

A.D.XENOPOL, A LESS KNOWN ECONOMIST

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Outstanding Romanian man of culture in the second half of the XIX'th century, known as remarkable historian, A.D.Xenopol was also a genuine economist, preoccupied not only by the theory but also by the practice of economics. I have achieved an investigation of the referential papers and articles with economic content published in the press at the time in view of highlighting and opening perspectives on the contributions of Xenopol in the field of economics, of joining the effort of recovering the cultural Romanian values. The interest of Xenopol for the economic state of the Romanian people derives from the very track of love for the country which spans all about his work and which urged him to search the causes of Romania's remaining belated compared to Western countries and to suggest solutions of surpassing the laggings. I dare believe that this work will stir the curiosity for studying and exploring further on Xenopol's ideas, many of them very actual indeed.

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They said – and they were right – about Xenopol that he was a man of his time, that is “in his historical, economic, social and political writings he never avoided an essential aspect of the general state and evolution of our country”³⁰⁹.

Some said that Xenopol was no theoretician of the economic science: G. Dobre³¹⁰, I. Veverka³¹¹, Z. Ornea³¹², L. Boicu³¹³. But there were also opposite points of view: V. Ioța³¹⁴, G. Zane³¹⁵, V. Nechita³¹⁶.

Neither the first, nor the latter expressed radical positions, nor do we think that the economic work of Xenopol would be worth of such a position. There is no doubt that the writings and the authors that Xenopol mentions allowed him to get acquainted with the economic theory. Moreover, in his works he operates with economic concepts, speaks about different economic theories which he defends or – on the contrary – he accuses: the free trade³¹⁷, the protectionism³¹⁸, the theory of value³¹⁹, the theory of money³²⁰, the work division³²¹, the productive and non-productive work³²², the property problem³²³, the commercial balance and the paying balance³²⁴, the budget problem, the problem of the external debt³²⁵, the problem of the capital circuit³²⁶ and much more that he does not mention explicitly but which can easily be understood: productivity, nominal salary, capital etc.

309 Leonid Boicu, Al.Zub, 1972, p. 382

310 G. Dobre, 1970, p. 22

311 Ion Veverka, 1967, p. 44-45

312 Zigu Ornea, 1957, p. 70

313 Leonid Boicu, 1972, p. 385

314 Vasile Ioța, 1969, p. 12

315 G. Zane, 1972, p. 104

316 Vasile Nechita, 1972, p. 137

317 A.D.Xenopol, 1967, p. 95-98 and p. 291-297

318 Ibidem

319 Ibidem

320 Ibidem

321 Ibidem, p. 84-89

322 Ibidem, p. 110-111

323 Românu, 31st May, 1882, p. 481

324 A.D. Xenopol, 1967, p. 190-194

325 Ibidem, p. 211-242

326 Ibidem, p. 299-300

It is however true that Xenopol does not make use of theoretical subtleties and sometimes he “does not pay attention... to the rigorous use of the notions” and he even “mixes up the terminology”³²⁷. The explanation consists on one hand of the lack of an adequate economic terminology in Romanian at that time and on the other hand of the power that Xenopol sees in the economic theory by trying to find the best way to give Romania an economic stability. In this respect we agree with V. Iota who stated that “Xenopol followed a practical goal”³²⁸. And Xenopol himself stated that “the political economy should not forget that it cannot move in the clear area of theory and that it floats in the wind and has no serious basis by leaving the real world escape”³²⁹, or that the “economic era passed here into the practical domain”³³⁰.

Considering the historical, cultural, economic and political conditions of our country in the 19th century, that is at the very beginning of the modern era, it is understandable that we cannot talk here about an original economic thinking or about a theoretical economic thinking, so that I. Veverca stated that in this century “we still do not have a real Romanian economic thinking, but only an economic thinking in Romania”³³¹. Under these circumstances we find the statement of G. Dobre exaggerated in which he points out the work “Economic Studies” should be considered a real original scientific creation in the very meaning of the word³³². We do not think that by this we minimize the merits of Xenopol or of his work which undoubtedly includes numerous original aspects.

But we can also not agree to the opinion of V. Vasiloiu who says that Xenopol’s economic thinking was “predestined to make the protectionist idea in our country popular”, as Xenopol neither addressed himself to “the Romanian principles and intelligence” like Martian, nor to “the economists or to the politicians”, but to the mass, not with “abstract, but with concrete arguments, closest to everyone’s understanding”³³³. We think that considering the “Economic Studies” of Xenopol as a work meant to make the economic science and phenomenon popular is extremely unfair. The fact that Xenopol exposed some of his economic ideas also within conferences or in some press articles only means that he tries to develop certain ideas from his works, so that he can make them accessible to the readers. But his works have the characteristics of a scientific economic work, considering the means it could be realized with in the second half of the 19th century.

The scientific personality of the author lends the economic works of Xenopol power; he builds his analysis on the special literature of the time without falling into the trap of blindly adopting some widely spread thesis or ideas. Relying both upon the classical doctrine and upon the protectionist one, Xenopol identifies and selects the aspects which allow a thorough analysis of the Romanian economy and the advancing of realistic solutions which should assure in the end the prosperity of the people. This is the main interest followed by Xenopol not only in his economic works.

G. Zane stated that Xenopol was a genuine economist who used in his studies several instruments from his time: the direct analysis, the statistical information, the historical documentation”³³⁴. The specific elements of his analysis consist on one hand of the approach of the economic problems both on the long and on the short term and on the other hand in the fact that in analyzing the Romanian economy the economist was doubled by the the historian, just as in the economic history the historian was doubled by the economist.

327 Vasile Iota, 1972, p. 270

328 Ibidem, p. 265

329 Ibidem, p. 190

330 Ibidem, p.126

331 Ion Veverca, 1935, p. 709

332 G. Dobre, 1972, p. 269

333 V. Vasiloiu, 1941, p. 63

334 G. Zane, 1972, p. 106

Xenopol's interest for the problems of the material life shows itself pretty early, that is in the time when, by spending two years (1851-1853) in Filipeni (Bacau) by Iordache Roset, he feels that "the love towards the rural life and the peasants grows in me here"³³⁵. This interest is not rare, but it prove sto be a permanent one, the way Xenopol himself confesses: "I have always been interested in the economic life of the societies..."³³⁶. Beginning with his studies in Berlin, he approaches "highly the economists Carey, the American, and Fr. List"³³⁷, getting in contact also with the works of other famous economists, especially classical ones, a fact proved by the numerous mentions of their ideas and works in his economic studies.

Xenopol attributes a great importance to the economic situation of Romania and to the means of assuring its prosperity. His interest for these aspects are comprised in some articles and works published in the newspapers and magazines of the time or gathered in brochures and greater works, while they are differently important. Xenopol thinks that "Economic Studies" created "an important idea movement on the economic field"³³⁸; and at the same time in several conferences both within the country and abroad as well as his active participation at the first economic congress in Romania held in Iasi 1882, where he dealt with the industry section³³⁹. But he also treats the economic-social problem in his historical works: *The Romanian History in the Traina Dacia*, *The Reign of Cuza*, *The History of the Political Parties*, *The Fanariot Era (1711-1821)* and even in the *Theory of History*, where numerous arguments and examples belong to the economic life. Actually Xenopol himself stated: "I tried... not to see the whole history only in political facts... I studied the development of the nobles, in the Romanian history, the production and the wealth of the countries... by always trying to connect them to the development of the people"³⁴⁰. Moreover, Xenopol recommends the study of the political economy in the Romanian schools, a science one can learn a lot from: "that the movement of wealth in a people obeys certain laws, that the recovery of the material welfare of a people is the first condition of any other progress, that this recovery should be done by general means applied to the whole country...". If all this were learned by a great number of people Xenopol thinks that "we would see another way of dealing with things"³⁴¹.

The classification of Xenopol's economic studies

For everyone who goes through these studies, even if only through their titles, it is obvious that Xenopol was preoccupied and approached the whole economic problem: the agriculture, the industry, the trade, he made his observations regarding the economic situation, he identified solutions for overcoming the disfunctionalities in the economic field, he made comparisons to the economies of other states, he drew his conclusions from the past evolution of the Romanian economy.

I.Economic studies:

- 1.Studies upon our actual state, I-IV, (study, 1877,113 p.)
- 2.Our economic state (the 5th part in Studies upon our actual state, 1877, 39 p.)
- 3.Economic Studies (studies; ed.I, 1879, 152 p. ; ed. II, 1882, 264 p.)
- 4.The liberal party and the economic movement (study, 1882, 25 p.)
- 5.Memorium. Economic improvements to be realised in northern Romania, especially in Iasi (study, 8 p.)
- 6.Travel printings (travel notes, brochure, 1888)
- 7.Some thoughts about our economic state (conference, 1895)

335 A.D.Xenopol, 1967, p. 363

336 Ibidem, p.405

337 Ibidem, p. 379

338 Ibidem

339 Mihaela Carp, I. Saizu, 1889, p. 303-314

340 A.D. Xenopol, 1967, p. 385

341 A.D. Xenopol, 1860

- 8.The decay of Iasi (article, 1904)
- 9.Regarding the needs of Iasi (article, 1904)
- 10."The Cadastre of Romania" by gen. C.I. Brătianu (report, 1904, 3 p.)
- 11.The economic regeneration of our country (study, 1910, 3 p.)

II.Agricultural and rural studies

- 1.Agriculture and trade (conference, 1880)
- 2.An economic matter. Our agricultural regime considered in its effects, by Gr.N.Macry (rece, 1882, 3 p)
- 3."The agricultural questionnaire" de N. Mandrea (recenzie, 1884, 2 p.)
- 4.Our agricultural state compared to that of other countries (article, 1887)
- 5.A practical guide for the Romanain peasant (conference, 1902)
- 6.The role of the teacher as a factor in the rural economy (conference, 1902)
- 7.The agricultural investigation (article, 1902)
- 8.In the peasantry matter (article, 1902)
- 9.About the serious situation of the peasants (conference, 1902)
- 10.The regeneration of the Romanian peasant (article, 1902)
- 11.The needs of the peasantry (conference, 1902)
- 12.The plantations (article, 1902)
- 13.The economic state of the Romanian peasant (conference, study, 1903, 13 p.)
- 14.Six losses in the agriculture of the Iasi county (article, 1903)
- 15.The peasants' and the Romanians' matter abroad (article, 1903)
- 16.A lecture regarding the peasantry matter (lecture, 1904)
- 17.La situation economique du paysan rouman (study, 1905, 32 p.)
- 18.Greniers de rezerve et foudres communaux (study, 1905, 12 p.)
- 19.Historique de la question rurale en Roumanie (study, 1906, 46 p.)
- 20.The peasantry matter (conference, 1906)
- 21.The rural banc (article, 1907)
- 22.About the peasantry's rebellions (interview, 1907)
- 23.Means of putting down peasantry rebellions (article, 1907)
- 24.The agricultural rebellions in Romania (article, 1907)
- 25.Means of improving the state of the Romanian peasants (brochure, 1907, 47 p.)
- 26.Something about the peasant's agriculture (article, 1908)
- 27.The peasants' agriculture (article, 1909)
- 28."The peasantry matter in Romania and the new agricultural laws" by G.C. Dragu, București, 1908 (rep, 1909, 1p.)
- 29.The new letter of Mr. Panu about the peasants' state (article, 1909)
- 30.La question paysan (a propos d'un livre recent) (the work of Gh. Panu Research upon the state of the peasants in the past, București, 1910) (study, 1910, 11 p.)
- 31.L'Amelioration de la condition des paysans roumains (study, 1910, 4 p.)
- 32.Misunderstood demagogy (article, 1911)
- 33.Small culture (article, 1913)

III.Studies on industrial matters

- 1.Industry and trade (conference, 1880)
- 2.Industry and functionarism (conference, 1880)
- 3.The exposition in Iasi (article, 1884)
- 4.The industrial investigation (article, 1885)
- 5."The Romanian worker" by A.C. Cuza (report, 1893, 8 p.)
- 6.The beer industry and the tax (brochure, 1895, 97 p.)
- 7.The silk industry (brochure, 1896, 52 p.)
- 8.Industry and trade (conference, 1898)

9. The trade and the industry of Romania (conference, 1899)
10. "The monography of the state of the professions in Pitesti" by Ștefan Chicoș, Pitești, 1909 (report, 1909, 2 p.)
11. Study upon the monopolies in Romania (report, colab. 1905)

IV. Studies on trade and transport matters

1. Agriculture and trade (conference, 1880)
2. The trade reports of the Romanian consulates on 1880-1881, (article, 1882)
3. Romania's external trade. I-XIV (study, 1882, 44 p.)
4. Romania's trade in 1881 (article, 1882)
5. The foreign economic politics and Romania (article, 1882)
6. The need and meaning of the expositions (article, 1893)
7. Industry and trade (conference, 1898)
8. Romania's trade and industry (conference, 1893)
9. About the new German price (article, 1901)
10. The cattle export (article, 1902)
11. The wagon parc (article, 1902)
12. "The history of our customs and trade politics", by C. Băicoianu (report, 1906, 4 p.)
13. The trade convention with Austria-Hungary (article, 1908)

V. Economic history studies

The preoccupations for the economic history of the Romanian Countries are a part of Xenopol's general preoccupations for history and assure an exemplary complementarity regarding the economic studies, while the evolution of the economy is sometimes an argument and sometimes a cause or an explanation of the actual state, however always allowing a better understanding of some economic phenomena and processes analyzed by Xenopol.

The main aspects approached from this point of view are: the problem of the formation and evolution of the property, the preoccupations of the Romanians in time, trade matters, the complex problem of finances especially in the fanariot era, the economic reforms realised during the reign of Cuza and their impact upon the ulterior evolution of Romania etc.

The most important economic history studies are:

1. The severe social state of the Romanian people in the past, by A.I. Philiphide (rec, 1881)
2. The first lesson of Romanian history course at the University of Iasi (lecture, 1883)
3. The leading ideas in the development of the Romanian people (study, 1883)
4. The economic state of the Romanian countries in the fanariot era (study, 1889, 21 p.)
5. The past of the silk industry in our country (article, 1893)
6. About the social state of the Romanian people in the past (conference, 1893)
7. The history of the peasantry matter up to the impropiation (conference, 1900)
8. The history of the rural matter (conference, 1902)
10. The historical evolution (study, 1907)
11. The big and the small property in the Romanian countries' past (study, 1913, 32 p.)
12. La situation financiere des pays Roumains sous les Phanariotes (study, 1911, 10 p.)
13. "Le comerce de la Moldavie jusqu'a la fin du XVI-e siecle", par I. Nistor (rec, 1912, 2 p.)
14. La grande et la petite propriete dans le passe des pays roumains (study, 1913, 6 p.)
15. The Romanian history in the Dacia Traiană (several chapters)

VI. Socio-economic studies

In these studies, but also in some other ones, the economic matter combines with the social one, in trying to realise a complex presentation of the Romanian society in the process of modernization. The articles and the studies upon this matter are:

1. Our interior state. Economy, functionarism (conference, 1880)
2. Work and power (conference, 1882)
3. Socialism and comunism (article, 1885)

- 4.The direction of our education (article, 1985)
- 5.The movement of the people in the Iasi county (article, 1885)
- 6.About socialism (conference, 1893)
- 7.The impact of alcoholism on the economic state (conference, 1897)
- 8.About the matter of competition for the "Prise Alexandru Bodescu": "The economic, statistical and social Monography of a rural location abroad", 13th April 1899
- 9.How do we live in towns? (conference, 1899, in volume, 10 p.)
- 10.Sociology and socialism (lecture, 1910)

VII.Financial and banc studies

- 1.The interest of gold, I-III (article, 1884)
- 2.The interest of gold and the debates of the Chamber (article, 1885)
- 3.The financial situation of Romania under the liberal government (study, 1887, 31 p.)
- 4.The economic magazine of the year 1900 (article, 1900)
- 5.The waste (article, 1902)
- 6.The rules of the rural saving houses (article, 1902)
- 7.The rural banc (article, 1907)
- 8.Misunderstood demography (article, 1911)
- 9.The beer industry and the tax (brochure, 1898)

VIII.Economic doctrine studies

We have to mention that Xenopol is no theoretician of economy, because he is mostly preoccupied with the practical aspects of the economic life. However, the economic theory and the aspects concernine the economic doctrines were not only unknown to him, but he adopted some of them, for example the protectionist theory, and denied others – the free trade.

The works in which Xenopol approaches these problems are:

- 1.The political economy treaty of Ioan Strat (rec, 1970, 7 p.)
- 2."Economic talks" by Ion Ghica (rec, 1872, 3 p.)
- 3.The economic matter (article, 1886)
- 4.Romania and Switzerland (article, 1886)
- 5.The national economy (article, 1893)

Conclusions

a) The most numerous and consistent are the studies about agriculture and about the rural world; then the economic ones in general, then the studies about trade, industry, the economic history studies, the socio-economic studies, the financial and banking studies and in the end the studies about economic doctrines.

It is worth analyzing the two extremes. Why such a great interest for agriculture, for the peasant, for the villane? The reasons are different: peasantry used to be the most numerous, agriculture was the main economic branch, the villane was the most popular environment, the peasants' problems were the most complex and difficult and their solving the priority. What is the cause for the small number of studies concerning the economic doctrines? First of all, Xenopol was no theoretician of economy, although he was acquainted with the main ideas of economy; back in the country after having studied, Xenopol feels the need of analyzing the concrete economic problems of the country, of formulatine solutions for the overcoming of the deficits in the Romanian economy, so that this country should catch up with the civilized countries.

Trying to separate in time the economic preoccupations of Xenopol, we could say that between 1870 and 1882 he deals mostly with economic doctrine problems, by means of theory but also proving with data and facts the negative influence of the free trade and the need of protectionist measures; until 1888 he finalizes the most important studies about economy in general (Our economic state, Economic studies, The liberal party and the economic movement, Memorium. Economic improvements to be realised in northern Romania and especially in Iasi) and those about trade (Romania's external trade, Romania's trade in 1881, The foreign economic politics

and Romania) and the financial and banking ones (The interest of gold, The interest of gold and the debates of the Chamber, the financial situation Romania's under the liberal government); between 1888 and 1893, an important period of time in the history, Xenopol writes his most important studies of economic history, some of them being included in different chapters of The Romanians' History in the Dacia Traiana (The Leading Ideas in the development of the Romanian people, The economic state of the Romanian countries in the fanariot era, About the social state of the Romanian people in the past), between 1893 and 1900 he shows a special interest in the problems of industry, which were a topic of several conferences but also of some bigger studies (The industry of beer and the tax, The silk industry); between 1900 and 1908 and especially around the year 1907 Xenopol focuses with sympathy on the peasants, on their economic, social or other problems, observing them and suggesting solutions for the improvement of their situation (The economic state of the Romanian peasant, Means of improving the state of the Romanian peasantry); finally, the socio-economic studies, either as such or by means of mentioning the social problems in the other studies, seem to be a permanent preoccupation.

b) Xenopol was very well aware and very interested in the current economic problems of the country; he alternates, on one hand, his economic with his historical preoccupations, but he also combines them on the other hand, realising this way important economic history studies; he combines the press articles with conferences and with reports on other economic works; he wants to make his ideas popular by also publishing in brochures, excerpts and then in the press; he is very well acquainted with the economic terminology and with important works in the Romanian and international economy, a reason for which he translates some articles into French and publishes them in widely known magazines; his bigger and more consistent economic studies are written between 1870 and 1888 and between 1888 and 1913 he only writes articles and works for conferences; the exceptions are the studies: The industry of beer and the tax (1895), The silk industry (1896) and Means of improving the state of the Romanian peasantry (1907), consequently the historical economy works included in the history works.

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