

Growth

Growth can take many forms and can manifest itself in the individual, in society, and in nature.

Growth in the individual. As the individual 'passes upward' through the stages of life. He or she naturally and typically grows—and in many ways. In a normal case the person will grow in weight, clarity of physical features, and general intelligence, which would include a variety of aptitudes ranging from metaphysical speculation to problem solving. The growth in general intelligence will of course include an informed sense of what it means to be a citizen and to interact with others in the construction of a society.

Growth in society. Human communities grow, evolve, after distinctive patterns, which local conditions stipulate. When conditions are favorable, crops thriving, and the human health stock is firm, farmers are likely to expand their investments. (The reverse applies in the bad times.) We can track the first clearly developing stages of agriculture in the Tigris and Euphrates River Valleys as early as the third millennium B.C., and historians will continue to identify global growth spots to our time; the breadbaskets of Ukraine, Russia, and the American Midwest; the Highlands of South America; the rice-centered cultures of South East Asia. In all such agriculturally generative regions we can track a millennia long history of culture-supporting fertility.

Growth in nature. Let's say 'in the natural world.' The impulse to grow, and the energy to light the life fuse seem irrepressible in nature. Astrophysicists astonish us with evidence for the incremental rates of growth size of the universe itself. Entomologists and microbiologists take us inside the growth dimensions of the tiniest crustaceans on the sea floor, or of the most hidden slugs in the most seemingly undiscoverable recess of the Amazonian rain forest. From one week to the next, my toenails grow, and begin their tireless round of chewing holes in my socks.