

Lessons from the Breivik case



Professor Lisa Bortolotti

“There is no good reason to think that labelling some of Breivik’s beliefs as delusional should have such a significant impact on his accountability. The Breivik case encourages us to move towards a more sophisticated account of the relationship between psychotic symptoms and criminal insanity, according to which psychosis does not necessarily rule out responsibility for action.”

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Feedback

AM on 25 November 2013, **Lisa Bortolotti** wrote

Thanks for this comment.

I agree that the outcome of court proceedings like these is important, but whether Breivik had been confined to a psychiatric hospital and subjected to compulsory treatment (with a diagnosis of schizophrenia) or incarcerated (with a diagnosis of personality disorder), he would have been prevented to cause further harm anyway.

When we were thinking about the case, we were interested in the role of psychiatric diagnosis in attributions of moral responsibility, and the issue seems to deserve attention as it clearly affects more generally the way in which we think about decision making in people living with mental illness.

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AM on 22 November 2013, **Dr. Allan White** wrote

When an individual commits a dreadful crime like this, there are often lengthy medico-legal arguments about whether the perpetrator is, in some sense, not of sound mind. I am of the opinion that, in such a context, the entire distinction is otiose. Whether the individual is mad or whether he/she is bad, the important outcome is that, for the sake of public safety, he/she should be incarcerated until such time as he/she is no longer a risk to society.

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