

The Aristotle in Afghanistan Papyrus: A New Conjecture (P. Ai Khanoum, Col. II, 8 – 9)

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Abstract: This paper advances a new textual proposal for the papyrus remains of a philosophical dialogue preserved in a clay imprint, P. Ai Khanoum (inv. no.: Akh III B 77, P.O. 154 = Mertens-Pack 02563.010), usually attributed to Aristotle and thought to be from his fragmentary works *On Philosophy* or *Sophist*. We suggest a new reading for Col. II, 8 – 9, supplying τῶν κοινοτάτων. Besides enjoying good palaeographical compatibility with the remaining traces, this proposal makes the overall argumentative structure in the surviving columns more linear and philosophically consistent. It also presents some novel philosophical contexts for the papyrus. Finally, our new textual proposal raises some further questions about the source of the arguments presented in P. Ai Khanoum, as well as authorship of the dialogue. A new text of those sections whose philosophical content survives (Cols. II, 2 – 12; III), along with a new English translation of this material, appears in an Appendix.

Keywords: Aristotle; P. Ai Khanoum; Old Academy; Forms; participation; causality

I. Introduction

On the 18th of September 1977, the French Archaeological Delegation in Afghanistan, which was excavating a site in Ai Khanoum (possibly to be identified with Alexandria-on-Oxus, in the former Greek province of Bactria), made an exceptional discovery.¹ For in one of the rooms of the royal

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palace – subsequently dubbed ‘the library’ – archaeologists recovered two ancient Greek texts², one of which is nothing less than a section of a philosophical dialogue that discusses the metaphysical question of ‘participation’ (usually referred to by ἡ μέθεξις and related Greek terms, on which see *infra*). The mode of preservation of this text is as unique as its content, since the papyrus on which it was originally written had dissolved, and yet its pulverised fibres managed to transfer the ink onto the lump of clay in which the papyrus found itself encased³.

Since the discovery of the papyrus, much progress has been made in terms of tracking its historical details and explaining the philosophical content. A palaeographical analysis of the writing style has led papyrologists to date P. Ai Khanoum to the middle of the 3rd century BC⁴, but scholars usually agree that the text preserved there must be older – possibly as old as the immediate circle of Plato’s disciples in the Academy, where problems related to the theory of Forms and the question of participation must still have been pressing issues, and subjected to intense debate. P. Ai Khanoum

¹ An accessible introduction to the discovery of the papyrus, its contents, and the problems associated with it, is Barnes 2023. The standard edition of the text, which is the basis for our own, is to be found in the *CPF*, published by Bonazzi with the help of the editorial board of *CPF*, which we henceforth abbreviate ‘R.’ for ‘Redazione’ in 2019.

² For the details of the discovery, cf. Rapin – Hadot – Cavallo 1987.

³ It has been pointed out to us by Mauro Tulli, Michele Corradi, and Dino de Sanctis that this explanation is far from unproblematic, as it presupposes that the papyrus must have been at least partly unrolled in order for the columns to transfer onto the clay without overlaps. To our knowledge, the only scholar who has ever raised concerns over the authenticity of the papyrus, on the basis of its mode of preservation, is Barnes 2023. But the question would certainly call for further scrutiny from papyrologists and scholars of ancient library studies.

⁴ Cf. Cavallo in Rapin – Hadot – Cavallo 1987: 236 – 237 for a description of the writing style, and Bonazzi – R. 2019: 5 for further papyrological parallels.

would then present a mid-3rd century copy of a dialogue written some decades earlier, most likely in reference (or in reaction) to an Early Academic context.⁵ But while this overall picture has never been seriously challenged, P. Ai Khanoum still presents a host of philological and interpretive problems. The former are exacerbated by the fact that the evidence went missing soon after its discovery, so that all the editions subsequent to the one by C. Rapin (cf. n. 2) rely not on the actual imprint of the papyrus in the clay, but on its photographs and the drawing by Rapin himself⁶. Furthermore, this textual uncertainty, combined with numerous exegetical puzzles, has resulted in a variety of attributions, which mostly point to Aristotle's lost exoteric works (ranging from the second book of the *On Philosophy* to his own *Sophist*⁷), but without excluding other thinkers, e.g. Heraclides of

⁵ What sort of dialogue was presented by P. Ai Khanoum? The presence of six *paragraphoi* indicates changes of speaker in the papyrus, but there are indications of narrative as well (signalled by the word εἶπεν) which might suggest either that the main speaker in the dialogue is narrating it a previous conversation to someone else, or that a third person was narrating a dialogue between two speakers. For P. Ai Khanoum's dialogue format, see Jazdżewska 2022: 57 – 59.

⁶ After Rapin's 1987 edition, the papyrus was edited by Isnardi Parente 1992; Rapin 1992; Lerner 2003; Rougemont 2012 (also reproduced in Hoffmann 2016); Rapin at clauderapin.free.fr/3Textes_Akhpapyrus1.htm; Auffret 2019; and Bonazzi – R. 2019.

⁷ For the fullest defence of attribution to Aristotle's *Περὶ φιλοσοφίας*, see now Auffret 2019. Scholars usually adduce as contextual evidence for this hypothesis the fact that at the same site where P. Ai Khanoum was recovered, archaeologists also found a stele with a dedicatory epigram mentioning a certain Clearchus, which accompanied a set of Delphic maxims. Clearchus can be identified with the Peripatetic philosopher, who, on this hypothesis, would have brought to Ai Khanoum a copy of Aristotle's *Περὶ φιλοσοφίας*. But this may be an explanation all too neat (cf. the moderate scepticism of Bonazzi – R. 2019). The latter option, that P. Ai Khanoum preserves a portion of Aristotle's *Σοφιστής*, was advanced by Isnardi Parente 1992, and she believes the main character is (or his

Pontus⁸. It is not our primary intention to enter into the controversy concerning authorship, although at the end of this article we will consider how our analysis problematizes attribution to Aristotle. This should not distract from our primary aim: to offer a new textual proposal for Col. II, 8 – 9, and to lay out the consequences for philosophical interpretation of P. Ai Khanoum. As we hope to show, our new text clarifies the argumentative structure of the dialogue and renders the overall claims being made by the authoritative interlocutor richer and more philosophically consistent.

II. A New Conjecture for Column II of P. Ai Khanoum

The clay in which P. Ai Khanoum is preserved provides only a few faint traces of the first column of text, plus three other columns of varying degrees of readability. Hence, Col. II coincides *de facto* with the beginning of the preserved text. As a point of departure, we present our Greek text and translation of Col. II, 2 – 12, including our new conjectural reading. When referencing passages from the other columns, we will rely on the edition by Bonazzi – R. 2019.

— — —

2 οὐ μόνον]
 τῶν ἰδεῶν φα]μεγ
 κοινωνεῖν τὰ] αἰσθητὰ

5 ἀλλὰ [κ]αὶ τὰς ιδέας αὐ-
 τὰς ἀλ[λ]ήλων.” “φάμεγ
 γάρ”, εἶπεν. “οὐκοῦν [τὸ]
 αὐτὸ αἴτιον τοῦ τῶν
 κοι]νοτάτ[ων] μετίσχει<ν>

10 τῶν ὄντων τ[ὰ]ς ιδέας

position reflects the doctrine of) Xenocrates. We will have more to say about the authorship question in the Conclusions.

⁸ Cf. Privitera 2011: 132. More on this attribution can be found in Hoffmann 2016: 198.

ὅπερ καὶ τ[ο]ῦ με[τέχ]ειν
τᾶλλα [γ]ε τούτ[ων]; αἴτια

2 – 4 οὐ μόνον|τῶν ἰδεῶν φα]μεγ| [κοινωνεῖν τὰ] Isnardi Parente : τῶν ἰδεῶν με|τέχειν οὐ μόνον φαμ]έγ|
[γε πάντα τὰ] Hadot 7 [τὸ] Vendruscolo : [ὥς] Isnardi Parente 8 – 9 το[ῦ τῶν|κοι]νοτάτ[ων] scripsimus :
τοῦ μη|[θε]νὸς ἄλλου Vendruscolo, sed s non aptum vestigiis : τοῦ συ[γ|γε]νοῦς τοῦ Sedley per litt. ap.
Vendruscolo : τῶ[ν α]ὐ[τῶν] [τῶ]ν οὐ .[. .] Isnardi Parente (8 τῶ[ν] recepit Bonazzi) 9 μετ[ίσχ]ει<v> Vendruscolo
12 [γ]ε Sedley per litt. ap. Vendruscolo : [δ]᾽ Rapin 12 post τούτ[ων] interpunxit Auffret 12 αἴτια vel
αἴτια Rapin

Col. II

‘Not only do we affirm that sensible things have a share of⁹ the Ideas, but also that the Ideas themselves have a share of one another.’

‘We do affirm it’, he said.

‘Now, isn’t it true that the cause of the Ideas’ having a share of, among the things that are, those that are the most universal, is the same as the cause of the other things’¹⁰ having a share of them? Causes...’.

The dialogue presented in Col. II features a leading interlocutor who initially establishes a double relation of participation: not only do sensibles share of, or participate in, Forms, but a relation of reciprocal participation obtains among Forms as well¹¹. Hence, while sensibles are mere participants,

⁹ The verb μετέχειν is routinely translated philosophically as ‘participate in’, and the relation signalled by this verb is often called ‘participation’. A more literal translation is ‘have a share of’, where the accusative μέρος is left unspoken due to its redundant nature. For this usage in 5th and 4th century BCE Greek literature and Plato, see Herrmann 2007: 31-35.

¹⁰ I.e., sensibles.

¹¹ At l. 4, κοινωνεῖν is a conjecture by Isnardi Parente 1992: 170 n. 5, motivated by the fact that the assimilation of the final ν to γ in the previous φα]μεγ suggests that the next word begins with κ or γ. Isnardi Parente 1992: 180, however, complains that the lack of distinction (not only terminological, but, in her view, also conceptual) between the two relations of participation in P. Ai Khanoum reveals

Forms can be both participants and things participated in. This proposition gains the second interlocutor's immediate approval. Scholars have aptly recognised Plato's *Sophist* as one of the main texts lying in the background of the idea of participation among Forms (cf. e.g. 254c – d; but also *R.* 476a, referred to by Bonazzi – R. 2019: 11). Yet, at least two aspects of the papyrus' content at this stage of the argument give reason for pause. First, we may wonder about the significance of the minor character's swift assent. One possibility is to read φამὲν γάρ as expressing the minor character's philosophical allegiance: 'We Platonists do affirm it'. On this interpretation, the theory of participation among Forms is merely asserted by the first character, rather than argued for, since it would be common ground for the two interlocutors. But another possibility is that the first character's lines are the result of a (now lost) argument for the necessity of establishing participation between Forms too, in which case the second character need not necessarily be a Platonist (he may simply have been convinced by the other character's argument). At any rate, whether they were expressed or not, the fundamental justifications for why there are modes of participation among Forms can be conjectured from arguments like the one we find at *Sph.* 251e – 252a, in which the Eleatic Stranger argues that: (1) Forms must possess some fundamental properties (e.g. each Form must be a being, if nothing else, in order to be capable of accomplishing its causal functions); and (2) if a thing's possession of a certain property is explained by that thing's participation in the Form of the relevant property, then clearly Forms must participate in other Forms (e.g., in the Form Being)¹².

a simplified and 'scholastic' reception of Plato's thought. Cornford 1935: 255 – 256 notes that μετέχειν and κοινωνεῖν are used in Plato to describe both the relation of participation of a sensible in a Form and that between Forms, but he also argues for the conceptual distinctness of the two.

¹² Judging from Arist. *Metaph.* M.5 1079b33 – 35, it would also seem that Ideas participate in the Ideas of their proximate genera (say, the Idea of man in the Idea of animal): ἔτι οὐ μόνον τῶν αἰσθητῶν παραδείγματα τὰ εἶδη ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτῶν, οἷον τὸ γένος τῶν ὡς γένους εἰδῶν. Cf. also A.9 991a29 – b1. This result, which is not explicit in the *Sophist* (cf. Isnardi Parente 1981: 146 n. 11), is

A second difficulty worth addressing is the vagueness with which the theory of participation between Forms is outlined. A charitable interpretation would have us read ll. 5 – 6 (τὰς ιδέας αὐτὰς ἀλλήλων¹³) as implying only that *some* Forms can participate in *some* Forms; but the reading on which *any* Form participates in *any* Form cannot be ruled out on purely grammatical grounds. This is even more puzzling given that the extent of participation between Forms is the object of a lengthy treatment in *Sph.* 251d ff., where three different options are reviewed: (a) there is no participation among Forms; (b) participation is all-pervasive; (c) there is participation between Forms, but it is selective – the final option being ultimately chosen. Overall, this makes us suspect that participation among Forms is somehow taken for granted (or at least is part of the background of the discussion), and the real focus is the *cause* of participation, which comes under the spotlight in the next argumentative step.

What is sufficiently clear in the next argumentative step (ll. 7 – 12) is that the main interlocutor introduces a higher cause (l. 8: αἴτιον) in order to account for both kinds of participation mentioned in the previous step. At this stage, the implicit idea may just be the general claim that, if a relation of participation obtains between two items, there must be something that *causes* this relation to

indeed necessary if (e.g.): (i) the Idea of man is a man (a premise granted by Platonists); (ii) men are animals; and (iii) being an animal for a thing is explained by the participation in the Idea of animal. On double participation in P. Ai Khanoum, cf. esp. Barnes 2023 and Forcignanò 2017: 170.

¹³ Participation of Forms ἀλλήλων is usually taken to express reciprocity. Cf. Cornford 1935: 256 – 257, who claims with respect to the *Sophist* that ‘participation as between Forms is a symmetrical relation’ by adducing as an example the participation of Being in the two subordinate kinds τὸ καθ’ αὐτό and τὸ πρὸς ἄλλο (*Sph.* 255c – d). So in his view ‘the generic Form partakes of (blends with) the specific Form no less than the specific partakes of the generic’. On reciprocity in Platonic and Aristotelian theories of relativity, see Duncombe 2020: 17.

obtain: the properties and ontological status of this item, later called τὸ τῆς μεθεξέως αἵτιον¹⁴ (Col. III, 6 – 7), will be the object of a fuller discussion in Col. III. Still, ll. 7 – 12 of Col. II have been interpreted in two different ways (call them Reading 1 and Reading 2), ultimately based on the adoption of different conjectures and syntactical reconstructions. In what follows, we will endorse and offer a refinement of Reading 2.

Reading 1, now accepted in part¹⁵ by Bonazzi – R. 2019, was first proposed by Isnardi Parente 1992 and is based on the following textual choices: (a) in l. 7, supplying [ὥς]; (b) in l. 8, reading τῶν; and (c) in l. 9, reading μετίσχει. The translation would be something like: ‘but therefore, it, insofar as it is a cause, does not¹⁶ participate in those beings that are the Ideas, and it is the cause of the other things’ (sc. sensibles) participation in them (sc. Ideas)’. But this construction commits us to a problematic interpretation of τῶν ὄντων τ[ὰ]ς ιδέας, whereby the accusative would work as some sort of ‘possibile predicato nominale’¹⁷ of τῶν ὄντων (‘those beings, i.e., the Ideas’ or ‘those beings – the Ideas, I mean’). Moreover, the argumentative structure of the passage would be obscure. The

¹⁴ It is significant that in *Metaph.* H.6 1045b7 – 9, Aristotle remarks that the Platonists accepted participation but were puzzled, *inter alia*, about the nature of the cause and precise activity of participation (οἱ μὲν μέθεξιν λέγουσι, καὶ αἴτιον τί τῆς μεθεξέως καὶ τί τὸ μετέχειν ἀποροῦσιν).

¹⁵ Bonazzi – R. 2019: 10 do not integrate Isnardi Parente’s supplement of [ὥς] in l. 7, although they do practically translate it as such: ‘Dunque, <il principio>, *in quanto* causa, non partecipa...’.

Moreover, it is problematic to assume that αὐτὸ in l. 8 could refer to a kind of ‘principle’, since there is no word for principle given here, and the most common term for ‘principle’ in Greek (ἀρχή) is feminine, not neuter (as αὐτὸ is in l. 8).

¹⁶ The negative reading would be more easily defensible if one were to print οὐκῶν instead of οὐκῶν, as Isnardi Parente does (the papyrus itself lacks accents and breathings).

¹⁷ Cf. Isnardi Parente 1992: 170 n. 6

authoritative interlocutor has just introduced double participation, but he would now appeal to the same principle to justify only *one* of the two participation-relations, i.e., that between sensibles and Forms.

These difficulties led Vendruscolo 1997 to propose Reading 2, which is based on the following textual choices: (a) in l. 7, supplying [τὸ]; (b) in l. 8, reading τὸ[ῦ; and (c) in l. 9, supplying a ν at the end of the line to restore the infinitive μετίσχει<ν>. On this reading, τ[ὰ]ς ιδέας is the subject of the infinitive μετίσχειν – the whole infinitive clause being governed by ἀξιὸν τὸ[ῦ. The translation would be: ‘Now isn’t it true that the cause of Ideas’ having a share ... of beings ... is the same as the cause of the other things’ (sc. sensibles) having a share of them (sc. Ideas)?’.¹⁸ There are several reasons why this reading is to be preferred over Reading 1. Palaeographically, the traces in l. 8 are not incompatible with τὸ[ῦ. Line 9 is perhaps more problematic because the photograph shows no clear traces of ink after μετίσχει (cf. table 2), so we would be forced to regard the addition of ν as a true and proper emendation. At any rate, the syntactical benefits of the conjecture outweigh its minor palaeographical drawbacks. Philosophically, Reading 2 is also much more promising, because it takes into account both of the types of relations introduced earlier in the passage.

To sum up, we adopt the overall syntactical structure of Reading 2. Where we diverge is in how to reconstruct the rest of ll. 8 – 9. Vendruscolo proposes μη|[θε]νὸς ἄλλου (μη = end of l. 8, [θε]νὸς

¹⁸ This reading requires positing a question mark at l. 12, after τούτ[ων]. We follow Vendruscolo in preferring οὐκοῦν to οὐκοῦν in l. 7, since the latter typically introduces a ‘lively, surprised, or indignant question’ (cf. Denniston 1954²: 432), which would be less fitting for the stolid argumentative tone of these lines than the unemphatic οὐκοῦν (the distinction, however, is not always clear-cut, as Denniston himself points out). Cf. also LSJ s.v. οὐκοῦν, I: ‘οὐκοῦν δοκεῖ σοι . . . ; you think *then*, *do you not*, that . . . ?’. We thank an anonymous reviewer for pressing us on this point.

ἄλλου = beginning of l. 9), which restores the following sense for the passage: ‘Now isn’t it true that the cause of Ideas’ having a share of no other [kind] of beings [than Ideas] is the same as the cause of the other things’ (sc. sensibles) having a share of them (sc. Ideas)?’. This proposal, however, we find problematic for both philosophical and textual reasons. On Vendruscolo’s conjecture, the lead interlocutor would seek to justify, by appeal to the same cause, two very different things, i.e., that which explains why Forms participate in nothing ἄλλου, i.e., only in *other Forms*, and that which explains why sensibles (τᾶλλα) participate precisely in *something other than themselves* (i.e., *Forms*)¹⁹. But this would count as a reason *not* to assign the *same* cause ([τὸ] αὐτὸ αἴτιον) to both kinds of participation²⁰. In other words, in the case of the Forms among themselves, the emphasis on the identity relation (μη|[θε]νὸς ἄλλου) between the participant and the thing participated is not motivated by what has been previously stated, and it seems out of place at this stage of the argument. For we would expect the main character to offer some sort of general justification for double participation *tout court* (i.e., without emphasising the differences between the two cases).

Moreover, there is a problem of palaeographical compatibility. It is clear in the photograph that the second and third letters after the initial gap in l. 9 are ο and τ, that the fourth letter is compatible with an α (as well as other triangularly shaped letters), and that the first letter is probably a ψ²¹. Since

¹⁹ The negative formulation itself causes further difficulties. Technically, the cause of a negative fact (i.e., that Forms *do not* participate in any other kinds of things) cannot be straightforwardly equated with that of its positive counterpart (i.e., that Forms *do* participate in things of the same kind).

²⁰ Indeed the Aristotelian passages quoted by Vendruscolo in support of the μηθενὸς ἄλλου ... τᾶλλα structure point to a strong contrast, rather than a shared similarity (cf. *APr* A.27 43a25 – 29; *Metaph.* α.2 994b9 – 10). This is acknowledged by Vendruscolo himself, who speaks in these terms: ‘si contrapporrebbe significativamente’ (p. 147).

²¹ Cf. the palaeographical analysis by Rapin in Rapin – Hadot – Cavallo 1987: 240 (*passim*), who assigns the following degrees of probability to the individual letters: ‘ν probable’, ‘ο sûr’, ‘τ probable,

the third letter is a τ, as is evident in the photograph, Vendruscolo's reading of ζ is implausible, and this renders his conjecture of μη|[θε]νὸς ἄλλου, which depends on reading ζ instead of τ, unlikely.²² Hence, the combination of philosophical and palaeographical difficulties presents a comprehensive case against Vendruscolo's conjecture of μη|[θε]νὸς ἄλλου in ll. 8 – 9 of Col. II²³.

Given the clear presence of the letter στ, as well as the likelihood of a ν before, and a triangular letter like α, after this sequence of letters, a new reading of l. 9 is required. Our proposal is to read κοι]γοτάτ[ων] at l. 9, to be construed with the partitive genitive τῶν ὄντων (l. 10): on this

car le linteau de cette lettre n'est pas compatible avec υ', and finally 'lignes obliques de lettres triangulaires de lecture incertaine'. The likelihood that there is a sequence of τα, rather than something else, is confirmed by comparison of these letters with the very clear τα at the beginning of l. 6.

²² Moreover, Vendruscolo's reading of the first λ in ἄλλου is unsubstantiated by visual observation of the photograph, and there is not enough space for λλου to appear between στα and the initial μ of μετίσχει (Vendruscolo is aware of this as he offers ἄλ<λ>ου as an alternative).

²³ Similar difficulties apply to the conjecture by Auffret 2019, which is derivative on Vendruscolo's: ἄ[λλο]υ|[μῆ]ν οὐδεν[ὸς]. It involves the same exegetical problems as well as the incompatibility of the υ in οὐδεν[ὸς]. Sedley's proposal συ[γ|γε]νοῦς τοῦ (*per litt.* in Vendruscolo), 'some existing thing which is akin to them' is much valuable as it is sensitive to the same philosophical difficulties we pointed out and manages to minimise them by softening the contrast between the two sets of items. Cf. in particular Sedley's fuller explanation reported by Lerner 2003: 48: 'The strength of the reading is its appropriation «from the previous sentence [of] the point that both particulars and Ideas partake in Ideas and adding the requirement that there be a single cause of both these relations (the same unitary cause as further discussed in column 3)»'. However, Vendruscolo 1997: 147 n. 11 himself already raised questions of palaeographical incompatibility. So, what we are on the lookout for, is a conjecture that respects the same intuitions as Sedley's, while matching the ink traces better.

reading, Forms would be said to ‘have a share of, among the things that are, those that are the most universal’. If our new conjecture is right, it would make sense to understand the definite article τῶν at the end of l. 8, rendering the chief interlocutor’s statement as:

οὐκοῦν [τὸ]

αὐτὸ αἴτιον τοῦ τῶν

κοινοτάτων μετέχει<ν>

10 τῶν ὄντων τ[ὰς] ιδέας

ὅπερ καὶ τ[ο]ῦ μετέχειν

τᾶλλα [γ]ε τούτων;

‘Now, isn’t it true that

the cause of the Ideas’ having a share of,

10 among the things that are, those that are the most universal,

is the same as the cause of

the other things’ having a share of them?’

III. The Advantages of our Conjecture for Column II: Palaeography and Philosophical

Context

In this section, we will first show why this conjecture is plausible on palaeographical grounds and point out its advantages in terms of reconstructing the argumentative structure of Col. II. Next, we will adduce some broader considerations and discuss the Peripatetic context of the conjecture.

III.1 Palaeographical Compatibility and Streamlining the Argument

A major advantage of reading $\kappa\omicron\iota\gamma\omicron\tau\acute{\alpha}\tau\iota[\omega\nu]$ at the beginning of l.9 is that it offers the most natural interpretation of the four visible letters $\nu\omicron\tau\alpha$ ²⁴. We take the letter after the α to be compatible with a τ , where the horizontal stroke intersects the vertical one slightly lower than usual (the same phenomenon occurs just at the beginning of l. 10, $\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$). Finally, while ω ν are surely among the letters that occupy the greatest space in the papyrus, the initial $\tau\tilde{\omega}\nu$ in l. 10 attests that the scribe is capable of adjusting the size of the letters to where they must fit in the line, with a notable degree of flexibility (cf. the description by Rapin in Rapin – Hadot – Cavallo 1987: 240: ‘les boucles du 1^{er} ω sont plus petites que celles du 2^e ω ’). Additionally, on our conjecture of $\kappa\omicron\iota\gamma\omicron\tau\acute{\alpha}\tau\iota[\omega\nu]$, l. 9 would have 18 letters²⁵, and thus it would still fall within the range of 14 – 18 letters displayed in the surviving columns.

More importantly, the conjecture $\kappa\omicron\iota\gamma\omicron\tau\acute{\alpha}\tau\iota[\omega\nu]$ helps to explain why it makes sense for the leading character to assign the *same* cause ($[\tau\acute{o}] \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{o} \alpha\tilde{\iota}\tau\iota\omicron\nu$) to both participation-relations. For whatever the participant happens to be, the things participated in are the same (i.e., Forms): indeed, on this reading, Forms are the ‘most communal’, ‘most shared’, or ‘most universal’ ($\kappa\omicron\iota\nu\acute{o}\tau\alpha\tau\alpha$) of the things that are because they are participated in by *both* kinds of items (sensibles and other Forms). Hence, on this proposal the two participation-relations are presented as being complementary and exhaustive of reality, so that the attribution of one and the same cause to both becomes understandable:

Argumentative Step 1 (Col. II, 2 – 6): participation obtains between sensibles and Forms, as well as among Forms themselves.

²⁴ Note that the conjecture $\tilde{\omicron}\tau\alpha\nu$ was already proposed by Rapin in Rapin – Hadot – Cavallo 1987: 240. Crucially, it was rejected *not* on palaeographical grounds, but because it ‘est incompatible avec le temps du verbe’.

²⁵ Discounting, of course, the final integrated $\langle\nu\rangle$, which, as we posited above, is an emendation.

Argumentative Step 2 (Col. II, 7 – 12): Forms are the κοινότατα among the things that are, because both kinds of beings (sc. sensibles and Forms) participate in them. Hence, in both relations, the things participated in are the same. Since there must be something that causes these complementary relations – Forms with other Forms, and sensibles with Forms – to obtain, isn't it true that the cause of both participation-relations be the same?

III.2 Peripatetic Contexts I: Aristotle

Scholars usually take Aristotle's criticisms of Plato and the Platonists in books A, M and N of the *Metaphysics* to be a useful guide for unpacking Col. II of P. Ai Khanoum, and the passage that is usually adduced in support of the idea of double participation is *Metaphysics* M.5 1079b32 – 35.²⁶ The text, whose argument is highly condensed and elliptical, reads:

ἔσται τε πλείω παραδείγματα τοῦ αὐτοῦ, ὥστε καὶ εἶδη, οἷον τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ ζῶον καὶ τὸ δίπουν, ἅμα δὲ καὶ αὐτοάνθρωπος. ἔτι οὐ μόνον τῶν αἰσθητῶν παραδείγματα τὰ εἶδη ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτῶν, οἷον τὸ γένος τῶν ὡς γένους εἰδῶν· ὥστε τὸ αὐτὸ ἔσται παράδειγμα καὶ εἰκόν.²⁷

²⁶ Cf. Hadot in Rapin – Hadot – Cavallo 1987: 246, La Croce 1989: 71, Rapin 1992: 119 n. 301, Lerner 2003: 47, Hoffmann 2016: 200 n. 91, Auffret 2019: 30.

²⁷ This text is almost exactly the same as what is written at Arist. *Metaph.* A.9 991a27 – b1, with one important change: there, the Greek of the manuscripts reads τὸ γένος, ὡς γένους εἰδῶν, which renders: 'e.g., the genus [is model/Form] as a genus of species'. In commenting on the version of this phrase in *Metaphysics* A, Alexander of Aphrodisias appears to have the same text as that given in *Metaphysics* M, as he explains the passage by saying (*in Metaph.* 105.20-21 Hayduck): τὸ γὰρ αὐτοζῶον παράδειγμα τοῦ αὐτοάνθρωπου· τὸ γὰρ γένος τῶν αὐτοῦ εἰδῶν ἔσται παράδειγμα, ἐπεὶ ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἐστὶ κάκεῖνο.'

And [if we say that Forms are models, and that the other things share in them]²⁸, there will be several models for the same thing, with the result that [there will be several] Forms [for the same thing] too, e.g., ‘animal’ and ‘two-footed’, alongside ‘human-himself’, [will be models for/Forms of] ‘human’. Moreover, not only are the Forms models for sensibles, but also [models] for themselves [sc. Forms], e.g., the genus is [a model for/Form of] Forms/species²⁹ of, as it were, a genus. As a result, the same thing will be a model and a copy.

Here, the charge that Aristotle brings against Plato and the Platonists is that the same things (i.e., Forms) will be both models and copies: for, besides serving as models (παραδείγματα) for sensibles, Forms themselves are in turn modelled after, and thus are copies of, other Forms (e.g., the Forms of their proximate genera, τὸ γένος τῶν ὡς γένους εἰδῶν). And this, Aristotle thinks, grants multiple incompatible ontological statuses to the Forms³⁰. The parallel with Col. II rests on the possibility of mapping the copy–model relation onto the relation between a participant and a thing participated in,

²⁸ Arist. *Metaph.* M.5 1079b24 – 25: τὸ δὲ λέγειν παραδείγματα εἶναι [sc. τὰ εἶδη] καὶ μετέχειν αὐτῶν τὰ ἄλλα...

²⁹ The argument depends, in part, on taking the term εἶδη in both senses as (transcendent) ‘Form’, and as ‘species’ of a genus.

³⁰ The cogency of this argument against Plato and the Platonists has been questioned by Crubellier (1994): 201, who notes that the contradiction is not evident, given that Forms are models and copies *in different respects* (i.e., models of sensibles and copies of other Forms). For Crubellier, the real difficulty lies in the fact that being a copy presupposes a material substratum that the Forms lack, thus barring them from being copies of other Forms. If this were the case, however, Aristotle would be filtering the Platonic παράδειγμα – εἰκὼν relation through his own conception of the relation between form and the material substratum.

an equivalence stated by Aristotle at *Metaphysics* A.6 987b10 – 13 (Plato’s μέθεξις is functionally the same as the Pythagoreans’ μίμησις, with only the name being changed). Yet, as it survives, P. Ai Khanoum never explicitly mentions any *paradigmatic* functions of the Forms, whereas the argument presented at *Metaphysics* M.5 1079b32 – 35 is one among a litany of objections to those who claim that the Forms are models (παραδείγματα), and that sensibles share in them.³¹ Accordingly, we should look elsewhere in Aristotle’s criticisms of the Platonist Theory of the Forms for more suitable comparanda.

Another passage coming from the same polemical context in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* against the Theory of the Forms provides a better parallel to P. Ai Khanoum Col. II. The section we identify as of significance depends on a more general concern that Aristotle wishes to address, namely, that when we speak about a Form, it must obtain consistently in the cases of both substances and non-substances. This is part and parcel of the so-called ‘One over Many’ argument, to which Aristotle has previously referred in setting up the objection we take to be relevant to P. Ai Khanoum.³² In the following passage (*Metaphysics* M.4 1079a24 – b3 = A.8 990b27 – 991a8)³³, Aristotle puts significant pressure on the mechanism of ‘participation’ (μέθεξις):

³¹ See n. 12.

³² Aristotle establishes the relevance of the ‘One over Many’ argument twice: in his introductory precis of Plato’s theory of the Forms (M.3 1079a2 – 4: καθ’ ἑκαστόν τε γὰρ ὁμώνυμον <τι> ἔστι καὶ παρὰ τὰς οὐσίας, τῶν τε ἄλλων ἔν ἔστιν ἐπὶ πολλῶν, καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖσδε καὶ ἐπὶ τοῖς αἰδίοις); and in his inquiry into the kinds of things for which there can be ideas (M.4 1079a21 – 23: καὶ γὰρ τὸ νόημα ἔν οὐ μόνον περὶ τὰς οὐσίας ἀλλὰ καὶ κατὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἐστί, καὶ ἐπιστῆμαι οὐ μόνον τῆς οὐσίας εἰσὶν ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐτέρων) It is repeated again in the passage we take to be of significance to P. Ai Khanoum at 1079a32-33 (τὸ ἐν ἐπὶ πολλῶν), on which see below.

³³ It should be noted that one major difference between the versions in *Metaphysics* A.8 and M.5 is that, in A.8 (e.g., at 990b23), the first-person plural (φαμεν) is used to indicate what ‘we’

κατὰ δὲ τὸ ἀναγκαῖον καὶ τὰς δόξας τὰς περὶ αὐτῶν, εἰ ἔστι μεθεκτὰ τὰ εἶδη, τῶν οὐσιῶν ἀναγκαῖον ιδέας εἶναι μόνον· οὐ γὰρ κατὰ συμβεβηκὸς μετέχονται, ἀλλὰ δεῖ ταύτη ἐκάστου μετέχειν, ἢ μὴ καθ' ὑποκειμένου λέγεται. (λέγω δ' οἷον εἴ τι αὐτοδιπλασίου μετέχει, τοῦτο καὶ αἰδίου μετέχει, ἀλλὰ κατὰ συμβεβηκός· συμβέβηκε γὰρ τῷ διπλασίῳ αἰδίῳ εἶναι.) ὥστ' ἔστι οὐσία³⁴ τὰ εἶδη· ταῦτα δὲ ἐνταῦθα οὐσίαν σημαίνει κάκεῖ· ἢ τί ἔστι τὸ εἶναι φάναι τι παρὰ ταῦτα, τὸ ἐν ἐπὶ πολλῶν; καὶ εἰ μὲν ταὐτὸ εἶδος τῶν ιδεῶν καὶ τῶν μετεχόντων, ἔστι τι κοινόν· τί γὰρ μᾶλλον ἐπὶ τῶν φθαρτῶν δυάδων, καὶ τῶν πολλῶν μὲν αἰδίων δέ, τὸ δυὰς σημαίνει ἐν καὶ ταυτόν, ἢ ἐπὶ τ' αὐτῆς καὶ τῆς τινός; εἰ δὲ μὴ τὸ αὐτὸ εἶδος, ὁμωνυμία³⁵ ἂν εἴη, καὶ ὅμοιον ὥσπερ ἂν εἴ τις καλοῖ ἄνθρωπον τόν τε Καλλίαν καὶ τὸ ξύλον, μηδεμίαν κοινωνίαν ἐπιβλέψας αὐτῶν.

But, according to necessity and the opinions concerning these things [sc. the Forms]³⁶, if the Forms are shared-of, by necessity there will only be Ideas of substances. For they are not shared-of accidentally, but [things] must share of each [of the Forms] in such a way that they are not [merely] predicated of a subject. (I mean, e.g., if something shares of the double-itself, this too shares of the eternal – but [only] accidentally; for it is accidental that the double is eternal.) Hence, the Forms will be a substance. **But the same things signify a substance both here [sc.**

philosophers think about the Forms, whereas in the parallel version of M.5 (1079a20), the third-person plural (φασιν) is used to indicate what ‘they’ (sc. others) say. From this perspective, the text in *Metaphysics* A.8 is closer to what the authoritative interlocutor in P. Ai Khanoum, who also uses the first-person plural, says.

³⁴ Bonitz proposed emending to οὐσίας or οὐσιῶν.

³⁵ Accepting Primavesi's text here.

³⁶ That is, according to both the criteria of philosophy and of dialectic. One wonders about whether Aristotle is pointing to highly regarded or opinions generally accepted by philosophers in the Academy about the Forms.

in the sensible world] and there [sc. in the eternal world]. Or what else will it mean to say that there is something else besides these things, the one over many? And if the Form of the Ideas and of the things that share of [them] is the same, there will be something common [sc. between them]; for why should ‘two’ signify one and the same thing over the perishable twos, and over the twos that are many but eternal, any more than over the two itself and any [particular] two? But if the Form is not the same, there would be [mere] homonymy, just as if someone were to call Callias and his wooden statue ‘human’, without seeking for any community between them.

This difficult³⁷ passage presents one of Aristotle’s most trenchant and persistent criticisms of Platonist metaphysics: in parallel passages of Aristotle’s lost work *On Ideas*, Aristotle argued that if we admit the existence (by observation of the world around us) of sensible particulars, and if we also manage to prove that there is something *besides* the sensible particulars, it does not necessarily follow that whatever is besides the sensible particulars *is an Idea*.³⁸ It is entirely possible to infer something else, ‘common things’ (τὰ κοινά), i.e., properties predicated in common of multiple things, which are neither separate, nor self-predicative, nor perfect. For Aristotle, these properties are universals.³⁹

³⁷ In the words of D. Frede (2012: 283), ‘though the upshot of the argument is clear, the justification is far from transparent’.

³⁸ Alex. Aphr. *In Metaph.* 66.19 – 22 Golitsis. In the *Recensio Vulgata*, the text has ἔστι γὰρ παρὰ τὰ καθ’ ἕκαστα τὰ κοινά, whereas the *Recensio Altera* has ἔστι γὰρ τὰ καθόλου.

³⁹ Cf. *In Metaph.* 81.21 – 27 Golitsis. Examples where κοινόν is used like καθόλου include: *Metaph.* Z.16 1040b21 – 27 and E.1 1026a23 – 27. On the relationship between Aristotelian universals and Platonic Ideas in the context of Aristotle’s criticisms of the Theory of the Ideas, see, inter alia, Leszl 1975: 108 – 115 and Fine 1993: 25. On the apparent interchangeability of the terms τὰ κοινά and τὰ καθόλου in certain parts of Aristotle’s philosophy, see further Fine 1993: 246.

In the above-quoted passage, Aristotle is concerned to show that, if it is to be truly ‘one’ (ἓν) and thus retain its identity, any Idea we might infer from multiple things must signify the same thing regardless of the ontological status of the subject of which it is predicated. So whether we apply the term ‘two’ to the Two-itself, or to any particular (pair of) two things, the sense of ‘twoness’ implied by the predication must remain the same, if the Idea of Two is to remain whole and complete – a true ‘one over many’. If this happens, the ‘two’ that is predicated of the Two-itself and the particular two – or, as he says in slightly different terms, the ‘two’ that both the Form Two and the particular two ‘share of’⁴⁰ – is ‘something common’ (τι κοινόν). But under these conditions the ‘community’ (κοινωνία) that obtains between these objects is not actually unified.⁴¹ The example provided by Aristotle helps to flesh out this claim. Take two particulars which have the same name, e.g., the man Callias, and the wooden statue of Callias.⁴² We refer to both with the name ‘Callias’, which might

⁴⁰ The text reads: εἶδος τῶν ἰδεῶν καὶ τῶν μετεχόντων. Hence, the text is not explicit in stating that the ‘Form of Ideas’ is something the Ideas participate in. But in the context of the argument, what other sort of relation could be implied by the genitive τῶν ἰδεῶν except participation? Indeed, the first sentence in this passage states that the admission that Forms are participated-in (μεθεκτὰ) leads to the conclusion that the Ideas of substances (sc. Forms) participate in those substances (sc. Forms) – although, for Aristotle, this leads to problems, since such participation can be merely accidental, just the way that a pair of eyes shares in the Form of the Double essentially, but only in the Form of Eternity accidentally (the Form of the Double is eternal, but the pair of eyes is not necessarily eternal).

⁴¹ The term κοινωνία is used to refer to participation of the (sensible) beautiful object in the Beautiful ‘itself by itself’ (αὐτὸ καθ’ αὐτό) by Plato at *Phd.* 100d4-6 (with reference back to *Phd.* 100b6).

⁴² We take the otherwise unspecified τὸ ξύλον to refer not just to a wooden statue of any man, although this is a possible reading, but to the statue of Callias himself (the definite article τὸ can

make one think that there is a single Form under which each particular Callias falls. Moreover, both are ‘human’, at least in a certain sense: Callias is a man, and the wooden statue of Callias is (in the shape of) a man. Hence, they feature ‘something common’ (τι κοινόν), i.e., a universal, between them. But they do so in different ways: for Aristotle, the man Callias is *essentially* man, but the statue of Callias is only *accidentally* man. Aristotle formulates this in terms targeted to Platonist metaphysics, according to what is sometimes called the ‘dilemma of participation’: the man Callias essentially participates in the Form ‘man’, but the wooden statue of Callias only accidentally participates in this Form. So while it is possible to refer to both particulars as ‘Callias’, it is not possible to refer to them in an unequivocal way as ‘man’. Hence, the relationship between them is not truly one of Platonic participation; in order for it to be so, the Form in which each chiefly participated would have to be the same.

By recasting the ‘dilemma of participation’ in a slightly more schematic way, we can appreciate the terminological and conceptual parallels between Col. II of P. Ai Khanoum and *Metaphysics* M.4 1079a24 – b3 = A.8 990b27 – 991a8), as well as the consequences of the theory of participation presented there. Aristotle presents the Platonists with two equally unwelcome alternatives⁴³. The second horn of the dilemma is the easier to grasp: if the Form of Ideas and participants is different because they are merely homonymous, then Ideas will be unrelated to the objects of which they are Ideas, and thus (it is implied) they will not accomplish their explanatory or causal functions. But if (first horn of the dilemma) the Form of Ideas and participants is the same, then there will be a further Idea set over both, which is necessary for explaining why both are *Fs* (non-homonymously). While this is not explicit, Aristotle seems to imply that this is enough to start an infinite regress that closely

indicate possession). Aristotle’s argument anticipates his later criticisms of the notion of Forms as models which comes in *Metaphysics* M.5, as discussed above, by assuming that the statue of Callias is a copy of the man Callias, which is its model; but it doesn’t thematize this point at this stage.

⁴³ Cf. Crubellier 1994: 156 and 186 – 188, Cherniss 1944: 305 – 308.

resembles the Third Man: for then, there should be yet another Idea set over this newly introduced Idea and the Idea we started from, and so on *ad infinitum*.⁴⁴ For our purposes the relevance of the passage lies not so much in the type of regress that is generated⁴⁵, but in Aristotle’s terminological choice of *τι κοινόν*, to designate the Idea in which both Ideas and participants share⁴⁶.

These considerations allow us to better explain the translation we initially provided for *[τῶν κοινοτάτων]*, ‘the most universal’, which is the safest option.⁴⁷ This term shouldn’t be interpreted as implying in any sense that Forms are the most ‘abstract’ or ‘general’ among the things that are, but merely as indicating that they are participated in to the greatest possible extent, because both sensibles and other Forms participate in them. ‘Common’ is another possible translation, although it has its own drawbacks (e.g., the potential confusion between ‘common’ and the sense of ‘ordinary’); still, it can be used more cautiously, e.g., when we say that an object has something ‘in common’ with another

⁴⁴ Compare Aristotle’s Third Man Argument (TMA) in his fragmentary *On Ideas* (Alex. Aphr. *In Metaph.* 70.6 – 16 Golitsis, esp. 11 – 14): ‘For if the [man] being predicated is other than the things of which it is predicated and subsists on its own, and [if] the man is predicated both of the particulars and of the Idea [sc. of man], then there will be a third man besides the particular [man] and the idea [of man].’ (trans. after Fine).

⁴⁵ Note, however, that the infinite regress that appears to be drawn as a consequence of the first horn of the dilemma can be seen as a *limit case* of intra-eidetic participation (a Form *F* participating in another higher-order Form distinct from it but sharing the same eidetic content).

⁴⁶ Moreover, the superlative of *κοινός*, too, is well attested in Aristotle’s corpus (for a total of 12 occurrences). Among these, *DA* II.4 415a23 – 25 is a particularly fitting parallel: ἡ γὰρ θεραπευτικὴ ψυχὴ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις ὑπάρχει, καὶ πρώτη καὶ κοινοτάτη δυνάμις ἐστὶ ψυχῆς, καθ’ ἣν ὑπάρχει τὸ ζῆν ἅπασιν (the relative clause explaining *κοινοτάτη*).

⁴⁷ Together with ‘general’, it is the default LSJ translation of *κοινός* in logical contexts (cf. *ibid.* s.v. V). This sense is already attested in Plato (cf. *Tht.* 185b – c).

thing⁴⁸. As we will see in the next section, this is precisely how Eudemus uses this term in his own criticisms of the Platonist Theory of the Forms.

III.3 Peripatetic Contexts II: Eudemus of Rhodes

As has been argued in the preceding section, our new conjecture for Col. II, 8 – 9 [τῶν κοινῶν] refocuses our attention on Aristotle's criticisms of the Platonists' One over Many argument (*Metaphysics* M.4 1079a24 – b3 = A.8 990b27 – 991a8), rather than on the sections where Aristotle attacks the Forms as paradigms (*Metaphysics* M.5 1079b32 – 35), as previous scholars have emphasised. As we will see in the present section, it also raises the likelihood that Aristotle was not the only figure to challenge Plato's and the Platonists' views on the universal extension of (certain) Forms; for similar concerns are raised by Aristotle's student Eudemus of Rhodes.

One of the precious few surviving contemporary critical responses to the Theory of the Forms *not* given by Aristotle is preserved in an argument of his student Eudemus of Rhodes (here itself summarized by Alexander of Aphrodisias (*In Metaph.* 69.19 – 27 Golitsis))⁴⁹:

The argument that brings in the third man goes like this. **They say that the things predicated in common (κοινῶς) of substances are such things [sc. substances] in the full sense (κυρίως), and that these things are Ideas⁵⁰. Furthermore, [they say that] things that are similar to one**

⁴⁸ Aristotle himself moves quite freely between 'universal' and 'common'. Cf. e.g. *Metaph.* B.6 1003a7 – 9; Z.13 1038b11 (τὸ δὲ καθόλου κοινόν); Z.16 1040b25 – 30.

⁴⁹ It is clear from 70.22 – 24 Golitsis that this argument belongs to Eudemus' *On Style*. Cf. Fine 1993: 255 – 6 n. 22.

⁵⁰ Accepting the conjecture of Bonitz, followed by Harlfinger. The manuscripts say τὰ ἴσα. Golitsis conjectures τὰ ἴσα <τούτοις καὶ ὅμοια>, on the grounds (2021: 222* n. 57) that the argument requires that the things predicated of 'sensible' substances should not be ideas. But it is not clear

another are similar to one another by a sharing of (μετουσίᾳ) the same thing, which is, in the full sense (κυρίως), this [sc. *F*]; and *this* [sc. *F*] is the Idea. But if this is the case, i.e., what is predicated in common (κοινῶς) of certain things – if it is not the same as any of those things of which it is predicated – there is some other thing besides it (for this is why the man-itself is a genus, because it, being predicated of particulars, is not the same as any of them). Hence, there will be a third man: [a man] besides the one that is particular, e.g., Socrates or Plato, and besides the Idea [sc. of Man], which is also one in number.

We set aside for the moment Eudemus' central complaint against Plato and the Platonists, i.e., that their theory of Ideas leads to a regress via the Third Man.⁵¹ What is especially important for our purposes is how Eudemus presents the argument of those whom he challenges. On the basis of his presentation, their argument goes something like this:

- (1) What is predicated in common (κοινῶς) of substances is a substance in the full sense (κυρίως).
- (2) *Ideas are predicated in common (κοινῶς) of substances* (***unstated premise**).

from the text that Eudemus is talking about *sensible* substances alone here. Given the fact that, as we saw above, Aristotle suggests that some of the Platonists identified Forms with substances in advancing the notion of Forms of Ideas, it is possible that Eudemus is not restricting 'substance' here to Aristotelian (primary) sensible substance.

⁵¹ For this, see Fine 1993: 220 – 3. She notes (p. 222) that what is distinctive about Eudemus' Third Man Argument (TMA) is that it includes the assumption that any Form of *F* must be 'fully' (κυρίως) *F*. The idea that this idea might be implicit in the so-called 'Resemblance Regress' (Pl. *Prm.* 132d – 133a) is not borne out by the text itself, since there the concern over the extent of taking on *F*-ness is not focussed on the *Idea*, i.e., that the Idea is 'fully' or 'most extensively' *F*. Rather, the 'Resemblance Regress' worries about the extent to which *individual participants* are similar to the Form (καθ' ὅσον αὐτῷ ἀφωμοιώθη at *Prm.* 132d6). We address a similar case below with regards to Aristotle's *On Ideas* (see n. 53).

(3) Hence, Ideas are substances in the full sense (κυρίως).

(4) It is by means of sharing (μετουσία) in some one thing which is *F* in the full sense that things that are similar in being *F* are similar to one another.

(5) *What is shared in to the greatest extent is what makes the greatest number of things similar to one another* (*unstated premise).

(6) *The Idea is shared in to the greatest extent* (*unstated premise);

(7) Hence, the Idea is what makes the greatest number of things similar to one another.

It is unclear from Eudemus' account alone where the Platonist argument would have proceeded from here; at this point in the text, Eudemus takes over and targets the assumptions from (1), (2), and (5), that the Idea is predicated in common of *substances* – by which he means Aristotelian primary substances (sc. sensible particulars) – and that while the Idea is similar to the things of which it is predicated, it is not *the same* as them. In the context of the Third Man, the focus on similarity between Idea and what shares of it at the end of the argument might have led the Platonist to arrive at Forms as paradigms, as one finds (interestingly, in reverse order of argumentation) at the beginning of the so-called 'Resemblance Regress' at Plato's *Parmenides* 132d – 133a. The problem with this conjecture is that there is no evidence the Platonists, whose arguments Eudemus summarizes, were themselves presenting a Third Man Argument: it is Eudemus himself who raises the Third Man objection.

But it is possible that the Platonist argument summarized in brief by Eudemus proceeded exactly along the lines that P. Ai Khanoum does in Col. III. A major concern of Eudemus' has to do with the fact that the Platonist arguments not only assume the universality (κοινῶς) of the Ideas over substances that participate in them, but also that there is a single Idea – the 'same one' (τοῦ αὐτοῦ τινοῦ)⁵² – in which a larger number of substances participate, and that they do so by virtue of the fact

⁵² Cf. P. Ai Khanoum Col. II, 7 – 8: [τὸ] αὐτὸ ἄλλῳ.

that this Idea possesses the character *F* ‘chiefly’ or ‘in the full sense’ (κυρίως).⁵³ This is similar to the inference the authoritative interlocutor of P. Ai Khanoum draws in Col. III:

“ἀλλὰ μήγ καὶ κυριώ-
15 τατόγ γε καὶ πρῶτον
 τῶν αἰτίων δόξειεν
 ἂν τοῦ[το] δικαίως”.

‘Moreover, [if someone] were to think
15 that it [sc. the cause of participation] is most authoritative
 and primary of the causes,
 he would think this judiciously.’

It is clear from the preceding statement that the authoritative interlocutor of P. Ai Khanoum has arrived at the claim that the cause of participation is both ‘most authoritative and primary’ (κυριώτατόγ γε καὶ πρῶτον) of the causes, i.e., the Forms, because all Forms are unmoved (including, conspicuously, the Forms of generation and destruction of sensibles, which are said to be eternal). The implication is that the unmoved Idea, in which all Forms – which are themselves

⁵³ The term *κυρίως* occurs in the *Recensio Vulgata*, and not in the *Recensio Altera*, of Alexander’s text. It is notable that in his epitome of Aristotle’s *On Ideas*, Alexander also preserves an argument with appeal to what is *κυρίως F* (68.17 – 20 Golitsis): ‘In the cases where some same thing is predicated of many things not [merely] homonymously, but as if it were to reveal some single nature, this obtains as true in their case either by virtue of the fact that they are, in the full sense (*κυρίως*), what is signified by the things predicated, such as when we say that Socrates or Plato is a ‘man’, or...’. Still, Eudemus presents a better parallel for P. Ai Khanoum than this section of Aristotle’s *On Ideas*, because his arguments address both the conditions of wide (*κοινῶς*) participation and high degree (*κυρίως*) of *F*-ness found in the papyrus.

unmoved – participates, is both more authoritative and prior to them because it is not moved or affected even by these subordinate Forms.⁵⁴ Once again, the chief interlocutor of P. Ai Khanoum is advancing a One over Many argument, which is subject to Third Man objections. This corresponds with what Eudemus says: he complains that the Theory of the Forms advanced by Plato and the Platonists is grounded in their notion that the superior substance, i.e., that which is ‘in the full sense’ (κυρίως) *F*, is most widely (κοινῶς) predicated of the things that participate in it, including both substances and non-substances that can be said to be *F*. With one exception, this is precisely what the authoritative interlocutor of P. Ai Khanoum is arguing. The exception is important, though: for P. Ai Khanoum presents this issue of extent (sc. κοινῶς) of predication and authority (sc. κυρίως) of superior Form in the context of a debate about *causation*, something that is not expressly dealt with by Eudemus, at least insofar as his account of the Theory of the Forms survives in Alexander of Aphrodisias’ epitome, or by Aristotle in *On Ideas*.⁵⁵ Aristotle does go on to challenge the Platonic and Platonist theories of Forms as causes in *Metaphysics* A.9, 991b3 – 992b18, with explicit focus on the two primary principles of the One and the Great & the Small, and on mathematical objects (numbers, points, lines, etc.) – none of which are attested in P. Ai Khanoum (although the poor state of its survival does not guarantee that they never would have been mentioned). With the exception of one brief reference to participation, at 992a28 – 29 (and here only to point the reader back to what he had said previously about Forms as paradigms at 991a20-22), Aristotle’s criticisms of

⁵⁴ It could be thought that the authoritative interlocutor of P. Ai Khanoum switches between the terms ἰδέα and εἶδος somewhat freely, although there is too little evidence provided by the papyrus to confirm this.

⁵⁵ The term τὸ αἴτιον and cognates do not appear anywhere in the surviving evidence concerning Aristotle’s *On Ideas*. It is noticeable that in her edition and analysis of this text, Fine (1993) only discusses Forms as causes in her account of Forms as causes/explanations in Plato’s *Phaedo* (p. 58), and nowhere in her analysis of Aristotle’s arguments against Plato’s theory of the Ideas.

Forms as causes in *Metaphysics* A.9, 991b3 – 992b18 do not track the arguments given in P. Ai Khanoum. If Aristotle were to be thought the author of P. Ai Khanoum, this incongruence would stand in need of explanation.

IV. Conclusions

In this paper, we have advanced a new conjecture for Col. II, 8 – 9 of P. Ai Khanoum, by proposing the reading τῶν κοινοτάτων. The proposal maximises the palaeographical compatibility with the surviving ink traces and renders the authoritative character's argument in Col. II more linear and cogent. After having established modes of participation between sensibles and Forms as well as among Forms themselves, the authoritative character would appeal to a characterisation of Forms emerging from the previous argumentative step – namely, that they are shared in by *both* kinds of beings (that is, *to the greatest possible extent*) – in order to emphasise the structural similarity between the two participation-relations and downplay the differences they might bear. This specific word choice, then, turns out to play a vital argumentative role, for it prepares the ground for the leading character's attribution of *one and the same* cause to both relations: it is in Col. III that the properties and ontological status of this αἴτιον as κυριώτατον and πρῶτον become the object of a sustained analysis.

While it is evident that the authoritative interlocutor is developing arguments that Aristotle, in some way, challenged in his criticism of Plato's and the Platonists' theories of Ideas (chiefly in *Metaphysics* and *On Ideas*), our new text for P. Ai Khanoum encourages us to look not to the arguments against the Forms' paradeigmatism, as scholars have maintained, but rather to the problems raised by the One over Many. Hence, Aristotle's central objections to the Platonist arguments presented in P. Ai Khanoum come in a passage of *Metaphysics* not typically adduced by scholars (*Metaph.* M.4 1079a24 – b3 = A.8 990b27 – 991a8), where Aristotle posits that the very Form in

which both other Forms and sensibles participate is ‘something common’ (τι κοινόν) to them all. Moreover, the new text of P. Ai Khanoum shows striking correspondences to another attack on the Platonist Theory of the Forms in a fragment of Eudemus of Rhodes, from his lost treatise *On Style* (*In Metaph.* 69.19 – 27 Golitsis), where Aristotle’s student objects to the kinds of arguments put forward by figures like the authoritative interlocutor, namely, those arguments that assume a single, primary and authoritative Idea, over the many things that participate in it. Yet, with its double focus on both *extent* of participation (κοινῶς – κοινοτάτων) and *degree* of superiority of the Idea (κυρίως – κυριώτατον), Eudemus’ summary of the Platonists’ argument for the Form that is One over Many more closely tracks the language and conceptualization of Columns II – III of P. Ai Khanoum than Aristotle’s own arguments. The resulting scenario has implications for the authorship of P. Ai Khanoum, as it presents two options for our consideration: (1) in challenging P. Ai Khanoum’s claims, Eudemus was attacking what *Aristotle* put into the mouth of his authoritative Platonist interlocutor (in his *Sophist*, *On Philosophy*, vel sim.); or, (2) in challenging P. Ai Khanoum’s claims, Eudemus was attacking what *a Platonist* put into the mouth of his authoritative interlocutor (in a lost dialogue).⁵⁶ Which of these two options seems more plausible? Given the fact that his criticisms more

⁵⁶ The most likely candidate for this scenario would be Xenocrates, who: (a) is said, along with Speusippus, to have posited that the Ideas are substances ‘fully’ (κυρίως), whereas sensibles are not (οὐκ κυρίως) (Fr. 15 Isnardi Parente² = Asclep. *In Metaph.* 377, 32 – 34 Hayduck); (b) was accused, along with Plato, of using the Idea of the Good homonomously, on the grounds that there is no real ‘community’ (κοινωνία) between the Idea of the Good and the Idea of the good of each thing that shares in the Idea of the Good (τὸ μετέχον τῆς ιδέας) (Fr. 17 Isnardi Parente² = Sext. Emp. *Adv. Eth.* 28 – 29); and (c) believed that there is a divine, separate, paradigmatic cause over and above the things that it constitutes naturally (Fr. 14 Isnardi Parente² = Procl. *In Parm.* 888 – 9 Cousin²). In this context, Diogenes Laertius (Test. 2 Isnardi Parente² = D.L. 4.11) bears witness to the titles of

directly target what is stated in P. Ai Khanoum, would it be more likely for Eudemus to find fault with a view (somewhat uncharitably) put forward by Aristotle’s authoritative Platonist interlocutor? Or would it be more likely for Eudemus to attack the exact words of a Platonist dialogue that has been lost to us? The answer to these questions depends not only on how we understand the relationship between Plato and the Platonists that came after him, but also on what we take it to mean when we say that Eudemus was a “student” of Aristotle. For if we assume that Eudemus cannot operate outside the strictures of Aristotelian doctrine, then the former appears more likely; but if we assume that Eudemus is an independent thinker, someone who can develop original philosophical claims in a bid to advance knowledge, then the latter appears more likely. To be sure, our new reading of P. Ai Khanoum has not solved the problem of authorship. But it does make us realise the precarious ground on which arguments for authorship are sometimes advanced.

Appendix: Text and Translation of Columns II, 2 – 12 and III of P. Ai Khanoum

Col. II, 2 – 12

— — —
 2 οὐ μόνον]
 τῶν ἰδεῶν φα]μεν
 κοινωνεῖν τὰ] αἰσθητὰ
 5 ἀλλὰ [κ]αὶ τὰς ιδέας αὐ-
 τὰς ἀλ[λ]ήλων.” “φαμὲν
 γάρ”, εἶπεν. “οὐκοῦν [τὸ]

works *On Ideas* (Περὶ ἰδεῶν), *On Forms* (Περὶ εἰδῶν), and *On the One* (Περὶ τοῦ ἑνός), each in one book, by Xenocrates.

αὐτὸ αἴτιον τοῦ τῶν

κοινοτάτων μετρίσχει<ν>

10 τῶν ὄντων τῶς ιδέας

ὅπερ καὶ τοῦ μετέχειν

τάλλα [γ]ε τοῦτ[ων]; αἴτια

2 – 4 οὐ μόνον τῶν ιδεῶν φαμεν | [κοινωνεῖν τὰ] Isnardi Parente : τῶν ιδεῶν μετέχειν οὐ μόνον φαμεν |
[γε πάντα τὰ] Hadot 7 τὸ Vendruscolo : [ὥς] Isnardi Parente 8 – 9 τοῦ τῶν κοινοτάτων scripsimus :
τοῦ μηδὲ ἄλλου Vendruscolo, sed s non aptum vestigiis : τοῦ συγγενοῦς του Sedley per litt. ap.
Vendruscolo : τῶ[ν α]ψ[] | [τῶ]ν ου .[. .] Isnardi Parente (8 τῶ[ν recepit Bonazzi) 9 μετρίσχει<ν> Vendruscolo
12 [γ]ε Sedley per litt. ap. Vendruscolo : [δ]ὲ Rapin 12 post τοῦτ[ων] interpunxit Auffret 12 αἴτια vel
αἰτία Rapin

‘Not only do we affirm that sensible things have a share of the Ideas, but also that the
Ideas themselves have a share of one another.’

‘We do affirm it’, he said.

‘Now, isn’t it true that the cause of the Ideas’ having a share of, among the things that are,
those that are the most universal, is the same as the cause of the other things’ having a
share of them? Causes...’.

Col. III

— — —

2 [± 6] . [

.. [] ὤ[στ]ε

... [] ν

| | |
|----|--|
| 5 | αἰτίω[ν] . [ἀκίνη]τον ἀ- ναγκαῖον εἶ[ναι] τὸ τῆς μεθέξεως αἵ[τι]ον· ἀκί- νητον γ[ὰ]ρ ἕκαστον τῶν εἰδῶν διὰ ταῦτά |
| 10 | τε καὶ τὸ τῆγ γένεσιν εἶ[ναι] καὶ τῆγ φθορὰν αἰδιδιον τὴν τῶν αἰσθη- τῶν". "ἀναγκαῖον", εἶπεν. |
| | — "ἀλλὰ μὴγ καὶ κυριώ- |
| 15 | τατόγ γε καὶ πρῶτον τῶν αἰτίων δόξειεν ἂν τοῦ[το] δικαίως". |
| | — "τοῦτο μὲγ γὰρ [αἵτι]ον πᾶσι καὶ πάσαις ταῖς |
| 20 | ιδέαις [2/3] ἀ[λλ]ήλων . .] . ξω . . [. .]ωδε[. ξ οὐθὲν οὐθενὸς τ[2/3] . . [3/4] . ει γὰρ με[. . . . ν αὐτῶν [|
| 25 | .] ε . ειν τω . . [.] . ων κ . [.] . . . [|
| |] ? [|

4 διὰ [τούτων τῶν αὐ]τῶν dub. Rapin 5 [ἀκίνη]τον Isnardi Parente 20 – 21 [τῆς] ἀ[λλ]ήλων με| [θέξ]εως
Auffret : τοῦ ἀ[λλ]ήλων| [κοι]γωνε[ῖν Vendruscolo

‘...with the result that . . . the causes . . . by necessity the cause of participation is
unmoved. Indeed, each of the Forms is unmoved for these [reasons], and because the
generation and destruction of sensibles is eternal.’

‘That is necessary,’ he said.

‘Moreover, [if someone] were to think that it [sc. the cause of participation] is most
authoritative and primary of the causes, he would think this judiciously.’

‘For this [would be?] the cause for all things, and for all the Ideas . . . of one another . . .
neither from another . . . for if . . . of them . . .’

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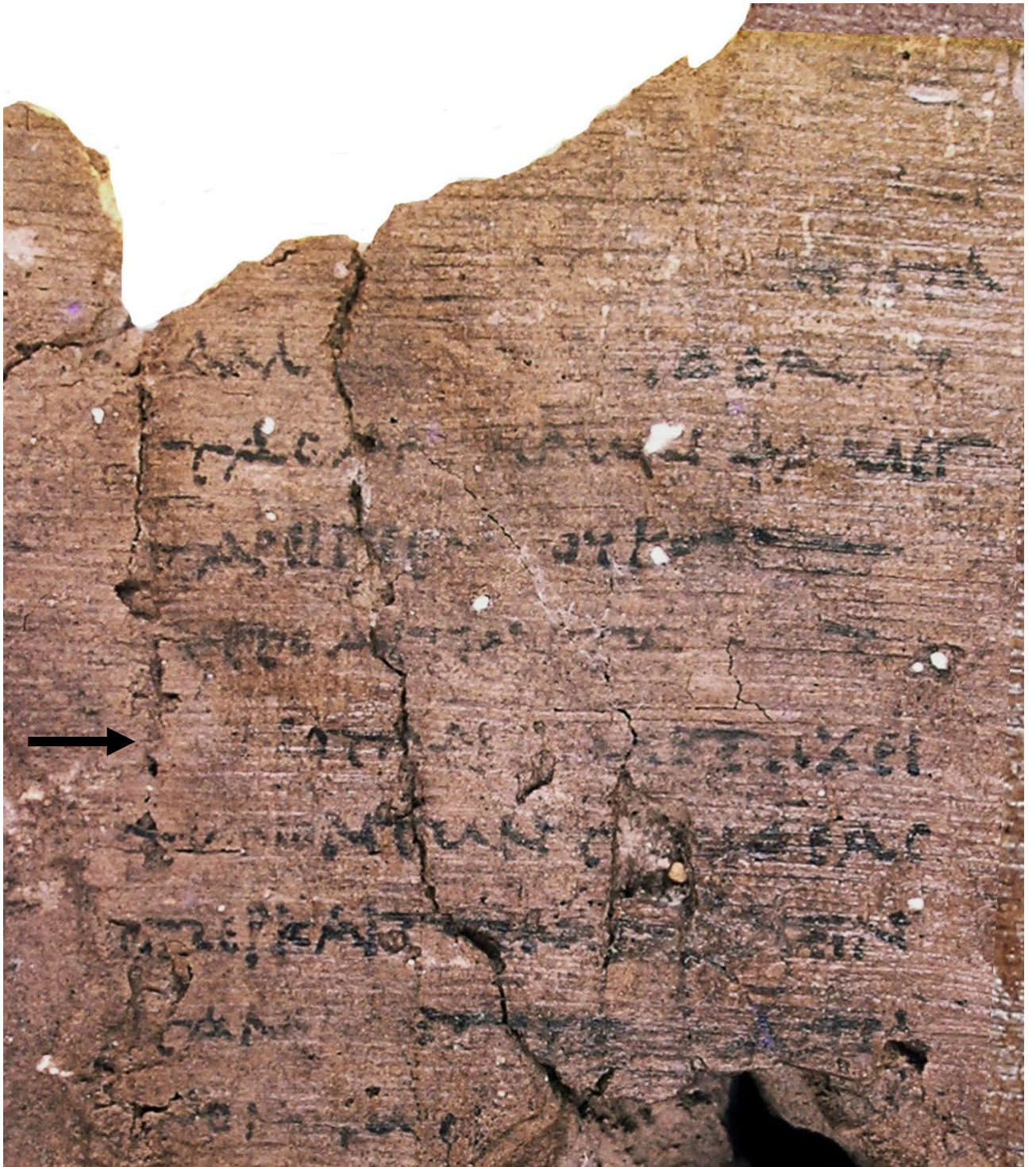
Table 1. Full view of P. Ai Khanoum.

Papyrological Data: Writing area: 19 X 16,6 cm. Number of columns: 4. Lines per column: at least 28. Average column width: 5 cm. Number of letters per line: 14 – 18. Average height of letters: 0,3 cm.



(Courtesy Claude Rapin)

Table 2. P. Ai Khanoum, Col. II, 2 – 12 (detail, with arrow pointing at l. 9)



(Courtesy Claude Rapin)



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