



Zyberk, are struggling to revive the American town-planning tradition. The essence of the New Urbanist idea is conveyed by Katz's subtitle: *Toward an Architecture of Community*. The New Urbanists argue that most of the postwar suburb's key features, from its broad roads to its generous setback requirements, work against the constant chance contacts between strangers needed to create a public realm. The remedy, say the New Urbanists, is in the plan: Build houses close to the street and closer together. Lay the streets out in a grid so that people can walk from one place to another. Narrow roads to slow down the cars. Mix housing types so that the mechanic can rent an apartment over the doctor's detached garage and the empty nesters can leave their five-bedroom house for a smaller place without departing for a distant retirement community. Most of these ideas are presented with textbook clarity by Langdon, a journalist who writes frequently about architecture.

So far, the signal New Urbanist accomplishment has been Duany and Plater-Zyberk's acclaimed community of Seaside, Florida, where construction began in 1981. Peter Calthorpe's Laguna West is being built on 1,000 acres outside Sacramento, California, and on the draw-

ing boards is Playa Vista, a planned community in Los Angeles designed by Elizabeth Moule and Stefanos Polyzoides. These and nearly two dozen other stunning New Urbanist communities—many still only in the planning stages—can be seen in Katz's lavishly illustrated book, which also includes brief essays by several New Urbanist leaders.

Yale University's Vincent Scully, the movement's *eminence grise*, concedes in the Katz volume that "New Suburbanism" might be a more accurate name for the movement. It is not that the group neglects cities but that "the *new* theme that links these projects is the redesign of that vast area in which most Americans now live." The critics who complain that the New Urbanists do not offer solutions to the problems of the inner cities are themselves heirs to a modernist tradition that, as Scully notes, helped destroy the city and that now has practically nothing to offer either cities or suburbs. (Both the New Urbanists and their critics, one might add, seem to be naive about the capacity of good design to overcome deeply rooted social problems.) There are other challenges to the New Urbanists' ideas: Do Americans really *want* to live together in towns? How do the planners propose to repair the thousands of square miles of suburban sprawl already in existence? Perhaps, however, it is too much to ask them to make up overnight for 50 years of lost time. Americans are continuing to surge into suburbia, and the New Urbanists have the only fresh ideas about how to shape the world they will make there.

RACE AND CULTURE: A World View. By Thomas Sowell. Basic. 331 pp. \$25

When European and Lebanese businessmen competed with each other in the cities and towns of 18th-century colonial West Africa, the Lebanese won hands down. In Malaysia during the 19th century, Chinese workers sapped trees on rubber plantations at twice the rate of the natives. Soldiers of German ancestry have commanded armies under Russian czars and American presidents. Most of today's mainstream social scientists can explain none of this, says Sowell, an

economist and senior fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. They spend too much time, he charges, analyzing "initial conditions" that don't affect results and "advantages" that don't really exist. "Whenever group A outperforms group B in any given set of circumstances," notes Sowell, "those circumstances are said to 'favor' group A."

But this kind of thinking obscures genuine differences in "cultural capital": "the specific skills, general work habits, saving propensities, and attitudes toward education and entrepreneurship" possessed by different cultural groups, Sowell says. The Lebanese, for instance, entered West African markets with far less financial capital than did the Europeans. But they chose to live meagerly, save money, and employ their entire families. They became more familiar with their customers and were better able to bargain and extend lines of credit. In short, culturally shaped behavior was the key: "The Europeans simply did not choose to subject themselves to many of the conditions which the Lebanese endured."

Sowell calls on researchers to start "regarding groups as having their own internal cultural patterns, antedating the environment in which they currently find themselves and transcending the beliefs, biases, and decisions of others." The reason scholars tend not to, says Sowell, is twofold. First, most social scientists fail to apply an international perspective to their work. A one-country analysis might examine Chinese retailers in Jamaica and suggest that they prospered for reasons peculiar to Jamaica. But that fails to account for similar kinds of Chinese success in Indonesia, Malaysia, Peru, the Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and elsewhere.

More important, Sowell believes, scholars have an "understandable revulsion" toward admitting that "some ways of doing things—some cultures—are better in some respects than others." Relativism continues to reign in the academy. Yet Sowell argues that some cultures are clearly more suited to certain economic roles than are others.

Through copious examples gathered from around the world, *Race and Culture* makes a strong case for "the reality, persistence, and consequences of cultural differences." So the book

succeeds at complicating a debate in which all differences in group performance are now automatically written off as consequences of politics or prejudice. Unfortunately, Sowell can be just as tendentious in his argumentation as the social scientists he criticizes. Perhaps most prominently, he essentially dismisses the impact of racial discrimination on a group's economic success. Where discrimination exists, he argues, it must reflect real differences in group productivity—an argument that ignores mounds of evidence to the contrary. Coupled with his familiar diatribes against affirmative action and multiculturalism, this sort of selective fact finding makes the book at times read more like a polemic than a serious scholarly study.

Philosophy & Religion

THE THERAPY OF DESIRE: Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics. *By Martha C. Nussbaum.* Princeton. 558 pp. \$29.95

A health-care plan drawn up by Martha Nussbaum would surely cover visits to philosophers. They are the mind's doctors—or at least they once were. That they are no longer so, and that systems of philosophy hold little interest today for anyone outside the academy, is one measure of our distance from the Hellenistic period (from the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. to the suicide of Cleopatra VII in 31 B.C.), when the question "How should one live?" drove the philosophical enterprise and the answer mattered equally to aristocrat and slave.

Nussbaum, a professor of philosophy, classics, and comparative literature at Brown University, begins her ambitious and impressive book with Aristotle, who accepted the idea that ethical philosophy should resemble medicine in its dedication to the practical goal of ameliorating human life. She goes on to explore how a medical and therapeutic conception of philosophy played itself out in the three principal Hellenistic schools of thought—the Epicurean, the Skeptic, and the Stoic.

All three schools worked to create a healing community that strove to counter the negative