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Pythagoras and Christian Eschatology: William of Auvergne and the Debate of Transmigration in Medieval Scholasticism

As this paper will demonstrate, in medieval Latin culture Pythagorean ideas had been transmitted in a two-fold way. On the one hand Pythagoras figured prominently in popular philosophy, in the doxographic treatises and in Sentence-collections like the 'Liber philosophorum'. The Greek philosopher appeared as chief witness of temperance and chastity. Usually accompanied by his famous 'Enigmata', abbreviated maxims of morality, Pythagoras became one of the main spokesmen of laymen ethics in popular medieval culture. While the doctrine of transmigration was mentioned in these texts only marginally, in the university debates on afterlife formed the key idea connected with Pythagoras. Known from the commentary of Chalcidius on the *Timaeus*, the idea of metempsychosis had to be managed by Christian philosophy. As it will be shown in this paper, the French theologian William of Auvergne (1180-1249) undertook an extended philosophical refutation of motifs ascribed to Pythagoras, which afterwards became crucial for later theologians like Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.