

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-28243-7 - Essays in Trespassing: Economics to Politics and Beyond

Albert O. Hirschman

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London New York New Rochelle

Melbourne Sydney

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521238267

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First published 1981
Re-issued in this digitally printed version 2008

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Hirschman, Albert O

Essays in trespassing.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Economics – Addresses, essays, lectures.
 2. Economic development – Addresses, essays, lectures.
 3. Latin America – Economic policy – Addresses, essays, lectures.
 4. Political science – Addresses, essays, lectures.
 5. Social science – Addresses, essays, lectures.
- I. Title.

HB171.H638 330 80–29654

ISBN 978-0-521-23826-7 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-28243-7 paperback

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Preface

“. . . the discipline [of economics] became progressively more narrow at precisely the moment when the problems demanded broader, more political, and social insights . . .”

Thus speaks a foundation which is a leading supporter of social science research.¹ It is an increasingly common lament. Under the circumstances, it may be useful to document the existence of exceptions and countertrends. While I dare not vouch for those “broader insights,” I can at least claim that the essays assembled here ignore any narrow disciplinary boundaries. Their unifying characteristic is the propensity to trespass from one social science domain to another and beyond.

Written over the past decade, the essays deal with themes that have engaged me over a much longer time. Once I put the volume together, I was indeed rather pleased to find that it also serves to tie together my own work: Virtually each of my previous book-length studies has a strong intellectual bond with one or several of the essays. This observation yielded a plausible, if egocentric, thematic subdivision (see Contents), which in turn facilitated the drafting of introductory notes to the resulting groups of essays, where appropriate. The notes provide background on the circumstances and intellectual climate in which the essays were written and orient the reader to some of the numerous interrelationships.

The arrangement makes plain that my interests have moved away from the exclusive concern with development issues that characterized my previous volume of collected papers, *A Bias for Hope: Essays on Development and Latin America* (1971). First place has been given to the essay “The Rise and Decline of Development Economics,” in part because it helps explain this shift. It is

¹ Russell Sage Foundation, *Annual Report, 1979*, New York, 1980, p. 12.

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not so much that the “decline” made me move on to greener pastures; rather, I came to feel that progress with some of the major puzzles in economic-political development requires considerable detours and forays into other areas. Some success can already be claimed for this circuitous approach: My work in intellectual history, published as *The Passions and the Interests* in 1977, has allowed me to reinterpret some particularly vexing development problems (see pages 23–4 and 99–105). Naturally, in addition to such utility, I found much that was worth pursuing for its own sake in those new areas.

Presenting the essays as being related to my previous books does not mean, I hasten to add, that they are mere postscripts. Afterthoughts some of them may be, but then an afterthought that comes to the author just as he publishes his book often expresses the essence of what he was really after and did not quite manage to catch while still laboring on the manuscript. Some of the essays do indeed testify to this curious occurrence, but most stand on their own feet as posterior works that are simply indebted to earlier ones.

Within each group, the essays are presented in chronological order. Their text is almost wholly unchanged, except for the correction of errors and the updating of references. When the same topic is discussed in two or more essays, cross-references have been provided. In a few instances, passages have been added at the time of preparing this volume for publication, for purposes of clarification or because intervening events invited further comment; those passages have been placed within brackets.

A number of acknowledgments are in order. I spent three of the last ten years at Harvard and the remainder at the Institute for Advanced Study, which I joined in 1974 after having been a visitor in 1972–73. Chapters 3 and 6 were written at Harvard, the others at the Institute. I am grateful to both institutions. The volume was prepared for publication in the summer of 1980 at the University of California at Berkeley where the Institute of International Studies kindly offered me its hospitality. Finally, I have been most fortunate to have Johanna M. Cornelissen as secretary for the past four years; her intelligent, skillful, and dedicated help has been invaluable.

Princeton, New Jersey
September 1980

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