The volume opens with a jewel introduction. It contextualizes Pareto historically and it offers the big pictures in which to fit all the pieces of Pareto's intellectual production. Pareto was an engineer involved with the running the newly nationalized Italian railroad system, but his claim to fame is for his sociological work. He wrote hundreds of pamphlets calling for change, free trade, small government, and pacifism, all of which fell flat. And "his youthful idealism soon gave way to skepticism, even cynicism, about human potential" (p. 2) so that today he is best known for his theory of human rigidity and inflexibility which make the world fundamentally unchangeable. His mathematical training and skills made him a professor of economics at Lausanne University (1893-1900), but his discontent with the model of a rational homo economicus led to his interest in and research on human irrationalities. During a time in which disciplines fought to establish their boundaries, Pareto broke them and refused to be confined in any one. For him comprehension of the complexity of human behavior came from the complexity of a boundless knowledge.

The rest of the book reflects the introductory claims. The first chapter, "Pareto and the Elite", by John Scott, describes the not always successful balance of an open definition of elite that Pareto offers us. This analysis smoothly continues in Chapter 2, "Talents and Obstacles: Pareto's Morphological Schema and Contemporary Social Stratification" (Francois Nielsen). Pareto's empiricism allows him to analyze data from across the world and across time and see patterns in the wealth elites. Wealth is not distributed normally, but more "like an arrow". Regardless of time and place, income inequality seems to be a natural and inevitable pattern: 80 percent of income is distributed among 20 percent of the population. This 80-20 distribution seems to be a constant pattern in many natural phenomena, from elites to genes, not just income distribution. This raises a question, not raised by the author, but that any post-2011 reader may ask: does 'Occupy Wall Street" know about Pareto? And assuming that by some miracle, Occupy Wall Street is successful in changing the distribution of wealth in rich societies, will it be a sustainable change? Or will we move back, inevitably, to the arrow-shaped income distribution that Pareto kept finding in his data? The inability of society to change, to be stuck with certain patterns or with certain equilibria becomes a major theme in Pareto's thought. While some of his contemporary sociologists and political scientists would theorize beneficial changes in society, Pareto focuses on dysfunctional evolutions and sticky points where societies may be unable to get out of detrimental conditions. So Chapter 3 is the chapter where Charles Powers describes "The Role of Sticky Points in Pareto's Theory of Social Systems".

The empirical and pessimistic eye of Pareto is also present in his visions of political theory, as Joseph V. Femia describes in Chapter 4—"Pareto, Machiavelli, and the Critique of Ideal Political Theory". A scientific understanding of human behavior requires that we look at human beings as real and not ideal creatures. This is why Pareto leans on the realism of Machiavelli, rather than the idealism of Kant, in his theories. And this realism, when combined with modern risk analysis, allows us to link Pareto to a variety of cultural and psychological patterns widely recognized and accepted today, as Alasdair Marshall and Marco Guidi demonstrate in Chapter 5—"The Idea of a Sociology of Risk and Uncertainty: Insight from Pareto".

The relevance of Pareto in today's debates and research agenda is pushed further by John Higley and Jan Pakulski in their chapter on "Pareto's Theory of Elite Cycles: A Reconsideration and Application" (Chap. 6). They apply what may seem a vague theory of elite to the UK and the US governing elites of the twentieth century. It is unclear whether Pareto works or not when applied today. This question mark comes at a perfect time in the volume. So far one is exposed to the marvel of Pareto's thinking, its correctness and applicability. One may be starting to question whether Pareto was this infallible intellect, underappreciated in his time and also in ours, who deserved a much larger role because of his continuous correctness. Higley and Pakulski remedy that sensation and bring back the fallibility, or at least imperfections, in a genius' work. I see their chapter as sort of refreshing watershed, as it is followed by two other chapters more prone to see some of the deficiencies of Pareto. Alban Bouvier shows how Pareto may be more indebted to J.S. Mill than he is willing to admit—or than his readers are willing to admit (Chap. 7: "Pareto, Mill and the Cognitive Explanation of Collective Beliefs: Unnoticed 'Middle-range Theories' in the Trattato"). Similarly, Giorgio Baruchello shows how Pareto may be more indebted to Aristotle than to Plato in his understanding of the role of rhetoric. Interestingly enough, in these two chapters, as well as in some preceding ones, there is subtle emphasis on the importance of language in communicating effectively and how Pareto may not have been gifted with it: a possible reason for the fact that his popularity does not necessarily reflects his contributions.

The breadth of Pareto's understanding, or his willingness to accept the complexity of human behavior, is returned to in the last chapter of the volume ("Pareto's manuscript on Money and the real Economy") where Micheal McLure describes how Pareto rejects the quantity theory of money and is willing to integrate money in the general equilibrium model of Leon Walras,

despite the unwillingness of the discipline to bridge the monetary and the real analysis.

The volume is an impressive and yet balanced testament of the breadth and stature of Pareto. Pareto does come out as a rounded Renaissance man, who for all that is pessimistic about the possibility of human improvement. He does come out as a scholar willing to break all disciplinary barriers and one who, as a consequence, stands alone. And probably today and more so in the future, when we also realize that many of the existing disciplinary boundaries are artificial constraints that limit our creativity and intellectual development, we will come to appreciate Pareto more. This volume is a step in that direction.