

Malak wa-falak.

Noetic and Angelic Terminology in al-Ġazālī's *Maqāṣid* and *Tahāfut al-falāsifa*

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The convergence between the heavenly intellects of philosophical cosmology and the angels of the various religious traditions is a distinctive feature of medieval thought, in all three monotheisms. Existing scholarship on this central issue, however, is still scanty, especially with regard to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ġazālī (d. 1111), who rather plays an arguably crucial role in the shaping and diffusion of this key tenet. Focusing on the several occurrences of the terminology of «angel» [*malak*] in the *Maqāṣid al-falāsifa* [*MF*] (32 cases) and the *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* [*TF*] (36 cases), two of the most prominent philosophical works penned by al-Ġazālī, the paper shows that the trend to employ religiously inspired lexicon when discussing *falsafī* issues is a typical trait of al-Ġazālī's mature engagement with philosophy. Indeed, the angelic terminology in the *MF* is preponderant with respect to Avicenna's more purely noetic lexicon, as employed in the fundamental source for the *MF*, the Persian *summa Dānešnāme-ye 'Alā'ī*. In the paper, I will give specific attention to one of the most characteristic claims of the *MF* (and the *TF*) about the issue of heavenly movers, *i.e.*, the explicitly acknowledged possibility of translating the «language of the group [of the philosophers]» [*luġat al-qawm*] into the «tongue of Revelation» [*lisān al-šar'*]. In the wake of Richard Frank's landmarking *Creation and the Cosmic System* and his emphasis on crucial similarities between al-Ġazālī's and Avicenna's cosmologies, the issue at stake attests al-Ġazālī's recognition, *qua* philosophizing theologian, of an underlying agreement between the Peripatetic cosmology of intellectual movers and the revealed picture of the world, in which the angels act as ministers and intermediaries of God's action on reality. Furthermore, the attention to lexicon also points at a distinctively Ġazālīan *via media*, which paves the way for further developments in the genre of *ḥikma*. This seems indirectly confirmed by the recurrence of statements echoing al-Ġazālī in Šaraf al-Dīn al-Mas'ūdī's *Commentary on (Avicenna's) Glistening Homily* [*Šarḥ al-Ḥuṭba al-ġarrā'*], recognized by recent scholarship as an important milestone in the ideal path that connects al-Ġazālī to Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.