In proposing to discuss the hermeneutics of suspicion, I clearly had in mind the usage of Paul Ricoeur: Ricoeur who never opposes without somehow reconciling, could not avoid opposing — at least in a first approach — hermeneutics in the classic sense, of interpreting the meaning of texts, to the radical critique of and suspicion against understanding and interpreting. This radical suspicion was inaugurated by Nietzsche and had its most striking instances in the critique of ideology on the one hand, and psychoanalysis on the other. Now it is necessary to examine the relationship between traditional hermeneutics, its philosophical situation, and this radical form of interpretation, which is almost at the opposite end of the spectrum of interpretation — because it challenges the claims to validity of ideas and ideologies. I should begin by saying that the problem of hermeneutical suspicion can be understood in a more radical or wider sense. Is not every form of hermeneutics a form of overcoming an awareness of suspicion? Husserl himself tried to found his own phenomenology on the basis of the Cartesian way of doubting the appearances of reliability of first impressions. That was a consequence of the modern sciences, so there is no question that the problem of suspicion has also this place in our context. Our efforts at understanding can be seen from the point of view of the suspicion that our first approach — as a pre-scientific one — is not valid and that consequently we need the help of scientific methods to overcome our first impressions. What is involved here, then, is the whole question of the foundations of our insights into truth.

This recalls the beginning of the hermeneutical discussion under the impact of the new sciences. Consider the position of Vico, who, as a professor of rhetoric in Naples, defended the old tradition of encyclopedic higher education in face of the new approach by scientific
method, which he called *critica Rhetorica* and *critica* are two competing approaches. Insofar as *rhetorica* is obviously based on common sense, on the probability of arguments insofar as they are well-received and assured by appearances. On the other hand, the critical attitude stands against appearances; on the side of the new physics, with its insistence on method. So we have indeed two competing approaches: on the one hand, the arguments of persuasion; on the other, the arguments of logical cogency.

It is not irrelevant to recall this original situation of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century before giving an account of the role of hermeneutics. Because there is a deep inner convergence between rhetoric and hermeneutics. In the course of recent investigations, I found a remarkable shift from the tradition of rhetoric to hermeneutics closely connected, of course, to the new priority of reading over against speaking to the Gutenberg era, to the Reformation, when people began to read the Bible in private, and no longer in the religious service alone. At this moment interest shifted from speaking and writing speeches to understanding of the written and to interpreting it. That happened with Melanchthon, a friend and follower of Luther in Wittenberg, who reintroduced the whole tradition of Aristotelian philosophy into the Protestant schools. In his lectures on rhetoric, he develops something at the beginning about the role of Aristotle, and of speech: yet he also says that one needs rules, models and good arguments, so on not only to give a good talk, but also in order to read and understand extended argumentation one needs all the help of the rhetorical tradition. Here we are at the turning point between rhetoric and hermeneutics.

Recently, it seems, some of my colleagues have been trying to “save my soul” from such dishonest things as rhetoric! They think that hermeneutics is no noble pursuit, and that we must be suspicious of rhetoric. I had to reply that rhetoric has been the basis of our social life since Plato rejected and contradicted the flattering abuse of rhetoric by the Sophists. He introduced dialectically founded rhetoric as in the *Phaedrus*, and rhetoric remained a noble art in the whole of antiquity. Yet one wonders why today everybody is not aware of it. When one cannot convince people in the exchange of arguments, in a more or less dialogue form, one needs rhetoric. Even Socrates was not able to speak to a mass of listeners in the same way that he spoke with individuals in the dialogues. So he shifts to speaking mythically in such moments and in such situations. Without doubt there is a function of rhetoric which has to do with the extension and sharing of common and relevant insights. Even scientists would have less influence if they did not use rhetoric to capture the interest of the public.

It is not so surprising that in the shift to a more literate culture rhetoric was more or less replaced by hermeneutics, by the interest in interpreting texts. It was especially in two fields that the change came about. In theology, it is obvious that the new claim of the Protestant church was that its doctrines were based completely on the statements of the holy scripture and not on the voice of tradition as in the case of the Roman Catholic Church. Protestants therefore needed the art of interpretation. A similar problem arose in law, in the latter there is a special problem of interpretation regarding the determinants of jurisdiction. How can we apply law in order to achieve as much justice as possible? This was the role for hermeneutics in jurisprudence: it was realized that no general rule could ever cover all the particularities of legal experience and practice. Fitting a particular case under a general law is always an act of interpretation. The role of judges and rulers consists in finding that form of classification according to a rule which corresponds best to the aims of justice. This is a very old problem of equity. Recall that Aristotle introduces the topic of equity in connection with the phenomenon of justice. He says that equity does not lower the dignity of justice. The opposite rather is true, namely, that equity makes justice *just*. It is in the service of just decisions that one interprets the law and finds the most adequate solution of the juristic problem.

It is well-known that once the French Revolution had broken the self-evidence of the Greco-Christian humanistic tradition. The distance of this tradition appeared — and what we ordinarily call romanticism — the feeling that something has been lost. Nostalgia may seek it, but it is no longer the unquestionable basis of our thinking and feeling. Romanticism along with its nineteenth century continuation reveals also that the 18th century was the last period in the western world which had inner style. What followed was really a series of experiments in historicism. whose architectural manifestation was the imitation of Gothic cathedrals for university buildings and of Roman Churches for railway stations. The last century with a monolithic expression or mood was the eighteenth and this also gave a new relevance to the feeling for antiquity. The Romantics developed the ability to overcome the classics and to discover the charm of the past, the far, the alien: the middle ages, India, China, etc. Hermeneutics can be defined as the attempt to overcome this distance in areas where empathy was hard and agreement not easily reached. There is always a gap that
must be bridged. Thus, hermeneutics acquires a central place in viewing human experience. That was indeed Schleiermacher's intuition: he and his associates became the first to develop the problem of hermeneutics as a foundation, as the primary aspect of social experience, not only for the scholarly interpretation of texts as documents of the past, but also for understanding the mystery of the inwardness of the other person. This feeling for the individuality of persons, the realization that they cannot be classified and deduced according to general rules or laws, was a significant new approach to the concreteness of the other.

This is why Schleiermacher defined hermeneutics as the ability to avoid misunderstanding, because, as a matter of fact, that is the mystery of individuality. We can never be sure, and we have no proofs, for rightly understanding the individual utterance of another. However, even in the romantic era when this feeling for the individuality and the "closedness" of the individual became widespread, there was never a doubt that behind a person's individuality something common, intelligible can be reenacted. Schleiermacher, too, was in this last respect an idealist, not in the silly sense that he denied the existence of the external world, but in the sense of affirming that our understanding is able to grasp the real kernel, and that there is an ultimate identity of the subjective approach and reality, a common rationality in consciousness and being. But in the modern epoch, which is the end of the romantic era, the new trend of the experimental sciences belong to us all. This interest became an epistemological interest in Erkenntnistheorie. That means, in the first place, that we are no longer convinced and sure that there is an identity between the subjective approach and the fact: the problem then is that of justifying the mathematically symbolic constructions of nature. The purely epistemological question which occupied the nineteenth century was "to what extent can we justify the validity of our scientific methods and procedures?"

As a consequence, hermeneutics also came to have an epistemological importance: to what extent are we justified in assuming that we have a correct understanding of the texts? A whole system of rules as principles was developed and collected from experience in classics and theological learning, consisting in the conviction that there is a certain set of principles that allows us to grasp the real idea of the text. On this basis the philosophical interpreters of the so-called historical school, especially Dilthey, developed the belief that the humanities need to have their own psychological foundation and hermeneutical methodology. Yet in the same epoch there is what I mentioned before: the concept of interpretation began its new career under Nietzsche's banner. Remember the famous statement, "There are no moral phenomena, there are only moral interpretations of the phenomena." Nietzsche, a philologist by profession, captured this concept of interpretation in a completely new and radical sense. The "will to power" changes completely the idea of interpretation: it is no longer the manifest meaning of a statement of a text, but the text's and its interpreters function in the preservation of life. The extension of power, that is the real meaning of our all too human insights and cognitions. This radical position forces us to attend to the dichotomy between the belief in the integrity of texts and the intelligibility of their meaning, and the opposed effort to unmask the pretensions hidden behind so-called objectivity (Ricoeur's "hermeneutics of suspicion"). The latter alternative was developed in the critique of ideology, in psychoanalysis, and in the thought inspired more or less directly by Nietzsche's own work. This dichotomy is too sharp to allow us to rest content with a mere classification of the two forms of interpretation, as either simply interpreting statements following the intentions of the author or as revealing the meaningfulness of statements in a completely unexpected sense and against the meaning of the author. I see no way of reconciling the two. I think even Paul Ricoeur must in the end give up attempts to bring them together, because we have here a basic difference involving the whole philosophical role of hermeneutics. The question is how thoroughly can the role which hermeneutics plays in philosophy be seen or discussed in light of this opposition?

The thinker who introduced the concept of hermeneutics in philosophy, and not only in the methodology of the humanities, was Heidegger. He placed hermeneutics in the center of his analysis of existence in showing that interpretation is not an isolated activity of human beings, but the basic structure of our experience of life. We are always taking something as something. That is the primordial givenness of our world orientation, and we cannot reduce it to anything simpler or more immediate. Yet shouldn't we recognize that there was also a hermeneutical moment in Husserl's analysis of the experiences of consciousness? This could certainly be elaborated. I refer you to a well-known note of Kar Becker, a common pupil of Husserl and Heidegger, a friend of both (and an excellent scholar, especially in aesthetics and in ancient mathematics): Becker wrote that when Being and Time was published, there was a certain mistaken tendency to think of it as something completely new and external to Husserl's phenomenology. And Becker said that the book does accomplish is the elaboration of the dimension of
hermeneutical experience internal to the framework of Husserlian phenomenology, and the determination, in a creative and remarkable form, of the finite structure of human understanding and interpretation. So far this statement is not inconsistent with Husserl’s decisive insights. But there are questions. Is there not a real break by Heidegger also in other respects? We should first pay some attention to the principle of phenomenology “Zu den Sachen selbst,” as opposed to constructions and to everything that is not really evident by its own givenness. Husserl overcame the dogmatism of an immanent consciousness, which must ask: how can we transcend ourselves and make contact with the external world? This is obviously an epistemological theme. Husserl overcame this by demonstrating that consciousness is exactly intentionality, which means that we are in the matter and not simply enclosed in ourselves. The primacy of self-consciousness is an error, phenomenologically speaking. Self-consciousness occurs only insofar as there is a consciousness of objects. That was clear to the Greeks and to Franz Brentano, who revived Greek psychology and became Husserl’s teacher.

So far the claim is to be faithful to givenness. Nothing should be accepted but the given itself. Husserl always claimed that he was the only real positivist, in the sense of taking things as they are given. But does Husserl follow the rigor of this own principle “Zu den Sachen selbst” in beginning his analysis of the evidence of our cognition by the standard model of sense perception? Is sense-perception something given or is it an abstraction that naturalizes an abstract constant of the given? Scheler, in his very living contacts with psychologists and physiologists of his epoch as with American pragmatism and Heidegger, demonstrated with vigor that sense perception is never given. It is rather an aspect of the pragmatic approach to the world. We are always hearing, listening to something and extracting from other things. We are interpreting in seeing, hearing, receiving. In seeing, we are looking for something: we are just not like photographs that reflect everything visible. A real photographer, for instance, is looking for the moment in which the shot would be an interpretation of the experience. So it is obvious that there is a real primacy of interpretation.

Husserl refused to accept this analysis. even in later publications such as Erfahrung und Urteil. (Although the text of the latter was done by Landgrebe, it cannot be doubted that Husserl accepted it.) He rejected the entire claim and held that all interpretation is a secondary act. The first thing is to realize what is present for the senses, that is, sense perception. Another theme that arises is the way in which the other person is given for the ego. Husserl’s answer is very complicated. He discussed the whole problem with great care, and I would not say that he did not succeed in careful description. But how is the difference between selves and other objects of perception articulated following Husserl? There is no doubt that he described it somewhat as follows: There is another. What is given there? There is something extended with a human shape. I tend to this object an ego in transferring my own ego into it. Husserl called this “transcendental sympathy,” which means that I constitute what I see there as another person through a new act, based upon the primary givenness of the visual object. That is hard to accept, especially after the superb analysis that thinkers like Sartre or Merleau-Ponty have given of the role of the look and the other.

Also the problem of one’s own body is a very precarious one for Husserl. There is no question that he did give marvelous descriptions of the structure of the intimate feeling of one’s own body. I remember how he introduced this theme in his class. “What is the absolute here?” he would ask. “Not that, not that,” pointing to the limbs. “That is the absolute here.” indicating his chest. “the point of the coordinates, that is the absolute here.” Of course, behind this amusing story we see the mathematician who tried to reach ultimate clarity in his position and certainty in his assumptions and who will warn us. Do not forget that in spite of all these difficulties in his phenomenology of the other and in the other’s givenness that there is a basic structure: first, something is given as extended in the space – without ego, and then the ego must be added. But is it given so? What is behind the dogmatism of this description? The problems are obviously not resolved in Husserl’s analysis, which claims to work out the program of philosophy as a rigorous science, and of founding all insight in absolute and apodictic evidence. The apodictic evidence of the ego, the old Cartesian argument, is the founding principle for the whole phenomenology. – But now we will ask ourselves why Becker, when Being and Time was published, could write his mediating note: In Being and Time Heidegger interpreted himself as a transcendental phenomenologist. Of course, not without criticizing Husserl. He attacked the transcendental ego of Husserl as a fantastic stylization, and went on to look for a deeper foundation of the whole problem of a philosophy in “existence.” And what he called “existence,” this projecting thrownness, was indeed not consciousness. I was recently asked what difference it made that Heidegger introduced the term “care” (Sorge) to replace consciousness. He described existence as care. What is the difference between “consciousness” and “care”? One point is clear: consciousness is representing what
is present for it. Care is anticipation of the future. Heidegger obviously replaced consciousness by care to demonstrate that the present and the idea of presentation are not adequate to the temporal structure of human existence, and its protecting character. But did it really make such a radical difference to replace consciousness by care? Must we not agree that to be careful to care for something, is always the central character of care: but whoever is “caring for” is careful in doing so, and that means: he is concerned with himself; in the same sense in which Husserl says (with Kant) to be conscious of something is, for essential reasons, to be self-conscious. So one can ask: did Heidegger really break through the immanentism of the Husserlian description of consciousness and self-consciousness by replacing it with care? Or is he simply concretizing consciousness by care and temporality? I think that because the answer is unclear, it was possible, when Being and Time had just come out, for readers like Oskar Becker to see it as simply a new variation and extension within the framework of phenomenology.

But there is something else that should be taken seriously: namely, that Heidegger was not fully satisfied with himself and did not remain at this point. After some years, he described it as a reversal or turning, die Kehre: he gave up the transcendental self-interpretation. What he gave up by that was the ideal of ultimate foundation. I remember very well how Heidegger said one day to me, “Letzbegründung — what a strange ideal!” But how can one give up ultimate foundation? Certainly, one cannot give it up if one insists on a narrow sense of rationality, of rigorous science in the sense of mathematics and its analogue. For transcendental phenomenology, which should fulfill Husserl’s ideal of science, one needs apodictic evidence and a consistent development of all valid consequences from this evidence. But is that possible? I mean, does it explain the full claim of rationality to self-understanding? That is the philosophical problem. For that it is certainly not enough to insert some concretized descriptions of intersubjectivity, of the body, of whatever it may be. The question at stake is: what is the relation of rationality to rigorous science to the rationality of life? And here I think that the ideal of foundation as an ultimate principle indeed misses the point. That is the reason why Heidegger did not remain with his earlier foundation. That is the reason why I tried to do something in the same direction. We had to seek for another self-interpretation, not for a foundation. By “self-interpretation of our doings,” I mean not my or Heidegger’s doings, but all our doings including, on the one hand, the rationality of sciences and on the other hand the rationality of practical reasoning.

Perhaps I can demonstrate that phenomenology is not identical with foundationalism. Think for a moment of the givenness of our life: the most telling form of this givenness is language. Of course, language is now of essential concern in modern philosophy. I think there are good reasons for this, but I am not convinced that philosophy of language or linguistics touches at all the decisive point of givenness. In language there is, first of all, both langue and parole, to use Saussure’s distinction. The spoken word is something other than the system of symbols which constitutes language. Language is not itself a given, what is given is parole, the speaking word in its working reality. And that certainly involves a strange form of concealment. One should realize that it is a basic character of speaking that it is completely forgetful of itself. Nobody could utter one sentence if he were completely aware of what he was doing. If I were to do that, I would not find a second word after the first. And more than that: it would really prevent me from going beyond every utterance to the matters I would convey, and force me to keep to myself what I am saying. I would go mad if I were to make an attempt at complete thematization of saying in saying. I must say something in order to speak; when I do there is a forgetfulness of speech as a theme or topic. One could reply that speech exists in texts. Yes, certainly, but the texts are alien or brutal. How is this speech, the speaking word, really preserved in the written text? Is it completely the utterance of my mind? Are we not all acquainted with the alienation between what we said and what we had in mind? Is it not one of our leading experiences that the utterance is no longer mine? We must always look for the real meaning of an utterance. It is an error when our logician friends insist that we must “improve” Plato, in regard to what is contradictory or inconsistent, making his argumentations more coherent. That is a misunderstanding of what speaking is. Speaking is not logical deduction: it is, in a way, overcoming the word, and it produces something one has to interpret by the context in the boldest sense. The context here is not only the words but the whole life context.

That context, of course, is never given in its full extent. So interpretation seems to me very demanding, and, of course, a field of philosophical and philological activity. I know just one instance in which the interpretation of speech is not an additional supplemental moment, and in which we go to the essence of the matters themselves: that is dialogue. In the dialogue we are really interpreting. Speaking then is interpreting itself. It is the function of the dialogue that in
that is the only result of the investigation of a poem, then we have failed. The intention is to understand this love poem, on its own and in its unique relation to the common structure of love poems. It is an absolutely individualized particular form, so that one participates in the utterance or message which is there embodied by the poet. Participation is indeed a better formulation of what is going on in our life experience than is the foundationalist account of the apodictic evidence of self-consciousness.

Participation is a strange word. Its dialectic consists of the fact that participation is not taking parts, but in a way taking the whole. Everybody who participates in something does not take something away, so that the others cannot have it. The opposite is true: by sharing, by our participating in the things which we are participating, we enrich them; they do not become smaller, but larger. The whole life of tradition consists exactly in this enrichment so that life is our culture and our past, the whole inner store of our lives is always extending by participating.

I want to end with just one remark about what there is in the methodological character of such an approach. That I would call hermeneutic in its central sense. Let me refer to the practical philosophy of Aristotle. Aristotle asks, “What is the principle of moral philosophy?” and he answers, “Well, the principle is that— the thatness.” It means, not meant openness for further determination. Is that “foundation” in the sense of Husserl’s higher principle? These “principles” of Plato were not meant to yield an ultimate determinacy. I think Plato was well aware of this position when he said that philosophy is something for human beings, not for gods. Gods know, but we are in this ongoing process of approximation and overcoming error by dialectically moving towards truth. In this sense I could present a partial defense of the idea that the oldest heritage of philosophy is exactly its functionality, its giving an account, and that as such it cannot presume to have fixed principles. This suggests very well what I would have in the place of “foundation.” I would call it “participation,” because that is what happens in human life. That is, without any doubt, the excellence of the humanities, that we share a common world of tradition and interpreted human experience. The interpretation of the common world in which we participate is certainly not in the first place the objectifying task of methodical thinking. That may certainly be included, but it is not the raison d’être of our activity. When we are interpreting a text, it is not to prove “scientifically” that this love poem belongs to the genre of love poems. That is objective and nobody can doubt it; but