Philosophy of social science is not widely considered a crucial or even indispensable implement in the toolbox of practicing sociologists, economists, political scientists, and others. Among the good reasons for this absence is the fact that much philosophy of social science is not particularly relevant for the working social scientist. It is in many cases just another highly specialized field that is only tenuously connected to the concerns of those whose practice it purports to study. The three books reviewed in this essay represent notable exceptions to this rule.

Mario Bunge is a scientist's philosopher of science. His works are not distant reflections of a philosopher who is far removed from the problems encountered by scientists in the field. Rather, in his studies, which also cover an astounding range of disciplines in the natural sciences, his approach is to describe and analyze scientific research, and identify and criticize its philosophical presuppositions. See Bunge's *Philosophy of Physics* (Dordrecht: Riedel, 1973); with Martin Mahner, *Foundations of Biophysics* (Berlin/Heidelberg/New York: Springer, 1997); with Ruben Ardila, *Philosophy of Psychology* (New York: Springer, 1987). Unlike most philosophers of science, he works from the “inside out,” taking as his point of departure the practice and problems of the disciplines he investigates.

At the same time, however, Bunge is also a philosopher’s philosopher of social science. His eight-volume *Treatise on Basic Philosophy,* (published between 1974 and 1989 by Reidel) his early work on causality, his later work on *Scientific Materialism* and *The Mind-Body Problem,* taken together constitute perhaps the most comprehensive and systematic philosophy of the twentieth century. Bunge’s philosophical mission is to help restore the unity of knowledge in an age when much of academic philosophy is divorced from the sciences, or has even turned against them, and when the unity of the sciences is threatened from within by their fast-paced growth and increasing specialization. In Bunge’s work, philosophy and science are part of the same project, and it is this that makes his philosophy of science of such general significance for the working scientist.

Bunge’s forays into the social sciences in the three books reviewed here should be placed in this larger context. *Finding Philosophy in Social Science* is a systematic application of his general philosophy of science. See Bunge’s *Philosophy of Science, Vol. 1, From Problem to Theory; Vol. 2, From Explanation to Justification,* rev. ed. (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, 1998). It starts by mapping out the various relationships between social science and philosophy. The first two parts of the book, “From Fact to Theory” and “From Explanation to Justification,” could well serve as core reading for any foundation course in the social sciences. The first part explores, in Bunge’s usual compact and precise fashion, basic concepts such as pattern, causation, chance and chaos, social fact, concept and proposition, fuzziness and exactness, ideal type, approach and paradigm, problem, hypothesis, theory and model, reduction, and reductionism, to mention a few.

The second part explores basic concepts such as description, explanation, Verstehen, social indi-
The final chapter is devoted to a brilliant and devastating critique of rational choice theory. Bunge leaves no doubt about his own position on all these fundamental problems. His is neither individualist nor holist but systemist. He defends an emergentist materialism against idealism and various forms of reductionist materialisms; ratio-empiricism against intuitionism, vulgar empiricism and pragmatism; and scientific realism against subjectivism, convention- alism and relativism. Notwithstanding the relevance of this book for social science, philosophers may generally feel more at home with it than social scientists. This is where the second book under review comes in.

Social Science under Debate surveys and assesses the entire range of major social science disciplines—sociology, economics, political science, cultural science, and history. The sheer scope of the literatures the author attempts to cover is brazenly ambitious and audacious, as most social scientists who struggle to keep up with the developments in their field will agree. Bunge’s highly critical discussion of major schools and approaches in the five disciplines is unlikely to make him new friends among the many social scientists who follow one or the other of the approaches he criticizes. No Kuhnian reassurances of “normal science” here. Nor will his roughly 40-page per discipline treatment make it difficult for opponents to dismiss his attempt as superficial and distorted. Yet Bunge pursues a particular purpose in his critical survey of the social sciences: to work towards a unified social science, and one that is better linked to its potential applications, that is, to social technology. Accordingly, the second part of the book takes on the applied disciplines devoted to sociotechnologies: action theory, law, management technology, normative economics, and large-scale social planning. As Bunge states in his Preface (p. x): “This book is not an impartial description and dispassionate analysis of the current state of the social sciences and sociotechnologies. Far from gloating over accomplishments, it focuses on flaws likely to be rooted in either mistaken philosophies or ideological dogmas.” Like his general philosophy of science, systematically applied and elaborated in Finding Philosophy in Social Science, Social Science under Debate is based on a systematic, coherent, and lucid philosophy. In fact, the author conveniently manages to sum up his “master ideas” in a dozen statements at the end of the Preface (p. xiii).

The third of Bunge’s books under review, The Sociology-Philosophy Connection, is somewhat narrower in scope. It combines elements of both works already discussed, but contains a number of previously published contributions that cannot be found in either. Of particular importance are the two chapters that introduce Bunge’s conception of mechanistic explanation, a crucial part of his social philosophy that is further discussed below. A third chapter is a discussion of quantification and measurement that is a gem for those of us too easily intimidated by social scientists wielding apparently sophisticated mathematical methods. Bunge’s report on instances of “pseudoquantitation” includes examples from the work of Vilfredo Pareto, Samuel Huntington, Gary Becker, and James Rosenau. In addition to another critique of rational choice theory, he takes to task Popper’s social philosophy, critical theory, phenomenology, ethnomethodology and interpretive anthropology, as well as the constructivist-relativist sociology of science. Fittingly, his final chapter is entitled “In Praise of Intolerance toward Academic Charlatanism.”

All three books reviewed here could individually serve as an introduction to the philosophy of social science and to the social philosophy of Mario Bunge. However, each offers specific elements not to be found in the others. Finding Philosophy in Social Science provides a systematic introduction to basic concepts used in all social sciences, as well as a survey and critique of widely held philosophical doctrines and assumptions. Social Science under Debate surveys five major social science disciplines and five types of social technologies. This book is particularly useful for those interested in problems of theory and practice, policy issues, and the relationship between ideology and science. Finally, The Sociology-Philosophy Connection is a general introduction to explanation in the social sciences, as well as a critique of some major social philosophies, approaches, and methods.