

# REVISING DOXOGRAPHY: HERMANN DIELS AND HIS CRITICS\*

LEONID ZHMUD

## 1

Our knowledge of the Presocratics, except for their verbatim fragments, is mainly based on the two «pillars», Aristotle and Theophrastus, whose reliability as sources is crucial for our understanding of early Greek philosophy. An attempt to offer a substantially new interpretation of an individual Presocratic or of Presocratic philosophy as a whole almost inevitably involves criticism and reassessment of these sources. Recent books by A. Capizzi and P. Kingsley are characteristic examples of such an approach.<sup>1</sup> Both authors adopt the assumption that Aristotle not only interpreted the Presocratics in his own terms and for his own goals, thereby transforming their views, but more significantly that he could not adequately understand the Presocratic «mystical» mentality. I do not see, however, any serious grounds to believe that the worlds of the Presocratics and of Aristotle were incompatible. It is probably not by chance that the most systematic and well-founded attempt to reassess Aristotle as a source of Presocratic philosophy, that of Cherniss,<sup>2</sup> was not tied to any specific reinterpretation of the Presocratics themselves. Later J. McDiarmid tried to apply to Theophrastus' doxography the principles worked out by Cherniss.<sup>3</sup> He stressed once more the dependence of Theophrastus' thought on that of Aristotle, but exaggerated its consequences for reconstructing Presocratic philosophy.

Along with Aristotle and Theophrastus, Hermann Diels can be viewed as another, more immediate, and no less important source of our knowledge about the Presocratics. By his brilliant restoration of the doxographical tradition in the *Doxographi Graeci* (DG) Diels laid a firm foundation for his later edition of the *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, on which the whole of 20th-century scholarship in this field rests. Due to the fact that after Diels astonishingly little was done to continue his research in the doxographical sources, his authority lasted unchallenged for almost a century, though P. Steinmetz' attempt to question an important point of Diels' reconstruction can be retrospectively viewed as a sign of the approaching revisionism.<sup>4</sup>

---

\* Oral versions of this paper were presented at Lille University (October 2000) and at St. Andrews (April 2001). I am very grateful to all participated in the discussions.

<sup>1</sup> A. Capizzi, *The cosmic republic*, Amsterdam 1990 (*La republica cosmica*, Roma 1982); P. Kingsley, *Ancient philosophy, mystery, and magic: Empedocles and the Pythagorean tradition*, Oxford 1995.

<sup>2</sup> H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's criticism of Presocratic philosophy*, Baltimore 1935.

<sup>3</sup> J. B. McDiarmid, *Theophrastus on Presocratic causes*, HSCPh 61 (1953) 85–156.

<sup>4</sup> P. Steinmetz, *Die Physik des Theophrastos von Eresos*, Berlin 1964, 334–51 (see below, 12).

In 1984 A. Lebedev proclaimed a full-scale offensive against Diels' doxographical theory:

Diels' history of doxography is false throughout. «Aëtius» is a phantom..., and Theophrastus as a pandoxographic *hypokeimenon* is a mastodon of the XIX-century *Einquellentheorie*. A complete revision of Diels' theory is in preparation. The «*Placita philosophorum*» have nothing to do with Theophrastus, but are of Academic (Eudorus) and Stoic (Arius Didymus) origin. We know almost nothing about Theophrastus' obscure work  $\Phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\kappa\alpha\ \delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\iota$ .<sup>5</sup>

Later Lebedev changed his mind and never completed his promised «complete revision», but his Russian translation of the first volume of the *Vorsokratiker* bears some traces of his deep disagreement with Diels.<sup>6</sup> In a recent book by the leading contemporary experts on doxography, J. Mansfeld and D. Runia, I found an absolutely devastating critique of Lebedev's ideas.<sup>7</sup> Equally unsuccessful was the other intermediary critique of Diels, that by Kingsley, whose «unfortunate and totally unsubstantial remarks have been refuted by Mansfeld in a critical note».<sup>8</sup> Although Mansfeld and Runia have repelled some, in their view, inauspicious attacks on Diels, their general approach to his work is highly critical, and hardly any part of Diels' doxographical theory is left unchallenged in their numerous works. Mansfeld, Runia and later H. Baltussen<sup>9</sup> initiated a revival of doxographical studies and created a distinctive school, which in view of its essential differences with and conscious distancing from the «old» doxography could be called «a new doxography school». This paper will concentrate mostly on points of disagreement between Diels and his critics, leaving aside for the moment all their important and valuable contributions to doxographical studies and to classical scholarship in general.

What are the fundamental Dielsean assumptions under attack, as stated in a recent paper by Runia?<sup>10</sup> First, there is the notion of a doxographical genre. Similarities between the doxographical texts, Runia believes, are better explained not in terms of literary genre, but in

---

<sup>5</sup> A. Lebedev,  $\Phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \tau\alpha\lambda\alpha\nu\tau\epsilon\acute{\upsilon}\omicron\upsilon\sigma\alpha$ : Neglected fragments of Democritus and Metrodorus of Chios, in: Proc. of the 1st intern. congress on Democritus. Xanthi 1984, 14 and n. 1.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., he gave a different title to his translation, «The fragments of the early Greek philosophers», and included among them Abaris and Pythagoras' wife Theano (both are not historical figures).

<sup>7</sup> J. Mansfeld, D. Runia, *Aëtiana: The method and intellectual context of a doxographer*, vol. 1, The sources, Leiden 1997, 333–38 (further *Aëtiana*).

<sup>8</sup> *Aëtiana*, 154 n. 109. Cf. P. Kingsley, Empedocles and his interpreters: The four-element doxography, *Phronesis* 39 (1994) 235–54. Another critical note, J. Mansfeld, *Doxographi Graeci*, in: W. M. Calder III, J. Mansfeld (eds), *Hermann Diels (1848–1922) et la science de l'antiquité*, *Vandœuvres*; Genève 1998, 164, is devoted to the thesis that Aëtius could not bear this name, see: J. Bremmer, Aëtius, Arius Didymus and the transmission of doxography, *Mnemosyne* 51 (1998) 154–60.

<sup>9</sup> H. Baltussen, *Theophrastus on theories of perception: Argument and purpose in the 'De sensibus'* (Diss.), Utrecht 1993 (further *Theophr. I*). Cf. a revised version of this book: *Theophrastus against the Presocratics and Plato: Peripatetic dialectic in the 'De sensibus'*, Leiden 2000 (further *Theophr. II*).

<sup>10</sup> D. Runia, What is doxography?, in: P. van der Eijk (ed), *Ancient histories of medicine*, Leiden 1999, 38–39: «Fundamental assumptions under attack».

terms of philosophical method, i.e. Aristotelian dialectic. Second, «Diels showed insufficient awareness of the possible tension between the methods of ancient doxographical texts and the requirements of the modern study of the history of philosophy». We can only exploit this material «when we have understood the aims and method of these texts». Third, Diels was too critical of the later writers, accusing them of making all manner of unnecessary changes: «he failed to recognize the flexibility of a doxographical method».

Closer reading of the works by Mansfeld, Runia and Baltussen for the last 15 years reveals that there is much more under attack: not only Diels' understanding of the doxographical tradition, but also his integrity of as a scholar and even the relevance of German classical philology of the 19th century.<sup>11</sup> I shall try to enumerate what exactly the new doxography does not like in Diels, taking into account mostly those reproaches, which are made repeatedly by all three scholars. To begin with, the term «doxography» is flawed. Then, Diels' understanding of doxography is wrong (since it is not a genre), as well as insufficient and too narrow, whereas the modern usage of the term is too wide — not least because of Diels' lack of clarity. His *Prolegomena* to the *DG* received a standard epithet: it is «labyrinthine», whereas his reconstruction of the doxographical tradition is «imposing» but «quite problematic». Diels «slavishly followed» his teacher Usener, while his references to his other predecessors are both «parsimonious and obfuscating». Furthermore, Diels devoted too little attention, on the one hand, to Aristotle as a founder of doxography, especially to his dialectical method, and to the methods and aims of the late doxographers, on the other. At the same time, he paid too much attention to the now doubtful method of *Quellenforschung* and especially to the obsolete *Einquellentheorie*. His understanding of the title of Theophrastus' doxographical work is wrong, as well as his ideas about its origin and structure. Contrary to Diels, Theophrastus' *De sensibus* was not a part of the  $\Phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\kappa\omega\nu$   $\delta\acute{o}\xi\alpha\iota$ , whereas most of the fragments attributed to the latter work come from Theophrastus' *Physics*. Of course, the «youthful Diels did do a splendid job», but he was just «a son of his time», so it is odd that his «methodologically flawed» reconstructions, which were never properly criticised, still dominate modern scholarship.<sup>12</sup>

This list is far from exhaustive, but I need to stop somewhere to have an opportunity for at least a partial reply to this criticism. It is true that in the last hundred years almost everything written by Diels on doxography was considered correct, if the opposite case has not

---

<sup>11</sup> «... the theoretical foundations of Diels' imposing edifice firmly belong within the German intellectual climate of the 19th century» (J. Mansfeld, *Studies in the historiography of Greek philosophy*, Assen 1990, 23).

<sup>12</sup> Mansfeld (n. 11), 22: «Diels' reconstruction... still maintains its position as a commonplace of the historiography of Greek philosophy. This is odd, since the *Doxographi Graeci* is an outstanding implementation of the method of *Quellenforschung*, which method today does not enjoy a good reputation».

been proven.<sup>13</sup> If this entails «Diels' dominance», this only reflects the real situation: he has done more for the study of the Presocratics in general and of doxography in particular than anybody else. It is therefore very regrettable that the struggle against Diels' dominance, which became a driving force of the whole offensive,<sup>14</sup> is completely changing the approach to his legacy. Too much of his work, which has not been replaced by anyone else, is taken for granted, whereas every minor correction of his position and every step beyond it is celebrated as a triumph of a modern scholarship. In a lecture given at Leiden University during a symposium held to celebrate the publication of the first volume of *Aëtiana*, D. O'Brien compared the field of doxography (which Diels tried to cultivate so hard) to a minefield, but then reassured all the students:

But have no fear. Jaap Mansfeld and David Runia are on their way. Let us wish them well in their brave resolve to render that dangerous terrain a safer place for the innocent and unwary.<sup>15</sup>

I still have my doubts. Specifically, I am afraid that this critical campaign that is obviously gaining momentum will become a flourishing business with such self-destructive results that even Jaap Mansfeld and David Runia will hardly be able to compensate for them.

## 2

In spite of the repeated usage of the word «methodology», an ideal of a scholarly theory which lies behind the attacks on Diels is more than just methodologically flawed. It is a holistic ideal of a theory that penetrates its subject from top to bottom and exhaustively explains it away.<sup>16</sup> An author of such a theory has to predict all the possible changes in scholarly interests in the next 150 years in order not to be accused of failing to exploit some idea or not paying enough attention to some fact. I hardly need to argue that such a theory is impossible, and luckily for us, otherwise its dominance would be truly unbearable. This does not mean that I plead for a convenient relativistic approach and propose to judge Diels' theories only by the standards of 1879, when the *DG* was published. On the contrary, it turns out that most of

---

Cf. below, n. 77.

<sup>13</sup> It is not true, however, that he was never properly criticised. Even Diels' devoted student, O. Regenbogen was not blinded by loyalty to his teacher. His RE article contains numerous criticisms and doubts about Diels' doxographical theory: Theophrastos, RE Supplbd. 7 (1940) 1535–38.

<sup>14</sup> «It is a fairly recent phenomenon that the study of ancient historiography of philosophy has started liberating itself from the dominating influence of Diels. In more recent years the flaws of this reconstruction and the *Einquellentheorie* as a whole have come under attack» (Baltussen. Theophr. I, 7). Cf. the chapter «Diels' error» (J. Mansfeld, Heresiography in context. Hippolytus' *Elenchos* as a source for Greek philosophy, Leiden 1992) and the paper: H. Baltussen, Plato in the Placita (Aëtius Bk. IV): A Dielsian blind spot, *Philologus* 144 (2000) 227–38. See also below, n. 15.

<sup>15</sup> D. O'Brien, Hermann Diels on the Presocratics: Empedocles' double destruction of the cosmos (Aëtius II 4.8), *Phronesis* 45.1 (2000) 16.

<sup>16</sup> «Diels' treatment is incomplete and so inadequate» (Baltussen, Theophr. I, XXI). Cf. below, n. 94.

what he did is still valid and that very often his results are more convincing than those of his critics.

The term «doxography», devised by Diels, is criticised from various points of view. Mansfeld and Runia are inexhaustibly inventive in adducing ever new arguments that replace their old ones, in order to show why it is so bad. These arguments include, e.g., the following:

The term doxography... is rather unfortunate because, if only by association, it suggests something as solid, impersonal, and objective as, say, cartography.<sup>17</sup>

Following this associative criticism one can reach such an absolutely unsolid term as «pornography», which in itself hardly compromises Diels' neologism. What follows then from the repeated stress that it is a *neologism*? Such an objection would permit us to study Greek culture only with its own terms, which is an impossible task. In the title of G. Lloyd's book, *Science, folklore and ideology*, we have three neologisms; that reflects the fact that although the ancient Greeks did have science, folklore and ideology, they did not have the general terms for them appropriate for *our* analysis of these phenomena. In fact, «doxography» has proven its right to exist and has every chance of winning a competition with the alternative neologism coined by Baltussen, «critical endoxography»,<sup>18</sup> which has not been used even by Mansfeld and Runia.

Mansfeld and Runia criticise the excessively broad usage of the word «doxography» since «its meaning has become quite diffuse». They even claim that because of this «not a few scholars prefer to avoid the term (and the subject) altogether».<sup>19</sup> I think they overdramatize the situation. Broad usage of a word does not necessarily lead to confusion. There are hundreds of scholarly terms with many clearly recognisable meanings, so that a new meaning, such as «doxography» applied to the *modern* exposition of the ancient theories, can peacefully coexist with the original one without obfuscating it. Anyway, Diels obviously does not bear responsibility for the broad understanding of the term «doxography», since he understood it quite narrowly and seldom used it.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, Mansfeld and Runia note: «To be sure, Diels himself contributed to the confusion».<sup>21</sup> Strangely enough, they find this contribution in the only footnote to Diels' *Elementum*.<sup>22</sup> It remains unexplained how a single word in

---

<sup>17</sup> Mansfeld (n. 11), VIII.

<sup>18</sup> Baltussen, *Theopr.* I, 21; id., A 'dialectical' argument in *De Anima* A 4, in: K. Algra et al. (eds), *Polyhistor. Studies in the history and historiography of ancient philosophy presented to J. Mansfeld*, Leiden 1996, 335 n. 14. Cf. *ibid.*, 333 n. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Aëtiana*, XIII.

<sup>20</sup> The term «doxographisch» appears for the first time in 1893, 14 years after the *DG*: W. Burkert (ed), H. Diels, *Kleine Schriften zur Geschichte der antiken Philosophie*, Hildesheim 1969, 101.

<sup>21</sup> *Aëtiana*, XIII.

<sup>22</sup> H. Diels, *Elementum: Eine Vorarbeit zum griechischen und lateinischen Thesaurus*, Leipzig 1899, VII n. 2. He calls «doxographisch» the first part of the book *Veterum de elementis placita*.

a footnote in the seldom consulted book that does not deal with doxography could have misled anyone.

What can be really misleading is not a diffuse usage of the word «doxography», but rather a rejection of doxography as a *distinctive genre*, which in turn leads to an arbitrary categorisation of diverse types of writings as doxographical. Indeed, since Mansfeld and Runia rejected Diels' «rigorous distinction» between doxography and biography,<sup>23</sup> their concept of doxography became much broader than that of Diels, sometimes it is even hard to grasp how they define it. Diels' view on doxography might appear too narrow, but at least it was clear: doxographers are those writers who compiled books *the content of which* could be traced back to Theophrastus' Φυσικῶν δόξαι. Diels believed in the existence of the doxographical genre, which is represented mainly by the Placita-literature, but is not confined to it, as no one did or would call Theophrastus' work ἀρέσκοντα or *placita*. As a matter of fact, I could not find in the modern criticism any serious arguments that Diels was wrong and that this genre did not exist. What can be found amounts to claiming that we prefer to analyse the material not in terms of a literary genre, but in terms of a philosophical method,<sup>24</sup> which I shall discuss later.

There is no doubt that literary and folklore genres exist objectively, even if their borders are not so strict as it seems in theory, and there are many intermediary or mixed works. Relying on the obvious differences between doxography and biography, Diels did not include in doxographical genre either the Successions-literature (Διαδοχαί), or the so-called Περί αἰρέσεων literature. He placed both Sotion, the originator of the Succession-literature, and Hippobotus, the author of the earliest known work Περί αἰρέσεων, among the biographers,<sup>25</sup> in full accordance with what we know from the fragments of their works.<sup>26</sup> Now, even if Mansfeld and Runia do not believe in doxography as a genre, they would probably not go so far as denying the existence of a biographical genre. What, in this case, are the reasons for connecting with doxography typically biographical Διαδοχαί?<sup>27</sup> I do not see any reason even

---

<sup>23</sup> Mansfeld (n. 11), 22 f. «The term 'doxography' ... was invented by Hermann Diels... as the designation of what he believed to be a specific genre of ancient writings» (Aëtiana, XIII). «The unspoken assumption of an identifiable doxographical genre that is broader than merely the *Placita*-literature is one of the chief reasons for the unclarity surrounding the notion of 'ancient doxography'» (Runia (n. 10), 36). «The genre of doxography, in Diels' view, was to be sharply distinguished from fanciful biography (in which he included the *Successions* literature and that *On sects*). There is some truth to this distinction, but generally it does not hold» (J. Mansfeld, Sources, in: A. A. Long (ed), The Cambridge companion to early Greek philosophy, Cambridge 1999, 35).

<sup>24</sup> Runia (n. 10), 38–39.

<sup>25</sup> Diels, DG, 147 f, 245; «Hippobotus biographus» (ibid., Index, 684).

<sup>26</sup> F. Wehrli (ed), Sotion, Die Schule des Aristoteles, Supplbd. II, Basel 1978; M. Gigante, Frammenti di Ippoboto, in: Omaggio a Piero Treves, Padua 1984, 151–93; R. Giannattasio Andria, I frammenti delle «Successioni dei filosofi», Napoli 1989.

<sup>27</sup> In his NP article Runia treats three types of literature: *Placita*, *On Sects*, and Διαδοχαί. The latter is

to discuss Διαδοχαί in the work entitled «What is doxography?»,<sup>28</sup> since all scholars working on Successions-literature unanimously placed it in biography.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, any generic classification has to take into account the origin of the genera, and not only similarities between them. In the case of the Successions-literature, Runia seems to ignore the last criterion, for *doxai* are presented here even to a lesser degree than in such non-doxographical genres as commentaries, encyclopaedias, introductions, etc. In the case of the literature *On sects*, Runia does not pay sufficient attention to the first criterion, viz. to the question whether this type has any genetic kinship with the doxographical genre originated by Theophrastus. Hippobotus was the author of two books, one biographical, Ἀναγραφὴ τῶν φιλοσόφων, and the other historiographic, Περὶ αἰρέσεων, devoted to *ethical* doctrines of the *Postsocratic* schools.<sup>30</sup> If we bear in mind that Theophrastus' work was concerned with the *physical* doctrines of the Presocratics and Plato, this rules out regarding Hippobotus' *On sects* as a successor to the Φυσικῶν δόξαι. In which sense then is this work doxographical? The question can be generalised: According to what methodological criteria does Runia distinguish doxography from the other kinds of writings pertaining to the historiography of philosophy? To be sure, he is not the first to relate the literature *On sects* to doxography,<sup>31</sup> but in view of his warnings against diffuse usage of this term, one would expect a more conscious approach to the problem.

Unlike Runia, Mejer in his analysis of the Hellenistic historiography of philosophy does *not* include the works Περὶ αἰρέσεων in doxography, but treats them, along with the Succes-

---

introduced as follows: «Eine dritte Art von Schriften, die man mit der Doxographie verbinden kann, ist die sog. 'Sukzessionen'-Lit.»; cf.: «Diese Art zu Schreiben ist zwischen Biographie und Doxographie angesiedelt» (D. Runia, *Doxographie*, NP 3 (1997) 804–05).

<sup>28</sup> Here Runia examines the same three types as in his NP article, which gives an impression that all of them are doxographical, but then concludes: «Accounts of successions of philosophers which do not focus on doctrinal differences and developments also fall outside the scope of doxography» (52), which again leaves to the reader to decide whether there are such successions that do focus on doctrinal differences and developments and therefore belong to doxography.

<sup>29</sup> W. von Kienle, *Die Berichte über die Sukzessionen der Philosophen in der hellenistischen und spätantiken Literatur* (Diss.), Berlin 1961, 79 ff; J. Mejer, *Diogenes Laertius and his Hellenistic background*, Wiesbaden 1978, 64; Wehrli (n. 26), 13; Giannattasio Andria (n. 26), 18.

<sup>30</sup> Mejer (n. 29), 77.

<sup>31</sup> B. Wyss, *Doxographie*, RLAC 4 (1959) 199. Wyss considered it a modified form of Theophrastus' doxography, whose main representative was Arius Didymus. The problem with Arius is, however, that as the recent thorough analysis shows he wrote two books: *Περὶ αἰρέσεων*, arranged by topics, and *Ἐπιτομή*, organised by schools: D. E. Hahn, *The ethical doxographies of Arius Didymus*, ANRW II 36.4 (1990) 3012 ff, 3018 ff; cf. D. Runia, *Areios Didymos*, NP 1 (1996) 1041–42. Meanwhile, it is the arrangement by schools that is universally regarded as a specific feature of the literature *On sects*! Cf. «the designation as doxography of the remains of the literature belonging to the genre *On Sects* dealing with ethics is a sort of solecism, though probably an ineradicable one» (J. Mansfeld, *Doxographical studies, Quellenforschung, tabular presentation and other varieties of comparativism*, in: W. Burkert et al. (eds), *Fragmentsammlungen philosophischer Texte der Antike*. Göttingen 1998, 26).

sions-literature and biography, as separate types of writings.<sup>32</sup> In this he closely follows Ueberweg-Praechter's *Grundriss* which distinguished the same four groups in the ancient history of philosophy: 1) biography; 2) Successions-literature; 3) doxography; 4) Περὶ αἰρέσεων literature.<sup>33</sup> There is no wonder that Praechter, in his turn, heavily relies on Diels' *DG* and highly praises his work. What is really surprising is that these four groups are to be found in Mansfeld's 1999 work (without reference to Ueberweg-Praechter). Even more puzzling is that Mansfeld unexpectedly regards them as *genres*, as if his previous criticism suddenly evaporated:

We should therefore look a bit more closely at the various ancient genres which, in a loose sense of the word, we may call historiographic...: (i) doxography, (ii) biography, (iii) literature on sects (*Peri Haireseōn*), (iv) literature on the successions of the philosophers... (*Diadochai*)...<sup>34</sup>

To the four traditional historiographic genres Mansfeld adds two new ones: «(v) collections of maxims (*gnōmai*), apophthegms, anecdotes, pronouncement stories (*chreiai*)..., and (vi) introductions (*Eisagōgai*)», but then admits: «collections of maxims and anecdotes... are not a historiographic genre in the proper sense of the word».<sup>35</sup> The same can be said, indeed, on the *Eisagogai*, so it is only natural that Mansfeld further mentions these two genres only in passing.

It seems hardly possible that Mansfeld was unaware of the conclusion reached by Runia in the same year: «There was no specific genre of doxographical writings in antiquity, and Diels was wrong to give that impression».<sup>36</sup> In any case, Runia in this very text encourages the reader «to consult two state-of-the-art survey articles by J. Mansfeld»,<sup>37</sup> one of which I have just quoted. It turns out, hence, that the state of the art in 1999 has not progressed much from 1920, indeed, it became much more confusing. I would not press too much on unanimity, if Mansfeld and Runia had not announced in 1997 that they «have reached full agreement on all the main issues, and have agreed to differ only on one or two minor points».<sup>38</sup> But what issue can be more pertinent for any work on doxographical tradition than to define, what is doxography?

---

<sup>32</sup> Mejer (n. 29), 75 ff.

<sup>33</sup> Fr. Ueberweg, K. Praechter, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie*, I. Teil, *Die Philosophie des Altertums*, 11. Aufl., Berlin 1920, 17 f, 20 ff.

<sup>34</sup> J. Mansfeld, *Sources*, in: K. Algra et al. (eds), *The Cambridge history of Hellenistic philosophy*, Cambridge 1999, 16–17. Mansfeld's further note, «It should however be borne in mind that these genres are not rigidly distinct», corresponds to the note in Ueberweg-Praechter: «Innerhalb der... philosophiegeschichtlichen Literatur kann man im allgemeinen vier Gruppen unterscheiden, ohne daß sich zwischen diesen überall durchaus scharfe Grenzen ziehen ließen» (20).

<sup>35</sup> Mansfeld (n. 34), 20.

<sup>36</sup> Runia (n. 10), 52.

<sup>37</sup> Runia (n. 10), 33 n. 1.

<sup>38</sup> *Aëtiana*, XXI.

What was the title of Theophrastus' collection: Φυσικῶν δόξαι or Φυσικαὶ δόξαι? This is after all a minor point, but it is intrinsically connected with the more important one, whether Theophrastus' approach to the Presocratic *doxai* was more historical or more systematic. In late doxography, say Mansfeld and Runia, the *doxai* are often more important than names, and this makes them believe that such was Theophrastus' attitude, too, which had to be reflected in the title of his book, Φυσικαὶ δόξαι. To deduce the decisive argument from the title as it is given in the list of his writings (Φυσικῶν δοξῶν ις') is impossible, but there is strong evidence in favour of Φυσικῶν δόξαι as much more historical and person-oriented work than is suggested by the critics.<sup>39</sup> Usener and Diels believed the titles Φυσικῶν δοξῶν in 16 books and Περὶ φυσικῶν in 18 books to be the same work.<sup>40</sup> Now, Περὶ φυσικῶν is not about τὰ φυσικά, but about οἱ φυσικοί, who represented for Aristotle, his students, and his commentators a distinctive group of thinkers, whose opinions were the subject of doxography.<sup>41</sup> Later authors quote this book under different titles, but all the quotations concern opinions of the specific φυσικοί, and not just anonymous «physical tenets».<sup>42</sup> Whereas in Aristotle we find some examples of φυσικῶν δόξαι,<sup>43</sup> φυσικαὶ δόξαι are not to be found. Mansfeld's favourite and sole example, φυσικαὶ προτάσεις (*Top.* 105 b 20 ff), can not be considered as a substitute for it, because the division of the διαλεκτικαὶ προτάσεις into ethical, physical and logical according to the subject does not confirm existence of the al-

---

<sup>39</sup> It seems that they do not consider their arguments as decisive: «It is however doubtful whether... the Theophrastean title should run 'Φυσικῶν' rather than 'Φυσικαὶ δόξαι'» (J. Mansfeld, *Doxography and dialectic: The Sitz im Leben of the 'Placita'*, ANRW II 36.4 (1990) 3057 n. 1); cf. id. (n. 23), 23. «As Mansfeld has shown..., the title is more likely to have been Φυσικαὶ δόξαι» (D. Runia, *Xenophanes or Theophrastus? An Aëtian doxographicum on the sun*, in: W. Fortenbaugh, D. Gutas (eds), *Theophrastus of Eresus: His psychological, doxographical and scientific writings*, New Brunswick 1992, 116 n. 9); cf. id. (n. 10), 38 n. 24.

<sup>40</sup> H. Usener, *Analecta Theophrastea* (1858), in: *Kleine Schriften*, Leipzig 1912, 27; Diels, DG, 102; *Regenbogen* (n. 13), 1395.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. another Theophrastus' title, Πρὸς τοὺς φυσικούς (D. L. V, 46).

<sup>42</sup> Alexander's variant, Περὶ τῶν φυσικῶν (fr. 227C FHSG), can only mean *On the Physicists*. The subject of this book are δόξαι τῶν φυσικῶν: περὶ Παρμενίδου καὶ τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ καὶ Θεόφραστος... λέγει. Galen gives the correct title and refers to τὴν Ξενοφάνους δόξαν (fr. 231 FHSG). Taurus' variant, Περὶ τῶν φυσικῶν δοξῶν (fr. 241A FHSG), can mean both *On the Physical Tenets* and *On the Opinions of the Physicists*. In view of the other evidence the latter variant is preferable. Cf. J. Mansfeld, *Physikai doxai and Problēmata physica from Aristotle to Aëtius (and beyond)*, in: Fortenbaugh, Gutas (n. 39), 64–65; R. W. Sharples, *Theophrastus of Eresus. Commentary*, vol. 3.1, *Sources on physics*, Leiden 1998, 10.

<sup>43</sup> ἡ κοινὴ δόξα τῶν φυσικῶν (*Phys.* 187 a 28), ἡ τῶν φυσιολόγων δόξα (*Met.* 1062 b 22).

leged class of φυσικὰ δόξα.<sup>44</sup> Aristotle's commentators do not seem to know of such class too: there is a lot of φυσικῶν δόξα(ι) in CAG,<sup>45</sup> but no φυσικὰ δόξα.<sup>46</sup>

Mansfeld and Runia have not brought any convincing argument against the traditional view that the *De sensibus* (*DS*) originally belonged to the Φυσικῶν δόξα,<sup>47</sup> while Baltussen, after long discussion and not without inner struggle concludes: «If pressed one would be tempted to attribute the *DS* to the *Physikai doxai* (as characterised in recent research)».<sup>48</sup> Now, the *DS* was obviously more person-oriented and historical than late doxography.<sup>49</sup> Whereas sections in Aëtius contained different *doxai* on each sense, Theophrastus arranged material by theories of the individual thinkers on all the senses, which he discussed and criticised at some length. At the very beginning φυσικοί are divided into two groups, according to their dominant principle. The order of the names of those who followed the principle «like by like» is Parmenides, Plato, Empedocles, which reflects the growing complexity of their theories.<sup>50</sup> Yet they are followed not by the proponents of the opposite principles, but by all the others, arranged in the chronological order: Alcmaeon, Anaxagoras, Clidemus, Diogenes, Democritus.<sup>51</sup> The same combination of the topic- and person-oriented approach is characteristic for Menon's Ἱατρικὴ συναγωγὴ that discussed the views of the individual doctors and

---

<sup>44</sup> Aristotle calls this division «tentative», and it is never repeated in his writings. What he defines here is the subject of the dialectical propositions and not the subject of all the possible δόξα, *pace* Mansfeld (n. 23), 29.

<sup>45</sup> ταῖς τῶν φυσικῶν δόξαις (*Alex. In Met.*, 72.2); τὴν ἀπάντων δόξαν τῶν φυσικῶν (*Themist. In Phys.*, 211.29, cf. *ibid.*, 13.32); τὰς τῶν προτέρων φυσικῶν δόξας (*Simpl. In Phys.*, 358.12, cf. *ibid.*, 162.8); ἥτις οὐδὲ φυσικῶν ἐστὶ δόξα (*ibid.*, 148.28); τὴν τῶν κυρίως φυσικῶν λεγομένων δόξαν (*id. In De Caelo*, 561.1); τὰς περὶ τῶν ἀρχῶν τῶν φυσικῶν δόξας (*Philop. In Phys.*, 26.23); τὴν κοινὴν πάντων τῶν φυσικῶν δόξαν (*ibid.*, 89.7, cf. 94.20, 184.25, 395.18); τὰς τῶν φυσικῶν δόξας (*ibid.*, 108.15); τῶν φυσικῶν φιλοσόφων τὰς περὶ τῆς ἀλμυρότητος δόξας (*Olymp. In Meteor.* 150.28). αἱ τῶν φυσικῶν καὶ τῶν ἀστρονομικῶν δόξαι in Strabo (II, 5,2.22–24) probably goes back to Posidonius (fr. 3c Theiler, but cf. Edelstein-Kidd II, 135, 364). Note also Δόξα τῶν φυσικῶν φιλοσόφων ἀπὸ τῶν Πλουτάρχου (*Euseb. Prep. evan.*, XV, 340.23 Mras) and τῶν φυσιολόγων δόξαι (*Simpl. In Phys.*, 355.20).

<sup>46</sup> My search with TLG in the entire corpus of Greek literature brought only one example of φυσικὴ δόξα (*Olymp. In Meteor.*, 138.29). No name is mentioned either in Aristotle or in Olympiodorus.

<sup>47</sup> They do not go much beyond doubts expressed in the earlier literature, see: F. Wehrli, Theophrast, in: H. Flashar (ed), *Die Philosophie der Antike*, Bd. 3, Basel 1983, 489 f.

<sup>48</sup> Baltussen. Theophr. I, 250. The same is repeated in Theophr. II, 245.

<sup>49</sup> See: K. von Fritz, Democritus' theory of vision, in: E. Underwood (ed), *Science, medicine and history*, Essays written in honour of Ch. Singer, vol. 1, Oxford 1953, 83.

<sup>50</sup> Diels, DG, 105.

<sup>51</sup> In § 1 Heraclitus is placed in the second group, but is not mentioned subsequently. Anaxagoras is the only true representative of the second group, whereas Alcmaeon, Clidemus, Diogenes and Democritus do not belong entirely to any of them. It seems that difficulties of clear-cut systematisation prompted Theophrastus to use the simplest, i.e. chronological, principle. Clidemus' position between Anaxagoras and Diogenes is the only chronological indication for this obscure figure, on which he was dated by Diels. Cf. Baltussen. Theophr. II, 16. Mansfeld's reconstruction of the very peculiar «présentation chronologico-système» (*Aristote et la structure du De sensibus de Théophraste*, *Phronesis* 41 (1996) 158–88) is not convincing.

thinkers on the causes of diseases. He also divides them into two groups, inside of which the sequence is mostly chronological.<sup>52</sup>

Theophrastus' work was based, at least partly, on his critical monographs devoted to the different Presocratics — Anaximander, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Empedocles, Archelaus, Diogenes, Democritus, Metrodorus (D.L. V, 42–44, 49).<sup>53</sup> Why would he have written so much against or about individual φυσικοί (cf. above, n. 41), if «the tenets are what matters most, not the persons who held them»?<sup>54</sup> One can assume that when reorganising this material for the Φυσικῶν δόξαι, Theophrastus did not consider it necessary to abandon his critique, although he probably reduced it. Judging by the extensive criticism in the *DS*, he was not primarily concerned with the logical consistency of a theory, although he did pay attention to this point. His favourite argument was rather that a theory contradicts the facts (observations) or does not explain the obvious facts.<sup>55</sup> In other words, his criticism was scientific, and not dialectical, as far as a scientific theory has to be consistent both with the known facts and with logical rules.

In the first chapter of his book Theophrastus arranges φυσικοί in chronological order, gives their patronymic, birthplace, and the name of their teacher and indicates their relationship to the predecessors.<sup>56</sup> All this is unnecessary for the dialectical discussion that, according to the new doxography, was *Sitz im Leben* of Theophrastus' work, but it is necessary and important for the history of philosophy. Yet a historical orientation of this work is exactly what Mansfeld, Runia and Baltussen try to reduce to a minimum, if not wholly eliminate. This tendency strikingly resembles structuralism with its attempts to replace history and historical methods with structure and formal methods. From this perspective one could perhaps better understand massive over-formalisation of doxography and denial of its historical character, persistent claims of the methodological superiority over the outdated 19th century positivism and firm conviction that it is a hidden dialectical structure of doxography that matters most. Such an approach tends to obfuscate the fact that Theophrastus' physical and Menon's

---

<sup>52</sup> D. Manetti, 'Aristotle' and the role of doxography in the Anonymus Londinensis, in: van der Eijk (n. 10), 102, 118 f. Due to the lacunae in the papyrus and the high number of the unknown names this order is not always clear; further, the author of the papyrus seems to have made some changes in it. Still, the first group begins with Euryphon of Cnidos (b. after 500 BC) and ends with Aegimius of Aelis, the younger contemporary of Hippocrates, the second, according to Manetti (118 f), runs from Philolaus to Philistion of Locri and Plato.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Diels, DG, 103. He wrote also on Plato and Xenocrates. Besides, he may have used the material of Aristotle's monographs on the Pythagoreans, Xenophanes, Alcmaeon, Melissus, etc. (D.L. V, 25).

<sup>54</sup> Mansfeld (n. 42), 65. Cf. «I submit that in this work the tenets were the main issue, not the persons who subscribed to them... This, at any rate, holds for Aëtius and the other sources...» (ibid.). Luckily for us, not everything that holds for Aëtius, holds also for Theophrastus.

<sup>55</sup> G. M. Stratton, *Theophrastus and the Greek physiological psychology before Aristotle*, London 1917, 58 f.

<sup>56</sup> McDiarmid (n. 3), 89; von Kienle (n. 29), 62 ff.

medical doxographies were parts of the historiographic project initiated by Aristotle. To the same project belong three histories of science, written by Eudemus, that were arranged according to the chronology of the mathematicians and astronomers.<sup>57</sup> One more part of the project was Eudemus' *History of Theology* that discusses the doctrines of the θεολόγοι in their chronological sequence.<sup>58</sup> In spite of the significant differences between the approaches of the individual Peripatetics to their specific material, it is history and not dialectic that unites various parts of the project into the one meaningful whole.<sup>59</sup>

That Theophrastus' book was devoted to the φυσικοί as a specific group is confirmed by the fact that it deliberately ignores thinkers belonging to the other «professional» groups: θεολόγοι, μαθηματικοί and ἰατροί.<sup>60</sup> Immediate reasons for such separation are clear: ideas of the θεολόγοι were reviewed in Eudemus' *History of Theology*, opinions of the doctors in Menon's Ἰατρικὴ συναγωγή, discoveries of the μαθηματικοί in Eudemus' *History of Geometry* and *History of Astronomy*. But whereas all these works except for the *History of Theology* were inclusive, i.e. they contained the names of some φυσικοί, Φυσικῶν δόξαι seem to be exclusive. There are no θεολόγοι even in the section περὶ θεοῦ (Aët. I, 7), nor doctors in the embryological part. The absence of the μαθηματικοί in the astronomical part appears even more striking, since Hippocrates of Chios and his student Aeschylus, Meton and Euctemon, Archytas and Eudoxus did express their *doxai* on this subject. The omission of all these names can not be explained only by the state of our sources, it must result from deliberate choice.<sup>61</sup>

Simplicius twice refers to Theophrastus' book Φυσικὴ ἱστορία (fr. 228B, 234 FHSG), and once simply to Ἱστορία (fr. 226B). Usener and Diels regarded this book not as «physics», but as «history of physics» and, therefore, identified it with the Φυσικῶν δόξαι.<sup>62</sup> That

<sup>57</sup> L. Zhmud, Eudemus' history of mathematics, in: W. Fortenbaugh, I. Bodnar (eds), Eudemus of Rhodes, RUSCH vol. 11, New Brunswick 2002 (in press).

<sup>58</sup> Τῶν περὶ τὸ θεῖον ἱστορίας α'–ζ' from Theophrastus' catalogue (251 № 2 FHSG), which has to be identified with Eudemus' *History of Theology* (fr. 150 Wehrli). See: Usener (n. 40), 18.

<sup>59</sup> «Aristotle's own great achievement in the field of history during his later years and the parallel works of his disciples organized by him show that the investigation of the detail occupied his mind on a large scale... This sort of historical interest cannot be explained any longer as an outgrowth of his dialectical method... We must not separate Aristotle's interest in the history of philosophy from his historical research in all these other fields of civilization» (W. Jaeger, Rec., AJP 58 (1937) 354).

<sup>60</sup> Later doxography adds to the original stock opinions of the μαθηματικοί and ἰατροί (see 'mathematici' and 'medici' in Diels' index); θεολόγοι are represented by Orpheus, Homer, Hesiod, etc. Opinions of Hippocrates of Cos and Polybus also were included after Theophrastus, whereas Alcmaeon was considered by him as φυσικός. Cf. Diels, DG, 232; Mansfeld (n. 39), 3058–59; D. Runia, The *Placita* ascribed to doctors in Aëtius' doxography on physics, in: van der Eijk (n. 10), 244–45.

<sup>61</sup> Eudoxus' opinion on the Nile's floods (DG, 386.1 f) obviously got into the doxographical tradition after Theophrastus (cf. DG, 228f; Eudox. fr. 287–288 Lasserre), as well as the reference to Eudoxus and Aratus (DG, 347.21 f).

<sup>62</sup> Usener (n. 40), 26f; Diels, DG, 102. Among other considerations they relied on Priscianus, who distinguished between Theophrastus' *Naturalis historia* and *Naturalis auditus* (no. 137 1b, 5b FHSG).

is plausible, for Simplicius, usually very pedantic in giving the correct titles, never refers to the *Φυσικῶν δόξαι*. It seems that the latter book was known to him only as *Φυσικὴ ἱστορία*.<sup>63</sup> If *Φυσικὴ ἱστορία* really meant «history of physics», this would be a strong argument for the historical character of Theophrastus' doxographical work. But Steinmetz denied that *φυσικὴ ἱστορία* could possibly mean «history of physics», it must be «physical inquiry». Accordingly, he identified this work with Theophrastus' *Physics* and assigned to it most of the fragments of Diels' *Φυσικῶν δόξαι*.<sup>64</sup> Theophrastus' doxographical work was about to disappear, whereas his *Physics* became an alternative source of the doxographical tradition.

Although Usener and Diels were basically right on this point, they did not adduce all the possible evidence. It has to be reminded that *ἱστορία* appears in the three titles of Eudemus' histories of sciences, *Γεωμετρικὴ ἱστορία*, *Ἀστρολογικὴ ἱστορία*, *Ἀριθμητικὴ ἱστορία*, Simplicius quoting two of them.<sup>65</sup> Eudemus' *Γεωμετρικὴ (Ἀστρολογικὴ) ἱστορία* means not «inquiry into geometry (astronomy)», but only «history of geometry (astronomy)», which is clear to everyone acquainted with the content of these books, including Simplicius.<sup>66</sup> This raises the possibility that in referring to Theophrastus' *Φυσικὴ ἱστορία* he was aware that it constitutes a parallel, even if not exactly parallel, to Eudemus' histories of mathematics.<sup>67</sup> There can be no doubt that Simplicius' references to *Φυσικὴ ἱστορία* have to be set apart from his more numerous references to Theophrastus' *Physics*, which he consistently calls *Φυσικά*.<sup>68</sup> Eudemus' *Physics* can serve once more as a good parallel: Simplicius gives almost a hundred quotations from this book and always refers to it just as *Φυσικά*.<sup>69</sup> The differences in the content between Theophrastus' theoretical *Physics* and doxographical *Φυσικὴ ἱστορία*, as quoted by Simplicius, are no less evident. All three fragments from *Φυσικὴ ἱστορία* concern the views of the Presocratics,<sup>70</sup> whereas only one of the ten Simplicius' references to the *Physics* mentions a name (fr. 238 FHSG, Democritus), the rest is purely theoretic-

<sup>63</sup> Sharples (n. 42) 12 notes that there is no overlap between authors who cite *Φυσικὴ ἱστορία* by name and those who cite *Φυσικῶν δόξαι* by name. See Diels' index to Simplicius, p. 1447.

<sup>64</sup> Steinmetz (n. 4), 335 f. He was followed by Mansfeld (n. 11), 253 and (n. 23), 26, Runia (n. 39), 117, 129, 137, and Baltussen (Theophr. II, 241).

<sup>65</sup> Fr. 140, 148 Wehrli; H. Gottschalk, Rec., *Gnomon* 39 (1967) 20. On *ἱστορία* as «history» see, e.g.: Arist. *Rhet.* 1359 b 30f, 1360 a 30–36; *Poet.* 1451 b 1–7, 1459 a 21–24; Anaximenes (*FGrHist* 72 F 3, 9). Ephorus' universal history was entitled *Ἱστορία*; Theophrastus' student Praxiphanes criticised Thucydides in his *Περὶ ἱστορίας* (fr. 18 Wehrli). Theophrastus' praise of Herodotus' and Thucydides' style (fr. 697 FHSG) may come from his *Περὶ ἱστορίας*, see: Regenbogen (n. 13), 1526.

<sup>66</sup> He gives a long wordy quotation from the *History of Geometry* (fr. 140 Wehrli) and three of the seven quotations preserved from the *History of Astronomy* (fr. 146, 148–149 Wehrli).

<sup>67</sup> *ἱστορικὰ ἀναγραφὰ* mentioned by Simplicius immediately after his account of the Presocratic principles (*In Phys.*, 28.33) imply above all Theophrastus' work.

<sup>68</sup> Fr. 143, 144b, 146, 149, 153a, 153c, 176, 238, 279, 298a FHSG.

<sup>69</sup> Fr. 32–34, 37b, 43–44, 50, 59, 62, 75, 81, 85–88, 93a, 101, 104–105 Wehrli.

<sup>70</sup> Anaximenes (fr. 226b FHSG), Anaximander and Anaxagoras (fr. 228b), Parmenides (fr. 234).

cal. All this makes impossible any attempt to consider *Physics* an important source for the doxographical tradition.

On the other hand, it is perfectly possible that Theophrastus' *Physics* contained *some* doxographical passages, as Aristotle's and Eudemus' *Physics* did, which means that Diels was wrong in assigning *Phys. op.* fr. 13 (= fr. 238 FHSg) to the *Φυσικῶν δόξαι* just because it mentions Democritus. The fact remains, however, that this is the *only* fragment of Theophrastus' *Physics*, reliably identifiable either by the title or by the content, where a name of any Presocratic appears,<sup>71</sup> except for the controversial Stobaeus' quotation.<sup>72</sup> But even if Theophrastus' *Physics* had as many doxographical digressions as Eudemus'<sup>73</sup> (which in itself seems rather improbable), this would hardly change anything. Neither Aristotle's, nor Eudemus', nor Theophrastus' doxographical passages could have constituted the doxographical genre, as it was formed by the *Φυσικῶν δόξαι*. Among many important differences between doxographical passages from Eudemus' *Physics* and fragments of Theophrastus' historiographic work, the following are the most conspicuous. Eudemus never gives 1) the patronymic of the person in question, 2) nor his birthplace, 3) nor the name of his teacher,<sup>74</sup> 4) nor any chronological indications. On the contrary, in his historical work *Γεωμετρικὴ ἱστορία* Eudemus gives both the birthplace and teacher's name of almost all the mathematicians and treats them strictly in chronological order (fr. 133 Wehrli). It seems, therefore, that *Φυσικὴ ἱστορία* as an alternative title to *Φυσικῶν δόξαι* was not so erroneous.

#### 4

The predilection of the new doxography for a systematic approach is especially manifest in the repeated criticism that, in his *Vorsokratiker*, Diels arranged material chronologically and according to the schools:

---

<sup>71</sup> Therefore, Diogenes Laertius' careless note that Theophrastus sets out in his *Physics* the opinions of almost all physicists (IX, 22 = 227D FHSg) is entirely wrong. Usener and Diels correctly took this note to refer to the *Φυσικῶν δόξαι*, the *Epitome* of which Diogenes mentions in IX, 21. Cf. Galen's reference to the *Epitome* (fr. 231 FHSg). Doxographical fragment on the origin of the sea (fr. 23 Diels = fr. 221 FHSg; cf. Aët. III, 16) also comes from the *Φυσικῶν δόξαι*, see: Sharples (n. 42), 219.

<sup>72</sup> Θεόφραστος ἐν τοῖς Φυσικοῖς γέγραπεν (fr. 232 FHSg). One cannot expect the same level of accuracy here as in Simplicius' references to the book titles. Theophrastus' reference to Xenophanes can be either from his *Physics* or from the *Φυσικῶν δόξαι*. See: Steinmetz (n. 4), 334 ff; R. W. Sharples, Theophrastus on the heavens, in: J. Wiesner (ed), *Aristoteles Werk und Wirkung*, Bd. 1, Berlin 1985, 577–93; Mansfeld (n. 11), 147 ff; Runia (n. 39).

<sup>73</sup> Fr. 31, 35–47, 49, 53–54, 60, 65, 67, 75, 78, 82, 89, 110–111, 118 Wehrli.

<sup>74</sup> The only exception among the nearly 30 fragments is Ζήνων ὁ Παρμενίδου γνώριμος (fr. 37a), but since this fragment comes via Alexander, Parmenides' name may well be his addition. — Doxographical remarks in Theophrastus' non-historical works also were very scarce: Gottschalk (n. 65), 20.

This method of presentation tends to obfuscate an important aspect of the evidence thus cut up, viz. the fact that... our earlier sources present the *doxai* of the Presocratics in *clusters*.<sup>75</sup>

The same critique is to be found in Runia 15 years later:

To put it somewhat paradoxically, the doxographical material, though not in itself fragmentary, became such because it was linked up to the study of individual philosophers... This method is quite inevitable and certainly not wrong in itself. The problem is that one can very easily lose sight of the content and method of the original doxographical sources.<sup>76</sup>

It is not without interest — at least for a future historian of the modern intellectual history — to note how in the course of the 20th century the term «original source» or «early source» has taken on an opposite meaning and begun to denote not Anaxagoras' treatise, and not even Theophrastus' compendium, but Aëtius and his epitomators. The cart is obviously put before the horse: since for *some* later compilers (but certainly not for Theophrastus!) the individual Presocratics happened to be just «name-labels» attached to the different *doxai* presented in clusters, all those who are interested in the first place in Presocratic thought *distort* these «original» doxographical clusters by trying to connect the ideas with their authors. But had Diels been really so impressed by the technique of the late compilers, and had he devoted his efforts to the study of the problems his critics consider to be the most important, we would hardly have benefited from his *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*.

The other frequent point of criticism, namely that Diels ignored Aristotle's role in the formation of the doxography, seems to me equally untenable. In his *DG*, Diels was not writing a history of «influences» but was looking for a common source of the doxographical genre. He has found this in the Φυσικῶν δόξαι and convincingly connected it with the later (existing or perished) works. In other words, he was doing that very necessary *Quellenforschung* which now tends to be so disreputable.<sup>77</sup> Although Aristotle did not write any purely doxographical works, Theophrastus' dependence on his teacher did not escape Diels: he finds many parallels with Aristotle's doxographical passages and refers to Zeller's article on this matter.<sup>78</sup> So

---

<sup>75</sup> Mansfeld (n. 11), 23. Cf. id. (n. 23), 25: «Diels' quasi-biographical mode of presentation, though based on a (too) clear hypothesis concerning the transmission, effectively obscures its own foundations and also inhibits access to the original sources themselves».

<sup>76</sup> Runia (n. 10), 37. See also: Baltussen. Theophr. I, 5.

<sup>77</sup> «*Quellenforschung*, just as psycho-analysis is an heirloom of 19th century positivism» (Mansfeld (n. 11), 345); «*Quellenforschung* is almost a dirty word today» (id. (n. 39), 3064); «the technique of *Quellenforschung* on which Diels' researches are based has today fallen in bad repute... If... we relate *Quellenforschung* to the *DG*... as cause to effects, we may say that the effects have persisted while the cause has largely been discredited, or even forgotten» (id. (n. 8), 17). See also above, n. 12.

<sup>78</sup> Diels, *DG*, 105–6. He also compares Aëtius' chapter on the Nile's floods with Aristotle's *De inundatione Nili* (*DG*, 226–29), which is far more relevant to the shaping of the doxographical tradition than Aristotelian dialectic. To be sure, at that time Diels was not sure about its authorship. Cf. J. Partsch, *Des Aristoteles Buch «Über das Steigen des Nil»*, *ASGW* 27 (1909) 555 n. 4. Cf. below, n. 121.

the problem is not that Diels was unaware of something, but that he failed to demonstrate his knowledge in a form acceptable to his critics.<sup>79</sup> I cannot help thinking that had he collected all the relevant Aristotelian passages already in the *DG*, and not in his later *Vorsokratiker*, he would have created even more grounds for criticising his 854 page book as «imposing» and his *Prolegomena* as «labyrinthine». Anyway, had he even started from Aristotle, he could be accused of failing to recognize the importance of the earlier writers! The following quotation shows that my last guess is not just a polemical exaggeration:

Diels' influential works provide important epistemic obstacles to the attempt to investigate whether or not before Aristotle, or before Plato, *doxai* were already inventoried in a systematical way, or successions were listed. Attempts to go beyond Diels have therefore brought only partial results, or have not advanced far beyond the status of postulates.<sup>80</sup>

I fail to see exactly which «epistemic obstacles» Mansfeld has in mind, if Snell in 1944, and after him Classen in 1965 have found an important predecessor of Aristotle, Hippias, whose book Patzer has reconstructed in 1986.<sup>81</sup> I consider their results to be no less significant than Mansfeld's, whose thorough study of the pre-Platonic doxography after all relies on them, and not *vice versa*. And if these results are only partial, such is the nature of every scholarly explanation. Again, it is the same ideal of an all-embracing scholarly theory, which seems to be a starting point of many excurses of the new doxography into *Wissenschaftsgeschichte*.

Mansfeld and Runia open their *Aëtiana* with a long prehistory of the Aëtius' hypothesis (p. 1–63), starting with the early 16th century and noting every coincidence of Diels' complex theory with every remark that leads, or could lead, if pressed in the same direction as Diels. But does this really mean that he was less independent than we used to believe? Every theory is a lucky combination of previous ideas, so in spite of the impressive number of Darwin's predecessors, there is only one Darwin. While using so much space to highlight the most distant corners of Diels' intellectual background, Mansfeld and Runia do not say anything about the immediate conditions under which the *DG* were written: that Diels was a teacher in a provincial *Gymnasium* who had to teach various subjects for 22 hours weekly, that he worked 18 hours per day, that many editions he had to use were unreliable while manuscripts were not easily available, and so on. The only passage where they touch one of these facts starts with a very promising note: «we should not be quick to point the accusing finger here», and here is the continuation:

---

<sup>79</sup> «He also failed to acknowledge the influence of Aristotle. To be sure, most Aristotelian passages dealing with the Presocratics are to be found in the later *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, but his decisive role in shaping the tradition had fallen by the wayside» (Mansfeld (n. 8) 147). Cf. *ibid.*, 165.

<sup>80</sup> Mansfeld (n. 11), 23. Cf. *id.* (n. 8), 25.

<sup>81</sup> A. Patzer, *Der Sophist Hippias als Philosophiehistoriker*, Freiburg 1986.

Stuck in a school-teaching job which he loathed, Diels was determined to establish his academic credentials as impressively as he possibly could. Hence the erudite Latin of the ‘Prolegomena’, its complex and circuitous structure, the scanty and not seldom scathing references to previous and contemporary scholars. For this reason too, we may surmise, his very considerable debts to his predecessors... are rather successfully concealed.<sup>82</sup>

I looked many times through the text and footnotes of the *Prolegomena* and did not find anything parsimonious and obfuscating in the hundreds references by Diels to the scholarly literature.<sup>83</sup> And is it reasonable to surmise that a reference to Budé or Jonsius could diminish Diels’ academic credentials? Of course, I can be as subjective as Mansfeld and Runia are; the problem is, however, that they have not yet brought any concrete example of what *exactly* Diels had tried to conceal and to obfuscate, so that we are not able to verify their accusations. In those cases when we are, they seem to be quite unfair, for example, their unconcealed wish to stress Diels’ dependence on his teacher Usener. Here is only one typical example.

It is not correct that Diels’ edition of the Φουσικῶν δόξαι «slavishly follows» Usener’s edition.<sup>84</sup> Diels retained Usener’s numbering, but in all important respects there is nothing here that even distantly resembles «slavishly following». Diels corrects Usener’s text frequently, he does not agree with his conjectures or proposes his own, his *apparatus* is four times larger than Usener’s, which in itself shows how seriously he took the editor’s task. Diels marks with the special typeface the words that belong, in his view, to Theophrastus; some of Theophrastus’ fragments are longer in Diels than in Usener (fr. 2, 5, 12, 23), some are rearranged (fr. 6a); there are fragments not represented in Usener (fr. 5a; fr. 19 was omitted in Usener due to the typographical error). Although Diels respected his teacher and trusted him, he was hardly «blinded by loyalty to Usener’s hypothesis», as Runia says elsewhere.<sup>85</sup> Rather, he did not want to demonstrate independence at any price which, as it seems, is exactly what Runia does. When looking for the criteria for separation between material of Arius Didymus and Aëtius in Stobaeus’ compilation, he stresses:

---

<sup>82</sup> Aëtiana, 73, cf. Mansfeld (n. 8), 168. For a similar kind of *Wissenschaftsgeschichte* see: W. Calder III, Hermann Diels: What sort of fellow was he?, in: Calder III (n. 8), 1.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Baltussen’s economical references to his predecessors. In Theophr. I, 13–14 n. 5 he says that the purpose and function of the *DS* as a whole have remained unstudied ever since Diels printed (!) it in the *DG*, and mentions two monographs on this subject (J. Beare 1906, repr. 1993; G. M. Stratton, 1917, repr. 1964) only in one critical footnote. In Theophr. II the stakes are raised: «[This] investigation... represents the first monograph on this text since L. Philippson’s *Hylê Anthrôpinê* (1831)»; «until recently the *DS* as a whole remained virtually unstudied... At any rate, Stratton’s commentary is insufficient» (1–2). Cf. a very different opinion: «the work by Stratton... seems by far the best so far as the interpretation of Theophrastus’ work is concerned» (von Fritz (n. 49), 84 n. 6).

<sup>84</sup> Runia (n. 39), 115.

<sup>85</sup> Runia (n. 39), 116. Cf.: «Diels ist sich zeit seines Lebens dessen bewußt geblieben, daß Hermann Usener es war, der ihm die erste große Aufgabe stellte... und nie hat Diels aufgehört, mit tiefster Dankbarkeit von diesem begnadeten Lehrer... zu sprechen» (O. Regenbogen, Hermann Diels (1922), Kleine Schriften, München 1961, 545).

It is thus of vital importance to determine various criteria that allow the two chief sources to be separated. In our view the most significant of these are eight in number. Obviously our list takes as its point of departure the list of ten criteria which Diels outlined in his rigorous and admirably succinct analysis. It would seem better, however, to draw up a new and revised list, in which his results are incorporated rather than repeat his list *more scholastico*... Unlike Diels we shall exclude any considerations that are based wholly on content (i.e. Diels' last three criteria).<sup>86</sup>

Arithmetically, this means that Runia subtracts three criteria from Diels' list of ten, then adds to the rest one criterion of his own and calls this «a new and revised list», in which Diels' results are incorporated! It is worth citing here Runia's earlier note: «The results of Diels' analysis were incorporated by Wachsmuth in the very structure of his edition, which therefore cannot be regarded as an independent piece of work».<sup>87</sup> To what extent are then the studies of the new doxography school independent in this specific sense, e.g. the first volume of *Aëtiana*?

«Diels did not easily change his mind or develop his thought».<sup>88</sup> It is true that Wilamowitz, to whose *Erinnerungen* Mansfeld and Runia refer in this case, did it much more easily, which only underlines profound differences between the two life-long friends. Anyone who has read Diels would probably agree that he always tried to build his views on the most solid factual basis that was possible in a given case, so he did not need to change his mind as quickly as Wilamowitz. It does not follow from this that he was unwilling or unable to correct his doxographical theory.<sup>89</sup> At least, Diels' letter to his publisher De Gruyter written on the eve of the first World War can hardly serve as decisive evidence for such a conclusion.<sup>90</sup> In the preface to the fourth edition of the *Vorsokratiker* (1922) Diels complains that, because of the higher printing costs, he cannot rearrange and improve this work as he wished and adds:

Das Schicksal der Doxographi, die vergriffen sind, aber die Neubearbeitung in kürzerer Form, die dringend nötig gewesen wäre, nicht haben finden können, verpflichtet mich gegenüber dem Verlage dieses vorliegenden Werkes... zu dem herzlichen Danke.

If I correctly understand this, Diels in fact wanted to have a new edition of the *DG*, although he hardly felt the need for its complete revision. After all, this is not such a bad thing, for had he changed his mind as easily as his critics do, we would have at least three substantially different versions of the development of the doxographical tradition.

---

<sup>86</sup> D. Runia, Additional fragments of Arius Didymus on physics, in: Algra (n. 18), 367 and n. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Runia (n. 86), 366.

<sup>88</sup> *Aëtiana*, 106, repeated in: Mansfeld (n. 8), 163.

<sup>89</sup> E.g., he changed his mind on the dependence of Achilles Tattius on Aëtius (*before* it was suggested by G. Pasquali, *Doxographica aus Basiliusscholien*, NGWG 1910, 221 n. 1), which is one of the few important points of divergence between Diels' reconstruction of Aëtius' work and that of *Aëtiana*.

<sup>90</sup> Quoted in: Mansfeld (n. 8), 162. Cf. Runia (n. 39), 117 n. 14.

Indeed, it would be unfair to say, and even more unfair to repeat on every occasion, that Mansfeld's *Vorsokratiker* slavishly follows Diels and that, like Diels' work, it is person-oriented and not *doxai*-oriented, which *eo ipso* distorts the original context of the *doxai*. The character of this book fully corresponds to its task, so that such reproaches would be beside the point. But it seems worth recalling that in the preface to this book we find exactly those views that Mansfeld and his school have been attacking during the last 15 years:

Theophrast... schrieb die erste «Geschichte der <Natur>philosophie»; «das Buch Theophrasts *Über die Meinungen (doxai, daher Doxographie) der Naturphilosophen* ist verlorengegangen, mit Ausnahme der Kapitel «Über die sinnlichen Wahrnehmungen».<sup>91</sup>

Except for one sentence, «jedenfalls hat keiner es bisher gewagt, Diels' Arbeit neu zu machen», nothing here suggests that the author is going to undertake a radical revision of Diels' and his own views. In 1987, Mansfeld was still using Diels' variant Φυσικῶν δόξαι, yet by 1989 he had changed his mind,<sup>92</sup> and in 1999 Runia points the accusing finger at Wehrli (1983!) by marking this variant of the title with the word *sic*, as if it were a grave or curious mistake.<sup>93</sup> In 1987, Mansfeld was still pleased at finding at least one mistake in Diels:

It can be shown that the doxographies concerned with Xenophanes... provide the unique opportunity to prove Diels wrong in at least one important case, i.e. not absolutely right insofar as his reconstruction as a whole is at issue.<sup>94</sup>

It turns out, however, that the main thesis of his paper, namely that the doxographical tradition offers in this case not Theophrastus' report on Xenophanes, but Theophrastus' own view, is wrong. This was shown in 1992 by no one else other than Runia, who concludes that Diels was right after all in this issue.<sup>95</sup> In 1986 Mansfeld notes: Steinmetz' suggestions «that the fragments in Simplicius attributed by Usener and Diels to the doxographical work are from Theophrastus' *Physics* no longer have the same appeal for me», but three years later he fully accepts them.<sup>96</sup> In 1992 Runia insists that it is «methodologically misguided» to try to connect various doxographical sources by means of a stemma, as it is implied in Diels' naive *Einquellentheorie*,<sup>97</sup> but in 1997 such a stemma appears in *Aëtiana* (p. 328). The problem, however, is that in the *DG* there is no stemma for the entire doxographical tradition, neither for its earlier period, nor for the later. The *only* stemma to be found here concerns the textual transmission of Ps.-Plutarch's *Epitome*, including its manuscripts and the sources that depend

---

<sup>91</sup> J. Mansfeld, *Die Vorsokratiker*, Stuttgart 1983, 30.

<sup>92</sup> Cf.: Mansfeld (n. 11), 147 and 262 n. 49.

<sup>93</sup> Runia (n. 10), 46 n. 54.

<sup>94</sup> Mansfeld (n. 11), 149–50.

<sup>95</sup> Runia (n. 39), 129.

<sup>96</sup> Cf.: Mansfeld (n. 11), 72 n. 16 and 238 ff.

<sup>97</sup> Runia (n. 39), 137. On p. 136 Runia gives a diagram, which is «entirely in the spirit of Diels».

on it.<sup>98</sup> In contrast to Runia's 1992 reconstruction and to the diagram in *Aëtiana* (p. 81), Aëtius, *Vetusta placita* and Theophrastus do not appear here.

Reviewing T. Göransson's book on Middle Platonism, Runia approvingly notes: «Seldom has a scholar shown such a sharp eye for the weakness of other scholars' arguments».<sup>99</sup> I am quite sure that a scholar with a much sharper eye than mine could easily double or triple my selective list of passages illustrating how eagerly and quickly Diels' critics change their views. Yet I would like to draw attention to one more fact. Critical remarks on naïveté of the *Einquellentheorie* are not to be found in the *Aëtiana* or in the later publications on the doxography, which plainly avoid mentioning this word. Does this mean that working closely on Aëtius' tradition, which represents a brilliant example of the successful *Einquellentheorie*, Mansfeld and Runia feel uncomfortable repeating their previous criticism of this would-be antiquated method?<sup>100</sup> Whatever the reasons for this change are, one is tempted to note both the differences with Diels and the similarity of the new doxography to the ancient Greek one:

the doxographical method was highly flexible and able to be adapted to a large number of different situations and usages.<sup>101</sup>

## 5

The complex structure of the  $\Phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\kappa\hat{\omega}\nu$  δόξαι guarantees the unity of the doxographical genre and allows to recognise its dependence on the original source. Now, we come to a very important point: what was the goal and structure of this book? The traditional view is that it was a Peripatetic history of philosophy, systematic and critical,<sup>102</sup> which should not be confused with the modern history of philosophy but can be compared with it, being in fact its starting point. *Quod non*, objects Mansfeld, — this compendium was written for dialectical purposes and, respectively, has a typically dialectical structure:

Aristotle converted Plato's urbane approaches (and Hippias' and Gorgias' presentations) into a discipline, viz. dialectic, which follows a set of specific rules, and it is from this discipline that doxography *qua* genre stems.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> DG, 40. «Liceat mihi hoc loco, quoniam varios Plutarchi libelli casus et memorias ab ipsis incunabulis per aetatum gentiumque seriem ad recentiora tempore decucurri, stemmatis artificio longiorem disputationem breviter comprehendere et illustrare» (ibid., 39).

<sup>99</sup> D. Runia, *Rec.*, *Vigilia Christiana* 51 (1997) 107.

<sup>100</sup> Baltussen's (n. 14), 237 continuous attacks on *Einquellentheorie* rest on an erroneous understanding of what it implies. Although Diels regarded  $\Phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\kappa\hat{\omega}\nu$  δόξαι as the ultimate source of the doxographical tradition, it was never his idea that every lemma in Aëtius directly goes back to Theophrastus.

<sup>101</sup> Runia (n. 10), 39.

<sup>102</sup> «Der Aufbau scheint nach Sach- und Problemkategorien geordnet gewesen zu sein, innerhalb deren sowohl die zeitliche Folge als die angeblichen Schulzusammenhänge bestimmend waren» (Regenbogen (n. 13), 1536).

<sup>103</sup> Mansfeld (n. 31), 26.

It sounds paradoxical, but struggling against Diels' idea of the *Φυσικῶν δόξαι* as *Urquelle* of the later tradition, the new doxography substitutes its own *Einquellentheorie* with Aristotle's *Topics* as *fons et origo* of the entire Greek doxography. Everything historical in Theophrastus' doxography is methodically suppressed, and everything systematic and critical is forcefully connected with dialectic, as if it were the only possible source of systematisation and criticism. Sometimes one gets the impression that Theophrastus was writing his work with the *Topics* in his hand and that otherwise he would be unable to write it at all. For instance, in the *DS* he frequently criticises one thesis from various points of view. Now, where else did he learn this remarkable and sophisticated technique of critique if not in the *Topics*? It is fairly natural therefore to argue that by applying this technique he «is following the advice of Aristotle expressed in the *Top.* Θ 8 to formulate many arguments against one point».<sup>104</sup>

The notion of dialectic as used by the new doxography school and its supposed role in structuring the ancient doxography seem to me the weakest point in the whole debate. To be sure, the expansion of dialectic from its original home in the *Topics* to various areas of Aristotle's philosophy and the tendency to make dialectic his most important philosophical method are dated at least fifty years earlier. But joining this trend of research, this school expands dialectic much further, both thematically and chronologically, from Aristotle's philosophy and the doxographical passages in his theoretical treatises<sup>105</sup> via Theophrastus' compendium to the late doxographers. At the same time, it reduces the notion of dialectic to a few easily recognisable signs like diaeresis, while ignoring the other, more important and characteristic features of dialectic which are not to be found in doxography.

Any detailed analysis of the «dialectical doxography» would go beyond the limits of this paper, so I have to be more apodictic here. There is a very revealing parallel in the recent scholarship: almost simultaneously with the expansion of dialectic occurred the systematic application of the *Posterior Analytics* to Aristotle's zoological works. Intermediate results of this last trend were summed up and critically assessed by G. Lloyd: «results so far obtained are disappointing»; «interpretative anarchy»; positions are changing in a couple of years; attention is constantly drawn to the need for future work.<sup>106</sup> Quite similar features are discernible in the application of the *Topics* to the *Φυσικῶν δόξαι*: the same disappointing results, in-

---

<sup>104</sup> Baltussen. *Theophr.* II, 224.

<sup>105</sup> On previous dialectical interpretations of Aristotle's doxography see: E. Berti, Sul carattere «dialettico» della storiografia filosofica di Aristotele, in: G. Cambiano (ed), *Storiografia e dossografia nella filosofia antica*, Torino 1986, 101–125. Berti believes that it was Cherniss who showed the dialectical character of Aristotle's historiography of philosophy (ibid., 105). Cf. Jaeger (n. 59), 350.

<sup>106</sup> G. E. R. Lloyd, *Aristotle's zoology and his metaphysics: The status quaestionis*. A critical review of some recent theories, in: *Methods and problems in Greek science*, Cambridge 1991, 373–396.

terpretative anarchy, constantly changing views and references to the need of further work.<sup>107</sup> The reason for this similarity is obvious: *systematic* application of the logical procedures in doxography is *a priori* as inconceivable as in zoology. As for the accidental application, it is worth quoting Aristotle himself:

Hence everybody, including laymen, makes use in some way of dialectic and peirastic; for all to some extent undertake to test those who profess to know things (*Soph. Ref.* 172 a 30).

Is diaeresis really so prominent in dialectic as to be its main representative in doxography? And was not Aristotle's later attitude to diaeresis rather critical?<sup>108</sup> Theophrastus surely tried to make similarities and differences between the Presocratic *doxai* as clear as possible, but this is quite understandable in the context of the history of philosophy, without any appeal to dialectic. In its loose form diaeresis is a method of classification, perfectly applicable to different material. If there is something in doxography that looks like diaeresis, or would look so if we restore some missing links, it does not mean necessarily that doxography *qua* genre stems from dialectic, because the very equation 'diaeresis = dialectic' is more than doubtful. What is more, such restorations often appear to be quite artificial,<sup>109</sup> sometimes they do not square with the material at all.<sup>110</sup> Where diaeresis is in fact present, e.g., at the beginning of the *DS* (above, 10), it is both evident and in a sense trivial as any similar division (realists and nominalists, materialists and idealists, etc.), but the postulate of a complex and hidden diaeretical structure of the entire doxography is unsupported by our evidence.<sup>111</sup>

What is the difference between ἔνδοξα, as the basis of dialectical syllogism, and δόξα, as the subject of doxography? Presocratic δόξα include a lot of ἔνδοξα, but also many things which Aristotle would surely have qualified as ἄδοξα.<sup>112</sup> Mansfeld regularly refers to the *Categories* and *Posterior Analytics* in his explanations of the dialectical nature of

---

<sup>107</sup> See, e.g.: Diels' «hypothesis is currently being revised and in need of still further revision, so the account which follows, though still preliminary in the sense that this revision is not yet completed, will in part go beyond Diels» (Mansfeld (n. 23), 26). Baltussen (Theophr. II, 243) is sure that Usener-Diels' hypothesis is bad, but «what should replace the hypothesis is not easily stated and will require further investigation». Cf. his explanation of why he excluded a chapter on the relationship of the *DS* with Aëtius: «This is a measure inspired both by the need for further thought on the relevant sources and by the recent developments in the study of doxography (Aëtius)» (Theophr. II, 234).

<sup>108</sup> H. Cherniss, *Aristotle's criticism of Plato and the Academy*, New York 1962, 27 ff.

<sup>109</sup> See, e.g.: J. Mansfeld, *Chrysippus and the Placita*, *Phronesis* 34 (1989) 314 ff.

<sup>110</sup> Mansfeld's idea that Simplicius' application of diaeresis to the chapter περὶ ἀρχῶν of the Φυσικῶν δόξα goes back to Theophrastus (Mansfeld (n. 11), 243 ff) contradicts both Simplicius' own words (*In Phys.*, 22.20–21) and the actual arrangement of material in this chapter. Cf. Diels, *DG*, 104 f; Steinmetz (n. 4), 338 ff; J. Wiesner, *Theophrast und der Beginn des Archereferats von Simplicios' Physikkommentar*, *Hermes* 117 (1989) 288–303, and above, n. 56.

<sup>111</sup> For a balanced critique of this idea see: A. Laks, *Du témoignage comme fragment*, in: G. W. Most (ed), *Collecting fragments = Fragmente sammeln*, Göttingen 1997, 257–63.

<sup>112</sup> In the *Topics* 160 b 17–22 the views of Parmenides (nothing is in motion) and of Heraclitus (everything is in motion) are characterised as ἄδοξα, which have to be avoided in a dialectical discussion.

doxography.<sup>113</sup> Does it mean that both Aristotelian logical categories and his theory of the scientific syllogism are part of his dialectic? It is possible, of course, to interpret some chapters of the *Φυσικῶν δόξαι* in terms of Aristotle's categories, suggesting that the chapters *περὶ τροπῶν ἡλίου* and *περὶ ἐκλείψεως ἡλίου* «are specific applications of the general topic *περὶ κινήσεως* in the sense of the categories doing and being affected».<sup>114</sup> The question, however, remains: did the Presocratics develop various theories on the solar eclipse or not? And is not it only natural for a person, who was interested in giving an overview of such theories to place them under the heading *περὶ ἐκλείψεως ἡλίου*? All these are questions to which I did not find any clear answer in the numerous publications on «dialectical doxography».

Aristotle certainly had a more limited conception of what dialectic is, for in his works we find a sharp distinction between dialectic and philosophy (e.g., *Top.* 105 b 30, *Rhet.* 1359 b 10 ff). Respectively, those contemporary experts in dialectic, who study the *Topics* for its own sake and not for the sake of doxography, are very restrictive concerning its possible applications in philosophy and science.<sup>115</sup> Primavesi, for example, maintains that the *Topics* describes a method of a dialectical syllogism, i.e. of a compulsive argumentation in *γυμνασία*, that dialectic presupposes real, and not just imaginary, dialogue between two persons, with strict rules of questioning and answering, etc.<sup>116</sup> Obviously, we would look in vain for that kind of thing in the *Φυσικῶν δόξαι*, and that is why the new doxography never attempted to find it. Among those things that it has found, the following are worth mentioning. First, Aristotle remarks casually that when preparing for dialectical discussions we have to make selections of opinions from the existing literature, including the *doxai* of individuals, e.g. Empedocles' opinion that the elements of bodies are four (105 a 34 f). Now, if something is used or just mentioned in the *Topics*, it does not necessarily become dialectical. Aristotle's advice reflects his general attitude to the predecessors and his readiness to take their views as the starting point of *any* research in which he was interested.<sup>117</sup> Second, there is the well-known passage that dialectic can be of use for philosophy as a way to ἀρχαί of all the sciences (101 a 34f). Disregarding the fact that this passage remains isolated, for in the *Analytics* Aristotle

---

<sup>113</sup> Mansfeld (n. 42), 69 ff.

<sup>114</sup> Mansfeld (n. 42), 93.

<sup>115</sup> The best recent introduction is: O. Primavesi, *Die Aristotelische Topik*, München 1996. See also: D. Devereux, *Comments on Robert Bolton's 'The epistemological basis of Aristotelian dialectic'*, in: D. Devereux, P. Pellegrin (eds), *Biologie, logique et métaphysique chez Aristote*, Paris 1990, 263–86; P. Slomkowski, *Aristotle's Topics*, Leiden 1997.

<sup>116</sup> Primavesi (n. 115), 17 ff. See also: E. Kapp, *Syllogistik*, RE IV A (1932) 1056; R. Robinson, *Plato's earlier dialectic*, 2nd ed, Oxford 1953, 91; Slomkowski (n. 115), 9 ff.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. his revealing remark in the middle of the doxographical passage: «It is what we are all inclined to do, to direct our inquiry not to the matter itself, but to the views of our opponents» (*De Caelo* 294 b 7–9, Rev.Ox.Tr.).

found another and better way to ἀρχαί,<sup>118</sup> one can ask, whether doxography has anything in common with the search for ἀρχαί. This question was raised by Baltussen and here is his conclusion:

[Theophrastus'] evaluation of propositional *archai*... can only be called a dialectical procedure in a restricted sense. Dialectic proper was defined as the reasoning from provisional *archai* to the foundations of a certain discipline. Such a form of reasoning does not materialise in *DS*.

He still insists that «*DS* is dialectical *sensu Aristotelico* to a considerable degree», for it meets at least two of four minimum requirements for a dialectical work, formulated by himself, viz. 1) it makes use of *endoxa* and 2) it exhibits dialectical arguments.<sup>119</sup> One has to object, first, that doxography makes use not of *endoxa*, but of *doxai*, and it would be strange if it did not; second, that exactly because dialectic is devoid of its own subject-matter its arguments are easily applicable to any subject.<sup>120</sup> But this potential applicability does not prove the actual dialectical origin of doxography.

How far the origins of doxography are from dialectic shows one of the earliest doxographical overviews, so far neglected by Mansfeld. Interested in the causes of the Nile's floods, Herodotus prefaces his own explanation of this phenomenon (II, 24–25) with three opinions of his predecessors (II, 20–23), viz. of Thales, Euthymenes of Massalia, and Anaxagoras (it is hard to say, whether their chronological order is accidental). Although he does not call them by names, they are easily identifiable from the later doxography on this topic. Herodotus' overview reveals some patterns characteristic for the Peripatetic doxography: 1) physical problem, 2) short references to the relevant opinions of the predecessors (two of them are φυσικοί) followed by 3) criticism of the first and the third *doxa* from *various points of view* (the second is bluntly dismissed). It is only natural that all the three *doxai* plus that of Herodotus himself appear in the doxographical part of Aristotle's *De inundatione Nili* (who, in his turn, brings against them physical, and not dialectical arguments) and later in Aëtius (IV, 1).<sup>121</sup> As for the origins of doxography, it seems more than symbolical that this doxographical overview comes from a *historical* work written at least 80 years before the *Topics*.

---

<sup>118</sup> Devereux (n. 115), 284 f; Primavesi (n. 115), 52 f, 57.

<sup>119</sup> Baltussen. Theophr. II, 229, 232. For the kind of arguments he calls «dialectical» see above, 21.

<sup>120</sup> «The proper subjects of dialectical and rhetorical deductions are the things with which we say the commonplaces are concerned, that is to say those that apply equally to questions of right conduct, natural science, politics, and many other things» (Arist. *Rhet.* 1358 a 10–14; Rev.Ox.Tr.).

<sup>121</sup> J. Balty-Fontaine, Pour une édition nouvelle du «Liber Aristotelis de Inundatione Nili», *Chronique d'Égypte* 34 (1959) 95–102; D. Bonneau, *Liber Aristotelis De inundatione Nili*, *Études de Papyrologie* 9 (1971) 1–33; M. Bollack, *La raison de Lucrèce*. Paris 1979, 539 ff.

The value of a scholarly work can be estimated from the extent that it makes unnecessary all previous, and stimulates all subsequent, studies in this field. From this point of view, Diels' *Doxographi Graeci* deserves as highest praise as his *Vorsokratiker*, even though the former attracted so far much less attention than the latter. Instead of repeatedly asking «Why did Diels not close the field of doxography?», we have to be grateful to him that he opened it for us. This does not mean of course that there is only one god of doxography — Theophrastus, with Diels as his prophet, in whose scripture there is nothing to change or to add. I do not have any doubt that Diels' reconstruction of the doxographical tradition, both the earlier and the later, can be corrected, improved and developed further, as has already been done by Mansfeld, Runia and Baltussen in many important points.<sup>122</sup> Yet this necessary work can be done without excessive struggle against or for any dominance (as opposed to an ambitious but fruitless «deconstruction of presuppositions, methods and results» of Diels' work<sup>123</sup>). This was recently demonstrated in the exemplary article of W. Burkert on Diels' *Vorsokratiker*.<sup>124</sup> Instead of «dominance», he speaks of «Diels'sche Zeitalter», in which we are still living, and does not conceal his doubts about the possible replacement of Diels' *Vorsokratiker* with a new, methodologically refined edition. By showing that Diels' reconstruction of Aëtius was right «almost beyond expectation»,<sup>125</sup> Mansfeld and Runia proved once more that this part of the scholarly tradition rests on a solid foundation. To be sure, «Diels' Arbeit neu zu machen» hardly means only to show where he was right or wrong. Taken seriously this would imply new editions of the doxographical texts edited by him both in the *DG* (among them Aëtius, Arius Didymus, Theophrastus' *De sensibus*) and later (Menon's medical doxography). It is far from certain, whether all these texts or just any of them will appear in the following volumes of *Aëtiana* and will forever replace Diels' work.

---

<sup>122</sup> Diels was very far from considering his reconstruction infallible: «Daß in dem komplizierten Geflecht der statuierten Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse und bei der notwendigen Scheidungen von Überlieferungsgruppen manche Linie zu einfach durchgezogen, manche Trennung zu scharf durchgeführt werden mußte, hat Diels selbst am besten gewußt: nur so war es möglich, erst einmal eine Durchleuchtung und Ordnung des riesenhaften Materials zu erreichen» (Regenbogen (n. 85), 545–46).

<sup>123</sup> Baltussen (n. 14), 227.

<sup>124</sup> W. Burkert, Diels' *Vorsokratiker*. Rückschau und Ausblick, in: Calder III (n. 8), 169–97.

<sup>125</sup> «Die Aëtios-Rekonstruktion der *DG* ist von Mansfeld-Runia (*Aëtiana*) fast über die Erwartung hinaus bestätigt worden» (Burkert, in: Calder III (n. 8), 165). Cf. a generally sympathetic review of *Aëtiana*: «Mansfeld and Runia rightly are critical of Diels' procedure and arguments, but in the end come to the conclusion that Diels, at least as far as this part of his thesis is concerned, was basically right... If one thinks that this result... is comparatively meagre given the enormous efforts made, one should keep in mind that it is of crucial importance if doubts concerning this central part of Diels' hypothesis can be laid to rest» (M. Frede, *Rec.*, *Phronesis*, 44.2 (1999) 137). It has to be stressed, however, that before Mansfeld and Runia it was only Lebedev's short, and mostly unnoticed, paper that attacked Aëtius' hypothesis. Significantly, only 8 of 371 pages of *Aëtiana* are devoted to the refutation of Lebedev's thesis.