

**Adriana GRZELAK-KRZYMIANOWSKA**

## **THE PRESENCE OF ETHICAL TEACHING IN THE *DE RERUM NATURA* OF LUCRETIVS**

LES ELEMENTS DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT ETHIQUE DANS *DE RERUM NATURA*  
DE LUCRECE

L'objectif de cet article est de montrer que dans son poème *De rerum natura*, Lucrèce n'a pas seulement inclus l'éthique épicurienne, mais l'a intégrée autant que la partie majeure de son œuvre. La présence, l'étendue et la forme des éléments épicuriens permettent de les considérer comme matériel suffisant qui justifie l'analyse effectuée. Dans la première partie de l'article, l'auteur démontre que Lucrèce – pour des raisons doctrinales – n'a pas pu interpréter uniquement la physique épicurienne et a construit son œuvre comme une sorte de compendium de la totalité de la doctrine épicurienne. Dans la partie suivante, l'auteur montre l'ampleur de la synonymie éthique contenue dans le poème et les fragments de l'œuvre analysée où l'éthique est largement débattue, en employant comme critère d'analyse le lexique du caractère éthique dans *De rerum natura*.

Key words: Lucretius, Roman ethics, Epicurean physics, moral education.

The issue of the content of the poem of Lucretius has been the subject matter of many studies in different times and places at the same time being the object of research and discussion conducted by academic and non-academic authors. Although many scientific analyses concerning the poem prove to emphasize the variability in the thematic fields described by Lucretius, they fail to formulate a satisfactory and complete description of Lucretius' reflections about morality, which in its sensible character may also appeal to any contemporary reader.

Some may find such an assumption controversial, as the poet nowhere in his work mentions his will to depict Epicurean ethical doctrine. On the contrary, in the very first lines of the poem, the author seems to suggest the physical character of his work, when he addresses the goddess Venus with these words:

[...] te sociam studeo scribendis versibus esse,  
quos ego de rerum natura pangere conor<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lucr. I, 24–25. All original Lucretian quotations follow: T. Lucreti Cari, *De rerum natura libri sex*, in ed. B.G. Teubneri, Lipsiae 1963.

With these words Lucretius harks back to the well-known issue of philosophical considerations about the nature of things, but not exclusively to the theory of atomistic physics taught by Epicurus, what would be the explicit interpretation of the mentioned verses, but, in my opinion, he makes the reflections about moral values in human life an apparent subject of his literary work<sup>2</sup>. In my article, then, I want to argue with the concept of Cyril Bailey<sup>3</sup>, who favored the idea that the moral theory and Lucretius' master's views of the nature of gods and religion only crop up from time to time in the poem, only incidentally and in partial treatment, completely subordinated to the main purpose and structure. How then, following Bailey's idea, shall we understand the fact that the poet, who perceives himself as an eager imitator of Epicurus, could communicate the whole teaching of his master by reducing it only to its physical aspect? There is only one answer to this question. Lucretius could not reduce his literary work only to the physical theory of Epicurus, otherwise he would not manage to convey his master's magnificent vision of a happy life<sup>4</sup>. Lucretius himself in the third book of the poem emphasizes the fact that Epicurus' teaching was not limited mainly to the nature courses (*naturae species ratioque*), but his doctrine included also the idea of the ultimate good (*summum bonum*) and depiction of the way (*via*) one might achieve it<sup>5</sup>. Could he, then, omit or neglect those elements of his master's concept which made the principal goal of the whole Epicurean teaching<sup>6</sup>?

The poem of Lucretius still remains a mystery. We are not able to acknowledge whether it was his only single intended literary work or maybe just a prologue with which Lucretius wanted to follow in his master's footsteps as far as the number of written pages is concerned. As the Roman poet included in his

---

<sup>2</sup> About the relations between Epicurus and Lucretius, see D. Sedley, *Lucretius and the Transformation of Greek Wisdom*, Cambridge 2008, p. 8, who calls them just a "philosophical inspiration".

<sup>3</sup> C. Bailey, *Prolegomena*, [in:] Titus Lucretius Carus, *De rerum natura*, Oxford 1950, p. 22. Cf. also K. Kumaniecki, *Literatura rzymska. Okres cyceroński*, Warszawa 1977, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> We must remember that Lucretius, as far as we know, was the author of only one literary work and we dispose of very little knowledge about his life. See L. Holford-Strevens, *Horror Vacui in Lucretian Biography*, "Leeds International Classical Studies" 1.1 (2002). These facts make our studies more difficult and our considerations not always unambiguous.

<sup>5</sup> See *Lucr.* III, 26–28; IV, 1–25.

<sup>6</sup> See *Lucr.* I, 331–333; IV, 25, where Lucretius mentions that *utilitas* plays an important role in his work. He considers the word *utilitas* (*vel utilis, e*) with the result of having equipped man with necessary knowledge and abilities to achieve the highest goal of Epicurean doctrine. Physical teaching is not enough to attract people and make their happiness achievable. One also needs to get to know what *ataraxia* is and in what way man can get it. See Diogenes Laertius X, 26–29; Usener, *Epicurea*, pp. 85–90; P. Mitsis, *Epicurus' Ethical Theory: The Pleasure of Invulnerability*, London 1988.

poem information about various aspects of human life and universe and made an attempt to find answers to the problems of ethics, the former assumption seems more probable. Lucretius obviously writes about the nature courses, but he also gives information about people who constitute its apparent part, about the soul and cognition, gods and religion, diseases and disasters, about human existence, feelings and fears, especially the one of death. The aim of Lucretius' poem seems obvious in the context of Epicurean doctrine. He wants to liberate people from pain and terror and substitute those with the sense of inner joy. The poet writes:

[...] 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<sup>7</sup>.

The poem *De rerum natura* may be regarded then as a kind of compendium of Epicurean doctrine. Besides the main branches of Epicurean philosophy, such as the canonic (to *kanonikon*), physics (to *phusikon*) and ethics (to *êthikon*), Lucretius also talks about anthropological and theological issues as well as the philosophy of culture, many of these are often included in one passage. In his opinion, human acknowledgment of all these elements he describes in his work is necessary in order to search for Epicurean *ataraxia*<sup>8</sup>. And, to my surprise, although scientists recognize this fact, they tend to treat all the lines in the poem that concern ethics just as digressions<sup>9</sup> or intended intrusions<sup>10</sup> and in this way they make them the subject matter of their academic publications, but to my

<sup>7</sup> Lucr. IV, 2–10.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. D.L. X, 35–36, see also B. Farrington, *Form and Purpose in the "De rerum natura"*, [in:] D. R. Dudley, *Lucretius*, London 1967, p. 20; A. Nowicki, *Z rozważań nad filozofią Lukrecjusza i genezą jego ateizmu*, "Euhemer – Przegląd Religioznawczy" 127 (1983), no. 1, p. 18; *idem*, *Zarys dziejów krytyki religii. Starożytność*, Warszawa 1986, p. 244; A. Cox, *Didactic Poetry*, [in:] J. Classen, *Probleme der Lukrezforschung*, Hildesheim 1986, p. 221; P. H. Schrijvers, *Elements psychagogiques dans l'oeuvre de Lucrece*, [in:] D. R. Dudley, *op. cit.*, p. 370; A. Korpanty, *Lukrecjusz: rzymski apostoł epikureizmu*, Wrocław 1991, p. 63; J. A. Olberding, *The Feel of Not to Feel It: Lucretius' Remedy for Death Anxiety*, "Philosophy and Literature" 29 (2005), no. 1, pp. 114–129.

<sup>9</sup> See J. Korpanty, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

<sup>10</sup> See A. Cox, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

knowledge, there is no monograph that would describe this issue with appropriate attention and scientific scrutiny<sup>11</sup>.

Epicurus created his physical and ethical system basing on the pattern of antinomies observed within the world, similarly to the rules he applied in his construction of the physical existence of matter<sup>12</sup>. Therefore, we also find in the poem of Lucretius many opposing values, confronted in their character and nature, and a description of direct and indirect impact they have on human beings. Among different values presented by the poet, we may regard as ethical those lines of the poem, in which Lucretius refers to moral antinomies observed in Epicurean doctrine. They might be regarded as manifestations of such contradictory notions as: good-bad, profit-detriment, pleasure-pain, tranquility-anxiety, agreement-disagreement, reason-ignorance. In the *De rerum natura* there are many words used by the poet to describe different moral phenomena and human behaviour in various situations. Although the poet does not make ethical teaching a separate part of his literary work, nevertheless there appear many passages that contain such linguistic and formal variations of ethically specified vocabulary and images, which allow us to distinguish the moral doctrine from physical considerations contained in all six books of the poem. However, during such analysis we must bear in mind the fact that in the *De rerum natura* we often come across passages, which at the same time belong to different fields of academic research, such as ontology, epistemology, psychology etc. Therefore, there may still remain some kind of ambiguity or possible inaccuracy in the analysis of the presence of moral teaching in Lucretius' poem reconstructed in this article.

---

<sup>11</sup> See K. Leśniak, *Lukrecjusz*, Warszawa 1960; J. Korpanty, *op. cit.*; P. Boyancé, *Lucrece et l'épicurisme*, Paris 1963; J. H. Nichols, *Epicurean Political Philosophy. The "De rerum natura"*, London 1976; D. Sedley, *op. cit.*, 1998; J. Classen, *op. cit.*; R. Poignault, *Présence de Lucrece, Actes du colloque tenu à Tours, 3-5 décembre 1998*, Tours 1998; F. Morselli, *Il pessimismo di Tito L. Caro*, Torino-Palermo 1892; F. Giancotti, *Il preludio di Tito Lucrezio Caro*, Messina 1959; P. H. Schrijvers, *Horror ac divina voluptas: etudes sur la poétique et la poésie de Lucrece*, Amsterdam 1970; M. Gale, *Myth and Poetry in Lucretius*, Cambridge 1994; M. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire*, Princeton 1994; R. D. Brown, *Lucretius on Love and Sex*, New York 1987; P. Merlan, *Lucretius – Primitivist or Progressivist?*, "Journal of the History of Ideas" 3 (1950), pp. 364–368; A. Nowicki, *Z rozważań...*, pp. 11–25; Z. Danek, *Lukrecjusz o początkach rodzaju ludzkiego*, "Studia Filozoficzne" 218 (1984), no. 1, pp. 121–134; J. Korpanty, *Pojęcie religio w poemacie Lukrecjusza*, "Meander" 9–10 (1988), pp. 371–396; M. Pigińska, *Opis zarazy w Atenach, Lukrecjusz, De rerum natura VI 1138–1286*, "Eos" 83 (1995), no. 2, pp. 285–305; A. Pawlaczek, *Sposoby i formy perswazji w poemacie Lukrecjusza*, "Meander" 3 (1997), pp. 205–217; L. Castagna, *Vecchiaia e morte del mondo in Lucrezio, Seneca e San Cipriano*, "Aevum Antiquum" 13 (2000), pp. 239–263 or M. Gale, *Etymological Wordplay and Poetic Succession in Lucretius*, "Classical Philology" 96 (2001), no. 2, pp. 168–172.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Lucr. II, 569–580. See also, A. Kwiatek, W. Worwąg, *Podróż po historii filozofii. Starożytność*, Warszawa 1997, p. 10.

As far as the moral references in Lucretius' vision of the world are concerned, we may regard as ethical the following verses of the poem. In the first book of the *De rerum natura*, ethically-related considerations are observed in the verses 1–49 and the following verses 50–53. The first lines 1–28 seem to depict the ideal and harmonious vision of Epicurean world, in which prevail pleasure (*voluptas* I, 1), generated by the bland and amiable idea of the surrounding nature that emerges from such phrases as *alma Venus* (I, 2), *suavis tellus* (I, 7), *rident aequora ponti* (I, 8), *placatum caelum* (I, 9), *pabula laeta* (I, 15), *blandus amor* (I, 19). The following verses I, 29–43 show the obstacles people face on their way to Epicurean *ataraxia*. They remain in close relation to Mars, the god of war, that is the metaphor of human restlessness, agitation and discomfort (*foera moenera militia / belli / Mavors* I, 29; I, 32). In lines I, 50–61 Lucretius makes a kind of conclusion that people may reach the state of happiness on the condition that they resort to the real doctrine (*vera ratio* I, 51), presented by him in the poem.

The next morally related passage of the poem (I, 62–158) elaborates on serious obstacles encountered by people who search for Epicurean pleasure in their lives, which are religion and superstitions. Lucretius describes religion in such words:

[...] quae caput a caeli regionibus ostendebat  
horribili super aspectu mortalibus instans<sup>13</sup>.

According to Lucretius, there is a chance to fight the negative impact of religion and superstitions and everyone who seriously considers applying Epicurean teaching in their life, should realize their catastrophic effects, such as flagitious deeds (*scelerosa atque impia facta* I, 93), suicidal attempts (*desciscere quaeres* I, 103), permanent dread (*fortunasque turbare timore* I, 106) of gods<sup>14</sup> and of torments in the afterlife<sup>15</sup>. The lines that follow (I, 127–158) present a kind of remedy for all the mentioned inconveniences of human life and thought. The poet mentions also human friendship (I, 141) that constitutes a positive element of Epicurean ethical theory and its presence in people's life certainly bears a supportive role in their moral struggles. In the first book of the poem, Lucretius twice more (I, 398–417, 921–950) calls on the human capacity of knowledge as one of the most important and useful values in human life.

The initial verses of the second book (II, 1–13) depict the Epicurean wise man, as a paradigm of human ethical pursuits. In these lines, Lucretius contrasts apparently opposing human attitudes to life and human behaviour. The wise man's life seems divine in a way, as he leads his life in serene places (*templa*

<sup>13</sup> Lucr. I, 64–65.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem* 150, 155.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem* 115, 120.

*serena* II, 8), his existence is sweet and gentle in character (*suavis* II, 1, 4–5; *dulcis* II, 7), deprived of evil (*malis careas* II, 4), distant from dangers (*tua sine parte pericli* II, 6). Everyday practice of life of an average and ordinary member of human society is associated with such terms as work and toil (*labor* II, 2, 12), anxiety and concern (*vexari* II, 3), mistakes and aberrations (*errare* II, 10), wars (*certamina belli* II, 5), competitions and strife (*contendere* II, 11), efforts (*niti* II, 12). In the following lines II, 14–52 not only does the poet oppose such notions as pain (*dolor*) and pleasure (*iucundus sensus, multae deliciae*), but also describes human actions that either intensify this pain or seemingly liberate people from its presence. In the passage II, 53–61, that makes the final part of this book's prologue, Lucretius calls again on the subject of knowledge and cognition as the significant element of Epicurean physical and ethical doctrine.

The verses II, 167–183 and the following passage II, 600–660 regard the idea of gods and their alleged interference in human world, what is a frequent motive in Lucretius' moral considerations. Basing on the atomistic physical concept, the poet attributes the gods with such features of character like peace (*summa pax* II, 647), painlessness (*privata dolore* II, 649), lack of dangers (*privata periculis* II, 649), some kind of indifference (*nec bene promeritis capitur nec tangitur ira* II, 651), which should be the pursuit of human moral efforts. The verses II, 1023–1047 contain Lucretius' exhortation to dispose of false convictions and beliefs and enjoy the pleasures of life. Reason and knowledge help people notice the interdependence of the world's components, their origins, meaning and final consequences (II, 1160–1174).

The prologue of the third book of the *De rerum natura* also includes ethical references, as all the Lucretian introductions. Its first part, the passage III, 1–30, known as the glorification of Epicurus, gives an account of positive moral consequences of Epicurean teaching and its application in one's life. The presented doctrine is said to have the power to liberate people from their mental fears (*animi terrores* III, 16) just by absorbing the Epicurean knowledge and common sense (*ratio* III, 14). The second part of the prologue deals with the notions of animus and anima (III, 35–36) and the fears of death (*metus Acheruntis* III, 37; *mortis formidine* III, 64, 79), which make a meaningful part of Epicurean ethical teaching. In the lines III, 31–39 the poet makes an attempt to show people their pernicious actions and their disastrous and underwhelming results. The acceptance of such actions as: growing wealthy at all costs (*ad summas emergere opes* III, 63; *sanguine civili conduplicant divitias* III, 70–71), greed (*avarities* III, 59; *avidii* III, 71; *invidia* III, 75), exceeding established rules (*transcendere fines* III, 60), committing crimes (*socios scelerum atque ministros* III, 61; *caedem caede accumulantes* III, 71), finally acts generated by ambitions (*honorum caeca cupido* III, 59) not only move people away from the state of happiness, but they often become the beginning of the human sense of abhor and contempt to the world and to themselves.

The verses III, 135–160 Lucretius uses to underline the role of reason, which

[...] caput esse quasi et dominari in corpore toto<sup>16</sup>.

Moreover, beside the fact that human natures (*natura hominum* III, 315) tend to differ significantly, according to the poet, there is no nature that could resist the power of reason. The whole passage III, 445–525 is a picture of the nature of the human soul and the consequences of Epicurean premonitions in this matter.

The next part of ethically related considerations appears in the passage III, 819–1094, which concentrates on the human fear of inevitable death. Death itself is the end of pain (*privatus doloribus aegris* III, 905), so its actual presence in the world should not negatively influence human temporary existence. Verses III, 930–977 of the poem reveal some characteristic human attitudes to the phenomenon of death. To conclude, the poet explicitly asserts:

Hic Acherusia fit stultorum denique vita<sup>17</sup>.

The prologue of the fourth book of the *De rerum natura* (IV, 1–25) emphasizes the useful role of Lucretius' literary work and its content. The presented doctrine may become a kind of cure for the human sense of unhappiness, as it liberates people from their superstitious faith in gods (*religionum animum nodis exsolvere pergo* IV, 7).

The next morally oriented passage of this book (verses IV, 462–521) above all aim to present Epicurean canonic assumptions, but at the same time, the poet tries to persuade the readers to undertake an effort to gain knowledge, which is a necessary step on the way to *ataraxia*.

Superstitions are also the theme of the passage IV, 572–594. Lucretius criticizes the human inclination to surrender to the magic charm of mythical stories about forest spirits, nymphs and satyrs.

Another ethically related matter in Lucretius' poem is the problem of passion and desire. In the passage IV, 962–1207 the poet divests these states of body and mind of any positive value. The words and phrases he makes use of in this issue are: "cruel lust" (*dira libido* IV, 1046), "love wound" (*mens [...] saucia amore* IV, 1048; *Veneris qui telis accipit ictus* IV, 1052), "hushed desire" (*muta cupido* IV, 1057), "frigid anxiety" (*frigida cura* IV, 1060), "anxiety and pain" (*curam certumque dolorem* IV, 1067), "fury and toil" (*furor atque aerumna* IV, 1069), "vulnerable insecurity" (*incerti tabescunt vulnere caeco* IV,

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem* III, 138.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem* 1023.

1120), “toil and labour” (*absumunt viris pereuntque labore* IV, 1121). The end of book four (IV, 1278–1287) is the glorification of temperance, moderation, and the golden mean, that is the feeling of love based rather on habit than on strong affection.

The next book of the poem *De rerum natura* begins with another appraisal of Epicurus’ achievements. In Lucretius’ opinion, Epicurus invented a new way of life (*vitae rationem invenit* V, 9), based on the knowledge formulated by the poet in his literary work. In his description (V, 1–54), Lucretius compares his master to the gods, as far as his inventions are concerned. Here the poet gives also an account of both apparently positive characteristics of human life (*[vitam] tranquillo et tam clara luce locavit* V, 12; *dulcia solacia vitae* V, 21) and negative ones (*proelia atque pericula* V, 43–44; *scindunt hominem cuppedinis acres sollicitum curae* V, 45–46; *timores* V, 46; *superbia* V, 47; *spurcitia* V, 47; *petulantia* V, 47; *luxus desidiaeque* V, 48). Lucretius – as he claims – retakes his master’s didactic plan:

[...] cuius ego ingressus vestigia dum rationes  
persequor ac doceo dictis<sup>18</sup>

and with these words he reveals his intention to make his work a discourse ethical in character.

Passage V, 146–186 is devoted again to the false convictions about the gods and their powers. Lucretius accentuates the gods’ ethical supremacy above the human race, when he attributes divine entities with such features as immortality (*immortales* V, 165), happiness (*beati* V, 165), tranquility (*quieti* V, 168), the lack of the inclination for what is new (*quidve novi potuit [...] inlicere ut cuperent vitam mutare priorem* V, 168–169; *quid potuit novitatis amorem accendere tali?* V, 173), and finally, a beautiful life (*pulchre degeret aevom* V, 172). The next passage V, 195–234 is a continuation of Lucretius’ theological and ethical argument that aims to exhibit the invalid faith in the gods’ intervention in the human world.

The passage 925–1457 of the fifth book of the poem is of great importance to all researchers of Epicurean doctrine. Lucretius gives here a detailed description of the ancient views on human civilization from its very early state to so called *cacumen* of its development. In this fragment of the text, we read about economical, political and social changes observed within human community. All these modifications influenced also man’s emotional sphere, and, in consequence, led to many alterations in human morality. Lucretius reveals an apparent correlation between the economical-social and ethical sphere of human existence. The poet examines such morally related issues like law (*leges, iura*)

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem* V, 55–56.

and customs (*mores*)<sup>19</sup>, affections<sup>20</sup>, human – nature relations<sup>21</sup>. He also expresses his opinions about the phenomenon of death<sup>22</sup>, friendship<sup>23</sup>, wealth<sup>24</sup>, ambition and honours<sup>25</sup>, the gods' existence, religion, false convictions and fears<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, Lucretius offers an argument on the notion of novelty (*novitas*) and its meaning in human life<sup>27</sup>. In this fragment, we may also find verses that reveal the poet's attitude towards war and conflicts<sup>28</sup> and his undisputed belief in the significant role of knowledge and reason on the way to achieve the Epicurean ultimate good<sup>29</sup>.

The last book of the *De rerum natura* also contains ethically related passages. It is initiated again with the glorification of Epicurus' achievements (VI, 1–95). According to Lucretius, he understood the fact that despite material goods (*divitiae* VI, 12), good reputation or fame (*honos et laus* VI, 12) people still experience suffering and angst (*anxia cordi* VI, 14). These people seem to be the target of Lucretius' ethical teaching. In this passage, the poet again explains the real character of the gods and nature (VI, 43–95).

The following lines of this book of the poem (VI, 379–422) are the next attempt to prove the irrational human faith in the power and interventions of the gods. Lucretius asks rhetorically:

[...] postremo cur santa deum delubra suasque  
discutit infesto praeclarus fulmine sedes  
et bene facta deum frangit simulacra suisque  
demit imaginibus violento vulnere honorem<sup>30</sup>?

The ethical teaching is also a part of the last passage of the poem (VI, 1090–1286). Lucretius does not explicitly give a lecture on morality here, but he creates a picture of man facing extreme adversities, such as the pest as well as

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem* 958–959, 1143–1160.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *ibidem* 962–965 (*Venus* V, 962; *cupido* V, 963; *libido* V, 964).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *ibidem* 972–987, 1361–1378, 1436–1439; *non erat ut fieri posset mirarier umquam nec diffidere* 979–980.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *ibidem* 988–1010; *linquebant lumina vitae* 989; *viva videns vivo sepeliri viscera busto* 993; *eos vita privarant* 997; *[non] una dies dabat exitio* 1000; *penuria leto membra dabat, contra nunc rerum copia mersat* 1007–1008.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *ibidem* 1019–1027; *amicitiam coeperunt iungere*, 1019, 1392–1404.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *ibidem* 1113–1122; 1426–1429; *aurum* 1113, *fortuna* 1121, *opulenti* 1122.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *ibidem* 1120–1135; *homines claros, potentes* 1120; *summum honorem succedere* 1123; *invidia* 1131, *iter ambitionis* 1130.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. *ibidem* 1161–1240.

<sup>27</sup> See, *ibidem* 1276–1280, 1412–1424.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *ibidem* 1281–1349, 1430–1435; *sic alid ex alio peperit discordia tristis, / horribile humanis quo gentibus esset in armis, / inque dies belli terroribus addidit augmen* 1305–1307.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. *ibidem*, 1447, 1452–1457; *ratio vestigia monstrat* 1447; *experientia mentis* 1452.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem* VI, 417–420.

the pain and death that follow it. The presented phenomena usually bring about such human feelings like sorrow<sup>31</sup>, fear<sup>32</sup>, anguish and despair<sup>33</sup>, suffering<sup>34</sup> and confusion<sup>35</sup>. But the aim of Lucretius' description is not to make people afraid of all of this, but, on the contrary, to prevent people from these negative feelings with the physical, but first of all, ethical doctrine of Epicurus.

The terminological and content-related criteria applied in my ethical study of Lucretius' poem allows me to conclude that the presented morally stigmatized passages not only appear in the whole poem, but they are found usually in similar places in all of the books, but in different number of verses what makes the ethically related fragments various in length and position within the proper book. As far as longer passages are concerned, Epicurean ethical teaching is mainly included in the following locations<sup>36</sup>.

Book I: v. 1–158 (1), 398–417 (3), 921–950 (5);

Book II: v. 1–61 (1), 167–183 (3), 569–580 (5), 600–660 (7), 1023–1047 (9), 1090–1104 (11), 1160–1174 (13);

Book III: v. 1–93 (1), 136–160 (3), 288–322 (5), 445–525 (7), 819–1094 (9);

Book IV: v. 1–25 (1), 462–521 (3), 572–594 (5), 962–1207 (7), 1278–1287 (9);

Book V: v. 1–90 (1), 110–125 (3), 146–234 (5), 925–1457 (7);

Book VI: v. 1–95 (1), 379–422 (3), 1138–1286 (5).

As we can see, the ethical teaching is obviously present in the poem of Lucretius and it can also be claimed that in an apparently significant quantity. Within the poem we may consider 2284 verses as having moral character, what makes over 31% (31.22%) of the whole literary work of the Roman writer. The precise number of lines in each book is presented in figure 1.

It is also necessary to add here that the morally aimed purpose of Lucretius' poem is manifested in many shorter passages, too even in single-word forms or passages containing just few verses in which the poet reveals his attitude to various aspects of human existence. Among them, we may find fragments about reason (I, 330–333, 370–371, 377, 471–477, 635–644, 659, 690–692, 698, 704, 711, 758; II, 82, 229, 496, 735, 740, 985; III, 105, 353, 754, 777; IV, 435, 816–817, 822–823, 832–835, 912–915, 1233–1239; V, 140, 406, 666, 890–891, 907–924; VI, 762–768, 850, 853), ignorance (II, 211), death (II, 211; V, 375), fear (IV, 173; VI, 251–255), non-existent afterlife (II, 74–79; IV, 37–41), gods (V, 114, 491; II, 1153–1154) or everyday life (II, 557; I, 471–477; IV, 627–632, 850; V, 816–817). Moreover, in the text of the poem, we also come across other

<sup>31</sup> See *ibidem* 1183, 1259, 1233, 1281.

<sup>32</sup> See *ibidem* 1158, 1179, 1183, 1212.

<sup>33</sup> See *ibidem* 1208, 1159.

<sup>34</sup> See *ibidem* 1158, 1177.

<sup>35</sup> See *ibidem* 1183, 1280–1281.

<sup>36</sup> See especially a characteristic location of many passages such as prologues, epilogues and so-called mid-argument passages – W. Cox, *op.cit.*, p. 221.

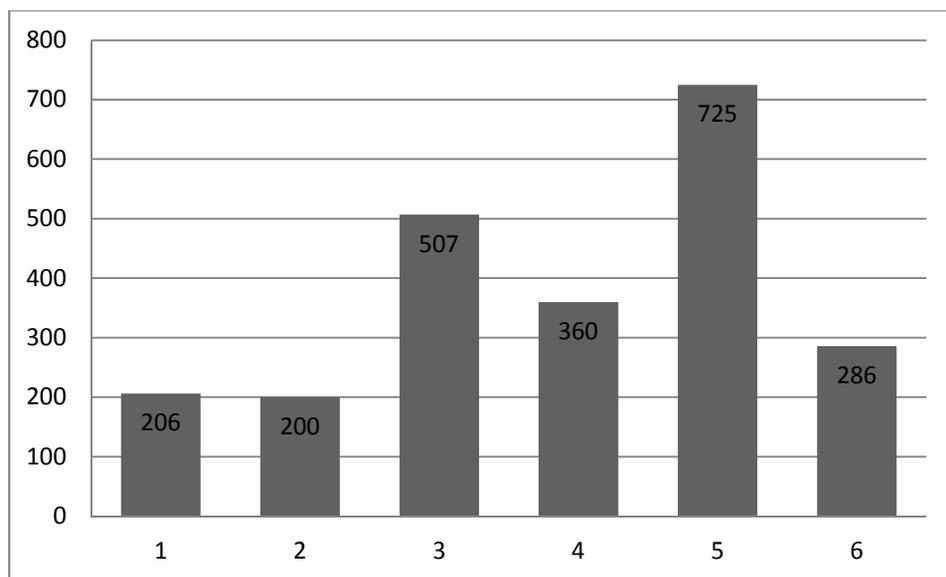


Figure 1. The number of ethical lines in each book of the *De rerum natura*

short remarks ethical in their character (e.g. I, 623–624, 657–660, 690–692, 698, 704, 711, 734–741, 758; II, 229, 308, 496, 500–506, 552–559, 676, 740, 840, 865, 886, 985, 1002; III, 94–96, 105, 116, 124, 353, 417–420, 676, 754, 776–777, 801–802; IV, 110–111, 129, 175, 209, 230–233, 370, 435, 446, 464, 627–629, 673–674, 722, 751, 754, 777–780, 816–817, 822–823, 831, 833, 883–884, 907–915, 929–931, 1232–1239; V, 97–103, 373–375, 406, 491, 590, 666, 735–736, 828–833; VI, 251–255, 534, 596–597, 639, 678–679, 762–768, 781–782, 850, 853, 917–920, 1049). These elements are completely inseparable from the form and content of the text. They apparently make an indispensable part of the poem. They are meant to show the reader an appropriate way of thinking, attract attention, add vividness to the presentation of the Epicurean physical theory, help the audience concentrate and emphasize the most important reflections of the author.

In conclusion, I would like to express my opinion that the ethical teaching, though neglected by the scholars, is apparently part of Lucretius' poem. The number of lines concerning ethical teaching in the *De rerum natura* raises questions about its form, structure and content, and it absolutely deserves thorough analysis and consideration, especially when there still remains the unsolved question of what kind of an Epicurean was Lucretius since he, in opposition to Epicurus' doctrinal premises, did not make moral values the separate part of his poetic work.