

## Neither good 'microbes' nor 'bad microbes' truly exist

[For centuries,] [m]icrobes became synonymous with squalor and sickness. They became foes for us to annihilate and repel.

Today, we know this view is wrong[.] Sure, some bacteria can cause disease, but they are in the minority. Most are harmless, and many are even beneficial...Slowly, the view that 'all bacteria must be killed' is giving ground to 'bacteria are our friends and want to help us'.

The problem is that the latter view is just as wrong as the former. We cannot simply assume that a particular microbe is 'good' just because it lives inside us. There's really no such thing as a 'good microbe' or a 'bad microbe'.

In reality, bacteria exist along a continuum of lifestyles...Some microbes can slide from one end of this parasite-mutualist spectrum to the other, depending on the strain and on the host they find themselves in.

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All of this means that labels like mutualist, commensal, pathogen or parasite don't work as definitive badges of identity. These terms are more like states of being, like hungry or awake or alive[.]

**The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Microbes have no morals](#)**