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**Leo Catana**

**Doxographical or Philosophical History of Philosophy:**

**On Michael Frede's Precepts for Writing the History of Philosophy**

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**Abstract:** In a series of articles from the 1980s and 1990s, Michael Frede analysed the history of histories of philosophy written over the last three hundred years. According to Frede, modern scholars have degenerated into what he calls a “doxographical” mode of writing the history of philosophy. Instead, he argued, these scholars should write what he called “philosophical” history of philosophy, first established in the last decades of the seventeenth century but since abandoned. In the present article it is argued that Frede’s reconstruction of the history of histories of philosophy is historically problematic.

**Keywords:** Michael Frede; methodology; history of philosophy; historiography.

**Introduction**

Michael Frede (1940-2007) was an important historian of Ancient philosophy, who also made original methodological contributions to the historiography of history of philosophy. In three articles published between 1987 and 1992, he presented a severe criticism of the prevailing but deplorable method of writing history of philosophy, and he offered bold precepts for a future history of philosophy. In the course of these three articles, he

established a periodisation for the history of histories of philosophy: Frede juxtaposes the doxographical tradition, ultimately going back to Diogenes Laertius (3rd century CE), with what he saw as a novel and very different method of writing the history of philosophy, a “philosophical” method for writing the history of philosophy, which emerged for the first time in the 1780s in Germany.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, this “philosophical” method was lost at the end of the nineteenth century, according to Frede, for which reason historians of philosophy must now return to the philosophical method of the 1780s.

This new method, emerging in the 1780s, did not venerate the past for its own sake, but for its value to contemporary philosophy. He explains:

As opposed to their doxographical predecessors, these histories originally are written out of the conviction that the philosophical positions of the past are no longer worth considering philosophically, that they are out of date; if they are still worth considering at all, it is because they constitute the steps through which we historically arrived at our present philosophical position. Thus, they are still histories written from a philosophical point of view, in fact from a

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<sup>1</sup> Frede persistently claims the existence of two competing traditions of writing the history of philosophy: The tradition of doxography and that of problem-oriented history, the latter also called the “philosophical history of philosophy”; see M. Frede, “Introduction”, in id., *Essays in Ancient philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987) xxiii-xxvii; id., “The history of philosophy as a discipline”, *The Journal of philosophy*, 85 (1988) No. 11: 666; and id., “Doxographie, historiographie philosophique de la philosophie”, *Revue de metaphysique et de morale*, 97 (1992): 311. The distinction between a historical and a philosophical approach to the past can also be found in W.-R. Mann, “The modern historiography of ancient philosophy”: *History and theory*, 35 (1996) No. 2: 168-169.

particular philosophical position; and they regard the past, the history of philosophy, as leading up to this position.<sup>2</sup>

These new histories of philosophy differed from the earlier so-called doxographical tradition by their use of chronological order and by their philosophical method.<sup>3</sup> According to him, the breakthrough of this novel method came with Christoph Meiners' *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit* (1786). It was soon followed, Frede explains, by a series of other German historians of philosophy, and here he probably refers to Dietrich Tiedemann's *Geist der speculativen Philosophie* (1791-97), Johann Gottlieb Buhle's *Lehrbuch der Geschichte der Philosophie* (1796-1804), and Wilhelm Gottlieb Tennemann's *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1798-1819).<sup>4</sup> I shall turn to these histories in a moment, but first I shall make a few observations on Frede's immediate intellectual background in analytic philosophy.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Frede, "The history of philosophy as a discipline", 667. No documentation or examples are provided here. For this so-called philosophical approach to the history of philosophy, see also Frede, "Introduction", x-xii; id., "Doxographie, historiographie philosophique de la philosophie", 323-325.

<sup>3</sup> Frede, "The history of philosophy as a discipline", 667, and id., "Doxographie, historiographie philosophique de la philosophie", 322-323, claims that the second tradition employed a chronological arrangement. Frede, "The history of philosophy as a discipline", 667, claims that "Meiners's history of 1786 seems to be the first to adopt a chronological disposition".

<sup>4</sup> Frede, "The history of philosophy as a discipline", 667, and id., "Doxographie, historiographie philosophique de la philosophie", 322, only gives the title and publication year of Meiners' work, not the titles of the other three authors (Tiedemann, Buhle and Tennemann). I have suggested the intended titles for these three authors.

<sup>5</sup> Analytic philosophy, which has evolved for more than a century now, is probably no longer a clearly defined field or method. For its development, see S. Soames, *Philosophical analysis in the twentieth*

Frede's fascination with analytic philosophy was probably among the factors that led him to defend a methodological dichotomy between "doxographical" and "philosophical" history of philosophy, where the former was to be abandoned, the latter to be pursued. He was led to assume that the "philosophical" method was identical with the problem-oriented method programmatically favoured by some analytic philosophers.<sup>6</sup> Frede's historiographical articles, discussed in the present article, can partly be contextualized within the 1980s debate over analytic philosophy and its stance towards the history of philosophy. This debate was to some extent provoked by the analytic philosopher and logician Willard Van Orman Quine (1908-2000), who made a few comments in 1985 and 1987 on the distinction between philosophy proper and the history of philosophy.<sup>7</sup> Quine's comments were sketchy and clearly derived from his personal lack of interest in philosophy's past, but they were telescoped by others to a general and methodological level. His comments thus gave momentum to one form of anti-historicism that had already been thriving for some time; analytic philosophers now took up arms against the history of philosophy, increasingly seen as the expression of an unsustainable and intolerable historicism. Analytic philosophers thus began to debate the role of the history of

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century, vol. 1 *The dawn of analysis*: vol. 2 *The age of meaning* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Catana: 'Philosophical Problems in the History of Philosophy: What are They?', in *Philosophy and its History: New Essays on the Methods and Aims of Research in the History of Philosophy*, eds M. Lærke, J. E. H. Smith and E. Schliesser. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 115-133.

<sup>7</sup> W. V. Quine, *The time of my life: An autobiography* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1985), 194; id., *Quiddities: An intermittently philosophical dictionary* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 209. For discussions on analytic philosophy and history of philosophy, see *Analytic philosophy and history of philosophy*, eds T. Sorell and G. A. J. Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

philosophy, seriously questioning the discipline's legitimacy.<sup>8</sup> Frede's three historiographical articles, published between 1987 and 1992, emerged from this intellectual

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<sup>8</sup> For a predominantly negative view of the value of history of philosophy, largely inspired by the distinction articulated by Quine, and other analytic philosophers, see G. Sebba, "What is the 'history of philosophy'?", *Journal of the history of philosophy*, 8 (1970), 251-262; G. Graham, "Can there be history of philosophy?": *History and theory*, 21 (1982), 37-52; R. Mash, "How important for philosophers is the history of philosophy?": *History and theory*, 26 (1987) 3, 287-299. For the view that the history of philosophy is a universal and context-free conversation among historically distant philosophies, see G. Galgan, "What's special about the history of philosophy?", *American philosophical quarterly*, 24 (1987) No. 1, 91-96. For a defence of analytic history of philosophy, see R. A. Watson, "What is the history of philosophy and why is it important?": *Journal of the history of philosophy*, 40 (2002) No. 4, 525-528.

For criticism of analytic philosophy's approach to history of philosophy, see J. W. Yolton, "Textual vs conceptual analysis in the history of philosophy": *Journal of the history of philosophy*, 13 (1975), 505-512; M. Ayers, "Analytical philosophy and the history of philosophy", in *Philosophy and its past*, eds J. Rée, M. Agers and A. Westoby (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), 42-66; J. Rée, "Philosophy and the history of philosophy", in *Philosophy and its past*, eds J. Rée, M. Agers and A. Westoby (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978), 3-39; R. Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Q. Skinner, "Introduction", in *Philosophy in history: Essays in the historiography of philosophy*, eds R. Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 11-14; E. Curley, "Dialogue with the dead", *Synthese*, 67 (1986) No. 1, 33-49; C. Janaway, "History of philosophy: The analytical ideal": *The Aristotelian Society: Supplementary volume*, 62 (1988), 169-189; P. Alexander, "History of philosophy: the analytical ideal", *The Aristotelian Society: Supplementary volume*, 62 (1988), 191-208; G. Striker, "Why study the history of philosophy?": *The Harvard review of philosophy*, 7 (1999), 15-18; D. Garber, "Towards an antiquarian history of philosophy": *Rivista di storia della Filosofia*, 2 (2003), 27-37; J. Cottingham, "Why should analytic philosophers do history of philosophy?", in *Analytic philosophy and history of philosophy*, eds T. Sorell and G. A. J. Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 25-41; D. Garber, "What's philosophical about the history of philosophy?", in *ibid.*, 129-146. For reconciliatory views, arguing that the history of philosophy can be appropriated within analytic philosophy, see A. P. Martinich,

climate.<sup>9</sup> He intended to strike a delicate balance: On the one hand, he defended the philosophical value of past philosophy; on the other hand, he demanded that historians of philosophy themselves adopted a philosophical method.

In this article I argue that Frede posits a divide in the history of history of philosophy which does not really exist, and that he fails to identify and reflect critically on other and real methodological issues, which have been instrumental to the discipline's methodology.

## **I . Frede's Claims about the History of the History of Philosophy**

Let us examine the evidence for Frede's contention, cited on page 2-3 above. If we look up the page in Meiners' 1786 work which, according to Frede' quote above, brought about a revolution in the history of philosophy, we shall soon be disappointed.<sup>10</sup> Meiners did not claim that he pursued a thematic or problem-oriented method in his account, which led up

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"Philosophical history of philosophy", *Journal of the history of philosophy*, 41 (2003) 3, 405-7; H.-J. Glock, "Analytic philosophy and history: A mismatch?": *Mind*, 117 (2008) No. 468, 867-897.

<sup>9</sup> Frede, "Introduction"; id., "The history of philosophy as a discipline"; id., "Doxographie, historiographie philosophique de la philosophie"; Mann, "The modern historiography of ancient philosophy"; A. Kenny, "The philosopher's history and the history of philosophy", in *Analytic philosophy and history of philosophy*, eds T. Sorell and G. A. J. Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 13-24.

<sup>10</sup> The only documentation advanced for this new method in the history of histories of philosophy, is Frede, "Doxographie, historiographie philosophique de la philosophie", 322, referring to C. Meiners, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit* (Lemgo, 1786), 3'. Frede's articles two other articles cited in the present article do not contain any documentation for this claim.

to contemporary philosophical problems.<sup>11</sup> Nor did he claim that he was the first to adopt a chronological method — indeed, he stated that others had already done this.<sup>12</sup> Frede clearly misrepresents Meiners in this respect. Even worse, Meiners’ work was not a work on the history of philosophy. It dealt with a much broader history, as its title indicates; it covers the history of language, morality, religion, culture, technology and political institutions.<sup>13</sup> Meiners’ intention in this work was not to replace the existing history of philosophy, but to add a new and much broader kind of history.<sup>14</sup>

It is equally disconcerting to see that Meiners’ alleged followers (Buhle, Tiedemann and Tennemann) cited Johann Jacob Brucker’s (1696-1770) history of philosophy from 1742-44, the *Historia critica philosophiae*, as an authority, whereas Meiners’ work of 1786 was listed, at best, as one of a number of other expositions.<sup>15</sup> Admittedly, Tennemann made

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<sup>11</sup> Meiners, *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit*, 3<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 3<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 4<sup>r</sup>-9<sup>v</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 9<sup>r</sup>-9<sup>v</sup>. See also *ibid.*, 15<sup>v</sup>, with his list of relevant literature.

<sup>15</sup> Tiedemann refers continuously to Brucker’s *Historia critica philosophiae* as an authority (e.g. D. Tiedemann, *Geist der speculativen Philosophie*, 6 vols (Marburg: In der neuen Akademischen Buchhandlung, 1791-97), vol. 1: 36 n. 3, 49 n. 2, 61 n. 2, 157 n. 1, 180 n. 1, 271 n. 1, 329 n. 2, 333 n. 3, 385 n. 1, 387 n. 2). *Ibid.*, vol. 1: v, Tiedemann adheres to a non-chronological account of past philosophers, and he does offer a thematic account of Early Greek philosophy on the first 49 pages of the first volume. However, the account in the remaining part of volume one, and in the following volumes, is chronologically ordered. Tiedemann only refers to Meiners’ *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit* on one occasion in the same volume (Tiedemann, *Geist der speculativen Philosophie*, vol. 1, 224). J. G. Buhle, *Lehrbuch der Philosophie und einer kritischen Literatur derselben*, 8 vols (Göttingen: Vandenhöck and Ruprecht, 1796-1804), vol. 1, [third page in the ‘Vorrede’], mentions Meiners, Tiedemann, Fülleborn, [Carl Friedrich?] Stäudlin as his forerunners, though without saying what he means by that. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 6, he refers approvingly to Brucker’s history of philosophy as the first to account for past philosophers in



programmatic declarations about the vast difference between his and Brucker's methodologies, claiming that Brucker's history of philosophy was nothing but an arbitrary and unordered compilation of chronicles with insufficient analysis of the systems of past philosophers.<sup>16</sup> It did not occur to Tennemann that Brucker was the key source for the very idea of a 'system of philosophy', which Tennemann himself used as his most central methodological concept.<sup>17</sup> One must also concede that Tennemann presented Meiners, among others, as belonging to a new generation of historians of philosophy enriched by the new critical philosophy of Kant.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, these admissions do not support Frede's claim that Meiners brought about a methodological revolution. Frede seems to have taken these rhetorical statements at face value without examining them critically.

In fact, the declared purpose of Buhle, Tiedemann and Tennemann was not to trace the prehistory of contemporary philosophical positions, as claimed by Frede, but to offer expositions of the history of philosophy, largely relying on Brucker's periodisation and historiographical assumptions. They thus used Brucker's historiographical concept of a

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chronological order, and *ibid.*, vol. 1, 8-9, Buhle praises Brucker's German and Latin histories of philosophy as outstanding in their chronological span and wealth of information. In the list of cited literature (*ibid.*, vol. 1, 9-10), we find Meiners' *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit*, but also three histories of philosophy by Brucker, among which we find the *Historia critica philosophiae*. Buhle does not regard Meiners' work as a dividing line in the history of histories of philosophy, but rather Brucker's. W. G. Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, 12 vols (Leipzig: Johann Ambrosius Barth, 1798-1819), vol. 1, lxxxiii, refers to Meiners' *Grundriss der Geschichte der Weltweisheit* in his elaborate 'Einleitung' on methodology (*ibid.*, vol. 1, lxxviii-lxxxviii). In the same list we find five works of Brucker (lxxx, lxxxi, lxxxii, lxxxvi).

<sup>16</sup> Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1, iv-v, lxxvi.

<sup>17</sup> See references in n. 19 below.

<sup>18</sup> Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1, lxxvii.

‘system of philosophy’ as their most important methodological tool.<sup>19</sup> Taking these matters into consideration, it would be an exaggeration to claim that these three historians completely abandoned Brucker’s methodology and adopted a radically new one which was problem-oriented and traced the pre-histories of contemporary philosophical debates.

Brucker’s methodology was vital to those historians of philosophy identified by Frede as innovators, namely Meiners, Tiedemann, Buhle and Tennemann. Tennemann clarified on the first pages of his *Geschichte der Philosophie* (1798-1819) that his intention was not to write a history of philosophers (like that of Diogenes Laertius), nor a history of *placita* (“Philosophemen”; probably an allusion to Brucker), but to write the history of philosophy as a science (“Wissenschaft”).<sup>20</sup> Such rhetorical statements may have led scholars like Frede to assume that Tennemann completely abandoned Brucker’s methodology, but a cautious reading reveals that this was not the case. Certainly,

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<sup>19</sup> Tiedemann, *Geist der speculativen Philosophie*, vol. 1, vi-vii, objects to an account of a past philosopher’s system based on fragmented and arbitrary lists of *sententiae*, possibly an allusion to Brucker, but nevertheless retains the idea that his or her system should be expounded (see also his ‘Vorrede’ in *ibid.*, vol. 1, ix, xi, xiii, xxii, xxxii). Tiedemann thus uses the system concept frequently in his account of Ancient philosophers. Buhle, *Lehrbuch der Philosophie und einer kritischen Literatur derselben*, vol. 1, 3, affirms the centrality of the historiographical concept system of a “system of philosophy”. Tennemann assumes, like Brucker, that genuine philosophers had always striven to develop systems of philosophy, for which reason Tennemann adopts this as a historiographical concept in his account; see Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1, 4<sup>f</sup>, 6<sup>f</sup>-6<sup>v</sup>, viii, ix, xiv, xix, xxxii-xxxiii, xxxiv, xxxv, xlvi, lii, liii, lvii-lix, lxi, lxxi, lxxv.

<sup>20</sup> Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1, 3<sup>v</sup>. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, lxxiv, Tennemann rejects Laertius’ work as a mere compilation. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, iv, Tennemann distances himself from Brucker’s works, characterising them as compilations without plan, and *ibid.*, vol. 1, lxxvi, Tennemann similarly criticizes Brucker’s work.

Tennemann abandoned Brucker's use of *placita* as an expository device, and he favoured Fülleborn's emphasis on philosophical problems,<sup>21</sup> but he nevertheless affirmed that an exposition of past philosophers' systems was a key element in his new endeavour.<sup>22</sup> In his fervour to present his method as novel, Tennemann overlooked, deliberately or carelessly, that Brucker was the main source to this historiographical element. Contrary to Frede's contention, historians of philosophy like Meiners, Tiedemann, Buhle and Tennemann were not providing problem-oriented accounts, shaped by their respective "philosophical positions". Instead, they followed the tradition of eighteenth-century general histories of philosophy.

## II. Frede's Reconstruction of the Doxographical Tradition: Laertius and Brucker

The German historian and Lutheran theologian Johann Jacob Brucker established the history of philosophy as a philosophical discipline with his *Historia critica philosophiae*. In this work he implemented the historiographical concept of a system of philosophy at a fundamental level of the discipline: only those past thinkers who produced systems of philosophy deserve to be included in his history of philosophy, and the main task of the historian of philosophy is to reconstruct his or her system of philosophy to the reader.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Tennemann, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, vol. 1, iv, vi.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., vol. 1, 3<sup>v</sup>-4<sup>r</sup>, [6<sup>r</sup>], viii-ix, xiv, xix, xxviii, xxxii, xxxv, lxvii-lxix. Ibid., vol. 1, xlvi, Tennemann explicitly subscribes to the idea of systems comprising principles from which doctrines are deduced.

<sup>23</sup> See Catana, *The historiographical concept 'system of philosophy'*.

Frede ignores this Bruckerian tradition, and he does not see that figures like Meiners, Tiedemann, Buhle and Tennemann worked within that tradition, not outside it.<sup>24</sup> More importantly, though, he promotes an account of the history of the history of philosophy, which has been influential, but also misleading, and which does little to understand the methodological precepts of Brucker, which were much more decisive to the history of the history of philosophy.<sup>25</sup>

Frede asserts that Georg Horn (1620-1670), Thomas Stanley (1625-1678) and Brucker carried on what he calls a doxographical tradition; this was devoid of chronological order, and went back to Diogenes Laertius' *Vitae philosophorum*, which had been rediscovered in the Renaissance and translated into Latin and the vernacular.<sup>26</sup> This is not true.

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<sup>24</sup> Frede does not examine the system concept as a methodological concept in any of his three articles cited in the present article.

<sup>25</sup> For this model, see Frede, "Introduction", ix-xxiii; id., "The history of philosophy as a discipline", 666-672; id., "Doxographie, historiographie philosophique de la philosophie", 311-325. Mann, "The modern historiography of ancient philosophy", is indebted to Frede's views, as acknowledged by himself on 165 n. 1, 180 n. 27, 182 n. 34, 194 n. 70, 195 n. 195. Frede, "The history of philosophy as a discipline", 666, states: "Little thought has been given to the nature of the history of philosophy as a discipline". He ignored existing studies on this topic, e.g. L. Braun, *Histoire de l'histoire de la philosophie* (Paris: Ophrys, 1973).

<sup>26</sup> Frede, "The history of philosophy as a discipline", 666-667, places Horn's *Historiae philosophicae libri septem* (Leiden: Elsevier, 1655) and Brucker's *Historia critica philosophiae* (1742-67) in the same doxographical tradition, ultimately going back to Laertius. Frede, "Doxographie, historiographie philosophique de la philosophie", 311-312, 318-322, groups Laertius and Brucker in the same doxographical tradition, and *ibid.* 321 he adds Thomas Stanley to it. Horn is left out of the doxographical tradition in Frede's article "Doxographie, historiographie philosophique de la philosophie". For the rediscovery and dissemination of Laertius' *Vitae* in the Renaissance, see I. Tolomio, "The *Historia*

First, Brucker structured his account chronologically in his *Historia critica philosophiae*.<sup>27</sup> Also, he rejected explicitly Laertius' *Lives* as a history of ancient philosophy; Laertius had "only" been a historian, not a philosopher, and he had not exposed the systems of philosophy worked out by ancient philosophers.<sup>28</sup> Second, Brucker not only rejected Laertius' model of writing the history of philosophy, he even defined his own history of philosophy as an alternative to it and to those recent historians of philosophy who had adopted Laertius' method, e.g. Thomas Stanley.<sup>29</sup> As regards Horn, categorised together with Laertius and Brucker by Frede, Brucker was equally dismissive: Brucker

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*philosophica* in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries", in *Models of the history of philosophy: From its origins in the Renaissance to the Historia philosophica*, ed. G. Santinello (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993), 154-160. For the doxography of Ancient philosophy, see J. Mansfeld, "Doxography of Ancient philosophy", *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. First published March 18, 2004; substantive revision January 26, 2008. Consulted August 13, 2010.

<sup>27</sup> Frede, "The history of philosophy as a discipline", 666, claims that "they [the histories of philosophy composed by Horn and Brucker] do not even follow the chronological order". Compare with the chronological table in Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, vol. 1, 43-45, which is put to use in his account.

<sup>28</sup> For this assessment of Laertius, see Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, vol. 1, 32.21-33. Ibid. C. A. Heumann, "Diogenes Laertius[.] *De vitis philosophorum*": *Acta philosophorum*, vol. 1, part 2 (1715), 348, had recognised the value of Laertius' *Vitae* for its wealth of biographical information, but he had also complained over Laertius' poor judgement, which did not provide adequate assessment of past philosophical systems.

<sup>29</sup> For Stanley writing the history of philosophy according to Laertius' model, see Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, vol. 1, 36.24-28.

regarded Horn's work as a problematic history of universal learning, which was very different from Brucker's own "critical history of philosophy".<sup>30</sup>

In short, Frede's category of doxographical histories of philosophy, including works by Laertius, Horn, Stanley and Brucker, is at variance with Brucker's own statements, which point towards quite different categories. Also, Frede ignores that Brucker developed a new methodology for the history of philosophy, centred on the notion of system of philosophy, which had been absent in Laertius' *Lives*. It was this Bruckerian notion of system that was carried on by Meiners, Tiedemann, Buhle and Tennemann. Frede thus identifies a divide in the history of history of philosophy that does not really exist (Meiners), and ignores another divide which does exist and which had an enormous impact (Brucker). This implies that Frede failed to address, let alone solve, the methodological problems inherent in the Bruckerian model. It also means that we are left wondering what constituted, in Frede's thought, the methodological innovation of the "philosophical" history of philosophy. To this issue I now turn.

### **III. Philosophical History of Philosophy as Problem-Oriented History of Philosophy?**

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<sup>30</sup> For Horn writing the history of universal learning, see Brucker, *Historia critica philosophiae*, vol. 1, 6.17-24. For seventeenth-century "philosophical history", see L. Malusa, "The first general histories of philosophy in England and the Low Countries", in *Models of the history of philosophy: From its origins in the Renaissance to the 'Historia philosophica'*, eds G. Santinello *et al.* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1993) 161-370.

What Frede might have wished to say, as Mann explains in a scholarly manner in 1996, is that the problem-oriented history of philosophy emerged with Georg Gustav Fülleborn (1769-1803) and Karl Leonard Reinhold (1757-1823) at the end of the eighteenth century, and that it remained a viable tradition in the nineteenth century and onwards. It influenced, among others, the histories of philosophy written by prominent analytic philosophers such as Bertrand Russell (*The problems of philosophy*, 1912).<sup>31</sup> However, the problem-oriented history of philosophy did not imply a fundamental shift away from Brucker, since Brucker's methodological system concept remained an integral part of problem-oriented history of philosophy. Frede seems to think that problem historians adopted a completely new method, which is not entirely true. Moreover, these two versions of history of philosophy existed in parallel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: the one did not replace the other.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For the development of a problem-oriented history of philosophy, see L. Geldsetzer, "Problemgeschichte", in *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, ed. J. Ritter, 13 vols (Basel and Stuttgart: Schwabe & Co, 1971-2007), vol. 7 (1989), cols 1410-1417; Catana, *The historiographical concept 'system of philosophy'*, 260-265.

<sup>32</sup> Problem historians preserved the historiographical concept of a system of philosophy; see Catana, *The historiographical concept 'system of philosophy'*, 260-265. Compare with Mann, "The modern historiography of ancient philosophy", 170, who claims that problem-oriented history "marks a radical break with all earlier attempts to treat the history of philosophy". For the break, see also *ibid.*, 182-183. *Ibid.*, 189 n. 61, Mann cites C. A. Brandis, *Von dem Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie* (Copenhagen: G. Bonnier, 1815), 65-66, where the system concept (Mann translates "Lehrgebäude" as "system") features prominently in Brandis' proposed methodology; for the centrality of the system concept to the internal dimension of history of philosophy, see also Brandis, *Von dem Begriff der Geschichte der Philosophie*, 24-26, 32-44, 47-55, 61-62, 66-68. Mann does not recognize this as a Bruckerian concept, which we also find in another problem historian highlighted by Mann, namely K. Reinhold, "Über den

This novel genre, the problem-oriented history of philosophy, was soon met with criticism and was given up in the course of the twentieth century. Gadamer argued that philosophical problems do not possess a timeless, universal and independent existence, but are historically bound.<sup>33</sup> Krüger argued that the problems change with their context, for which reason it is essential to comprehend that context in order to understand the problems dealt with.<sup>34</sup> Other points of criticism have been levelled.<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, as Frede sees things, historians of philosophy like Zeller in the late nineteenth century perverted this genuine, philosophical history of philosophy by returning to the earlier doxographical tradition of Laertius and Brucker.<sup>36</sup> According to Frede, contemporary philosophers and historians of philosophy (i.e. in the 1970s and 1980s), should return to the philosophical phase in order to write the history of philosophy properly, i.e. in a problem-oriented manner. As in the case of Frede's negative programme,

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Begriff[f] der Geschichte der Philosophie: Eine akademische Vorlesung": *Beyträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie*, 1 (1791), 23, 27.

<sup>33</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, "Zur Systemidee in der Philosophie", in *Festschrift für Paul Natorp zum siebenzigsten Geburtstage von Schülern und Freunden gewidmet* (Berlin and Leipzig: Walter de Gruyter & Co, 1924), 61-62.

<sup>34</sup> L. Krüger, "Why do we study the history of philosophy?", in *Philosophy in history: Essays on of philosophy*, eds R. Rorty, J. B. Schneewind and Q. Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 82-85.

<sup>35</sup> E.g. L. Catana, 'Philosophical problems in the history of philosophy: What are they?', in *Philosophy and its history: New essays on the methods and aims of research in the history of philosophy*, eds M. Lærke, J. E. H. Smith and E. Schliesser. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 115-133.

<sup>36</sup> Again, Frede ignores that Zeller and other nineteenth-century historians of philosophy (e.g. Fisher and Falckenberg) adhered to the system concept; see Catana, *The historiographical concept 'system of philosophy'*, 260-265.



the rejection of 'doxographical' history of philosophy, his positive programme, the 'philosophical' history of philosophy is similarly misguided in its assumptions about its historical origin and methodological core.