The Spread of Economic Ideas among Romanian People. Case Study: Dionisie Pop Marțian

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Abstract. In the nineteenth century, the accelerating globalization started to show demands that the majority of the Romanians could not understand. The delay in the economic development, the political-state establishment, the scarcity of instruction and education, the historical and geographical context marked by hostility, all these formed the gap between the "West" and "East". The renewing economic ideas penetrated hard, often deformed ... The relentless intelligence of some young people educated outside the Romanian land, as Dionisie Pop Marțian (1829-1865), has started the struggle for "the economic emancipation of the nation" by promoting the ideas, the principles and the institutions on which was build the prosperity of the West. Seen as a "reactionary" or as a "man of progress", Marțian has delivered a heterogeneous economic outlook, a mixture of liberal principles and protectionist principles. The most significant "protection" supported by Marțian was the one against ignorance. The compilation made by Marțian using the works of various authors sustaining the "social economy" shows the dimensions of economic backwardness - the absence of current economic terms from the lexicon. Marțian invents some economic terms, which are understandable, such as: „comerciu“(trade), „manufaptură” (manufacture), „product”,” „const”, „fair price”, „banc-rupt” etc. Marțian's mission was clear: "the spreading of economics through speaking and writing.".

Keywords: economic education; industry; institutions; protectionism; economic emancipation.

JEL Codes: B00, B31, I20.
REL Codes: 1L, 3B.

* Ideas in this article were presented at the Symposium „The global crisis and reconstruction of economics”, 5-6 November 2010, Faculty of Economics, Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies.
Introduction

Dionisie Pop Marțian, one of the first Romanian economists, was educated at the University of Vienna, where he had been sent by the Greek-Catholic Archdiocese of Blaj, providing him a scholarship. The historiography lacks clarity in explaining the nature and duration of studies of Marțian (Marțian, 1961, p.6). Clearly, Dionisie Pop Marțian “breathed the air of the economic ideas of the List’s protectionism”, which were the dominant ideas in the first half of the nineteenth century. Even today, in many places around the world, no one could say that protectionist ideas are not as strong as they were in the past. The analysts of Marțian's writings assume that the economic militancy of his work releases the influence of the works of Friedrich List. During his studies, Marțian was a passionate scientist, who apparently, under the guidance of his professor of economics, Lorenz von Stein, had become not only his disciple, but also his opponent in discussing economic ideas. After his studies in Vienna (1854-1857), from personal reasons, Dionisie Pop Marțian decided to live in Bucharest, where were living the other members of his family, refugees from Ardeal. Devoted to his scientific belief in the same way other young people concerned to spread the economic ideas in Romania were (Rogojanu et al., 2010, pp. 143-147, Rogojanu et al., 2009, pp. 191-201, Rogojanu et al., 2008, pp. 371-376): “Dionisie Pop Marțian was a leading economist, actually the editor of the first university course on political economy, publishing also the Economic Annals, a source of invaluable information at that time” (Stahl, 2002).

From a doctrinal perspective, indeed, “Marțian meant a special moment in the Romanian history of economic thought. Creator of a school and of an economic way of thinking in our country, Marțian has made public his beliefs and fought for their achievement in a period dominated by the liberal ideology and practice. His protectionist point of view came to confront and combat the liberal ideas, which due to some circumstances were raised to the rank of state policy” (Marțian, 1961, p. 60).

The life and works of Dionisie Pop Marțian drew attention to some important Romanian economists, who were concerned either to spreading the economic concepts, such as Victor Slavescu, either to study his intellectual biography - Anghel Rugină, who in 1942, made public at the Academy of High Commercial and Industrial Studies in Bucharest his PhD thesis entitled “The Economic Life and Works of Dionisie Pop Marțian”, being scientifically supervised by Victor Slavescu (see Anghel Rugină, http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anghel_Rugină).

In fact, Victor Slăvescu asserted that Dionisie Pop Marțian was “the strongest and the most representative personality, the most original and most
characteristic of all the Romanian economists of the nineteenth century” and emphasised that he was “very different of all his contemporaries in all respects” (Slăvescu, 1943, p. 6, cited by Murgescu, 1987, pp. 278-279). Meanwhile, Victor Slăvescu has “the great merit to bring back into the circulation of the Romanian economic thought the work of D.P. Marţian”, although “he exaggerated by using an accumulation of superlatives, and by belittling the fact that it was presented unfortunately a short period of only six years, injuring in this way other major socio-economic figures of our national history from that century” (Murgescu, 1987, p. 279).

Economic ideas

The economic interest in the theories regarding to define Romania for the developed countries of that time gives Marţian the opportunity to express his scientific belief. The pathetic tone used by Marţian, however, reveals an attitude full of fear and reserve towards the expansion of the Western capitalism; he puts himself in the same line with the advocates of nationalism, which was typical for the period in which he lived and wrote. Today, all the efforts made by the brilliant minds of the time for the political unity and economic development of all the Romanian lands having a common history and sharing a common cultural heritage are judged by people in function of the meaning of economic development and not in function of patriotism. This explains why all those attitudes resulting from chosen and precious feelings, who called to the conservation of traditions under the banner – "We are and we remain a state of peasants” – led, unfortunately, to economic backwardness and not to development. Clearly, chosen feelings are not for making fun of, but they cannot take the place of the economic and globalizing action that took place in the Western European countries. In that era, it was natural to align to a strong cultural trend, able to help your country to unravel the way to political freedom and, in the same time, to seek the causes of your country powerlessness in the economic success of others. Citing the changes in the geopolitics of the second half of the nineteenth century, Marţian emphasize the role of the economic development in obtaining the political independence. Correctly, Dionisie Pop Marţian reveals the logics of the interdependence existing between political and economic interests: “This is a key to the secrets that go with the interests to fight for us and against us. It cannot be other way, because today we can’t conquer other countries by using assault weapons, but we can see that developed countries use the trade and industry to prepare the way for
opportunities. So, if we get rid of the political dependence, we will find another – the economic one” (Marțianu, 1858, „Studii sistemice în Economia politică. Prima parte. Economia socială”, in Marțian, 1961, p.71).

The condition of the Romanian states in the mid-nineteenth century needed a rapid connection to the modern world trends. If from the legal and political perspectives the situation seemed clear and allowed the engagement of the Romanian society in the modernization process, from the economic point of view, the situation could be presented in a simplified manner: the sources needed by the industrial capitalist development were blocked in big properties; the aristocrats, even if accidentally used the capitalist exploitation, used to hold for themselves the production factors such as labour and capital; those who wanted to leave villages in order to work in industry needed money, which were not provided through the natural distribution; the empty place left by the Romanian people in the area of industrial and commercial occupations that were supposed to bring progress and civilization was available to foreigners. The secular domination of the natural economy deterred or eliminated any attempt to transform the old conceptions in order to accept the fact that the exchange may be the main tool of selecting the potential value of indigenous goods. The solutions of a potential historical emancipation were injured by the confusion of identifying and defining the political entity, able to ensure not only a new beginning, but a new ideal.

In his enthusiasm Dionisie Pop Marțian aimed to show to the people the way to welfare as he saw the fact that “the future is under the veil” (Marțianu, 1858, „Studii sistemice în Economia politică. Prima parte. Economia socială”, in Marțian, 1961, p. 73). In terms of the eclectic German historical school, Marțian asked his contemporaries to study the economic science in order to find the key of the emancipation: “sacrificing the present for the future”. The alternation of parables with economic principles, in a nationalist way, quite widespread in many European countries, Marțian emphasised the role of knowledge in economics in order to “train efficient people, able to meditate on natural laws, that man cannot rule, but can use” (Marțianu, 1858, „Studii sistemice în Economia politică. Prima parte. Economia socială”, in Marțian, 1961, p. 76).

Dionisie Pop Marțian strived for an intellectual emancipation of the Romanians and for the spread of economic ideas; he wrote a course on “Social Economy” (1858), articles and studies on economic issues, and offered support to the publication of “Economic Annals” and to the establishment of some institutions as Statistical Office of Romania.
The dispute over the unification of customs tariffs showed that Marţian was not a follower of List, or an opponent of the Union of principalities. The fact that the year 1859 brought Romania as a political entity on the world stage was for Marţian a good opportunity to put knowledge in the service of the national welfare. The author's comment in the Annual Economic Review, of Al. I. Cuza message sent on 6 December 1859 to the Chamber of Deputies shows some concern and support for good governance to strengthen the newly formed state: “A compass should lead both branches of the government in resolving the issue according to the true interests of this nation... But an opinion in that regard in our country does not exist. The government is obliged to present such an opinion by using discussions and instruction” (Marţian, 1961, p. 181).

In the first years after unification, the leading classes’ attention and the „enlightened minds” attention turn to the facts that could lead to economic and social emancipation. Among the causes of economic backwardness were difficultly found solutions to harmonize the interests of heteroclite classes of society, which were a mix between old and new, hard to change, and hard to manage. Dionisie Pop Marţian’s bitter optimism attacks the lack of vision and thinking of many politicians of the day, which taking advantage of the ignorance of Romanians postponed the real decisions: “What patient is more resigned than the nation?” (Marţian, 1961, p. 190).

As a supporter of the protectionist capitalism, Marţian seeks in the state of society the minimum arguments regarding a social indigenous class that is similar to the western “knight of industry” that set the tone for economic development. Unfortunately, Marţian saw that “the richest class in our country is a conglomeration of people of all origins” and that “the capitalist knew that, whatever foreign government is going to come certainly is going to ask him to participate in the national business. If the government would not be “a good politician” and would not ask the national capitalists to participate in the national business, then the national capitalists are going to withdraw their money to private life, where they can live free from the deprivation and political concerns of public affairs, comforted by the fact that at least if he's far from power, nor his rivals are not in the front of the nation” (Marţian, 1961, p. 197).

Very able, Marţian passes the arbitrage between xenophobia and nationalism, being preoccupied by a social equilibrium, cancelling the social polarization with a substantial numerically and economically middle class. However, Dionisie Pop Marţian, being influenced by the way of thinking of the
followers of “social economy”, said that: “The power of a civilizing action of the people is even higher, as it has a larger middle class. In our country this class barely sprout. The elements that constitute this class are foreign or indigenous, but they don’t have the skills, the intelligence and dexterities needed in arts and crafts, areas that are necessary in order to participate in the economic development of our country (Marţian, 1961, p. 217).

In fulfilling the goal of “economic emancipation of the nation”, Dionisie Pop Marţian launches in 1861 the targets of a well defined program: “Any nation that is in our state have to pass through three stages of development: the process of an adequate consolidation or unification of all the elements into one single nation; then the process of emancipation of the nation under wills of foreign and hostile interests (freedom), and finally the process of defining the nation from a cultural perspective. The first of these processes is the most important one” (Marţian, 1961, p. 204). All this means an evolution from the primitive state of economic development, dominated by agriculture, to the industrial status and then to the trade stage. As Dionisie Pop Marţian affirmed the industrial progress must be protected of the free trade and of the competition made by foreign industrial products. Marţian uses the education received at Austro-German School against his masters, especially against Lorez von Stein.

In the context of the liberal enthusiasm of many contemporary authors, “Marţian's protectionist approach, however, seemed so unusual that it was seen by some commentators as an expression of a visionary way of thinking” (Murgescu, 1987, p. 289). Despite the reaction in that time, the protectionism “would become the official orientation of Romania's industrial policy”. (Murgescu, 1987, p. 289) The main argument to support Marţian’s point of view was related to “the requirement to defend the interests of the Romanian nation against the pan-Germanic current”. (Murgescu, 1987, p. 290). Analysts of history of economic thought seem to agree that the imminent danger of “Austro-German economic invasion and the need to fight back become the driver of the whole activity of Marţian” (Murgescu, 1987, p. 290).

Moreover, from the beginning of the course of “Social Economy”, Dionisie Pop Marţian emphasizes the potential danger hovering over Romania: “All Europe, and especially the most populous part of it, is interested in Romania; all the communications related to social life in our country are looked for. Travellers from all nations have come to study the sources of our wealth and their greed is causing various kinds of problems” (Marţian, 1961, p. 71). When he explains the Western capital’s offensive on the Romanian economy, Marţian identifies the one coming from France, Belgium, “Germany seeing us
as a fruit garden expecting its exploiter” and continues with “Austria, which have monopolized a long time ago our trade” (Marțian, 1961, p. 71).

On the occasion of the establishment of “Annals of Statistics and Economic Research”, Dionisie Pop Marțian drew attention to the need of spreading the ideas coming from a history of national economy in order to decide politically correct: “A request to write the history of political economy and to discuss the main economic issues of a country; without achieving the political issues, it is absurd to ask” (Marțian, 1961, p. 205). The vocation of institutional promoter places Marțian alongside other iconic figures of the nineteenth century: “In 1859, Dionisie Pop Marțian, a young Transylvanian educated at Vienna, is assigned as chief of the Central Office of Statistics of the Romanian country”; that year, Ion Ionescu de la Brad is assigned as chief of the “Department of Statistics of Moldova”; these two conducted, each in its area, a census in 1859-1860 with the results published in “Annals of statistics in the Wallachian land of Romania”(1860-1864) and in “Moldova's statistical work”. In 1852 as the principalities were now united, the two statistical offices merged under the direction of Pop Marțian in a “Central Office of Administrative Statistics”. It is remarkable that these beginners and those who followed were great scientists” (Stahl, 2002, http://ebooks.unibuc.ro/Sociologie/henri/). As a founder of the statistics in Wallachia, Dionisie Pop Marțian was engaged in a “cruel activity, which he conducted with a great energy, strongly criticizing the errors of the inexperienced elements of the system and defending his work of those who did not understand its importance and that were neither few nor without political prestige at the time” (Murgescu, 1987, p. 286).

In 1859, in a memorandum addressed to the Minister of Interior, Dionisie Pop Martjian outlined the importance of his program in defining and using official statistics in Wallachia, a program which included inter alia: drawing country's general statistics, and of the main branches of the state administration; training those who were to prepare and develop some industry statistics and to complete some forms; statistical reflection of the progress in agriculture, manufacturing, commerce, arts, sciences, etc.; drawing up tables on price evolution; publishing a magazine “for the national economy and its statistics”; publishing a statistical yearbook; elaborating civil status registers; using of common statistical records in the cities, courts, customs, etc. so that the government to always have authentic information on all the activities; setting up of departments of basics in statistics in secondary schools and departments of general and administrative statistics in law faculties (Murgescu, 1987, p. 285).
Although he has encountered numerous obstacles in the organization of the Statistical Office, Dionisie Pop Marțian continued his courageous work of recruiting and training the rapporteurs in statistics of each county, preparing and carrying out the first census in 1860 and in 1863 the first statistical survey of the industrial establishments in Romania (Marcu, N. and Ornea, Z., „Studiu introductiv“, in Marțian, 1961, p. 59).

The belief that the new state will need a solid institutional foundation helped him in overcoming obstacles of any kind: “The administration of a country, meaning to take care of the material and moral condition of its inhabitants, without knowing what and where are its resources, is similar to curing a patient without seeing him or asking him what are his symptoms” (Murgescu, 1987, p. 286). Indeed, the desire of scientific knowledge of the economic and social realities dominates the whole activity and way of thinking of the creator of modern Romanian statistics (Murgescu, 1987, p. 287). In “Annals of Economics and Statistics” the language “could not be other than scientific, which does not ask what parties like or dislike”, but it says in the language of figures: this is what we are, this is the stage of our development” (Marțian, 1961, p. 206). Consequently, in the political arrangements resulting from the early exercise of democracy, “a government should be between the parties as a sober man between drunken men” (Marțian, 1961, p. 213).

The causes of economic backwardness should be sought in the complexity of the Romanian society because “the economic life of nations, as well as the individual's life is related to the political status of the country, to its legislation, administration, culture and its relations with other countries and peoples" (Marțian, 1961, p. 207). Compared to the many facets of the economic precariousness of the development, Dionisie Pop Marțian supports and promotes the development of the industrial capitalism by an overall protectionist economic policy. Unlike the protectionist system of List, which denied the proportionality of economic sectors, Marțian, “faithful to the protectionist ideals will push for a balanced and normal development of the Romanian economy, where the industry, the agriculture and the trade to be taken into account” (Marcu, N. and Ornea, Z., „Studiu introductiv“, in Marțian, 1961, p. 34).

Thus, for Marțian, as for other industrialist authors of the time, the development of the private and state industry was necessary and possible: “in those countries where the private industry has not yet reached the level to set up business models, the Government believes that it is a duty to uphold the honour of the nation, by setting the need establishments” (Marțian, 1961, p. 301).
As analysts of the history of the national economy observed, in Marţian’s work: “state enterprises had only an educational function, because the foundation of the industrial area was related to the private initiative” (Marcu, N. and Ornea, Z., ”Studiu introductiv”, in Marţian, 1961, p. 36).

Overall, the industrial design of Dionisie Pop Marţian is comprehensive; Marţian places the agricultural processing industries along with crafts and home industries. Unlike other industrialists, such as Ghica or Şuşu, whose doubts concerning the light industry were known, Marţian encourages this type of industry, able to enhance the available raw materials in sufficient quantities. Under these arguments, Marţian promote the establishment of typographies, because “the state of printing houses in the country certifies the degree of culture of a nation” (Marţian, 1961, p. 301).

It is defining for the industrial design of Dionisie Pop Marţian the underpinning of the gradual and progressive development of some manufacturing industries, such as metallurgical ones, for which there were enough material resources. Marţian publicly urges the owners of capital to invest in these industries. He also asks the government to exempt of duties the import of iron and other raw materials. Moreover, Marţian stated: “In no European country is accepted the principle: that the customs are set up with the clear purpose of taxation, but to protect the indigenous industry, although customs practice brings high benefits. Those states that impose taxes on consumption goods, justify customs revenues with the law, and those without such taxes, use customs revenues to encourage the industry” (Marţian, 1961, p. 435) Also, Marţian advocate for the export of salt mining and coal because “their production is the easiest and it is the most visible result of the will of the holder” (Marţian, 1961, p. 296). The establishment and growth of industries implied a custom policy which should follow a series of actions such as:

“a) to charge luxury products and those goods similar to the national ones;
b) to diminish the taxes in case of the necessary objects to produce in the national industries;
c) to charge the exports by using a sliding scale, but only to charge the goods of those who cannot compete with us and the taxes to be small.”
(Marţian, 1961, p. 435).

Incidentally: one of the great ideas that deserve a moment of reflection is related to Marţian's revolt against a situation occurring in the export of salt: Romanian exported salt was recognized as a good and cheap product; however Serbia, Romania's traditional partner, imported salt from France, obviously
more expensive! Marțian solves the mystery: Romania does not have good roads! Of course, things are questionable, but the problem remains!

In conclusion, industry protection measures should be supplemented with measures of custom protection and with an educational policy that requires those professions needed by the industry: “The whole civilized world has respected the requirements of the time; people create institutes of polytechnics in order to spread real knowledge that help them to dominate the matter (nature) and to transform it in wealth and power, from which springs the welfare and the culture” (Marțian, 1961, p. 219).

Quoting the French minister of Public Instruction, “let’s educate people and not absolvent” (Marțian, 1961, p. 303), Marțian advocate for an appropriate and modern educational system. For this purpose it was necessary to qualify the labour force in order to respect the requirements of the industry; in those times in Romania was a shortage of workers, technicians and engineers. Marțian proposes to increase the share of technical and vocational education and to diminish considerably the humanistic education share: “to transform the raw material of this country and to give an industrial aspect, we need economists and industry workers, we must create mechanical workers and trained economists” (Marcu, N. și Ornea, Z., „Studiu introductiv”, în Marțian, 1961, p. 39).

According to Dionisie Pop Marțian, the school must not prepare public servants, but economists and workers: "We have to encourage the creation of professional schools organized and distributed according to the necessity of local industries and in the Romanian capital, beside universities we need a polytechnic institute" (Marțian, 1961, p. 303). Marțian is launching a campaign to support applicative education: “There will come a day when a one-hour speech will seem too long, when a journal article, longer than one hundred lines will not be red, when every sentence that will not be the expression of the human intelligence is going to be thought as ridiculous. The best way to hasten the arrival of such days is to multiply technical schools where they learn first of all what is useful for practical life, where they teach geography before mythology, arithmetic before poetry, natural sciences before, Latin verses and Modern languages before the Greek language. We would be sorry if you understood that we disregard the letters. On the contrary, we owe them everything and we love them. But as I said before: Bread above all!” (Marțian, 1961, p. 305).

On the other hand, the strong development of education would have an important socio-cultural significance, facilitating the consolidation of an
educated middle class, ensuring social stability that is necessary in any society. We only have to agree with the conclusion of Costin Murgescu: “Indeed, as the young Romanian state was consolidated, the reasons for free trade, undeniably respected in the era of Cuza Voda, began to weaken; at the forefront of national interests began to count the defense sector and the industry threatened by foreign competition, coming primarily from Austria-Hungary. Thus, as the years gathered on Dionisie Pop Marțian’s unknown tomb – pure figure in our history and unrepeatable cultural destiny – his way of thinking, unique in his lifetime, became the source of a refreshing current of economic thought” (Murgescu, 1987, p. 300).

The author, focusing more on industry, did not mean any disregard or denial of agriculture. Marțian acknowledged the difficulties of the agriculture sector: “The rural issue is an old one, protracted and often confused by the persecutors. This damages the public safety. Trying to solve did not emerged because other than injustice can be expected as long as the defendant to pay is himself the judge?” (Marțian, 1961, p. 210).

In fact, in case of the Romanian society, “the question of distributing the land to the peasants is a fundamental one” (Marțian, 1961, p. 211) At the same time as the property reform, Marțian requires the progressive transformation of agriculture by the introduction of farming mechanization: agriculture “have to renew his working tools, who are most backward in Europe; to be provided with roads, cars and others; and in order to do that it must earn equity and in this respect it need credits and to take credit, it should be free and safe and the welfare to be more generally widespread. It need, especially the freedom of jokes and a good regime. The best means, in fact, the unique ones are: the spread of economics by speaking and writing” (Marțian, 1961, p. 242).

Indeed, under such realities, the economic concept of Dionisie Pop Marțian is the voice of conscience and vocation. The protection against ignorance – the thread of his short life – became his profession of faith: “Economic and political education of the people proceeded very slowly, because mass remains a long time steeped in ignorance. During centuries, mass ignorance is not so harmful, but when debated issues that are related to it, ignorance is the most dangerous as it is the instrument used by the revolutionaries, as many times history have shown us” (Marțian, 1961, p. 242).
Acknowledgement

This work was co-financed from the European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013, project number POSDRU/1.5/S/59184 „Performance and excellence in postdoctoral research in Romanian economics science domain.

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