The Parts of Life

by Carl Zimmer

We're made of plants. The cells that form our brain come from a different plant than the cells that form our intestines. The cells that form our gut come from a different plant than the cells that form our skin. In the same way that our body is an ecosystem of many kinds of cells, our body is an ecosystem of many kinds of plants.

There's a lot of variation within each of these parts. Some parts are made of just one kind of cell, while other parts are made of many kinds of cells. Even within a single kind of cell, there's a lot of variation. Some cells are made of just a single kind of protein, while other cells are made of many kinds of proteins.

All of these differences result in differences in function. Some parts are designed to be strong and durable, while other parts are designed to be flexible and pliable. Some parts are designed to be able to move, while other parts are designed to be able to stay in place. Some parts are designed to be able to sense and respond to the environment, while other parts are designed to be able to shield and protect the body.

We've learned a lot about these differences over the years. But there's still much to be learned. For example, we still don't know why some parts are made of just one kind of cell, while other parts are made of many kinds of cells. We also don't know why some cells are made of just a single kind of protein, while other cells are made of many kinds of proteins.

In the end, we're still a mystery. We're made of plants. But we're also made of cells. And we're also made of proteins. And we're also made of many different parts. And we're also made of many different functions. And we're also made of many different ways of sensing and responding to the environment. And we're also made of many different ways of shielding and protecting the body.

But we're still learning. We're still exploring. We're still discovering. And we're still a mystery.