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‘MATTER’ AND ‘ELEMENT’ IN MOSES IBN TIBBON’S HEBREW TRANSLATION OF THEMISTIUS’ PARAPHRASE OF ARISTOTLE’S METAPHYSICS LAMBDA

Foreword

In his *Book of Letters* (*Kitāb al-Ḥurāf*), Alfarabi (c. 870–950) discusses the transfer of philosophical terms from nation to nation and remarks:

> The philosophy that now exists among the Arabs has been translated for them from the Greeks. Those who translated it have endeavored, in naming the concepts present in it, to follow the courses that we have mentioned.² We find some who exaggerate and go too far to express them all in Arabic. This leads them into homonymy. For example, they have given the following two concepts on one word in Arabic: they have named *al-ustuqus* [Greek *stoicheion*] *al-ʿunṣur*, and they have also named *al-hayūlā* [Greek *hyle*] *al-ʿunṣur*. *Al-ustuqus* in not named *al-māddah* or *hayūlā*. Sometimes they have used *al-hayūlā*, and sometimes they have used *al-ʿunṣur* in place of *al-hayūlā*.³

Alfarabi’s complaint here makes perfect sense: if, for the sake of Arabic purism, you take two different Greek terms (*hyle* and *stoicheion* – or their respective Arabized forms, namely *hayūlā* and *ustuqus*) and combine them into one Arabic term (*ʿunṣur*), confusion is bound to arise. This passage shows that not only is this homonymy confusing, it is also redundant, since according to Alfarabi there already exists a “pure” Arabic term for *hayūlā*, namely *māddah*. The historical course of this terminology is obviously much more complicated than Alfarabi presents it to be,⁴

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¹ Note: this is a thoroughly revised version of a paper I presented at the Workshop on Medieval Hebrew Philosophical Terminology in the Making, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, December 2011. I am grateful to the participants in the workshop for their very helpful comments and stimulating discussion. It is still very much work in progress, so please refrain from referring to it or quoting from it without approaching me first.


⁴ For the history of the Arabic term *māddah* and its relation to *hayūlā* (and, obviously, Aristotle’s *hyle*) see H.A. Wolfson, "Arabic and Hebrew Terms for Matter and Element with Especial Reference to Saadia," *The Jewish Quarterly Review* 38/1 (1947), 47–61, at 47–50. According to Wolfson, the term *ʿunṣur* is not a direct translation of *stoicheion* (or *ustuqus*); it is rather a translation of the Greek *chumos* (humor), and its meaning as "element" derives from an analogy offered by Galen between
but in the context of my discussion he puts the problem quite succinctly: in Arabic translations of Greek philosophical works – and subsequently in original philosophical works in Arabic – the term ‘unṣur is indeed used homonymously to render either "element" or "matter" sometimes in the very same text, as I will soon show. The severity of this problem deepens when one turns to Hebrew translations of Arabic translations of Greek works. The Arab translators at least had the original text before them when they made their decisions (whether we – or Alfarabi – agree with them or not). The Hebrew translators, however, working exclusively with the Arabic, sometimes found themselves in the unfortunate position of not knowing which of two Greek terms is translated into a given Arabic term – or yet worse, of being altogether unaware of the fact that the Arabic term is indeed employed homonymously in the text that they are translating.

In what follows I will show how this problem is reflected in the manuscript tradition of Moses Ibn Tibbon's (fl. second half of the 13th century) Hebrew translation of Themistius' (317 – c. 390 AD) Paraphrase of Aristotle's Metaphysics Lambda, and will mainly discuss ‘unṣur, the very same term that Alfarabi is complaining about in his Book of Letters. I will discuss the manuscript with reference to the existing material in Arabic, as well as other relevant philosophical works in Arabic and Ibn Tibbon's other translations. The different manuscripts display different translation approaches to the text, and on the basis of analyzing these difference I will try to form a hypothetical relationship between them that will help reconstruct the text and retrace the translation process.

The Existing Material in Arabic and Hebrew

Themistius' Paraphrase of Aristotle's Metaphysics book Lambda has a very unusual history. It was completely ignored in Late Antiquity, but had considerable influence, which has yet to be sufficiently explored, on Arabic and subsequently Hebrew philosophy, since it was the only

5 For Themistius, his works, and translations see R.B. Todd, "Themistius", Catalogus Translationum et Commentariorum 8 (2003): 57–102, and further references there.

complete work the Arabs possessed as an introduction to Aristotle's text.\(^7\) The work was translated, probably by Ishâq ibn Ḥunayn (c. 830–910/11) into Arabic, although some sources ascribe it to Shamîl (fl. 9th century) or to Abû Bishr Mattâ (d. 940).\(^8\) Also, if what some of the Hebrew manuscripts tell us is reliable, the translation was corrected by Thābit ibn Qurrah (d. 901).\(^9\) Moses ibn Tibbon, a third generation of the celebrated family of translators, translated the Arabic into Hebrew in 1255.\(^10\) The Hebrew translation, in turn, was translated into Latin during the 16th century by the otherwise unknown Moses Finzi, and it was published in 1558 in Venice.\(^11\)

Themistius' original Greek text is lost, as is its Arabic translation, only fragments of which have survived. Only the Hebrew and Latin translations have come down to us in their entirety, and a semi-critical edition of them was published by Samuel Landauer as part of the *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* Series in 1903.\(^12\) I will now briefly present the Arabic fragments, and then proceed to discuss the Hebrew material.

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\(^7\) According to Alfarabi's testimony, the only expositions of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* available to the Arabs was an incompleted commentary by Alexander of Aphrodisias (fl. Late 2nd Century–Early 3rd Century CE), and Themistius' *Paraphrase* of book Lambda (see Alfarabi, "Maqâlah... fi Aghrâd... Arisṭûlis fi Kitâb Mâ Ba'd al-Tabî'ah", in F. Dieretici, *Alfarâbi's Philosophische Abhandlungen*, Leiden: Brill, 1890: 34–38, at 34). For the extant fragments of Alexander's commentary, derived from its quotations in Averroes' *Long Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, see J. Freudenthal, *Die durch Averroes erhaltenen Fragmente Alexanders zur Metaphysik des Aristoteles*, Berlin: Verlag der Königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1885.


\(^9\) Two Hebrew manuscripts (B and R; see below) state that Thābit ibn Qurrah revised the Arabic translation, and it remains in question whether this is actually the case. Undoubtedly, Thābit was qualified for the job. It is well documented that he revised other of Ishâq's Arabic translations, most notably Ptolemy's *Almagest* and Euclid's *Elements*, as well as writing various interpretive works on the Aristotelian corpus, including a *Precise Exposition (Talbîs)* of the *Metaphysics*, which has been published recently. See D.C. Reisman & A. Bertolacci, "Thābit ibn Qurrah's Concise Exposition of Aristotle's Metaphysics Text, Translation, And Commentary", in Thābit ibn Qurra: Science and Philosophy in Ninth-Century Baghdad, ed. R. Rashed, Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2009, 715–776. According to the editors (ibid., 720), this work shows the marks of Themistian influence.


\(^12\) Themistius in Aristotelis Metaphysicorum librum A paraphrasias. Hebraice et latine, ed. S. Landauer, *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca*, v. 5, Berlin, 1903 [henceforth: Landauer]. I will not discuss the Latin translation here. As Frank writes
The surviving fragments of the Arabic translation draw from two different versions: a full version and an abridgement. The beginning of the full version survives in a manuscript whose other pages are lost.\textsuperscript{13} Some generous quotations from it are found in Averroes's *Long Commentary on the Metaphysics*,\textsuperscript{14} and – of all people – in Ibn Taymiyyah's *Minhāj al-Sunna al-Nabawīyah*.\textsuperscript{15} The abridged version (whose author is unknown) shortens Themistius' paraphrase of chapters 6–9 of *Metaphysics Lambda*.\textsuperscript{16} Since among the surviving Arabic fragments there is no case where we possess the Arabic text from both the full and abridged versions,\textsuperscript{17} I have compared the Arabic abridgment to the complete Hebrew text and concluded that it is undoubtedly based on the full Arabic version. According to Pines, the abridgment "denotes considerable skill: the text is pared down to essentials, none of the main doctrines is omitted, and in some passages the shorter text is more coherent than the longer one."\textsuperscript{18} All in all, the surviving Arabic material covers about 40\% of the text.

(\textsuperscript{13} "Notes", 216 n.4), the Latin version "is poor, even as revised by Landauer, and affords virtually no control over the Arabic version."

\textsuperscript{14} Averroes, *Tafsîr Mâ Ba'd al-Ţabî'ah*, ed. M. Bouyges, Beirut, 1948, 1410, 4–15 (= Badawi 329, 6–13; Landauer 1, 5–13); 1492, 3–1494, 14 (= Landauer 7, 26–8, 27); 1635, 4–1636, 13 (= Landauer 22, 11–29; 1635, 6–9 overlaps Badawi 18, 15–17); Averroes 1707, 2–3 (= Landauer 30, 10–12)

\textsuperscript{15} This was first reported by Marc Geoffroy, who ascribes this finding to M. Taïeb Farhat with no further reference. See M. Geoffroy, "Remarques sur la traduction Usâf de la livre Lambda de la *Méphysique*, Chapitre 6", *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* 50/2 (2003): 417–436, at 420. While unable to access Farhat's study, I have located Ibn Taymiyyah's lengthy quotation, which is attributed to Aristotle and does not mention Themistius' name. This quotation is of immense importance; it includes not only of the ending of the paraphrase of chapter 4, but also more than half of chapter 5 (Ibn Taymiyyah, *Minhâj al-Sunna al-Nabawîyah*, ed. Salim, Vol. 1, 170, 19–173, 7 = Landauer 9, 24–11, 4).

\textsuperscript{16} The text is published in Badawi 12–21, but here as well Frank, "Notes", should be consulted throughout. The abridgement is found under the title *Min Sharh Thamastûs Li-Ḥarf al-Lamb* in MS Hikmah 6 of the Dâr al-Kutub Library in Cairo, 206v16–210v7. Gutas, in his detailed study of this manuscript, maintains that it was probably written in Bughara in the first half of the 12th century. D. Gutas, "Notes and Texts from Cairo Manuscripts, II: Texts from Avicenna's Library in a Copy by 'Abd-ar-Razzaq aš-Şînahî", *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 2 (1987): 8–17, at 10. The scribe is 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Sînahî, a third generation student of Avicenna (about him see ibid., 8–9). The continuity within the manuscript and the fact that no pages are missing suggest that the abridgement of chapters 6–9 is all that was copied, or perhaps all that was done in the first place. It is possible that the abridged version of the *Paraphrase*, along with an abridgment of an Arabic translation of *Metaphysics* a that precedes it, comprise together a "Compilation of Metaphysics" belonging to Ibn Zayla (d. probably 1048), a student and colleague of Avicenna (ibid., 13–14). On Ibn Zayla see A.H. Al-Rahim, "Avicenna's Immediate Disciples: Their Lives and Works", in *Avicenna and his Legacy*, ed. Y.T. Langermann, Turnhout: Brepols, 2010, 14–16.

\textsuperscript{17} There are also fragments in Al-Ĥîmî (d. 992), Avicenna (c. 980–1037), al-Shahrastânî (1086–1153), and 'Abd al-Latif al-Baghdâdî (1162–1231), which are important for research but are less helpful for control purposes for reasons I do not discuss here. See the full list in Brague, *Themistius*, 24–30 and his references there. Brague's list should be supplemented with Ibn Taymiyyah (see above, n. 14) and Al-Ĥîmî, *Kūthâ al-Sa'ādah wa-al-I'sâd*, ed. M. Minovi, Wiesbaden, 1957/8 182, 14–18, which was overlooked.

\textsuperscript{18} Pines, "Metaphysical Conceptions", 177 n. 3.
As already noted, Moses ibn Tibbon translated the Paraphrase from Arabic into Hebrew in 1255. With the original Greek lost, and the Arabic evidence fragmentary and of uneven character, the study of the Hebrew text is extremely important, but obviously poses many difficulties as one is standing on very shaky grounds. The Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts in Jerusalem holds microfilms of 10 extant manuscripts of Themistius' Paraphrase, and I list them according to their conjectured chronological order:

[D] Paris – Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 894 [F30349; F31526]
41a–47b (incomplete; ends at Landauer 12, 17)
Provinceal Script / 14th Century

[A] Muenchen – Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 234 [F 1185]
175b–204a (one page is missing between pp. 187–8 =Landauer 17, 3–18, 10)
Spanish script / 14th Century

[B] Muenchen – Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 108 [F 1623]
80a–90b
Spanish (Italian) script / 1441

[C] Leipzig – Universitaetsbibliothek B.H.fol.14 (Formerly in the Stadtibibliotheke of Leipzig) [F 30745]
234b–247a
Byzantine script / 15th Century

[T] Torino – Biblioteca Nazionale Universitaria Cod. AI 14 [F 34308]
560a–567b (this manuscript survived a fire in the Torino Library, most of the edges of the folios are burnt, eliminating some of the text)
Provinceal Script / 1471

63a-77b (beginning missing; starts at Landauer 3, 14)
Spanish Script / 15th Century

[P] Paris - Bibliothèque Nationale heb. 1054 [F33997]
74b–82b

19 To avoid confusion, when available I follow Landauer's abbreviations for the manuscripts he used in his edition. See Landauer, vi. The dating of the manuscripts is based on the information provided in the computerized catalog of the Institute of Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts [henceforth: IMHM] and consultation with the institute's staff. Each item is appended by its code in the IMHM in square brackets. For further bibliography see the relevant item in the computerized catalog of the IMHM: <http://aleph.nli.org.il/F?func=file&file_name=find-b&local_base=nnlms>. 
Spanish Script / 15th Century

[O] Oxford – Bodleian Library MS Can. Or. 63 (Cat. Neubauer 1377) [F 22401]
134a–151b

Italian Script / 15th Century

[R] Firenze – Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana Or. 471 [F 19174]
154a–179b

Spanish Script / 15th Century

[N] Leiden – Bibliotheek der Rijksuniversiteit Cod. Or. 4758 [F 17368]
345a–353a / incomplete (ends at Landauer 17, 15)

Spanish Script / 15th–16th Century

Of the 10 manuscripts listed here, Landauer used 5 (A, B, C, D, O). He chose not to use P and N, and wasn’t able to consult T. He does not refer to M and R, which were probably unknown to him. Upon preliminary analysis of the manuscripts for my forthcoming new edition of the text, 6 of them can be divided into pairs, one stemming from the other: P stems from A; R stems from B; and O stems from C. N, undoubtedly the latest of them all, besides being incomplete, is full of errors and has (sometimes chimerical) readings stemming from all of the manuscript traditions. Manuscript T has survived a fire, and its microfilm is virtually impossible to work with, so I have postponed my analysis of it until I inspect the actual manuscript. In the following discussion I therefore use manuscripts A, B, C, D, and M. Of these, manuscript C stands out as representing a revised version of the translation which exhibits active interference in the terminology. Whether Moses Ibn Tibbon himself or someone else is responsible for these revisions remains, for the moment, an open question.

20 Landauer, vi.
21 Steinschneider, in his survey of the manuscripts, doesn’t record them either. See M. Steinschneider, Die Hebräischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters und die Juden als Dolmetscher: ein Beitrag zur Literaturgeschichte des Mittelalters, meist nach handschriftlichen, Berlin, 1893, §89 (pp. 176–177).
22 Here are a few examples: mashal for dimyôn; hevedel for hefresh; ra’ïy for yithayev; hadrâchah for hanhagah. It is important to note that a second hand had compared C with a more reliable manuscript that has not reached us and corrected it rather meticulously throughout. Since none of these corrections affect the terminological novelties in C, it is safe to assume that the manuscript compared with it shared them. Therefore we can add another theoretical manuscript to the group CO.
The relevant Greek terms for my discussion are *hyle* and *stoicheion*. The surviving Arabic translates *hyle* into either *hayūlā*, or *māddah*, or *‘unṣur*. The term *stoicheion* is translated into *‘unṣur* and, in the beginning of the text, into *rukn*. The term *ustuqus*, which is a common translation/transliteration of *stoicheion*, does not appear in the Arabic fragments, and I doubt that it was used in the Arabic at all. In Hebrew, the term *māddah* is always translated into *ḥōmer*. In most of the manuscripts the term *hayūlā* is translated primarily into *hiyūlī* and rarely into *ḥōmer* (there is a slight variation among manuscripts A, B, and M in this respect). However, manuscript C stands in stark opposition to this: it retains the first 3 occurrences of *hiyūlī*, but after that it consistently translates all of the occurrences of *hayūlā* into *ḥōmer*. Here I will focus on the term *‘unṣur*, which is translated either into *yesōd* or into *ḥōmer*, with considerable variation among the different manuscripts.

Taken together, the terms *hiyūlī*, *ḥōmer* and *yesōd* appear 127 times in Ibn Tibbon's Hebrew translation. Of these, we have the Arabic original of 32 occurrences. Furthermore, there are 27 instances in which Themistius' text can be confidently shown to quote Aristotle's text or refer explicitly to a given passage in it, so assuming he was faithful to Aristotle's terminology (and there is no reason to assume otherwise) these instances enable us to roll back to the original Greek. There are 13 instances where we have the Greek, the Arabic, and the Hebrew terms to work with. The distribution of the Hebrew terms among the manuscripts is as follows, and just a glance is enough to see how different C is from the rest of the manuscripts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Landauer</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>hiyūlī</em></td>
<td>49</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>ḥōmer</em></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>yesōd</em></td>
<td>48</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 The term is introduced rather late into the text, so unfortunately we don't have the text of D for this, as it is cut off in the middle.
25 I intend to develop the discussion of this issue in the final version of this paper.
26 In manuscript A, 3 instances are missing because one page is lost. In one case (180a19) there is an occurrence of *ha-yesōd* which is corrected to *hu-ḥōmer* in the margin. In manuscript B, 4 instances are missing due to scribal errors; D is incomplete (see description) and besides is missing 3 instances due to scribal errors. M's beginning is missing (see description).
Most of the occurrences of the term ‘unṣur are found in Themistius' paraphrase of chapters 1–5 of book Lambda, which discuss (after a general introduction) sensible substances, but there are also a few occurrences in the second half of the text, which deals with immaterial substances. There is a delicate interplay between the terms yesōd and hōmer among the various Hebrew manuscripts, which is the result of the homonymous use of the term ‘unṣur in the Arabic. As I will show, the main tenet of the discussion revolves around the uncertainty which instance of ‘unṣur should be translated into hōmer, and which – into yesōd. I will analyze in detail a few passages and show how they reflect different translation strategies within the manuscripts.

Aristotle's standard definition for stoicheion is a "primary component immanent in a thing." One of its most frequent applications is to denote the four physical elements (fire, air, water, and earth). Such an application is not unproblematic as the four elements can be further analyzed into two sub-groups of contraries – the hot and cold and the dry and wet, and even further into prime matter. Another frequent application of the term is to denote the various suggestions for the identity of the basic elements of reality in thinkers before Aristotle, whom he surveys (or hypothetical constructions in this vein that Aristotle seeks to explore). The terms stoicheion and hyle are distinct, although they have both a logical and an ontological affinity. From the ontological point of view, I have already mentioned that the four elements can be analyzed into prime matter (as such it can be seen as the "element" of the "elements"). From the logical point of view, according to Aristotle's definition matter is an element, as it is indeed – along with form – a primary component immanent in the sensible substance. There is much more to say about this, of course, but if one takes even this preliminary discussion and combines it with the fact that in the Arabic translation of Themistius' Paraphrase the term ‘unṣur appears homonymously standing for both stoicheion and hyle, it is not surprising that many occurrences of the term that lacked sufficient context left Moses ibn Tibbon in the dark as to what meaning of the term is intended.


28 This point has been long been regarded as a source for Aristotle's outspoken suspicion towards the term, although the scholarly consensus has lately been challenged by T.J. Crowley, "Aristotle's 'So-Called Elements'," *Phronesis* 53 (2008): 223–242, who provides further references.
I will now present the various occurrences of the terms yesōḏ hōmer in the various manuscripts and offer analysis and discussion. I divide the discussion according to the chapter of *Metaphysics Lambda* that Themistius is paraphrasing.

**Paraphrase of Chapter 1**

The first 4 instances of the term yesōḏ, occurring in the paraphrase of chapter 1, are unproblematic, as all of the manuscripts are in agreement and we also have the Arabic. Here the translated term is *rukn*, and the context is the Greek *stoicheion* in the abstract meaning of a "primary component immanent in a thing." This can be gathered from a sentence in Aristotle that Themistius is referring to (I quote it in Hebrew and Arabic along an English translation and the text of Aristotle that I take to be the point of reference here):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landauer 2, 6–7</th>
<th>Badawi 330, 9</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th><em>Metaphysics</em> 12.1.1096a24–25</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>וכנו לבקש התחלת הברה组织领导 הנתונים ויסודם ושתותיהם</td>
<td>קצדו לطلبمبادئ האشيואתי الموجودة וסיבותה וארקאניה</td>
<td>The aimed at seeking the principle of the existing things, their causes and their elements</td>
<td>[1] It was of substance that they sought the principles (ἁρχὰς) and elements (στοιχεῖα) and causes (ἀἴτια).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fifth occurrence of the term poses a problem:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landauer 2, 30–31</th>
<th>Badawi 331, 8–9</th>
<th>Translation</th>
<th><em>Metaphysics</em> 12.1.1069a32–33</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>وهذا הגויה خاصة</td>
<td>وهذا הגויה הוא</td>
<td>And only this substance is the substance whose</td>
<td>of this [i.e., the sensible perishable substance] we must grasp the elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>והיו יסודות וסיבותו</td>
<td>הוא הגויה שאותו</td>
<td>of this [i.e., the sensible perishable substance] we must grasp the elements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ענاصرיו</td>
<td>ענاصرיו</td>
<td>of this [i.e., the sensible perishable substance] we must grasp the elements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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29 All English translations of Themistius are my own. Unless noted otherwise, I translate the Hebrew text on the basis of Landauer’s edition.

30 I am translating from the Arabic here. Frank, "Notes", 218n26 remarks that the order of the Arabic is inverted in the Hebrew. It is also important to note that Asian is not a correct translation of *אָסִּיסָּא* (cause). This can be explained, I think, by a misreading of the Arabic text. The previous line had *אַסִּיסָּא*, which is properly translated into *אָסִּיסָּא* (cause), so probably at some point *אָסִּיסָּא* was confused with *אָסִּיסָּא* (cause) given their graphic similarity and the fact that the use of the term *אָסִּיסָּא* ("foundation") doesn't render the text illogical.
As can be seen, while the Arabic (‘unṣūr and arkān) and Hebrew (yesōdōt and shatōt) each have two terms, in Aristotle we only have stoicheia. It is unclear what one should take to be the difference between ‘unṣūr and rukn in this context, and what other Greek term the one or the other are translating. The Hebrew translation isn't very crisp, as Ibn Tibbon opts to simply reproduce the formula yesōdav ve-shatōtav, which he had already used twice in the preceding passage. Assuming that Themistius is referring to Aristotle's text here without introducing a new technical term (whatever could it be?), I think that what we have here is a case of a gloss in one of the Arabic manuscripts that eventually found its way into the text. Be this as it may, in what's left of the Arabic the term rukn is no longer encountered, and once ‘unṣūr is introduced it plays a significant role.

Paraphrase of Chapter 2
In the paraphrase of chapter 2 there is only one, isolated instance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landaeur 5, 18–20</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ווד שسائرו הנשא הנשה בכר נשתנה בכללה תחתל אלısוסדות תורבעぬ ווד אל השמות עליי تريد.</td>
<td>We encounter the body after it had already changed completely – first into the four elements, and then into the plants and animals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here again there is a complete agreement within the manuscripts and the context of the term is quite clear, as Themistius is referring to the four elements, namely earth, water, fire and air. The Arabic is lost, and what Themistius is saying here does not trace back to a specific passage in Aristotle Themistius may be quoting.

Paraphrase of Chapter 3
In the paraphrase of chapter 3 the confusion in the manuscripts regarding the terms ḥōmer and yesōd is first encountered. The context of the discussion is Themistius' interpretation of
Aristotle's threefold division of substance into matter, form, and the particular composed of the two. Aristotle's discussion revolves around the term *hyle*, and *stoicheion* is not used at all. Themistius elaborates on Aristotle's discussion of matter and describes the process of matter's assuming and losing forms, with reference to proximate matter and prime matter. Unfortunately, we don't have any Arabic for this discussion. The following table exhibits the terminological differences between the manuscripts in all of the occurrences in this passage, along with Landauer's choices:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landauer</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>M</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6, 13&lt;sup&gt;31&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>קיסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 17</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 17</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 23</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 23</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 24</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 25</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 26</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6, 29</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
<td>יסוד</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the Arabic here is lost, the examples in the next chapters will enable to determine with a high degree of confidence that the Arabic term underlying all of these instances is *ʿunṣūr*. Now even without the context, a quick glance at this table reveals in a nutshell the central features of each of the manuscripts with regard to the term: A and M translate it into יסוד; C, although "testing the waters" in the first 3 instances, finds stability with הומר; and B and D alternate (not together) between הומר and יסוד – each according to its own considerations. Here are some examples of what the end results look like:

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<sup>31</sup> This is probably derived from *Metaphysics* 1070a9.

<sup>32</sup> In the margin we have יסוד, to the best of my judgment by the same hand.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>והם מרחק זה התמיד מהנושאים מהיותו רמות ihm אל-fly בשמש</td>
<td>והם מרחק זה התמיד מהנושאים מהיותו רמות ihm אל-fly בשמש</td>
<td>והם מרחק זה התמיד מהנושאים מהיותו רמות ihm אל-fly בשמש</td>
<td>והם מרחק זה התמיד מהנושאים מהיותו רמות ihm אל-fly בשמש</td>
<td>And the most remote among the substances from being a &quot;this&quot; in itself is the matter/element, because the matter/element is formless by nature, nevertheless it is a thing that also desires to be considered counted as a &quot;this&quot; in itself (Landauer 6, 16–18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>For this element/matter is a &quot;this&quot; in itself, since it has a form, like the copper to the statues and the boards to the ship. For whatever is in the element/matter of specific things (rather than unified things) – like the bricks and the stones to the house and – analogically [to them] the element/matter transforms from obscurity, weakness, and remoteness as to be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>כזה התמיד זוהו</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>וכזה התמיד זוהו</td>
<td>כזה התמיד זוהו</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

33 I am not including M here as it is similar to A in the present context.
34 Inserted by the correcting hand of C (see above).
35 On the margin: סא לכל
The context of Themistius' discussion is interpreting Aristotle's claim that neither matter nor form are generated, so that new substances are generated by new combinations of matter and form, which have already existed in other states. The term *stoicheion* is nowhere to be found in Aristotle's text, and the quotations given here are clearly referring to *hyle*. However, since ‘*unṣur*’ was already introduced earlier in the text, and was correctly understood as element (thus translated into *yesōd*), Moses ibn Tibbon found himself in an uncomfortable situation: should he continue to translate the term consistently, should he opt for more clarity, or should he work on an ad hoc basis?

Using *yesōd* in the sense of matter is certainly not an error, for this sense already had some history in Hebrew translations and literature, most notably in texts with a Neoplatonic flavor. However, Moses' employment of *yesōd* as matter in an Aristotelian text – especially a text that has explicit reference to element as constituent or a physical entity (earth, fire, etc.) – is confusing and rather unorthodox, especially after his father Samuel had somewhat standardized the Hebrew philosophical vocabulary. Furthermore, in no other translation by Moses (or Samuel, for that matter) have I found *yesōd* in the sense of matter. The only merit I can think about of translating ‘*unṣur*’ (when it denotes matter) into *yesōd* is an accurate reflection of the Arabic terminology; this choice reproduces the inherent difficulty of the homonymous use of ‘*unṣur*’ in the Arabic translation, but at least does not make things worse. In this sense it is a rather safe route, and it is a route taken by manuscripts A and M in the overwhelmingly majority of cases.

Another option is to prefer a more standard terminology and to abandon *yesōd* in favor of the more appropriate *hōmer*, unless it is beyond doubt that the text is referring to the four elements. The merits of this approach are obvious, as it renders the text much more readable and crisp. The downside of this choice is twofold: first, it results in a terminological detachment from the Arabic original, and second, this stark dichotomy obliterates any chance of sensibility toward the Arabic text when it requires a more subtle approach, in cases where the terms are employed.

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36 See the very useful survey in Eliezer Davidovich, *The Mystery of the Yesod – The terms used to refer to prime matter, and their philosophical meanings in Rabbi Solomon ibn Gabirol's book Mekor Haim and his liturgical poem Keter Malkhat*, MA thesis, department of Jewish Culture, Tel Aviv University, 2011 (in Hebrew), 20–40.
in less obvious connotations. This is the route chosen by manuscript C, and rather aggressively. If manuscripts A and M chose the safe path of preserving the homonymy, manuscript C chooses to rid of it altogether by committing almost exclusively to interpreting ‘unṣur as ḥōmer.

A third option is to attempt to balance the terminological requirements and the sense of the text by choosing yesōd or ḥōmer individually in every case. In other words, it is an attempt to dismantle the homonymy on a local basis without committing up front to a certain meaning. This is the course taken by manuscript B (although it gradually tends to align more or less with the strategy of A and M) and manuscript D. The obvious advantage of this approach is that it exhibits sensitivity toward the text and attempts to render it as exact as possible. The obvious risk is not getting it right. This is a bold approach, but rather hopeless given the fact that the translator sometimes has too little information to enable him to make the right choice.

It is important to note that this is not exact science, as there are a few counter-examples to be found in every manuscript. However, the overwhelming majority of the occurrences are in tune with the approaches I have identified here, especially in chapters 3–5, which are the core of the discussion.

Near the end of the paraphrase of Chapter 3 there is an instance of ḥōmer, universally agreed upon in the manuscripts:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landauer 8, 5–7</th>
<th>Averroes, Tafsīr, 1492, 13–1493, 2</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ואנה דמיוני היחסים האלו بما שהיל</td>
<td>פאם נצורה ברוב מי שפה לולה</td>
<td>Where are the models of these proportions in that from which this animal was begotten, unless a prepared proportion, ready to generate a possible species among animals, had already been placed in nature beforehand having found appropriate matter to generate a certain animal from it?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|න ציבור |準備 proportion, ready to generate a possible species among animals, had already been placed in nature beforehand having found appropriate matter to generate a certain animal from it? |"
The context of this instance is one of Themistius' departures from the Aristotelian text in the favor of a critical discussion of his denial of Plato's Forms and a promotion of his notion of transcendent "proportions" (logoi).\textsuperscript{37} Averroes quotes this passage in his \textit{Long Commentary on the Metaphysics}, and his quotation confirms that corresponding Arabic term is ‘\textit{\textit{unṣur}}’. This is one of the rare cases where A and M choose the term \textit{ḥōmer} for ‘\textit{\textit{unṣur}}’.

\textit{Paraphrase of Chapter 4}

The paraphrase of Chapter 4 adds another degree of complexity to the text. Granted, we do have a considerable amount of the Arabic thanks to Ibn Taymiyyah, but here can be found a perfect example of what Alfarabi was complaining about, as the homonymous translation of \textit{hyle} and \textit{stoicheion} into ‘\textit{\textit{unṣur}}’ leaves us in a state of perplexity in attempting to reconstruct Themistius' original text. To make things worse, Aristotle's usage of the term \textit{stoicheion} in this chapter is a "terminological innovation [...] this special use of \textit{stoicheion} cannot be found elsewhere in the Aristotelian corpus."\textsuperscript{38} The notion of \textit{stoicheion} here is of an immanent cause which is "in some way conserved in the thing caused,"\textsuperscript{39} and Aristotle hypothetically attributes this function to form, matter, and privation. The context here is a critical discussion of Plato's conception – or what could have been his conception – of \textit{stoicheion}. As Crubelier puts it:

Aristotle's calling form, matter, and privation "elements" is not to be taken as a straightforward account of Plato's doctrine, nor as a positive part of Aristotle's doctrine either. It is rather an \textit{ad hoc} conceptual device, by means of which he reshapes Plato's conceptions in order to refute them more effectively.\textsuperscript{40}

I can only imagine how frustrating this was for Ibn Tibbon. Here are some examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landauer</th>
<th>Ibn Taymiyyah</th>
<th>English translation</th>
<th>Aristotle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>י”של</td>
<td>חומר</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>The element/matter is prior to the thing of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>חומרי</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>But the element (στοιχείον) is prior to the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{37} See Henry, "Themistius".
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{40} Ibid.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Arabic Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
<th>Greek Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אשר הוא יסוד [ABM] חומר [CD]ˇ Lehah (9)</td>
<td>which it is an element/matter</td>
<td>στοιχεῖον (1070b2–3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>יתרבז בו שלמה והממהיה [AC]ˇ חומר [BDM] הэффектות [המען] (9, 12)</td>
<td>And this would necessitate a conclusion unacceptable to the intellect, [namely] that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כולם היסודות [CD]ˇ החמרים [B]</td>
<td>the matter/element of the substance exist under the substance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ההתחלות של הדורות [ABDM]ˇ חומר [CD]ˇ למיחדים [המעון] כולם היסודות [CD]ˇ [ABDM]ˇ המקדמים [המעון] (9, 25)</td>
<td>The principles of all of the existing things are three – the form, the matter/element, and the privation; this is like in the perceptible substance, as the heat stands for the form, the cold stands of the privation, and the matter/element is that which has both of these potentially</td>
<td>(1070b19). This is like the perceptible bodies, that form is the hot, and in another sense the cold – the privation, and matter (ολη) is potentially these (1070b11–13)41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הפרמים והמעון [CD]ˇ למיחדים [המעון] או המהר אחר [ABM]ˇ לא شيء אלא בהן (27)</td>
<td>There are three principles – the form, the privation, and the matter (ολη)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ואמה הלעדים فلا יجوز [C]ˇ הרופאים [C]ˇ הנם אפי הרופה כר [CD]ˇ המר והמעון [C]ˇ המר והמעון [C]ˇ השירה [C]ˇ [ABDM]ˇ</td>
<td>As for the elements/matters, it is impossible for them to exist unless in things that are [composed] from them; whatever is an element/matter – there is nothing that can prevent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

41 The English translation is slightly modified.
What one can see here is the continuation of the pattern established in chapter 3: manuscripts A and M are committed to yesōd, C is committed to ḥōmer, and D work on an ad hoc basis, alternating between yesōd and ḥōmer. What is significant is that as of this chapter, it seems as if manuscript B has grown tired of hopping around and aligned itself to manuscripts A and M in choosing yesōd. I will discuss the significance of this in the end of the paper. Given the special meaning of the term stoicheion in this chapter, and the fact that the chapter explicitly discusses hyle as well, it is not difficult to see why some of the occurrences of ‘unṣur can be understood as referring to matter. For example, an expression like "the element/matter is prior to the thing of which it is an element/matter" is so abstract that it can really go either way, but C's persistence on ḥōmer here actually superimposes the term on the text, since as can be seen in the original Greek of Aristotle, the term discussed there was stoicheion. This is a price unknowingly paid by manuscripts C for taking such a stubborn stand. On another note, it is unclear how manuscript D can live with making two different choices in the same passage, which result in an unintelligible construction like this:

The principles of all of the existing things are three – the form, the element, and the privation; this is like in the perceptible substance, as the heat stands for the form, the cold stands of the privation, and the matter is that which has both of these potentially.

Paradoxically, choices like this transform the text from the homonymy of ‘unṣur to the synonymy of yesōd and ḥōmer, and I doubt this is what the translator was aiming at.

*Paraphrase of Chapter 5*

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42 I translate the second half of the quotation according to the Arabic as it makes more sense. The translation according to the Hebrew would be something like this: "whatever is an element/matter – it is not prevented from being called a principle, and whatever is a principle is doubtlessly not an element/matter."
Chapter 5 of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* Lambda continues the investigation of sensible substances, focusing the discussion on the causes and principles of substances. The discussion once again is very abstract, and in some cases it is extremely difficult to understand the context. Here are a few examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landauer</th>
<th>Ibn Taymiyyah</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Aristotle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| והבשר פעמים יהיה בפועל /[ABDM] | קראות פאנסים ויהו בפועל ביבמות [C] | And the flesh sometimes exists in actuality and sometime exists potentially in the elements/matters from which it is begotten; and when we say potentially or actually we mean nothing but the form and the element/matter
| והבשר פעמים יהיה בכח /[ABDM] | והבשר פעמים יהיה בכח /[ABDM] | - |
| | והבשר פעמים יהיה בכח /[ABDM] | - |

And these things are causes for the created thing neither in the way of element/matter, nor in the way of form, nor in the way of privation

This causes are neither matter (ὕλη) nor form nor privation (1071a16)

As for the principles that are truly principles, we ought to seek them in the separable things, because the element/matter is not the element/matter of man absolutely, but your element/matter is your element/matter and my element/matter is my element/matter.

[The causes] of things in the same species are different, not in species, but in the sense that the causes of different individuals are different, your

[This causes] are neither matter (ὕλη) nor form nor privation (1071a16)
There is nothing new here, as the policies are clear: A and M (along with their new acquaintance B) are committed to *yesōd*, C is committed to *hōmer*, and D alternates.

At this point the rather frequent discussions related to *yesōd* *hōmer* cease. The text proceeds to discuss the immaterial substances, and from now on the term ‘‘unṣur will play a secondary role in it, and its sense as matter is usually replaced by either māddah of hayūlā. Accordingly, the various manuscripts still display their characteristic approaches, but with somewhat less conviction.

**Paraphrase of Chapter 6**

Here there is a passing occurrence of the term *yesōdōt* included in Themistius' discussion of the seeds and the semen as the respective efficient causes of the plants and the menstrual fluids, to which he adds the sun as a remote efficient cause. Although the Arabic is unavailable, all of the manuscripts are in agreement for *yesōdōt* in this case:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landauer 14, 27–28</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אבל השמש מניע הארץ ושאר היסודות והזרעים למיחזור השמות.</td>
<td>But the sun moves the earth and the rest of the elements and the seeds for there to be plants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two ways to understand this sentence. The first is that this is a somewhat clumsy rendition of Aristotle's expression τὰ σπέρματα καὶ ἡ γονή (the semen and the seed).43

---

43 Here one can refer to Averroes' *Tafsīr*, which offers two translations of this expression: Uṣṭāḥ's *الزرع والمنى* and Abū Bishr Mattā'ī's *الزرع والمنى* (See Averroes, *Tafsīr*, 1564, 5 and notes).
The second is to read the sentence as if \textit{ve-ha-yesōdōt} is connected to \textit{ha-aretz}, in this case one should split the sentence into two parts: (1) the sun moves the earth and the rest of the elements; and (2) the sun moves the seeds which grow into plants. If this is the correct reading, then it is plausible that the Arabic here was \textit{‘anāṣir} as a translation of \textit{stoicheia}, and it was unanimously translated into \textit{yesōdōt} because of the clear context.

\textit{Paraphrase of Chapter 7}

Here too there is a passing occurrence of the term \textit{yesōd}, and once again with no Arabic or Greek parallels. Manuscripts B, C, and M are in agreement. Manuscript A is missing the relevant page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landauer 16, 7–8</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| פִּסְמוֹת הָרֶבֶת נָאָר בֵּין חֲזַרְתֵּן וּחָצוּרָה | In many cases we say about it [= the immaterial thing] that it is "one" and that it is "simple" – as [when] we say "one man" and "one nation", and "a simple premise" and "a simple element"
| השאָד אָדָם אָדָם פָּשָׁמֶה והָאָדָם פָּשָׁמֶה | אָדָם אָדָם פָּשָׁמֶה והָאָדָם פָּשָׁמֶה | פָּשָׁמֶה פָּשָׁמֶה | פָּשָׁמֶה פָּשָׁמֶה |

The context of the discussion here is Aristotle's explanation of the difference between the predicates "one" and "simple" included within the discussion of the substance's simplicity. The word \textit{yesōd} is introduced to the text as an example and without further discussion, so it is impossible to guess what this is translating.

\textit{Paraphrase of Chapter 8}

In the \textit{Paraphrase} of chapter 8 there is a strange unanimous occurrence of the words \textit{החומר והיסוד}, which reflect the Arabic \textit{المادة والعنصر} and refer to Aristotle's discussion:

| Landauer 25, 16–18 | Badawi 19, 10–12 | English | Aristotle, 1074a33–36
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>והמהות המקרנים אשת</td>
<td>והמהות המקרנים אשת</td>
<td>The things that have one form and are many in</td>
<td>But all things that are many in number have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>והמהות המקרנים</td>
<td>והמהות המקרנים</td>
<td>também</td>
<td>também</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

44 The English translation is slightly modified.
This seems strange for a number of reasons. First, the Aristotelian passage upon which this passage is based only has ὦλη, and the context of both Aristotle's and Themistius' argument here, namely the principle of plurality, is clearly that of matter. Second, the element is not discussed by Themistius here, but just pops into the sentence and fades away – no explanation is provided as to why and how an element can be a principle of plurality, and this is not something Themistius usually does. Third, one would expect the beginning of the Arabic clause to be in the plural, namely تكون الأسباب rather than يكون السبب (although the present construction is also possible). I believe that this is a case of a gloss explicating māddah as ‘unṣur, that found its way into the Arabic text.46

Paraphrase of Chapter 9

Chapter 9 presents a discussion that has its roots in Metaphysics 1074a1–4, which deals with the differentiation of the sciences according to their materiality/immateriality and the role of intellect in them. Here, once again, there is no Arabic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landauer 29, 33–30, 5</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>והם כי树木ת אשר לא יتمعר בו</td>
<td>For the sciences that are unmixed with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aside from the first occurrence, in which A and M uncharacteristically have ḥōmer (I explain why in a moment), the variation among the manuscripts follows the exact pattern that was exhibited throughout the text: A and M prefer yesōd, C insists on ḥōmer, while B, which as I have shown had committed itself to yesōd, suddenly has one instance of ḥōmer. The recurrence of the pattern enables to confidently assume that the Arabic term translated was *unṣur*. Now with regards to the uncharacteristic appearance of ḥōmer in A and M for the first instance, this can be explained by the fact that the term appears in the construct *lo yitʿarev bō ha-ḥōmer*. The construct *lo yitʿarev bō ha-hiyūlī* (translating *لا يشوبها الهيولى*) appears many times in the text,47 and is a standard formula for "unmixed with matter". Since A and M never translate any word but *hayūlā* into *hiyūlī*, it is reasonable to assume that the Arabic was *لا يشوبها العنصر*.

**Paraphrase of Chapter 10**

Finally, in the paraphrase of chapter 2 there are two occurrences of the word yesōdāt, agreed upon among the manuscripts, which I'm unsure what to make of, as we have no Arabic, no Greek, and no context:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Landauer</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

47 To list just a few random examples: Landauer 16, 15; 17, 4; 20, 20; 22, 31; 22, 32; 22, 33; 29, 20.
The most outrageous among what has been explained of the previous physical claims is the claim of he who places all of the things that are recipients of corruption, those that are not recipient of it, those that are generated, and those that have no generation as [originating] from the very same elements.

For the undivided things that Anaxagoras talked about, and the elements that Empedocles talked about, necessitate the generation of the existing things from that which exists in actuality, and this is absurd and repugnant.

The first quotation attacks an unknown interlocutor in a discussion that is absent from Aristotle's text. The second quotation is also unclear: while Aristotle does discuss Anaxagoras and Empedocles in this chapter and criticizes their views, these are not the doctrines he is referring to, and Themistius had already referred to Aristotle's text in this context earlier.\(^{49}\) The attempt to understand the sense of \(\text{yesōdōt}^{\text{48}}\) here lies for the moment beyond the scope of this study.

**Discussion**

As I show above, the manuscripts exhibit three different tendencies to the term \(\text{‘unṣur}^{\text{48}}\). (1) translated as \(\text{yesōd}^{\text{48}}\), thus retaining the homonymy of the Arabic (A, M, and eventually B); (2) translated as \(\text{hōmer}^{\text{182}}\), thus discarding the homonymy in favor of a one-sided interpretation; (3) translated as \(\text{hōmer}^{\text{182}}\) or \(\text{yesōd}^{\text{48}}\), ad hoc, depending on the context. This is the path taken by B (initially) and D (throughout the portion of the text we have), but each of them makes different choices. The bulk of the relevant discussions appear in the paraphrase of chapter 3–5, and the occurrences of the terms in the other chapters are sparse and therefore somewhat less systematic. Effectively, there are three different approaches within the manuscript tradition of the text,

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\(^{48}\) All of the manuscripts here have \(\text{ma’as}^{\text{22}}\), and I read with Landauer's suggestion for correcting the text.  

realized in four different manners (the differences between A and M here are negligible). It remains to be asked whether these differences reflect different stages of Moses ibn Tibbon's translation, or perhaps intuitive scribal decisions, or conscious editorial decisions by someone with a philosophical agenda. I state in advance that what I suggest here is hypothetical and based as much on common sense than on hard evidence.

In order to offer some answers a widening of the context of the discussion is due. I have reviewed Moses ibn Tibbon's translations of philosophical works in an attempt to understand his approach to the technical use of the term ‘unṣur and perhaps make some sense of the confusion in the various manuscripts of the Paraphrase.50

The term ‘unṣur does not appear at all in Averroes' Short Commentaries on the On the Soul (1244), Physics (1246), On the Heavens (1248?), On Generation and Corruption (1250), Meteorology (1252), and Parva Naturalia (1254) – all of which were translated before Themistius' Paraphrase (1255). Neither does the term appear in Alfarabi's Political Regime (1248?).

In al-Baṭalyawsī's (d. 1127) Kitāb al-Dawāʾir al-Wahmiyya (The Book of Imaginary Circles),51 translated circa 1250, the term ‘unṣur appears four times, three in the context of one of the four elements,52 and once in the sense of a constituting element53 (in most of the cases the author prefers to use the term rukn). It is always translated into yesōd.

A key encounter for Moses ibn Tibbon was the case of Maimonides' Al-Maqālah fi Ṣināʿat al-Manṭiq (Milḥot Ha-Higayōn, Art of Logic), translated in 1254, where Maimonides writes:

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52 Arabic §15 line 2 (Hebrew 5, 19); §15 line 5 (6, 2); §47, line 3 (19, 2).
53 § 47 line 3 (19, 2).
This thing which is common to the four elements (al-ustuqsāt), which is necessarily intelligized, is what we call the primary matter (al-māddah al-ulā), and its name in Greek language is al-hayūlah (ha-hiyūlī), and frequently many physicians and philosophers call it אלאנ gönderil (al’unṣur). It is interesting to see that Ibn Tibbon preserves the Hebrew transliteration of the Arabic for al-ʿunṣur, instead of translating it, since he understands Maimonides is referring to a specific Arabic word. A definition of this sort makes clear that Ibn Tibbon was well aware of the possibility to understand ʿunṣur as matter, although it may be significant that the precise understanding should not be just any matter, but prime matter, and this may have been a consideration against translation ʿunṣur into matter in some contexts.

These two examples show that by the time ibn Tibbon embarked on translating Themistius' Paraphrase, he already had some experience with the term ʿunṣur in both of its meanings as matter and element, but the appearances were sparse and did not occur in the two meanings within the same text. However, his father, Samuel ibn Tibbon, did have experience with this homonym. In Yahyā al-Bīṭriq's (c. 800 A.D.) Arabic translation/adaptation of Aristotle's Meteorology, translated by Samuel as Otōt ha-Shamayim, there are 9 occurrences of the term ʿunṣur. Samuel translates the first 8 occurrences into yesōd, and the final occurrence into ḥōmer. The first 8 occurrences clearly refer to one of the four elements (and occasionally to the fifth), and whenever there is correspondence between the Arabic text and the original Greek the term translated is stoicheion. But in the final occurrence, where the Arabic has ʿunṣur, the Greek passage on which it is based has hyle. It is remarkable that Samuel, who only had the Arabic, was aware enough to correctly read through the homonymous use of ʿunṣur in a very delicate context.

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54 Israel Efros, Maimonides’ Treatise on logic: the original Arabic and three Hebrew translations, New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1938, 51; I have made some modifications to Efros' English translation, making it more literal in some places (for terminological considerations), and also on the basis of the comparison to the complete Arabic original unavailable to him, published by M. Türker, "Mūsā ibn-i Meymūn'ın al-Makāla fi šīnā'at al-manṭīq: inin Araça asli, Ankara Üniversitesi Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Dergisi, cilt: xvii, sayi 1-2, Ocak-Haziran (1960), 52.
55 Ahitub (fl. 13th century) did the same (Efros 84, 6). Yoseph ben Yehoshua ibn Vivas (fl. 14th century) translates into yesōd (119, 17). Anecdotally, Efros' original English translation for al-ʿunṣur – on the basis of ibn Tibbon's Hebrew, since he didn't have the Arabic of this chapter – was "foundation".
57 Here are the references (line numbers in Schoonheim’s Arabic edition, followed by book and line numbers in Fontaince’s Hebrew edition in parentheses): 9 twice (I.74 twice); 25 twice (I.90 twice); 67 (I.139); 135 (I.251); 884 twice (III.17 twice); 1057 (III.296).
58 See e.g. Aristotle, Meteorology, 1.1.338a22, corresponding to line 9 in the Arabic and 1.74 in the Hebrew.
59 Here is the relevant passage:
There are two other texts I would like to discuss, Averroe's *Epitome of the Metaphysics* (1258) and his *Middle Commentary on De Anima* (1261), both of which were translated after Themistius' *Paraphrase*. Since they are late, it is interesting to see if the translation strategy they employ corresponds to one of the strategies employed in the *Paraphrase*. The term ‘וֹסָד’ appears once in Moses' translation of Averroes' *Middle Commentary on De Anima*, and is translated into *yesōd*.60

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>سفּרֹנָה המְדוֹקָשָׁה הוא המְדוֹקָשָׁה המְסַפְּרָה</td>
<td>אָבַדְתָּ הַנְּפֶשׁ הָהּ מְבָדֲלֵי הָאָדוָד</td>
<td>He [i.e., Plato] believed that the soul is [composed of] the first principles of numbers, which are the forms of universal things and their elements (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אשר הוא צורתו הָדוֹרִים הָלִיָּם</td>
<td>וענַעְרָתָה (10–12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וָסָרְתָּה (1.188)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is not much to gather from this, since the sense of ‘וֹסָד’ here is the sense of a primary component and the term doesn't play any role in the text that requires deliberation.

The more interesting example is Averroes' *Epitome of the Metaphysics*. Here are all of the appearances of the term ‘וֹסָד’ in the text, along with their Hebrew translation and Arnzen's English version:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ibn Tibbon Hebrew61</th>
<th>Averroes Arabic62</th>
<th>Arnzen English63</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>סֶפֶרֶנָה המְדוֹקָשָׁה הוא המְדוֹקָשָׁה המְסַפְּרָה</td>
<td>ארְבֶּה יָדוֹצְקַר הָהָנְפֶשׁ הָהָהֵלְקֵהַ</td>
<td><em>Their dryness compresses it, and it congeals</em> [...]<em>Hence, they are water in a sense, and in a sense not. Their matter (ὕλη) was that which might have become water, but it can no longer do so.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>אשר הוא צורתו הָדוֹרִים הָלִיָּם</td>
<td>וּעֲנַעְרָתָה (10–12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>וָסָרְתָּה (1.188)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of *yesōd* here would have rendered the text incomprehensible as it would posit the existence of an element which is potentially like another element (namely, water), but in a sense different than the standard Aristotelian explanation of how the four elements can transform into one another. Incidentally, Gerard de Cremona's 12th Century Latin translation from the Arabic wasn't as attentive, as he has *elementum* in all of the instances. Gerard's technique is discussed in detail in Schoonheim, *Meteorology*, xx–xxviii.

60 Arabic original and English translation in Averroes, *Middle Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*, ed. & trans, Alfred L. Ivry, Provo: Brigham Young University Press, 12 (I slightly altered the English translation). The context is Plato's mathematical conception of the soul in his lost treatise *On Philosophy*. See Aristotle, *De Anima*, 404b24–25: "The numbers are by him [Plato] expressly identified with the Forms themselves or principles, and are formed out of the elements (*ἐκ τῶν στοιχείων)" (tr. J.A. Smith). For further discussion see Ivry, *Middle Commentary*, 157. 61 The Hebrew text of Averroes' *Epitome* is collated from three different Hebrew manuscripts I examined: Paris – *Bibliothèque Nationale Heb. 918* (118b–149a); Muenchen – Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. hebr. 108 (92a–115b); and Leipzig –
each [thing] that comes to be is something
(I mean form and natural disposition) and
from something (I mean matter) and
through something (I mean an agent)

For he only produces that in which matter
and form are united because he produces
that which has a form simply by changing
the material in such a way that he gives the
form to it

For this reason, there is neither such
composition [as sought by them] in
anything which has no matter, nor any
moving [cause].

This is why the concept of body
representing matter is different from
the concept of body representing general form
(the difference between genus and matter
has been explained elsewhere.)

<table>
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<tr>
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anything which has no matter, nor any
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representing matter is different from
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(the difference between genus and matter
has been explained elsewhere.) |

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Universitaetsbibliothek B.H. fol.14 (250a–281b). The latter two belong, respectively, to the same codices of manuscripts B and C of Themistius’ *Paraphrase*, and in both cases the *Paraphrase* and Averroes’ *Epitome* are copied by the same hand.

64 Doubtlessly, *geshem* here is the result of misreading *الجنس* as *الجسم* either by Moses ibn Tibbon himself or by an earlier Arabic scribe on whom he was relying.
As can be seen from the quotations, the term ‘unṣur is treated as homonymous: the first three occurrences are translated into ḥōmer, while the last three – into yesōd. (On a side note I think that this is a mistake, as all of the instances should have been translated into ḥōmer – like in Arnzen's English translation – but this is beside the point.) Ibn Tibbon's translation here exhibits consciousness to the homonymy of the term unṣur and seeks to diffuse it in the Hebrew version. Since ibn Tibbon attempts to choose the appropriate meaning in every case, I would tentatively suggest that the translation policy he adopts in the Epitome is more in line with what was found in manuscripts B and D. Since two of the codices I used for the Epitome were included also manuscripts B and C of the Paraphrase, it is perhaps significant that they are in terminological conformity (in this context, at least). I do not want to read too much into this, but combined with the rest of the evidence, and given that this translation is later than the translation of Themistius' Paraphrase, it is not unreasonable to assume that the treatment of the term ‘unṣur in the Epitome reflects Moses' definitive approach to the term after he was done with the Paraphrase.

Conclusion

All of the above leads me to the following hypothesis for the turn of events, which should be reviewed and refined on the basis of other terms.

1. Manuscripts A and M represent an early stage of the translation, where Ibn Tibbon decided for the most part "not to decide" and leave the homonymy of the term ‘unṣur as it is in the Hebrew translation, at the expense of using a somewhat un-Tibbonite vocabulary. Simply put, this version is just too odd to count as a final version.

2. Manuscripts B and D represent a later stage of the translation of the term ‘unṣur, which exhibits a conscious effort to diffuse the homonymy in every occurrence, with the attempt to standardize the terminology to something less confusing, when this is possible. B represent an early, incomplete attempt at this, since it conforms to yesōd by the time the paraphrase reaches chapter 4, effectively joining the approach exhibited in A and M. Therefore I presume that D, with its tireless efforts to find the right meaning, represents Moses ibn Tibbon's last version of the text that has come down to us. This stage also conforms to the approach advanced by ibn Tibbon when translating Averroes' Epitome of the Metaphysics.

3. Manuscript C reflects a substantial terminological revision of many words in the text and seems to have an independent agenda. This is also apparent in its assertive suppression
of the term *hiyūl* in favor of *ḥōmer*, whose logic is the same as its *modus operandi* with *yesōd*. The procedure is more dogmatic than critical, and results in a more elegant and tight text on the one hand, but a less precise and subtle one on the other. This leads me to assume that the changes were made by someone other than Moses ibn Tibbon that did not consult the Arabic original.\(^{65}\)

\(^{65}\) This manuscript, and my conclusions about it, will be discussed in greater detail in the final version of this paper.