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The Communitarian Curse

By Richard A Epstein

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Many modern journalists and academics wrongly think that self-proclaimed moderates distill wisdom drawn from both sides. One vivid confirmation of that grievous error is found by looking at the dubious communitarian proposals by the British academic Phillip Blond, endorsed this past week by the columnist David Brooks of the New York Times.

The first part of the Blond/Brooks indictment of modern society rings true--the U.S. and Great Britain both face enormous challenges to minimum levels of social solidarity. Yet diagnosis for this ailment is incorrect. The blame for this sorry state of affairs does not fall equally on pesky libertarians (like myself) and the statist left wing. We libertarians are charged with ignoring vital small-scale social institutions in our rapturous embrace of the market. The left-wing is charged with running up relentless debts and raising false hopes as it relentlessly extends government tentacles into all areas of social life, riding roughshod over strong public opposition, as Sunday's passage of the health care act so vividly shows.

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