

Erwin Schrödinger Lecture

Friday, December 16, 2016 - 5 p.m.

Boltzmann Lecture Hall, ESI, Boltzmannngasse 9, Vienna

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Mathematics, Physics, the search for a new man, and French-German politics - Claude Chevalley's challenges in the 1930s

Claude Chevalley (1909 - 1984) is principally known today as the excellent and influential mathematician of the twentieth century that he was. Apart from several seminal research contributions (for instance in class field theory, and the theory of the groups which today bear his name), he is particularly remembered as one of the founding fathers of the Bourbaki enterprise and as author of groundbreaking books, such as *The Algebraic Theory of Spinors* (1954).

Few mathematicians and physicists are aware, however, that Chevalley has also attracted the attention of general historians because of his activity as a member of the French “non-conformist” political group *Ordre Nouveau* between 1931 and 1938, and as a go-between with leftist-national groups in Germany. It turns out that understanding Chevalley's idea of the modern scientist is impossible without also taking into account his political texts and actions in the 1930s.

The aim of the talk will thus be to explain the coherent overall project which drove Chevalley in the 1930s, illustrating at the same time the two aspects - mathematics and politics - which characterized Chevalley's trips to Germany during that decade, before he left the European scene for Princeton in 1938.

Norbert Schappacher holds a chair in mathematics at the University of Strasbourg; he is director of the GDR 3398 “Histoire de mathématiques” and chief editor of the “Revue d'histoire des mathématiques”.

The Erwin Schrödinger Lectures are directed towards a general audience of mathematicians and physicists. In particular it is an intention of these lectures to inform non-specialists and graduate students about recent developments and results in some area of mathematics or physics.

The lecture will be followed by a reception in the spirit of Advent.

Joachim Schwermer

Director