

*A Thorn in the Flesh of Doctrinal Readers of Plato:
a note on signum interrogandi at the end of an οἶμαι sentence, Rp. 335d.*

Akitsugu Taki

Οὐ γὰρ θερμοῦτος οἶμαι ἔργον ψύχειν ἀλλὰ τοῦ ἐναντίου. Ναί.⁽¹⁾ (Rp. 335d)

The copyist of Parisinus graecus 1807 (Codex A), no one knows on whose advice, used a question mark to end the sentence at Rp. 335d⁽²⁾, and this punctuation has been followed by the copyist of the Lobcovianus manuscript, according to Schneider's report. As far as I know, however, no modern editors⁽³⁾ do this, nor do any commentators⁽⁴⁾ explain such a trifle; yet among over forty translators of this *magnum opus*⁽⁵⁾, Davis, Jowett, Robin, Lindsay, Vretska and Grube & Reeve put a question mark. They left no note *ad locum*. Hence, in what follows I vindicate their practice, not least Robin's.

First, the parenthetical use of οἶμαι occurs with a wh-question, like the verbs ἀπορώ and ἐρωτώ, once at D. 36.44 (cf. γ 255), or with an explicit interrogative force, once at Rp. 558c-d, although modern readers drown out the interrogative tone there⁽⁶⁾.

Second, the parenthetical use of "I believe /think /suppose" in English suggests that by the parenthetical use of οἶμαι a speaker can intend to ask a question. According to anglophone linguistic philosophers' analyses⁽⁷⁾, someone who says, "I believe / think / suppose" parenthetically still has to be sincere in commitment to the embedded

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- (1) F (here and below, according to Burnet's sigla): omit ναί; supra ναί (translation following F's reading: Jowett (a); Saisset). No editors adopt this reading.
- (2) *Pace* Boter, 80. See Taki, 2008.
- (3) See the bibliography below.
- (4) See the bibliography below.
- (5) For the translations I consulted, see the bibliography below.
- (6) For D. 36.44, Sandys & Paley, Pearson, A.T. Murray; For Rp. 558c-d, Vretska, Waterfield.
- (7) Urmson, 1952; Simons, 2007.

proposition. Even though, in spoken language, weakening in anticipation the assertiveness of what the respondent is ready to assert (e.g. ἄρα ... ὡς ἔοικε) triggers his or her response, they assume that the parenthetical use of opinion verbs unavoidably has an assertive character, however much it may be weakened. This use may be too subtle to be reduced theoretically to the standard and explicit, and hence unsophisticated, performative utterance⁽⁸⁾, “I hereby ask you whether ...” However, linguistic data such as The Bank of English⁽⁹⁾ show that there are a number of examples, in both written and spoken sources, especially in British English and with the verb “I suppose”, of a sentence with a question mark. Also anglophone informants, asked about the parenthetical use of these verbs, suggest that while the type “_ p _, I believe / think / suppose” (‘p’ for a proposition such as “the earth is flat”), if used to intend to ask a question, sounds rather unnatural, the type “You mean that _ p _, I believe / think / suppose”⁽¹⁰⁾ sounds more natural. Therefore, in practice, although the potential interrogative force varies among parenthetical verbs and among local and social dialects, the parenthetical use of the opinion verbs can be, and sometimes is, found in an utterance of interrogative force. Among the ancient Greek parenthetical verbs Kühner enumerates (II, 2, 353, 3), οἶμαι (ὀίω)⁽¹¹⁾ is the only verb with such function (Ast’s *Lexicon s.v.*).

(8) For the standard and explicit performative utterance, see Austin.

(9) *Wordbank*, Collins COBUILD on CD-ROM, HarperCollins, 2001.

(10) Any speech embodying the proposition which refers or alludes to the respondent in action, speech, intention, belief, disposition, and social position as logical subject can sometimes be reduced to this type.

(11) Parenthetical use of οἶμαι, οἶμαι, ὀίω (references with an asterisk leave the possibility that the omitted copula is εἶναι): Θ 536, N 153, β 255, ξ 363, π 309, χ 140, ψ 261; A. Ch. 758; Pr. 758, 968*; S. Tr. 536, Ant. 1051; Ph. 498; Fr. 583.4; E. Alc. 353, 565; Med. 311, 331, 588; Heracl. 511, 670, 968; Hipp. 458; El. 1124; Ba. 321; IA 392; Ar. Nub. 1185; Pax. 1286; Av. 75; Th.2.54.3; 4.64.3; And. Myst. 19.8, 39.2, 99.2; Isoc. In Soph. 8.5; Plat. 13.4; Antid. 137.1, 236.5; Philip. 27.1; Is. 2.29; Lycurg. Leoc. 96.1; Aeschin. Tim. 13.2, 19.2, 24.2, 47.8, 58.3, 69.5, 71.6, 78.4, 78.5, 139.6, 147.5, 178.4; Fals. Leg. 3.1, 38.7, 89.1, 159.4; Ctes. 10.4, 33.2, 40.3, 137.1, 140.1, 180.2, 194.7, 211.7, 218.6, 233.7; Epist. 10.10.12; D. Ol. 1.5, 11, 20; 2.10, 14, 20, 23; 3.19, 32; Philip. 1.45; 2.4, 7, 11; 3. 64; 4.3, 6, 40; Pax 3.2; Cor. 46, 149, 225; Or. 8.12, 20, 32; 13.24, 25; 16.20; 19.24, 30, 37, 64, 67, 76, 80, 82, 95, 97, 113, 137, 173, 185, 197, 227, 254, 268, 320; 20. 3, 60, 113, 162; 21.27, 59, 67, 113, 139, 140, 147, 194; 22.25, 42, 63; 23. 47, 101, 122 (bis), 172; 24.60, 74; 29.27; 31.12; 36.12, 44, 54; 37.24, 26, 47, 56; 41.24; 43.10; 44.3, 35, 53, 66, 67; 45.20, 29, 82; 54.19, 38; 55.7, 20; 56.29; 57.46, 53; 58.20, 38; 59.48, 51,

In addition, just as the parenthetical opinion verbs of English, in the same way as adverbs such as ‘perhaps’ and ‘surely’, sometimes by position qualify part, not the whole, of an utterance, so does the verb οἶμαι (s.v. LSJ IV 2).

The reason for choosing the parenthetical use instead of a direct yes-no question is, according to anglophone informants, mainly politeness and the informed anticipation of the interlocutor’s answer. One comments, “in conversation, it may be more polite to

59; *Ex.* 24.2; *Ep.* 13.7; *Hyp. Lyc.* 6.27; *Din. Dem.* 76.7; *Fr.* 7 6.7; *X. Hell.* 5.4.32, 6.4.16; *Mem.* 2.2.9; *Oec.* 3.9, 5.19, 7.39, 15.7, 16.2, 18.1, 19.15, *Symp.* 2.10, 3.11, 8.7; *Anab.* 1.9.22, 2.1.16, 3.1.29, 3.1.35*, 3.2.8, 5.8.22, 7.6.16; *Cyr.* 1.3.11, 1.6.29, 1.6.43, 2.1.5, 2.2.3, 2.2.15, 2.2.19 (bis), 2.2.23, 2.3.6, 2.3.12, 3.1.16, 3.1.28, 3.1.34, 3.3.53, 3.3.59*, 4.1.2, 4.1.3, 4.3.4, 4.3.8, 4.5.54, 4.6.4, 5.1.13, 5.1.14, 5.2.27, 5.4.19*, 5.4.25, 5.4.34, 5.4.36 (bis), 5.5.9*, 5.5.30, 6.1.18, 6.1.40, 6.2.21, 7.1.9, 7.1.13, 7.5.50, 8.2.6; *Hier.* 1.35, 7.8; *Vect.* 4.4, 4.16; *Hipp.* 7.4, 9.5; *Pl. Euthphr.* 4a*, 8c, 8d, 8e, 12c*, 14a; *Ap.* 23c, 23d, 28b, 31c; *Phd.* 59b, 75e, 81b, 81c, 83d, 85b, 87c, 87d (bis), 95e, 101a, 102a, 103d, 106a, 106d; *Cra.* 385c, 386d, 393c, 402b, 410e, 413d, 414c, 414e, 422c, 423a (bis), 424e, 426e, 430c, 433c, 437c; *Th.* 144e, 145d, 155b, 160b, 161e, 164e, 165b (bis), 165c, 166a, 167b, 171d, 178c, 180b, 184b, 189c, 191a, 195d (bis), 198a, 207a, 209c; *Sph.* 220d, 220e, 233c, 240e, 250c*, 251b, 267a, 267d*; *Plt.* 258c, 259e, 260a, 271b, 283c, 285d, 290b, 291d, 292b, 293a, 295a, 300b, 304d*, 307d; *Prm.* 129b, 129c, 143a, 144c, 153b, 153c, 165b; *Phlb.* 19b*, 23d, 27d, 29d, 31c, 35a, 40d, 40e, 43a, 46c, 48e, 49b, 55d, 56b (bis), 58e*, 59b, 65c; *Smp.* 181d, 182b, 182c, 183d, 198e, 204c, 205e, 208d, 209b, 209c; *Phdr.* 235c, 236a*, 240c, 252b, 258d*, 268d (bis), 270a, 276e; *Alc.* 1 106e, 107b, 107c, 110d, 112c, 113d (bis), 117a, 130c; *Chrm.* 154b, 163b, 166c, 170b, 174a; *La.* 184e, 188d, 189e, 191e, 195b, 196e*, 197b; *Ly.* 206c, 208b, 209c, 210a, 211e, 213b*, 217a, 218e; *Euthd.* 280e; *Prt.* 323d, 327b, 328a, 352e; *Grg.* 450c, 457a, 457b, 483b, 483c (bis), 483e, 484a, 484e, 485a, 492a*, 495e, 496b (bis), 496e, 505a, 510e, 511d, 511e, 514d, 520d, 525e, 526a; *Mn.* 76d, 80c; *Hp.Ma.* 284d, 288e, 290a, 290c, 295b (bis), 299b; *Ion* 536d, 540b; *Clit.* 408c, 410c; *Rp.* 332b, 333a, 335d, 336e, 337b, 340d (bis), 341d*, 346b, 351a, 352a, 353a (bis), 368d, 370b*, 370b, 389e, 390a*, 392a, 394b, 396a*, 404d, 406b, 408e, 411d, 425b*, 425c, 429b, 434a, 436c, 439b, 441d, 442b, 444a, 444a*, 444b, 452d, 453b, 455e, 458d, 460a, 461b, 462d, 465a, 466e, 468b, 485d, 487e, 490c, 491a, 491d, 492a, 494b, 501b (bis), 505c, 508b*, 508d, 509b, 516a, 516b, 539a, 550e, 553b, 553d, 554b, 554e, 555c, 555d, 557a, 558d, 559e, 560a (bis), 560b, 560c, 561a, 562c, 564a (bis), 564e (bis), 565b, 566b, 566c, 566e, 567a, 568b, 568c, 571d, 573d, 578b (bis), 579b, 583d, 587b, 596e (bis), 597b, 597d, 598c, 599b, 604a, 606b, 608d; *Ti.* 18a; *Lg.* 629b, 629d, 635c, 640c, 647a, 649b, 661c, 662e (bis), 665b, 676a, 678c (bis), 682c, 700b, 707d, 709d, 711a, 716d, 722a, 779a, 788d, 795c, 798d, 801a, 801b, 812b, 818b, 819e, 822b, 832d, 864d; (*Alc.* 2 140b, 144a, 145b, 145d, 146a (bis), 146c, 147a, 147d, 148d, 149e, 150a; *Hipparch.* 230c; *Thg.* 124b, 124e, 125e, 126a; *Demod.* 385e); *Arist. Metaph.* 1041a1; *Mu.* 391a14, 400b30, *Protr.* 62.2.

anticipate the expected answer in a tentative way rather than to ask a bald open question. It depends on whom you are addressing and how much you know about their views/ideas.” Another comments, “A reason for the choice could be, for example, wanting to show that we know our interlocutor so well that we can guess what his/her response in a certain situation [is].” Accordingly, a speaker who prefers to use some opinion verbs parenthetically, when intending to ask a question, is in a position to take advantage of the interlocutor’s attitude, commitments, and common sense. This is not far from the *ad hominem* argument of Plato’s Socrates.

Third, putting a question mark after a declarative sentence with a parenthetical οἶμαι has sometimes been tried, although it may be unnecessary, for modern linguists, and perhaps, classicists⁽¹²⁾, knowledgeable in the theory of indirect speech act, unless they wish to express a rising intonation. Hence, possible interpretations implied in this practice are worth exploring⁽¹³⁾. In editions, *e.g.*, of Plato, Burnet, although rather parsimoniously and not the first to do it⁽¹⁴⁾, tried this at *Grg.* 496b, *Phd.* 81c, *Rp.* 333a, 558c-d, and 567a, and of other classical works, *e.g.* of Euripides, Murray did it at *Heracl.* 670 and 968. In translations, the mark ‘?’ is easier to catch (*e.g.* Zeyl, *Grg.* 496a-b). Stokes, in his interpretation of *La.* 184e, queries the speaker’s full commitment⁽¹⁵⁾.

Fourth, in the structure ... γάρ ... οἶμαι ... in general, the verb οἶμαι, if it is used parenthetically rather than as the main clause finite verb governing an infinitive⁽¹⁶⁾, qualifies all the other parts including γάρ. Also the particle γάρ, if not an assertive connective, can sometimes refer not to the speaker’s but to the addressee’s previous speech (*e.g.* *Rp.* 429b; *Alc.* 1 107b, 107c; *X. Cyr.* 1.6.29; *Ar. Nub.* 1185-1186). And the causal γάρ can sometimes be used with a question (*e.g.* *S. O.T.* 1017; *Pl. Euthphr.* 12d, *Alc.* 1 125c, 130b). Accordingly, the structure γάρ ... οἶμαι ... , if it is “You said thus

(12) Diggle changes Murray’s question mark at *E. Heracl.* 670 and 968; Page Murray’s at *A. Pr.* 968.

(13) The absence of the parenthetical use of οἶμαι in *Prt.* 329d-331a and *Mn.* 82a-86a is a minor other reason.

(14) A question mark is put at *Grg.* 496b in Codex F (fol. 20’ l. 11), not in Codex B (fol. 390’ l. 7); at *Rp.* 333a in both Codices A (fol. 5’ col. 2 ll. 19-20) and F (fol. 84’ l. 4); at *Rp.* 558c-d and 567a neither in Codex A (fol. 89’ col. 1 l. 43; fol. 93’ col. 1 l. 40) nor in Codex F (fol. 185’ ll. 16-17; fol. 188’ ll. 33-36).

(15) Stokes, 1986: 59.

(16) Cf. *Lycurg. Leoc.* 28; *D. Ep.* 4.2.

because ..., I suppose”, not “In fact, I believe, ...”, comes near to being the type “You mean _ p _, I suppose.”

Fifth, the structure οὐ ... ἀλλά ... is, if used in discussion, often a marker for the contrast between the opponent’s and the proponent’s ideas. In that case, if the speaker is on the proponent’s side, this structure is usually used in a declarative sentence. Mostly in Plato’s works, editors put a full stop to a sentence with this structure. However, the structure as a whole can sometimes also be a unit of idea or form a contrast between a disputant’s own two admissions or ideas (e.g. *Rp.* 335d (*se excepto*), 564a-b; *Demod.* 385d-e). Hence, the structure can also be used in a question.

For these reasons, the speech at *Rp.* 335d can formally be a question as far as its grammatical and semantic structure is concerned, but whether it is depends on its meaning and context.

The context clearly is Socrates’ examination of Polemarchus’ view by asking questions. Socrates is also in an ignorant stance.

The verb οἶμαι here is being used parenthetically because, as it turns out from the ellipsis in Socrates’ next two speeches, the omitted copula is not εἶναι (*pace* Ficinus, Bastien, Bloom) but ἐστί. And as the word order and ellipsis of Socrates’ next speeches at 335d indicates, by its position in the structure οὐ ... ἀλλά ..., οἶμαι qualifies not the whole but just θερμοτήτος ἔργον⁽¹⁷⁾, and by splitting the phrase, it specifically qualifies θερμοτήτος in contrast to τοῦ ἐναντιοῦ.

The structure οὐ ... ἀλλά ... here, when “it is not X’s function but the opposite of X to do so-and-so” is fully or elliptically repeated, is used not to express a contrast in disputation between the interlocutors but by means of an indirect and contrasting formulation to reject a popular idea of the synonymy in cause and effect.

In contrast to *Grg.* 496b or *Rp.* 333a, it may appear harsh if the structure here οὐ γάρ ... οἶμαι ... ἀλλά ... is reduced to the type “You mean _ p _, I suppose” (οἶμαι rendered non-parenthetically: “if I am not mistaken” Davies & Vaughan; “as I imagine” Spens, T. Taylor; not rendered at all: Schleiermacher, Jowett (a), (b), Andreae, Lee, Vretska, Grube & Reeve). The particle γάρ here is troublesome if it is to be causal (Spens, Schleiermacher, T. Taylor, Ast, K. Schneider, Hirshig, Heß, Saisset, Bastien, Preisedanz, Andreae, Lee, Robin, Vretska, Bloom, Yamamoto, Rufener, Waterfield; “Yes, for ...”

(17) Cf. *Grg.* 520d. Contrast *Euthphr* 4a, 8c; *Aesch. Ctes.* 33.

and the like: Davies & Vaughan, Davis, Griffith). Whose and what opinion does Socrates imagine is the reason for the negatively formulated specific synonymy in the cause and effect of cooling? If none, γάρ here is asseverative (Apelt, Chambry, Fujisawa, Vegetti; no translation for γάρ: Jowett (a), (b), Horneffer, Lindsay, Grube & Reeve). This may be a logical conclusion⁽¹⁸⁾. Certainly Polemarchus, if prompted to consider his reason for his previous admissions, would have thought of the synonymy in cause and effect in a general, not specific, form, and would be ready to admit this general theory. Therefore, if one says that Polemarchus' reason for specific synonymities is his belief in another physical specific synonymy, which perhaps he has never thought of, does it sound absurd? Logically it is not well-ordered. However, if this orderliness is queried in conversation, it is allowable and it is perhaps for Socrates, if he is alert to every sign of his interlocutor's, dialectic. How could Socrates need, suddenly in his series of questions, to assert his own belief in a specific synonymy in cause and effect? Following Robin's translation I would rather take the dialectical *hysteron proteron* as arising from logical looseness.

Whether by omitting the copula Socrates deliberately makes the verbal structure grammatically and thus semantically ambiguous⁽¹⁹⁾, and whether his interlocutor by responding ναί catches its effect besides attending to the embedded proposition are open to further scrutiny. Furthermore, whether Socrates' intention to ask a question by the parenthetical use of οἶμαι, thus staying non-committal, is entirely fulfilled, I doubt from the interlocutor's response at 335d (παντάπασί μοι δοκεῖς ἀληθῆ λέγειν). However, the verb οἶμαι in parenthetical use or, perhaps, as a main clause finite verb if properly set in conversational interaction, will be a problem for readers, ancient⁽²⁰⁾ or modern⁽²¹⁾, who try to elicit Plato's doctrine.

(18) If Socrates were being ironical here, the verb οἶμαι could be ironical with the particle γάρ asseverative. See Paley on *A. Pr.* 777; 968 and Griffith on *A. Pr.* 968. The ironical use of οἶμαι is a criterion by which to decide whether Thrasymachus' speech at *Rp.* 344e is a question or not (Schneider *contra* Stallbaum and Adam; see also Jowett & Campbell).

(19) The splitting position of οἶμαι appears in the infinitive structure once at *Phlb.* 22c.

(20) Bekker and C.E.Ch. Schneider propounded that from this passage Sextus Empiricus (*Math.* 11.70), Porphyrius (*Abst.* 2.41) and Eusebius (*PE.* 4.22.8) deduced Plato's thought (cf. Plutarchus *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum* 1102D; Iamblichus *Myst.* 2.10).

(21) *E.g.* Whewell, Cornford and Richards in their compressed translations.

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(Josai International University)