

Insane, or just \342\200\234Intellectually Challenged?\342\200\235  
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When criminal perpetrators go to court, lawyers and judges still have problems with the \342\200\234insanity defense.\342\200\235 The courts in Florida determined that an obviously demented man knew what he was doing when he murdered eight people in the 1970s. They finally got through all the appeals and executed him, to the howls of those who both oppose capital punishment and especially oppose executing the \342\200\234insane\342\200\235 or, in some cases, the Intellectually Challenged (very low IQ). To some others, the fact that it took 30 years of appeals before this fellow was executed is also a miscarriage of justice. One way or the other, this was a divisive execution.

We often fail to recognize insanity that is not of the \342\200\234out-of-one\342\200\235 sort; the subtler forms elude juries (such as the post-partum, religiously delusional mother of four children who drowned them all so that they could \342\200\234go to heaven\342\200\235). Post-partum depression is not unusual; a hormonal imbalance is not a woman\342\200\235 fault. But what happens when it is made deadly by religiously delusional thinking? We have difficulty in dealing legally with religious poisoning affecting rational thought. But in today\342\200\235 world, we had better be looking at this.

The trial of Major Nidal Hasan was a case in point. If there is an example of religiously delusional thinking, it is right here. Hasan was born in the United States to Palestinian parents. He benefited throughout his life from the largess of his new country: good education, promotion in the US Army, and a career as a psychiatrist where he was supposedly helping others.

But what was going on in his head? His adopted country was so politically correct (reluctant to offend a Muslim) that he passed all of his exams to become a psychiatrist, got promotions in the army, and was given every opportunity to succeed in this country, despite suspicion that he was a ticking time bomb and not so smart. Although his military superiors noticed that his thinking was bizarre, they ignored complaints from colleagues that he had a screw loose, and kept promoting him despite valid concerns.

The Major has demonstrated that he is also intellectually challenge by opting to defend himself on his mass murder charges, despite knowing that a person who is his own lawyer in court has a dolt for a client. His astonishing legal defense was citing Islamic law: that his duty was to defend Al Qaeda, not the America that nurtured him. The court found no difficulty in finding him guilty and sentencing him to death. Unfortunately, with assistance from Islamist legal arms, his execution will be postponed for years. Again, justice delayed is justice denied.

What is really wrong with Major Hasan? Is he wired wrong, unable to tell right from wrong? Is he stupid, unable to think through his crackpot actions? Is he someone who just took to the opium of a religious obsession to justify horrible actions? My guess is that he is all of these. The same religious poisoning applies to the Boston bomber brothers too.

But Islamic religious poisoning is not alone. Pious parents who let their child die of a burst appendix rather than get medical care have a religious delusion. Gun nuts who murder abortion doctors have the delusion that God is on their side.

This brings up the issue: what is evil? Progressives dislike the term for sounding too \342\200\234biblical,\342\200\235 but it does describe the actions of certain people. The man who tortured and abused three girls for a decade saw nothing wrong with what he did. He said he was a victim of his \342\200\234addiction to sexual perversion,\342\200\235 caused by the \342\200\234availability of pornography.\342\200\235 In a lucid moment, he killed himself, avoiding the imprisonment he inflicted on others.

Serial killers often start out with horror over the first kill, followed by less and less conscience. Are they guilty of deliberately deadening the one thing that makes us decent: putting ourselves in the place of others? Is this a choice or is it psychopathy?

The mystery of human evil still defies our ability as a society to defend ourselves from it and our justice system imperfectly punishes it.

681 words

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