



# **Agrarianism and the Good Society: Land, Culture, Conflict, and Hope (Culture of the Land)**

*Eric T. Freyfogle*

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Every society expresses its fundamental values and hopes in the ways it inhabits its landscapes. In this literate and wide-ranging exploration, Eric T. Freyfogle raises difficult questions about America's core values while illuminating the social origins of urban sprawl, dwindling wildlife habitats, and over-engineered rivers. These and other land-use crises, he contends, arise mostly because of cultural attitudes that made sense on the American frontier but now threaten the land's ecological fabric. To support and sustain healthy communities, profound adjustments will be required. Freyfogle's search leads him down unusual paths. He probes Charles Frazier's novel *Cold Mountain* for insights on the healing power of nature and tests the wisdom in Wendell Berry's fiction. He challenges journalists writing about environmental issues to get beyond well-worn rhetoric and explain the true choices that Americans face. In an imaginary job advertisement, he issues a call for a national environmental leader, identifying the skills and knowledge required, taking note of cultural obstacles, and looking critically at supposed allies. Examining recent federal elections, he largely blames the conservation cause and its inattention to cultural issues for the diminished status of the environment as a decisive issue. *Agrarianism and the Good Society* identifies the social, historical, political, and cultural obstacles to humans' harmony with nature and advocates a new orientation, one that begins with healthy land and that better reflects our utter dependence on it. In all, *Agrarianism and the Good Society* offers a critical yet hopeful guide for cultural change, essential for anyone interested in the benefits and creative possibilities of responsible land use.

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