

Unfortunately, Most Voters Are ‘Idiots’

On the first Tuesday of November millions of Americans will turn out to cast their ballots.

Unfortunately, most of them are probably idiots.

Now, I don't mean that as an insult based on the modern sense of the word “idiot”, i.e., someone who is simple and stupid. It's more of a lament based on the ancient meaning of the term.

As Notre Dame professor [Patrick Deneen](#) explains in his newly published book *Conserving America? Essays on Present Discontents*, the Greek word *idiotes* was a derogatory term for an individual who was purely concerned with private things. In other words, a self-centered person who thinks only of his own comfort and gain.

The *idiotes* stood in contrast to the ideal in an Athenian democracy, the *polites* (“citizen”) who was selflessly concerned with the *res publica*, the “public things” that enable a free society to flourish.

In [an essay earlier this year](#), Deneen explained that America's education system has been churning out “idiots” for many decades now:

“Ancient philosophy and practice heaped praise upon res publica—a devotion to public things, things we share together. We have instead created the world's first res idiotica—from the Greek word idiotes, meaning ‘private individual.’ Our education system excels at producing solipsistic, self-contained selves whose only public commitment is an absence of commitment to a public, a common

culture, a shared history. They are perfectly hollowed vessels, receptive and obedient, without any real obligations or devotions. They have been taught to care passionately about their indifference, and to denounce the presence of actual diversity that threatens the security of their cocoon. They are living in a perpetual Truman Show, a world constructed yesterday that is nothing more than a set for their solipsism, without any history or trajectory."

As a result, most people who go into the voting booth today will be primarily choosing a candidate based not on a reasoned, dispassionate assessment of who will best serve the interests of the larger society. Rather, they will be voting for the candidate who confirms them in their personal prejudices, limited perspectives, and self-centered desires.

Such is the nature of an election in a *Res Idiotica*.

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