human intellect. To compensate for this ignorance early man was compelled to develop his “corporeal imagination” in order to project familiar meanings onto unfamiliar natural phenomena within his environment: “It is noteworthy,” Vico (1948, p.129-130) observes, “[...] that in all languages the greater part of the expressions relating to inanimate things are formed by metaphor from the human body and its parts and from the human senses and passions.” According to his “axiom that man in his ignorance makes himself the rule of the universe,” Vico views such early metaphors as constituting the pragmatic foundations upon which the institutions of myth, religion and philosophy would later emerge.

This view of early man as an artist or poet is renewed in the nineteenth century by Nietzsche (2001, p.881) among others for whom the “drive to form metaphors” constitutes what he calls a “fundamental human drive.” Indeed, as Sarah Kofman (1993) observes in *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, Nietzsche’s interest in metaphor as a pragmatic tool of human self-assertion can be seen to span his entire philosophical career. What Nietzsche consistently foregrounds in his work, however, is the paradoxical fact that the impulse to use metaphor as a tool of self-assertion is repeatedly forgotten and its effects repeatedly literalized into the very fabric of our cultural formations⁴. To be sure, Nietzsche’s interest in metaphor appears to culminate in “On Truth and Falsity in Their Extramoral Sense” (1873), in which he famously describes truth as a

[...] mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms: in short a sum of human relations which became poetically and rhetorically intensified, metamorphosed, adorned, and after long usage seems [...] fixed, canonic, and binding; truths are illusions which one has forgotten are illusions; worn-out metaphors which have become powerless to affect the senses; coins which

⁴ See, for instance, Kofman (1993, p.23-59).

have their obverse effaced and now are no longer of account as coins but merely as metal.” (NIETZSCHE, 1992, p.636).

Yet Nietzsche’s Viconian view of man as a “metaphorical animal” is also indispensable to his later critique of Western morality in *On the Genealogy of Morals* (1887), in which he interprets the emergence of the moral realm itself as a *residuum* of forgotten metaphors.

During the twentieth century, an increasing number of philosophers have developed their own particular versions of this pragmatic theory of metaphor. Predicated upon a Viconian model of the rhetorical foundations of human culture and its institutions, Hans Blumenberg launches his project of metaphorology in 1960 which seeks to identify residual metaphors within philosophical discourse. And like Vico, Blumenberg (1997, p.95) attributes the anthropological significance of rhetoric to the same “principle of insufficient reason” which motivates its use in Vico’s theory. Yet where Vico relegates the pragmatic use of poetry to an early epoch in human history, Blumenberg insists that rhetoric is operative throughout the entirety of history, that rhetoric is not overcome or abandoned in the course of history. Indeed, Blumenberg (1998, p.11) criticizes Vico for, as he puts it, falling back into a teleological or “Cartesian scheme insofar as he reserves an early historical epoch for the language of fantasy.”

Instead, Blumenberg calls for a more radical reappraisal of the relationship between “*mythos* and *logos*,” suggesting that the former remains the irreducible foundation of the latter. Thus, rather than residual traces of a more primitive language which gradually yield in the *ricorso* to the more rational and objective idiom of philosophical logic, poetic metaphors represent a “[...] fundamental part of philosophical discourse, ‘translations’ that cannot be recuperated into the realm of logic or authenticity” (BLUMENBERG, 1998, p.10). Blumenberg calls such metaphors, by which he means the whole Vichian field of tropes, “absolute metaphors” since they serve as the conditioning foundation of philosophy on the one hand and yet remain philosophically irreducible on the other hand – cut off or separated from its thematic content. Indeed, it is precisely their disappearance within the discursive institutions they found – their “literalization into the language” as it were – that makes such metaphors pragmatically functional as a kind of forgotten epistemic infrastructure or underground (*Substruktur des Denkens*) within such institutions (BLUMENBERG, 1998, p.13). What motivates Blumenberg’s metaphorological work is the metaphysical challenge presented by Heidegger’s history of Being, *Seinsgeschichte*, whose *epoché* (corresponding to Vico’s *ricorso*), *Seinsvergessenheit*, Blumenberg translates into the rhetorical terms of his metaphorology. Thus, Blumenberg reformulates what Heidegger refers to as the “ontological difference” between Being and being into

the rhetorical terms of a metaphorological difference between absolute metaphors and their manifest rhetorical effects. Rather than Being, in other words, it is precisely metaphor which is forgotten and thus calls out for recovery. In this way, the project of metaphorology displaces Heidegger's "*Aufbris*" of history and reduces it to the pragmatism of a meta-rhetoric of deconstruction, anticipating both Derrida's and Rorty's interest in the role of metaphor in Heideggerian philosophy⁵.

Following in the footsteps of Vico, Nietzsche and Blumenberg whose rhetorically informed critiques of Western metaphysics have sought to expose the metaphorological foundations of this tradition, Derrida's own deconstruction of metaphysics has also been motivated by a desire to expose the rhetorical foundations of the philosophical tradition. Although largely unfamiliar with Blumenberg's metaphorological project, Derrida's reading of metaphor in the text of Aristotle's metaphysics – a crucial reference point for Heideggerian philosophy – in "White Mythology" reiterates and confirms Blumenberg's central insights regarding the latent centrality of metaphor within the language of philosophy, though it is quite clear that Derrida remains unconvinced that all such latent metaphors can be successfully identified, elucidated, and extricated from this philosophical context, which is the ostensibly goal of Blumenberg's project:

If one wished to conceive and to class all the metaphorical possibilities of philosophy, one metaphor, at least, always would remain excluded, outside the system: the metaphor, at the very least, without which the concept of metaphor could not be constructed [...] the metaphor of metaphor. (DERRIDA, 1982, p.220).

Thus while Derrida follows Vico and Blumenberg in his acknowledgement of the rhetorical foundation of philosophy, he rejects efforts to expurgate philosophy of its metaphors for reasons to which we will have an opportunity to return later in our discussion.

In the case of Rorty's neopragmatist project, the significance of rhetoric is already evident in his important early work *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, in which he seems at best ambivalent about the role of rhetoric within the history of thought. In the opening pages of this work, for instance, Rorty reduces the history of Western thought to a single historical epoch that has been suffering under the delusion of metaphor:

It is pictures rather than propositions, metaphors rather than statements, which determine most of our philosophical convictions. The picture which

⁵ See Blumenberg (1997, p.98-102). See also Anselm Haverkamp (1994, 1996, 1998).

holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations – some accurate, some not – and capable of being studied by pure, nonempirical methods. Without the notion of the mind as mirror, the notion of knowledge itself as accuracy of representation would not have suggested itself. Without this latter notion, the strategy common to Descartes and Kant – getting more accurate representations by inspecting, repairing, and polishing the mirror, so to speak – would not have made sense. (RORTY, 1979, p.12).

Rorty explicitly follows Hans Blumenberg here in his reduction of the history of thought and Heidegger's history of Being or *Seinsgeschichte* to a "history of metaphor" (RORTY, 1989, p.16)⁶. Yet he by no means rejects rhetoric as an obstacle on the road to philosophical knowledge. Instead, he is much more interested in abandoning the road to philosophical knowledge altogether in order to pursue the methodological opportunity presented by rhetoric.

Thus, while Rorty's interpretation of the history of Western thought as "[...] the story of the domination of the mind of the West by ocular metaphors", is ostensibly a rhetorical critique of the Western philosophical tradition, it is also – and more significantly – a recognition and appreciation of the power of rhetoric to influence the direction of philosophical history. In other words, it is not rhetoric *per se* that constitutes the object of his critique, but rather the aporetic metaphors that have held Western philosophy captive since antiquity. While he acknowledges and appreciates the power of rhetoric to facilitate and consolidate broad cultural myths and intellectual institutions such as Western metaphysics, what Rorty objects to is the specifically visual or optical nature of the metaphors which are responsible for the emergence of what he calls, following Dewey, a "spectator theory of knowledge"⁷. Thus, rather than following the script of the metaphorological project of Blumenberg for instance which seeks to elucidate the latent operation of metaphor within philosophical discourse, Rorty develops his project of neopragmatism as a kind of active methodological exploitation of metaphor, a project which seeks to create and circulate new metaphors in order to effect cultural and institutional transformation.

To be sure, such metaphors must not only be created and introduced into circulation, they must also be "literalized into the language" of a given culture in order to achieve their intended transformative effects. As we have seen, Rorty (1991d, p.169) often speaks of metaphors that must be "killed off," for instance, or allowed to "die off into literalness" in order to clarify this position. As he writes in "The Contingency of Language," a metaphor introduced into circulation

⁶ On Rorty's pragmatist critique of Heidegger's project, see Rorty (1991b).

⁷ On Dewey's "spectator conception of knowledge," see Dewey (2004, p.59-75).

[...] will acquire a habitual use, a familiar place in the language game. It will thereby have ceased to be a metaphor – or, if you like, it will have become what most sentences of our language are, a *dead metaphor*. It will be just one more, literally true or literally false, sentence of the language. That is to say, our theories about the linguistic behavior of our fellows will suffice to let us cope with its utterance in the same unthinking way in which we cope with most of their other utterances. (RORTY, 1989, p.18-19).

And although the link between Rorty's "dead metaphors" and his goal of social reform may appear unclear, the introduction and assimilation of such metaphors make it possible for the pragmatist to avoid expending intellectual resources engaging in futile argumentation by simply changing the terms of traditional philosophical debates, disposing of long-standing philosophical aporias, and thus escaping false parameters of traditional philosophy which are themselves the result of prior metaphorical sedimentation. In what amounts to a kind of homeopathic or homeotropic irony, the solution to the problem of the residual metaphors that have become assimilated within philosophical discourse turns out to be the continued production of those very metaphors.

While it is evident that Derrida and Rorty share similar perspectives on the rhetorical foundations of philosophical discourse and the residual figures, or the dead metaphors, that remain latent within the text of philosophy, their views diverge quite dramatically on the subject of what we might call the afterlife of dead metaphor. As we have seen, Rorty's commitment to replacing philosophy with metaphor is informed by his sense that changes to the language that mediates our experience of our social environment can result in changes to that environment. The pragmatist pursues this meliorist goal by generating new metaphors, introducing them into circulation, and allowing them to die off into a kind of unconscious or mindless literality. Thus, unlike Nietzsche and Blumenberg who posit a model of dead metaphor as the *terminus a quo*, or point of departure, of their genealogical and metaphorological projects respectively, Rorty reverses the trajectory of these paradigms by positing a model of dead metaphor as the *terminus ad quem*, or goal toward which his project is underway, seeking to create new language that literally disappears from the consciousness of its users, thus fostering a kind of linguistic automatism among them. In his decision to abandon philosophy in favor of literature, Rorty seems to have done little more than to rediscover the pleasures of the Platonic cave, with the *philosophia* of metaphysics giving way, it seems, to the *philoletbia* of pragmatic textualism. A good metaphor is not only a dead metaphor, but a forgotten metaphor.

In the case of deconstruction, however, the situation could not be more different. Derrida has consistently maintained and vigorously defended his view that the dead metaphors that litter the philosophical landscape and constitute its

discursive foundation remain very much alive, actively generating effects of meaning and reference from beyond the grave as it were. Derrida's position could not be more unequivocal in this regard. From "White Mythology" onward, he has consistently held that the rhetoric whose erasure conditions the emergence of philosophical conceptuality remains "active and stirring": "[...] metaphysics has erased within itself the fabulous scene that has produced it, the scene that nevertheless remains active and stirring, inscribed in white ink, an invisible design covered over in the palimpsest." (DERRIDA, 1982, p.213). Derrida's insistence on the life or afterlife of dead metaphors becomes most explicit in the debate that is played out between the comments made by Ricoeur in *The Rule of Metaphor* on the status of "dead metaphor" in Derrida's "White Mythology" and Derrida's response to Ricoeur in "The *Retrait* of Metaphor"⁸. In the context of this debate Derrida objects to Ricoeur's claim that Derrida's text "White Mythology" "[...] makes death or dead metaphor its watchword," promoting "a concept of metaphor dominated by the concept of wear and tear as *being-worn-out* or *becoming-worn-out*." (DERRIDA, 2007c, p.59). In question of course is Derrida's discussion of the concept of "*usure*," the gradual erosion of value or meaning through continued use or circulation, at the beginning of "White Mythology." Yet far from privileging the term, Derrida subjects it to deconstructive analysis:

The value of *usure* also has to be subjected to interpretation. It seems to have a systematic tie to the metaphorical perspective. It will be rediscovered wherever the theme of metaphor is privileged. And it is also a metaphor that implies a *continuist presupposition*: the history of a metaphor appears essentially not as a displacement with breaks, as reinscriptions in a heterogeneous system, mutations, separations without origins, but rather as a progressive erosion, a regular semantic loss, an uninterrupted exhausting of the primitive meaning, an empirical abstraction without extraction from its native soil. (DERRIDA, 1982, p.215; 2007c, p.57).

Rather than subscribing uncritically to the idea of metaphorical *usure* as Ricoeur suggests he does, Derrida insists that the metaphors whose original meanings have been eroded or worn away over time, like the surfaces of circulating coins, are not simply reduced to the status of dead metaphors but remain "alive and dead simultaneously": a determination that characterizes a range of terms along what Rodolphe Gasché (1986, p.185) calls deconstruction's "infrastructural chain": the trace, *différance*, supplementarity, iterability, and metaphoricity, to name only a few. While metaphors are subject to the gradual erosion of their original sensory meaning

⁸ For an excellent overview of this debate, see Morny Joy (1988).

over time, they remain subject to displacements and reinscriptions of meaning as well. And they remain active or alive in the extensions, projections, and hyperbolizations of figurative meaning that are facilitated by such *usure*. What Derrida discerns in this double movement of metaphor – always both “alive and dead,” always losing and gaining meaning simultaneously – is in fact a paradigm of the process of dialectical idealization itself:

[...] the movement of metaphORIZATION (origin and then erasure of the metaphor, transition from the proper sensory meaning to the proper spiritual meaning by means of the detour of figures) is nothing other than a movement of idealization. Which is included under the master category of dialectical idealism. (DERRIDA, 1982, p.226).

What we might call Derrida’s “discontinuist” model of the history of metaphor, which is attentive to the disjunctions, displacements, ruptures and reinscriptions that punctuate this history, serves as a corrective to the more “continuist” view that metaphors simply die off or can be killed off into unthinking literality that informs the method of Rorty’s neopragmatism. As we have seen, there is perhaps no better example of this discontinuist view of metaphor than Derridean deconstruction itself which demonstrates the integral relationship between the interruption or occlusion of meaning, on the one hand, and the production of new meaning and reference, on the other. In *A Taste for the Secret*, Derrida admits that “[...] my own experience of writing leads me to think that one does not always write with a desire to be understood – that there is a paradoxical desire not to be understood.” Absolute “transparency of intelligibility,” he suggests, “would destroy the text, [...] would show that the text has no future [*avenir*], that it does not overflow the present, that it is consumed immediately.” (DERRIDA; FERRARIS, 2001, p.30). What ensures the future of his texts and thus of deconstruction itself, one might add, is what he calls a perverse desire to intentionally interrupt the smooth transmission of his own textual meaning as a means by which to challenge himself, his readers and his interlocutors to engender new contexts of meaning:

I have often been accused of writing things that are unnecessarily difficult, that could be simplified, and I have even been accused of doing it on purpose. I’d say that this accusation is just and unjust at the same time. It is unjust because I really do try to be clear; it’s not that I amuse myself multiplying obstacles to understanding; I can even be pedagogical – often *too* pedagogical, perhaps. But I have to admit that there is a demand in my writing for this excess even with respect to what I myself can understand of what I say – the demand that a sort of opening, play, indetermination be left, signifying hospitality for what

is to come [*l'avenir*]: “One does not know what it means yet, one will have to start again, to return, to go on”. (DERRIDA; FERRARIS, 2001, p.31).

We should not be surprised to hear an echo of Rorty’s description of the pragmatist who introduces unfamiliar marks, noises and vocabularies into circulation that call out for the creation of new theoretical models within which they can be assimilated in Derrida’s description of his tendency to leave his texts open to a degree of play and indetermination that occludes immediate understanding in order to ensure the various futures of deconstruction that continue to take shape in a range of discursive contexts around the globe. Just as the infelicitous name of deconstruction has imposed itself and acquired meaning gradually as “a certain number of actors” have worked to engender contexts of understanding within which it has been assimilated, so too will the difficult text of deconstruction continue to impose itself as its practitioners, interlocutors and critics work to engender new contexts of understanding within which it will be assimilated in the afterlives of its dead metaphors.

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- **RESUMO:** *Este artigo analisa o papel da “metáfora morta” em meio à desconstrução e ao neopragmatismo em uma tentativa de esclarecer algumas das afinidades subreptícias entre as duas formações discursivas que viriam a constituir aquilo que Derrida chamou de “pragmatologia (a vir)”. Por meio de uma revisão metaforológica do pensamento filosófico que parte de Vico, passando por Nietzsche e Heidegger até Blumenberg, Derrida e Rorty, este artigo defende que a desconstrução continua a gerar novos contextos de sentido e de referência sob a forma de um pragmatismo que integra já há muito a sua identidade discursiva.*
- **PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Desconstrução. Pragmatismo. Neopragmatismo. Retórica. Metáfora. Metaforologia.*

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