

An Interview with Mario Bunge,
by Heinz W. Droste, sociologist, writer and journalist

I was asked by the editor to write a few lines about the interview I conducted with Mario Bunge in the summer of 2013, which was released on the Internet in 2014. Here is the background I was asked for:

In the 1980s I was trained in sociological system theory and theory of action at a German university (Heinrich Heine Universität, Düsseldorf).

I gained knowledge in modern philosophy and science theory in order to analyze and assess the numerous problems of theory formation in the social sciences.

In my opinion, the most common solutions in this field do not work satisfactorily; they suffer from profound philosophical and epistemological deficiencies. Through the influence of idealistic thinking, the use of certain concepts such as structure, system, function, and dialectics - prevents clear and distinct talk about social facts.

For a long time, I, therefore, sought for a clarifying approach to the discussion of the basic concepts of sociology.

About ten years ago, I discovered some of Mario Bunge's many books and articles written on the philosophical foundation of social sciences (see list below provided by editor). In my opinion, Bunge was able to unfold fruitful solutions that have hitherto been hidden. This motivated me to get in contact with him, which was the beginning of a most lively correspondence. The results of this interaction are four books, which I have published since then in the German language (for example *Kommunikation* a detailed study of the conceptual foundations of social communication).

[The following are some of Bunge's writings on social science and philosophy: editor]

Bunge, M.: 1988, 'Analytic philosophy of society and social science: The systemic approach as an alternative to holism and individualism', *Revue internationale de Systémique* 2: 1-13.

Bunge, M.: 1989, 'Game theory is not a useful tool for the political scientist', *Epistemologia* 12: 195-212.

Bunge, M.: 1993, 'Realism and Antirealism in Social Science', *Theory and Decision* 35, 207-235. (Reprinted in M. Mahner (ed.) *Scientific Realism: Selected Essays of Mario Bunge*, Prometheus Press, Amherst NY, pp.320-342.

Bunge, M.: 1994, 'The concept of a social system'. In R. Rodríguez Delgado & B. H. Banathy, (eds.), *International Systems Science Handbook*, Madrid: Systemic Publications, pp. 210-221.

Bunge, M.: 1995, 'The poverty of rational choice theory'. In I. C. Jarvie & N. Laor (eds.), *Critical Rationalism, Metaphysics and Science* Vol. I Dordrecht-Boston: Kluwer Academic, pp. 149-168.

Bunge, M.: 1996, *Finding Philosophy in Social Science*, Yale University Press, New Haven, CT

Bunge, M.: 1999, *The Sociology-Philosophy Connection*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, NJ.

- Bunge, M.: 2000, 'Systemism: the alternative to individualism and holism', *Journal of Socio-Economics* 29: 147-157.
- Bunge, M.: 2000, 'Ten modes of individualism —none of which works— and their alternatives', *Philosophy of the Social Science* 30: 384-406.
- Bunge, M.: 2000, *Social Science under Debate: A Philosophical Perspective*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Bunge, M.: 2004, 'Clarifying some misunderstandings about social systems and their mechanisms', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences* 34: 371-381.
- Bunge, M.: 2004, 'Systemism: The alternative to individualism and holism'. In A. van den Berg & H. Meadwell, (eds.), *The Social Sciences and Rationality*, New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishers, pp. 109-123.
- Bunge, M.: 2006, *Chasing Reality: Strife over Realism*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto.
- Bunge, M.: 2006. 'A systemic perspective on crime'. In P.-O. Wikström & R. Sampson, eds., *The Explanation of Crime*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 8-30.
- Bunge, M.: 2007. 'Max Weber did not practice the philosophy he preached'. In L. McFalls, ed., *Max Weber's "Objectivity" Revisited*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, pp.119-134.
- Bunge, M.: 2007, 'The ethics of science and the science of ethics'. In Paul Kurtz (ed.), *Science and Ethics*, Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, pp. 27-40.
- Bunge, M.: 2008, 'Bayesianism: Science or Pseudoscience?' *International Review of Victimology* 15: 165-178.
- Bunge, M.: 2009, *Political Philosophy: Fact, Fiction, and Vision*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick, NJ.
- Bunge, M.: 2012, *Evaluating Philosophies*, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, vol. 295, Springer, Dordrecht.
- Bunge, M.: 2012, 'Wealth and well-being, economic growth, and integral development', *International Journal of Health Services* 42: 65-76.
- Bunge, M.: 2013, *Medical Philosophy: Conceptual Issues in Medicine*, World Scientific, Singapore.
- Bunge, M.: 2014, 'Big questions come in bundles, hence they should be tackled systematically', *International Journal of Health Services* 44(4), 835-844.

A bibliography of Bunge's English-language publications is available in the Resources folder of this website.

It is my intention to help other people interested in philosophy and theory of science to get easy access to Mario Bunge's works and to the systemic perspective of his thinking.

One way to achieve this is to provide simple introductory statements of Bunge's philosophy. To get such introductory, but authentic texts, was my target when I formulated the questions for this interview. Fortunately, Mario had the patience to answer everything in detail - although he was on vacation in Greece at the time.

The interview:

<http://deutschedenker.pedion.de/the-big-questions-come-in-bundles-interviewing-mario-bunge/>