

# Stupid



Critical term indicating lack of sense.



Term of approval for culture that does not have any pretensions to stimulating thought.

What is ‘Wal-Mart’? Is it, like, they sell wall stuff?

Paris Hilton, TV star

Mandelstam\* always said they knew what they were doing: the aim was to destroy not only people, but the intellect itself.

Nadezhda Mandelstam

It is not that genuine stupidity is celebrated in a mediocracy, since nothing is really celebrated in a mediocracy except mediocracy. People of low intelligence are belittled for their particular deficiencies as readily as anyone else is for theirs. What is promoted, rather, is *identification* with stupidity.

Enthusiasm for ‘stupidity’ can express a rejection of the supposed ‘intelligence’ of mediocratic high culture, which in practice is dull and impenetrable. This suits the mediocratic elite, who create such culture precisely to turn everyone else off it.

The development of a celebrity class which is predominantly glamorous, rich and ‘stupid’ indicates what the real threat in a mediocracy is perceived to be. Not extreme financial inequality, not fame, not desirability, but intellect – the genuine rather than the ersatz kind.

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\* Osip Mandelstam, Russian poet who died in a Soviet labour camp.