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# Nature Note

## The Protists

A strange one-celled creature called *Euglena* acts like an animal, with a whiplike structure to propel it through the water and a mouth through which it ingests small animals and plants as food. Yet *Euglena* also acts like a plant, for its one-celled body contains round green globules called chloroplasts by which food is synthesized with the energy of sunlight.

*Euglena* is neither a plant nor an animal, say some scientists, but a protist—a member of the newly created third kingdom of life. Protists are microscopic one-celled organisms that have combinations of both plant and animal traits or that may resemble neither plant nor animal.

Other members of the protist group are bacteria, those round, spiral, or rod-shaped organisms which obtain their food from dead or living organic matter. Some bacteria are destructive, causing many diseases and spoiling food. Others are beneficial in their life processes, creating foods such as cheeses and vinegar and taking nitrogen from the air and making it available to plants in the soil.

Scientists have long tried to analyze another protist, the viruses which sometimes act like living things, then like non-living things. Viruses need living cells in order to grow and reproduce, and yet can be made into lifeless crystals which are capable of infecting cells.

Some scientists are putting creatures in the protist group which used to be called protozoans in the animal group—whiplashing flagellates, as well as the amoeba. *Paramecia*, sporezoa, and masses of granular protoplasm called slime mold can all be grouped under the protist kingdom.

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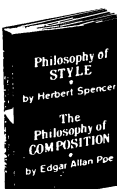
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