It takes a yardstick, not the pathologist's caliper, to measure the thickness of the glaze that commonly descends over historians' eyes when the topic of the welfare state is broached. Social insurance, old-age pensions, workers' compensation, actuarial risk, waiting time, point-indexing, and cost-of-living differentials: Such topics seem to inflame the tender Sitzfleisch of historians, sending them off in search of distraction, while leather-bottomed social scientists brace unflinchingly for extended discussions of the nuts and bolts of social policy. The number of historians who have done serious work on as important a topic as the welfare state, narrowly defined, is diminutively small, a hardy band of those inured to tedium: Henri Hatzfeld on France, Anne-Lise Seip on Norway, Hans Günter Hockerts and Marie-Luise Recker on Germany, Daniel Levine on Denmark, José Harris, Pat Thane, and E. P. Hennock on Britain, to list just the ones who have worked on Europe. Some of the most historical books on this topic have been written from other fields: their authors include Hugh Heclo, a political scientist, and the late Gaston Rimlinger, an economist.

Why are historians so wary of this topic? It certainly cannot be the inherently low entertainment quotient of the welfare state as a subject. History is a discipline, after all, that claims to find the dietary practices of French peas-
ants, the tariff policy of Württemberg in the 1830s, or labor relations in the Dutch margarine industry (to take in this last case an example recently used by Simon Schama to emblematize the allegedly insufferable boredom of certain species of academic history) sufficiently enthralling to be worthy of detailed scrutiny. Rather, the problem seems partly to stem from the inevitable delay with which historians respond to topics. Apparently, it is only now that a sufficiently decent interval has passed, in the eyes of many historians, for the welfare state, a phenomenon recognized, if not created, in the period after 1945, to become an object of serious and dispassionate examination. Consequently, the welfare state for the first many decades of its existence as the subject of scholarly investigation has been left to the hard-core social scientists, whose activities are not fettered by any temporal inhibitions. Until recently, the study of social policy has been dominated by social scientific approaches, especially those furthest removed from the average historian’s mode of work. Among the least historical are those studies of the welfare state which seek general explanations for its emergence as a phenomenon common to all industrialized nations. These accounts attempt to understand the welfare state as a ubiquitous and largely monocausally determined affair the variations of which among nations have been less important than its overarching similarities. The variables advanced in the general explanations—industrialization, modernization, democracy, capitalism, party and interest group competition—have differed, of course. Nonetheless, the common methodological presuppositions distinguishing these social scientific approaches from the way historians would, had they bothered, study the welfare state is unilinearity, the disregard of contextualization, the eagerness to gloss over particularity in search of regularity.

This unilinear, monocausal approach to the welfare state is challenged in the works under the glass here. They break the social scientific spell and herald if not the beginning, then at least the possibility of a new, historically informed, approach to the welfare state. This is not, alas, to say that these are works by historians showing the way. With the exception of Gerhard Ritter and some of the authors of the Cambridge Economic History, the rest are economists, political scientists, or sociologists. But their various and respective approaches to the welfare state take history seriously and ought to shame historians into keeping their end up.

BACK TO THE PAST

The first two books seek to situate the welfare state in its longue durée. Regarding it as something more than a twentieth-century phenomenon with only a prehistory in earlier measures of poor relief, they seek to trace its historical pedigree.

François Ewald's *L'état providence* is unlike any other book on the welfare state and is therefore difficult to place in the existing literature. Wordy, repetitive, and needlessly long, it is also a brilliant and breathtakingly ambitious attempt to understand the world-historical significance of the fundamental philosophical, indeed ontological, assumptions that are, he claims, inherent in the development of social legislation. Ewald's ability to be a pathbreaker probably owes something to his position as an outsider in the field. Trained as a philosopher and a legal historian, he was for many years a collaborator of Michel Foucault and doubtless inspired Foucault's sally into questions of welfare policy. He is also French and therefore burdened by no previously existing literature on the subject. The French have barely managed to cobble together the rudiments of their own social policy history and have contributed little to the story of events elsewhere.

Sketched with a thumbnail, the evolution that Ewald fleshes out in meticulous detail is the transition from the liberal ideology of individual responsibility for fault, risk and misfortune to the collectivization thereof, *l'après libéralisme*, as he calls it, that has taken place with the development, first, of insurance and then of social legislation. Through the application of actuarial logic to the organization of society, questions of fault and responsibility, the mainstays of the liberal world view, were superseded by the problem of dispersing the costs of risk away from the individual who suffers it to the community at large. Compensation replaced responsibility. As risks are socialized, society becomes, in a sense, a fully realized concept for the first time. While the medieval view of society as a sort of family writ large sacrificed individuality and freedom for the sake of the community and while the liberal ethos exalted the atomized and autonomous monad over the demands of the whole, the socialized society, conceived of as an all-embracing risk pool, has managed to reconcile the hitherto conflicting demands of the individual and the community. By applying the logic of probability honed by the increasing exactitude of actuarial mathematics, individuals draw benefits from their dependence on society without sacrificing their autonomy. Quetelet, not Comte and certainly not Marx, is the true harbinger of modern society.

Ewald traces the breakdown of the old liberal laissez-faire conceptions through the discovery of pauperism and a form of poverty that could not be attributed to the individual's own will, a fairly familiar story, and then moves on to the brunt of his case, the evolution of legislation on work accidents, a prolonged two-decade debate that culminated in the law of 1898. The story of work accident legislation is that of dissolving the notion of responsibility, whether of the worker or the employer, and replacing it with the concept of

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professional risk—that element of uncertainty and danger which adheres to
any given activity and whose costs are now dispersed evenly throughout a
given risk community. From professional risk and accidents, the story moves,
in the French case at least, on to the problem of old age. Clearly, the same
ideas of responsibility and liability that figured in the case of accidents could
no longer hold for pensions. Old age was foreseeable, was no one’s fault. Any
right to compensation could be founded not in civil law but emerged only as
part of a new concept of social rights. Finally, with the development of social
security (the full coverage of most risks for all citizens, often in return for no
direct payment of insurance contributions, or at least in return for those not
directly tied to actuarial risk), the complete socialization of risk was achieved.
Society could now for the first time deliberately select criteria of justice and
fairness for its members without having to bow helplessly to the arbitrariness
of nature or fate. In so doing, the old liberal ideas of society based on the
concept of the sovereign individual have been finally vanquished by the new
notion of social rights that start from the existence of society, of individuals
already placed in a social setting with mutual obligations and expectations.

What Ewald has done, in effect, is to turn Tönnies on his head. Evolution
leads us not away from communal solidarities but in fact to their most perfect
realization, a combination of the collective responsibility of a Gemeinschaft
with the individual freedom of a Gesellschaft. Put in a slightly different way,
Ewald has fleshed out, with greater detail and philosophical nuance, T. H.
Marshall’s concept of the evolution from civil to social rights. Ewald’s work
should be seen less in the context of the social scientific approaches to the
welfare state, with their concern for the origins and development of social
policy, than of two other clusters of work: first, the working out of the
philosophical and moral underpinnings of welfare legislation; and, second,
the fascinating work done recently on the development of the ideas of proba-
bility and chance.

Abram de Swaan is another scholar working at a similar level of deep
historical background for the welfare state. His book, In Care of the State, is
as ambitious as Ewald’s but shifts the focus to cover a much wider range of
topics across a broader spectrum of nations and, consequently, at a rather less
detailed level of analysis. De Swaan’s central methodological conceit employs

3 Work like that of Robert Goodin, Protecting the Vulnerable: A Reanalysis of Our Social
Responsibilities (Chicago, 1985); Reasons for Welfare: The Political Theory of the Welfare State
(Princeton, 1988); Amy Gutmann, ed., Democracy and the Welfare State (Princeton, 1988); and
(Boulder, 1988).

4 Ian Hacking, The Taming of Chance (Cambridge, 1990); Lorenz Krüger, et al., eds., The
tical Thinking, 1820–1900 (Princeton, 1986); Gerd Gigerenzer, et al., The Empire of Chance:
an analogy to Norbert Elias's brilliantly stimulating notion of the civilizing process. Elias claimed that the modern concepts of peaceful sociability and freedom are built on restricting the individual's psychosocial proclivities, which have been brought under increasingly tight rein since the sixteenth century. Society can dispense with all but fairly rudimentary external restraints on the individual only by containing the instincts and passions that would otherwise impel us to aggression.

De Swaan extrapolates from this idea to argue for an analogous process of collectivization that explains why and how society has become increasingly socialized. His question is: Why did the state take over duties and responsibilities that earlier had been the individual's? There are two legs to the answer. First, the external effects of an individual's actions give others an interest in his behavior and encourage an effort throughout society to regulate it. In other words, as members of a society, for reasons usually summed up in the phrases capitalism, industrialization, and modernization, become increasingly interdependent, collective action is therefore required. Second, the problem of the free rider, the attempt made by each individual to avoid paying the cost of public goods that, regardless of how burdens are distributed, benefit all, also means that if any measures are to be taken at all, then they must of necessity be collective. De Swaan traces this collectivizing process across a number of endeavors: providing charity and poor relief to the most destitute, the spread of elementary education, medical services, public hygiene and sanitation, police, transport, gas and electricity.

At some levels, de Swaan's argument is certainly persuasive. One primary insight concerns the extent to which social provision was not, in distinction to theories of the welfare state that see it largely as the outcome of class struggle, solely a zero-sum contest pitting antagonistic groups against each other for exclusive advantage. Instead, he shows how social elites stood to gain as much from most public goods as did the poor, although of course not always measured in the same coin. In other respects, de Swaan convincingly traces a link between Elias's notion of the ever more restrained and deinstinctivized personality of modern human beings and the institutionalization of thrift, prudence and foresight—postponing immediate pleasures in favor of future security—in systems of social insurance. Also compelling is de Swaan's insistence on the importance of the establishment of national insurance schemes: the enormous bureaucratic machinery, the all-pervasiveness of the new link between state and citizen, the social trust and consensus required for contributions to a system that in some instances did not promise to benefit individuals until half a century hence, when they reached the end of their lives.

But de Swaan's argument often degenerates into simplistic trivialities when it comes time to specify just how this collectivizing process worked and why. Migration to urban centers "caused great anxiety among the established city-
dwellers” and inspired the reforms that led to schools, hospitals, penitentiaries, medical and police services and so forth (p. 113). Or, again, urbanization leads to greater interdependence and hence collectivization because “people come to live together in a different state of aggregation, more dense, more structured and differentiated than earlier forms of society” (p. 119). Because towns and cities are as old as history, the reader is entitled to wonder when this was not the case. De Swaan assumes that city life is inherently interdependifying, which is obviously true at one level. But, at the same time, urban interdependence is like that of the market, which, as Albert Hirschman has shown us, can be either collectivizing or atomizing, depending not on the actual effect of the market or the city but on the observer's perception. Moreover, like Elias, de Swaan assumes the presence of a radical break between society's dependent and interdependent phases. Although the timing of this caesura is unclear, it conveniently tends to coincide with the beginning of the measures of state intervention that interest him. Thus, for example, he apparently believes that the migration from countryside to town in the nineteenth century that coincided with the establishment of all sorts of public services, was unprecedented and wholly unlike whatever internal migration had fed cities in the centuries, if not millennia, before.

There is also, in de Swaan's work, no hint of the weaknesses in Elias's ideas. Most obvious among these is the tragic irony of a book on the supposedly ever encroaching process of civilization, the reduction of instincts and desires to reasoned psychological control, appearing in 1939 on the eve of Europe's descent into barbarity. Less crucial among its problems is that our impression of, say, Socrates or any other pre-Erasmian person is not of the belching, farting, tablemannerless pawn to his lesser instincts that if Elias is right, he should have been, having not had the benefits of a genteel upbringing in modern etiquette.

Both Ewald's and de Swaan's works share common problems. Their proclivity to whiggery is the most daunting. The collectivizing process or the progress of society towards socialization and solidarity is inherent, unstoppable, inevitable. In the retrospective vision of these scholars, what stands out are not the deviations from this highroad to the present but the relentless, inexorable, on-time, freight train of historical progress whose scheduled arrival seemingly nothing can stop. Also troubling is their complete indifference towards variations among nations in the terms of their choice. The process they describe is universal, at least implicitly so in Ewald's case. All nations go through approximately the same evolution. Differences among them are trivial and discounted accordingly. Now that after decades of effort historians and social scientists have finally persuaded themselves that monolithic concepts of progress like industrialization and modernization are untenable, what is

the advance in bringing into play new ones fraught with all the troubles of the old?

But having said this, it would be churlish not to emphasize the enormous service that these two books, especially Ewald’s, have done for the study of the welfare state. In contrast to the fixation on arcane minutiae that afflicts far too many studies of social policy, both of these books have a firm grip on the overriding importance of the issues at stake here. Both try to grasp the world-historical significance of the new political logic that allowed the shift from the atomized individualism of classic liberalism to the degree of collectivization and socialization that today even the right, or at least that right short of the dyspeptic extremes of a Hayek, takes for granted. These two authors have placed the welfare state in its deep historical context and shown us its significance in the broader scheme of things. If for no other reason, we owe these scholars, and again especially Ewald, an immeasurable debt.

USING HISTORY

An historical approach can be taken in ways other than simply nose-diving into the past, ingesting a heady snort of archival dust, and laying forth the long development of principles and practices that constitute the pedigree of the modern welfare state. An historically informed approach can just as well be given voice in the way that the study of more contemporary social policy is conducted. A respect for the particularities, rather than the regularities, of a given phenomenon and a concern for its peculiar context, rather than the abstractions of its universal features, are among the ways that history has long distinguished itself from the hard-core social sciences. It is precisely such a particularizing, contextualizing attitude among the remaining works on the welfare state under consideration here that sets them apart from earlier social scientific accounts.

Take the intellectual development of Gösta Esping-Andersen as an example. Esping-Andersen is well known as one of the most supple and sophisticated formulators of the social democratic theory of the welfare state. He was among a group of scholars who first attacked the functionalist birds-eye approach to social policy that saw all nations passing through the crucible of industrialization or modernization and emerging willy-nilly as welfare states of one stripe or another. Esping-Andersen and his colleagues did not deny that all industrialized nations have social policies of some sort but argued that there were as many differences among them as similarities. The various degrees to which nations exerted themselves in social policy terms was due, they claimed, to their divergent political complexions. When the labor movement and the left was strong and well-organized (or, as in Castles’s corollary, when the right was fragmented), social policy of a particularly generous and expansive nature could be implemented; elsewhere, the sort of residual and rudimentary social programs required for merely functional reasons were all that was possible.
At this stage in the argument, these scholars who focused on political factors, on the competition between various social and interest groups, were almost as unilinear in their approach as the functionalists they were combating. Just as social policy was the inevitable accompaniment of industrialization or modernization, so, too, munificent and solidaristic welfare states were the product of a strong left. All nations were placed at some point or another along the road that led towards the social policy pinnacle of security from the cradle to the grave. Crowning this development was Sweden, a nation of no compelling interest to researchers outside its own borders in other respects but one which had achieved a certain scholarly great power status in terms of the fine-mesh of its social security net. Towards the other end of this spectrum lay the United States, geopolitically preeminent, but socialpolitically a laggard and a miser. Most other nations were then arrayed somewhere between these two extremes. All were assumed to be at quantitatively different points along the road leading to Stockholm: If they could not all actually be expected to reach this welfare Mecca, at least they were all, from different removes, genuflecting in the same direction.

This was the argument put forth most convincingly by Esping-Andersen in his book, *Politics Against Markets: The Social Democratic Road to Power* (Princeton, 1985). He has now significantly changed this account in his most recent work, *The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism*. In this wonderfully stimulating, lucid, and path-breaking new book, he has not so much modified the reasoning of the earlier work as recontextualized it, placing it in a larger scope. The question to be answered has shifted from why is the rest of the world not like Sweden to why is it different. From having had a single road to the welfare state, we now have three possible approaches, among which the social democratic route is but one. Esping-Andersen's aim is no longer to measure all welfare states against the inapplicable standard of how much they spend on social policy but to grasp the different qualities of each, the way they spend to the extent that they do.

Each kind of welfare state now identified by Esping-Andersen has its own historical origins, trajectory, and developmental logic. Inspired by the usual scholarly theology, he identifies a trinity of welfare state types. The liberal type personified by the United States and Australia guarantees only minimal and often means-tested benefits and relies on the market for further protection. The conservative and corporatist welfare state, as in Germany, France and Austria, does not suffer the laissez-faire trepidations vis-à-vis state intervention of the liberal countries. It sees its role as the insurance broker of the nation, but at the same time as it excludes the market from social provision it makes sure that the statutory welfare system reflects the status and income inequalities of civil society. Finally, the social democratic systems of Scandinavia banish the market from the realm of welfare and seek to ensure an equality at the highest common denominator of treatment for all citizens.
Each of these paths, Esping-Andersen argues, was chosen and followed by
the nations in question for reasons that cannot be reduced to any one factor.
Various causes interacted in particular contexts: the nature of class mobiliza-
tion; the different political coalitions that emerged in each cluster of welfare
states; and, finally, the institutional legacy of first decisions taken in social
legislation that cemented loyalties to particular ways of doing things.

Dissolving the Paradigms

By revealing several possible routes of welfare state development, Esping-
Andersen has abandoned the insistence of the social democratic model that the
non-Swedish welfare states are but images in the cave of the ideal types found
in Scandinavia. There is no longer an attempt to cram all developments onto
one runway. Instead, he has carved out separate empires for distinct explana-
tory schemas. Each of his three types of welfare state is given an account that
is much more nuanced, much more attentive to particularities and context—in
a word, much more historical—than the older, unilinear, social scientific
approach.

The question is, why rest content with three worlds? Already Francis Cas-
tles and his associates have begun taking us down a taxonomic slippery slope.
They have proposed a fourth world, the radical welfare state, of nations that
achieve goals similar to the social democratic ones by using other tech-
niques.6 Now, in another work, Castles and his collaborators have gone
further, implicitly offering as many worlds of welfare capitalism as there are
nations. The particularization and therefore sensitivity to individual national
variation that an historical approach encourages comes across especially
strongly in this collection of essays, The Comparative History of Public
Policy, which Castles has edited and introduced with his customary lucidity
and incisiveness.

Each country on this smorgasbord palette, ranging from Australia to Israel,
Japan to Sweden, is treated in terms of its peculiarities, the factors that set it
apart, not as yet another contribution to one grand, overarching theory of public policy development. But, at the same time, Castles and his colleagues—none of whom can be accused of being historical obscurantists
insistent on the unique and irreducible quality of their particular national
stories—are equally determined not simply to write a series of unconnected
country studies that stand cheek by jowl but without further connection. Their
goal, a middle level of analysis that neither subsumes the individual to the

6 Francis G. Castles and Deborah Mitchell, “Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism or Four?”
(The Australian National University, Graduate Program in Public Policy, Discussion Paper No.
21, October 1990). Four is also the magic number in the very suggestive mapping out of world-
wide variations in the welfare state in Richard Rose’s “Is American Public Policy Exceptional?”,
in Byron E. Shafer, ed., Is America Different? A New Look at American Exceptionalism (Oxford:
general nor stops satisfied with the particular, instead aims at intermediary comparisons between nations whose various developments present variations on a common theme.

The highlights include Castles’s own attempt to solve the problem of why Australia has achieved many of the effects of a welfare state (low inequality, high job security) by using other avenues than costly social programs of the sort responsible for these outcomes elsewhere. Australians have used tariff, minimum wage, arbitration laws, and even immigration policy to create a welfare state by other means. Rather than protect its small, export-dependent economy through policies of adjustment to the fluctuating world market, as did the Scandinavian nations in a similar predicament later, Australia responded with what Castles calls policies of “domestic defense,” protecting rather than accommodating the economy and its wage earners.

In Israel, according to Michael Shalev’s chapter, the conundrum is posed the other way around. Israel’s labor movement has been strong and well-integrated (in power for longer than anywhere other than Sweden) but has not, despite the expectations derived from the Scandinavian experience, brought with it a correspondingly generous or elaborate welfare state. The answer in this case is that the Israeli labor movement is unlike its European counterparts and has therefore put different policies on its agenda. Securing employment for Jewish immigrants, its first objective, has left an imprint in the segmentation of Israeli social policy and its preference for employment creation over income maintenance programs.

Japan, also, in the chapter by T. J. Pempel, challenges the notion of a simple correlation between a strong left, a disunited right, and the development of elaborate social policies. On the surface, its welfare state—miserly and underdeveloped—seems the sort to be expected from the right’s stranglehold on Japanese politics. Yet, at the same time, Japan has achieved by other routes many of the goals, such as low unemployment and a high degree of income equality, that European nations seek through social policy. Many of the measures institutionalized elsewhere through the state are the responsibility of the family and the firm in Japan. In general, the radically different policy profile found in Japan comes from a different historical starting point: the need for strong intervention by the state in the economy in order for it to rebuild after the war, the lack of a powerful union movement, a long heritage of meritocracy, a tradition of employer paternalism, a legacy of comparatively flexible conservative ideology.

Castles and his colleagues present us with a new blunderbuss view of the welfare state: Nations are treated as variations on a common theme, but no attempt is made to lace them all up in the whalebone corset of one developmental path. Where the choice by Castles et al. was deliberate, the array of approaches taken in the latest and last volume of the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe* is a *Sammelsurium* more by default than deliberation. The
range of geographical coverage is vast and spans the industrial economies from Europe, including its Eastern parts, to the United States and on to Japan. Temporally, it stretches from the early nineteenth century up to the Second World War. The scope of subjects is also wider than most of the other books considered here, including not only social policies, however broadly defined, but also economic measures.

Oddly enough, despite this scattershot approach, the underlying themes are more unitary than those of the Castles volume. The organizing principle of the work, the emergence of economic and social policies, is meant to be taken as the defining characteristic of modern societies. Each set of authors of those chapters organized nationally approaches its respective country equipped with the brief of explaining how these policies developed. The result is that, given nothing but this volume, it would be difficult to see whether and, if so, how nations have diverged in such respects. Viewed through this prism, all countries here have become welfare states to an extent whose variations are scarcely touched on. The organizing ethos of the volume is decidedly centripetal.

Volker Hentschel’s chapter on Germany, for example, insists on the unexceptionably liberal nature of economic policies there. What he means is that, compared to modern interventions, neither policy nor practice in the nineteenth century came close to this sort of hands-on approach. This is, of course, true, but it leaves largely unaddressed the sense that Germany, or at least many of its most important constituent states, practiced more deliberate intervention during this period than, say, Britain or the United States. Lennart Jorberg and Olle Kranz’s chapter on Sweden spends a great deal of time on monetary policy but leaves the average reader with little sense of why this nation enjoys a reputation of leadership in implementing social and economic policies. Nor do we often get a sense, in the way that is one of the Castles volume’s virtues, of the different kinds of interventions taken in different nations and the various qualities of statutory policies. In other words, as one might have expected from a project like the Cambridge Economic History, each section has been written so independently of the others that the book forms a whole greater than the sum of its parts only because it is bound together by the stitching and glue of the binding.

Many of the chapters here are the sort of state-of-the-art surveys of their allotted topics for which the average reader turns to reference works like this. Other chapters, in contrast, are more eccentric, adventurous, or offbeat. D. E. Schremmer’s masterful book-length chapter on taxation and public finance, for example, breathes life into a topic not usually credited with quickening the pulse. Equally stimulating is John Laslett’s chapter on labor organizations in the United States and Britain. What he has done, in effect, is to update Sombart’s classic, Why Is There No Socialism in America? by making an explicit comparison with England rather than an implicit one with Germany.
If the essays in Castles's book and the *Cambridge Economic History of Europe* subvert the old unilinear orthodoxies, leaving the field in a state of fluidity—moist and marled soil waiting for the impress of a new paradigm—the multicity survey of the welfare state's history undertaken by Gerhard Ritter in *Der Sozialstaat* tries to implant a new and differently focused understanding of its development. His very title indicates the change. Not the welfare state but the "social state" is his subject. Why this shift in terminology? Largely it is a question of nuance in German. *Wohlfahrtsstaat*, he argues, has more negative connotations than its equivalent in other languages, much like the colloquial American usage of welfare to berate and stigmatize recipients of means-tested benefits. *Wohlfahrtsstaat* is also a less inclusive concept, one that may or may not go beyond social insurance to encompass labor law, housing policy, education, and legislation on protecting workers against accidents. *Sozialstaat*, in contrast, a more embracing term, is also one emphasizing the long-term historical continuities in the development of social policy and does not limit attention to the twentieth century. The *Sozialstaat*, then, is most generally that form of state which, in distinction to earlier national states with their claims to allegiance based on geopolitical and military abilities, takes as its central legitimating function the improvement of its citizens' welfare.

What Ritter has attempted is a brief, but genuinely international history of the development of social policy in the broadest sense, focused not, as has hitherto been customary in the literature, through the lens of the British or the Scandinavian experience, but through that of Germany. Germany is no longer the anomaly: no longer, as it has been portrayed in the Anglo-Scandinavian view, the country that managed under Bismarck precociously to take some of the right moves for most of the wrong reasons; that managed to bungle things in the 1930s, just as the Swedish Social Democrats were settling into their extended reign; and that, after 1945, created an unadventurous, although efficient, system of workers' social insurance complemented by some labor legislation of international repute.

In Ritter's new teutonocentric perspective, Germany takes center stage for a number of reasons. The continuities between older traditions of the paternalist state and modern welfare intervention are stronger here than in those nations that had to overcome the ideological hiccup of the laissez-faire tradition. Bismarck founded the first modern system of social policy, whatever one may think of his motives. The Weimar constitution, however doomed in retrospect, anchored social rights as close equivalents in law to civil ones, decades before T. H. Marshall heralded this development in the British case. Codetermination and other labor legislative novelties have made Germany a model in this
respect, and the 1957 pension reform unprecedentedly introduced the principle of giving the retired a share of economic growth.

Having placed the welfare state in this new perspective, Ritter then proceeds to a remarkably compact yet broad survey of the development of social policy from the Middle Ages to the present. His net, cast not only across western Europe, also catches the United States and Japan, Australia and the Soviet Union, although obviously not with equal coverage everywhere. He deals not only with social policy, narrowly defined, but also labor law and public health. He manages ably to balance the many different factors that have contributed to the development of social policy: ideological traditions, industrialization, political mobilization, influences from abroad, intellectual predispositions, the role of certain leaders. In many ways the book is a miracle of compression, managing to encompass a nuanced account of so many different developments across so broad a range of both time and space in a scant 200 pages. If translated into English, it would undoubtedly find a welcome place in the courses on the welfare state that are becoming increasingly popular in sociology and political science departments.

Is Ritter's approach the herald of a new orthodoxy? Will we soon all be approaching the welfare state from a German point of view? Probably not. But it is nonetheless clear that his tack is certainly as plausible as any of the inherited views. With the collapse of the old orthodoxies, the field is open for a new master plan, and Ritter has put in a strong bid to be its architect.

A new historicism is at work in the study of the welfare state. In certain instances, it involves taking a longer perspective on the development of social policy than has been customary, situating laws and practices that have been portrayed as quite recent, often twentieth-century novelties, in the context of a much more extensive historical durée, showing the way in which the welfare state represents a fundamental reorientation of social relations. In others, it has meant eschewing the older unilinear social scientific ambitions to gather all nations under a single causal umbrella, taking a more contextualized and particularized approach to the development of social policy, writing the histories, or at least the comparative histories, of welfare states. But this historically informed approach has not, by and large, been the work of historians. While historians may welcome this new orientation among the hard-core social sciences, we have cause to be ashamed of our underrepresentation among the ranks of its practitioners. There is no reason why historians should not be exploring this crucially important subject, especially not for a profession that prides itself on being polytopically perverse, on finding pleasure in almost any object of study. If we have already passed up the chance to blaze a trail in this subject, the time has come for historians to become at least diligent followers. Aux stylos, aux stylos, historiens!