

Favorite Translation of Lucretius

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 24, 2023 at 2:38 PM

Just a little poll while I was doing some work...

Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2023 at 2:54 PM

I answered Humphries because to me I think it is good combination of literal and poetic sounding, but it depends on the purpose.

For most up to date I would say MFSmith.

For most up to date public domain I would say Bailey.

For most insightful on difficult issues I always like to check Brown.

For perhaps most literal I check Munro.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 24, 2023 at 5:53 PM

I answered Melville, but I also like Humphries and Stallings. I tend to prefer the verse versions.

Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2023 at 6:19 PM

I wish I could downvote Leonard 😏 Just got into an exchange with Kalosyni this afternoon about a very important passage in Lucretius where Leonard seems to have deviated strongly from the consensus.

Here in the first "nothing from nothing" sequence in Book 1 Leonard translates:

This terror, then, this darkness of the mind,
Not sunrise with its flaring spokes of light,
Nor glittering arrows of morning can disperse,
But only Nature's aspect and her law,
Which, teaching us, hath this exordium:
Nothing from nothing ever yet was born.

While virtually every other translator makes noise that it's not just "nothing from nothing ever yet was born, but that:

Munro: [146] This terror then and darkness of mind must be dispelled not by the rays of the sun and glittering shafts of day, but by the aspect and the law of nature; the warp of whose design we shall begin with this first principle, nothing is ever gotten out of nothing by divine power.

Martin Ferguson Smith: This terrifying darkness that enshrouds the mind must be dispelled not by the sun's rays and the dazzling darts of day, but by study of the superficial aspect and underlying principle of nature.²²

The first stage of this study will have this rule as its basis: nothing ever \[150\] springs miraculously out of nothing.

Brown: [146] These terrors of the mind, this darkness then, not the Sun's beams, nor the bright rays of day, can ever dispel, but Nature's light and reason, whose first of principles shall be my guide: Nothing was by the Gods of nothing made.

ETC Most everyone else (I wish I had time to check them all to see if anyone else does this but I don't) makes some reference to by the gods or divinely, because the Latin is:

Principium cuius hinc nobis exordia sumet,
nullam rem e nihilo gigni divinitus umquam. 150
quippe ita formido mortalis continet omnis,
quod multa in terris fieri caeloque tuentur,
quorum operum causas nulla ratione videre
possunt ac fieri divino numine rentur.

I mean, I know the general rule is that nothing comes from nothing FOR ANY REASON, and that in fact that's the way that Epicurus says it in Herodotus (if I recall correctly) -- no direct linking to "the will of the gods." But Lucretius here is in the middle of a long argument against divine

supernatural influence, so it should have been left in by Leonard here IMHO.

If someone can show me that I am libeling Leonard without justification, I will gladly withdraw this comment. But for the time being I can't resist the suspicion that Leonard is not to be trusted on key passages -- and yet his version is almost everywhere on the internet!

[Don](#), especially given your interest in the translation details -- am I missing something here in Leonard vs the others? And Leonard is the one Perseus uses too, if I recall correctly.

Post by “Kalosyni” of January 24, 2023 at 7:09 PM

[Cassius](#) most importantly that the whole thing began with the Humphries translation. As I was listening to an audio recording of Humphries translation book 1 today, I was shocked by it when it seemed to say: by the will of God, nothing comes from nothing. (book 1 passage 146)

Also starting in passage 102, it says "we do not know the nature of the soul" implying skepticism. The "we" is totally incorrect because it is talking about the misleading nature of others. And I see in other translations it uses "they".

I don't have a printed copy available to show the actual words of those two passages. Does anyone have that?

My current advice is to not trust Humphries translation.

Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2023 at 7:28 PM

Ha well I have to slightly disagree with your analysis of Humphrey on that point, but I am glad you said this because it points out how hard it is to be precise. On this point I think Humphreys (and Charlton Griffin, in the way he read it, probably got it right. The problem is that the issue is new to us and the way it reads it isn't immediately clear where the "at the will of the gods" fits in. I think you're interpreting it as meaning that the gods ordered that nothing come from nothing. I don't think it really comes out that way when you hear it a few times. Let me get the audio and let's check. -- Will Update....

Post by “Don” of January 24, 2023 at 7:32 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

I wish I could downvote Leonard 😊

LOL! I hear you. His language is stilted and Victorian at best.

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Don, especially given your interest in the translation details -- am I missing something here in Leonard vs the others? And Leonard is the one Perseus uses too, if I recall correctly.

Correct. Perseus uses Leonard:

[Lucretius, De Rerum Natura, BOOK I, line 1](#)

Should you be looking a little further down for that Latin to correspond?

Fear holds dominion over mortality

Only because, seeing in land and sky

So much the cause whereof no wise they know,

Men think Divinities are working there.

Meantime, when once we know from nothing still

Nothing can be create, we shall divine

More clearly what we seek: those elements

From which alone all things created are,

And how accomplished by no tool of Gods.

[Quote from Kalosyni](#)

Also starting in passage 102, it says "we do not know the nature of the soul" implying skepticism. The "we" is totally incorrect because it is talking about the misleading nature of others. And I see in other translations it uses "they".

I agree with Kalosyni that the difference between "we" and "they" is significant!

ignoratur enim quae sit natura animai, (1.112)

ignoratur is verb 3rd sg pres ind pass, i.e., 3rd person singular would be "he" (or "they" if used in the singular sense) not "we" (1st person plural).

If Humphries is using "we"... that's an issue.

I'm partial to Stallings primarily since that's the first translation I read front to back 😊

Post by “Godfrey” of January 24, 2023 at 7:37 PM

Humphries:

"Our starting-point shall be this principle:

Nothing at all is never born from nothing

By the gods' will. Ah, but men's minds are frightened

Because they see, on earth and in the heaven,

Many events whose causes are to them

Impossible to fix; so, they suppose,

The gods'will is the reason. As for us,

Once we have seen that Nothing comes from nothing,

We shall perceive with greater clarity

What we are looking for, whence each thing comes,

How things are caused, and no "gods' will" about it.

Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2023 at 7:37 PM

Let's see if this works. Here's the section. Someone who is unfamiliar with the material might well be confused, but when you know what to expect his point to be, it probably makes sense. He's not saying that "the gods ordered that nothing be created from nothing. He's saying "Nothing is ever created from nothing by the gods will (with the implication of... or by any other

means either.) What do you guys think? Kalosyni's reaction is very very understandable, and this just reminds me of how important it is to educate new readers to the subtleties or else they will tend to interpret things in our modern paradigm rather than from the Epicurean perspective. And it might be especially confusing to hear that if they think that Epicurus was an atheist. Knowing that Epicurus was NOT an atheist, it's easy to put this in perspective. "The gods" do exist, but neither they nor anybody or anything else creates things from nothing.

[Nothing was ever born from nothing by the gods will .mp3](#)

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 24, 2023 at 7:40 PM

Same question, but *this* time you can select more than one answer.

Post by “Cassius” of January 24, 2023 at 7:43 PM

Thanks for the new poll, but am I overlooking it or did you leave out the Brown 1783 version? We don't know the translator's name, but I actually consider that one of my favorites due to the rendering of several important passages - one that stands out to me is his use of "events" rather than exclusively "accidents" in describing emergent properties.

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 24, 2023 at 7:47 PM

[Quote from Cassius](#)

Thanks for the new poll, but am I overlooking it or did you leave out the Brown 1783 version? We don't know the translator's name, but I actually consider that one of my favorites due to the rendering of several important passages - one that stands out to me is his use of "events" rather than exclusively "accidents" in describing emergent properties.

I've added him to both.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 24, 2023 at 7:50 PM

Humphries does use "we" at line 112 (not 102). That doesn't bother me, though. It's in the midst of describing erroneous views of religion, and leading into the exposition on "nothing comes from nothing", where it's eventually made quite clear that everything is atoms and void.

Post by “Eikadistes” of January 24, 2023 at 8:44 PM

Fun thing I just found while making some notes in my Latin copy:

Book II 27-31

cum tamen **inter se prostrati in gramine molli**

propter aquae rivum sub ramis arboris altae

non magnis opibus iucunde corpora *curant,*

praesertim cum tempestas *adridet et anni*

tempora *conspargunt viridantis floribus herbas.*

"...when they lie in friendly company on velvety turf near a running brook beneath the branches of a tall tree and provide their bodies with simple but agreeable refreshment, especially when the weather smiles and the season of the year spangles the green grass with flowers." (Smith 36)

Book V 1392-1396

saepe itaque **inter se prostrati in gramine molli**

propter aquae rivom sub ramis arboris altae.

non magnis opibus iucunde corpora *habebant,*

praesertim cum tempestas *ridebat et anni*

tempora *pingebant viridantis floribus herbas.*

"So they would often lie in friendly company on velvety turf near a running brook beneath the branches of a tall tree and provide their bodies with simple but agreeable refreshments,

especially when the weather smiled and the season of the year embroidered the green grass with flowers." (Smith 174-175)

Post by "Little Rocker" of January 25, 2023 at 7:15 PM

I initially had some misgivings about Smith's translation using 'miraculously,' since the more literal translation is definitely something like 'by divine hand,' but using 'miraculously' manages to express what is only suggested/entailed in the other translations. As Cassius put it, most translations imply the 'or by any other means.' But 'miraculously' might better capture both a divine and non-divine hand.

What irritates me most about the Leonard passage, actually, is the 'yet.' (Nothing from nothing ever yet was born.) Like, what, but it might start happening soon?

Post by "Cassius" of January 25, 2023 at 7:39 PM

[Quote from Little Rocker](#)

What irritates me most about the Leonard passage, actually, is the 'yet.' (Nothing from nothing ever yet was born.) Like, what, but it might start happening soon?

I can't believe that I missed that! You are right! The "yet" GUTS the whole meaning of the passage, and in fact I would say the whole meaning of the canonics and the philosophy itself! Yes i understand that it's a deep issue as to how many times we have to see the same thing over and over without exception, and when we are justified in claiming that we "know" something, but that question is exactly what Epicurus is wrestling with, and Leonard totally pulls the rug out from under it before Book One is even getting started!

You've managed to multiply my sourness toward Leonard, but this is now a great illustration of one of how to go wrong on one of the biggest issues in the philosophy. Even Bailey - who I distrust too - doesn't go nearly so far! 😊

Post by "Eikadistes" of January 26, 2023 at 10:48 AM

Another thing I noticed in Latin, speaking of repetition:

Book I 926-951

**avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante
trita solo. iuvat integros accedere fontis
atque haurire, iuvatque novos decerpere flores
insignemque meo capiti petere inde coronam,
unde prius nulli velarint tempora musae;
primum quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis
religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo,
deinde quod obscura de re tam lucida pango
carmina musaeo contingens cuncta lepore.
id quoque enim non ab nulla ratione videtur;
sed vel uti pueris absinthia taetra medentes
cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore,
ut puerorum aetas improvida ludificetur
labrorum tenuis, interea perpotet amarum
absinthii laticem deceptaque non capiatur,
sed potius tali facto recreata valescat,
sic ego nunc, quoniam haec ratio plerumque videtur
tristior esse quibus non est tractata, retroque
volgus abhorret ab hac, volui tibi suaviloquenti
carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram
et quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle;
si tibi forte animum tali ratione tenere**

versibus in nostris possem, dum percipis omnem

naturam rerum *qua constet compta figura.*

Sed quoniam docui...

"this is what impels me now to penetrate by power of intellect the remote regions of the Pierian maids, hitherto untrodden by any foot. Joyfully I visit virgin springs and draw their water; joyfully I cull unfamiliar flowers, gatherings for my head a chaplet of fame from spots whence the Muses have never before taken a garland for the brows of any person: first because I teach about important matters and endeavor to disentangle the mind from the strangling knots of superstition and also because of an obscure subject i compose such luminous verses, overspreading all with the charm of the Muses. For obviously my actual technique does not lack a motive. Doctors who try to give children foul-tasting wormwood first coat the rim of the cup with the sweet juice of golden honey; their intention is that the children, unwary at their tender age, will be tricked into applying their lips to the cup and at the same time will drain the bitter draught of wormwood--victims of beguilement, but not of betrayal, since by this means they recover strength and health. I have a similar intention now: since this philosophy of ours often appears somewhat off-putting to those who have not experienced it, and most people recoil back from it, I have preferred to expound it to you in harmonious Pierian poetry and, so to speak, coat it with the sweet honey of the Muses. My hope has been that by this means I might perhaps succeed in holding your attention concentrated on my versus, while you fathom the nature of the universe and the form of its structure. Now then..." (Smith 28-29)

Book IV 1-26

Avia Pieridum peragro loca nullius ante

trita solo. iuvat integros accedere fontis

atque haurire, iuvatque novos decerpere flores

insignemque meo capiti petere inde coronam,

unde prius nulli velarint tempora musae;

primum quod magnis doceo de rebus et artis

religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo,

deinde quod obscura de re tam lucida pango

carmina musaeo contingens cuncta lepore.

id quoque enim non ab nulla ratione videtur;

nam **vel uti pueris absinthia taetra medentes**

**cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
contingunt mellis dulci flavoque liquore,
ut puerorum aetas improvida ludificetur
labrorum tenuis, interea perpotet amarum
absinthii laticem deceptaque non capiatur,
sed potius tali facto recreata valescat,
sic ego nunc, quoniam haec ratio plerumque videtur
tristior esse quibus non est tractata, retroque
volgus abhorret ab hac, volui tibi suaviloquenti
carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram
et quasi musaeo dulci contingere melle;
si tibi forte animum tali ratione tenere
versibus in nostris possem, dum percipis omnem
naturam rerum ac persentis utilitatem.**

Sed quoniam docui...

"I am penetrating the remote regions of the Pierian maids, hitherto untrodden by any foot. Joyfully I visit virgin springs and draw their water; joyfully I cull unfamiliar flowers, gathering for my head a chaplet of fame from spots whence the Muses have never before taken a garland for the brows of any person: first because I teach about important matters and endeavor to disentangle the mind from the strangling knots of superstition, and also because on an obscure subject I compose such luminous verses, overspreading all with the charm of the Muses. For obviously my actual technique does not lack a motive. Doctors who try to give children foul-tasting wormwood first coat the rim of the cup with the sweet juice of golden honey; their intention is that the children, unwary at their tender age, will be tricked into applying their lips to the cup and at the same time will drain the bitter draft of wormwood – victims of beguilement, but not of betrayal, since by this means they recover strength and health. I have a similar intention now: since this philosophy of ours often appears somewhat off-putting to those who have not experienced it, and most people recoil back from it, I have preferred to expound it to you in harmonious Pierian poetry and, so to speak, coat it with the sweet honey of the Muses. My hope has been that by this means I might perhaps succeed in holding your attention concentrated on my verses, while you apprehend the nature of the universe and become conscious of the beneficial effect of my instruction. Well, now that..." (Smith 100-101)

I have, before, come across the suggestion that repetition found throughout Lucretius' verse lends credence to the proposition that we are only reading a draft of *De Rerum Natura* and **not** its author's anticipated final form. I had not realized this myself; *now* that I found 26 consecutive lines that are repeated almost identically, it seems likely to me (*unless there was a trend ancient poets adopted of heavily employing repetition as a rhetorical technique*) that Lucretius used this as a placeholder, likely, in my mind, to be re-visited upon meeting some other conditions.

Post by “Cassius” of January 26, 2023 at 11:00 AM

[Quote from Nate](#)

I have, before, come across the suggestion that repetition found throughout Lucretius' verse lends credence to the proposition that we are only reading a draft of *De Rerum Natura* and not its author's anticipated final form.

Yes I have seen that stated many times too, but the task of getting a grip on the big picture of what is going on in *De Rerum Natura* has been such a hurdle for me that in my case I've never had time to absorb these points either.

Thanks for pointing these out because once the haze begins to clear and you see what Lucretius is doing with the poem as a whole, it's much easier to appreciate textual issues like this and think about what they might mean.

Seems to me it's clear that DRN was not left to us in what was intended to be a final form, and that plays into Emily Austin's suggestion about the probably intended ending for Book Six, not to mention how Lucretius he apparently intended to go further into the nature of the [Epicurean gods](#) before he got finished. And it calls to mind that mysterious later reference about Cicero "emending" the text.

It seems to me that it is possible that (1) it wasn't finished, but also (2) some of the most controversial material (about the gods) was intentionally deleted by critics, or (3) some combination of the two.

Post by “Godfrey” of January 26, 2023 at 2:34 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

(unless there was a trend ancient poets adopted of heavily employing repetition as a rhetorical technique)

This is what I'm curious about, but totally ignorant. Any thoughts [Joshua](#) ?

Post by “Pacatus” of January 26, 2023 at 5:18 PM

[Quote from Nate](#)

(unless there was a trend ancient poets adopted of heavily employing repetition as a rhetorical technique)

In her translator's notes, Stallings mentions the repetition:

“Writing in the epic tradition of Homer, Lucretius occasionally repeats phrases, lines and even passages verbatim. Within the constraints of a rhymed translation, this effect was not always possible to replicate, and so I sometimes make use of variation where Lucretius uses repetition.”

Lucretius. *The Nature of Things* (Penguin Classics) (p. 238). Penguin Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.

So, she seems to think it was a poetic device in the Homeric epic tradition ...

Post by “Joshua” of January 26, 2023 at 6:56 PM

Very much right, [Pacatus](#)!

The Homeric Question will never have a satisfactory answer, but the growing consensus suggests an intimate relationship between Iliad, Odyssey, and the oral tradition of bardic singers from which those two great works arose. The Odyssey actually describes two such singers. People are capable of incredible memorization when they put their minds to it. I frequently encounter people--and quite ordinary people at that--who have hours and hours of song lyrics tucked away in their minds.

Songs are somewhat easier to remember than prose. They have a clear structure, sometimes a rhyme scheme, and very often a lot of repetition, whether in the lyrics of the chorus or in the melody of the verses.

Homer's epics were also meant to be remembered, in whole or in part, and to be performed by singers at court or in public. To help them remember, the epic verse has structure, in the form of its dactylic hexameter, and it has repetition. Most of the repetition is in the form of Homeric epithets; instead of saying Achilles, he writes "swift footed Achilles". Each main character has their epithets. "Lord of men Agamemnon", "Hector tamer of horses", and so on. The really central characters will have several epithets. This is important because the chosen epithet must match the hexameter of the line he plugs it into.

There may have been some improvisation involved in the very early period. A singer who knew the story of the war and also knew a number of stock phrases and epithets might well decide to play to his audience. All of these characters came from Greek places. If a singer was entertaining in Ithaca, he might choose to lay it on thick for the locals when he was describing the exploits of Odysseus, their native son.

All of this had changed by Lucretius' time. He wasn't writing a poem to be recited aloud to the song of the lyre. He was writing a philosophical poem, meant to be read deeply and repeatedly until his audience really got the point. He still uses hexameter, and he uses epithets for form's sake--"mother of the Aeneadins", "Mars mighty in battle"--but he's not writing a story about the adventures of men and gods. He doesn't expect his verses to be sung at lavish parties. He describes himself working late at night, by lamp or candle light, penning his lines. The process is long, laborious, and sometimes tedious. The hexameter is difficult and unyielding. If he can't make this one line work, he'll have to backtrack, and rework the preceding 3 or 4 lines. It is a devilishly intricate art, sometimes more like playing chess than writing--you have to be able to see a few moves ahead, or you write yourself into a corner.

So why the repetition? Here are some reasons.

- He thought it was exceptionally good. The yellow honey on the rim of the wormwood cup is one example of this. Those lines form basically his mission statement for the whole poem, and may be worth repeating to reinforce the point. "I know this stuff may not be easy to hear, but it really will help you. Just hear me out."
- He was writing on the same subject and it was easier to repeat the same lines. Virgil is guilty of this--there are lines from his *Georgics* that are repeated in his *Aeneid*. Or Norman DeWitt, who wrote several articles before he wrote his book. It's easier to adapt the articles into the book than to rewrite those sections.
- The repetition came long after he was dead. This is evidently true of the lines on the gods in Book I. It is thought that those lines were copied into the margin of Book I by a scribe from later in the poem. The scribes who followed him then moved those lines into the body of the text. Now we read them there, where the poet never intended to put them.

It may not be possible to know all of the answers.

Post by “Pacatus” of January 26, 2023 at 7:15 PM

Thank you, [Joshua](#)!

[Quote from Joshua](#)

The hexameter is difficult and unyielding. If he can't make this one line work, he'll have to backtrack, and rework the preceding 3 or 4 lines. It is a devilishly intricate art, sometimes more like playing chess than writing--you have to be able to see a few moves ahead, or you write yourself into a corner.

I suspect that Lucretius was more fastidious about his hexameter than Stallings is with her “fourteeners”: her rhythm is often awkward, even though she is consistent with the final iambic foot. (I think of Robert Frost, who wiggled his blank verse sometimes – but in order, it seemed, to make it read more smoothly without using the apostrophe for elision.)

I get myself into a corner all the time -- in chess, too! 😊

Post by “Joshua” of June 17, 2023 at 12:08 AM

It occurred to me today that it would be possible to use some basic statistical analysis to evaluate which translations are, on the whole, more literal and which are idiosyncratic.

You might, for example, take the Latin text of Book I. Go through it and isolate all of the root nouns and verbs (for simplicity's sake), and put them in the first column of a spreadsheet under “Latin”. For the second column, Perseus; whichever definition the Perseus Project suggests for that Latin word goes in column 2. Then Munro. Then a column for numerically representing the deviation from the mode; 0 for using the mode word, 1 for using an idiosyncratic word, 2 for not translating the word at all. Then Bailey and deviation, and so forth.

Then add up the deviation for each column and divide by the number of words. This value is that translator's *eccentricity*. A higher eccentricity for that data set suggests a less literal translator. Because Perseus cites dictionary entries including multiple translations, it will not count toward modality, nor be included in the final tally.

Latin	Perseus	Leonard	Eccentricity 1743	Eccentricity Bailey	Eccentricity Munro	Eccentricity	
Aeneadum	Aeneas	Rome	0	Rome	0	Aeneas	0
Genetrix	Mother	Mother	0	Mother	0	Mother	0
Hominum	Man	Man	0	Man	0	Man	0
Divomque	God	God	0	God	0	God	0
Voluptas	Delight	Delight	0	Delight	0	Joy	1
Alma	Nourishing	Dear	-	Sweet	-	Life-giver	-
Caeli	heaven	-	2	heaven	0	heaven	0
Signa	sign	star	-	sign	-	star	-
Mare	sea	main	1	sea	0	sea	0

Eccentricity = (X/7) where X equals the number of words for which there is a mode. Larger numbers signify more consistent outliers.

1743: 0

Bailey: 0.14

Munro: 0.14

Leonard: 0.43

This data set is obviously so small as to be meaningless, and the project is probably not worth doing with a proper set: say, the whole of book one. It could prove interesting to sample passages throughout the book, or perhaps from the beginning of each book.

...but I'm not going to do it!

Post by “Cassius” of June 17, 2023 at 2:13 AM

It is a great idea though, and it helps to post ideas, because at some point someone may have the time and resources to do it, or they think up a better way. So thanks for posting this!

Post by “Don” of June 17, 2023 at 7:16 AM

See, now this is an application where AI would come in handy. This sounds like some academic master's thesis or something. Well done, Joshua. This would be fascinating.

Post by “Cassius” of June 17, 2023 at 7:27 AM

Just so I understand your message, would not Leonard and 1743 in line 1 get a "1" because they used "Rome" and not the literal "Aeneas" or "Aeneads"?

Post by “Cassius” of June 17, 2023 at 7:31 AM

Also as to voluptas, would not the most literal be "pleasure," as in Latin there is no more basic word for pleasure than voluptas, correct?

I recall that we have discussed that before and they delight sounds better to us, but for strict literalness "pleasure" would be more strictly plain?

[Latin Definition for: voluptas, voluptatis \(ID: 39082\) - Latin Dictionary and Grammar Resources - Latdict](#)

I do think that we could pick some super important passages and make such a project both useful and manageable.

And a list of super important passages would be a great exercise in itself.

See, for example:

[humanacomparison.jpg \[\]](#)

Post by “Joshua” of June 17, 2023 at 8:44 AM

Quote

Just so I understand your message, would not Leonard and 1743 in line 1 get a "1" because they used "Rome" and not the literal "Aeneas" or "Aeneads"?

Taking only these four translators, two of them went one way and two of them another making it a wash. Actually that row should be thrown out from the final calculation; no mode word.

Voluptas certainly does have pleasure as one of its meanings. It occurs to me now that this analysis doesn't really test for "literality", but instead tests for "eccentricity". Just because 3 others translate a word one way and one translates it another way, that doesn't mean that the eccentric word choice is less literal. It could be *more* literal!

Post by “Kalosyni” of June 17, 2023 at 11:02 AM

[Quote from Joshua](#)

It occurred to me today that it would be possible to use some basic statistical analysis to evaluate which translations are, on the whole, more literal and which are idiosyncratic.

[Joshua](#) maybe you saw this thread?

Post

[Paper: Comparisons of Six English Translations of Lucretius De Rerum Natura](#)

I just found this very detailed paper:

<https://blogs.helsinki.fi/dh-project-cou...e-rerum-natura/>



Kalosyni

May 17, 2023 at 8:54 AM

Post by “Joshua” of June 17, 2023 at 11:21 AM

A statistical analysis of Lucretius' meter:

[Hexameter | Lucretius](#)

Post by “Kalosyni” of June 18, 2024 at 2:57 PM

I've now listened to an audio recording of Humphries' translation a number of times (by Charlton Griffin), and have gotten much more acclimated to it. (Perhaps it is now my favorite version). In Book 2 at the section which starts out: "Much poorer men are every bit as happy," and a few lines from there in the audio version I thought I heard him say "beaver's heat departs no sooner..." but just today when reading the printed version I see it actually says "fever's heat". (Just some idle musings of summertime, and which was an lol !)

Post by “Ulfilas” of June 27, 2025 at 12:59 AM

Nobody seems to mention my favourite version, by C. H. Sisson.

You can read some of it [here](#).

(I also highly recommend his translations of the Aeneid and the Divine Comedy.)

Post by “Cassius” of June 27, 2025 at 5:41 AM

Welcome Ulfilas - I will set up your welcome thread now.

Also, what aspect of the Sisson translation makes it your favorite?

Thread

[**Welcome Ulfilas!**](#)

Welcome @Ulfilas

There is one last step to complete your registration:

<http://www.epicureanfriends.com/thread/2848-favorite-translation-of-lucretius/>

All new registrants must post a response to this message here in this welcome thread (we do this in order to minimize spam registrations).

You must post your response within 24 hours, or your account will be subject to deletion.

Please say "Hello" by introducing yourself, tell us what prompted your interest in Epicureanism and which particular aspects of Epicureanism most interest you, and/or post a question.

This forum is...



Cassius

June 27, 2025 at 5:42 AM