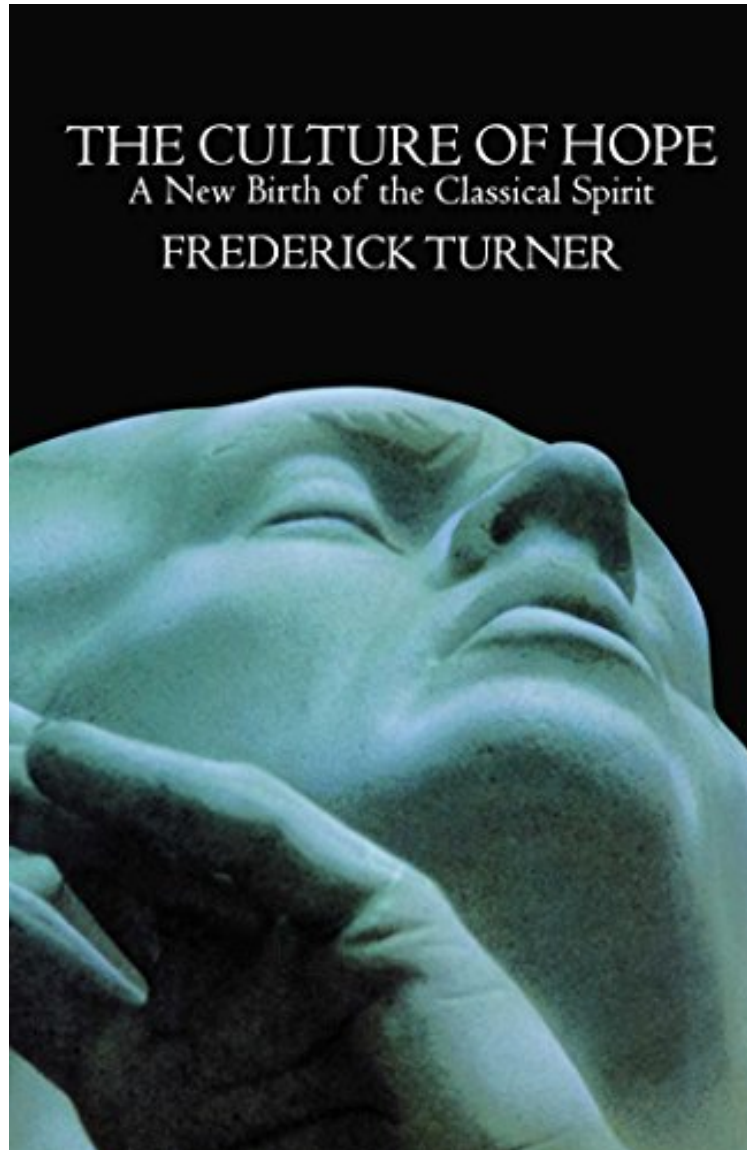


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## Culture of Hope: A New Birth of the Classical Spirit

*Frederick Turner*

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**Frederick Turner : Culture of Hope: A New Birth of the Classical Spirit** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Culture of Hope: A New Birth of the Classical Spirit:

16 of 17 people found the following review helpful. Claiming the Best Within Us By Valjean This book - with its diminutive subtitle of 'A New Birth of the Classical Spirit' - is after very big game. Nominally a broadside against post-modernism in the arts, 'The Culture of Hope' quickly expands its focus to tackle the entire American cultural establishment and goes after this monstrous weed by its roots. I found his effort hopelessly ambitious -- but strangely successful in many respects. Frederick Turner's arguments are complex but utterly novel, his \*optimism\* is refreshing

(especially compared to reactionary cultural commentaries that regard any cultural \*change\* as hedonistic or ridiculous), and his courage to wage these battles from \*within\* the academic world downright inspiring. Where else in the academic world, for example, would you find a scholar arguing for "a return to patriarchy, in its best sense" (and using the glorious \*Don Giovanni\* as an artistic example)? To show he's no prissy "conservative" critic, Turner also gives a nod to matriarchy (but easily shows its cultural destruction by "oppressive" patriarchs to be a myth), and witheringly contrasts both of these with what he terms the "juvenocracy" - a culture that ultimately destroyed the traditional patriarchy/matriarchy divide (under the neat guises of anti-authoritarian and "feminist" ideals), replacing it with a cult of the hip, young (men, mostly), self-absorbed, impulsive and emotional. If all this sounds a bit abstract, be assured Turner provides lengthy examples from history and literature - ranging from the Greek muses to Shakespeare - to hammer home his points. I was further impressed by an overall lack of sourness. The author generally stays very true to the "hope" in his title - and impressively devotes the majority of this book to a new cosmology and doesn't dwell on the old. If he proposes any "manifesto" it consists of what appears to be rather simple propositions: \* Reunite the artist with the public\* Reunite beauty with morality\* Reunite High with Low art\* Reunite art with craft\* Reunite passion with intelligence\* Reunite art with science\* Reunite the past with the future. The harkening-back verbs are intentional. One of Turner's subtlest and best points is an exhortation not to literally \*return\* to the past, but rather to bring back many of the \*methods\* of the past with the best of the present. (Rather obvious in the last point, of course.) Contrasted with the modernist "starting from zero" impulse, this stance appears mature and reasoned - rather than peevish and emotional. Juvenocracy, indeed. Many commenters have skewered the avant-garde, of course - Paul Johnson's doorstop-like 'History of Art' being a, well, solid recent example. But Turner is a true apostate: an \*academic\* storming the gates of the modern (and, for good measure, post-modern) cultural fortress. Other writers and critics can be easily dismissed as "conservative" (read: not \*serious\*, not one of us) and therefore probably "retro" or "old-fashioned" (why, they actually think representation art has merit! How quaint!). Turner, an arts and humanities professor at the University of Texas, has not such protection. No doubt he gets few free tickets to openings. If you find any part of the current art and cultural scene fundamentally distressing I strongly recommend a careful reading. Turner's only nagging flaw - an occasional lapse into jargon - seems to be in all academic's DNA and only slightly detracts from an otherwise sterling effort. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. A New Paradigm in Seeing the World By Troy Camplin The Culture of Hope provides the reader with a truly new world view for the reader prepared to honestly engage Turner's ideas. This book provides us with not only a new paradigm in the arts, moving us thankfully beyond postmodernism and the nihilistic dead end that is its world view, but of the world as a whole. Turner unifies the hard sciences of quantum physics, chemistry, and biology with the soft sciences of economics, political science, psychology, and sociology and with the humanities, including philosophy and the arts. Turner's thesis: humans have a nature, and that nature is classical. Not classical in the merely Greek and Roman sense, but in a natural sense. He sees rhythms and patterns, for example, as a natural part of human experience, thinking, and art. Attempts to give them up in the arts separate those works from our very humanity and from the world and life itself. Rhythms are patterns over time, and time too is a vital element of Turner's thesis. He takes the idea of time seriously, and uses the emergentist paradigm of J.T. Fraser [ASIN:0870235761 Time: The Familiar Stranger] as a model for his own cosmology. Turner further uses a truly universalist approach to how we should understand the arts, philosophy, religion, and society. He believes we do have a human nature, but that nature is a unity which gives rise to variety. That unity does not stifle variety or creativity, but rather acts, like a sonnet's form, as an engine containing the explosion to turn it into productive work. Thus, his ideas on human nature are neither conservative (unity-only) nor liberal (variety-only), but libertarian (good rules generate good games). I cannot recommend this work strongly enough. It is the kind of work that, if enough people would read it, it could and would change the world -- and change it for the better. 5 of 21 people found the following review helpful. Another Excuse to Trash the Left By E. Iver If the author of this book bothered to exert any effort to understand the Left in this country this might have made for a good book. As it is, one feels that his impression of the '60s came from old Dragnet and Monkees episodes. While I want to agree with this author, the way he characterizes whole movements is nothing short of ridiculous.

As we approach the new millenium, the moral, intellectual, and spiritual crisis of our time is visible most plainly in the sickness of the arts. The "postmodern" cultural establishment is philosophically empty and esthetically corrupt. But no one has been able to explain this decline or give a satisfying answer to the question of the proper role of the arts in our society. Now, in *The Culture of Hope* -- a manifesto for a new vision of culture that is both radical and classical -- Frederick Turner goes beyond the stale dichotomies of Left and Right to take the "third side" in the culture war: the side of art itself. Great art can never be politically correct, Turner reminds us, whether the correction comes from Right or Left, because its sources are deeper than politics. The visionary modernists (Picasso, Joyce, Stravinsky) understood this, but their successors today, as well as their conservative opponents, have forgotten. Turner sharply indicts the bankrupt tribe of venal mediocrities who now infest the arts, citing their naive rejection of morality, their ignorant denial of scientific truth, and their lazy dismissal of the Western cultural heritage. On the other hand, conservatives who call for a return to traditional values seek a socially "safe" vision of art that has never existed and never can. In the

past, the arts have flowered when they drew their inspiration from new scientific visions of the cosmos. Thus Turner argues that the revolution in cosmology that is occurring today in the frontier fields of scientific thought will powerfully invigorate the artists of the future. A new esthetic synthesis arising from the unexpected convergence of religion, art, and science will restore a hopeful vision of the cosmos as intelligent, creative, and self-ordering and provide the missing ground for the recovery of classical values in the arts, such as beauty, order, harmony, and meaning. Turner points to new developments in chaos theory, neurobiology, evolution, and environmental science, among other fields, to offer us a guide to the emerging art of the "radical center" which he predicts will shape the culture of the future.

From Library Journal Turner (arts and humanities, Univ. of Texas, Dallas) argues for a "radical center" that dissolves the dualistic theories of both the avant-garde and right-wing art critics. Using information and reasoning from evolution science and cultural history, he makes a compelling argument for an aesthetic that will reunite public and artist, high and low culture, passion and intelligence. His presentation has an oddly absolutist quality, and both scholars and informed lay readers should find this text grounds for argument, debate, or at least lively dialog-which in itself seems to prove Turner's theoretical point. For academic and large public libraries. Francisca Goldsmith, Berkeley P.L., Cal. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. Edward O. Wilson Pellegrino University Professor, Harvard University; Author, *The Diversity of Life* *The Culture of Hope* takes us past the wreckage of postmodernism to revive the dream of the unification of science and the humanities -- and hence of culture. Frederick Turner is an articulate spokesman for the small band of visionaries who know enough, and care enough, to make that dream realizable. About the Author Frederick Turner is the Founders Professor of Arts and Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas. He is the author of sixteen books of poetry, criticism, and fiction, including *The New World: An Epic Poem*; *Rebirth of Value: Meditations on Beauty, Ecology, Religion and Education*; and *Tempest, Flute and Oz: Essays on the Future*.