

**A Short Primer on Essential Ideas
Relating to
The Axiology of Robert S. Hartman**

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1. A “concept” is the result of experiences that surround some reality.
2. For example, all of my car/automobile experience – every car I have ever seen, read about, driven, ridden in, etc. -- “coagulate” into a car concept in my mind. (By “mind,” I mean the information storage and sorting areas of my brain. My “experience,” I mean the stimuli that have come from cars/automobiles and found their way through my sense organs to my central nervous system to my brain.)
3. Some of my concepts are “rich”; others are “lean,” depending on what kind of experiences have been unique to me. I may have a “richer” car concept than someone who has spent his life in the back mountains of Nepal, but my mountain/winter/snow concept is likely to be “leaner” than this person’s given that I have lived most of my life in Southeast Tennessee. I certainly would have a “leaner” car concept, to extend that metaphor, than Jeff Gordon, Mario Andretti, or Henry Ford.
4. In most instances – except when the idea of “ignorance is bliss” reigns – the goal of living itself could be to attain a greater *quantitative* base of concepts, the pure number of different concepts I hold in my mind; and, to attain a great *qualitative* base of concepts, concepts that are “richer” rather than “leaner.” For Robert Hartman, “richness in qualities is *better*.” To strain proper grammatical construction, “better” is “good-er.”
5. “Goodness,” the basic core of the evaluative process, is *not the property of an object*; rather, “goodness” is **the property of a concept**. This can be illustrated easily by returning to the car concept. I do not find “good” on a car – the object – like I would find a steering wheel, an engine, or a fuel pump. When I say that a car is “good,” I am saying that it *fulfills* my concept of what a car ought to be. “Goodness” as concept fulfillment is Hartman’s axiological axiom. The axiom brings focus and clarity to the phenomenal field in his terms. He was fond of quoting Edmund Husserl’s idea that “profundity is a symptom of chaos which human consideration is always trying to transform into cosmos.” Hartman saw his axiology – his value *science* -- as a way of reigning in the utter chaos of value discussion.
6. “Goodness” can never be merely quantitative concept fulfillment, although this is important. We would certainly want our cars to have all of their parts. Similarly, it does not make a person a better person simply to have more, better, or more expensive cars. These are considerations of quantitative concept fulfillment. On the

other hand, the presence of all of the parts or other considerations of comparative value may have little to do with qualitative concept fulfillment. My father, for example, died at age ninety-two. By that time, he had lost both of his legs to diabetes and was blind. He was old, of course, and unable to contribute to a work place. None of this, however, kept him from being a “good man” or a “good father” in the sense that he fulfilled my qualitative concept of what a “good man” or a “good father” ought to be.

7. Of course, qualitative concept fulfillment is not the same for any two persons. One man’s trash is another man’s treasure. Qualitative concept fulfillment may not be the same for the same person at different times in his life. These statements are self-evident, and really make no positive or negative impact on the overall discussion. When we do not agree, we simply need to talk, enrich each other’s concepts, hopefully find a common range of resonance, and let life continue. In most instances, when we do not agree, we should simply see the value of diversity of opinion, and not let the diversity interfere with our mutual existence as human beings in oppressive or violent ways.
8. This approach to reality through the lens of goodness understood as concept fulfillment can then become the basis for a gamut of potential judgments that runs from considerations of **systemic value**, to **extrinsic value**, and then to **intrinsic value**.
9. The emphasis on *judgment* is critical at this point. Our “value systems” – the sum total of our concepts and the way we feel about them – is manifested in two, dominant ways: (1) our personal beliefs, and (2) the *judgments* we make about some reality. When we are caught up in a situation of *judgment*, our value systems are reaching a high level of integration with life. When *judgment* results in assessment, consideration, evaluation, decisions, choices, and – finally – action, this wonderful continuum of living, we are reaching a high level of engagement with life.
10. We are clearly *rational* creatures and *emotional* creatures; we clearly *think*. However, the arena of evaluative judgment and evaluative engagement with life, while involving these dynamics, is of such difference in degree that it becomes a difference in kind. The “highest order activity of *human* beings” is the capacity to make value judgments. In fact, the degree to which we are *human* at any given time is proportionate to the exercise of our evaluative judgment capacities and our evaluative engagement activities. This capacity translates continually into real-life situations: in family life, for example, we want our children to be rationally intelligent, emotional sound, and individuals who possess appealing personalities, but – above all – we want our children to exercise *good judgments*; in business life, for example, if some position can be filled with the appropriate skill sets called for in that position **plus** *good judgment*, then outcome of “excellence” and “quality” – favorite words in modern work environments -- are more likely to be achieved. One of the best ways to understand the concrete application to real life of Robert Hartman’s

axiology is to see it as a comprehensive paradigm by which human judgment capacity can be articulately understood.

11. Keep in mind throughout this discussion that Hartman is not trying to give scientific, demonstrable “proofs” concerning what is of value or not of value, what is good or what is not good. He has his own, personal conclusions in this regard, and -- for the most part – these conclusions are fairly traditional and conservative: he highly values children, he sees events such as the Holocaust in terms of highest loss of value. His range of metaphors, literary, philosophical, and historical references, and anecdotes that relate to the fine arts is more sophisticated than most people’s, yet his philosophical explanations traffic little at all in obscure esoterica. Hartman is “scientific” in the sense that he is as consciously arduous and exact in his explanations as he can be utilizing the exactitude patterned by modern scientific discourse. It is in this regard that he uses the “language” of transfinite mathematics and the field theory explorations of modern physics as his primary explanatory paradigms. His contribution is not in “proving” anything about value theory, but in his decisive and articulate way of *talking about* value theory.
12. Something of the following sets of comparisons (or progressions) is always helpful in gaining insight into Hartman’s axiology. If a person begins to create his/her own set of comparisons, a new “lens” through which life/people/self are encountered can be easily created:

<u>Systemic</u>	<u>Extrinsic</u>	<u>Intrinsic</u>
1. Words as part of general sentence structure – nouns, verbs, adjectives, etc.	1. Words as sentences of prose	1. Poetry
2. $A=l \times w$	2. A house (any building)	2. Home
3. NaCl	3. Table salt	3. Lot’s wife
4. A calendar date	4. 9/11 (before 2001)	4. 9/11 (after 2001)
5. Homo Sapien	5. A female	5. Wife/Partner/Lover
6. $V=d/t$ (mathematical formula for speed)	6. Driving to the grocery store (a common task)	6. Driving a NASCAR race car on a speedway
7. Homo Sapien	7. Patient/Client/Worker	7. A unique person
8. A file in a file cabinet	8. A Kansas Bureau of Investigation file on a murder case (the Cutter family case)	8. Truman Capote’s <i>In Cold Blood</i>

9. Force: a golf club hitting a golf ball 9. Force: a 175 yard shot using a #5 iron (a common golf shot) 9. A hole-in-one
13. (As a parenthetical aside, it can be noted that there may be a kind of “entropy” that is typical to these progressions from the systemic to the intrinsic. For example, the moment of a mathematician or a physicist discovering some axiom such as $V=s/t$ may produce an “*intrinsic* value experience” and the resultant *intrinsic* judgment capacity like Newton’s experience when the apple falls from the tree and the “Law of Gravity” is *born*. Over time, the formula will likely become a utilitarian tool that is much more *extrinsic* or *systemic* in its impact. In a similar sense, a unique human being can easily be reduced in this “value entropy” to a function, role, or object. A “hollowness” or “emptiness” of life would seem to clearly occur when there is a void/eroding/diminishing of the *intrinsic*. To keep the *intrinsic* vital/potent/alive would seem to be a distinguishing drive of truly authentic, human existence.)
14. Hartman placed a great deal of emphasis on *balance* in regard to evaluative judgment. For example, in life in general it is “good” to have and exercise capacity in all of the primary evaluative areas – the systemic, the extrinsic, and the intrinsic. To be unenlightened or inept in any of the areas could easily diminish the potential of high success in any one of the areas or in life in general. In a similar sense, in the business world it is important to have individuals who are strong in each area, and then to create “fit” with these people so that “perspective” in decision-making can occur. In addition, there are likely to be certain jobs that will require more facility in one evaluative area than others.
15. A second way that Hartman describes “value balance” is in terms of what he calls “compositions” and “transpositions.” “Compositions” occur when value is added; there can be the phenomenon of “over valuing.” “Transpositions” occur when value is diminished or negated; there can be the phenomenon of “under valuing.” This qualification of his thought can be seen graphically as follows:

The “Field” of Valuing

Composition/”Over valuing” -- Balanced -- Transposition/”Under valuing”

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Indulging children | 1. Abusing children |
| 2. Greed about money | 2. Disregard for finances |
| 3. Obsessive compulsiveness | 3. Radical disengagement |
| 4. Radical fundamentalism | 4. Laissez faire “anything goes” |
| 5. Over protective | 5. “Don’t give a damn” |
| 6. Obesity (eating too much) | 6. Anorexia (eating too little) |

These thoughts come very close to Aristotle’s concept of the “golden mean.” For Hartman, there would be the continual engagement in living that calls upon a person

to achieve balance between the more generic claims of ethics, for example, and the highly situational claims of morality. Life is always the challenge of finding balance between theory and practice in the midst of the demands of unique situations.

16. Some people have become intrigued with Hartman's basic concepts and turned to his primary work, *The Structure of Value*, to find greater clarification and explanation. In doing so, they have run square in the face of his use of the scientific, logical, and mathematical paradigms of transfinite mathematics. To say that this entire arena of consideration is daunting, to those uninitiated in higher mathematical formulations, is the greatest of understatement. Some people are simply overwhelmed and turn away, the "baby" of Hartman's axiology often going out the door with the "bath water" of the paradigm.

The paradigm of transfinite math is interesting, to say the least, but not necessary in the ultimate sense of the word for understanding Hartman. Given the popularity of these kinds of intellectual considerations in the late 1950s and 1960s when Hartman was working on *The Structure of Value*, he must have felt that finding the parallels with his own work would give his own work a higher credibility. That he so immersed himself in the mathematical configurations is, at least, one other indication of the expansive grasp of his own intellectual curiosity. It may be equally useful, today, to simply see these parallels and mechanisms of explanation as another kind of metaphor.

For those uninitiated or still unclear, using transfinite mathematics, Hartman was able to define three different levels of mathematical complexity or three different kinds of mathematical "sets." These levels or sets offer a perfect mechanism of explanation of his systemic, extrinsic, and intrinsic kinds/sets/levels of value experience. The following pattern may be helpful:

- finite sets = formal concepts/definitions such as an algebraic axiom ($A=1 \times w$)
- denumerably infinite sets = classes of things in the real world (the set of objects identified as buildings, examples of $A=1 \times w$); denumerable infinity sounds like a contradiction in terms, yet the number of buildings in the world is "all but" infinite – who could count them, yet – at least in theory – they could be counted
- non-denumerably infinite sets = singular/unique concepts that exhaust definition and explanation (my home).

On the non-denumerably infinite level, there is a continuum of meaning that can never be fully contained in logic or reason. Hartman uses the German word *gestalt* to describe the experience of this level. *Gestalt* as it is used here is roughly equivalent to the modern, English word *whole*. A unique, singular whole can be experienced, but it can never be fully explained. Such experiences are of the highest meaning, the highest *intrinsic* value.

17. In the early 1960s, Hartman began work on what would ultimately become *The Hartman Value Profile*. This instrument is designed to assess the judgment capacities of human beings in ways that make concrete and useful applications of the

axiological theories. The instrument contains two sets of eighteen items that are rank order prioritized in terms of a person's personal judgments. The resulting interpretation provides critical insights not available in most rational intelligence, emotional balance, or personality inventories. The *Profile* has been very helpful in promoting self-growth and development, enhancing group dynamics, and even as a hiring tool. While the *Profile* has achieved high levels of validation in numerous scientific studies, it does not claim to be some sort of "crystal ball" or "magic wand." The credibility of a profiling inventory type instrument is its ability to generate insight and dialogue that is beneficial in creating "better" people and "better" environments for people to live and work in; in this regard, the Hartman instrument may be one of the most compelling and intriguing tools of its sort ever created.

18. When Robert Hartman left a wonderfully successful career that he had established with the Walt Disney organization in the mid-1940s, friends were almost overcome with disbelief; Disney was becoming powerful throughout the world, and Hartman had become a prime mover in the organization. He was clear, however, about his intent – even about what might be termed his "calling." Adolph Hitler, who he had opposed with every fiber of his being in Germany as early as 1933, had been able to *organize evil*. For Hartman, Hitler had not simply had evil intent or evil ideas; he had been able to *organize* that intent in the most destructive way known to human existence up until that time. Would it be possible, Hartman reasoned, to be able to *organize goodness*? The pursuit of this question took him away from Disney and charted the remainder of his life. Across the next thirty years, he taught, wrote, and lectured across the world. His wide-ranging articles and lectures are all but prophetic in describing the movements of the modern world. His axiological formulations have profoundly advanced the dialogues of human philosophy in the entire arena of value inquiry. He has become the "giant" in this area that future generation will stand on the shoulders of. His *Profile* becomes increasingly well-known and respected. In 1973, he was nominated for the Nobel Prize for his work.
19. Ours is the task of trying to determine globally and situationally how to *organize goodness*. This is the most compelling, human task. It is not enough to be people of good ideas or good intent; we must move to the point of implementation in our personal and corporate lives. We must be systemically astute, extrinsically capable, but – even more – intrinsically aware. The *intrinsic* must "wrap" everything else that we do as our highest arena of value; in this way, our very humanity has its highest opportunity. To speak of "organized goodness" is to speak of "excellence" and "quality," to speak of "meaning" and perhaps even "truth." Robert Hartman has shown the way.

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