



Get to know the winners of the 3rd edition of the Expanded Reason Awards

The 3rd Expanded Reason Awards has been assigned

This week the winners of the 3rd Expanded Reason Award have been disclosed (<https://expandedreasonawards.org/get-to-know-the-winners-of-the-3rd-edition-of-the-expanded-reason-awards/>).

First among others for research, this year a Springer volume by Marta Bertolaso "*Philosophy of Cancer – A dynamic and Relational View*" has been awarded. As the Expanded Reason's website says, "the scientific and intellectual life that runs through the veins of today's university has a dominant note: scientific rationality. This assumes that it is the only sure way to advance in certain knowledge and its applications for the good of man and society. (...) However, there is something else. If scientific rationality becomes the only true form of knowledge, vital questions for man are left out. (...) To broaden the horizons of scientific rationality is to put man back into play as the subject and beneficiary of science".

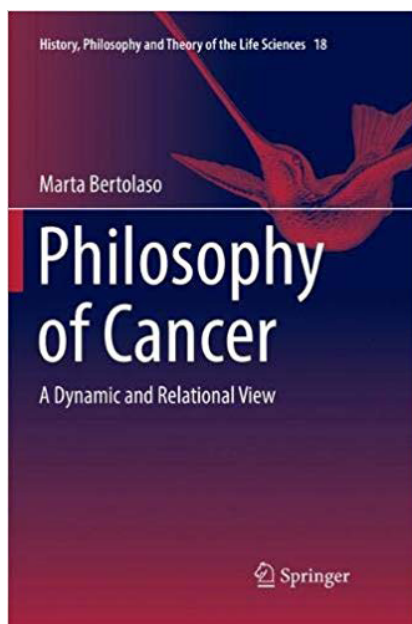
Philosophy of Cancer contributes to demonstrate that a broad and open reason is necessary to answer not only the fundamental questions about man and his

destiny, but also the ordinary questions that science asks regarding life and its dynamics, in response to the society's demands, urgencies and desires. Cancer research is an example of this: the obstacles encountered are posed not only by the complexity of cancer itself, but also by the deep fragmentation of knowledge and by the peculiar 'specialization' characterizing mechanistic biology, as much as by the loss of *explananda* (what really needs explanation) in day-to-day scientific work.

Scientists - and even more contemporary philosophers - have assumed naturalism and mechanism as the privileged theoretical framework for tackling the challenge of biological complexity. This led to a "molecularized" understanding of life and of its dynamics. Both scientists and philosophers committed themselves to a strong materialistic and positivistic position in the life sciences, in seeming lack of alternatives to the inherited Cartesian dualism or to vitalistic views on organismal dynamics. Accordingly, no way out was glimpsed from the dichotomies emerging in cancer research, up to its molecular development in the last seven decades at least. At the crossroad of mechanism and naturalism,

there is the debate about reductionism in the contemporary philosophy of life sciences too.

In this book, Marta Bertolaso presents how a wider and different understanding of scientific practice and of living entities allows us to go deeper in the biological dynamics, looking for more integrated models for intervention, and to make sense of our best scientific results. Examining the history of cancer research thus consists in seeing how scientific reasons have played out, how reductionist viewpoints have been challenged by reality (reality of living dynamics, of development, and of scientific practice). *Philosophy of Cancer* speaks to the very foundations of science, broadening fundamental categories such as causality (beyond mere efficient causation), emergence (beyond mere accounts of living systems), relations and interaction. Causal dependencies, explanatory foundations of functional accounts, and the explanatory import of mechanistic explanations are explored and analyzed.



The scientist, aware of their role in scientific practice and in the society, must be thus, first of all, a well-educated person. This perspective will also help understand and refine the role of technology in biological research, and in the case of medical research, in clinical application. Reason translates into action as the ‘scientist human being’ reflects, interprets, decides how to give meaning to data and decide where to head progress.

References

Bertolaso M., 2018, *Philosophy of Cancer. A Dynamic and Relational View*, Springer.