Stewart Justman
Liberal Studies Program
University of Montana
Missoula, MT 59812
Stewart.justman@umontana.edu

Storm Clouds: The "Warning Signs" Fallacy

"Truly, officer, because he hath some offenses in him that thou wouldst discover if thou couldst, let him continue in his courses till thou know'st what they are"—
Measure for Measure

Soon after Maj. Nidal Malik Hasan shot to death 13 and injured many more at Fort Hood, Texas, on November 5, 2009, reporters and commentators began to wonder aloud whether warning signs of the homicidal outburst had been ignored. "Officials may not have heeded warning signs," declared a headline in the Washington Post of Nov. 7. According to an article in the New York Times on Nov. 9, the FBI and the Army may be guilty of "missing possible warning signs that might have stopped a mass killing." Whether or not such a massacre was predictable, the retrospective invocation of warning signs seems to take place regularly—predictably—in the aftermath of mass murder. Within a day of the massacre at Virginia Tech in April 2007, CBS News already had an article on its website headlined, "Warning Signs from Student Gunman." Appended to the report of the Virginia Tech Review Panel, likewise, is "a list of red flags, warning signs and indicators." It is as if the ritual repetition of a phrase served to buffer the shock of

events. However, the notion that shocking events are preceded by legible warnings, and could therefore have been prevented if only the warnings were heeded, obscures the self-evident truth that it is easier to predict events after they have occurred.

Regardless of the language that sprang up seemingly automatically in the press in the immediate aftermath of Fort Hood, those events too yielded warning signs only in retrospect. After the fact it came out that Hasan was known to American surveillance to be in communication with an anti-American cleric in Yemen, yet "there was no indication that Major Hasan was planning an imminent attack at all."[1] The ominous import that his exchanges with the cleric seemed to possess in retrospect escaped intelligence analysts in real time. Surely even those who think Hasan's actions might have been prevented would have been reluctant at the time to charge him with conspiracy to commit mass murder on the strength of messages that furnished no evidence of any such thing.

Where, then, does the belief in warning signs come from? The term itself recalls the belief that "the warning signs of cancer" provide our best defense against the disease, a doctrine already well established when a succession of school shootings in the 1990s, culminating in the Columbine massacre of 1999, provoked public reflection on their causes and the possibility of prevention. Because no cure of cancer materialized despite the war on cancer declared by President Nixon in 1971, the only recourse seemed to be early treatment, which in turn demands early detection. The discourse and even, to some extent, the

machinery of detection were already in place when the mass murders first in high schools, then Virginia Tech, and lately at Fort Hood began to form a kind of genre in our common experience. Given the widely held and seemingly intuitive notion that society itself can suffer from illness, the application of a cancer metaphor to this social problem seemed all the more apt.

In that medical warning signs are more definite than behavioral signals of impending events, the cancer analogy works to the advantage of those concerned to prevent violence by rooting it out in its early stages. But this isn't to say that "the warning signs of cancer" pose no interpretive quandaries. Considering that the search for early cancer is less epistemologically open-ended than the interpretation of behavioral signals, it's noteworthy that in the case of some cancers we tend to find what we seek, and that the cancers thus detected are of uncertain significance. Because a protein associated with prostate cancer can be detected by a blood test, the disease has lent itself to a population-wide program of prevention, with the result that by 2005 well over a million men had already been treated with surgery or radiation for cancer without clinical significance.[2] Even if the presence of cancer is confirmed under the microscope, its significance is by no means a settled question in many cases. That medicine cannot always distinguish clinically insignificant from dangerous cancer of the prostate, and that screening has therefore led to massive overdiagnosis and overtreatment of the disease over the last twenty years are openly conceded in the medical literature. The more rigorous the hunt for the early signs of prostate cancer the more of it is detected, to the point that fully 25%

of the placebo group in the Prostate Cancer Prevention Trial, a low-risk population, was diagnosed with prostate cancer (this even as mortality from the disease stands at about 3% of the male population).[3] That the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force declines to recommend PSA testing, and has lately recommended against mammography for women at age 40, suggests that the search for incipient cancer has costs. Yet there is more science behind it than behind the search for the theoretical early signs of homicidal violence. If we were to screen the population for warning signs of the latter as actively as we screen for early-stage cancer, the result would be massive signal-distortion, with the complication that cancer is a disease and a tendency to violence isn't.

In part, the trouble lies in the very concept of a behavioral warning of an impending event. Compounding the uncertainty of behavioral signals as such with reference to an as-yet nonexistent occurrence, such a sign seems doubly uncertain. Virtually by definition, it's easy to miss the import of a behavioral signal directing our gaze to something that hasn't yet taken place. However, it's also very possible to make something of nothing—to convert a datum into a warning sign by reading ominous import into it that it doesn't really possess or warrant. The concept of a warning sign is pregnant with false negatives and false positives.

Say that a youth who turns a gun on his fellow students is discovered to have liked a song that exalts killing. In retrospect the association seems significant, though it real time no one read anything into it, and in any case it would have been impossible to predict so terrible an outcome on the strength of such tenuous

evidence (even buttressed by other evidence of the same kind). Was his affection for the song a sign? How could it have been recognized as such? How, on the basis of evidence as slender as this, would it be possible to justify the sort of pre-emptive intervention that believers in warning signs seem to have in mind?

Following a succession of school shootings but before the massacre at Virginia Tech, the Secret Service Interim Report on the Prevention of Targeted Violence in Schools cautioned that "Knowing that an individual shares characteristics, features, or traits with prior school shooters does not advance the appraisal of risk. The use of profiles carries a risk of overidentification, and the vast majority of students who fit any given profile will not actually pose a risk." To classify students as potential shooters because they happen to resemble other shooters is to abuse evidence and to institute a sort of interpretive presumption of guilt in the name of prevention. When CBS News, but one day after the bloodshed at Virginia Tech, pointed to the perpetrator's "violent writings" and "loner status" as fitting "the Secret Service profile" of a school shooter, it did exactly what the Secret Service cautioned against. Such a search for resemblances will yield not only a flood of false positives but also, ironically, the likelihood of false negatives. The Secret Service report continues, "The use of . . . stereotypes will fail to identify some students who do, in fact, pose a risk of violence, but who share few characteristics with prior attackers."[4] Any checklist of psychological signals we might care to draw up—depression, anger, interest in guns, fantasies of violence, thoughts of suicide,

"loner status"—will yield multitudes of false suspects, even as others slip through the net by not conforming to type.

Not only is the concept of a sign pointing to a future event uncertain in itself, but to search for signs with strong emotive preconceptions about their character and import is to make findings still more dubious. In a hunt for signs of violent acts that haven't yet occurred, plenty of evidence would be uncovered, no doubt —but evidence of what? It has been said of jealousy that it

> comprises a powerful desire to know along with a distorted sense of evidence—curiosity combined with credulity. The jealous man, suspecting his wife of infidelity, becomes epistemologically voracious—he must *know*; hence the interrogations, the spying, the private detectives even. . . . But instead of the desire to know being accompanied by high standards of evidence and reasoning, the jealous man turns into an epistemological nincompoop.[5]

Somewhat similarly, the hunt for warning signs would in all likelihood turn up evidence of the hunter's own fears and preconceptions, in this case reinforced by the theories and findings of others. Not only are warning signs subject to interpretation (and "possible warning signs" doubly so), but to search them out is to bend the ambiguity of the evidence into the service of our own foregone conclusions. Those on an interpretive mission tend to find what they seek.

Freudians discover Freudian material. When journalists search after the fact for warning signs of an event, they find them. The hermeneutics of alarm would not fail to uncover alarming signs.

The traps besetting the notion of a behavioral warning sign (and all the more the hunt for such signs) seem to trace back to the belief that the future reveals itself in the present. According to the common conception, this is just what happens in a work of literature—the outcome shows itself symbolically before it occurs, in the form of foreshadowing. "Let us suppose that a character is happy, confident of the future, and celebrating a victory that promises still greater success," writes Gary Saul Morson in a superb study of narrative.

> Obstacles are melting ever faster. But although he does not know it, a thunderstorm, which the author describes in some detail, is approaching. Even if the hero did know of the storm, it would indicate to him nothing more than rain; but the reader recognizes it as foreshadowing, a sign of a reversal of fortune. . . .
>
> The storm happens *because* something else is *going to happen*. It is caused by subsequent events, and that is why it is an instance of foreshadowing. . . The causation, so to speak, works backward.[6]

If something like this literary model informs the popular notion of warning signs—and we do tend to call events like the mass murders at Columbine, Virginia Tech and Fort Hood tragedies, perhaps for lack of a better term—a few comments are in order. First, there's no such thing as reverse causality, as Morson emphasizes. Second, signs are usually less portentous than turmoil in the heavens. Third, even in works of literature with their heightened patterns and lack of randomness, the significance of foreshadowing usually dawns on us only belatedly. So too in life. A section of the Review Panel's report on the Virginia Tech massacre is entitled "Storm Clouds Gathering, Fall 2005."

If and only if Hasan were like a time-bomb would the murderous outcome of his history have been given in advance. But the metaphor of the time-bomb is too mechanistic, the path from present to future implied in its terms too linear and too determined, to apply readily to human life.[7]

*

Some would say, however, that there are specialists among us uniquely qualified to discern and evaluate warning signs of violence. When the press holds out the hope of averting acts of violence by the timely interpretation of signs, it usually means the interpretation of signs *by psychologists*. Exactly what has inspired this investment of hope and trust is hard to say—certainly not the profession's success record. In point of fact, "there are no accurate methods of

discriminating those who will go on to develop a bona fide mental disorder from those who do not,"[8] and psychological experts have a notably poor prediction record.[9] In an amicus brief filed in a capital case some thirty years ago, the American Psychiatric Association itself declared that "even under the best of conditions, psychiatric predictions of future dangerousness are wrong in at least two out of every three cases."[10] Four months before Charles Whitman ascended the tower of the University of Texas at Austin and poured down rifle fire on the mall below for a full 90 minutes—thus inaugurating the twisted tradition of school shootings itself—he admitted to a psychiatrist "thinking about going up on the tower with a deer rifle and start [sic] shooting people." The psychiatrist interpreted the remark as "quite transient.[11]

By the nature of things, it's all but impossible to document a case where someone who would eventually have gone on to commit a massacre was kept from doing so, while on the other hand we know of persons under psychological treatment who did just that. Eric Harris, prime mover of the Columbine massacre, seems to have seen a number of therapists, one of whom, the psychologist Kevin Albert, refused to release his treatment notes to Harris's parents. Not long before the massacre, in which he aspired to kill hundreds, Harris also completed an anger management class. "I learned the four stages of anger; tension building, verbal escalation, physical escalation and opportunity for change. I believe the most valuable part of this class was thinking up ideas for ways to control anger and for

ways to release stress in a nonviolent manner," he wrote afterward, no doubt with suppressed rage, in some kind of assigned exercise.[12]

In January 1997 Kip Kinkel was arrested in Bend, Oregon for throwing rocks from a railroad trestle at the traffic below, hitting one car with what was described as "a fairly decent-sized rock." Held for one night in a facility in Bend, he was referred to the Department of Youth Services in Eugene where a psychologist, taken in by his show of contrition, ordered him to perform thirty-two hours of community service, write an apology to the driver, and pay $50.00 in damages. Faith Kinkel, concerned over her son's arrest in Bend as well as his fascination with weapons and bombs, took him to see a psychologist, Jeffrey Hicks, in Eugene. In May 1998 Kinkel executed his father and mother, then drove to Thurston High School armed with 1000 rounds of ammunition, and shot three students in the head, killing two of them. The therapist's last notes on Kinkel, dated July 30, 1997, read as follows:

> DATA: Kip continues to do well. He is taking Prozac 20 mg. A.M. daily with no side-effects. He does not appear depressed and denies depressive symptoms. His mother reports his moods have generally been quite good. He recently returned from a family reunion in San Diego and was very well behaved and seemed to have a good time.
>
> ASSESSMENT: Kip continues to function well with no evidence of depression.

> PLAN: Kip, his mother and I agree he is doing well enough to discontinue treatment.[13]

Although Hicks testified in court that Kinkel brought up his father's purchase for him of a 9mm Glock, Hicks made no mention of this at the time in written notes. Reportedly, the therapist told Kinkel that he himself was very pleased his Glocks.[14] Those who believe psychologists possess a special ability to decode warning signs, amounting to prescience, have not considered the Kinkel case. If the psychologist had perceived signs of what was to come some months later, it's unthinkable that he would have taken the gun issue so lightly and recommended cessation of treatment.

After the massacre of 32 people by Seung-Hui Cho, the Virginia Tech English faculty were praised for attempting to coax the withdrawn student into getting treatment—as if treatment were the answer. At the time it was not widely known that Cho had already received treatment, a lot of it. According to the Virginia Tech Review Panel, Cho underwent years of weekly therapy sessions. His record is crowded with therapists, art therapists, counselors, psychiatrists.

> After starting with a Korean counselor with whom there was a poor fit, Cho began working with another specialist who had special training in art therapy as a way of diagnosing and addressing the emotional pain and psychological problems of clients. . . . He modeled houses out of clay, houses that had no

> windows or doors. . . . Cho also had a psychiatrist who participated in the first meeting with Cho and his family and periodically over the next few years. He was diagnosed as having [severe] "social anxiety disorder" . . . Cho was evaluated in June 1999 by a psychiatrist at the Center for Multicultural Human Services. . . . Cho was fortunate because the intern who was his psychiatrist was actually an experienced child psychiatrist who had practiced in South America before coming to the United States. . . . The doctor diagnosed Cho with "selective mutism" and "major depression: single episode" . . . In the eleventh grade Cho's weekly session at the mental health center came to an end because there was a gradual, if slight, improvement over the years and he resisted continuing, according to his parents and therapist.[15]

Following a report by one of his acquaintances that he might be suicidal, Cho was ordered to undergo a psychiatric evaluation on December 13, 2005. The next day doctors concluded that "his insight and judgment are normal." Did any of his therapists or evaluators foresee that Cho would one day chain the doors of a classroom building and fire more than 170 shots over nine minutes at those trapped within? Perhaps we misplace our hopes in looking to therapeutic expertise for the accurate interpretation of signs of future events.

The case of Maj. Hasan is particularly confounding to the notion that expert knowledge of the human mind can prevent acts of violence through early detection, for he himself is a psychiatrist.

*

In an elegy for the victims, one of Cho's instructors looked retrospectively for warning signs of what was to come but found none:

For

As long as I can think I will wonder if I could have seen

Something in him to ring an alarm and get him treated.
But I swear on the lives of my children and the family genes
That he showed nothing but extreme stubborn shy retreat.

The search for antecedents of an outburst that seems to come from nowhere has become a kind of convention in recent years. But if we can't intercept acts of violence by early detection, what are we to do?

We could begin by shifting discussion from what a person might do to what a person has done; from the early detection of future disasters to the appropriate evaluation of present acts; from therapy to judgment. There are press reports that

Cho set fires in his dorm room. (The Report of the Virginia Tech Review Panel notes that "Several times when the suitemates came in the room, it smelled as though Cho had been burning something.") Setting a fire in a dormitory is a manifestly dangerous act, quite unlike a sign whose import needs to be interpreted, such as the fashioning of a clay house with no windows. Someone who sets fires in a dormitory should at the very least be thrown out of the dormitory. As for the English faculty at Virginia Tech, the question to be asked is not whether they "could have seen / Something in him to ring an alarm and get him treated" but why they accepted the trash he submitted for academic credit, thereby allowing him to remain a student in good standing.

Writing in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, the lead author of *Rampage*, an investigation of the West Paducah and Jonesboro massacres, spoke for many when she praised the English faculty at Virginia Tech:

> And here we must take our hats off to the colleagues and students at Virginia Tech who did exactly what we would want them to do. They alerted the counseling staff to the scary writing submitted by the shooter; they tried to cajole him into treatment; and they warned the police.[16]

I can't tip my hat to the Creative Writing instructor who gave Cho credit for a script that read in part: "You wanted me to call you dad? Okay. Hey, *dad*, you are such a asshole! Asshole of assholes, *DAD!* And as for you banging my mom, looks like that

lasted a long [sic] as your pathetic career, you prematurely ejaculating piece of dickshit. Sucks for you, you motherfucking McBeef."[17] Blotted out by the *Rampage* author is the faculty's specifically academic responsibility—one which, if fulfilled, could have seen Cho suspended from Virginia Tech instead of being rewarded with academic credit, and in the case of a tutorial he took with the chair of the English Department an A, for sinking ever deeper into the mire of his fantasies. The sub-academic nature of outpourings like "Richard McBeef" speaks for itself. It is manifest, glaring, not subtle or inferential like a sign.[18]

With Kinkel, too, the question to be asked isn't why everyone failed to see the future coming but why so little was done about plainly outrageous acts committed by him well before the hour of carnage. Kinkel was charged with but not prosecuted for the felony of throwing rocks at speeding cars (an act written off by the psychologist who evaluated him in February 1997 as a "boyish" incident[19] and by a feature in the New York Times on April 10, 2000 as a "prank"). Pelting cars at highway speed with rocks may or may not have been a sign, but was definitely a crime. Again, Kinkel smashed the windows of a farmer's tractor with an ax. A month or so before opening fire in the cafeteria of Thurston High School, he was suspended for karate-kicking a fellow student in the head. Reportedly, he decapitated cats and exhibited their heads to neighborhood children, an atrocity that one or another adult must have caught wind of. It was certainly known that he regularly assembled and exploded bombs. The pity of the Kinkel case isn't that adults overlooked or misread psychological clues of things to come but that they,

including at least two psychologists, attached so little import to violations of the law. When Kinkel was finally arrested for possession of a stolen gun on school property, it was as if his entire history of lies, violence, and lawbreaking caught up with him in one moment. Before he was prosecuted on charges of aggravated murder, not one of Kinkel's violations of the law had ever come to a hearing.

As to Hasan, the corresponding issue is whether under military law it's permissible for a soldier to fraternize with a known enemy of the United States. If not, Hasan should have been prosecuted. In any case, it doesn't seem to make sense to interpret his communications with the jihadist in the light of his later actions and to blame those who intercepted but saw nothing amiss in these messages for failing to discern the shape of the future.

By concentrating our efforts not on reading the future but on evaluating performed acts in the categories appropriate to them (applying academic standards to academic acts, legal standards to criminal acts), we avoid getting lost in the fog of clues, hints, and signals, and avoid falling into the sort of interpretive excesses that would almost necessarily swamp any search for warning signs of things to come. The best warning sign requires a minimum of interpretation. The strongest warning sign of suicide is that a person has already attempted suicide. The strongest warning sign of a school shooting is talk about carrying one out.

A literally graphic warning sign appeared on a package delivered in 1992 to the mailroom of Simon's Rock College in Great Barrington, Massachusetts. Shipped by the manufacturer Classic Arms and so labeled,[20] the box contained

ammunition that was duly delivered to the student Wayne Lo, who ran amok with an assault weapon that evening, killing two and wounding four. College authorities had been warned that Lo had a gun—illegal on campus—and intended to use it. Those responsible for putting the ammunition in Lo's hands were guilty, therefore, not of a failure of interpretation but a failure of ordinary diligence. In our concern to decode the subtle warning signs of violence, we dare not overlook warnings that are not subtle at all.[21]

*

Hermeneutics—interpretation—is a tricky business. The term derives from Hermes, messenger of the gods, and himself the god of both thieves and merchants. Hermes in short

> was . . . both a conveyor of meanings and a transmuter of them, indispensable but not wholly trustworthy. To remember Hermes' problematic character and try to distinguish the cunning and mischievous from the undistorted and valuable was essential for any mortal having dealings with him. Hermeneutic understanding being always probabilistic, always fallible, the possibility of error is never absent.[22]

The duplicity of Hermes is built into the ambiguity of signs themselves—a quality that exposes them to the possibility of misreading, all the more in the case of something as uncertain and emotive as "warning signs."

Why would we be asked to place our hopes in the interpretation of warning signs when such signs tend to disclose themselves only after the fact and when interpretation itself is a patently "problematic" activity? The ambition of defusing shocking acts of violence before they occur is dictated by the understandable wish to render the world more predictable and less dangerous. If it were known that Hasan was a potential mass murderer, something could have been about him before it was too late. Unfortunately, however, only after a person has committed murder do we know that person was a potential murderer.

The owl of Minerva flies at dusk. The river of time does not flow backwards. History lived—the present experienced in ignorance of the future—looks and feels categorically different from history surveyed in retrospect, which is why it would be pointless to characterize the obscure fanatic who wrote *Mein Kampf* as a potential Führer even though the ravings of *Mein Kampf* presage Hitler's sterilization and euthanasia programs and indeed his effort to exterminate an entire people as if it constituted "a noxious bacillus." Though less time separates Hasan's exchanges with the jihadist and the massacre at Fort Hood, it still seems an abuse of interpretation to say that the psychiatrist whose intercepted messages were deemed innocuous by American surveillance in real time had actually revealed himself to be a mass murderer in the making.

Because actions like Hasan's shake us to our roots and impel us to examine our own thinking, it is fitting to recall that law serves and is intended to serve an end much like that sought by believers in warning signs—namely, to make the world more stable. This simple point is made near the end of Hannah Arendt's study of totalitarianism, inspired as it was by the threat posed by that ideology to all traditions including legal ones. Writes Arendt,

> Positive laws in constitutional government are designed to erect boundaries . . . between men whose community is continually endangered by the new men born into it. With each new birth, a new beginning is born into the world, a new world has potentially come into being. . . . The laws hedge in each new beginning and at the same time assure its freedom of movement, the potentiality of something entirely new and unpredictable.[23]

Law, that is, contains threats to the common world we inhabit without suppressing the possibility of the new. A regime that sought to snuff out actions before they occur, before they became subject to law at all, would have jettisoned this concept of law.

Utopias in effect do just this. Arguably, the essence of utopia is that citizens do as their way of life bids them as if it were a prompting of their own nature, without being admonished or commanded. The original utopia, More's, is a place of few laws—not so much because all are left to do as they please as because behavior is

so closely regulated by surveillance, and citizens so conditioned by their upbringing, that the commonwealth can afford to save laws for extreme cases. Utopia doesn't seem to have laws against theft, for example, the love of wealth having been carefully rooted out of citizens beginning in early childhood. The wish to pluck the seeds of rage from the human heart by expert therapy is similarly utopian.

Though driven by the hope of reducing risk by timely ("proactive") intervention, the search for warning signs poses risk of its own. Seeking to extinguish danger in its early stages, before it matures into action subject to the law, it invests trust in the pseudo-science of interpreting clues—trust better invested in the rule of law itself.

---

[1] New York Times, Nov. 9, 2009.

[2] Otis Webb Brawley, *How We Do Harm: A Doctor Breaks Ranks About Being Sick in America* (New York: St. Martin's, 2011), p. 232.

[3] See I. Thompson et al., "The Influence of Finasteride on the Development of Prostate Cancer," *New England Journal of Medicine* 349 (2003): 215-24. On overdiagnosis and related issues see also the American Urological Association's Best Practice Statement 2009.

[4] http://www.secretservice.gov/ntac/ntac_ssi_report.pdf, p. 5.

[5] Colin McGinn, *Shakespeare's Philosophy: Discovering the Meaning Behind the Plays* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), p. 80.

[6] Gary Saul Morson, *Narrative and Freedom: The Shadows of Time* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), pp. 47-48.

[7] On the futility of prediction, cf. Edward Mulvey and Elizabeth Cauffmann, "The Inherent Limits of Predicting School Violence," *American Psychologist* 56 (2001): 797-802.

[8] Laura Batstra and Allen Frances, "Diagnostic Inflation: Causes and a Suggested Cure," *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* 200 (2012): 475.

[9] Robyn Dawes, *A House of Cards: Psychology and Psychotherapy Built on Myth* (New York: Free Press, 1994), pp. 94, 27.

[10] Daniel Shuman, "Softened Science in the Courtroom: Forensic Implications of a Value-Laden Classification" in *Descriptions and Prescriptions: Values, Mental Disorders, and the DSMs*, ed. John Sadler (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 221.

[11] Gary Lavergne, *A Sniper in the Tower: The Charles Whitman Murders* (Denton, TX: University of North Texas Press, 1997), p. 233.

[12] Information in this section is derived from my article, "School Shootings: Against Interpretation," *Montana Professor*, Spring 2008.

[13] See http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kinkel/trial/hnotes.html.

[14] http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kinkel/etc/script60.html.

[15] http://www.vtreviewpanel.org/report/index.html. See ch. 4, pp. 34-37.

[16] Katherine Newman, "Before the Rampage: What Can Be Done?", *Chronicle Review*, May 4, 2007.

[17] See http://www.thesmokinggun.com/archive/years/2007/0417071vtech2.html.

[18] There is some evidence that Hasan was less than competent as a psychiatrist. Reportedly he somehow allowed a "homicidal patient" to walk out of an emergency room.

[19] See Joseph Lieberman, *The Shooting Game* (Santa Ana: Seven Locks Press, 2006), p. 57.

[20] Gregory Gibson, *Gone Boy: A Walkabout* (New York: Anchor, 1999), p. 66.

[21] If the best warning sign is self-evident, so, conversely, does the lack of available evidence disable our apprehension of risk. Notwithstanding the contentions of

conspiracy theorists, this was just the case with the analysis of Japanese signal traffic on the eve of Pearl Harbor. Guarding against the possibility that their plans for an attack on Hawaii would become known to the United States, Japanese forces maintained strict silence in their signals. "Though war with Japan was indeed expected, that expectation did not—could not—imply knowledge of an attack on Pearl Harbor, for it is impossible in logic to leap from a general belief to a specific prediction. . . . Not one intercept, not one datum of intelligence ever said a thing about an attack on Pearl Harbor." So profound was the shock of the unanticipated attack that its memory haunted the United States in the Cold War. "The nation spent billions on early-warning radar lines and intelligence satellites and, for decades, kept its missiles ready to fire within minutes." David Kahn, "The Intelligence Failure of Pearl Harbor," *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1991: 147-48, 150. It was a nation whose very defense was predicated on early warning that was put on guard against the early signs of cancer.

[22] Wendell Harris, "The Great Dichotomy" in *Theory's Empire: An Anthology of Dissent*, eds. Daphne Patai and Will Corral (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 197.

[23] Hannah Arendt, *Totalitarianism*; Part Three of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1951), p. 163.