

Cambridge Elements

Elements in the Philosophy of Biology

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STEM CELLS

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Stem Cells

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Abstract: What is a stem cell? The question is deceptively simple; the answer seemingly obvious. A stem cell is a *cell* that serves as a *stem*, or point of origin, for something else. But beneath the surface of this simple conjunction is a swirling mass of further questions. What does the stem lead to? What is a stem cell a stem *of*? What connects the stem to its sequel? Is the connection “pre-formed” in the stem cell itself or governed by external factors? The very idea of a stem cell leads directly to fundamental questions about the nature of biological development.

Stem cell science, by the same token, raises issues central for the philosophy of science.

Keywords: stem cells, experiment, models, development, regenerative medicine

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Contents

1	Background	1
2	Stem Cells: The Very Idea	10
3	Finding Stem Cells	35
4	Using Stem Cells	62
	Epilogue	74
	References	76