

## *Bunge's Call*

by Denis Wood

I've often spoken about the impact my discovery of geosophy has had on my life, certainly as a geographer, but more broadly too. Geosophy was an idea J. K. Wright wrote about in 1947, something I learned about in 1967 when I started studying geography in graduate school. This was at Clark University where Martyn Bowden was a Wright advocate (Bowden, 1970). Bowden got Wright to visit Clark where he read from a paper he was working on; and he got me to buy, and read, Wright's *Human Nature in Geography*. There I found his 1947 paper, "*Terrae Incognitae: The Place of the Imagination in Geography*" (Wright 1966). That's where Wright defines *geosophy* as "the study of geographical knowledge from any and all points of view." This covers, he goes on, "the geographical ideas, both true and false, of all manner of people – not only geographers, but farmers and fishermen, business executives and poets, novelists and painters, Bedouins and Hottentots" (p. 83). From any and all points of view? Well, *why not mine?* Which set me off on a mapping project I've described elsewhere (2013) and, via Kevin Lynch's idea of mental maps (1960), to my thesis (1971), my dissertation (1973), and the rest of my life.

I think about my discovery of Bill Bunge as having happened at the same time, but in fact it wasn't until the spring of 1969 that another Clark faculty member, Jeremy Anderson, posted a letter from Bunge on the bulletin board near the mailboxes. It was headed, "The Society for Human Exploration," and Jeremy had photocopied the back so we could read both sides. Bunge also visited Clark around this time – it could have been earlier, in fact – and Jeremy had had some of us over to his house for an evening with Bill, so I'm not *really* sure when I first became aware of him. But his letter was ... *electrifying*. Bunge republished it in *Field Notes No. 1* (1969) and again in *Field Notes: 5*, my copy of which Jeremy has redated "1977?" in place of 1971. I mean, these are field notes from the Canadian-American Geographical Expedition, the first number of which didn't appear until January of 1977. You'd think people would know about Bunge's letter – his *call* – but so few do that I'm going to read it now:

### THE SOCIETY FOR HUMAN EXPLORATION

Scientific advances of a stable and permanent sort arise from new perspectives on very old traditions. Much geographic technique has been forgotten by geographers and among our needlessly lost arts is that of exploration. What does a geographer mean by the statement that a portion of the earth's surface has been explored? Does he mean that the easy to map features for some harried early traveler such as rivers and mountains, are

accurately placed on a map? If so the earth is certainly explored. Humans are often of great significance to geographers but are extremely difficult, even dangerous, to map. If the features of the earth's surface of interest to mankind include the human condition, then vast stretches of the map are in fact as "unexplored" as Antarctica in 1850 and should appear under that label and in the traditional intriguing chalk white color.

Geography is often defined as the study of the earth's surface as the home of man. But the view from which men's home? The perception from the homes of people that live in those particular places on the earth's surface, or rather from the homes of men in distant Buckingham Palaces or New York book publishers. For instance, "The South" seems to automatically refer to "The White South." What about the "Black South?" Florida is not a vacation land to the Afro-Americans that live in that "dream" state.

Accusingly, there seems to be no geography of children, that is, the earth's surface as the home of children. What is their perception of their space? What is the "market area" of a tot lot? What is the average rate of travel of a kindergarten child? We seem to have ample statistics on the speed of trucks and giraffes, what is the traffic flow pattern of children across crowded streets including normally "illegal" children who jay walk and do other childish and disorderly things?

Why is there no recognition of geographic regions of the areas of cities people actually occupy, such as, the "Regions of Detroit?" The folk geographers discuss all sorts of vital regions, Watts, Beverly Hills and so forth while the "professional" is still busy classifying the increasingly deserted farm land based on geological activity of eons ago. Is Appalachia really best typified as a physiographic province? To classify people geologically is environmentalism at its worst. It also helps explain the inattention to human provinces, especially urban regions. John Nystuen has suggested a gazetteer of urban places with heavy emphasis on human in place of physical features.

To implement a truly human exploration of the earth's surface, the academic geographers, folk geographers, urban planners and others intrigued with such an effort, have founded The Society for Human Exploration. The functions of the Society are to assist exploration especially through the mounting of expeditions. The first of the planned series is the "Detroit Geographical Expedition, I" covering the entire urban conglomeration centered on Detroit. Its advance scouts are now in the field and completion date is projected for the fall of 1970.

Unlike many earlier expeditions where local geographers were denigrated to the rank of "native guide" and their maps of their known world simply appropriated along with everything else, there will be no white-pith-helmet mentality. The Board of Directors of the Society is composed of an absolute majority of people from the areas to be explored. Bus loads of gawking tourists are impermissible. The have-nots of the world are powerful enough, if a humanist taste is lacking, to compel an attitude of respectful attention, not ruthless arrogance. A major portion of the effort will be to provide scholarship money to train folk geographers in the professional aspects of geography and

through increasing their skills also enrich our own profession. Support will be sought from the power structure of the ins, but more interestingly, from the power structure of the outs. Geographers, especially geographers in their roles as planners, can be directly useful. The frustration of the planner is that his dreams as a rational locator runs into the complacency of the well off who essentially wish to keep things the same. Therefore, active cooperation with the outs, especially the poor, allows full creativity and generates the necessary political power for the implementation of our “oughtness maps.” After all, it is not the function of geographers to merely map the earth, but to change it.

One interesting discovery so far is that the most effective techniques of communication are to recapitulate the history of our venerable subject – place names, regions and then theoretical geography. The Expedition is to continue in geography’s unfinished task of exploring the earth and most of the classic expeditionary features are retained – careful preparation, an element of physical risk, and a scientific-scholastic commitment to extend human knowledge.

The summer session is to be especially busy, hopefully sending enthusiastic human geographers back to their respective urban or rural regions to flush out expeditions in other territories. By the second full summer (1970), considerable international involvement is projected. The point is to sensitize geographers to humans.

Geographic publications are always unusual in that they contain a great number of maps and photographs and require peculiar formats due to a visual nature. To take care of these special needs a series of *Field Notes* in mimeographed form will be prepared. Hopefully, in time, a journal will be needed to supplement the *Field Notes* format, The *Journal of Human Exploration*, with Wayne providing editorial offices. Special publications will also be necessary. W. Bunge has completed a three hundred and seventy page, plus maps and photographs, manuscript based upon one square mile of Detroit entitled *Fitzgerald: The Americanization of a Community*. An atlas to be entitled *The Atlas of Love and Hate* is also projected. A unique feature will be that each map will be the individual contribution of a particular geographer who will be asked to sign his map and brief essay, photographs and supplementary maps to create in a sense a journal of maps. If the reader is interested in receiving *Field Notes* or knows of others interested, mail addresses to Editor, The Society for Human Exploration, Department of Geography, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan 48202.

The Expedition is unique in that it is self-financed. That is, rather than starting with a project grant the expedition starts with a geographic need. The only funds initially available will come from within geography itself. To help with financing, the Detroit Geographical Expedition, I, Director, W. Bunge, is issuing a personal appeal enclosed. If the Expedition swells in numbers it might be possible for a house in the Wayne neighborhood to be rented as a combination base camp, shelter, social center and think tank for the minor army on the Expedition. If geography is not fun, it is wrong.

Your comments and suggestions are most welcome.

Now I hope you can see why I opened with my encounter with Wright. I mean, how far is “But the view from which men’s home?” from “from any and all points of view;” and Bunge and Wright both thought geography should be fun, of which I was also convinced.<sup>1</sup> In any event I copied both sides of the letter and carried it with us when, that summer my wife, Ingrid and I left for Mexico and the field work for our theses.<sup>2</sup> The following year Ingrid and I had jobs in Barranquitas, Puerto Rico, teaching English at the Barranquitas campus of Inter American University (then Barranquitas Regional College), from which, while Ingrid kept her job, I was soon fired.<sup>3</sup> Out of work, with little to do, and while Jeremy was in town (as director of Clark’s field camp (remember those days?)), Ingrid and I hammered out a proposal for “A Geography of Caserío Children,” the *caserío* being the housing project we lived across the street from. This began:

The purpose of this proposed geography of caserío children is to begin to answer the more than just accusation Bill Bunge has more than once slapped across the face of the world’s geographers. We claim to be geographers and yet we don’t know the first god-damned thing about the functional geographies of better than half the people of the world – kids.

While turning out to be a lot of fun, this also took care of the little-to-do part of our time in Puerto Rico. Like Bunge’s Detroit Expedition ours too was self-financed and, if it has yet to be published, I did read a bunch of papers drawn from it at AAG meetings in 1981, 1985, and 2005, each of which, inspired again by the *Field Notes* example, I distributed through the mails in large numbers, courtesy of North Carolina State’s School of Design, where I taught. And thanks to that distribution, each of them ended up in some form of print (1982a, 1982b, 1985a, 1985b 1988, 2006), and soon as a book (in press).

That was the first of my Bunge-inspired projects and it sort of set a template for the sorts of things I’d end up doing. Of course I used him directly in my dissertation, twice, his “Islands and Continents of Mankind” map in one place<sup>4</sup>, and in another his ideas from *Theoretical Geography* about spatial transformations (1966). After finishing the work for my PhD, I ended up for a couple of years teaching high school in Worcester, not in a regular school, but in an alternative one, The Adjunct School. There a bunch of students and I did a kind of world-view project – “the view from which men’s home” – that twelve years later I was asked to publish

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1 Bunge later rejected “fun” as “... a word from my bourgeois youth, an attitude of studied gaiety,” which it certainly might have been, but was *not* in my case. He replaced it with “necessity” which is okay too, but different, and in fact far less radical.

2 An episode in which Jim Blaut will fail to show up with the Clark plane in which he and I had planned to carry out my fieldwork, resulting in a sharp change in my topic *in media res*.

3 Thanks to a drunken brawl between me and the director.

4 This map appeared on the cover of the original Detroit series of *Field Notes*. On a white background it displayed blobs of black wherever the population exceeded 30 persons per square mile. Black people, white background. Period. Nothing else.

(1984). And then I ended up teaching in a design school where, desperate to figure out what to do with studios filled with landscape architecture students, I ended up carrying out the mapping exercises that would ultimately be published in 2010 as *Everything Sings: Maps for a Narrative Atlas* (2010, 2013). This was inspired by my geography background, by Wright's and Bunge's anybody-can-make-a-map attitude, and by Bunge's evocative phrase, *The Atlas of Love and Hate*.

But there was some of Bunge's call in everything I did. For example, one of the first papers I wrote, "The Psychogeomorphology of Mud" – which I read in a session (chaired by Kenneth Boulding) at the 1976 meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science – was doubly inspired by Bunge, first in studying kids, and then in studying the kids in *my own backyard* (as *Everything Sings* would be an atlas of my own neighborhood). This too was ultimately published (but only in 1993), and by then the School of Design had mailed out *hundreds* of copies. The next year, that is, in 1977, the *McGill Journal of Education* published my "Free the Children! Down with Playgrounds!" in which I'd included the two maps from *Field Notes: Discussion Paper No. 3* that documented "Where Commuters Run Over Black Children on the Pointes-Downtown Track," these to help make the point that children want to play where they *are* and not in the ghettos we call playgrounds (1977a, 1977b).<sup>5</sup> In "Pleasure in the Idea: The Atlas as a Narrative Form" (1987) I again referred to Bunge's "Islands and Continents of Mankind." The references to Bunge in my "I Don't Feel That about Environmental Psychology Today, But I Want To" in the *Special Clark University Issue* of the *Journal of Environmental Psychology* referred to him more generally:

It was a key word in those days, "view". There it was in the title of Kates's piece in *The Journal of Social Issues*, "Stimulus and symbol: the view from the bridge" (Kates, 1966). And there it was in the title of the Appleyard, Lynch and Myer piece in *Environmental Perception and Behavior*, "The view from the road" (Appleyard, Lynch and Myer, 1967). It was the principle operator in Wright's definition of geosophy, ". . . from any and all points of view" (Wright, 1966, p. 83). But among all these views it was only Bunge's that connected with my desire to matter, to make a difference, and from that point forward school became for me a pursuit of what I called psychogeography, Wright's fascination fired by Bunge's sense of outrage.

Bunge was a motivator. He moved people – he moved *me* – to action.

In 1992 I published *The Power of Maps*. In it I included the map of a block in Bloomfield Hills paired with a map of a block in the Mack Avenue area, both in Detroit, from *Field Notes: Discussion Paper No. 3*, as well as a map from *Field Notes: Discussion Paper No. 2* of housing discrimination as an index of racial tension, which I discussed at some length. The two following pages I devoted to a discussion of Bunge's call. In the footnotes I directed readers to Bunge's and Ronald Bordessa's *The Canadian Alternative: Survival, Expeditions, and Urban Change*

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<sup>5</sup>Of course the maps are actually from a paper by Gwendolyn Warren, who was then working with Bunge (Warren 1971).

(1975), Bunge's *Nuclear War Atlas* (1982, 1988), and his *Patterns of Location: Michigan Inter-University Community of Mathematical Geographers Discussion Paper No. 3* (1964). In *Rethinking the Power of Maps* (2010), under the heading, "Maps in Protest," I discussed Gwendolyn Warren's efforts to acquire the data used to make the "Where Commuters Run Over Black Children ..." map along with the map itself, before going on to discuss Bunge's *Nuclear War Atlas*; and in a later chapter I spent an entire section on "The Detroit Geographical Expedition and Institute," in which I wrote about: his call (of course!), all three of the Detroit *Field Notes*, Bunge's retitled *Fitzgerald: Geography of a Revolution* (1971), *The Canadian Alternative*, the Toronto *Field Notes* (1977), Bunge's *Theoretical Geography* and, in the footnotes, to still other writings. I also reproduced the maps, "Continents and Islands of Mankind" and "Region of Rat-Bitten Babies," the latter from the *Canadian Alternative*.

The Region of Rat-Bitten Babies!

Bunge's hard for me to get away from. All three editions of *Making Maps* (2005, 2011, 2016) – the text I co-author with John Krygier – use "The Continents and Islands of Mankind" in four-page spreads to introduce the chapter on map generalization and classification. As the maps in *Everything Sings* make clear, this map had had a profound impact on me. The third edition of *Making Maps*, which came out last summer, has as well a six-page spread built around "Where Commuters Run Over Black Children ..." to introduce our treatment of map symbol abstraction. We love the map's specificity, its dramatization of the havoc white commuters have on black children, on their neighborhoods. This is as *far* from abstract talk about race relations as you can get, and that's why Bunge mattered, why he continues to matter, because he talked and wrote and mapped about the *real*, not about some symbol of it, not about the artificial.

There was a straight-forwardness to Bunge, a straight-forwardness to his work that was a kick in the guts to someone, to *anyone* searching for something to think about, to work on. The world's a mess: how can it be so hard to figure out something to do? His work is a reproach to graduate students, to assistant professors flailing around for a topic. His work says roll up your sleeves! Get to work!

I like that he became a cab driver, that he first published the *Nuclear War Atlas* as a poster that he sold for five bucks at AAG meetings, himself, sitting there behind a table. Some professors made fun of him, thought he had no pride, but he had the real pride of a man who has worked hard – *thought* hard – and who had the compulsion to share what he'd discovered, to let others know what he now knew, like the angel announcing the birth of Christ to the shepherds, only with no tie on and his sleeves rolled up.

Bunge was a goddamned *geographer* and he made it plain what that could mean to the meanest intelligence. He made it plain to me anyway, and it changed my life!

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