Thucydides hoped his *History* would be useful for those wishing “to have a clear picture of what had happened in the past and of similar events that may be expected—given human nature (κατὰ τὸ ἄνθρωπον)—to happen in the future” (1.22.4). Such a statement about human nature as a universal constant places Thucydides immediately in connection with the sophistic movement and the development of medicine in the latter half of the fifth century. Both stressed the human and the generic, the constants, and the larger general rules behind the observable world. In placing “human nature” at the center of history so emphatically, he also implicitly rejected any idea that the divine might play a part in either individual actions, or the larger patterns of history. The *History* is also much indebted to the techniques of epic, and possibly tragedy;¹ and recently Thucydides’ relationship with Pindar and the world of epinician poetry has been explored.² He knew the *Histories* of Herodotus, and much could be said about how far he was influenced by them, either in emulation or in reaction.³ Herodotus had set the pattern for a narrative history with speeches as vehicles of analysis of individual character, motivation, moral lessons, and contrasts of national character. But this too brings us back to the developing techniques of argument and persuasion of the latter part of the fifth century. Herodotus’ awareness of the new and evolving techniques of argument and proof, of the effective use of evidence and deductions from that evidence, show some relation to developments that are more usually labeled

¹ See Macleod (1983a), “Thucydides and Tragedy”, for instance; most recently Rood (1998a) and Rengakos, this vol. for his narrative technique; Hornblower (1994b) on “narratology”.
² Hornblower (2004).
³ See Hornblower (1987) ch. 1 and Rogkotis, this vol.
“sophistic”. These seem to belong to the wider milieu of intellectual style that was manifested both in the “scientific” work of medical writers and in the growth of the art of persuasion, and often in both.\(^4\) Thucydides both uses such language and builds upon it: for instance in his opening, where he stressed his careful deduction from evidence and proof (1.1), and his section on his method (1.20–22), he is claiming a similar scaffolding of careful deduction from tested evidence for his research into the past, and compressing it, unlike Herodotus, into one main magisterial statement of intention.

Herodotus was participating in these wider intellectual developments, rather than passively taking over various undigested ideas, and despite his liking for overt disagreement, it is likely that there was more silent controversy and correction of others than is always obvious. This is even more true of Thucydides, who does not usually engage in open and explicit polemic, in the open dissection of why others are wrong. It is true that he attacks the uncritical acceptance of tradition in his explanation of his superior method (1.20–21), and again outlines his correct account of the tyrannicides in Book VI (53.2–60), but the sustained and rhetorical polemic of Herodotus on theories about the Nile, for instance (2.20ff), is not a feature of Thucydides’ style. This type of polemic seems to belong to a more flamboyant and argumentative style that was part of intellectual discourse and argument in the second half of the fifth century and particularly suited to the display lecture—which Herodotus seems to flaunt—but this makes it all the more striking that Thucydides avoids it. Thus his complex relationship to various intellectual currents is left usually implicit rather than overtly displayed. He makes silent corrections, as Hornblower has shown most eloquently in the area of religion,\(^5\) and the seamless flow of his narrative takes his audience inevitably in certain directions without giving them any chance of tasting alternative views (except in the speeches), contrasting versions, or differing evidence. Thucydides’ intellectual debts and milieu have to be read directly from the nature of his historical analysis, language, and arguments.

The central influence seems to be the intellectual movement known as the sophistic movement, though the exact relationship is harder

\(^4\) See on this Thomas (2000) passim.

\(^5\) Hornblower (1992a) for the “religious silences” of Thucydides; Hornblower (1987) ch. 2 for his selectivity.