

The Value Structure of Work

What Does It Mean, A Value Structure of Work?

Our experience—our “encounter” or “meeting”—with life begins with consciousness/awareness. If I am not aware/conscious, for example, of a pop fly in a baseball game that is about to drop down on my head, there is not much likelihood that I will move to avoid being hit. Following consciousness/awareness, there is deliberation, consideration, and assessment. At times, we will take more time for this process; more often than not, we engage in non-deliberative, reactions and responses. At our best, our deliberation, consideration, and assessment—our *evaluation*—will lead to choices and decisions. These choices and decisions, then, lead to action.

What I have just described in these opening words is a process that we are involved in constantly in our lives. I have described the underlying *structure* of human consciousness that leads, in stages, to human decision and action. This *structure* is as real and decisive as the skeletal structure of the human body or the steel rigging of a skyscraper.

This *structure*, in what is a vital consideration for me, is a *value structure*. I chose this word carefully because so much of this movement from consciousness and awareness to decision and action involves *evaluation*. I am not, at this point, emphasizing “thinking.” I disagree with Descartes that “thinking” is the highest attribute of human existence. I do not find my uniqueness as a human being because I *think*—*cogito ergo sum*—but because I *evaluate*, because I make *evaluative judgments* as every level of the process from initial consciousness to final decision. *Evaluation* may, in fact, involve that which we identify as “thinking,” but it is of such a difference in degree that it becomes a difference in kind. Human *judgment*, the primary manifestation of human *evaluation*, is a more sophisticated and higher order activity than “thinking.”

It would be possible to have a “value structure of art.” This more defined process would allow for a closer investigation of that more specific experience/encounter/meeting with life that is commonly called *aesthetics*. Here, a more specific understanding of consciousness, consideration, and decision judgment would be assessed. The same could be said for a “value structure of law,” a “value structure of creativity,” or a “value structure of theology.” All of these areas were specifically pursued in the work of Robert S. Hartman.

Therefore, to speak of a “value structure of work” would be to give consideration to the underlying factors that contribute to work as a primary way in which human being interact with life, with particular life processes, and with each other in the context of these particular processes. Work involves specific kinds of consciousness, consideration, decision, and action, so the “value structure of work” would represent an attempt to understand these work-related specifics in an integrated and coordinated manner unique to work and its processes.

Constantly, in work, specific dimensions of *judgment* are required to complete tasks, build accomplished teams of workers, and develop individual talent and perception.

Successful management and then leadership represent developed forms of work *judgment* and, therefore, become fertile ground for more fully understanding the roles of *values* and *valuation* in the workplace.

Robert Hartman and Galileo

Robert Hartman wanted to create a “value *science*.” He called this *science axiology*, building on the Greek word *axia*, which means “worth” or “value.” He was not interested in simply compounding anecdotal instances of value, pontificating about these, or seeing values in terms of philosophical, cultural, or theological maxims. He did not want to commit what logicians have called the “naturalistic fallacy,” deducing value from subjective opinions about what one person or another has decided is “valuable.” In these kinds of discussions, there is little consistency. One person’s trash becomes another person’s treasure, and little is ensured but endless debate, contentiousness, and sometimes even war and violence.

Hartman wanted to search for underlying principles of values based on critical relationships. For him, anecdotal instances of some reality would be “secondary properties” or “secondary examples,” while underlying relationships would be “primary qualities” or “primary examples.”

He was inspired by the work of Galileo. In his remarkable wisdom, Galileo had examined the phenomenon of motion. He clearly could not have helped but notice anecdotal instances of motion too numerous to every fully articulate: the motion of a boat as it moved along a waterway, the motion of a horse-drawn cart as it moved through a street, the motion of running children or competitors in a race. All of these anecdotal instances of motion would be “secondary properties” of motion, mere examples of motion.

What makes Galileo unique—and Hartman in turn—is the way in which the forbearer of modern science saw motion in terms of underlying relationships that applied to all forms of motion. Galileo recognized the relationship in motion between the space traversed by a moving object (S) and the time of the traversal (T). He was then able to create a mathematical formula that could be applied to all motion, $M=S/T$. He now had the capacity not to simply talk descriptively about motion, but to *measure* it. Now, there were the rudiments of a *science*.

Applying Hartman axiology to the workplace, it is possible to look at work anecdotally in terms of the wide variety of outcomes resulting from work: the number of widgets produced on an assembly line; the credibility of customer service provided by physician referral service; the beauty of a work of art; the efficiency of an electric motor. The list of outcomes is as diverse as businesses and professions are diverse. These anecdotal outcomes are all “secondary properties” of work.

As with Galileo, however, there is an underlying relationship in what might be called, following a variety of paradigms introduced by Hartman, “the value structure of work.” Here, the underlying relationship, the “primary property,” of work is the connectedness between *competency of skill sets* and *good judgment*. Have both of these “primary properties” of work, and the result will be outcomes of excellence and quality, outcomes that are *good*, outcomes that fulfill the concept of what is most possible and most desired in a particular product or service.

Once this critical relationship is seen, components intrinsic to any and all work are observed. Can you think of any specific outcome of work that is not dependent on *competent skill sets*? Can you think of any employer who would not look for the best skill set competencies possible to accomplish some work activity? Would you want a pilot, a surgeon—any worker—who did not possess the best skill set competencies that could be obtained? In a similar sense, would you want anything less than the best judgment that you could find? Judgment, a primary manifestation of our value systems, our evaluative capacities, is the critical driver in accomplishment and production. Can you think of any job—a firecracker producer, a third base coach in baseball—for whom good judgment is not essential? As a matter of fact, I work with organizations on a regular basis that will tell me that good judgment is so vital, and so exceptional, that they would skimp a bit on skill set competency if they could be sure that they were obtaining superior judgment.

Again, *competency of skill sets* and *good judgment* are the fundamental, underlying components of work, the “primary properties” of work. Then, to follow Galileo, we now have realities that can be *measured*. Suddenly, work can be treated in a scientific manner.

It is, of course, not difficult to relate measurement to skill set competencies. This has been done in the workplace for centuries. We must have a rifleman with so many bull’s eyes on the target range to be considered a marksman. A clerical person must type accurately so many words per minute to qualify for certain jobs. A phlebotomist must accurately find veins and draw blood without unnecessary “sticks.” A rookie running back wanting to play in the NFL must move across forty yards in about four seconds in order to be a high draft choice.

The new item in this discussion is the somewhat radical idea of being able to measure good judgment. To most people, good judgment is such an ephemeral, exotic, ambiguous quality—a “soft side issue” to use negative connotations popular in modern business language—that the thought of measuring it seems implausible or even, for some, ridiculous. This stereotype about “soft side” is one of the most severe limitations facing organizational growth today.

Here, then, is the dramatic beauty and profound importance of the Hartman Value Profile. Hartman’s profiling instrument—a tool every bit as effective as a radar gun for measuring Galileo’s motion—is able to accurately discern judgment capacity. Use whatever skill set competency measures that are available to gain insight into functional capacity to perform tasks. Then, use the Hartman Value Profile to measure good judgment—even the unique forms of judgment demanded by a particular task, and excellence of outcomes will be achieved. Use the Hartman Value Profile to assess a team or work unit, and the dynamics of good judgment that is being enhanced or diminished by a specific group’s interactions will be revealed. In higher, decision-making groups, the presence—or absence—of “perspective”—as opposed to “tunnel vision”—can be assessed, or the Profile can be used to literally *construct* better group judgment dynamics.

The Profile is capable of assessing judgment—both individual and group—in the following manner:

- (1) the dynamics of broad, global judgment tendencies;
- (2) over thirty, individual components of good judgment; and,

- (3) the degree to which judgment is enhanced or diminished by *balance*, the integration of judgment factors—both work and self related—that will enhance or diminish any judgment capacities that are present.

It is decidedly important that the Profile is also able to give keen insights into both work-related judgment and self-related judgment. In most instances, it is able to show how work judgment is either advanced or encumbered by positive or negative self judgments. Self-understanding gained from the Profile will always reveal for individuals a variety of areas of affirmation/strength and areas of challenge/needed growth and development. In most instances, the very best outcomes will be achieved when strong work-related judgment is supported by strong self-related judgment.

What Is Judgment?

Judgment is a primary manifestation of an individual's (or group's) value system. Another manifestation of this value system is an individual's personal beliefs. In general, personal beliefs are *not* an object of investigation and assessment by the Profile. Therefore, the Profile is absolutely not invasive of an individual's privacy on these kinds of matters. However, organizations should deeply desire a fuller understanding of judgment capacities for—in the value structure of work—no work is accomplished without judgment as a critical factor. Organizations have a right to this understanding, and clearly, should want to take every opportunity to strategically and constructively improve judgment. The Profile can be an easily usable catalyst and monitor of this judgment improvement process. The process can also go forward through the effort of internal mentors, and reliance on expensive, external providers can be minimized.

According to Leland Kaiser, with whom I deeply agree, judgment is a function of two, causative realities—lived experience and the presence of critical, integrative principles. I would even tend to call these, respectively, “lower values” and “higher values,” although any value should be seen as being highly important and desirable.

The phenomenon of experience almost speaks for itself. The more rounds of golf I play, the more insight I should have into the sport, the “reading” of greens when I putt, the right club selection, and how to create strategies in a particular situation for success. The more sales presentations I give, the better I should become at understanding the dynamics of negotiation, deal closing, and making the sale. The more clients I see in a counseling practice, the better I should be at dealing with the uniqueness of the next, new client's personal circumstances. Teach a class for the tenth time, and there should be an evolution of refinements that make the class distinctively better than the first time it was taught. Cross train an up-and-coming manager, and you may be paving the way for an executive with a more comprehensive understanding of a particular business or an industry as a whole. There is little substitute for actual, hands-on experience, and it is of very high value.

However, experience itself is not a sole guarantee of good judgment. It may be very true that someone has been a CEO at six different hospitals, for example, but there may simply have been basically the *same* experience six times over. I may have taught for twenty years, but my courses and syllabi after two decades may not be all that different from when I started. If this is true, in either instance, it is likely that brightness

and innovation may have given way to dullness and boredom, and I may have ceased to be an effective catalyst in my work.

Therefore, “integrative principles” are vital, constituent dimensions of good judgment. The more “mature” our judgment capacity, the more integrative principles we are likely to have. The more reflective and contemplative our judgment capacity, the more integrative principles—“higher values”—we are likely to have. Our problem, of course, is that we are so busy repeating and expanding anecdotal experience that we do not take time to create and develop an awareness of integrative principles.

Integrative principles rise to prominence when we see “connections.” Hartman talked about the moment when an *axiom* rises/appears that “unites” a phenomenal field. Galileo saw the relationships, the “primary properties” that unite and connect all forms of motion. People of better judgment have more of these integrative principles. People of better judgment search for more of these integrative principles. People of better judgment apply these integrative principles and, therefore, are able to get more out of and give more to the actual, anecdotal experiences that populate their lives.

Requisite Organization Theory

At this point, the discussion is very close to the work of Kathryn Cason and Elliot Jaques known as “Requisite Organization Theory.” This theory embraces the idea that there are four levels of leadership that can be distinguished from each other in terms of the ability to see connections and interrelationships. The levels are as follows:

- (1) Declarative – the ability to see and describe individual events and singular circumstances.
- (2) Cumulative – the ability to see and describe compounds of these individual events and singular circumstances.
- (3) Serial/Conditional – the ability to see basic interrelationships, implications, and consequences that rise from individual events.
- (4) Parallel Processing – the ability to understand multiple serial constructions simultaneously. That is, the ability to relate to complex wholes as opposed to anecdotal parts or compounds of anecdotal parts.

The first two levels would relate to that part of judgment that embraces individual experiences or compounds of those experiences. At best, and this is not a negative, the most that can be done in judgment is to describe and define. There are simply limitations, like the limitations involved in having essentially the same experience in multiples. On the third level, there is a movement to more complex principles of integrations. This is consummated on the fourth level, where the most complex integrations are seen and become the basis for understanding the individual experiences as part of a larger whole. On this final level, “perspective” is at its highest, and “tunnel vision” is greatly diminished.

For Chason and Jaques, the most outstanding leaders will have capacity on the third and fourth levels, although in the modern world there are many more persons in places of leadership who are trying to function effectively on the first two levels. Such effectiveness will always be penultimate and exhibit voids that may leave an entire enterprise woefully vulnerable.

When Martin Luther King, Jr., for example, spoke of the interconnected “network of humanity” that was as beautiful and as fragile as a spider’s web, he was clearly operating on the level of Parallel Processing. If he went on to talk about specific implications and consequences of the interconnections of this web, he would move to the Serial/Conditional level. If he talked about individual events or groupings of events relating to specific, situational moments within this web, he would move to the Cumulative and Declarative levels. What is common to those who are endowed with the title of wise man, sage, shaman, or guru is the ability to see the whole of the phenomenal field at one time, the capacity for Parallel Processing. The great teacher would, in turn, be the person who can articulate and interpret cohesively the whole phenomenal field. The saint would be the person who actually acts in ways to advance and enhance this whole.

Return to Judgment

Now, to return to the functions of judgment: (1) experience, and (2) integrative principles that connect/unite these experiences. A prime example can be seen in John F. Kennedy’s “First Inaugural Address.” Kennedy talked about many accomplishments that he hoped to make during his administration, not the least of which was having a man walk on the moon by the end of the 1960s. Each of these goals, even the almost audacious undertaking of walking on the moon, was an example of an individual experience. The value of the experience, in and of itself, was extremely high—the advancement of technology, the improvement of the power of the United States compared to the Soviet Union, the boost that would be given to national morale and self-image—and the complex, high-value systems needed to make the experience possible would include many scientific, rational, and mathematical “integrative principles,” but the experience would be an experience. You could be declarative and descriptive about this experience, even allow it to accumulate with other experiences, but it is an experience all the same. All kinds of “lower-level judgments” can rise from the context of this experience as it is defined and pursued.

Then, toward the climax of his moment-defining oration, Kennedy moved to the level of higher “interpretative principle.” Forever, the minds of a generation would ring with his pronouncement “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” This would become a rallying cry for Kennedy’s “Camelot.” The phrase would echo down across the next decades as the epitomizing statement of the time. The values affirmed in the statement are an example of integrative principles at their best. They can empower and sustain all kinds of individual experiences and unite/connect them in a defining manner. An entire, additional range of “higher-level judgments” can rise from the context of this integrative judgment experience as it is defined and pursued.

For many people, the role of judgment as it is borne of individual experiences and integrative principles is exhibited in their lives in the influence of parents. Perhaps, the primary parental prerogative and responsibility is to help a child develop good judgment. In a different way, the same can be said for teachers, coaches, mentors, counselors, and role models that individuals find along their way in life, including experiences they have in the workplace in careers and professions.

My father taught my three brothers and me numerous lessons built around tasks that we might be able to perform. These tasks held great value for him, as he saw them as a way to enhance our productivity as human beings and, perhaps, ensure our survival in some way. At least, learning these tasks would serve some functional benefit in our day-to-day lives that would be of value. He taught us how to paint, to hang wallpaper, to do basic plumbing, how to fix motors, how to do basic car repair and maintenance. We listened well, have all gained some degree of proficiency, and have been able to help ourselves with some amount of self-sufficiency. There is even pride in being able to repair something that is broken, not have to call a repair person, or make an engine that will not operate run again.

In my home I have a large, wooden trunk that must weight two hundred pounds. It was the chest that my father kept his tools in when he worked on heavy road equipment for the State of Tennessee when he was a young adult. My wife and I have cleaned and refinished this huge trunk, and it has a place of honor in our home. However, before we could do much with it in the way of restoration, I had to remove nails from its top. In all, I removed over three hundred nails! You see, my father used this trunk as the place he taught my brothers and me how to hammer.

Again, in the end, these skills—and the judgment that is involved in all of them—amount to an accumulation of individual experiences. These experiences can and have been refined and practiced. My brothers and I can all be declarative and descriptive enough about the experiences to pass them on to a next generation of our own children. There is good judgment involved in tuning an engine, building a room addition, or fitting wallpaper into a difficult space. Sometimes—not necessarily with me personally—such good judgment can rise to the level of craftsmanship and artistry, so even though this factor of judgment is being called “lower level,” it is not being demeaned or diminished in any way whatsoever.

My father was also capable of a kind of “higher level,” integrative principle creation not unlike the movement seen toward the end of Kennedy’s speech. Any time that we would go out to do work for someone else—mow a yard, deliver newspapers, help in a garden—he would send us off with the following injunction: “Whatever you get asked to do, do it the very best you can; be sure that whatever you find, you leave it better than you found it.” This statement, repeated many times across our youth, represented one of his highest values. This higher, integrative principle could act as a catalyst and inspiration for any task.

As can be seen, almost everything my father took interest in, like his own life, was work-related. My mother, on the other hand, was more concerned with self-related matters. She was capable of having task judgment as part of her “package” of taught judgment—baking cupcakes, getting clothes clean, or helping with various cleaning projects—but her expertise was self-judgment.

She taught us to share. I will never forget my younger brother getting old enough that he could eat normal food at the table with the rest of the family. Somehow, I had held the favored status of always getting the “pulley bone” when we had fried chicken, a cut from the chicken’s breast that was all soft, white meat. When my mother said “Don’t you think it would be a good idea to let Pat have the ‘pulley bone’ every other time?” I thought she had lost her mind. It may not have been a good idea to me, but it was the basis for an integrative principle of living that could have many, positive ramifications.

She taught us to take turns, which was not easy for a kid who was almost always the biggest, strongest, and fastest of his peers. She taught us to clean up our own messes, emphasizing that she—or anyone else—was not placed on this earth to clean up after us. She taught us that the widowed Methodist minister's wife, old beyond words, should be visited regularly and taken cakes on special occasions. She taught us that the hobos who rode the trains that rolled by near our home deserved to be fed on our back porch because they were human beings, too; just like us, only a bit down on their luck. She never allowed any semblance of the “N-word” in a 1950s South that was filled with racial prejudice.

She taught us to say that we were sorry. I was the first in line at the home of two old women who lived in our neighborhood on Halloween. They had forgotten what the day was and had no “treats.” I was infuriated, if an eight-year old can be infuriated. I went into the backyard, turned over their garbage can, and threw the garbage all around in the yard. Of course, my younger brother told on me. My mother punished me, would not let me have all of the Halloween candy I had collected across the evening, and sent me dragging off back down the street to admit what I had done, offer an apology, clean up the trash, and do yard work for the women across the next week. For her, there were probably many higher, integrative principles that she was trying to teach me.

My mother, like my father, had her own “highest” integrative principle. When my brothers and I would go out in a situation where we would be “on our own,” she would not get caught up in any litany of suggestions about one possible issue that we might run into or another. She would not talk about how we should not smoke, how we should stay away from alcohol, or how we should not do things such as lie, cheat, or steal. That is, she would not be descriptive in her judgment about one experience or another. She would simply say, “If you ever have a question about what you should do, just ask what Jesus would do in that situation.” This was her ultimate integrative principle, and it represented the highest value of her own upbringing and life. This was the principle of highest judgment for her, and all other judgments would integrate themselves in relationship to this one. I am not asking for agreement with my mother about her emphasis on Jesus, but I am convinced that this is a perfect example of the importance and use of the function of judgment contained in high-value, integrative principles.

The Center for Creative Leadership has done a great deal of very interesting research into how people learn, and *learning* is a strong synonym for that kind of maturity, authentic growth and development, of our evaluative capacities that increases the likelihood of good judgment. Small percentages of our learning come from—in increasing order of impact—formal education, on-the-job training types of life experience, and role models. Beyond these, in level of importance, is adversity. I recall one day sitting on a stool beside the kitchen stove watching my mother canning green beans. She would put the beans in jar, boil them in a pressure cooker, and then take them from the stove to prepare them for storage. Each time, she would warn me not to touch the bright red stove burner. (We called this the “eye” of the stove in East Tennessee.) I kept looking at the red, hot “eye.” What would this actually be like if I touched it? Why was she so adamant in her warning? Didn't I need to find out for myself? So, I touched the stove “eye.”

I would call this experience a “low-level value” experience. The conclusions drawn from it are simple and direct. The “adversity” of a burned hand makes *judgment* in regard to this particular kind of phenomenon pretty easy. I will never, on purpose, touch a hot stove “eye” again.

By comparison and contrast, there are “higher-level value” experiences—and deeper dimensions of adversity—that took place when that same mother died of cancer when I was thirteen. The sorting out, evaluation/assessment, and subsequent conclusions and *judgments* associated with this event have had implications that have stretched out over a lifetime and had a distinct impact on my own, personal uniqueness, my own *value system*.

Adversity—ironically, a great teacher—invades our consciousness/awareness often by surprise. It becomes a powerful catalyst for introspection—the movement from consciousness to decision and action—that can manifest itself in great struggle. If we are able to move through this struggle, the maturity of *judgment*, evaluative capacity, and perspective are almost inevitable.

Conclusion

Note again, that I am making the distinction—somewhat arbitrary for discussion sake—between my father’s work-related judgments and my mother’s life/self-related judgments. I am saying—with Robert Hartman—that judgment is not at its most sophisticated until *both* lower-level, experiential judgment *and* higher-level, integrative principle judgment are incorporated and support each other. I am also saying that all work-related judgment must be supported by life/self-related judgment. A person can be potentially very strong in the former dimension of this judgment capacity, but be so weak in the second that the work strength of judgment is handicapped or rendered ineffective. In fact, in most instances, when the Hartman Value Profile looks at these two dimensions of judgment, the work-side is almost always substantially stronger than the self-side.

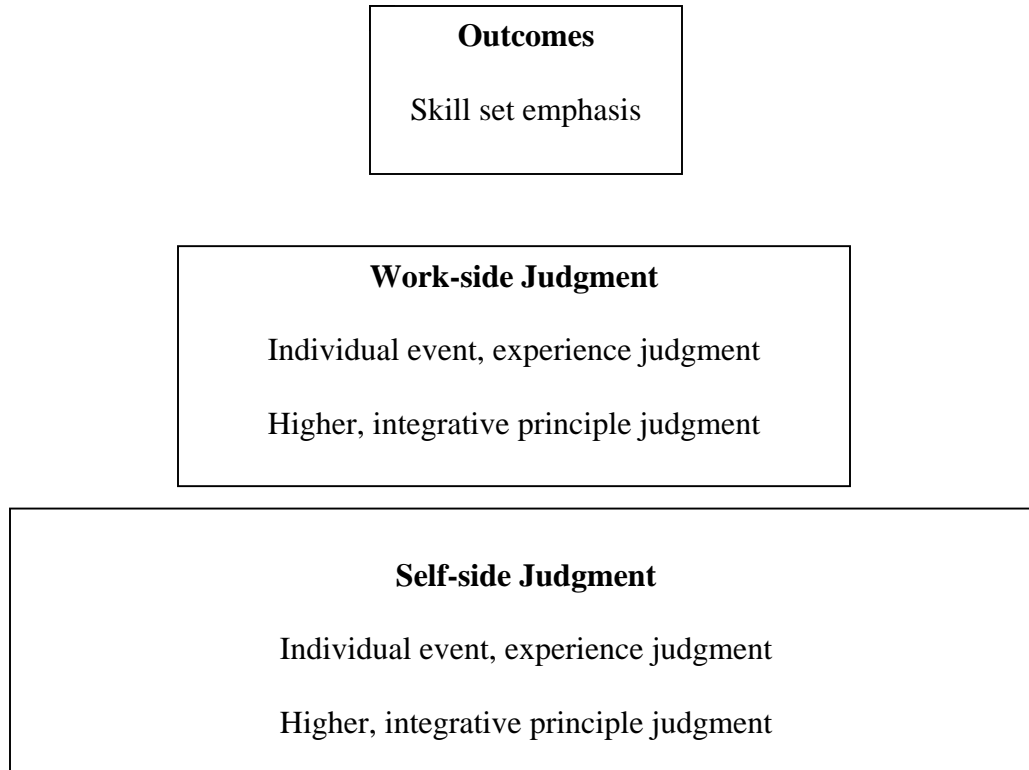
In the end, there is a sort of three-tiered wedding cake dynamic that is being described here. On the top tier are outcomes. These outcomes—completed activity—will be most prominent to any outside observer. They are the “tip of the iceberg” that will gain greatest attention, but the understanding is greatly needed that the top tier, the “tip,” is not all that there is to see and give consideration to in our overall concerns. On this top tier, the issue—the critical issue—of competent skill sets is of utmost necessity. There should never be the first moment of corner cutting when skill sets are under consideration.

However, the tier of outcomes rests totally and completely on two other tiers. Both of these supportive, necessary, underlying tiers involve judgment. Both tiers involve *both* experiential judgment *and* integrative principle judgment. Proportionately, the two, large judgment tiers are notably more important than the outcome tier.

The second tier involves work-side judgment. This needs to be as strong, as well-schooled, as trained and developed as possible. The realization simply needs to be clearly understood that high, integrative principles must have as much attention and visibility as individual, descriptive, experiential lessons and training.

The third tier, where self-side judgment is advanced, is the key. If self-side judgment is not given highest priority, the real base—the third tier—diminishes in size

and intensity, and the entire “cake” is vulnerable. It will collapse of its own weight like some ill-fated and ill-conceived Tower of Babel. A conclusion can be created around this discussion with the following graphic:



James Carville has become one of the best-known commentators on modern politics in the United States. Carville is bold and rambunctious. He is never at a loss for words. Regardless of whether a person agrees with Carville’s political positions, no one can fault him for being assertive about his beliefs and positions. Carville first gained national attention by being the leading strategist and campaign consultant for Bill Clinton’s first run for the Presidency of the United States.

Carville became famous for his emphasis in the first Clinton campaign for his unrelenting emphasis on economics. He would plaster the walls of campaign headquarters and campaign strategy sessions with signs reading, “It’s the economy, stupid!” In other words, in Carville’s opinion, lose perspective on the importance of the economy, and the entire election process was in question.

The point of this presentation is clearly “It’s judgment, stupid!” There is a *value structure* to work—and, for that matter, to life in general. This *value structure* places a total adequacy of emphasis and meaning on skill sets. However, there is also, as part of the necessary connection and relationship involved in work, an emphasis on judgment. This emphasis on judgment involves *both* experiential judgment *and* higher, integration principle judgment. Then, this judgment involves both work-related and self-related judgment. The deeper a person goes into the base of the above-detailed, three-tier configuration, the more significant the type of

judgment that is being described. Ultimately, work and life outcomes are most determined and most impacted by higher-level, integrative principle judgment on the self-side. Not to understand this dynamic—either in life events or work events—will bring a “stupidity”—to use Carville’s word—that will undermine and make vulnerable even the most ambitious and highly honorable outcome strategy and intent.

“The Hartman Value Profile. . . . You help people
find a language that allows them to understand
who they are.”

Louis Smith
Executive Director
The Spiritual Leadership Institute
Houston, Texas