



The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy

By Albert O. Hirschman

Harvard University Press. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy, Albert O. Hirschman, With engaging wit and subtle irony, Albert Hirschman maps the diffuse and treacherous world of reactionary rhetoric in which conservative public figures, thinkers, and polemicists have been arguing against progressive agendas and reforms for the past two hundred years. Hirschman draws his examples from three successive waves of reactive thought that arose in response to the liberal ideas of the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man, to democratization and the drive toward universal suffrage in the nineteenth century, and to the welfare state in our own century. In each case he identifies three principal arguments invariably used: (1) the perversity thesis, whereby any action to improve some feature of the political, social, or economic order is alleged to result in the exact opposite of what was intended; (2) the futility thesis, which predicts that attempts at social transformation will produce no effects whatever--will simply be incapable of making a dent in the status quo; (3) the jeopardy thesis, holding that the cost of the proposed reform is unacceptable because it will endanger previous hard-won accomplishments. He illustrates...



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