

What If Anything Has Changed About Human Nature In the Last 2000 Years?

Post by “Don” of January 8, 2024 at 11:25 AM

[Quote from BrainToBeing](#)

This is, of course, unfair at a number of levels.

[BrainToBeing](#) : First, I sincerely didn't mean any offense. My only purpose for that simile was to compare what you seemed to be doing in taking one word ("capital-T Truth") and equating it with something at a much more basic level. Likewise, I see some scientists who want to thread the needle, so to speak, wanting to be able to use the word God while referring to a more basic level of knowledge and/or practice.

On the other points, your using "objective truth" and "opinion versus objective accuracy" and "objective data" and so on is entirely consistent with an Epicurean approach. It is possible for there to be all of those things without there being some kind of transcendent, capital-T, universal Truth...unless you want to assign, semantically, the capital-T Truth word to "the way things are" in an effort to find out what is "objectively" true in a given situation. Epicurus, and even more so Lucretius and Philodemus, advocate for acquiring observation and evidence and not taking things at face value or assigning some supernatural cause to them. This seems to align with your wanting to diagnose your patients true needs against their profession of 10/10 pain in an effort to acquire opiates.

And, let me state explicitly, that the opioid epidemic was and continues to be a tragedy, especially in some rural communities from which I came and where I grew up. But a search for some universal Truth isn't going to make that better. The tragedy has to be addressed on a myriad of levels: personal, familial, societal, and governmental. As such, that topic probably falls outside the purview of this forum; however, as others have said, Epicurus's philosophy is a philosophy of personal responsibility, deep friendship, the support of a social contract that should have participants doing no harm and not being harmed, and the rejection of supernatural causes and the inefficacy of prayer for divine intercession (although Epicurus did say that "it is better to follow the stories of the gods" than to be fraught with the anxiety of hard determinism). You can apply those aspects of Epicurean philosophy as seems appropriate to that real-world situation.

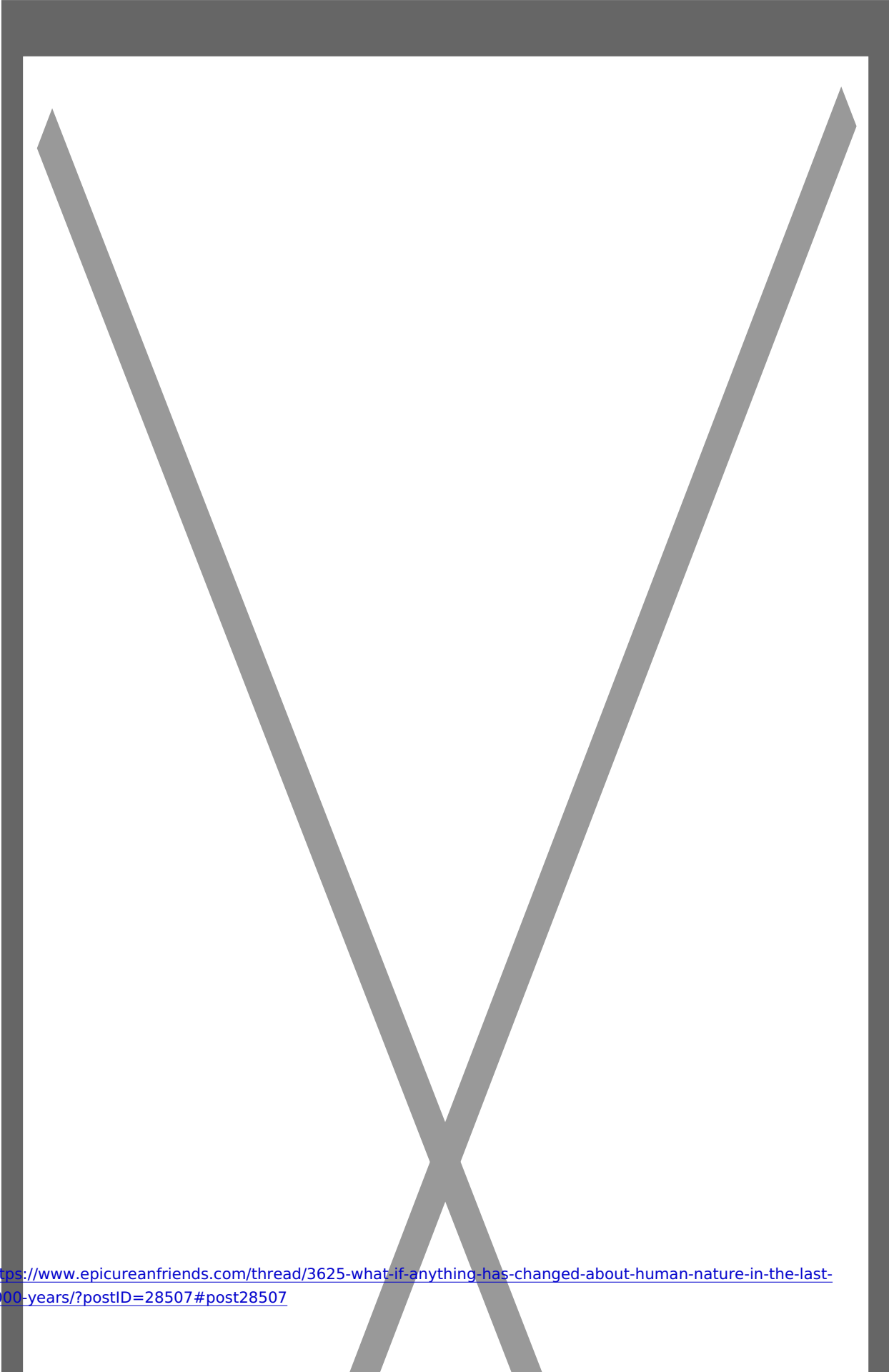
[Quote from BrainToBeing](#)

Anticipating your possible question (prolepsis)

Actually, that's not how the word prolepsis or, in English, "anticipation" is used in the Epicurean philosophical sense unless you were using it in a humorous way. Prolepsis is somewhat of an enigmatic word and the texts are woefully few in explaining how Epicurus and the early Epicureans used the term. Speaking for myself, the canonic faculty of the prolepseis (plural of prolepsis), seems to be a faculty of pattern recognition that sorts through all the sensory data flooding into us and is able to pick out meaningful patterns. That faculty can then apply those patterns to sense data in the future, and, over time, then builds up a "library" of patterns against which to make sense of the world. That's one reason I find the work of Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett and others in seeing the brain as a prediction machine intriguing, as it seems to align (imperfectly but pretty well) with this idea of the Epicurean prolepseis.

As far as the gods, Epicurus famously asserted "Gods exist," but what he actually meant by that statement continues to be argued among those of us on the forum 😊 and in academic circles. What is without question is that Epicurus did not think the gods - in whatever way he meant that word - took no notice of us and did not grant favors or inflict punishment. That said, the Epicureans - especially Lucretius - had no problem whatsoever in imagining other life forms, mortal like us, inhabiting other worlds. Lucian of Samosata, who was at the very least sympathetic to Epicureanism, wrote arguably the first sci-fi story, *A True Story*, where there is space travel, life on other planets, etc. The use of the word "true" in light of the other topics on this thread is interesting in that Lucian says his is the only "true" story because he tells everyone at the outset that he's making it up, unlike the old myths that attempt to say what they're writing actually happened.

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<https://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/3625-what-if-anything-has-changed-about-human-nature-in-the-last-2000-years/?postID=28507#post28507>

[A True Story - Wikipedia](#)
en.wikipedia.org