relations take place (p. 150). The fifth chapter examines four fields of economic policy (the new economic order of a social market economy, the Marshall Plan, fiscal policy and monetary policy) and their potential effects on economic growth. Traditionally, economic reforms and, in particular, the introduction of the DM have been considered to have a decisive effect. Vonyó sees economic policy more as an accompanying role and emphasizes the path dependencies on pre-war economic policy.

All in all, this is a very good and useful book. Vonyó sums up the extensive German-language literature for international readers very well and he also comes up with his own innovative interpretations. These are always based on intuitively plausible economic considerations and are underpinned descriptively and econometrically the extensive use of official statistics. To readers who are interested in the German or European economic history of the twentieth century I can definitely recommend this book.

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Societies have long made efforts to cope with economic insecurity as well as absolute poverty. George Boyer lucidly demonstrates in this masterful synthesis both the extent of these efforts and their limited success for Victorian and early twentieth century Britain.

His introductory chapter defines economic insecurity as the risk of economic loss due to such adverse events as unemployment, poor health, as well as risk of poverty in old age. The introduction also notes the recurring debate between those favoring compassion towards the poor and those arguing for personal responsibility and self-reliance in coping with poverty.

The book then turns to developments during the Victorian era in Britain. Despite efforts through the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 to encourage more self-help through personal savings and friendly society membership, outdoor relief remained important through the 1860s. Boyer maps out in considerable detail the importance of both outdoor relief and charity in relieving distress in manufacturing districts during the so-called “hungry” 1840s and during the U.S. Civil War induced cotton famine in Lancashire. During both episodes, the inadequacy of public poor relief led to an outpouring of private charitable activity to fill in the gaps. During the 1860s and 1870s there was a crusade against out-relief for the poor on personal responsibility grounds and increasingly successful efforts to deal with economic adversity through friendly society and trade union membership. The following two chapters consider unemployment trends and relief measures and the relation between old age and pauperism. Boyer finds that poor relief and other forms of government funding were major sources of support for the elderly during the Victorian era well before any sense of a welfare state.
In the second, concluding part of the book, Boyer turns first to developments in the Edwardian era which extended provision of social insurance beyond that of the poor law culminating in the Liberal Party Welfare reforms of 1911. He then turns to developments in both living standards and welfare policy which mitigated economic insecurity during the interwar period. This is followed by a consideration of the Beveridge report sometimes viewed as a culmination of Edwardian era reforms, but, which as Boyer points out, went beyond the Edwardian proposals in its coverage and in shifting costs of welfare provisions to the central government.

Boyer sets himself two basic tasks. The first is to provide profiles and estimates of percentages of population covered by insurance and relief measures and in various poverty categories as well as to sources of funding for covering relief and insurance. In this the book succeeds admirably. While some guess work is involved, Boyer is quite explicit about his assumptions and in justifying their plausibility. One can however, come up with a wish-list of topics for further consideration. Did occupational or geographic mobility lessen insecurity over a worker’s career. How did the insecurity faced by shopkeepers and others in the petty bourgeoisie compare with that in manual occupations. His international comparative perspectives only extend to Western Europe. Both U.S. and commonwealth comparisons including Canada and Australia would have been apt given the extent of English emigration to these destinations. Dickens’ impecunious Mr. Micawbre, cited by Boyer, ultimately migrates to Australia where the respectability and stability so lacking in England, finally “turns up” for him. Some further detail on the current British welfare state—the destination as it were—would also seem in order as a benchmark.

The second basic task of Boyer’s book is to explain the determinants of English government policy on economic insecurity and their timing. Boyer argues convincingly for the salience of government policy as a driver of the extent of insurance against poverty and insecurity. The task is a challenging one given the complex interaction between an array of factors likely to have been involved. And longer-term changes in provision for poor relief and economic insecurity could well have been influenced by underlying factors determining centralized provision for a range of government services including schooling. Boyer allows for the role of multiple, diverse factors including ideology, the influence of trade unions, and the emergence of the Labor Party. He gives particular attention to extension of the franchise, a factor emphasized by Peter Lindert. However, Boyer does not find any one particular factor to have been dominant. His consideration of key episodes such as the liberal reforms of the Edwardian era in 1906 and 1911 and of the Beveridge Report is careful and thorough.

One remarkable feature of English provision for poor relief is that national provision for this albeit implemented at the parish level goes back to the reign of Elizabeth I. Some consideration of the factors at work behind this early development would seem important for understanding the historical origins of British institutional arrangements for poor relief during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. It could have been useful for Boyer to give consideration to larger synthetic approaches from political science, historical sociology, and the new institutional economists including perspectives from the varieties of capitalism and history of capitalism approaches.
Boyer also acknowledges the importance of public opinion or what could be called more generally attitudes of civil society as an influence on welfare policy. There is an extensive cultural, intellectual, and social history on views on poverty which Boyer touches on. However his discussion focuses primarily on the common “undeserving” versus “deserving” poor distinction versus those with a more compassionate perspective on the pauper. Consideration could have been given to E.P. Thompson’s notion of the moral economy and to that of the economy of obligation emphasized by Craig Muldrew and to that of Tory paternalism emphasized by some British social historians. It reflects the emphasis of the book, that while both the bibliography and the index contain extensive references to Charles Booth and his social surveys, William Booth of Salvation Army fame gets no mention whatsoever. But if there are further vistas to explore on the rise of the British welfare state, the perspectives provided by Boyer’s book are important and illuminating.

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ASIA

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How does a pre-industrial society provide welfare to its most vulnerable and impoverished populations? What are the roles that define providers and recipients in the absence of a centralized public administration? These are some of the major questions tackled by Maren Ehlers in her vivid account of poverty in eighteenth and nineteenth century Japan, which focuses on the dynamics of status group relationships in a proto-industrial welfare system. Drawing mainly from official journals kept by municipal leaders in the rural region of Ono, Ehlers documents over six chapters how traditional hierarchies adapted to the economic and social needs of lower class groups within a framework of benevolent seignorage and ritual performance. This system of charity and exchange was remarkably flexible and persistent in the face of catastrophic famines, fires, and epidemics, as well as larger economic and political changes that threatened the existing social order, and continued its influence even after the feudal era was replaced by a modernizing Meiji state in the late nineteenth century.

The book ranges widely in perspective, from general discussions of regional history and status order to detailed accounts of two particular lower class groups, the beggars and the blind, before returning to examples of hunger relief and adaptation to the new Meiji state. Descriptions of beggars like Shiro, a boy from a mountain village found dead in Ono town, provide poignant examples of how individuals of little or no means fit within the highly structured nature of Tokugawa society. Despite being organized around Confucian principles of authority and occupational caste, marginalized communities were still able to maneuver within these constraints with a surprising amount of success. Authorities adhered to institutional norms and noblesse oblige in granting