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Ibn Sina's and Al-Ghazali's Approach towards Pythagoreanism

Abū Hāmid Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Al-Ghazali (1058-1111) famously criticized especially Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina as well as the Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā, as followers of Pythagoreanism, in his *al-Munqidh min al-ḍalāl* (usually translated as *Deliverance from Error*) for their philosophical approach and adaptation of Classical Greek philosophy. His detailed criticism of the so-called *falāsifah* is to be seen at best in his so-called *Tahāfut al-falāsifah* (usually translated as *Incoherence of the philosophers*). In the course of the argumentation he asserts that he explicitly wants to take an anti-philosophical or better non-philosophical standpoint. He explicitly takes a stand against certain philosophical convictions of the *falāsifah* like the eternity of the world, God's ignorance of particulars and the non-existence of reward and punishment. However, this is not to say that the approach of Al-Ghazali is bare of philosophical content. When it comes to Pythagoreanism he actually even employs Pythagoras' ten categories with their opposites in his *Mishkat al-Anwar* (usually translated as *Niche of the Lights*). Beyond this, one can note that also Abū 'Alī b. al-Ḥusain b. 'Abdullāh b. Sīnā (980-1030), who is criticized by Al-Ghazali, offers a rather critical depiction of Pythagorean mathematics. Especially in book seven of *Al-Ilahīyāt (al-ilahīyāt min aṣ-Ṣifā'* usually translated as *The metaphysics of The healing*) Ibn Sina proves to be critical of the Pythagorean concept of number when it comes to the idea of unity. This critical attitude could prove to be a common ground between Al-Ghazali and Ibn Sina. Their approving as well as their critical attitudes towards Pythagoreanism are to be examined closer and compared with each other.

Biography:

The author studied Philosophy, Jewish Studies, Religious Studies as well as English and Comparative Literature in Heidelberg, Cairo and Berlin receiving her PhD in Philosophy in 2010 at FU Berlin. She was a research associate at Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen and Potsdam University. Since November 2012 she is a post-doctoral researcher in the SFB 980 at Freie Universität Berlin.