

## Philosophy in Review



# A.W. Carus, Michael Friedman, Wolfgang Kienzler, Alan Richardson, & Sven Schlotter (Eds.). "Rudolf Carnap: Early Writings. The Collected Works of Rudolf Carnap, Volume 1."

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Volume 40, Number 3, August 2020

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1071512ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1071512ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

University of Victoria

ISSN

1206-5269 (print)

1920-8936 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Tuboly, A. (2020). Review of [A.W. Carus, Michael Friedman, Wolfgang Kienzler, Alan Richardson, & Sven Schlotter (Eds.). "Rudolf Carnap: Early Writings. The Collected Works of Rudolf Carnap, Volume 1."]. *Philosophy in Review*, 40 (3), 99–100. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1071512ar>

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**A.W. Carus, Michael Friedman, Wolfgang Kienzler, Alan Richardson, & Sven Schlotter (Eds.).** *Rudolf Carnap: Early Writings. The Collected Works of Rudolf Carnap, Volume 1.* Oxford University Press 2019. 528 pp. \$90.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780198748403).

In looking at the history of twentieth-century analytic philosophy, one could use different markers to locate all the figures we can include in our grand narratives. Number of citations, number of students, school organization, the transmission of ideas, and many other similar characteristics could be used to impose some order on philosophers. But there is another, perhaps less often considered possibility, namely making collected works in a critical edition.

Among analytic philosophers, one might find some authors who deserve to be included in an edition of collected works. Some of them (like David Lewis or Hilary Putnam) earned such an honor during their lifetime, but usually, these editions were not carried through under any critical editorship—they were simply and literally *collected* (or better, selected) works in a volume. But we might find examples, like Moritz Schlick, whose published and unpublished works were collected recently into a critical edition in more than ten volumes altogether. But there is another candidate who just entered the hall of fame of analytic philosophy: namely Rudolf Carnap.

Not that Carnap (1891-1970) did not already have a significant and distinguished place in the history of analytic philosophy. With the publication of his collected works, his works became available in a highly standardized and scholarly fashion that indeed marks his significance, and the ongoing interest in his works among systematic philosophers and historians. But who was Carnap and why is he important?

Carnap was trained as a physicist and a philosopher and studied logic with Gottlob Frege, one of the grandfathers of analytic philosophy. In the usual stories, Carnap is presented as a scientific philosopher, who went to Vienna during the mid-1920s and wrote one of his most important work, *Der logische Aufbau der Welt*. The story goes on, but *Volume 1: Early Writings* stops right before the *Aufbau*-period. But even Carnap's life and works during the early-1920s are more interesting and complicated as this story would imply.

Two of the editors, Carus and Friedman, have written a helpful introduction to set the stakes and provide the context for Carnap's papers gathered in the volume. They collected the papers into three categories, namely '(1) Carnap's utopian conception of the role of knowledge and ideas in society; (2) approaches toward a conception of a system of science or system of knowledge, (3) the *Aufbau* project' (xxiii). It is really interesting to see how Carnap the technician-formal-logician, an admirer of cold-blooded logical deductions, is transformed in the editorial introduction into a somewhat naive utopianist, who utilized his philosophical and scientific knowledge to form a better society. Carus and Friedman draw a novel picture of Carnap (which is well-known among Carnap-scholars, but might be somewhat shocking for outsiders) that is based on Carnap's time in the German Youth Movement (a group of young people, in the transitory phase between childhood and adulthood, rebelling against conventions, traditions and all hierarchies by singing, dancing, hiking, and self-education). One might wonder whether one of the most important and original fruits of the entire collected works series will be a highly revised and refined picture of Carnap.

The volume was edited under the leadership of Carus by Friedman, Kienzler, Richardson, and Schlotter. It is a bilingual edition—all of Carnap's papers prior to 1935 were published in German, which might help explain the apparent lack of attention paid to these early writings. But that is no longer an excuse; this edition will be of major significance for everyone to follow the terminology, vocabulary and other professional issues of turning German-Carnap into English-Carnap.

The other problem that might be detected behind the general negligence of these early writings is the fact that they were embedded in a very complex nexus of philosophical traditions. Neo-Kantianism, phenomenology, Vaihinger-type-fictionalism, and German-conventionalism are a few of the early influences on Carnap's thinking. Exploring all these trends in the early-Carnap is not an easy task, but without proper notice and recognition of them, Carnap's real significance and place in the early German-speaking history of analytic philosophy is almost impossible. The only monograph-length treatment of Carnap's early papers was provided by Edmund Runggaldier in 1984 (*Carnap's Early Conventionalism: An Inquiry into the Historical Background of the Vienna Circle*, Rodopi), but it was not well-received among Carnap-scholars, thus it did not survive in the secondary literature.

But *Volume One: Early Writings* will finally resolve this difficulty as all the papers in the volume are followed by a detailed editorial commentary to help the reader get through the text after the first 'shock' of what is going on there. The first two short texts are entirely unknown for the majority of Carnap-scholars. The first is a two and a half-page political essay on the distinction between 'league of nations' and 'league of states,' which is followed by a summary-like review of Hugo Dingler's conventionalism. But the main achievement of the volume is the inclusion of Carnap's doctoral dissertation, as it was published in *Kant-Studien* in 1922. Though many papers have discussed the Kantian, Husserlian, and the scientific origins of Carnap's book, having now in our hands the German and the English version is a major step to understand the intermingled conceptions of analytic and continental philosophies from the early twentieth century.

Furthermore, three of Carnap's early papers on the philosophy of physics are included—all of them very stimulating, not only because we can see what Carnap understood by conventionalism in the 1920s, but also because we get a new look at the long road that led to the *Aufbau* (the topic of Volume Two). In addition, these are the only papers by Carnap that explicitly address the philosophy of physics. As his attention turned slowly to the general theory of knowledge (with some utopian insights as they are presented by the editors), and later toward the logical syntax and semantics of language, these three papers seem to be genuine contributions to *Naturphilosophie*.

The volume ends with another short book (or pamphlet), namely his 1926 *Physical Concept Formation*. Rarely discussed, but already connected to Vienna, this short booklet provides a glimpse of Carnap's last stage before he entered the scene of professional philosophers with his early magnum opus. Like all rare treasures, it requires some effort from the reader to understand all the stakes and points, but the editors are really helpful here as well.

Having such a detailed edition is an important moment in twenty-first century philosophy. Carus and all the other editors (with a huge team of supporters and co-workers, generously acknowledged) have brought us a volume that will influence Carnap studies for a long time. As the definite edition of the early writings, the first volume will serve not just historians, but also systematic philosophers, and even intellectual historians. Carnap had such an extended web of relations to the most important philosophers and scientists of his time that it may serve as a focal point for unveiling the interconnections between twentieth-century history of science and philosophy. Oxford University Press has produced a marvelous edition that will be a perfect fit on every analytic philosopher's bookshelf—just in case something comes to mind in the evening and you have to take a quick look at it.

**Adam Tamas Tuboly**, Supported by the MTA Lendület Morals and Science and by the MTA Premium Postdoctoral Scholarship