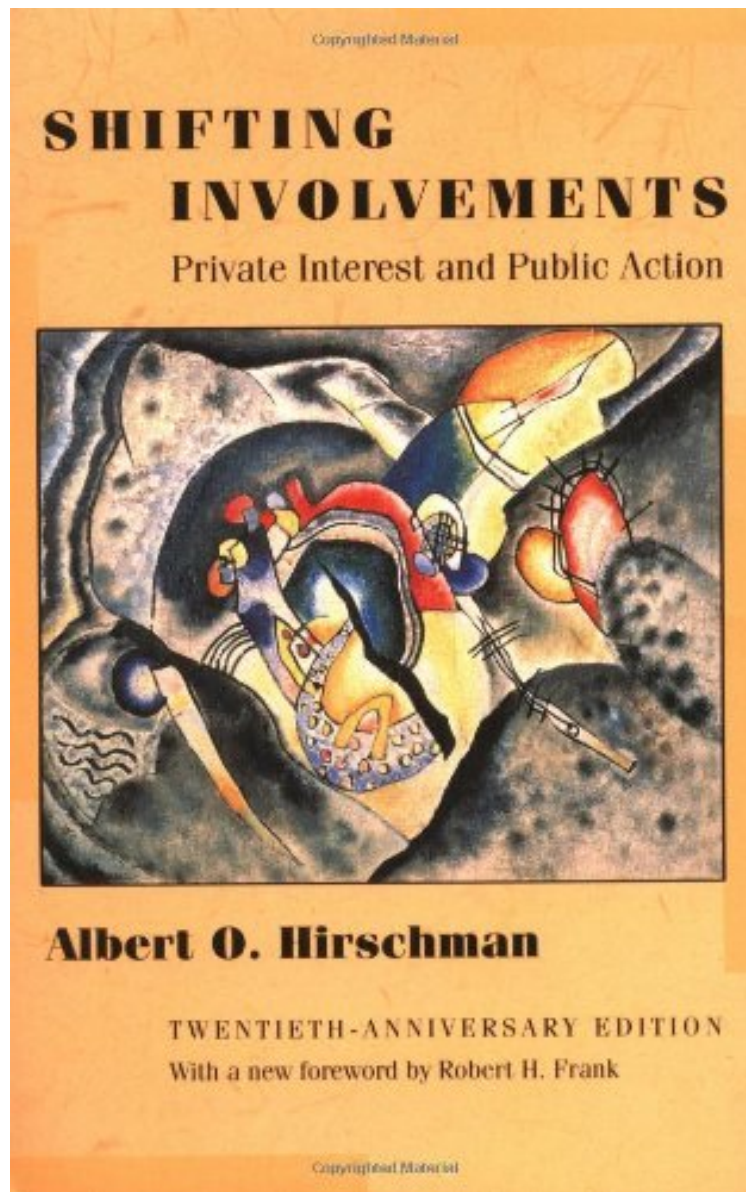


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Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action (Eliot Janeway Lectures on Historical Economics in Honor of J)

Albert O. Hirschman

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Albert O. Hirschman : Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action (Eliot Janeway Lectures on Historical Economics in Honor of J) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Shifting Involvements: Private Interest and Public Action (Eliot Janeway Lectures on Historical Economics in Honor of J):

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Underrated Economist By Antonia Bercovici I am a Hirschman admirer. He is one of our country's best (and underrated) economists. I wish more people were reading him especially in Washington -- but perhaps it should be required reading for all future economists. Sadly, Hirschman died recently. His thinking to economic thought have been too long neglected. 14 of 16 people found the following review helpful. interesting but not compelling By C. Magee The author's premise that the general public is given to mass swings from seeking private gain to seeking public benefit, both driven by disappointment, is interesting; but the argument is never quite proven. For starters, there is offered no empirical evidence that this occurs. (The only historical review given is in support of the narrower point that a growing level of wealth generates disappointment in various affected classes.) Secondly, the explanations for why such swings *might* happen, or be expected to happen, never quite explain why these swings would happen *en masse*. Nevertheless, I recommend reading this book -- it briefly introduces a range of provoking ideas. These include: that potential for disappointment varies by type of good, that there are multiple responses to disappointment (including postponing response by ignoring problems or internalizing dissatisfaction), that consumers do not have perfect knowledge nor only a single set of preferences, that "comfort is the enemy of pleasure," that public involvement could disappoint for providing too much *or* too little opportunity for participation. The book is more marketing/psychology than economics, but its arguments could help explain, for instance, our modern shift to disposable goods and possible methods for understanding voters by understanding second-order volitions. It gets you thinking, even if the primary argument of the book is less than convincing.

Why does society oscillate between intense interest in public issues and almost total concentration on private goals? In this classic work, Albert O. Hirschman offers a stimulating social, political, and economic analysis dealing with how and why frustrations of private concerns lead to public involvement and public participation that eventually lead back to those private concerns. Emerging from this study is a wide range of insights, from a critique of conventional consumption theory to a new understanding of collective action and of universal suffrage.

Winner of the Talcott Parsons Prize, American Academy of Arts and Sciences "Original. . . Mr. Hirschman, one of our most distinguished economists, is no ordinary writer. . . even his offhand ruminations have always been interesting. So is this book."--Peter L. Berger, New York Times Book "Shifting Involvements can be read over and over again, with each reading disclosing new subtleties, so cunning is its construction and so original its standpoint."--Michael Banton, Times Literary Supplement "This interesting essay contains a wealth of ideas. There is a surprising freshness in the treatment of such a well worn topic as the relation between public and private concerns. . . . Intellectually stimulating."--David Berry, Times Higher Education Supplement "Literate, reflective, and sophisticated. . . Hirschman's work . . . is proof that an economist with a knowledge of and sensitivity for history will avoid the oversimplifications of economic theorists who see the world and human behavior in one dimension."--Eli Ginzberg, Journal of Economic Literature About the Author Albert O. Hirschman is a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. He is the author of many books, including *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* and *The Strategy of Economic Development*. Robert H. Frank is Godwin Smith Professor of Economics, Ethics, and Public Policy at Cornell University. He is the author of *Luxury Fever* (Princeton).