The title of my talk today could serve as a heading for this whole conference. It is evident that the expression “human sciences” is problematic for us today and that we must come to the conclusion that science should be defined by us in another way than it is for modern times. This, of course, includes a certain justification of the older Greek conception of knowledge as “philosophy.” It is not because of my special predilection for the Greeks that I propose this topic for today, but rather because of the necessity of seeking an epistemological self-understanding which is not based on the credence of the natural sciences and of the ideal of method as it was characteristically called at the beginning of the seventeenth century and as it dominates the research work and our academic activities in the humanities. It is for this reason alone that I want to go back to the philosophy of Aristotle, for it is this ancient philosopher who defended for the first time a special approach to the subjects of human action and human institutions.

That it makes sense to investigate from this point of view the methodological impasses of our contemporary situation seems to me quite well illustrated by the meeting for which we have gathered together today. We have seen how the problem has already been expressed by Professor Apel in connecting it with this almost doctrine-like radicalism of Max Weber and the whole question of value-free research
which serves to verify the distinction of public and private and the orientation of anything that is public to the model of what Husserl called "knowing for everybody." To this position we must ask: Is this not the expression of the conflict in our own self-understanding rather than the solution to this problem? No humanist, no follower of the sciences that we call *Geisteswissenschaften*, can be described in his own doing and his own ideals under the point of view of value-free science. That is so self-evident that I find it necessary to reconsider the whole question of the humanistic tradition and its function in our modern culture.

It is certainly a very ambiguous situation in which the humanities have continued their activities since the beginning of modern humanism in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It is not very comfortable to choose between the rhetorical tradition of the *artes liberales* or to side for a self-understanding that calls itself critical and methodical and tries to compete with the natural sciences. I am referring here to John Stuart Mill's well-known chapter in *A System of Logic* in which a naturalistic methodological ideal is assigned to the human sciences. It ends by saying that the "moral sciences" (*Geisteswissenschaften*) constitute a field of modern sciences which can compete with the prognostic exactitude of meteorology. I think under this point of view the humanities have a very poor place and a very limited self-understanding compared with the fact that the contents which are treated and interpreted by the humanities have such a tremendous impact on the whole world view, on the whole moral attitude and on the expectations of society.

Confronted with this modern ideal of methodical sciences, we cannot avoid seeking for the enterprise of reason in the humanities a better recognition than that of the procedures of modern science. Far from recommending something as a new method, I can but describe how the critical, methodical attitudes of modern investigation cooperate with another human tradition. To this end I proposed to resume the expression hermeneutics, which, of course, I take from Dilthey and Heidegger, and which is connected with the whole problematic of so-called "historicism"—a philosophical situation which should also inform my own contribution to the subject.

It is obvious that between Dilthey and Heidegger we have a very radical gap, even considering Heidegger's statement that he will continue in elaborating the scientific thoughts of Dilthey and of his philosophical friend Graf Yorck. Even when he had said that, the fact remains that Heidegger in *Being and Time* had called his own dimension of questioning a hermeneutics of facticity. Dilthey, as one of the