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Sommario/riassunto	Immunology is the science of biological identity. Three key characteristics—individuality, identification, and immunity—together define immune identity, and as one notion changes meaning, so do the others. The story of this mutual dependence begins with the discovery of infectious diseases, when immunity, conceived as the response to invading pathogens, focused on the infected patient—later formalized as the “immune self.” That orientation, signifying autonomy much in line with cultural norms of individuality, dominated twentieth-century immune theory. Although an effective idiom, the self construct has proven inadequate to account for the organism’s normal physiology and exchanges with the environment. When integrated into its larger ecology, immunity’s governing model shifts from defense to the more basic cognitive function of information processing that discerns benign from the toxic. The effector function (assimilate or eliminate) only follows identification of the immune object. Moreover, as a cognitive–communicative system (analogous to the brain), the immune system’s various roles assume their full expression only when the organism is

considered in its total environment—"internal" and "external."
From this perspective, beyond defending an insular individual, immunity accounts for the organism's mutualist relationships that characterize the holobiont, where lines of demarcation are blurred. In response to this ecologically informed conception of the individual, the idea of immunity correspondingly widens. The implications of this revised configuration of immunity and its deconstructed notions of individuality and selfhood have wide significance for philosophers and life scientists working in immunology, ecology, and the cognitive sciences.
