Among historians of economic thought, two sets of scholars may be distinguished: those who restrict themselves to the field of history of economics, and those who at the same time contribute to current economic theory. Well-known examples of the first group are Mary Morgan (Morgan (1990)) and Roger Backhouse (Backhouse (2002)). They often also show an interest in methodology, not without a certain sense of dogmatism. Scholars who also take part in modern economic theory seem to be more flexible on methodology, and in my opinion rightly so. The author of the book under review belongs to the second group. He is a brilliant theorist, who made major contributions to the interpretation of Sraffa's work and classical theory (Schefold (1989, 1997)).

A first look at the table of contents of Schefold’s book reveals that great names like Adam Smith, David Ricardo, John Stuart Mill, François Quesnay, Leon Walras and John Maynard Keynes do not show up. As the editor V. Caspari points out, the discussion of these figures in the literature is overwhelming. Schefold concentrates on important contributions to economic theory, which have received little attention, like those by Oresmius, Lessius, Savary and Launhardt. Special attention is paid by Schefold to authors outside the traditional sphere and culture. Schefold's approach is to study the economic contributions of the past against the background of the historical period from which they emerged. He does not analyze or criticize the older work from the perspective of modern economic theory. He puts strong emphasis on a broad knowledge of other sciences at the time, in order to understand the contributions of the economists under discussion.

The structure of the book completely differs from most books on the history of economic thought. Schefold starts with the views on economic topics of Xenophon, Aristotle and Cicero, great figures of the ancient world. Already from the very first page Schefold illustrates his approach: a thorough knowledge of Xenophon’s work, an analysis from a broader historical and philosophical perspective, a sophisticated interpretation, and a proper use of later comments on Xenophon. And this is not all. Schefold has a vast knowledge of several languages, also being able to read the original material in the classical languages, Latin and Greek. In the chapter on Aristotle and Cicero, the reader encounters quotations in Greek and Latin.

Schefold moves to the Middle Ages with a deep and lengthy analysis of the work of Oresmius and his role in the development of the theory of money. In a footnote, Schefold is able to link the theoretical procedure that Oresmius applies to monetary affairs to the modern issue of ‘dirty floating’ (Schefold (2004), p. 98). In a marvellous chapter on Lessius, Schefold illustrates how the ethical and moral debate on
justice developed into economic theory, again presenting Lessius’s work against the broader background of scholasticism of the time.

Under the general heading ‘mercantilism’, Schefold starts with a rich chapter on Spanish economic thinking in the 16th and 17th century. In this chapter, the author illustrates the strong interaction between history in general, economic history in particular, and the emergence of economic theory. Schefold exploits his vast knowledge of the literature and his capability to read the relevant books in their original language. For example, he refers to a publication by Soto on the fate of the poor, during the period of hunger around 1540, and to his book *De justitia et iure*, from 1553, in which the author dealt with monetary questions. It is here that the reader gets the feeling that Schefold goes a step further than Schumpeter (Schumpeter (1954)) in depth and detail. It is hardly possible to bring to the fore the wealth of knowledge that lies behind the modesty of Schefold’s exposition. While Leiz Ortiz is referred to in Schumpeter’s monumental work (Schumpeter (1954), pp. 165, 194, 209), Schefold presents a thorough analysis of Ortiz, as the first European mercantilist. The same observation applies to Azpiloueta (Schumpeter (1954), pp. 95, 104 and 106), the man and his work (Schefold (2004), pp. 170–177). The next chapter in this part is devoted to Serra. On the basis from quotations of the original Italian text of 1613, Schefold makes clear the important role of Serra’s book for the development of economic thought, in particular on the balance of trade.

The fourth part of the book deals with neo-classical economists like Jevons, Edgeworth, Böhm-Bawerk, Irving Fisher and Pareto. Böhm-Bawerk and Fisher even received two chapters. In these chapters, Schefold makes use of his mathematical background and of his analysis of Sraffa’s system. Also the chapter on Pareto’s *Manuale di economica politica* is highly enriched by Schefold’s precise mathematical reasoning. It is at this stage that the reader cannot avoid pausing, in order to savour the fact that here is a scholar who feels at home in the world of literature, history and culture just as well as in the sphere of the exact sciences. This part closes with a discussion of the emergence of the theory of imperfect competition during the years of high theory (Shackle (1967)). It comes as no surprise that Schefold’s knowledge of Sraffa’s work and Sraffa’s way of looking at the essence of economics plays a major role in this chapter (Sraffa (1960)). The book then moves back, so to speak, to the old and young historical school, which is to a large extent a German affair. Hildebrand, Roscher, Von Mangoldt, Knies, Wagner, Launhardt and Weber enter the scene. Let me dwell a moment on the chapter on Launhardt. Schefold observes that German economics during the 19th century was less a-theoretical and less a-mathematical than is often suggested. He refers to Kröncke, Lang, Buquoy, Rau and Von Thünen to support his case. Even more relevant is Launhardt although rather neglected by most students of the history of economic theory. However, Launhardt made a substantial contribution in the footsteps of Walras and Jevons. Of the two remaining parts, the first deals with modern economists, like Wicksell, Von Stackelberg, Samuelson and Hicks, and the second with economists from another cultural sphere. The second group contains chapters on Chinese economics, on Ibn Khaldûn (1332–1406) as a representative of Arab economic thought, on the development of Japanese economic thought and the role of Miura Baien (1723–1789), and on Russian economics.