The human world is today, as never before, split into two camps, each of which understands the other as the embodiment of falsehood and itself as the embodiment of truth….

Each side has assumed monopoly of the sunlight and has plunged its antagonist into night, and each side demands that you decide between day and night…

We can comprehend the origin of this cruel and grotesque condition in its simplest lines if we realize how the three principles of the French Revolution have broken asunder. The abstractions freedom and equality were held together there through the more concrete fraternity, for only if men feel themselves to be brothers can they partake of a genuine freedom from one another and a genuine equality with one another. But fraternity has been deprived of its original meaning, the relationship between children of God, and consequently of any real content. As a result, each of the two remaining watchwords was able to establish itself against the other and, by so doing, to wander farther and farther from its truth…

Man is no longer, as in earlier epochs, content to take his own principle for the single true one and that which opposes it as false through and through. He is convinced that his side is in order, the other side fundamentally out of order; that he is concerned with the recognition and realization of the right, his opponent with the masking of his selfish interest…

During the First World War it became clear to me that a process was going on which before then I had only surmised. This was the growing difficulty of genuine dialogue, and more especially of genuine dialogue between men of different kinds and convictions. Direct, frank dialogue is becoming ever more difficult and more rare; the abysses between man and man threaten ever more pitilessly to become unbridgeable. I began to understand at that time, more than thirty years ago, that this is the central question for the fate of mankind. Since then I have continually pointed out that the future of man as man depends upon a rebirth of dialogue…

I experienced a great satisfaction, therefore, when I read a short while ago the words in which a not just ordinarily competent man, Robert Hutchins, formulated the importance and possibility of a Civilization of the Dialogue. “The essence of the Civilization of the Dialogue is communication. The Civilization of the Dialogue presupposes mutual respect and understanding. It does not presuppose agreement. And further: “It is no good saying that Civilization of the Dialogue cannot arise when the other party will not talk. We have to find the way to induce him to talk.” As the means to this, Hutchins recommends showing interest and understanding for what the other has to say…

Nothing stands so much in the way of the rise of a Civilization of Dialogue as the demonic power which rules our world, the demonry of basic mistrust. What does it avail to induce the other to speak if basically one puts no faith in what he says? The meeting with him already takes place under the perspective of his untrustworthiness. And this perspective is not incorrect, for his meeting with me takes place under a corresponding perspective. The basic mistrust, coming to light, produces ground for mistrust, and so forth and so forth…

The other communicates to me the perspective that he has acquired on a certain subject, but I do not really take cognizance of his communication as knowledge. I do not take it seriously as a contribution to the information about this subject, but rather I listen for what drives the other to say what he says, for an unconscious motive, say, or a ‘complex.’ He expresses a thought about a problem of life that concerns me, but I do not ask myself about the truth of what he says. I only pay attention to the question of which interest of his group has clothed itself in this apparently so objective judgment. Since it is the idea of the other, it is for me only an ‘ideology.’ My main task in my intercourse with my fellow-man becomes more and more, whether in terms of individual psychology or of sociology, to see through and unmask him In the classical case this in no wise means a mask he has put on to deceive me, but a mask that has, without his knowing it, been put on him, indeed positively imprinted on him, so that what is really deceived is his own consciousness.