transition went smoothly because it was preceded by the so-called round table talks, during which reforming parties met with Communist representatives and sought to find a satisfactory mode of coexistence. In that sense the losers were, so to say, well-defined at the outset. Besides, it should be borne in mind that the first Solidarity government had to collaborate with a Communist president. No politician would have dreamt of removing the Communists from power altogether. Nor Communists, for their part, could have ignored the rising dissatisfaction and the impending demand for change.

The main line of Bell’s reasoning rests on the presumption that economic changes have had very profound political consequences in Poland (as, perhaps, in any post-Communist country). The big question, the author rightly notices, was whether “the negative economic effects constitute a permanent state of affairs, or whether by being an offshoot of transition they are temporary” (9). Another interesting diagnosis that Bell has arrived at, going back to the times of one-party authoritarian rule in the 1970s, is that “the Communist party’s rule … primarily legitimized through promises of continuous improvement in consumption and material living standards” has consequently brought about a situation in which “political legitimation through delivery of improved living conditions has remained a constant” (13). I do not think that this is necessarily characteristic only of post-Communist countries, but may equally concern countries with stable democratic systems. The only difference, however, might be that in developed countries this intricate link between politics and economics is hardly noticeable, except in times of crisis, whereas in developing countries people are more accustomed to look to politicians for change. There is another thing here that Bell fails to notice, namely, the notion of civil society—a notion almost totally alien to a post-totalitarian society. Totalitarian regimes leave a vast desert behind, as regards mature ideas of what a body politic is to be like, of what responsibility for the common good means, and of what the State actually stands for.

There is another thing, though, that cannot be left out of an analysis of post-totalitarian regimes that aspires to be complete. It is a generally hostile attitude toward any person who holds political power. As a rule, they are to be mistrusted. To my mind, this sharp dichotomy that cuts through the fiber of a post-totalitarian society is especially apparent in Poland.

Bell’s handling of statistical data and the rich material she discovers make her analyses thorough, reliable, and accurate. It also should be noted that a great merit of the book is that the author does not limit herself to mere numbers. She makes attempts at interesting interpretations, so that the reader is not at a loss for an appropriate understanding of processes that are under way here. Bell knows that numbers only manifest some social forces but do not explain them. It is a sociologist’s job to do that. And, in this respect, the book fits well into the list of studies that could be called guidelines into the period of transition. The statistical data provided are there to support the overall line of reasoning (e.g., 24–25) rather than the other way around. Figures show well a shift from confidence in government to solve socioeconomic problems to almost total distrust. And Bell gives us the example of Tyminski, a “shadowy émigré,” who had outrun Mazowiecki in the 1990 run for presidential election (although the Office of Research underestimated Tyminski’s support). With a masterly expertness, Bell shows us the tensions among political coalitions and any results thereof. One has to notice, though, that the twenty-one postulates signed by the Solidarity and governmental authorities in 1980 were not only economic in nature. The book gives the reader a good insight into many indicators, such as age, religion, and educational attainment, across which, variations in Polish society appear.

The overall picture of changes that are at the moment going on in Poland is astoundingly accurate. The reader may treat the points that I have raised as missing in the book not as a criticism of this otherwise remarkable and interesting analysis but as additional matters worth considering in a future publication (such as the impact of the election of Karol Wojtyla to the papal see).

In any case, the author herself admits that she does not want to say that “Polish voting behavior is completely determined by socioeconomic status”; rather, she wishes “to investigate the extent to which it is” (17). Indeed, people in a post-totalitarian country test governmental efficiency mainly from the economic point of view. If we bear in mind the economically biased starting point that the author has taken, we can only congratulate her on her ability to command all statistical data and how she managed to combine them with such a thorough sociological analysis. Hence, the reader receives an almost complete picture of transformational processes in a post-Communist country.

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The Price of Virtue: The Economic Value of the Charitable Sector
Vivien Foster, Susana Mourato, David Pearce, and Ece Özdemiroglu
Cheltenham, United Kingdom: Edward Elgar, 2001 (226 pages)

Like other sectors in the economy, the charitable sector uses scarce economic resources to produce an array of outputs that provide services to members of society. However, the charitable sector possesses characteristics that make it difficult to measure the economic importance of the sector: Many institutions in the sector use volunteers who provide valuable services but are unpaid; the consumers of the services provided often do not pay for the services or pay a price that does not reflect the value of the services to the recipient or the costs of producing the services; and the sector relies heavily on third parties to finance production of the services. The authors of this book attempt the formidable task of measuring the economic value of the services provided by the voluntary sector in the United Kingdom.

The heart of the book is the first five chapters in which the authors describe both the methodology they used to measure the economic value of the charitable sector and
provided more services. The authors also attempt to measure the benefits and costs of volunteering. Finally, they take all the direct and indirect benefits and measure the net benefits of the charitable sector in the United Kingdom.

The latter half of the book examines ways by which funds are raised or could be raised better by charities. Given the differences between the British tax system and the U.S. tax system regarding charitable giving, the estimates derived for Britain may not be comparable to those for the United States. Ultimately, the authors argue that additional grants from the government to charities would be appropriate to overcome the free-rider problem.

This is a valuable book, but one that is not easy reading. It is often technical, and someone who is not well-versed in statistics is likely to find the book overwhelming. The book draws from the lead author’s doctoral dissertation, and many sections of the book read accordingly.

As an economist, I am leery of relying too much on surveys that elicit information about how much money people are willing to pay for something when it is strictly hypothetical. There have been numerous situations in which people have not acted when faced with an actual situation as they said they would when faced with a hypothetical situation. Consequently, I think that one must take their estimates of net social value as rough estimates at best. The authors are careful not to claim too much for their estimates, but there is a tendency to see numbers in print and give them more credence than they deserve.

The policy prescription of more grants from the state to charitable organizations is not explored adequately. For one thing, if larger grants were forthcoming, would voluntary contributions decline, or would the beneficiaries find the charitable sector services less desirable? These issues are not explored at all in the book.

I recommend this book to those who are interested in the importance of the charitable sector, but primarily for those with some statistical training. In my view, the first five chapters are the most important. While I am not convinced that the approaches used in the surveys are adequate, they certainly provide a provocative approach. Anyone who wants to examine the economic impact of the charitable sector needs to be aware of the analytical and empirical tools used in the research presented in this book.

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