

CAN ἌΛΛΑ AND ΓΑΡ REALLY MARK AN INFERENCE?
A DEFENSE OF THE “CORE CONSTRAINT” APPROACH
TO CONJUNCTION LEXICOGRAPHY

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Abstract: This article examines passages where the typically corrective *ἀλλά* and the typically explanatory *γάρ* are claimed by BDAG to have an inferential sense. By demonstrating that the inferential senses are unnecessary and that here specialized manners of correction and explanation persist, it serves to support an approach to conjunction lexicography which recognizes the fundamental unity of conjunction semantics, known as the “core constraint” approach. (Article)

Keywords: conjunctions, core constraint, *ἀλλά*, *γάρ*.

1. Introduction

In recent years there have been voices¹ advocating an approach to conjunctions in New Testament Greek which recognizes a “core constraint” for each conjunction, some basic relationship being marked between what precedes and what follows which can be found in some form each time that conjunction occurs. Such an approach fits well within multiple linguistic schools currently active in research on New Testament Greek. Within monosemous approaches to lexicography this core constraint found in every occurrence would be considered the semantic

1. Including Heckert, *Discourse Function*; Levinsohn, *Discourse Features*; Runge, *Discourse Grammar*. This is following the theoretical approach found in Blakemore, *Relevance*.

value of the word itself.² The monosemous school of thought approaches all words in a language as each having at their core only a single invariable meaning. Within cognitive linguistics, on the other hand, this core constraint would be considered an example of a “schema,” which is defined as “an abstract characterization that is fully compatible with all the members of the category it defines (so membership is not a matter of degree); it is an integrated structure that embodies the commonality of its members, which are conceptions of greater specificity and detail that elaborate the schema in contrasting ways.”³ While cognitive approaches would emphatically deny that each and every word in a language can be reduced to a single invariable meaning,⁴ they do find agreement with monosemous approaches on the fact that there are at least some word-classes that operate in this way. And, as already mentioned, there are those who have argued that Greek conjunctions are just such a word-class that operates in this way, describing this phenomenon with the more theory-neutral designation “core constraint” to speak of that basic relationship between clauses which a given conjunction will always mark.

But if such a core-constraint approach to conjunction lexicography is adopted, then what does one do with times the standard lexica advocate senses of the conjunction that lie far outside the bounds of—or are even opposite to—the core constraint for that conjunction? Obviously, something has to give. Either the conjunction has these radically divergent meanings and lacks a core constraint, or it lacks these radically divergent meanings and has a core constraint. So which one is it?

2. Ruhl, *Monosemy*.

3. Langacker, *Foundations*, 371.

4. The semantics of other word-classes would be considered in terms of prototypes, where there is a prototypical use of the word which the word most readily calls to mind, and by extension the word can also come to be used whenever the referent bears a close enough resemblance to the prototype, though the various extensions in meaning do not necessarily have to have anything in common with each other beyond the fact that they all in some way resemble the prototype. See Langacker, *Foundations*, 16–17, 371.

Examples of just such a dilemma can be seen in the times BDAG attributes something of an inferential sense to conjunctions that are not typically inferential. BDAG does so with the corrective conjunction *ἀλλά*,⁵ though admittedly what exactly the lexicon intends is often obscured by its too heavy reliance on glosses. For its fifth definition of *ἀλλά* BDAG describes the conjunction as being used “to strengthen the command,” but then provides as glosses *now*, *then*, and *so*, the latter two of which are inferential in nature.⁶ Toward the end of the definition BDAG more explicitly says that “*ἀλλά* is also used to introduce an inference from what precedes: *so*, *therefore*, *accordingly*.” Accordingly, despite BDAG’s lack of clarity for this entry, the overall impression it gives is that before imperatives *ἀλλά* can function inferentially.

BDAG also attributes an inferential sense to the explanatory conjunction *γάρ*,⁷ though, just as with its treatment of *ἀλλά*, the presentation of this purported meaning is often needlessly unclear. Under definition 1, which states that *γάρ* is a “marker of cause or reason,” sub-definition f states that *γάρ* is found “oft. in

5. This inferential sense is also given for *ἀλλά* in Beale et al. (*Lexicon*, s.v.). This inferential sense was already argued against in Winer (*Grammar*, 451).

6. That *so* is fundamentally inferential in nature is obvious. The non-temporal use of *then* is an extension of its temporal use, marking the material it introduces as taking place under the set of circumstances anaphorically referred back to (Schiffrin, *Discourse Markers*, 246–66, and Dancygier and Sweetser, “*Then*”), which does make non-temporal usages of *then* broadly inferential. Similarly, the non-temporal use of *now* is an extension of its temporal use; however, it puts the attention on what comes next as opposed to what has come previously (Schiffrin, *Discourse Markers*, 230–46, and Aijmer, “*Now*”), which makes non-temporal usages of *now* broadly transitional. As will be seen later, a transitional usage, derived from its corrective sense, is capable with *ἀλλά*, so as a gloss, but not as a definition, *now* at times could have merit when the purpose of *ἀλλά* is to course-correct from informative to imperative discourse, although this is not the case in any of the instances in which BDAG employs this gloss (Matt 9:18; Mark 9:22; 16:7; Acts 4:17).

7. This inferential sense is also given for *γάρ* in Beale et al. (*Lexicon*, s.v.), Wallace (*Grammar*, 673), and Porter (*Idioms*, 207–8). This inferential sense was already argued against in Winer (*Grammar*, 454).

questions, where the English idiom leaves the word untransl., adds *then*, *pray*, or prefixes *what!* or *why!* to the question.” So despite BDAG’s classifying this sub-use under the larger category of causal usages, such glosses, including the inferential *then*, obscure entirely the overall causal nature it attributes to this use.⁸ Later, in definition 3, which contains the imperatives found with *γάρ*, BDAG is much more explicit in positing an inferential sense: “marker of inference, *certainly, by all means, so, then,*” though it later includes a number of indicatives and also attributes to *γάρ* a weaker resumptive sense.

BDAG’s treatments of *ἀλλά* and *γάρ* with regard to their supposed inferential meanings paint an exegetically perilous picture when it comes to conjunction lexicography, one in which these little but important words can mean virtually anything—even the opposite of what they normally mean—and in which these various meanings have no discernable connection to each other. This approach adopted by BDAG is also greatly at odds with the core-constraint approach mentioned above, and that makes these passages where BDAG reads *ἀλλά* and *γάρ* as being inferential to be an ideal test-case as to the validity of the core-constraint approach to conjunction lexicography. Because the inferential sense is radically divergent from the typical senses that these conjunctions communicate, in this article I will examine their contexts to see whether the inferential sense is necessary, or whether instead a corrective sense (for *ἀλλά*) or an explanatory sense (for *γάρ*) can be perceived.

Significantly, in examining these contexts the question to be asked is not whether an inferential sense is *possible* for the context but whether it is *necessary*. This is due to the

8. *Then*, as seen above in n. 6, is inferential in its non-temporal uses. *Pray* is merely an antiquated way to make a request, much like the more modern *please*, but it is often used sarcastically (Stevenson, *Oxford Dictionary of English*, s.v.). It is presumably this sarcastic use of *pray* which BDAG intends here, but the lexicon does not make this explicit. Similarly to *pray*, *what!* and *why!* would at least seem to indicate that the question is meant to reject what had just been said, but no explanation is given as for how this fits within the larger causal usage, and *then*, the first proposed gloss, would run entirely counter to that.

perspectival nature of language.⁹ Language does not simply reflect a situation as it is but instead reflects one particular way of construing it among perhaps many. There is often not just a single logic by which two thoughts might be connected, but the speaker chooses the specific relationship between them they wish to communicate.¹⁰ So even if we can perceive a potential inferential logic,¹¹ and even if that potential inferential logic is the connection which feels most natural to us, the speaker still could have been marking a corrective or explanatory connection instead, and so the task is to see if such a corrective or explanatory connection is contextually viable. If so, there remains no reason to retain such inferential senses of these conjunctions as are outside their core constraints. If not, the inferential senses become necessary and the core constraints are falsified.

2. *ἀλλά* with Imperatives

The core constraint for the conjunction *ἀλλά* has been identified as “correction,”¹² which means it marks what follows as adding information necessary to in some way correct what precedes. Sometimes it does so by following negated information with the correct information, other times by correcting something that might be wrongly inferred from the previous statement. In several instances, however, all with imperational-type

9. See Geeraerts, “Introduction,” 4.

10. See Winer, *Grammar*, 450. BDAG seems to recognize this to some extent when it says, “Many questions w. *γάρ* have both inferential and causal force.” But just because the question could be construed as either inferential or causal to what precedes, that does not mean that the *γάρ* itself marks the question as both inferential and causal.

11. Rudolph (“Reclaiming *Γάρ*,” 57–58) discusses how it was just such a situation which caused the multiplication and radical divergence of conjunction meanings, as translators, lacking a sense of what conjunctions did, relied on their own intuitive understanding of the logical relationship between thoughts to render a conjunction, and these translations then provided the basis for the lexica which later canonized such a proliferation of haphazard glossings.

12. Brannan, “*ἀλλά*”; Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 55–56, 92–100. Heckert (*Discourse Function*, 13–28) uses instead the term “contrast.”

constructions, BDAG claims *ἀλλά* is instead inferential in nature (Matt 9:18; Mark 9:22; 16:7; Acts 4:17; 10:20; 26:16; 2 Cor 8:7; Eph 5:24).¹³ But is that the case?¹⁴

ἡ θυγάτηρ μου ἄρτι ἐτελεύτησεν· ἀλλ' ἐλθὼν ἐπίθεε τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπ' αὐτήν, καὶ ζήσεται. (Matt 9:18)

My daughter just died. *But* come place your hand on her and she will live.

An imperative followed by a future indicative, as here, presents a quasi-conditional, telling someone to do something and then saying what will happen if they do.¹⁵ Consequently, recognizing that connectives' "role must be described at the level of discourse rather than the sentence,"¹⁶ if we look here at the entire ensuing communicated thought, and not just the clause which contains the imperative itself, the corrective value of *ἀλλά* is not difficult to see. Due to the normally permanent nature of death, the girl having died entails the obvious implication that she will stay that way.¹⁷ Her father, however, corrects that unwanted

13. BDAG cites in support of this meaning Moorhouse, "Ἀλλά." However, all Moorhouse demonstrates here is that in a few stock constructions where *ἀλλά* is followed by *ὅτε* or by *μὲν . . . δέ* the sense of correction is sometimes weaker. This last use before a correlative *μὲν . . . δέ* may account for BDAG's citation of Artemidorus Daldianus, *Onir.* 4.27 as an example of an inferential *ἀλλά*, despite the fact that there is no imperative found following it.

14. The body of this article will discuss the examples BDAG gives for such readings specifically from the New Testament because the contexts of these verses are likely more familiar to most readers. Extra-biblical examples given by BDAG will be discussed in the footnotes.

15. Wallace, *Grammar*, 489–92.

16. Blakemore, *Relevance*, 1.

17. In this respect Mark 9:21–22 might seem similar here as it involves a conditional marked as correction (*ἀλλά*) to the implication that a bad situation will stay that way. There, however, the imperative is found in the apodosis, and it is instead the protasis "if you are able" that is being marked as the correction to the implication that the situation is beyond help, so this passage does not really offer us an example of *ἀλλά* as used with the imperative. An extra-biblical example given where the *ἀλλά* should be similarly construed with something other than the imperative is seen in Homer, *Il.* 6.279, where, just as in the identical line 6.269, Hector corrects (*ἀλλά*) his mother's statement that he should make offering to Zeus with the statement that she (*σύ*) should be the one who makes offering to Zeus, while he will do something else.

implication (ἀλλά) with the assertion that she will live if Jesus places his hand on her.¹⁸

A similar example where the entire thought, and not just the clause containing the imperative, corrects an unwanted implication is seen in Mark 16:6–7.¹⁹ The fact that Jesus is not to be seen in the tomb might imply that he is not to be seen at all, but the angel corrects this unwanted implication (ἀλλά) with the information he instructs the women to relate: Jesus will be seen in Galilee. Here, as above, no inferential sense for ἀλλά is necessary.

ὁ δὲ λέγει αὐταῖς, μὴ ἐκθαμβεῖσθε· Ἰησοῦν ζητεῖτε τὸν Ναζαρηνὸν τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον· ἠγγέρθη, οὐκ ἔστιν ὧδε· ἴδε ὁ τόπος ὅπου ἔθηκαν αὐτόν· ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἰπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι προάγει ὑμᾶς εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν· ἐκεῖ αὐτὸν ὄψεσθε, καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν. (Mark 16:6–7)

But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid him. *But* go tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. You will see him there, just as he said to you.’”

It can also be the action of the imperative itself which corrects an unwanted implication of what has just been said. In this next example the Jewish leaders had just admitted their inability to deny a miracle had been done, which might imply an inability to do anything about the situation, but they correct that implication

18. It has been claimed that in wishes and prayers “ἀλλά merely marks a gentle transition from the known present to the unknown and desired future, corresponding very closely with the English ‘well’” (Denniston, *Particles*, 15). But, whether gentle or not, this use is still corrective as it corrects the implication that the known present must remain as such on into the future.

19. An additional extra-biblical example of this is seen in *Apoc. Mos.* 3. Here God through the archangel Michael tells Adam that Cain, as a son of wrath, is unfit to be told about the revelation of paradise which Adam had seen, which might be taken to imply the bad news that Adam will not be able to pass down this revelation to anyone. God corrects (ἀλλά) this unwanted implication, telling Adam that he need not grieve because he would give Adam another son to take Cain’s place and that son would be fit for being told about this revelation.

(ἀλλά) with the imperative,²⁰ telling themselves they should use threats to at least stop the news from spreading even further.²¹

τί ποιήσωμεν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τούτοις; ὅτι μὲν γὰρ γνωστὸν σημεῖον γέγονεν δι' αὐτῶν πᾶσιν τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν Ἰερουσαλὴμ φανερόν καὶ οὐ δυνάμεθα ἀρνεῖσθαι· ἀλλ' ἵνα μὴ ἐπὶ πλεῖον διανεμηθῆ εἰς τὸν λαὸν ἀπειλησώμεθα αὐτοῖς μηκέτι λαλεῖν ἐπὶ τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ μηδεὶ ἀνθρώπων. (Acts 4:16–17)

What shall we do to these people? For the fact that a sign has been done through them is clear to all who live in Jerusalem and we cannot deny it. *But* to keep it from spreading any more to the people, let's threaten them not to speak in this name any more to any of the people.

Similarly in the following two examples ἀλλά marks an imperative as correcting a wrong implication. Telling Peter that people were looking for him might be taken to imply that he should try to escape, but instead he is supposed to go with them confidently. And Jesus identifying himself as the one Paul was persecuting might be taken to imply that Paul should be cowering in fear, but instead Paul is supposed to get up and get ready for his apostolic commissioning.²² Again, no inferential sense for the conjunction is necessary.²³

20. Morphologically speaking, ἀπειλησώμεθα in Acts 4:17 is not an imperative but a hortatory subjunctive. However, since it, like an imperative, communicates volition and not reality, it may be considered broadly imperatival in nature and can be expected to function similarly as do morphological imperatives at least with respect to the conjunction ἀλλά.

21. A parallel extra-biblical example is found in Herodas, *Mim.* 7.89, where a woman tells the cobbler Kendron that goddesses will soon rush to be his customers and give him a windfall. The woman then corrects (ἀλλά) such an implication of Kendron's financial security by warning him to take care that weasels do not steal his coming fortune. In this case both what precedes ἀλλά and what follows it are meant sarcastically, taking a dig at the degree to which Kendron is overpricing his wares.

22. The phrase ἀλλά ἀνάστηθι, identical to Acts 26:16, is also found in *Jos. Asen.* 14:11. There the ἀλλά is even more obviously corrective in nature, as it replaces a prohibition (“do not fear”) with a positive command.

23. An alternative, but still corrective, way of interpreting ἀλλά in these two examples is shown below, where the conjunction corrects the conversation from informative to imperative.

τοῦ δὲ Πέτρου διενθυμουμένου περὶ τοῦ ὀράματος εἶπεν αὐτῷ τὸ πνεῦμα, ἰδοὺ ἄνδρες τρεῖς ζητοῦντές σε, ἀλλὰ ἀναστὰς κατὰβηθι καὶ πορεύου σὺν αὐτοῖς μηδὲν διακρινόμενος ὅτι ἐγὼ ἀπέσταλκα αὐτούς. (Acts 10:19–20)

As Peter was thinking about the dream, the Spirit said to him, “See, three men are seeking you. *But* get up and go down and go with them, with no doubts that I have sent them.”

ἐγὼ δὲ εἶπα, τίς εἶ, κύριε; ὁ δὲ κύριος εἶπεν, ἐγὼ εἰμι Ἰησοῦς ὃν σὺ διώκεις. ἀλλὰ ἀνάστηθι καὶ στῆθι ἐπὶ τοὺς πόδας σου· εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ὤφθην σοι, προχειρίσασθαι σε ὑπηρετήν καὶ μάρτυρα ὧν τε εἶδές με ὧν τε ὀφθῆσομαί σοι. (Acts 26:15–16)

I said, “Who are you, Lord?” The Lord said, “I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. *But* get up and stand on your feet, because the reason I appeared to you was to appoint you as servant and witness both of the things you saw and will see of me.”

Sometimes the “correction” marked by *ἀλλά* is to course-correct the conversation. An example of this, where the imperatival is merely implicit, is found in Ephesians 5 where Paul, in discussing Christ’s role as savior of the church, has digressed from his primary topic of the respective roles of husband and wife. With *ἀλλά* he corrects course and returns to his primary topic, as if saying, “But back to my main point!”²⁴

ὅτι ἀνὴρ ἐστὶν κεφαλὴ τῆς γυναικὸς ὡς καὶ ὁ Χριστὸς κεφαλὴ τῆς ἐκκλησίας, αὐτὸς σωτὴρ τοῦ σώματος· ἀλλὰ ὡς ἡ ἐκκλησία ὑποτάσσεται τῷ Χριστῷ, οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί. (Eph 5:23–24)

For a husband is head of the wife, just as also Christ is head of the church—he the savior of the body. *But* just as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything.

24. Not long after the example cited here, *πλὴν* is used in the same way in Eph 5:33, to “correct” the conversation from the mysterious one-flesh union of Christ and the Church back to its intended primary topic, the relationship between husbands and wives. An extra-biblical example of correcting from a digression to the more primary point is seen in Arrian, *Anab.* 5.26.4, where Alexander the Great, in speaking to his troops, corrects (*ἀλλά*) from his digression about the consequences of giving up the fight back to his larger point that they should be steadfast in the fight due to the glories that can be gained by doing so.

Such course-corrections marked by *ἀλλά* are especially common before imperatives,²⁵ because one kind of course-correction can be to correct the nature of the conversation from informative to imperative,²⁶ as if saying, “But here’s why I’m talking to you right now!” or “But here’s what you need to do!” Frequent examples are found outside the New Testament,²⁷ but the same logical connection can be observed within the New Testament as well,²⁸ as Paul corrects toward his exhortation to the Corinthians to abound in the grace of giving. Here too, no inferential sense is necessary as *ἀλλά* precedes an imperatival *ἵνα*-clause.

εἰς τὸ παρακαλέσαι ἡμᾶς Τίτον, ἵνα καθὼς προενηρξάτο οὕτως καὶ ἐπιτελέσῃ εἰς ὑμᾶς καὶ τὴν χάριν ταύτην. ἀλλ’ ὡσπερ ἐν παντὶ περισσεύετε, πίστει καὶ λόγῳ καὶ γνώσει καὶ πάσῃ σπουδῇ καὶ τῇ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν ἀγάπῃ, ἵνα καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ χάριτι περισσεύητε. (2 Cor 8:6–7)

As a result, we encouraged Titus that, as he had begun, so also complete for you also this grace. *But*, just as you abound in everything, in faith and speech and knowledge and all zeal and the love from us which is in you, see to it that you abound in this grace also.

25. See *Jos. Asen.* 13:9 where *ἀλλά* corrects Asenath’s prayer from her description of her penitential state to the supplication proper. Also *Sib. Or.* 3.624, 632; Josephus, *Ant.* 4.145, where *ἀλλά*, combined with *συ*, corrects the topic of conversation by bringing it back to the addressed and what they are being told to do. Aristophanes twice uses *ἀλλά* with imperatives following a lengthy and descriptive statement announcing the arrival of a character (*Ach.* 1189; *Av.* 1718) by correcting to how the addressed is supposed to act in response to the coming.

26. See Denniston (*Particles*, 13), who describes such a use as “a transition from arguments for action to a statement of the action required. Hence *ἀλλά*, in this sense, usually occurs near the end of a speech, as a clinching and final appeal.” I would further clarify that a transition to that for which the speech was undertaken can easily be understood as a sort of correction.

27. LSJ, s.v., II.2; MGS, s.v., 2.c.

28. Some of the other examples of *ἀλλά* with imperatives discussed above, specifically in Acts 10:19-20 and Acts 26:15-16, could alternatively be considered as correcting the conversation to the imperative for which the present conversation is happening. Either way the imperative is preceded by an *ἀλλά* which can be considered corrective in nature.

The tone of such corrections to the imperatives for which the current conversation is happening seems to have been somewhat sharp, and lexica give various glosses and explanations which attempt to capture that sharp tone of the course-correction.²⁹ As glosses these might work quite well to represent the tone, but that does not negate the underlying corrective nature of ἀλλά which gives rise to that sharp tone.

In every purported case of ἀλλά with an imperatival signaling inference, the corrective constraint typically seen with ἀλλά fits the context well. This would seem to be clear indication that even when used with imperativals ἀλλά marks some manner of correction to either what was just stated or to what might be wrongly inferred from what was just stated. No inferential sense for ἀλλά is necessary.

3. γάρ with Imperatives

The core constraint for the conjunction γάρ has been identified as “explanation.”³⁰ It marks that what follows provides some manner of clarification to what precedes. Sometimes it does so by explaining why what precedes was the case, other times by explaining why what precedes was mentioned. In a number of instances, however, BDAG claims γάρ is instead inferential in nature. Rudolph has shown that such instances as are claimed to occur with declarative indicatives do not hold up to scrutiny and the explanatory sense persists there.³¹ What remains to be done is to look at the use of this conjunction with imperatives (Heb 12:3; Jas 1:7; 1 Pet 4:15)³² and interrogatives (Matt 9:5; 16:26; 23:17,

29. LSJ, s.v., II.2: “to remonstrate, encourage, persuade”; BDAG, s.v., 5: “to strengthen the command: *now, then*”; DGE, s.v., D.i.1: “*ea, así pues*” . . . “convertido en exclam.”; MGS, s.v., 2.c: “come on! up!”

30. Runge, *Discourse Grammar*, 51–54. Heckert (*Discourse Function*, 29–36) alternatively characterizes it as “confirmation” and Levinsohn (*Discourse Features*, 91) as “strengthening.”

31. Rudolph, “Reclaiming Γάρ.”

32. BDAG includes with the imperatives it cites as being found with an inferential γάρ also the verbless clause οὐ γάρ in Acts 16:37. However, just like the parallels BDAG cites for this usage (Aristophanes, *Nub.* 232; *Ran.* 58;

19, 23; Mark 15:14; Luke 23:22; John 7:41; Acts 8:31; Rom 3:3; 1 Cor 10:29; 11:22; Phil 1:18; 1 Pet 2:20), which have seemed harder to recognize as being explanatory and not inferential. Of these we take up first the combination of γάρ with imperatives.

αἰτείτω δὲ ἐν πίστει μηδὲν διακρινόμενος· ὁ γὰρ διακρινόμενος ἔοικεν κλύδωνι θαλάσσης ἀνεμιζομένῳ καὶ ῥιπιζομένῳ. μὴ γὰρ οἰέσθω ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἐκεῖνος ὅτι λήμψεται τι παρὰ τοῦ κυρίου. (Jas 1:6–7)

Let him ask in faith, not doubting at all. *For* the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. *Because* that man should not think that he will receive something from the Lord.

The explanatory nature of the last sentence is not hard to pick up on here. The fact that a doubter has no reason to expect something from the Lord explains why (γάρ) someone should not doubt as they pray.

εἰ ὀνειδίξεσθε ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, μακάριοι, ὅτι τὸ τῆς δόξης καὶ τὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πνεῦμα ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς ἀναπαύεται. μὴ γὰρ τις ὑμῶν πασχέτω ὡς φονεὺς ἢ κλέπτῃς ἢ κακοποιὸς ἢ ὡς ἄλλοτριεπίσκοπος· εἰ δὲ ὡς Χριστιανός, μὴ αἰσχυνέσθω, δοξαζέτω δὲ τὸν θεὸν ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τούτῳ. (1 Pet 4:14–16)

If you are mocked in Christ’s name, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. *Because* none of you should suffer as a murderer

Plato, *Resp.* 492e; Lucian, *Jupp. conf.* 16) the full idiom includes an adversative following the οὐ γάρ (οὐ γὰρ ἀλλά for all except Lucian, where οὐ γάρ is followed by δέ). This fuller idiom suggests that γάρ retains its typical explanatory constraint, indicating that the present statement, including the following adversative clause, explains the reason for disagreeing with what was previously stated. It may have sounded somewhat like saying, “Because no. Instead . . .” or “Because that is not right. However, . . .” As will be discussed below in the section on γάρ with interrogatives, English style would likely omit the *because* in such cases and allow the causal connection to remain implicit.

For the indicatives BDAG lists under this same heading (Rom 15:27; 1 Cor 9:19; 2 Cor 5:4) it attributes to γάρ merely a weakened resumptive sense. However, while the initial clause may be resumptive material, if one reads further on in the sentence there is in all these cases material which easily serves as being explanatory to what had just been said.

BDAG cites in favor of this meaning Bird, “γαρ.” However, Bird’s thesis is that in a number of instances throughout Mark the purpose of γάρ is to assert that an Old Testament allusion is being made. Bird’s theory was refuted at length already in Thrall, *Particles*, 41–50.

or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler, but if it is as a Christian, don't be ashamed, but glorify God in this name.

Peter's comments introduced by *γάρ* further clarify his statement that there is blessing to being mocked as a Christian by spelling out that for that to be the case they need to make sure the suffering is actually for being a Christian and not for doing something wrong.

τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περικείμενον ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων,
ὄγκον ἀποθέμενοι πάντα καὶ τὴν εὐπερίστατον ἁμαρτίαν, δι' ὑπομονῆς
τρέχωμεν τὸν προκείμενον ἡμῖν ἀγῶνα ἀφορώντες εἰς τὸν τῆς πίστεως
ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτὴν Ἰησοῦν, ὃς ἀντὶ τῆς προκειμένης αὐτῷ χαρᾶς
ὑπέμεινεν σταυρὸν αἰσχύνης καταφρονήσας ἐν δεξιᾷ τε τοῦ θρόνου τοῦ θεοῦ
κεκάθικεν. ἀναλογίσασθε γὰρ τὸν τοιαύτην ὑπομεμενηκότα ὑπὸ τῶν
ἁμαρτωλῶν εἰς ἑαυτὸν ἀντιλογίαν, ἵνα μὴ κάμητε ταῖς ψυχαῖς ὑμῶν
ἐκλυόμενοι. (Heb 12:1–3)

Therefore, as we too have such a great cloud of people testifying around us, let's get rid of every weight and the easily ensnaring sin and run with endurance the race lying in front of us, keeping before our eyes the one in whom our faith is begun and brought to the finish, Jesus, who, for the joy lying in front of him, endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. *Because* you need to consider the one who has endured such hostility from sinners against him so that you may not become tired and weary in your souls.

The clause marked as explanatory by *γάρ* explains why it is that it would be necessary to run with Jesus kept before the eyes: so that his example of endurance may ward off the temptation to give in to tiredness.³³

You may have noticed that in the three passages above I did not render the Greek imperatives into English by using imperatives but by using deontic modal verbs. English

33. An additional extra-biblical example can be seen in Diogenes Laertius, *Vit. Philos.* 6.47, where a young man's accusation of the crowd bothering him is met with the response: "It's because (*γάρ*) you need to stop carrying around signs you want it." The explanation for the young man being bothered is not that it is the fault of the crowd but the fault of the man himself, who should instead stop asking for all the attention.

imperatives are not generally able to occur within subordinate clauses,³⁴ but the same is not true of Greek imperatives.³⁵ This mismatch in imperatival usage between the languages is probably what has made it more difficult to see the explanatory nature of *γάρ* when used with imperatives, as any English rendering which retains both the explanatory conjunction and the imperative mood will automatically feel ill-formed. However, having recognized this mismatch between the languages, and paying attention to the larger context, *γάρ* with the imperative still consistently marks an explanation and not an inference.

4. *γάρ* with Interrogatives

We now similarly examine the use of *γάρ* with interrogatives, looking to see whether an explanatory sense remains perceptible there too or instead an inferential sense is truly necessary. One thing we immediately notice as we look at such examples is that in every alleged case of an inferential *γάρ* with an interrogative within the New Testament the question is always rhetorical in nature.³⁶ Where rhetorical questions differ from other questions is that with other questions the speaker is seeking information *from* the addressed, but in rhetorical questions the speaker is

34. Lakoff (“Clauses,” 479) expresses the exception: “Clauses expressing a reason allow speech act constructions that convey statements, and the content of the statement equals the reason expressed.” Similarly, Verstraete (“Coordination,” 620–22) finds that conjunctions such as *for* and *because* require assertive illocutionary force for non-declarative clauses.

35. Goodwin, *Syntax*, §253; Smyth, *Grammar*, §1842; Rijksbaron, *Syntax*, 44. For other New Testament examples, see the imperatives embedded within relative clauses in 2 Tim 4:15; 1 Pet 5:12.

36. This is not the case, however, in all of the extra-biblical parallels given. Aelius Aristides, *Orat.* 23 uses *γάρ* with a question which is meant to learn information from its answer. Still here, however, the *γάρ* is explanatory, because if Zosimus answers the question of whether Aristides should have fasted in the affirmative (as he immediately does), this explains (*γάρ*) Aristides’ continued indigestion. And similarly in Josephus, *Ant.* 9.92, Hazeal asks Elisha how he would be able to do the things Elisha had just prophesied he would do, but the answer that Elisha would give would serve as explanation (*γάρ*) for the things that Elisha had just prophesied.

seeking to deliver information *to* the addressed. The question is meant to make a point because the answer is implicit within the question itself, and—important for our purposes here—that implicit point being made can easily be used to provide an explanation (γάρ) for something.

ἐὰν δέ τις ὑμῖν εἴπῃ, τοῦτο ἱερόθυτόν ἐστιν, μὴ ἐσθίετε δι' ἐκεῖνον τὸν μνηύσαντα καὶ τὴν συνείδησιν· συνείδησιν δὲ λέγω οὐχὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ ἀλλὰ τὴν τοῦ ἑτέρου. ἵνατί γὰρ ἡ ἐλευθερία μου κρίνεται ὑπὸ ἄλλης συνειδήσεως; (1 Cor 10:28–29)

But if someone says to you, “This has been sacrificed to an idol,” do not eat for the sake of that one who informed you and conscience. By conscience I mean not your own but the other person’s. *Because* why would what is free for me be appraised by someone else’s conscience?

The rhetorical question here communicates that what freedom a person has in Christ is not determined by someone else’s sensitivities. This serves as explanation (γάρ) as to why, when the issue of idol meat is raised, it is that other person’s conscience which would cause a person to refrain from eating, not one’s own.

ἀδελφοί μου, μὴ ἐν προσωπολημψίαις ἔχετε τὴν πίστιν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῆς δόξης. ἐὰν γὰρ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς συναγωγὴν ὑμῶν ἀνὴρ χρυσοδακτύλιος ἐν ἐσθῆτι λαμπρᾷ, εἰσέλθῃ δὲ καὶ πτωχὸς ἐν ῥυπαρᾷ ἐσθῆτι, ἐπιβλέψῃτε δὲ ἐπὶ τὸν φοροῦντα τὴν ἐσθῆτα τὴν λαμπρὰν καὶ εἴπητε, σὺ κάθου ὧδε καλῶς, καὶ τῷ πτωχῷ εἴπητε, σὺ στῆθι ἐκεῖ ἢ κάθου ὑπὸ τὸ ὑποπόδιόν μου, οὐ διεκρίθητε ἐν ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ἐγένεσθε κριταὶ διαλογισμῶν πονηρῶν; (Jas 2:1–4)

My brothers, do not have your faith in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ in favoritism. *Because* if a man with a gold ring and bright clothing enters into your synagogue and a poor man in dirty clothing enters too and you look favorably on the one wearing the good clothing and say, “You should rightly sit here,” but say to the poor man, “You should stand over there” or “Sit beneath my feet,” have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with wicked thoughts?

The lengthy rhetorical question here communicates that it is discriminatory and wrong to show favoritism. This serves as explanation (γάρ) of the exhortation to Christians not to do so.

τοῦτο γὰρ χάρις εἰ διὰ συνείδησιν θεοῦ ὑποφέρει τις λύπας πάσχω· ἀδίκως.
ποῖον γὰρ κλέος εἰ ἀμαρτάνοντες καὶ κολαφιζόμενοι ὑπομενεῖτε; (1 Pet 2:19–20)

For it is favorable if, due to an awareness of God, someone endures pains while suffering unjustly. *Because* what kind of credit is it if while sinning you endure even being beaten?

The rhetorical question here communicates that it is of no credit to endure suffering while doing bad. This serves as explanation (γάρ) to Peter's specification in the previous sentence that the suffering he is talking about must be something suffered unjustly.

The same is seen with rhetorical questions introduced by τίς/τί γάρ.³⁷ In the following example the γάρ shows that the rhetorical question, in denying that there is any benefit to gaining the world but losing life, explains why giving up everything to follow Jesus and find life is a better course of action.

εἴ τις θέλει ὀπίσω μου ἔλθεῖν, ἀπαρνησάσθω ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἀράτω τὸν σταυρὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀκολουθεῖτω μοι. ὃς γὰρ ἐὰν θέλῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ σῶσαι ἀπολέσει αὐτήν· ὃς δ' ἂν ἀπολέσῃ τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ εὕρησει αὐτήν. τί γὰρ ὠφελήσεται ἄνθρωπος ἐὰν τὸν κόσμον ὅλον κερδήσῃ τὴν δὲ ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ζημιωθῇ; (Matt 16:25–26)³⁸

If someone wants to come after me, he must deny himself and pick up his cross and follow me. Because whoever wants to save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. *Because* what good will it do a person if he gains the whole world but loses his life?

In the next example the rhetorical question explains why (γάρ) the scribes' thoughts were evil in questioning Jesus' prerogative to forgive sins.

ἰνατί ἐνθυμεῖσθε πονηρὰ ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν; τί γὰρ ἐστὶν εὐκοπώτερον, εἰπεῖν, ἀφίενται σου αἱ ἁμαρτίαι, ἢ εἰπεῖν, ἔγειρε καὶ περιπάτει; (Matt 9:4–5)
Why are you thinking evil things in your hearts? *Because* which is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Rise and walk"?

37. BDF (§452.1) explains the use of γάρ in such cases as giving "the reason for a reproach (expressed or unexpressed)."

38. Similarly the parallel in Luke 9:25.

And in this next example the rhetorical questions explain why (γάρ) someone is a blind fool for trying to distinguish between the objects on which the oaths are taken.

οὐαὶ ὑμῖν, ὁδηγοὶ τυφλοὶ οἱ λέγοντες, ὅς ἂν ὁμώσῃ ἐν τῷ ναῷ, οὐδέν ἐστιν· ὅς δ' ἂν ὁμώσῃ ἐν τῷ χρυσῷ τοῦ ναοῦ, ὀφείλει. μωροὶ καὶ τυφλοὶ, τίς γὰρ μείζων ἐστίν, ὁ χρυσὸς ἢ ὁ ναὸς ὁ ἀγιάσας τὸν χρυσόν; καί, ὅς ἂν ὁμώσῃ ἐν τῷ θυσιαστηρίῳ, οὐδέν ἐστιν· ὅς δ' ἂν ὁμώσῃ ἐν τῷ δώρῳ τῷ ἐπάνω αὐτοῦ, ὀφείλει. τυφλοὶ, τί γὰρ μείζον, τὸ δῶρον ἢ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τὸ ἀγιάζον τὸ δῶρον; (Matt 23:16–19)

Woe to you, you blind guides who say, “When someone swears by the temple, it’s nothing, but when someone swears by the gold of the temple, it matters.” You are blind fools, *because* what is greater: the gold or the temple which has sanctified the gold? And, “When someone swears by the altar, it’s nothing, but when someone swears by the gift on it, it matters.” You are blind, *because* what is greater: the gift or the altar which sanctifies the gift?

This still explanatory use of τίς/τί γάρ is somewhat frequent throughout the New Testament. Additional examples can be seen in Luke 14:28; 22:27; Acts 19:35;³⁹ Rom 4:3; 11:32; 1 Cor 2:11, 16; 4:7; 5:12; 7:16; 2 Cor 6:14; 12:13; 1 Thess 2:19; 3:9; Heb 1:5; 12:7.⁴⁰

Recognizing this still explanatory use of γάρ with rhetorical questions helps to clarify a diatribal use of the conjunction which has proven difficult: Rom 3:3. The rhetorical question introduced by τί γάρ communicates that, for the purposes of the present conversation at least, some Jews being unfaithful with what was entrusted to them does not matter (and the subsequent rhetorical

39. Here the prior thought being explained is not communicated in the text by direct speech. Instead, the thought being explained is what the clerk would have said in quieting the crowd (*καταστείλας*). Then the clerk explains (*γάρ*) the reason that they can be quiet: the worldwide fame Ephesus has in its connection with Artemis.

40. Additionally, while pedantic teachers of English may insist that appending questions with *because*—whether the question is written as its own sentence or not—is ungrammatical, English as actually exists as a real spoken language does comfortably employ such structures as utilized in the above translations (Lakoff, “Performative Subordinating Clauses”).

question further communicates why that is). This, then, serves as explanation (*γάρ*) as to how being entrusted with these messages in the first place does still constitute a Jewish advantage.

τί οὖν τὸ περισσὸν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου ἢ τίς ἡ ὠφέλεια τῆς περιτομῆς; πολὺ κατὰ πάντα τρόπον. πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ ὅτι ἐπιστεύθησαν τὰ λόγια τοῦ θεοῦ. τί γὰρ εἰ ἠπίστησάν τινες; μὴ ἡ ἀπιστία αὐτῶν τὴν πίστιν τοῦ θεοῦ καταργήσει; (Rom 3:1–3)

So what advantage does a Jew have? Or what benefit is there to circumcision? One that's great in every way. For first is that they were entrusted with God's messages. *Because* what does it matter if some were untrustworthy? Does their untrustworthiness really negate the trustworthiness of God?

At this point I consider it to be sufficiently well demonstrated that *γάρ* is still explanatory and not inferential even when found with interrogatives, but because my argument here is that even in the more exceptional uses the core constraint still holds up, we do need to treat two even more exceptional uses of *γάρ* with rhetorical questions, ones where from an English-speaking perspective the explanatory nature of *γάρ* may be more difficult to perceive initially, and yet still it turns out to be present. Here is the first of these more exceptional kinds of use:

ἕκαστος γὰρ τὸ ἴδιον δεῖπνον προλαμβάνει ἐν τῷ φαγεῖν, καὶ ὃς μὲν πεινᾷ ὃς δὲ μεθύει. μὴ γὰρ οἰκίας οὐκ ἔχετε εἰς τὸ ἐσθίειν καὶ πίνειν; (1 Cor 11:21–22)

For each goes ahead and eats his own meal, and while one goes hungry another gets drunk. *Because* do you really not have houses to eat and drink in?

Here the rhetorical question works a little differently than we have seen so far. It asks a question which, if given the answer “yes,” would be an explanation for the Corinthians’ actions mentioned in the previous statement. But since the answer to the question is and is implied to be “no,” it communicates that there is no good explanation for the Corinthians’ actions. So again the explanatory sense of the *γάρ* is present, but in this setting is meant to show there is no good explanation for what they are doing.

In the second of these more exceptional kinds of use, the rhetorical question found with *γάρ* is used by a speaker not as further explanation of something they themselves have said but as a response to something someone else has said.

λέγουσιν πάντες, σταυρωθήτω. ὁ δὲ ἔφη, τί γὰρ κακὸν ἐποίησεν; (Matt 27:22–23)⁴¹

They all are saying, “Crucify him!” But he said, “(Because) what evil did he do?”

ἄλλοι ἔλεγον, οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός, οἱ δὲ ἔλεγον, μὴ γὰρ ἐκ τῆς Γαλιλαίας ὁ Χριστὸς ἔρχεται; (John 7:41)

Some were saying, “This guy is the Christ!” But others were saying, “(Because) does the Christ really come from Galilee?”

προσδραμῶν δὲ ὁ Φίλιππος ἤκουσεν αὐτοῦ ἀναγινώσκοντος Ἡσαΐαν τὸν προφήτην καὶ εἶπεν, ἄρα γε γινώσκεις ἃ ἀναγινώσκεις; ὁ δὲ εἶπεν, πῶς γὰρ ἂν δυνάμην ἔαν μὴ τις ὁδηγήσει με; (Acts 8:30–31)

Running up to it, Philip heard him reading the prophet Isaiah and said, “So do you know what you are reading?” And he said, “(Because) how would I be able to unless someone will guide me through it?”

These rhetorical questions marked with *γάρ* represent indirect “no” answers to what was just said by the other party.⁴² Rather than simply saying “no,” instead they explain *why* their implied answer is “no.”⁴³ In the above examples, Pilate is explaining why he is not yet convinced to crucify Jesus, the second subset of the crowd is explaining why there is reason (in their opinion) for skepticism that Jesus is the Christ, and the Ethiopian eunuch is explaining why he would not be able to understand what he is

41. Similarly the parallels in Mark 15:14; Luke 23:22.

42. The *γάρ* in such cases does not mean “no.” It is that the rhetorical question as a whole serves as a “no.” More rarely the rhetorical question could serve as an indirect “yes.” In *T. Job* 23:8 Job’s wife uses a rhetorical question to explain (to herself) why (*γάρ*) Satan’s offer to trade her hair for his bread was agreeable.

43. An extra-biblical example where the rhetorical question found with *γάρ* explains disagreement with what was just said is found in Josephus, *War* 1.589, where Pheroras uses a rhetorical question to explain why (*γάρ*) his brother Herod has no reason to treat him so poorly.

reading.⁴⁴ In such cases good English style would likely leave the *γάρ* unrendered and assume, based on what in Grice's Cooperative Principles is often called the maxim of relevance, that hearers will pick up on the fact that the response is an explanation serving as an indirect "no."⁴⁵ Greek, however, explicitly marks that explanatory relevance with *γάρ*.

The tone communicated by *γάρ* with these rhetorical questions may have been somewhat aggressive or cheeky, and lexica give various glosses and explanations which attempt to capture that tone.⁴⁶ As glosses these might work quite well to represent the tone, but that does not negate the underlying explanatory nature of *γάρ* which gives rise to that tone by signaling that the rhetorical question undercuts the logic of the thought to which it is responding.

Recognizing that *γάρ* can mark a rhetorical question as explaining the reason for an indirect "no" answer helps clarify another diatribal use of the conjunction which has proven difficult: Phil 1:18. Those who fashioned themselves Paul's rivals *thought* that they were troubling him through their preaching. But instead of simply saying that they were not troubling him, instead Paul explains the reason why they were not troubling him (*γάρ*), using a rhetorical question that dismisses the idea that he cares if it is someone else who is getting the attention for doing the preaching.

οἱ μὲν ἐξ ἀγάπης, εἰδότες ὅτι εἰς ἀπολογίαὶν τοῦ εὐαγγελίου κεῖμαι, οἱ δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας τὸν Χριστὸν καταγγέλλουσιν, οὐχ ἀγνώως, οἰόμενοι θλίψιν ἐγείρειν τοῖς δεσμοῖς μου. τί γάρ; πλὴν ὅτι παντὶ τρόπῳ, εἴτε προφάσει εἴτε ἀληθείᾳ, Χριστὸς καταγγέλλεται, καὶ ἐν τούτῳ χαίρω. (Phil 1:16–18)

While some proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I am set to defend the gospel, others do so out of rivalry, not with pure thoughts but thinking to trouble me while I'm in chains. *Because* that matters? What actually

44. Cf. BDF, §452.1: "the reason for an unexpressed denial or refusal."

45. Grice, "Logic," where the maxim of relevance is initially introduced as the maxim of relation.

46. LSJ, s.v., I.4: "in abrupt questions, *why, what*"; BDAG, s.v., 1.f: "or prefixes *what!* or *why!* to the question"; MGS, s.v., 2.c: "strengthening: interrogative *ever, so*."

matters is that in every way, whether for pretense or truth, Christ is being proclaimed, and in this I rejoice.

It is not uncommon to come across the comment that *τί γάρ* here or in Rom 3:3 is basically equivalent to the considerably more frequent *τί οὖν*. But if they are as equivalent as claimed, what would motivate the use of the less frequent expression *τί γάρ*? Taking the explanatory nature of *γάρ* seriously allows us both to explain the motivation for the variation, and to respect the particular logic of the speaker which motivated them to use the wording they did.

Even in the situations where an English translation would omit such an explanatory conjunction, the sense of *γάρ* is still explanatory. In every instance of *γάρ* found with an interrogative, we have seen that it was a rhetorical question which served to explain in some way what came before it.⁴⁷ There was never a need to resort to an inferential meaning.

5. Conclusion

The core constraints of these conjunctions do consistently hold up. Even in the face of supposed meanings which would run entirely counter to them, more careful examination of the specific contexts reveals uses which for *ἀλλά* are still some manner of correction and for *γάρ* are some manner of explanation. The implication of this is that not only should we abandon the purported inferential sense for these conjunctions, but we should also be very hesitant to accept any alleged senses for conjunctions which cannot be conceptualized within the core constraint for that conjunction. Instead, we should adopt such a core-constraint approach to conjunction lexicography and exegesis, as it will allow us to better grasp and respect both what

47. We dismiss in passing the remaining extra-biblical example BDAG gives for its description of *γάρ* with interrogatives (Hyperides, *Fr.* 219), as the fragmentary nature of the citation, having no indication of what comes prior to it, makes it impossible to know how *γάρ* might have connected this question to its context.

a given conjunction does and also what an author is choosing to do with it.

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