

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12518-5 - The Theory and Scholarship of Talcott Parsons to 1951: A Critical
Commentary

Bruce C. Wearne

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE THEORY AND SCHOLARSHIP
OF TALCOTT PARSONS TO 1951

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12518-5 - The Theory and Scholarship of Talcott Parsons to 1951: A Critical Commentary

Bruce C. Wearne

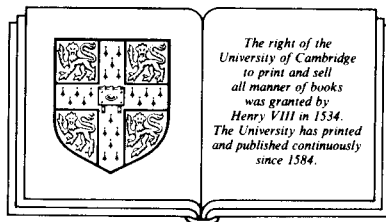
Frontmatter

[More information](#)

THE THEORY AND SCHOLARSHIP
OF TALCOTT PARSONS TO 1951
A critical commentary

BRUCE C. WEARNE

Chisholm Institute of Technology, Victoria



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

NEW YORK PORT CHESTER

MELBOURNE SYDNEY

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12518-5 - The Theory and Scholarship of Talcott Parsons to 1951: A Critical Commentary

Bruce C. Wearne

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521125185

© Cambridge University Press 1989

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements, no reproduction of any part may take place without the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 1989
This digitally printed version 2009

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Wearne, Bruce C.

The theory and scholarship of Talcott Parsons to 1951: a critical commentary / Bruce C. Wearne.

p. cm.

Rev. version of thesis (Ph.D.) – La Trobe University, Melbourne, 1985

Bibliography.

Includes index.

ISBN 0 521 37003 5

1. Parsons, Talcott, 1902–. 2. Sociology – United States – History. 3. Social systems. I. Title.

HM22.U6P3794 1989

301'.092 – dc20 89-1040 CIP

ISBN 978-0-521-37003-5 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-12518-5 Paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12518-5 - The Theory and Scholarship of Talcott Parsons to 1951: A Critical
Commentary

Bruce C. Wearne

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Special thanks to Valerie. This book is for Oliver and Nicholas.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12518-5 - The Theory and Scholarship of Talcott Parsons to 1951: A Critical
Commentary

Bruce C. Wearne

Frontmatter

[More information](#)*Contents*

<i>Preface</i>	<i>page ix</i>
Part 1 Unravelling Talcott Parsons' theoretical development	1
1 Introduction	3
Part 2 Talcott Parsons: the roots of his thought	9
2 Talcott Parsons in relation to the thought of his time	11
3 The Amherst Papers	19
Part 3 The development of theory	39
4 Max Weber and the vision of a unified social science	41
5 The position and prospects of sociology at Harvard in the 1930s	61
6 Convergence and its construction	76
Part 4 The theory	89
7 Conceptualizing <i>The Social System</i>	91
8 Developing <i>The Social System</i>	116
9 Formulating <i>The Social System</i>	133
10 <i>The Social System</i>	155
Part 5 Parsons' theory as it stood at 1951	177
11 Conclusion	179
Appendix: Some recent publishing on Talcott Parsons' theory: a bibliographical essay	188
<i>List of references</i>	195
<i>Index of names</i>	203
<i>Index of Parsonian concepts</i>	206

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-12518-5 - The Theory and Scholarship of Talcott Parsons to 1951: A Critical Commentary

Bruce C. Wearne

Frontmatter

[More information](#)

Preface

This book is the edited version of my doctoral thesis submitted in 1985 at La Trobe University, Melbourne. The research was begun back in 1974 with the impetus provided by the late Dr Bernard Zylstra of Toronto. Since that time there have been innumerable persons who have encouraged me along the way. David Bettison, at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, added his advice.

Since 1982, Alan Cubbon at La Trobe University has made a most important contribution to my evaluation of Talcott Parsons. My attempts to unravel the various strands of the argument in *The Social System* were greatly helped by the fruits of his long-term critical appraisal of Parsons' writings. I can now join the many others who can pay tribute to the busy and perceptive scholarship of teachers and mentors who have been so busy gleaning insights for their students that they have scarcely paused to compose journal articles and learned tomes.

I also thank Mrs Helen Parsons and Professor Charles Parsons for their warm and friendly encouragement. Victor Lidz, Clark Elliott, Bernard Barber, Harold Bershad, Jeffrey Alexander, Larry Nichols, Howard Brick, Ruth Barton, Keith Sewell and Charlotte Carr-Gregg are a few of the others who have made a contribution to the thinking that has gone into this book, and to these colleagues I am most grateful.

Thanks also to Tim Harland and Rita Jackson, willing helpers at various times when help was needed.

Whenever we come upon these matters in secular writers, let that admirable light of truth shining in them teach us that the mind of man, though fallen and perverted from its wholeness, is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God's excellent gifts.

(J. Calvin (1559), *Institutio*, II.II.15)