...I think most historians would agree that the part played by impulses of selfish, individual aggression in the holocausts of history was small; first and foremost, the slaughter was meant as an offering to the gods, to king and country, or the future happiness of mankind... The number of victims of assassins, highwaymen, rapists, gangsters, and other criminals at any period of negligible compared to the massive numbers of those cheerfully slain in the name of the true religion, just policy, or correct ideology.

Man is learning to use new brain, the cortex. The old animal brain inhibits the learning process, and the history of the acquisition of knowledge is, at times regressive—the Middle Ages.

Man acquires consciousness of his existence and his death in the cortex. The ancient, emotive brain cannot comprehend consciousness, death.

Man as an animal has neither claws nor fangs, and is not given strong instincts like other animal he can do little damage. Then man's cortex invents weapons.

The old and new brains are badly out of contact with each other.

Man as an animal has a strong desire to form communities and a tendency to dispute with other colonies.

The easiest way to create a community and satisfy man's self-transcending urges is to organize a group of people with a common enemy.

Then man's cortex invents language, and language quantifies and sophisticates perception. Kozel: "In the rat it is the smell which decides who is friend or foe. In man, there is a terrifyingly wide range of criteria, from territorial possessions through ethnic, cultural, national, ideological differences, which decide who is friend and who is foe." Dispute the explanation—it is theoretical, though based on neuroanatomical fact.

The conclusion is the inescapable tragic lesson of history: Man tries to achieve community, friendship, love—by killing.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

The people on the Common could not stomach their parents' culture and so they created their own. Increasingly, the culture is a symbol of membership, a means of acquiring a collective identity. A few hundred will participate in a radical action. A hundred thousand will attend a well publicized liberal rally.

Four hundred thousand will congregate in rain and mud in uptown New York to live with each other for a few days of communal bliss. Four hundred thousand products of less than 36 templates; four hundred thousand compulsive conformists who like the same music, who speak the same phrases, who wear the same style of clothes. And this is the hope for the future...

The easiest way to create a community is to provide a common enemy. If Richard Nixon is willing to exterminate every black, every student, every dissident, to stay in power, he will do it comforted by the intellectual belief that he is saving humanity, and by the emotional inability to understand that bugs are human beings. If a revolutionary is willing to die or willing to kill, he is comforted by the belief that he is saving humanity, and by the emotional inability to understand that pigs are human beings.

It's pigs versus bugs.

What is stupider than the death of a human being for an idea, for the future? What is greater insanity than the pitiful attempts of mankind to build a good world on a foundation of rotting corpses?

The triumph of the belief that violence cleanses is the atomic bomb. The atomic bomb is the embodiment of the desire of mankind to perish in anonymous mass death rather than face the need to live, to die a fully conscious life, to die a fully conscious death. The man who will kill and the man who will die for a cause have not learned to live.

Many believe that there is little time left, that by the year 2000 three billions must die horribly to allow the rest of us to live out the remains of unnatural, pitiful existences. Some believe that it is already too late.

What matter if China or later catches up with it its mistakes, will catch up with this one.

...for they say that one is not yet an adult so long as he looks forward to the time when everything will be different because he'll know the secrets; but he is an adult when he comes to realize that there is no secret at all.

PAUL GOODMAN The Empire City