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EDITORIAL

Hermann Minkowski (1864–1909), Élie Cartan (1869–1951), Hermann Weyl (1885–1955), Louis Joel Mordell (1888–1972), Otto Schreier (1901–1929) et Harold Davenport (1907–1969)—these are, in order of their years of birth, the main mathematicians studied in the present issue of our Revue. The two articles are based on recent Ph.D. theses; even if those theses covered a much broader ground than the texts published here. This whole issue of the Revue thus deals with mathematics that may seem fairly close to us today. However, each article clearly shows in its own careful way that a historical approach to what seems close to us need not be straightforward.

Renaud Chorlay presents a subtle analysis, by way of comparison between Élie Cartan and Weyl, resp. Schreier, of how several key notions of the theory of Lie groups and homogeneous varieties transformed in the course of the 1920s. The dichotomy local / global works differently before and after this transformation, and it is this dichotomy which the author chooses as his straightedge to gauge the slippage of meanings in the process.

Terms that change their meanings in the course of history are also at the heart of Sébastien Gauthier's article. But the fact that the same expression refers to different mathematical practice at different times is in his case linked to claims of disciplinary identity. The subdiscipline of which he studies different avatars over time is the geometry of numbers. By carefully making the various methods explicit which have to be mobilized to grasp what constitutes a subdiscipline, Gauthier's study can practically serve as a blueprint for similar projects in the history of mathematics.

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