

# Poetic differences between Leonard and Humphries translations (opening verse of book 1)

Post by “Kalosyni” of March 20, 2024 at 2:48 PM

[Bryan](#) just posted (over in the thread ["On Nature, Book 28"](#)) that "Epicurus and Metrodorus originally took a fully conventionalist view of language".

That got me thinking about how different translations of Lucretius, and how words influence feelings and poetic words can push a feeling response.

Here is a side-by-side comparison of the opening of Book 1, between Leonard and Humphries, and you can see that there are very different poetic flourishes in each one (and which that makes me wonder about what the original Latin is actually like).

Leonard says: "the first fowls of the air, smit to the heart by thee foretoken thy approach"

Humphries says: "high in the sky the happy-hearted birds, responsive to your coming, call and cry"

## **Leonard:**

For thee the daedal Earth bears scented flowers,  
For thee waters of the unvexed deep  
Smile, and the hollows of the serene sky  
Glow with diffused radiance for thee!  
For soon as comes the springtime face of day,  
And procreant gales blow from the West unbarred,  
First fowls of air, smit to the heart by thee,  
Foretoken thy approach, O thou Divine,

## **Humphries:**

For you that sweet artificer, the earth,  
Submits her flowers, and for you the deep  
Of ocean smiles, and the calm heaven shines  
With shoreless light.  
Ah, goddess, when the spring  
Makes clear its daytime, and a warmer wind  
Stirs from the west, a procreative air,  
High in the sky the happy-hearted birds,  
Responsive to your coming, call and cry,