Theories of order in Carnap's Aufbau

The notion of “order” occupies a prominent place in Carnap’s Aufbau, and is a key concept in important debates in the period around 1920. This paper discusses how this notion functions in a number of, in retrospect, highly diverse debates, ranging from logic and philosophy of mathematics to psychology and epistemology, and why it could be seen as integrating these discourses. Key features to be found in all theories of order in this period are the search for an ultimately general form of science, an anti-atomist approach that accepts the existence of complex elements, and an attitude of tolerance or neutrality that allows to capture a large array of different scientific attitudes under the notion of “order”. This lecture presents the background of the theories of order that Carnap is referring to, highlights some issues in which Carnap’s Aufbau-project fits into a discourse about order, and raises the question as to which historiographical conclusions should be drawn from the prominence of these theories in the Aufbau.