

LIFE STAGES

It is hard not to think life as a series of stages, though that perspective is misleading, and simplifies the extent to which life is simply a jerking and jolting movement, a little forward a little backward, with a specific terminus and a precise inception. Thought as a series of stages life asks to be given continuities and meanings which are not always appropriate to it.

Some landmarks in a growing life seem firm as granite. There's birth. Unless you were born in heaven you were born on earth, vaginally or artificially. There's a childhood during which the young being's sensorium begins to get the idea, to understand himself as in a place and among other beings who feed and clean him. There's a place within this latter growth zone, in which the two or three year old makes forward strides in language, or—in the case of my three year old grandson—veered off the language tracks just when we were on the verge of a small conversation. Rolf, who several years later has proven himself a talented young writer, needed to go on very private language trips before he could figure how to take a strong path through the thickets of words and sounds.