

Fulgentius and the allegorical interpretation of the first line of Virgil's *Aeneid*

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ABSTRACT

In his treatise *The Exposition of the Content of Virgil according to Moral Philosophy*, Fabius Fulgentius allegorically interpreted the contents of Virgil's epic the *Aeneid*. The aim of our paper is to explain the main principles of Fulgentius' allegorization by analysing the first verse of Virgil's *Aeneid*. In Fulgentius' view, the 12 books of the epic depicted the three main stages of a human life as they follow the "natural order": childhood, adolescence and adulthood. In his prologue (Fulg. *Cont.* 87. 4–6; 87. 11–89. 3; 89. 19–90. 17), the author supports his claim by presenting an allegorical interpretation of the first line of Virgil's epic (Verg. *A.* 1. 1), which contains three famous words: *arma* ("arms"), *vir* ("man") and *primus* ("first"). According to Fulgentius, the first term *arma* ("arms") represents *virtus* ("manliness") in the sense of characteristics that are available to all human individuals during childhood. The second term *vir* ("man") refers to *sapientia* ("wisdom"), which is related to the development of the *ingenium* ("mind") during adolescence. The third term *primus* ("first") symbolises the adult ability *ornare* ("to ornament") what we have learnt in the first phases of our life. With life experience in childhood and adolescence, a person can gradually become *princeps* ("a ruler"). In other words, they can be "first" within a given society and thus conclude their personal development towards perfection. As such, the contents of Virgil's *Aeneid* correspond to these three terms: Books 1–3 to childhood, Books 4–6 to adolescence, and Books 7–12 to adulthood.

KEYWORDS

Fulgentius, allegorization, Late Antiquity, Vergil, *Aeneid*, Aeneas

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INTRODUCTION

At the end of the 5th or start of the 6th century CE, Fabius Planciades Fulgentius¹ wrote a short treatise: *Expositio Virgilianae continentiae secundum philosophos morales* (*The Exposition of the Content of Virgil according to Moral Philosophy*).² From a literary perspective, this work constitutes an interesting example of how Virgil's *Aeneid* was received at that time. Fulgentius was the first author to summarise the *Aeneid* as an allegory, as well as the first Christian to write a commentary on Virgil.³ From a chronological point of view, the treatise was published on the cusp of two historical epochs. On the one hand, Fulgentius concluded the long-developed antique perception of Virgil's epic,⁴ while on the other, he opened the floor to an emerging Christian tradition.⁵

This work, as well as its author, are important but problematic. According to Robert Edwards, Fulgentius “enjoyed a remarkably durable reputation among later writers in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance”.⁶ His influence is present in the works of authors such as

¹Modern interpreters refer to this author as Fulgentius the Mythographer to distinguish him from Fulgentius the Bishop: a well-known church dignitary and later saint from the town of Ruspe. Until recently, many researchers took a unitarian stance on the identity of Fulgentius, whereby Fulgentius the Mythographer and Fulgentius the Bishop were the same individual. However, after an exhaustive textual analysis by Gregory Hays, the separatist scenario seems much more likely, whereby the two figures represent different individuals. See HAYS, G.: The Date and Identity of the Mythographer Fulgentius. *The Journal of Medieval Latin* 13 (2003) 163–152. About problems of authorship in the ancient philosophy, see ŠKVRNDA, F.: Platón ako Pseudo-Sókratés? Niekoľko poznámok k problematike autorstva filozofického textu v antike [Plato as Pseudo-Socrates? Some remarks on the problems related to the authorship of a philosophical text in antiquity]. *Ostium* 13.4 (2017). Fabius Planciades Fulgentius authored at least three other works (*Mythologiae*, *Expositio sermonum antiquorum*, *De aetatibus mundi et hominis*). In a critical edition of Fulgentius' works compiled by Rudolf Helm, five treatises can be found. See HELM, R.: *Fabii Planciadis Fulgentii v.c. Opera*. Lipsiae 1898. However, the final treatise in that compilation, titled *S. Fulgentii episcopi super Thebaiden* was apparently written in the Middle Ages. See HAYS 164–165.

²When quoting and referencing the Latin text of Fulgentius' works, I used the Rudolf Helm edition. HELM (n. 1) 81–107. I source the English translations from WHITBREAD, L. G.: *Fulgentius. The Mythographer*. Columbus 1971, 129–145.

³ZIOLKOWSKI, M. J. – PUTNAM, C. M. (eds): *The Virgilian Tradition. The First Fifteen Hundred Years*. New Haven – London 2008, 660; WOLFF, E.: Vergil and Fulgentius. *Vergilius* 54 (2008) 59–69. The author, just like his forebears from antiquity, tries to appear very learned, as evidenced by the quantity of Latin and Greek quotations in the text (Sal. Cat. 3. 2 = Fulg. Cont. 89. 15–16; Petr. Euscion, fr. 8 = Fulg. Cont. 99. 2; Pl. Cist. fr. 3. 252–253 = Fulg. Cont. 103. 18–19; Il. 1. 1 = Fulg. Cont. 88. 19–89. 1; Il. 1. 2 = Fulg. Cont. 91. 13; Il. 1. 189 = Fulg. Cont. 104. 17–18; Il. 5. 35 = Fulg. Cont. 105. 16). On the other hand, the more Fulgentius appeals to antique authority, the clearer it becomes that he is not well-versed in that tradition. For example, he very often cites incorrect sources for quotations ascribed to classical authors. Specifically, Fulgentius incorrectly cited a quote from Virgil's *Eclogues* (Fulg. Cont. 84. 7–8), and he mistakenly ascribed an excerpt from the collection *Corpus Hermeticum* to Plato (Fulg. Cont. 88. 2–4). Moreover, it is clear that the author is a Christian. He refers in the text to the *Old* and *New Testaments* (Fulg. Cont. 89. 6–7; 87. 8), as well as to Tertullian's treatise *De pudicitia* (Fulg. Cont. 90. 15–16).

⁴See TARRANT, R. J.: Aspects of Virgil's reception in antiquity. In MARTINDALE, CH. (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to Virgil*. Cambridge 1997, 56–72; KINNEY, A.: [Reception of Virgil in] Late Antique Literature. In THOMAS, R. F. – ZIOLKOWSKI, J. M. (eds): *The Virgil Encyclopedia*. Oxford 2013, 724–728.

⁵WETHERBEE, W.: From late Antiquity to the twelfth century. In MINNIS, A. – JOHNSON, I. (eds): *The Cambridge History of Literary Criticism. Volume II. The Middle Ages*. Cambridge 2005, 107.

⁶EDWARDS, R.: The Heritage of Fulgentius. In BERNARDO, A. S. – LEVIN, S. (eds): *The Classics in the Middle Ages*. Binghamton – New York 1990, 141.



Isidore of Seville, Rabanus Maurus, Petrarch, Boccaccio etc.⁷ Despite this reputation, Fulgentius' works shows many limitations. Fulgentius' Latin is "strained", "pompous", "full of tortuous elaborations".⁸ His work with text already considerably devalues the learned form of allegorization, still typical, for instance, for Macrobius (turn of the 4th and 5th centuries AD). Or as Martin C. Putna says: "The more diligently Fulgentius uses Greek vocabulary in his Latin text and the more authorities he refers to, the more it is clear how little he is now familiar with the treasury of ancient knowledge and how much he simply makes up the words and names he uses."⁹ This modern critique, while valid, does not diminish the importance of the author's works. The aim of our paper is to explain the main principles of Fulgentius' allegorization by analysing the first verse of Virgil's *Aeneid* in his treatise *The Exposition of the Content of Virgil according to Moral Philosophy*.

Fulgentius wrote a relatively simple plot device into this work. After a traditional invocation of the Muses, Virgil's spirit visits Fulgentius and reveals the true meaning of the *Aeneid* to him. The Roman epic is not intended as a mere description of the journey of Aeneas and his companions from Troy to a new homeland in Italy. Rather, it depicts an allegorical representation of development throughout a human life according to the *fisici ordinis* ("natural order"):¹⁰ from childhood, through adolescence and into adulthood, all framed within the concepts of Christian ethics. Indeed, Virgil's spirit explicitly states: *per duodena librorum uolumina pleniorum humanae uitae monstrassem statum* ("in the twelve books of the *Aeneid* I have shown the full range of human life").¹¹

Fulgentius interprets the first book of the *Aeneid* as referring to themes of human birth and the obstacles that must be overcome in early childhood. The second and third books symbolise the period during which children love fairytales and stories. The fourth book portrays the trappings of adolescence and love. The fifth book presents youthful exercises in virtues. The sixth book describes the knowledge and wisdom that accompany the journey to adulthood. The seventh book is a metaphorical expression of the entry into adulthood. The eighth book illustrates the inner construction of the human soul. Finally, the ninth to twelfth books deal with how a person battles various forms of evil.¹²

Before Fulgentius begins his interpretations of Virgil's twelve books, he attempts in a prologue to justify his reading of the *Aeneid* as an allegorical representation of development throughout a human life. His main argument uses the introductory verse of Virgil's epic, where three notable words are found – *arma* ("arms"), *vir* ("man"), and *primus* ("first") – in the line: *Arma virumque cano, Troiae qui primus ab oris* ("Arms I sing and the man who first from the

⁷See WHITBREAD (n. 2) 24–26; EDWARDS (n. 6) 141–142.

⁸WHITBREAD (n. 2) 108.

⁹PUTNA, C. M.: Svět posledních římských pohanů v zrcadle Macrobových Saturnálií [The world of the last Roman pagans in the mirror of Macrobius' Saturnalia]. In Macrobius, *Saturnálie*. Překlad J. HLAVÁČEK. Praha 2002, 65.

¹⁰Fulg. *Cont.* 87. 1; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 122.

¹¹Fulg. *Cont.* 87. 2–3, trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 122.

¹²PUTNA, C. M.: Křesťané a římské dědictví: básník svůdce, básník kazatel, hymny bez básníků [Christians and the Roman heritage: poet seducer, poet preacher, hymns without poets]. In FISCHEROVÁ, S. – STARÝ, J. (eds): *Původ poezie: Proměny poetické inspirace v evropských a mimoevropských kulturách*. Praha 2006, 85–98.



coasts of Troy [...]”).¹³ According to Fulgentius, Virgil’s ordering of these words in the text – (1) *arma*, (2) *vir*, and (3) *primus* – is intended to correspond to three phases of development throughout a human life: (1) childhood, (2) adolescence, (3) adulthood. In the text, Fulgentius first concentrates more closely on explaining the first two principles (*arma* and *vir*);¹⁴ he then deals with the third principle (*primus*) with much less interest.¹⁵

ARMA AND VIR

In Fulgentius’ view, the first term *arma* (“arms”) refers to *virtus* (“manliness”) in the sense of characteristics that all human individuals have at their disposal during childhood. In this sense, the term “manliness” is related to *corpus* (“the body”). The word *vir* (“man”), as the second to appear, is connected to *sapientia* (“wisdom”), which concerns *ingenium* (“the mind”).¹⁶ This relationship can be represented schematically as follows:

1. *arma* (“arms”) → *virtus* (“manliness”) → *corpus* (“body”)
2. *vir* (“man”) → *sapientia* (“wisdom”) → *ingenium* (“mind”)

Fulgentius posited that we all have certain bodily dispositions at the beginning of our life, including the characteristic of *virtus* (“manliness”), which is symbolically represented in Virgil’s text with the term *arma* (“arms”). By developing and cultivating these bodily dispositions, we gradually form our individual personalities, which are represented in the *Aeneid* by the second term *vir* (“man”). As people mature, their mental abilities come to the fore increasingly often, and this is indicated philosophically by the term *sapientia* (“wisdom”). If our lives follow such a course, it means that we have used our inner dispositions to their full potential. The contents of the *Aeneid* should also be understood through the prism of this developmental scheme. Their true meaning, according to Fulgentius, is a chronological representation of how a human life develops, following the order and concepts of these two principles.

However, Fulgentius realised that his thesis was problematic from a philosophical point of view because *secundum dialecticam disciplinam* (“the rules of logical discourse”) dictate that when a problem is presented, *persona* (“the person”) must be described first, followed only afterwards by *personae congruentia* (“the attributes of the person”). In philosophical terms: *prima poneretur substantia, deinde accidens substantiae* (“the essential quality should first be outlined then outward shows of that quality”). Thus, Fulgentius should have started his interpretation by explaining the term *vir* (“man”) as *substantia*, followed by the word *arma* (“arms”) as *accidens*.¹⁷

Had Fulgentius followed this rule, he would have been forced to change the structure of the verse in his allegorical interpretation. However, he wished to adhere strictly to the order of the first

¹³Verg. A. 1. 1; trans. H. RUSHTON FAIRCLOUGH (cf. Virgil, *Eclogues, Georgics, Aeneid I–VI*. London–New York 1916, 241).

¹⁴Fulg. *Cont.* 87. 4–6; 87. 11–89. 3.

¹⁵Fulg. *Cont.* 89. 19–90. 17.

¹⁶Fulg. *Cont.* 87. 4–6; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 122.

¹⁷Fulg. *Cont.* 87. 12–17; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 122.



two words in Virgil's *Aeneid*: (1) “arms” → (2) “man”. For this reason, he tried to justify why the term “arms”, referring to “manliness” as a qualitative component, must appear before the word “man” meaning “wisdom”. To this end, he appeals to the so-called *laudis materia* (“rules for praise”). The following table shows how “the rules for praise” and “the rules for logical discourse” differ in their approach to presenting text:

The rules for praise (Order according to Virgil and Fulgentius)	The rules for logical discourses (Philosophical order)
(1) <i>accidens</i> = <i>arma</i> (“arms”) → <i>virtus</i> (“manliness”) → <i>corpus</i> (“body”)	(2) <i>substantia</i> = <i>vir</i> (“man”) → <i>sapientia</i> (“wisdom”) → <i>ingenium</i> (“mind”)
(2) <i>substantia</i> = <i>vir</i> (“man”) → <i>sapientia</i> (“wisdom”) → <i>ingenium</i> (“mind”)	(1) <i>accidens</i> = <i>arma</i> (“arms”) → <i>virtus</i> (“manliness”) → <i>corpus</i> (“body”)

In his prologue, to defend the structure of his text based on “the rules for praise”, Fulgentius gives several examples that emphasise the primacy of the accidental component – that is, some characteristic of a person – over the substantial component (the person themselves). His first example comes from everyday life, namely the rules of formal communication when addressing someone in a letter: *in epistolis [...] quo primum ‘domino merito’, sic ponatur nominis uocitatio* (“in writing letters, where ‘your excellency’ is put first and then the actual name”).¹⁸ Put simply, when writing a letter, the custom is to address the recipient first using an honorific, followed by their actual name. For instance, in phrases like “Dear Peter”, the qualitative form of address “Dear” always comes before the physical entity “Peter”.

As another example of why “the rules for praise” should be applied here, Fulgentius points to Aeneas’ own character traits, mentioning two instances in the *Aeneid* where Aeneas is described on the one hand as *fato profugus* (“a man driven by fate”)¹⁹ and on the other as an entity ruled *ui superum* (“by the power of the gods above”).²⁰ Both these quotes emphasise that, although “fate” and “the gods” are responsible for the Aeneas’ escape from Troy as a physical entity (*substantia*), as well as for his long and arduous journey to a new homeland, the hero’s character traits (*accidens*) precede the actions of these external agents. In other words, Aeneas had to cultivate the necessary character traits, such as *pious* (“be good”) and *magnanimous* (“be great-souled”) in order to fulfil his calling.²¹ Fulgentius reasons that, had Aeneas not already possessed these traits, he would hardly have been capable of humbly obeying all the decisions of the higher powers (“fate” and “the gods”). Therefore, qualitative personality traits (*pious*, *magnanimus*) precede the actions of external agents (*fatum*, *ui superum*).

¹⁸Fulg. *Cont.* 87. 19–22; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 122.

¹⁹Verg. *A.* 1. 2.

²⁰Fulg. *Cont.* 87. 24; Verg. *A.* 1. 2; Verg. *A.* 1. 4.

²¹See Verg. *A.* 1. 220, 260, 305, 378; trans. RUSHTON FAIRCLOUGH (n. 13) 257, 259, 263, 267.



Fulgentius supports this second example by citing two Greek texts. First, he mentions a quote, ostensibly from Plato,²² although he does not cite the exact source: *illam nihilominus Platonis antiquam firmantes sententiam, ubi ait: νοῦς ἀνθρώπινος θεός οὗτος ἐν ἀγαθός, θεὸς εὖ ἐρ<γαζό>μενος, id est: sensus hominis deus est; is si bonus | est, deus est propitius* (“thus fully confirming the old notion of Plato that ‘the spirit of man is his god’. If man is worthy, God favors him”).²³

Secondly, he calls upon a quote from Carneades’ book *Telesiacus*:²⁴ *nam et Carneades in libro Telesiaco ita ait: πᾶσα τύχη αἰσθησιν φρονίμοις κατοικεῖ, id est: omnis fortuna in sensu habitat sapientis* (“as Carneades says in his book *Telesias*: ‘All fortune lies in the mind of the wise man’”).²⁵

Both quotes function as arguments from authority and are intended to strengthen Fulgentius’ hypothesis laid out above in the other example involving Aeneas’ name. The actions of external agents, such as Plato’s θεός (“God”) or Carneades’ τύχη (“fortune”),²⁶ necessarily precedes some characteristic such as ἀγαθός (“be good”) or φρονίμος (“be wise”), because only by availing ourselves of these traits are we able to recognise and follow the “higher” principles of reality.

In his third argument for why “the rules of praise” should apply in this case, Fulgentius reasoned that if we use “the rules for logical discourse” to interpret the text based on the word *vir*, which is *significatio sexus sit, non honoris* (“a designation of sex, not of praiseworthiness”), it follows that we would use this word to refer to *multi uiri* (“many men”) representing a multiplicity of bodily entities. However, certainly not all men deserve to be praised for a given qualitative trait, such as “be courageous” or “be righteous”, but only a few.²⁷ For this reason, Fulgentius begins his interpretation with the word *arma*, meaning “manliness”, because this quality can only refer to a certain man who is to be praised.

²²The first quote definitely did not come from Plato. It probably refers to the collection *Corpus Hermeticum*, specifically to the introduction of the twelfth book Περὶ τοῦ κοινοῦ πρὸς Τάτ (Corp. Herm. 12. 1–2). See HELM (n. 1) 88; WHITBREAD (n. 2) 146. Fulgentius probably ascribed this statement to Plato because, in late Antiquity, Hermes was considered the teacher of Plato so the ideas of both authors could become conflated.

²³Fulg. Cont. 88. 2–5; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 122.

²⁴This may refer to Carneades of Cyrene. However, according to Diogenes Laërtius, Carneades himself did author a treatise that Fulgentius may have quoted (DL 4. 65). For this reason, G. R. Boys-Stones proposes two alternative solutions to this problem. Firstly, based on references to “perception” and “the wise”, Fulgentius may have incorrectly connected this phrase with Academic skepticism, in which epistemological questions were often discussed between the Academy and Stoa in debates about knowledge. The second of G. R. Boys-Stones’ potential solutions assumes that Fulgentius is citing another Carneades, namely Carneades the Cynic, who is mentioned by the Greek sophist and historian Eunapius in his collection *Vitae Sophistarum* (Eun. VS 2. 1. 5). Eunapius is our only extant source for this author. However, it may be that Fulgentius was aware of Carneades the Cynic, because when citing the Academic skeptics, he never refers to anyone by name in his works, whereas when mentioning the Cynics he names Diogenes several times (Fulg. Cont. 97. 8; Mit. 43. 16). Furthermore, the title of the book *Telesiacus* also alludes to Cynic philosophy. BOYS-STONES, G. R.: A Fragment of Carneades the Cynic? *Mnemosyne* 53.5 (2000) 528–536.

²⁵Fulg. Cont. 88. 5–8; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 122–123.

²⁶The term τύχη (“fortune”) in this quote corresponds to the word θεός (“god”). This likely results from the influence of Stoic philosophy, which defines “fortune” as events with unknown causes. Since τύχη could not be understood using human reason, it was considered something divine and heavenly that transcended the boundaries of human knowledge. See SVF 2. 965, 966.

²⁷Fulg. Cont. 88. 14–18; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 123.



In this case, Fulgentius uses the first line of Homer's *Iliad* as an argument from authority:²⁸ *Homerum uidelicet secutus qui ait: μῆνιν ἄειδε θεὰ Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος* ("Homer who says 'The wrath do thou sing, O goddess, Peleus's son, Achilles'").²⁹ Here, Fulgentius highlights Homer's use of the word μῆνις ("wrath") as a qualitative component at the beginning of the line before the word Ἀχιλλεύς ("Achilles") as an individual at the end of the line. He uses this as an analogy for how a qualitative component (*arma* = "manliness") can have primacy over an individual (*vir* = "wisdom").

PRIMUS

Based on these arguments from "the rules for praise", corporeal form in the sense of "arms" and "manliness" constitute the first stage in the development of a human individual. The second, intellectual phase, defined by the principles of "man" and "wisdom", serves *regit* ("to control") the first component.³⁰ Initially, it is important in life *habere* ("to possess"), and then *regere quod habeas* ("to control what you possess").³¹ To Fulgentius, the bodily and mental components constitute two principles that form the foundation upon which the human personality can develop. He corroborates this claim with a quote from Sallust:³² *nam nostra omnis uis in animo et corpore sita est* ("For all our strength lies in the mind and the body").³³

If the body and mind correspond to the first two words of Virgil's epic, the third word *primus* ("first") must also have a special meaning, namely the ability *ornare quod regis* ("to ornament what you control").³⁴ Fulgentius claimed the following: '*arma*', *id est uirtus, pertinet ad substantiam corporalem*, '*uirum*', *id est sapientia, pertinet ad substantiam sensualem*, '*primus*' *uero, id est princeps, pertinet ad substantiam censualem* ("Arms", that is, manliness, belongs to the corporeal substance; 'man', that is, wisdom, belongs to the intellectual substance; and 'the first', that is, a ruler [...], belongs to the power of judgment").³⁵

In childhood, we first come to know our physical constitution, while in adolescence we learn to control it using our minds. In adulthood, we should ornament these two principles. With life experience and judgement, a person can gradually become *princeps* ("a ruler").³⁶ In other words, they can be *primus* ("first") within a certain society and thus conclude their development towards perfection. Fulgentius presented this tripartite categorisation as the basic framework within which he would allegorise Virgil's *Aeneid*. He also declared that it was his personal belief

²⁸Hom. *Il.* 1. 1. When quoting Homer, Fulgentius only refers to the *Iliad*. His quotes from Homer are mostly completely verbatim or have only minor insufficiencies. See BALDWIN, B.: Fulgentius and his Sources. *Traditio* 44 (1988) 37–57.

²⁹Fulg. *Cont.* 88. 19–89.1; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 123.

³⁰Fulg. *Cont.* 89. 14–15; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 123.

³¹Fulg. *Cont.* 89. 18–19; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 124.

³²Unlike other authors, Fulgentius cites Sallust somewhat accurately. See BALDWIN (n. 28) 54.

³³Sal. *Cat.* 1. 2; Fulg. *Cont.* 89. 15–16; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 123.

³⁴Fulg. *Cont.* 89. 19–20; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 124.

³⁵Fulg. *Cont.* 89. 21–24; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 124.

³⁶The term *princeps* is derived from Latin words *primus* and *capio* (see LEWIS, CH. T. – SHORT, CH.: *A new Latin Dictionary*. New York/Oxford 1891, 283; 1444).



about the correct order in which a human life should develop. In this regard, he appeals once again to Plato to support his argument:³⁷ *Plato trifarium humanae uitae instruens ordinem ait: 'Omne bonum aut nascitur aut eruditur aut cogitur'* ("Plato, teaching the threefold order of human life, declared: 'All good is either inborn or taught or disciplined'").³⁸ The table summarizes Fulgentius' interpretation as follows:

Order	Word order (Aeneid)	Interpretation (Cont.)	Area of action	Verb	Stage of human development	Books of Virgil
(1)	<i>arma</i>	<i>virtus</i>	<i>corpus (ad substantiam corporalem)</i>	<i>habere</i>	childhood <i>natura</i>	1–3
(2)	<i>vir</i>	<i>sapientia</i>	<i>ingenium (ad substantiam sensualem)</i>	<i>regere</i>	adolescence <i>doctrina</i>	4–6
(3)	<i>primus</i>	<i>princeps</i>	<i>ad substantiam censualem</i>	<i>ornare</i>	adulthood <i>felicitas</i>	7–12

In this way, based on Aeneas' adventures, Fulgentius outlines the complete course of a person's development: *prima natura, secunda doctrina, tertia felicitas* ("first, his nature; second, what he learns; third, his attaining to prosperity").³⁹ The first to third books of Virgil's epic depict childhood, during which a person remains for a long time under the influence of nature in the sense of fulfilling their basic bodily needs. The fourth to sixth books portray the period of adolescence, when a person undertakes study to educate their mind and learn how to control their negative impulses. The seventh to twelfth books present a symbolic expression of adulthood. At this stage of life, a person has gathered experience and is disciplined; his goal is therefore to achieve happiness and ornament the story of his life, perhaps by becoming an example or a leader within human society. Because Fulgentius used this method of argumentation, his treatise *The Exposition of the Content of Virgil according to Moral Philosophy* constitutes a valuable document for research into the manners in which allegory was employed during the period, as well as into the approach to argumentation and work with antique literary sources. Fulgentius is thus certainly one of the other great late Antique authors (similarly as Donatus, Servius, Macrobius) who attempted an allegorical interpretation of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

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³⁷Once again, this quote cannot be ascribed to Plato. Rudolf Helm accredits it to Tertullian (Tertull. *de pud.* 1). See HELM (n. 1) 90; WHITBREAD (n. 2) 146.

³⁸Fulg. *Cont.* 90. 14–16; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 124.

³⁹Fulg. *Cont.* 90. 2–3; trans. WHITBREAD (n. 2) 124.

