PART I

FOUNDATIONAL STUDIES
CHAPTER ONE

DOXOGRAPHICAL STUDIES, QUELLENFORSCHUNG, TABULAR PRESENTATION AND OTHER VARIETIES OF COMPARATIVISM

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1. Hermann Diels’ monumental Doxographi Graeci of 1879,¹ which has made his neologisms doxographer and doxography into bywords, is a splendid example of nineteenth-century Quellenforschung. It inaugurated a new period in the historiography of ancient philosophy, and its influence is still predominant though today very few scholars bother to study the lengthy and labyrinthine introduction which demonstrates Diels’ reconstruction of the history of the traditions that are involved. Collections of ancient philosophical fragments—beginning with Use- ner’s Epicurea of 1887,² with Diels’ own Poetarum Philosophorum Fragmenta of 1901 and the far more influential and often revised Fragmente der Vorsokratiker of 1903, and indeed continuing to the present day—are to a lesser or greater extent based on or indebted to the hypothesis of the DG. The revised editions of Zeller’s opus magnum Die Philosophie der Griechen which were published after 1879 wholeheartedly incorporated Diels’ findings,³ and later histories followed suit. Pertinent criticism was restricted to points of detail, and was mostly to be found in papers published in learned journals.⁴ [17]

But the technique of Quellenforschung (hereafter QF) on which Diels’ researches are based has today fallen in bad repute, at least among students of ancient philosophy. If for argument’s sake we relate QF to

¹ Hereafter DG. The substantive Doxographie is first found in Diels 1893, 101; the neologism doxographus presumably was coined to stress the distinction with biography, believed by Diels to be an almost totally unreliable genre (into which moreover he included the On Sects and Successions literature). For precedent in antiquity see e.g. D.L. III.47 who distinguishes the bios “life”, from the doxai “tenets”, of Plato, and VII.38 the bios of Zeno from the dogmata of the Stoics. Diels’ appeal to a passage in Hippolytus is unjustified, see Mansfeld 1992b, 7–18.
² Also see Teichmüller in the 7th. ed. of Ritter–Preller 1886, iii.