

# François Châtelet and the Spatial Turn in French Marxist Thought

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## The author

Danilo Scholz is a doctoral student in political philosophy at the Ecole des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS) in Paris where he is currently writing a thesis entitled “Antistatistism in French Philosophy, 1947-1992”. Before pursuing doctoral studies at the EHESS, he studied philosophy at the Ecole normale supérieure (2009-2012) and history at the University of Cambridge (2005-2008). His master’s dissertation on “Alexandre Kojève and Interwar German Philosophy: philosophical anthropology, history and the political, 1926-1947” has been awarded the Raymond Aron Prize by the EHESS in 2011 and the Marc Bloch Prize for historical research by the European University Institute Florence in 2013. Danilo has also been a visiting student researcher at the University of California at Berkeley.

His publications include “All Alone in the Country of Heideggerianism: Adorno’s Three Lectures at the Collège de France in 1961” (in *L’Angle mort des années 1950. Philosophie et sciences humaines en France*, 2015) and “Alexandre Kojève and Gaston Fessard: Paternal Authority and Politics in Occupied France” (*La Revue philosophique de la France et de l’étranger*, March 2016). In December 2015, he was the guest-editor of a special issue of *Merkur* devoted to recent intellectual developments in France. He is also very interested in contemporary debates about the EU and, together with Svenja Bromberg and Birthe Mühlhoff, has prepared *Euro Trash* (February 2016), an edited volume bringing together contributions from economists (Thomas Piketty, Martin Wolf), philosophers (Alexandre Kojève, Étienne Balibar, Antonio Negri) sociologists (Luc Boltanski) and novelists (Michel Houellebecq).

## The paper

The present paper reconstructs the intellectual constellation around the philosopher François Châtelet in order to retrace the emergence of a spatial turn in French thought in the 1970s. Initially close to neo-Hegelianism and following a galvanising encounter with the writings of Louis Althusser in the mid-1960s, Châtelet grew increasingly frustrated with the epistemological and political strictures of philosophy of history. The ethnological work of his friend Pierre Clastres took on considerable importance, as it simultaneously challenged the state-centred vision of the Hegelians and the Marxist emphasis on the interplay between the various modes of production. With Yves Lacoste, a geographer and colleague of his at the University of Vincennes, Châtelet urged a spatial reorientation of philosophy and a better appreciation of the political potential of geography. These endeavours culminated in the founding of the geography journal *Hérodote* in 1976, which rapidly gained popularity in French intellectual circles. Finally, it will be shown how Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari integrated the geographical vision of *Hérodote* into their philosophical project, abandoning the “universal history” of *Anti-Oedipus* in favour of the geographical conception of political thought that animated *A Thousand Plateaus* and critically engaged Carl Schmitt’s *The Nomos of the Earth*.