



Who Was Robert S. Hartman?

Robert S. Hartman was born in Berlin on January 27, 1910. Interestingly enough, this was also Emperor Kaiser Wilhelm's birthday, and Hartman became a young man under the shadow of the autocratic pomp and circumstance of German idealism and super-patriotism. He was taken to the grand parades that sent men into World War I with great celebration. His own father was all but absent across the war years; his Uncle Alex, only a boy himself, was killed. An early, unarticulated insight would guide Hartman's life: a facade covered life in a dishonest and misleading way - there was a deep need to look beneath the surface of human existence and find the true "core" which motivated human life.

Hartman came of age in a Germany filled with turmoil, and from the earliest stages of his young adult life, he found himself in radical opposition to the political positions of cultural arrogance, hate, and violence which filled his country. He saw clearly the negative implications of the rise to power of Adolph Hitler and never failed to be an outspoken voice of opposition.

By his early twenties, Hartman's brilliance took him to study all over Europe, and he succeeded in achieving a law degree. In his position as an Assistant District Court Judge - he was also teaching at Berlin University - Hartman was on a collision course with the Nazis. As quickly as people were dragged into his court on trumped up charges, Hartman would release them. He wrote an expose of evils at the top of Hitler's Third Reich, and suddenly he was a hunted man. He had to flee Germany for his life.

A fake passport he drew out of a hat placed in the middle of a table at a German restaurant where he and several co-conspirators met bore the name Robert S. Hartman; his birth name had been **Robert Schirokauer**. After obtaining an alien passport, he escaped to Mexico with his wife and child. Hartman found work with, of all places, Walt Disney Enterprises. He was tremendously successful in this venture and was personally instrumental in opening

Disney activities in Mexico, Central America, and - following the war - Europe itself. By the war's end, Hartman was positioned to move to the top of the Disney organization and reap all of the economic privileges that would accompany such executive status.

But Hartman was more deeply moved by a personal crisis of conscience that was at the very core of his being. Adolph Hitler had been able to organize evil in the most profound ways imaginable. Would it be possible to give an organization over to goodness in a way that might be as equally profound?

This was a philosophical question, a religious question - a value question - which could best be perused in a university professors' existence. His research, teaching, and writing took Hartman to Northwestern University, the College of Wooster, Ohio State University, MIT, and Yale. He held more than fifty lectureships in the United States, Canada, Latin America, and Europe. Making decisions in mid-life based on where he wanted to live, he shared time between the University of Tennessee in Knoxville and the National University of Mexico in Cuernavaca. He wrote six books, more than 100 articles, and was the translator of six additional volumes. His work has been translated into five languages.

Organizing evil - as Hitler did - involved mechanical intricacy, the mechanistic technology to create a vast war machine of the mechanical processes under girding the Holocaust. Organizing goodness was less external and more internal, less mechanical and more - for want of a better word - spiritual. And herein lies the critical problem - words. The language of goodness, which ultimately would become the basis for concepts and actions, was lost in vagueness and inexactitude. Hartman's quest was the attempt to discover a language about goodness that could be as precise and exact as scientific language; thus, he conceived an axiology, a "science of value."

The basic, motivating core of human existence for Hartman was valuing. Much more than rational thinking and emotional feeling, if the way in which humans come to value could be understood, a key for exploring, evaluation, and even enhancing human relationships in every dimension from home to work could be provided. As early as the mid-1950s, Hartman was exploring the application of these value/axiological insights in the management programs of the nationwide Insurance Company in Chicago. Today, Hartman's processes are finding concrete usage in a vast array of applications. Business and industry use the Hartman Value Profile to gain better insight into employees and work groups. A whole new tool for teambuilding and the development of quality circles has been provided. The Profile has also become an exceptionally insightful tool for psychiatrists, psychologists, school counselors, and family therapists.

Hartman died in 1973. His work is carried on by The Robert S. Hartman Institute, which meets annually at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN.