REVIEWS


This volume offers 16 essays, most of which originated in papers presented in late September of 2001 at a conference in Jena, Carnap’s intellectual birthplace. It was in Jena, where Carnap attended university and received his Ph.D. in 1921, that he took his first steps towards philosophical maturity. While the title of the collection suggests a single interpretative theme of the importance of Carnap’s Jena origins, most of the essays have little to say about this period of Carnap’s intellectual development. Instead, the aim of the editors is to ‘bring home’ or emphasize how important Carnap’s philosophy was and how important it still should be. Thus, in the first essay that acts as an introduction, Gottfried Gabriel insists, “that Carnap is a much subtler and more sophisticated philosopher, on many more fronts, than was generally suspected even a few years ago” (3). The danger of such an approach is that it could blind an interpreter to the weaknesses of her subject. I am glad to say that none of these essays errs in this direction, although there is a decidedly pro-Carnap feel to many essays. In the end, we find 16 high-quality essays that convincingly make the case both that Carnap is a philosopher of first-rate importance and that Carnap scholarship has reached a new stage of rigor and thoroughness.

Although the essays are not divided up into parts by topic or theme, I will impose such a division in this review. I begin with a group of five essays that consider Carnap’s place in his broader philosophical and intellectual context. Gabriel’s “Introduction: Carnap Brought Home” argues for the importance of Dilthey’s Lebensphilosophie in shaping Carnap’s attitudes towards traditional, theoretical metaphysics. Dilthey argued that different metaphysical systems had their roots in the opposing attitudes towards life of the metaphysicians. Gabriel claims that Dilthey’s conception of metaphysics influenced Carnap directly and via Carnap’s friendship with Herman Nohl, an exponent of Dilthey’s views at Jena. The evidence offered here includes Carnap’s own autobiographical reflections as well as Carnap’s use, in the 1932 essay “Overcoming Metaphysics”, of Nohl’s linkage between musical composers and metaphysical theories.

Gereon Wolters extends this picture of Carnap’s deep engagement with his broader intellectual context by isolating Carnap’s philosophical style from his contemporaries in “Styles in Philosophy: The Case of Carnap”. Wolters presents
Carnap’s style as above all collective and objective, and opposes this to the individual and subjective approaches often attributed to German Romantic philosophers such as Novalis and Schleiermacher. Opposing this, Carnap presents philosophical activity as an activity that can and should be cooperative and whose conclusions can be debated objectively, and not resolved simply as expressions of feeling or emotion. While Wolters praises these aspects of Carnap’s style, he completely rejects Carnap’s noncognitivism about value statements, which removes practical questions from the realm of collective and objective theoretical resolution.

Moving beyond the world of academic philosophy, Hans-Joachim Dahms examines the intellectual sympathies between the Vienna Circle and modernism in art and architecture. His “Neue Sachlichkeit in the Architecture and Philosophy of the 1920s” builds on Galison’s earlier work by offering important new information about the personal connections between Franz Roh, Carnap and Neurath. Dahms relates how Roh, the author of the “decisive manifesto” (361) of the Neue Sachlichkeit movement, not only knew Carnap from his early days at Jena, but even helped Neurath in the turbulent post-World War I period and later introduced Carnap to Neurath.

The philosophical connections between Carnap and Husserl are the focus, in somewhat different ways, of the essays by Jean-Michel Roy and Michael Beaney. Roy argues against Carnap’s own suggestion in the Aufbau (section 3) that his constitution system is linked to Husserl’s “mathesis of lived experiences”. The basis for this skepticism is the claim that the main goal of the particular constitution system outlined in the Aufbau is the reduction of scientific concepts to the given, where this is interpreted in terms of easily accessible immediate experiences. Husserl must reject both this starting point and the wholly formal logical tools that Carnap uses to constitute his objects. According to Roy, Husserl sought to provide a foundation for formal logic itself based on his ultimate given, and so cannot take formal logic for granted as Carnap does in his constitution system.

Michael Beaney’s essay “Carnap’s Conception of Explication: From Frege to Husserl?” explores a different link between Carnap and Husserl: Carnap’s notion of explication and its connections to Husserl’s use of the same term. In his Logical Foundations of Probability Carnap had indeed acknowledged Husserl when he used the term “explication”, but after a careful analysis of Carnap’s practice Beaney concludes that “no genuine influence” (141) of Husserl on Carnap can be found. Instead, Beaney traces back the philosophical roots of the need for explication to the lectures by Frege that Carnap attended at Jena and the need to solve the paradox of analysis.

A second group of five essays in the volume focuses more narrowly on Carnap’s philosophy and its origins in the interactions between Carnap and the other philosophers that he worked with directly. Erich Reck’s “From Frege and Russell to Carnap: Logic and Logicism in the 1920s” presents the case that Carnap’s work in logic and the philosophy of mathematics in the 1920s, while based