

A NEW HYPOTHESIS ON ARISTOXENUS' WORKS AND THE BIRTH OF THE LEGEND OF EPAMINONDAS

by

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ABSTRACT: Nep. *Epam.* 2, 1–2, a list of Epaminondas' teachers, offers information derived from a lost work by Aristoxenus, who may have written a *Life of Epaminondas*. The hypothesis rests on a comparison with the extant biographical materials on Aristoxenus and with the earliest reception of Epaminondas' musical and philosophical education. Besides, I contend that Aristoxenus is a reliable source for the early years of Epaminondas' life and, as such, the tradition that is based on Aristoxenus should be trusted in the reconstruction of Epaminondas' early years.

1. INTRODUCTION

The loss of Plutarch's *Life of Epaminondas* will never be mourned enough¹. The only extant biography of the man, by Cornelius Nepos, was variously expanded through the anecdotes mentioned by Plutarch in his other writings and by other classical sources, in the first place Polyaeus and Frontinus².

The modern scholar relying on Nepos needs to judge the value of this biography by means of all the surviving sources on the Theban general³. None of these other authors provide us with a biography, but we know today that the modern opposition between historiography and biography may be ill-founded when ancient biographies are valued for their own materials and methodology⁴. This continuity is shown by the picture of Epaminondas as a philosopher, which is a frequent trait in the extant purely historiographical sources⁵. Diodorus in

¹ On this lost biography, cf. SHRIMPTON 1971a; TUPLIN 1984; GEORGIADOU 1997: 6–8; FRAKES 2017.

² On the use of Epaminondas as an aristocratic model, see CARRASCO MARTÍNEZ 2018.

³ After SWOBODA 1900, the only modern studies on Epaminondas are CARRATA THOMES 1952, FORTINA 1958 and TUFANO 2023.

⁴ Cf. Diod. X 11, 2 for a synthetic picture of Epaminondas' Pythagoreanism. See at least, with further scholarship, SCHEPENS 2007 and SCHORN 2018: 431–445.

⁵ Sources and commentary in SORDI 1974; BREGLIA 2011; an overview on the sources in TUFANO 2023: 15–19. On Ephorus and his emphasis on the education of Epaminondas, cf. MOMIGLIANO 1935 and STYLIANOU 1998: 10–11.