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C. Bertrand Thompson and management consulting in Europe, 1917-1934
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C. Bertrand Thompson and management consulting in Europe, 1917-1934

Management
consulting in
Europe

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to highlight myriad accomplishments of C. Bertrand Thompson, who is perhaps most well known as a scientific-management bibliographer and a Taylor disciple, in the belief that his contributions as a pioneer management theorist and consultant in Europe deserve to be more widely known and more deeply appreciated.

Design/methodology/approach – Archival, primary and secondary sources were used in the research.

Findings – Thompson was among the first to bring management consulting to Europe. He understood the importance of adapting scientific-management principles to meet the diverse needs of each client for whom he consulted. Thompson's strong belief and value system remained constant throughout his life.

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Practical implications – Understanding the needs of customers or clients and adapting systems to meet those needs is essential in achieving success as a consultant.

Originality/value – By drawing on rarely accessed published and unpublished materials, this paper discusses Thompson's many contributions to management thought and practice, most of which previously have not been highlighted in the referent literature.

Keywords Management, Scientific management, International management, C. Bertrand Thompson, Management consulting, Taylorism

Paper type Research paper

[C]est l'homme le plus remarquable que j'aie jamais rencontré, Planus (1964, p. 40).

Introduction

If management scholars are familiar with the name C. Bertrand Thompson (1882-1969), it is either as a scientific-management bibliographer (Greenwood and Greenwood, 1976) or as a disciple of Frederick W. Taylor (Greenwood, 1984). Both are accurate descriptions, but fail to convey the complexities and contributions of Thompson's life and work. By drawing on rarely accessed published and unpublished materials, we develop a portrait of a unique man of significant accomplishment, whose contributions as a pioneer management theorist and consultant deserve to be more widely known and more deeply appreciated. Knowing more about Thompson's life and work will, perhaps, lead others to agree with the remarks of French consulting engineer Planus (1964, p. 40) who, after working together in France, described Thompson as, "the most remarkable man that I ever met" (Planus, 1965) (Figure 1).

Thompson's background

Clarence Bertrand Thompson was born April 12, 1882 in Denver, Colorado, to Medora Gertrude Thompson (née Reed), a domestic servant, and James Beauregard Thompson, a hotel waiter. His parents had met in Boston, in the 1860s, where James worked as a jeweler; they married in 1873 (Massachusetts Town and Vital Records, 1873) and moved to Denver in 1880. An older sister, Beatrice Sumner Thompson, named for the abolitionist Charles Sumner, was born in 1874[1].

In 1890, only Medora and Bertrand moved to Los Angeles; the parents divorced (Reynolds) and Medora married Peter Mitchell, railroad chef and restaurateur, shortly after 1890. Bertrand graduated from Los Angeles High School in 1897 (Marquis, 1916, p. 1,060) at 15 years of age, and then enrolled in the Los Angeles Law School [opened in 1897 Shapiro (2000); incorporated in 1898][2]. James Scott Brown, a Harvard Law School graduate, founded the Los Angeles Law School; like Harvard Law, the curriculum incorporated the case-method of pedagogy.

The State of California required attorneys to be at least 21 years old to practice law; Thompson was only 18 upon graduating from law school. In the years before he reached full legal age, Thompson was busy and productive. He indulged his lifelong passion for travel and music; he read extensively in subjects such as philosophy, art and science; he was secretary to two municipal groups; and he wrote. His first publication, an article for the multi-volume series *Encyclopedia of Evidence*, was written during this time (Salem Evening News, 1906). Two important aspects of his life developed during this period: his interest in organized religion and his acquaintance with Maravene Kennedy.



Source: Ronald G. Greenwood Collection, Nova Southeastern University Archives

Figure 1.
C. Bertrand
Thompson

In December 1904, Thompson joined, as Assistant Minister, the recently established Los Angeles Fellowship, an independent church “for the purpose of encouraging trustful and unselfish living” (Mills, 1905, p. 1). The Fellowship maintained close ties to the Unitarian Church. Founded that year by the famed orator Benjamin Fay Mills, the actual administration of the Fellowship, with 1,200 members, was given to Thompson, who described the work of the church as “extensive and valuable institutional work on broad religious and economic lines” (*Salem Evening News*, 1906). Thompson’s interests in social welfare and equality were shared by Kennedy. Thompson first met Kennedy, a writer of popular short stories and plays, in San Francisco, “where she was doing newspaper work [and] he had come for a visit, *en route* Los Angeles” (*Passport Application, 1906-1925*). Kennedy followed Thompson to Los Angeles, where she joined and became active in the Fellowship. They both moved to Boston in September 1905, where she continued her writing and became Principal at the Boston School for Literary Art; Thompson entered Harvard University.

Thompson was a student in Harvard College and, for a year, at the school of Divinity. He graduated in 1908 from Harvard, with an A.B. specializing in economics and sociology. He impressed his teachers; after only a few months, George Herbert Palmer, Alford Professor of natural religion, moral philosophy and civil polity, wrote: “He has shown himself a superb scholar and a man of dignity and power. His capacity for work is exceptional and his swift intelligence is equal to it” (*Salem Evening News*, 1906). E.C.

Moore, Plummer Professor of Christian Morals commented: "I have rarely had a man of his fitness for practical work or his capacity for executive work and leadership" (*Salem Evening News*, 1906). Thompson's senior thesis, which Harvard philosophés Josiah Royce and George Santayana recommended for "Degree with Distinction", was accepted by the Department of Philosophy[3]. Thompson earned his Harvard AM degree in Economics in 1909. The first Dean of the Harvard Business School, Edwin F. Gay, would later describe Thompson, as did all who knew him, as "a talented fellow" (Gay, 2015).

While a Harvard undergraduate, Thompson continued his interest in organized religion, and, on October 17, 1906, was ordained and installed as Pastor of the First Unitarian Church of Peabody, Massachusetts (*Salem Evening News*, 1906)[4]. The church was an offshoot of the Congregational Church of Peabody and had attracted numerous wealthy, educated, liberal members of the community (B.P. Doucette, personal communication, 4 January 2013). In many respects, Thompson's ministry was a success: a renovation and refurbishing of the church, adding new members, increasing revenue and delivering notable sermons and evening lectures (*The Christian Register*, 1908). As noted by Barbara P. Doucette, Peabody (MA) Historical Society & Museum, the local newspaper published every one of Thompson's sermons because they were dynamic and "futuristic" (personal communication, 4 January 2013). Thompson's lectures and sermons merged topics in economics and religion, with titles such as "Labor and Labor Unions" (*Salem Evening News*, 1907b) and "Labor, Capital and the Public" (*Salem Evening News*, 1907c)". Notable also was his rapid delivery, rising to 200 words per minute at times; despite speed and subject, his oratory was characterized as optimistic and he attracted large audiences, even for evening lectures.

The published summaries of Thompson's evening lectures provide an early record of his views on labor and labor unions, capital and the economy, from the time he was a college student. In his lectures, Thompson reasoned that at no time in history was it more apparent than in the early twentieth century that no man stands alone; interdependence between people was made more obvious by the march of democracy. Labor needs capital and capital needs labor for both to survive. He further held that it is natural for labor to combine, as natural as it is for capital to combine, and for workers to form unions (*Salem Evening News*, 1907b). Thus, his lifelong insistence that labor was necessary and should be part of the implementation of scientific management was based on principles espoused long before he had met the "father of scientific management", Fred Taylor, or observed contemporary workplaces. The lectures formed the foundation for his first book, *The Churches and the Wage Earners* (Thompson, 1909), and the basis for his relationship with workers and unions throughout his career. The book also summarized Thompson's concerns with organized religion's role *vis-à-vis* work and the complexities of economic activity in the industrial workplace. Issues of labor, management, ownership, social class and status, equality and much more are addressed in much the same way and with many of the same conclusions as voiced in his evening lectures and sermons.

Thompson and Kennedy were married by the pastor emeritus of the First Unitarian Church of Peabody on February 6, 1907. Announcement of their marriage prompted opposition based on the "discrepancy in age and her previous divorce[5]"; yet, the church community generously gifted the couple (*Salem Evening News*, 1907a). Despite his many ministerial successes, Thompson was concerned that some church members sought counseling elsewhere. On principle, he submitted a letter of resignation, and then agreed, at the insistence of the church's congregation, to stay another year; he finally resigned

his ministry on May 11, 1908. A contemporary news account notes that Thompson's final tenure was the third of three short ministries at the church: "lack of harmony and failure to give the minister united support has been the causes of all these short pastorates" (*Salem Evening News*, 1908). Thompson would have no further connection with the Unitarian Church, other than organizing a meeting in 1910 with church leaders as part of the Boston-1915 movement to develop a "greater and finer" Boston (*The Christian Register*, 1910). Nor would his work in organized religion ever be mentioned in his biographical statements, letters, Harvard Class of 1908 Reports, or writings.

Thompson and the Harvard lectures

While pursuing his master's degree, Thompson served as an assistant in the Harvard University Economics Department (Greenwood and Greenwood, 1976). It was at this time that he "discovered" being "rather more interested in real business than in the theory about it" (*Harvard Class of 1908, 1933*, p. 696). Upon graduating in 1909, he thus accepted a position with the Boston Chamber of Commerce as Secretary of its Committee on Industrial Relations, chaired by Boston department-store owner Edward A. Filene. Through his work, Thompson "fell by accident" on *Taylor's Shop Management* (1903). He was so taken by Taylor's "task-management" system that he arranged for the Chamber to invite Taylor to lecture in Boston (Thompson, 1966a, 1966b).

The following year (1910), Thompson accepted an offer to join the two-year-old Harvard Business School as a Lecturer in Manufacturing. From this point, Thompson's early work developed along dual paths: one, teaching at Harvard and, in 1911, coordinating lectures that Taylor and other early management pioneers such as Carl G. Barth, Horace King Hathaway, Charles B. Going, Morris L. Cooke and Sanford E. Thompson delivered to students enrolled in Bus 17a (Introduction to Factory Management) and Bus 19 (Scientific Management); and two, as an apprentice not only learning and applying Taylor's ideas but also publishing about the theory and practice of the so-called Taylor System.

As the Dean of the Harvard Business School, Edwin F. Gay questioned what could be learned in a classroom that would be useful to practicing managers. He was encouraged by Wallace C. Sabine, Dean of Harvard's School of Applied Science, to become familiar with *Taylor's Shop Management* (1903), which had caught the attention of the engineering school faculty as an applied approach to industrial management. Sabine and Gay visited Taylor's home in Germantown, Pennsylvania, listened to Taylor lecture on "task management" and toured local Philadelphia firms that had installed the Taylor System (Cruikshank, 1987, pp. 56-58). Gay asked Taylor to teach his system at the Harvard Business School, although Taylor was "openly skeptical" about whether his system could be taught in a classroom. Eventually Taylor agreed and, initially giving two lectures in Spring 1909, as part of Business 17a, returning the check for \$100 that had been sent to reimburse him for his services (Cruikshank, 1987, p. 58) Melvin T. Copeland, a member of the Harvard Business School faculty, recalled that Business 17a was "new [...] newsworthy. It was concrete, dealing with specific factory problems, and to many it seemed to provide something of a formula for management" (Copeland, 1958, p. 26). By this time, the Taylor System had received widespread publicity from both Harrington Emerson's claim at the 1910 Eastern Rate Case hearings before the Interstate Commerce Commission that the railroads petitioning for a rate increase could save a million-dollars a day by applying the newly named scientific management, and the

August, 1911, International Association of Machinists strike at the US Army Arsenal at Watertown, Massachusetts (Aitken, 1985; Hathi Trust, 1911). Taylor's *Principles of Scientific Management* was also published to wide acclaim in 1911.

An apprentice in the Taylor System

Wishing to gain a greater familiarity with Taylor's principles, in 1912, Thompson asked Taylor for permission to apprentice in a plant that was installing scientific management. Taylor agreed and sent Thompson to the Plimpton Press, near Boston, which was then being reorganized by Hathaway and Cooke. It was here that Thompson also met Frank B. Gilbreth, who, while building a warehouse, was conducting time studies of the motions required to lay bricks. Gilbreth complained to Thompson that the studies were going slowly. In turn, Thompson suggested that Gilbreth place:

[...] a clock with a large dial and the hands running in hundreds of a minute and place it in the midst of the group [...] take moving pictures of the whole set-up (Thompson, 1966a, p. 1, 1966b).

Recognizing the value in Thompson's suggestion, Gilbreth later claimed use of the clock as his own idea.

This usurpation of Thompson's suggestion may have been the beginning of a rift between Thompson and both Frank and Lillian Gilbreth. In commenting on Thompson's (1914a) compilation and criticism of the scientific-management literature, Greenwood and Greenwood (1976, p. 5) note that:

Thompson is [...] 'more harsh' toward the Gilbreths despite their important and voluminous work they are mentioned only once in terms of brick-laying studies and a footnote in the section 'Development and Theory of Scientific Management as a Whole' [...] The two [Gilbreths] are still relegated to an insignificant place in the development of scientific management.

This, thus, raises the question as to whether the Gilbreths' failure to acknowledge that it was Thompson's idea to place a special clock in the background of the Gilbreths' motion-study films led to Thompson's lack of recognition of the contributions the Gilbreths made to scientific management.

Following a stint at the Plimpton Press, Taylor sent Thompson to work with Hathaway implementing Taylor's principles at Eaton, Crane, & Pike, Pittsfield, Massachusetts, manufacturers of writing paper. After a year working with Hathaway, Taylor asked Thompson to study the Tabor Manufacturing Company, Philadelphia, of which Taylor was part owner. The Tabor Company was considered "the most celebrated demonstration ground and school connected with the scientific management movement" (Drury, 1915, p. 134).

Hathaway was Thompson's mentor until Taylor asked Thompson to "undertake the reorganization of the Gray & Davis Company, manufacturers of automotive self-starters" (Thompson, 1966a, p. 1, 1966b). This assignment would lead to a lingering animosity between Thompson and Carl Barth. Thompson explained to Taylor that he [Thompson] lacked mechanical-engineering skills and needed Barth to work with him. Barth agreed, but only if Thompson accepted Barth's son, Christian, as head of the Gray & Davis Planning Department. Thompson agreed, but felt Barth was developing "a violent antipathy" toward him because he was "an obstacle to the entrance of his son into the [Taylor] group" (Thompson, 1966a, p. 1, 1966b). As Thompson, explained:

[...] as long as Taylor lived Barth had to keep his animosity under wraps. Shortly after Taylor died, Barth came to Boston and at luncheon with me at the Harvard Club announced that he could not tolerate his son working under me and would demand of Gray & Davis to discharge me and put his son in my place (Thompson, 1966a, pp. 1-2, 1966b).

Gray refused and dismissed Barth's son, Christian, further fueling Barth's wrath. Barth threatened Thompson (1966a, p. 2, 1966b), telling him:

[...] he would make it impossible for me to work in the Taylor System in America and that it would be useless for me to appeal to Hathaway and Cooke as he would do the same for them if they tried to interfere.

Spreading the word

Thompson occasionally wrote "how to" articles in *System: The Magazine of Business; Factory, the Magazine of Management*; and *The Library of Factory Management*, publications devoted to providing advice to practicing managers. In serving his apprenticeship and studying with Taylor and his disciples, Thompson developed a step-by-step means for implementing the Taylor System:

- plan the work to be performed so it can be dispatched to the proper work station;
- train the best workers in what Thompson called "elementary time study"; and
- provide an opportunity for the workers to be observed by an experienced time study expert to verify that they had properly learned their new skills.

Elementary time study was then to be supplemented by a second analysis of worker motions, workplace tools and an allowance for worker fatigue. Thompson (1914a, p. 409) added: "It must be pointed out here that the mere possession of a stop watch does not constitute elementary time study". Thompson's procedure for implementing the Taylor System was incisive and, if applied as prescribed, would have arguably avoided misunderstandings such as had occurred at Watertown Arsenal (Aitken, 1985).

British reaction to the Taylor System

The widespread notoriety of Taylor's methods spurred the development of college courses devoted to scientific management; by 1913, scientific-management (under varying titles) was also being taught at Carnegie Institute of Technology, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Northwestern University, Ohio State University, Pennsylvania State University, University of Pittsburgh and University of Wisconsin (Nelson, 1992). Taylor's ideas, however, did not inspire courses outside the USA. In England, scientific-management was criticized as inappropriate for teaching or practice. In 1913, at a meeting of the British Sociological Society, Edward Cadbury, president of the family-owned eponymous chocolate manufacturing firm, was critical of scientific-management for its lack of employee participation and social-welfare plans, such as those adopted by the Cadbury firm. He also maintained that scientific-management caused physical strain on workers, cast aside collective bargaining over wages and, further, with its payment of an incentive wage, would increase productivity and, as a result (reminiscent of the nineteenth-century Luddite argument), would increase unemployment, as fewer employees would be required to achieve the same output (Cadbury, 1914)[6].

Other participants in the symposium, papers and discussion of which were reproduced in *The Sociological Review*, included Walter Hazell and John A. Hobson (a sociologist and an economist), G.D.H. Cole (trades-union advocate) and W.H. Jackson and Sir Charles G. Renold (manufacturers). Their views varied. Only Sir Charles, son of Hans Renold, had seen scientific management in practice. He wrote, it did lead to increased productivity and could be adapted to British firms. Hans Renold Ltd. was the first British firm to adopt scientific-management and found that the study of jobs would assist trades unions in bargaining about rates of pay^[7].

The editor of *The Sociological Review* asked Taylor for a response. Taylor (1914a), pp. 266-267 was brief:

Cadbury had made a very earnest and impartial effort to represent fairly the principles of Scientific Management [...] However, he [Cadbury] has never taken the trouble to personally investigate a company which was actually running under those principles, and that he, therefore, is not competent to judge [scientific management].

Taylor felt more should be said and asked Thompson to reply to Cadbury's criticisms.

Thompson's response offered point-by-point refutations of Cadbury's critique. Thompson added, however, if a trade union was in place and bargained over hours of work, wages and working conditions: "There is no reason why improvements [...] [through scientific management] cannot be the basis of collective bargaining and worked out by mutual agreement" (Thompson, 1914c, p. 325). Thompson followed with what he thought would be an explanation of Taylor's position, describing Thompson (1914c, p. 325) as:

An autocrat by birth, training, and experience, who has had to fight the most bitter, unscrupulous, and ignorant representatives of American labor trade unionism; it is not to be wondered that he cannot accept collective bargaining practically, no matter what his feelings may be in regard to its [unionism] historic usefulness.

Taylor's response, in a personal letter dated December 30, 1914, to Thompson's comments was lengthy and sharp:

What you say is far from correct. *I am not an autocrat by birth, training, and experience* [emphases by Taylor]. I have worked as a workman and lived right among workers and have many of my best friends now among the workers [...] As you know, I am heartily in favor of unions where a hog employer or an employer careless of his workmen's rights is up against the old fashioned type of organization, but [...] the union is absolutely unnecessary and only a hindrance to the quick and successful organization of any manufacturing establishment (Taylor, 2014c, p. 1).

Taylor added a handwritten note at the end of the letter:

On reading this after coming back from the stenographer, I find that I have said too much in criticism and not enough in praise. Best wishes for a happy and successful New Year (Taylor, 1914, p. 2).

In a January 6, 1915 letter to Taylor, Thompson tried to clarify his statements. He meant "autocratic" to refer to the:

[...] forcefulness and positiveness in the application of principle and policy, [but he did not] seriously misrepresent [Taylor's] attitude. As I understand it, you are willing to concede a place for the operation of trade unions in regard to those matters which are not susceptible to

reduction to law and on which there may be a possibility of compromise and balance of opinion and judgment.

If, however, a factory was unionized “it would be quicker and easier to recognize [this] and secure the union’s cooperation” (Taylor, 1915a). Taylor’s January 8, 1915 response to Thompson was brief: “If you will confine yourself to quoting what I have written about trades unions I think you will do better than imagining what I have said”.

Taylor would, however, later praise Thompson’s work. As a case in point, Thompson spent some four years personally investigating various installations of the Taylor System in 12 states in the area between Maine, Maryland and Chicago. He noted the need for “experienced and technically trained chronometrists” for time study, but cautioned, “a stop watch [should] not [be] used at all until a preliminary motion study has been made” to simplify the operations being studied” (Thompson, 1915a, pp. 276-277). Like Frank B. Gilbreth, Thompson considered motion study to be inherent in time study. Of 107 plants Thompson visited and in which progress was sufficient to warrant a judgment, he considered 58 to be complete successes, 15 partial successes and 34 failures. Of the failures, Thompson was of the opinion that 29 had not followed Taylor’s prescriptions. Thompson concluded that the failures occurred because the time study people were untrained or inept, or management or the owners rushed the work to show quick results; none of the failures could be attributed “to difficulty with workmen – and this independently of whether the workers were organized or not” (Thompson, 1915a, p. 305)[8]. In commenting on one of a series of articles in which Thompson reported his findings, Taylor wrote:

It is splendidly written and I am certain will give the impression of fairness and impartiality. I feel your articles are doing an immense amount of good to the cause [i.e. scientific management] (Taylor, 1915b).

Sometime after January 1915, Taylor and Thompson met in Atlantic City and Thompson asked for the names of some of Taylor’s contacts in Europe. Taylor apparently mentioned Frenchmen scientist Henry Le Chatelier and engineer Charles de Fréminville and possibly others. On March 15, 1915, Thompson wrote requesting additional names because he wished to locate opportunities to develop the Taylor System in England, France and Germany (Thompson, 1915b). On March 18th, Taylor’s secretary, Miller (1915), wrote to Thompson that Taylor was in the hospital and “unlikely to attend to any matters of business”. Taylor died unexpectedly from pneumonia three days later on March 21, 1915.

Thompson becomes a persona non grata in the Taylor group

Although Taylor had disagreements with Thompson, he sometimes passed over them, such as the handwritten note about being perhaps too critical when described as an “autocrat” in Thompson’s 1914c *Sociological Review* article. In response to Thompson’s 1914b “The Literature of Scientific Management”, published in Harvard University’s *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Taylor wrote, “I do not altogether agree with some of your statements [...] and will look forward to talking that over with you” (Taylor, 1914b). What exactly Taylor disagreed with is unknown. One might speculate, however, that Taylor may have taken exception to Thompson’s opinion that Henry L. Gantt’s *Work, Wages, and Profits* “ranks with Taylor’s *Shop Management* and *The Principles of Scientific Management* as one of the standard authorities” (Thompson, 1914b, p. 515).

Cooke also wrote Thompson about the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* article and chided him for not citing an article that Cooke had written; giving too much praise to Gantt; and, perhaps, most cutting of all, referencing Richard C. Maclaurin, President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who was critical of Cooke's (1910) report to the Carnegie Foundation on Academic Efficiency[9]. Maclaurin felt Cooke's recommendations "would consume the instructor's time [and] distract attention from the fundamental purpose of a university". Thompson replied "I quoted Maclaurin not because I approve of his criticism, but because he was the most conspicuous of the critics". Further, Thompson 1914a wrote:

I know that Taylor is the master and Gantt the disciple, but what I said in the article represented my true convictions that Mr Gantt has succeeded in presenting the human side of scientific management more fully and in a better light than Mr. Taylor. If this is heresy, I suppose I shall have to be classed as an 'impure Taylorite'.

Hathaway had worked with Thompson at Eaton, Crane, & Pike and Plimpton Press. He viewed Thompson with skepticism, and, according to Nelson (1980), after Taylor's death, "with outright contempt", as Hathaway "seemed to enjoy denigrating not only Thompson", but men like [Hollis] Godfrey and [Royal R.] Keely, "who had advanced degrees and backgrounds as educators" (p. 181). Taylor endorsed Hathaway's "slight" of Thompson after the latter became a practicing consultant.

When Thompson was gathering material for updating his review of the scientific-management literature and its progress, he wrote Frank Gilbreth for a list of his clients in the USA and Germany. Thompson promised not to publish the clients' names, but use this information for statistical purposes (Thompson, 1916b). Gilbreth responded he could not do this:

We [Frank and Lillian Gilbreth] find it is not advisable to let anybody know who our clients are for two reasons. One is that the clients themselves are not particularly anxious to have it known among the trade they have gone outside for information regarding management, and the second reason is that some people who formerly used to be my friends have made a systematic attempt get all jobs away from me wherever they can. (F.B. Gilbreth to C.B. Thompson, June 19, 1916).

Thompson's reply indicated he sympathized with Gilbreth:

Since I have myself become the goat for the Taylor crowd – the self-appointed "successors" of a man whose spirit is entirely beyond their grasp – and have myself been the victim of some of their choicest tricks, I can understand your feelings (Thompson, 1916c).

Frank Gilbreth died in 1924, and further correspondence between Thompson and Lillian M. Gilbreth is somewhat mysterious. In 1923, Mrs Gilbreth attended a conference in Paris, organized by Taylor followers who were members of the Conference de l'organisation française. Paris was the location of Thompson's consulting offices and he wrote he would like to see her and "talk shop". Somehow, they missed connections and Mrs Gilbreth apologized, hoping "to hear of Thompson's work in France" and adding perhaps they could meet in Brussels in 1925 at the next Conference de l'organisation française meeting. She added a handwritten note for filing this letter: "This correspondence is important because F.B.G. thought C.B.T. purposely underrated our mark" (L.M. Gilbreth to C.B. Thompson, June 19, 1916). The intended meaning of the phrase "our mark" is ambiguous, but seems to indicate Thompson thought less of the

Gilbreths' work than they felt was the case. This possibility is underscored by Greenwood and Greenwood' (1976) observation that the omission of a paper by the Gilbreths in Thompson's (1914a) book, *Scientific Management: A Collection of the More Significant Articles Describing the Taylor System of Management* seems "peculiar", in that they are the only pioneer writers not included.

C. Bertrand Thompson: international management consultant

Thompson's first opportunity to develop the Taylor System as an independent consultant came in 1916. Although Edwin Gay had offered Thompson an appointment as Professor of Business Administration at the Harvard Business School, he declined. Seeking to apply his scientific management training, Thompson accepted a consulting assignment reorganizing the retailing and wholesaling operations of the Pacific Commercial Company's 17,297-acre Calamba Sugar plantation in the Philippines (Scruggs and Howard, 2015; Thompson, 1966a, 1966b). In the following year, he was asked by the British Embassy in China to organize the recruitment of 125,000 workers and prepare them for the construction and repair of roads in France during The Great War. During the same period, Cooke asked Thompson to take a position in Washington, DC, "to organize the storage of war materials between the factory and shipment in the US" (Thompson, 1966a, 1966b). Thompson declined both requests, and accepted instead an offer from Henry Le Chatelier to assist Louis Loucheur, who, in 1917, became the French Minister of Munitions, in applying scientific-management to the manufacture of ordnance.

Thompson and the Great War (1914-1918)

The Great War was in its third year when Thompson arrived in France. Scientific-management before 1914 had not been received well because of hasty installations by untrained "consultants", union opposition, strikes at the Renault Frères and Berliet automobile factories and unfavorable publicity in both the popular and the socialist press. Fridenson (1987) has noted that the pressure of war created a favorable environment for the Taylor System to be introduced in munitions and armaments factories, as well as those producing war materiel. Shells of all calibers, rifles, cannon and gunpowder required a batch manufacturing process where planning, routing and dispatching of work and other Taylor ideas were appropriate. Albert Thomas, a French socialist and influential in the French labor movement was made Director of Artillery in September 1914 and succeeded in fostering labor-management cooperation by assuring organized labor that scientific management was not a weapon to destroy unions, and national defense was more important than the narrow-class interests of employers. Thomas's thinking paralleled that of Thompson who felt:

Labor unions may and should assist in the determination of standardized conditions of a day's work and its attainment, and that the existence of the unions is and will continue to be to maintain an adequate wage (Thompson, 1917, p. 269).

Thomas was named Undersecretary of Munitions and Armaments in May 1915, and asked Le Chatelier to be in charge of improving the quality of French ordnance (Moutet, 1985). Shells sometimes exploded prematurely and weapons would misfire. Quality was a critical factor, but wasted raw materials prevented an increase in production:

The result was so disastrous that it appeared from the beginning of 1915, that to increase production, it was first necessary to reduce the percentage of waste: to produce five thousand shells [of acceptable quality] it could require the production as high as thirty thousand (Moutet, 1985, p. 73).

Partisan politics reputedly forced Thomas out of the Ministry of Armaments in late 1917. Minister of Munitions, Loucheur, believed that the problems plaguing ordnance production could be solved by applying Taylor's ideas about planning, quality control, time study and incentive bonuses for quality shells and weaponry. Thompson recalled that Loucheur "asked me, on the suggestion of M. Le Chatelier, to see him about increasing the production of the munitions plants". Thompson felt his first loyalty was to the US forces who were arriving in France in 1917, but "[US] General [Charles] Dawes [...] advised me to accept [Loucheur's offer] as they need your services more than the American Army" (Thompson, 1966a, p. 2, 1966b).

Planus (1964, pp. 40-41), who was involved with the production of French munitions during this period, described Thompson's appointment to the Munitions Ministry:

In 1917, I was an artillery lieutenant. Gravely wounded near Caronne, I was declared unfit for armed service. After 14 months of hospitalization and convalescence [...]. I went to the Munitions Ministry to call upon my former colonel. He welcomed me, saying that the ministry had just hired an American specialist – a certain Mr Thompson – to improve the organisation of shell loading factories. He [the Colonel] had been allocated two officers, he was asking for a third [...] Do you want to be that assistant? [Three days later] I came back to give him my consent. That is how I met M. Thompson.

Planus (1964, p. 40) described Thompson as:

[...] a tall fellow, exceeding 1 m. 90 cm. [6 ft, 3 in.], who declared himself in shape when he weighed a mere 105 kg [231.5 lbs.]. He spoke French admirably, but with a dreadful accent [...]. He was extremely physically lazy, but he was the most remarkable man I ever met.

It appears that Thompson arrived in France in late 1917 or, possibly, during the first few months of 1918. In early 1918, French Premier Georges Clemenceau ordered the application of scientific-management in all facilities falling under the French Minister of War. Thompson was assigned to work with de Fréminville in implementing Taylor's methods in three marine engineering establishments: at Châlons-sur-Marne, Guérigny and Clermont-Ferrand (Devinat, 1927). In October 1918, Thompson gave three lectures at the *Conservatoire national des arts et métiers* in Paris on his war-related work (Thompson, 1920a). He told his audience "scientific management is not a universal solution, a panacea for all the ills of humanity [...] [and] needed the participation and knowledge of the worker" (Thompson, 1920a, pp. 16-17). In his comments, Thompson referred to the "Taylor-Thompson System", which suggests he had become the "impure Taylorite" he had described in his correspondence with Cooke. Thompson also addressed the Société de ingénieurs civils in an effort to draw further attention to scientific management. The Great War ended on November 11, 1918, and Thompson, subsequently, turned his attention to establishing his own consulting firm.

Thompson et compagnie: Bureaux de conseil en organisation scientifique
Moutet credits Thompson with being the first to establish a scientific-management consulting practice, Thompson et compagnie: Bureaux de conseil en organisation scientifique, in France. Although others would follow, Thompson had a head start as a

result of his work with de Fréminville, his consulting experiences in the USA and Asia and his association with Taylor and other scientific-management pioneers. Despite these credentials, Thompson was initially unknown to French industrialists. “At first, in order to ensure the success of his enterprise, he advertised in newspapers and more directly to the scientific community in general” (Moutet, 1997, p. 32). Thompson sought “to demonstrate to French industry it needed a true Taylor disciple in order to apply the latest techniques” (Moutet, 1997, p. 32). With the Parisian publisher Payot providing the translations, he assembled an “industrial library” of scientific-management that included books by Ida M. Tarbell, Henry L. Gantt, Charles B. Going and Wallace Clark, as well as his own books *How to Find Factory Costs* (Thompson, 1916a) and *Méthodes américaines d'établissement des prix de revient en usines* (Thompson, 1920b).

Thompson explained how the Taylor–Thompson System was installed as he approached a consulting assignment with Compagnie général électrique de Nancy:

I made one condition to management: that I must be assured of the cooperation of the workmen; and I told them I must first come to an understanding with the labor unions [...] I asked M. [Léon] Jouhaux, president of the C.G.T. Confédération générale du travail] and M. [Alphonse] Meerheim, President of the Mechanics Union to meet with me for a discussion [...] we talked for 5 hours [...] they told me of their objection to the Taylor System, based on their experience in the Renault plant in which an engineer who had visited half a dozen Taylor plants in the USA attempted to reproduce the T.S. [sic] (Thompson, 1966b).

Thompson asked if a representative of the mechanics union could work with him and, in turn, report his impressions to Jouhaux and Meerheim. It was agreed:

I then began to work in Nancy with a very intelligent delegate of the union at my side. He was with me for a year and a half at every stage of the work, reporting to his union regularly. At the end of that time I was told that neither the mechanics union or the C.G.T. had any objections to the system as I applied it. And in fact, never in any of the reorganizations I affected in France was there the slightest trouble with labor even up to 1936 when Léon Blum took over [by that time Thompson had left France] (Thompson, 1966a, 1966b).

With his first consulting work at Nancy, it was clear that the “Taylor–Thompson System” would cooperate with organized labor. The precise number of consultants in Thompson’s practice is unknown, but Paul Planus, whom he met earlier during the Great War at the Munitions Ministry, was probably among the first. Planus’s initial consulting assignment was at the Munitions Ministry’s weapons factory at Saint-Étienne. He recalls producing a report of his work and that after reading it, Thompson tossed it in the wastebasket. “I protested, saying that the situation described was accurate because everything in this plant was carried out according to strictly established administrative regulations” (Planus, 1964, p. 3). Thompson burst out laughing. A few days later, Planus and Thompson returned to Saint-Étienne, and Planus recognized that nothing happened according to regulations. Thompson told Planus, “If you want to be a consultant, only believe half of what you see and not a word of what you are told” (Planus, 1964, p. 3).

The Compagnie des chemins de fer de l’Est (the French Eastern Railway Company) was another Thompson company assignment. He was asked to study the costs associated with the company’s marshaling yards, where incoming rail cars were sorted by destination and reassembled for departure on outgoing tracks. Thompson’s findings

resulted in “reducing expenses of the company to a very considerable extent” and a new wage incentive plan (Devinat, 1927, p. 241).

Thompson not only collaborated with other members of his consultancy but also former clients. He wrote a number of papers (Thompson, 1930), three of which were co-authored with members of his consulting practice (André Blandin, A. Burklé, and L. Paul); six with contributors of firms where scientific management was installed (J. Baudez, C. Beaufay, F. Clément, R. Goupil, J. Louis, and J. Teinturier); and one with a cost accountant (G. Daubray), who occasionally assisted Thompson. The firms Thompson consulted with were not identified by name in his various articles, perhaps for proprietary reasons, but each paper addressed some aspect of the Taylor–Thompson System: materials handling, standards for raw materials and finished products, ventilation, inventory management, purchasing, hiring employees, work scheduling and so forth. Thompson (1930, p. 260) concluded with a *caveat*:

Scientific organization requires not only time and money. It can be implemented only if we show unlimited patience, perseverance, and above all, loyalty and justice [...] [and] if one is determined to share the gains with the workers. Otherwise, it cannot possibly be put into practice [...] if, under these conditions, you desire to adopt the Taylor [Thompson] system, and if the system fits you well, you can walk forward, otherwise you had better leave.

The Michelin brothers had stopped short of applying Taylor’s ideas in their rubber factory on the eve of the Great War, but after the war, they became advocates through their *Comité Michelin*. The *Comité* published a booklet on scientific-management, advocated scientific training of staff, and gave examples of how the Taylor System could be used in industry. Thompson’s consulting practice had at least one Michelin contract. Michelin had diversified beyond automobile tires into related lines and needed a rational means of planning, routing, scheduling and dispatching multiple products within one factory. Thompson’s firm installed the Taylor–Thompson System in the shop that produced bicycle tires, tubes, clothing, shoes and carpets (Devinat, 1927).

At least two French department stores installed the Taylor–Thompson System under Thompson’s direction, and Paul Planus reorganized a third retail store. Thompson’s reorganization of Thibaud-Gibbs & Cie. Parisian department store involved its commercial and bookkeeping departments (Thompson, 1932). La Samaritaine was also a Thompson client. In this case, one of Thompson’s recommendations was the dismissal of the Chief Administrator of the Mail-Order Department. The President of La Samaritaine dismissed his “oldest collaborator [...] without notice and with an indemnity of \$200,000” (Thompson, 1966). Other Thompson clients came from a variety of industries, including a sausage mill and more than one paper mill (Scruggs and Howard, 2015). According to Devinat (1927), Director of L’organisation scientifique du travail en Europe, Thompson was considered to be the best-known consultant in France.

Thompson, Planus and Suzanne Garcin-Guynet

Among Thompson’s colleagues were two fellow consultants who would carry the Taylor–Thompson System into the future: Paul Planus and Suzanne Garcin-Guynet. Thompson’s consulting firm primarily employed engineers trained in French polytechnics. Some, however, were self-taught, learning by experience, followed by hands-on training in the Taylor–Thompson System. All were schooled in time study methods.

Paul Planus. As noted, Planus was involved in Thompson's wartime work at Munitions Ministry weapons factory at Saint-Étienne, and later assisted Thompson in reorganizing the repair shop at the French Eastern Railway Company. A description of the role enacted by the Thompson firm's time study engineers appeared in *l'Usine* (1929):

The role of the time-study [engineer] is to focus on the worker performing the operation to be studied and [to] continue after having won his confidence, assuring his cooperation; noting the time required to detail the various operations [...] and to use his [the worker's] experience to determine if there is a way to make these operations less fatiguing and reduce the time for the employee's task.

Planus's description details how the Taylor–Thompson System was applied and provides a contrast in worker cooperation and participation with how scientific-management had been previously applied in France. In particular, Thompson emphasized fundamental time study training rather than the quick-fixes attempted at installations such as at Renault Frères, which led to strikes and widespread worker hostility.

After Saint-Étienne and the French Eastern Railway Company, Planus's next assignment for Thompson's firm was at the Hutchinson Company of Paris. It lasted two years. Planus was the lead consultant in conducting time studies, simplifying tasks and reorganizing Hutchinson's workshops. Owned by Hiram Hutchinson, a colleague of Charles Goodyear, the company used Goodyear's patents to manufacture galoshes and other rubber products for the French automobile industry. Planus also consulted with Brown, Boveri & Cie. of Baden, Switzerland, a manufacturer of turbines and electric motors, and Galeries Lafayette, a vertically integrated department store specializing in textile products. Another task at Galeries Lafayette involved streamlining the "inventory accounting to the whole department store to improve the buying system and reduce the amount of stock", that is, the inventory (Champsaur and Cadilluet, 2010, p. 16).

Planus left Thompson's firm in 1929 to start his own consultancy. In late 1929, a worldwide depression began and pressure on French firms to reduce costs increased. During this period, firms in France became more nationalistic, favoring French consultants. As a result, Thompson, along with other American consultants, sought clients outside of France. Planus's firm prospered with contracts from the French public sector, including the Postal, Telephone & Telegraph Company and the Société national chemins de fer (France's national railway) (Moutet, 1997, p. 216). By 1939, Planus employed 35 consultants, and his firm was the most successful consultancy in France. As Moutet (1997, p. 33) wrote: "His [Planus's] office, after Thompson left, became one of the most important existing in France between the two wars". After World War II, Planus's firm was the training ground for another generation of French consultants, including André Vidal, Pierre Michel and Yves Bossard, with "almost all of them [...] firmly anchored in the Taylorist tradition" (Kipping, 1997, p. 78).

Suzanne Garcin-Guynet. Garcin-Guynet also began her work with Thompson and, likewise, later established her own consultancy. She had been an employee of the Mannestamp Forges (iron-works) for 19 years before joining Thompson in 1923 (Moutet, 1997). Self-educated, Thompson trained Garcin-Guynet in the Taylor–Thompson System. Garcin-Guynet's first publication was a paper presented at a meeting of the *Comité national de l'organisation français* in 1928 on the application of time study in a specialty steel plant (Garcin-Guynet, 1928).

In 1916, a private school, the Haut enseignement commercial pour les jeunes filles, was established to teach young women stenography and typing and “other practical subjects”, such as, bookkeeping (Delorme-Hoehstetter, 2000). The acronym for this school, HEC, greatly resembled the well-known Haute études commerciales, which admitted only males and was established in 1881, the same year as the Wharton School of Finance and Economy at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. To avoid confusion, the Paris Chamber of Commerce, which owned the “real” HEC, purchased the Haut enseignement commercial pour les jeunes filles, creating HEC-JF. In 1928, Garcin-Guynet began to collaborate with HEC and well-known consultants such as International Labour Office director Paul Devinat and Wallace Clark (a member of Henry L. Gantt’s consulting firm), in an annual series of conferences on accounting, economics and other business subjects. “Intended for female employees in industry, the conferences became, in fact, a license for company directors to initiate their engineers in the methods of organization” (Moutet, 1997, p. 33).

After the 1929 conference, Garcin-Guynet returned to her position in Thompson’s consultancy, developed statistical records for planning and controlling production orders, office management through record-keeping and organizing for office machinery (Garcin-Guynet, 1931). In 1932, Garcin-Guynet resigned from Thompson’s firm to begin her own consulting practice. She continued to advise firms in office automation and the analysis of office work (Garcin-Guynet, 1953). In 1954, she returned to organizing conferences for young women and did so for 15 years before retiring. She is considered to be a pioneer among French consultants and in preparing young women for business careers.

Thompson’s reflections on Europe and Russia

Thompson retired from consulting in 1934. He was proud of his legacy, in particular, of those members of his firm, such as “Paul Planus and “one woman” [Garcin-Guynet] who have had conspicuous success in carrying on the pure Taylor tradition” (Thompson to E. Dale, August 10, 1966). France had been:

[...] in the lead in its appreciation and understanding of Taylor and its eagerness to apply practically his principles and methods insofar as it was possible to learn what they were (Thompson, 1966).

He attributed his consulting success to cooperation with organized labor. Reflecting back, he noted that before socialist Léon Blum, of the Popular Front, became the Prime Minister of France in June 1936, labor and management had worked together.

At the same time, Thompson was concerned that some consultants in France were “shameless fakers, mostly unemployed bookkeepers, who solicited clients from house to house and got quite a number of them at bargain rates” (Thompson, 1940b, p. 171), but created a bad image for the Taylor System. He worried that the wider scientific-management spread, the thinner it got, and he commented that he was aware of instances where “[a]ny improvement in practice, such as the installation of an adding machine, or even a telephone was referred to as ‘Taylorization’” (Thompson, 1940b, p. 171).

Thompson’s reflections went beyond France to other nations and their acceptance or non-acceptance of scientific management. In England, he felt the situation never changed due to “the almost invincible conservatism of the British temperament”.

Indeed, he remarked that scientific management “was so emasculated that when I first saw some so-called examples of the Taylor System in England in 1922 I could not recognize them” (Thompson, 1940b, p. 171).

In Germany, Thompson was asked to reorganize the General Electric Company (Allgemeine Elektrizitäts Gesellschaft). He wrote:

Before beginning time study I put [asked] the question of bonus payments and met on this score the irreducible opposition both of the directors and of the labor unions; and as I refused to establish tasks without the guarantee of supplementary payment to the worker, my work stopped at this point (Thompson, 1940b, p. 171).

To Thompson’s dismay, German industry had agreements with labor organizations to provide the same pay for the same class of work and prohibited bonus payments.

Italy was a disappointment. Thompson wrote, “Their [Italy’s] practice [...] rarely goes beyond the paper stage” and commented that organized labor and the Fascist government of Benito Mussolini rejected the study of scientific-management (Thompson, 1940b, p. 174). In Belgium, scientific-management was primarily used in the textile industry by Edmond Landauer (Urwick, 1956, pp. 242-244). In Poland, Karol Adamiecki represented his country on the International Committee for Scientific Management and, in 1896, had developed a “harmonogram” for better planning, but his work was never widely accessible and he received little credit outside of his native land (Marsh, 1975).

Thompson was approached in 1921 and again in 1935 to work in Russia. He declined, citing as the reason the Russian use of “Stakhanovism”. Alexei Stakhanov was a Russian coal miner whose daily output was reputedly 15 times the normal production. The Russians used Stakhanov’s output as an example of how much work others should produce (Bedeian and Phillips, 1990). Thompson saw this as a deliberate speed-up and wished to have no part in this abuse of Russian workers.

After retiring from consulting and closing his Paris office, Thompson and his second wife Lisbeth (also Elizabeth or Lisbet) Heineman left France for a tour of Italy, Spain, North Africa and Palestine[10]. While they were traveling, Fascism was spreading: Mussolini occupied Ethiopia; Francisco Franco over ran the Loyalists in Spain; and Adolf Hitler began his conquests in Eastern Europe and his persecution of the Jewish population. As Thompson’s wife was Jewish, he was concerned for their future. After going to England for a time, the Thompsons settled in the USA.

On the eve of World War II, however, Thompson returned to France and volunteered his services to the Air Ministry. The French, in Thompson’s opinion, had delayed preparing for possible conflict “until the war clouds became too threatening to be ignored” (Thompson, 1940a, p. 17). Thompson was soon frustrated in his efforts to prepare the Air Ministry for war:

After a few months of struggle with the henchmen of Pierre Cot, the communist Minister of Air, I escaped from Paris just before the Germans entered the city [June, 1940] (Thompson, 1966a, p. 3, 1966b).

Thompson escaped through Portugal to return to the USA to embark on a new career. During his time in France, Thompson received the Médaille du Conservatoire national des Art et Métiers, in 1919, for outstanding work in “applied science and technology” and was made a Chevalier de la légion d’honneur, in 1934, for efforts toward the betterment of French industry and developing French engineers.

Retiring from management consulting, Thompson spent the remainder of his career as a biochemical researcher (Greenwood, 1984). He had originally become interested in biochemistry in 1912 after taking a course at Harvard taught by famed physiologist Walter B. Cannon (Harvard Class of 1908, 1958). In 1941, Thompson studied chemistry at the University of San Francisco. He then entered the University of California (Berkeley), where he spent three years as a student, being appointed a research assistant in the Department of Biochemistry in 1945. Upon reaching the mandatory retirement age of 65, in 1947, Thompson left California and spent a year at the Policlinique University in Lausanne, where he conducted research into the use of arginase, a manganese-containing enzyme, as a treatment for cancer. In 1949, Thompson and his wife relocated to Montevideo, Uruguay, where, having been offered a laboratory by Professor Diamante Bennati at the Instituto de Fisiologia, he continued his cancer research as a “Colaborador Honorario” on the Facultad de Medicina (Harvard Class of 1908, 1953). He remained in Uruguay until his death on January 12, 1969 (General Records of the Department of State, 1969), a few days after delivering an address at the 1968 Academy of Management meeting in Chicago (Dale, 1969).

Conclusion

C. Bertrand Thompson authored six books on sociology, economics and management. In addition, he published more than 50 articles in these subjects and in chemistry (Thompson, 1967). His career spanned over 70 years in various roles: lawyer, minister, professor, consultant, engineer, lecturer, researcher and biochemist. In his adult life, no matter what position or profession, he continued to engage in his diverse hobbies. Each day he set aside significant time for reading literature, philosophy and history. He collected fine books with an emphasis on typography; at one time, the collection numbered in the thousands of volumes (Harvard Class of 1908, 1933). His wide-ranging interest in music and pronounced talent as a pianist allowed him to equally amuse his toddler niece with a rendition of Claude Debussy’s *Prélude à l’après-midi d’un faune* (Reynolds) and Russian novelist Vladimir V. Nabokov with an original interpretation of a Mikhail Lermontov poem set to music (Boyd, 1993).

The Taylor–Thompson System reflects Thompson’s interest in workers, approval of unions and a desire for worker participation, concepts evident as early as his book on *The Church and the Wage Earners* (1909) and his sermons in Peabody in the Unitarian Church (*Salem Evening News*, 1907). He was careful to suggest modification of Taylor’s ideas, yet keep in good standing with the Taylor group, at least during Taylor’s life. His self-description as an “impure Taylorite” is on target. His description of how to install scientific-management has a post-Taylor feel, edging toward the progressive views of leadership theorist Ordway Tead, industrial counselor Robert G. Valentine and consulting engineer Morris L. Cooke. Thompson created a system that evolved beyond the technical orientation and achievements of Taylor’s scientific-management to focus on management and labor working together; the Taylor–Thompson system could be seen as a reflection of Thompson’s own concept of humanism (McKinney and Howard, 1998, p. 150). Not to be slighted are his additional contributions in re-shaping Taylor’s ideas into a cross-cultural context and in preparing Planus and Garcin-Guyenet to carry on their joint work.

It is difficult to summarize the life of a man with such diverse interests and experiences. Management historians have written that “he was an ideal teacher – he

gave his associates the direction to develop lucid, experienced, and imaginative management” (Greenwood, 1984, p. 351). Nabokov said Thompson “could speak more interestingly and knowledgeably on virtually any subject” (Nabokov, 1932)[11]. Political theorists McKinney and Howard (1998, p. 150) called Thompson “a renaissance man”. (L.H., Thompson 1967) wrote that her husband would best be remembered by his own words from the 50th Anniversary Report of the Harvard Class of 1908 (1958, p. 637):

Among my “deepest satisfactions” – which of course spring from my “deep convictions and philosophy of life” – I may mention the following: the opportunity to satisfy a wide-ranging curiosity of study, experience and travel; the feeling of constructive achievement in the reform of important business affairs and the consequent amelioration in the well-being of their employees; the stimulation of younger minds in business and scientific research; the possibility of seeing at first hand some of the world’s finest art and hearing the best music, drama and ballet in their most perfect interpretations; and finally in the conviction that life is all-pervading and everlasting and that our little individual shares in it are not entirely without significance.

Thompson’s accomplishments are many, yet his greater significance may lie with the institutions he established. He was among the first to establish the practice of management consulting in France and left behind a number of highly trained consultants and well-established practices to serve clients successfully; his consulting took him throughout Europe. He also modeled the path to consulting success: he understood deeply the concepts underpinning scientific-management yet modified its implementation to fit the culture and context in which they will operate. Before Thompson, Taylorism had been tried then dismissed in Great Britain; it had led to strikes in France. Because Thompson recognized the importance of context and modified how Taylorism was introduced to fit the prevailing situation, he was the first to successfully implement scientific-management in Europe.

Thompson was successful in his many careers, even those he abandoned, and always operated within his own value system. As a Unitarian minister in Massachusetts, he expressed profound respect for labor; this continued to be reflected in his consulting practices when he demanded that, before a consulting engagement, he would meet with labor and management first and even work with a union delegate at his side (Thompson, 1966a, 1966b). Thompson shifted from what many saw as Taylor’s narrow focus on organizational efficiency to a broader, fundamentally more important and difficult goal of bringing management and labor together; for Thompson, only then could the optimal result, including a fair distribution, truly be realized. Thus, Thompson, with his lifelong humanistic interests and varied background, went beyond a technical approach to improving the industrial workplace to consider the interplay of management and worker (McKinney and Howard, 1998, p. 150).

Thompson was an “impure Taylorite”, yet all of Taylor’s disciples lacked purity. In a study of 29 industrial installations of scientific-management by Taylor’s disciples before 1915, each disciple demonstrated “individual specialization within an overall pattern of conformity to Taylor’s ideas” (Nelson, 1972, p. 500), including Thompson. As Barth and Hathaway stressed machine efficiency and the Gilbreths stressed motion, Thompson stressed labor and management cooperation as the mechanism to ensure the successful implementation of scientific-management for the betterment of workers and management alike. Thompson’s earliest lectures in the Unitarian Church in 1907 stressed labor and management’s mutuality of interests, exactly as Taylor’s concept of

the “mental revolution” would a few years later (*Hearings to Investigate the Taylor System*, 1914, pp. 1,388-1,389). Making management and workers understand that they share common interests that require collaboration not strife was, as Thompson (1966a), (1966b) saw it, the true Taylor doctrine and one he lived by throughout his professional life.

Thompson made many contributions to management thought and practice, most of which previously have not been highlighted in the referent literature. He was also a key figure in the development of management consulting in France and then Europe. Like almost all biographies, the present effort is incomplete. We encourage future research that will:

- add to our appreciation of a significant contributor to early management thinking;
- further explore the roots of management consulting in Europe; and
- shed greater light on the cross-cultural diffusion of management concepts in the period between 1917 and 1934.

Notes

1. For a memoir covering the Thompson family ancestry, see: Reynolds, *Tan Experience*. Reynolds was Thompson’s niece by his older sister Beatrice. Reynolds reports family stories of James B. and Medora R. Thompson having mixed racial heritage. Census records show family identifying themselves White, except for 1910, when Medora, her second husband Peter Mitchell, their children and Beatrice and her children are identified as Mulatto. Thompson always identified himself as White.
2. The Los Angeles Law School was first affiliated with the University of Southern California (USC) in 1900; by 1904, the law school was merged into USC, and its law degrees were changed to USC degrees. Thus, Thompson graduated in 1900 from the Los Angeles Law School and was awarded a law degree from the University of Southern California Law School dated 1904. See Bice (2000) and <http://lawweb.usc.edu/who/history/diversity.cfm>
3. Thompson’s thesis, “The Relation of Coleridge’s Habits to His Philosophy”, preserved in the Harvard University Archives (<http://hollis.harvard.edu/?itemid=|library/m/aleph|009892795>), was submitted as an essay for the course Philosophy 9. For more on this course, titled Metaphysics, see: Hocking *et al.* (1998).
4. Buehrens (2011) reports that Thompson was the “first African American in ministerial fellowship with the American Unitarian Association)” (p. 43).
5. An account of the gossip surrounding their engagement, which appeared in the *Boston Sunday American*, focuses on rumors from the West coast about Thompson’s mixed-race father and stepfather. A copy of the account, published in 1907 but with no exact date, may be found in the Peabody (MA) Historical Society & Museum Archives. A similar account, published four days following the Kennedy–Thompson nuptials, may be found in the *Salem Evening News* (1907a).
6. The comments of other participants may be found in *The Sociological Review*, 1914, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 117-125. Taylor’s response appears in the July 1914 issue, pp. 266-269. According to Rowlinson, Cadbury was using time study, piece-rate payment and scientific selection of workers and “the essential elements of scientific management” at this time and did not understand operations at the workers’ level. Taylor’s reply to Cadbury makes the same claim (Rowlinson, 1988).

7. Hans Renold Ltd. was the only firm in Britain to adopt scientific-management. In addition to Sir Charles G. Renold's comments in *The Sociological Review*, see [Boyns \(2001\)](#).
8. Thompson's findings were also reported in *System: the Magazine of Business; Factory the Magazine of Management*; and *The Library of Management* and ultimately collected and published in his book *The Taylor System of Scientific Management* (Chicago: A.W. Shaw, 1917).
9. Cooke's biographer, [Trombley \(1954\)](#), added that Maclaurin wrote Cooke's book read "as if the author received his training in a soap factory" (p. 11).
10. Thompson and his first wife, Maravene Kennedy, were divorced in 1922.
11. The correspondence between Thompson and Nabokov and between Lisabeth H. Thompson and Vera Nabokov, who were friends in Germany before marrying, can be found in the Vladimir Nabokov Archive, Berg Collection, New York Public Library. The two couples maintained a strong friendship, socializing frequently during their years in New York and Paris. Nabokov likened Thompson to Pushkin in that both had some African heritage ([Boyd, 1993](#), p. 393).

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