

Living the Legacy in the AI Revolution: Robert S. Hartman's Science of Value and the Six Volumes of Business Storytelling

Sep 29, 2026 · David Michel Boje <https://davidboje.com/ws> working paper series

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Prepared for the submission to the Robert S. Hartman Institute 50th Annual Conference, *Living the Legacy*, Savannah, Georgia, October 7–9, 2026, and for the World Scientific Encyclopedia of Business Storytelling, Series 3 Wednesday Lab

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Abstract

Robert S. Hartman asked why evil could be organized so efficiently while good could not, and he spent his life building a science of value to answer it. Fifty years after the founding of the Robert S. Hartman Institute, that question returns in a new register: artificial intelligence now organizes stories, judgments, and work at a scale Hartman could not have imagined. This essay proposes that Hartman's formal axiology, with its hierarchy of intrinsic, extrinsic, and systemic value ($I > E > S$), can serve as a shared value grammar for the six volumes of Series 3 of the *World Scientific Encyclopedia of Business Storytelling*. I review Hartman's biography, his theory, and his forgotten economics of partnership, then map axiology onto quantum antenarrative, narrative authority, True Storytelling and inclusion, human–AI co-creation, strategy against cognitive surrender, and socio-economic consultation (SEAM). I argue that AI storytelling tends toward systemic transposition, and that Hartman's work offers a disciplined way to restory it toward intrinsic composition.

Keywords: formal axiology, Robert S. Hartman, business storytelling, artificial intelligence, antenarrative

Introduction

More than eighty years ago, Robert S. Hartman looked at the machinery of the Third Reich and asked a question that has never left me. If a society could organize evil with such efficiency, why could it not organize good (Hurst, 2022)? Hartman's answer was that we could not organize the good because we did not know what the good *is*. So he set out to build a science of value, a formal axiology, that would do for our moral nature what mathematics had done for physics (Hartman, 1967, 2019). The Robert S. Hartman Institute has carried that project for fifty years, and this October in Savannah it gathers under the theme *Living the Legacy* (Robert S. Hartman Institute, 2026a).

I write this essay from a particular place. I am an organizational storytelling scholar, not a trained axiologist, and I have written about Hartman before [author note: insert citation to prior Boje–Hartman writing]. I came to value questions through antenarrative, through Bakhtin's moral answerability, and through four decades of watching corporations tell stories that hide their hidden costs. What draws me back to Hartman now is the AI Revolution. The generative systems being deployed across business are extraordinarily good at organizing. They organize data, drafts, hiring pipelines, customer journeys, and

public consent. They are far less good at knowing what is worth organizing. Hartman's question has come back to us in silicon.

The Institute's own framing of this anniversary is the right starting point. It asks members not only to celebrate Hartman's work but to recommit embodying it, to live, love, and lead in ways that generate value, and to treat the legacy as "not an anchor, but a launch pad" (Robert S. Hartman Institute, 2026b). I take that invitation literally. This essay proposes a launch: that Hartman's formal axiology become one of the shared value grammars of Series 3 of the *World Scientific Encyclopedia of Business Storytelling*, titled *Business Storytelling in the Age of AI* (Boje, 2026a).

The Series 3 Context

Series 3 is the third set in an encyclopedia I serve as editor-in-chief. Set 1 (five volumes) and Set 2 (five volumes) appeared with World Scientific in 2023, covering entrepreneurship, history, postcolonialism, diversity, SEAM, True Storytelling, sustainability, communication, statistics, and grounding methodology (Boje, 2023a, 2023b). Series 3, forthcoming 2027–2029, convenes six editor-led conversations on how artificial intelligence changes narrative authority, work, ecology, inclusion, strategy, and answerability (Boje, 2026a). The six working volumes are:

1. *Generative AI, Quantum Storytelling, and Organizational Futures* (possible editors: Boje and Rosile).
2. *Narrative Authority, Cognitive Access, and Institutional Legitimacy* (proposed editor: Jillian Saylor).
3. *True Storytelling, DEI, and the Age of AI* (proposed editor: Oscar Edwards, with Ken Long).
4. *Human–AI Co-Creation in Entrepreneurship and Strategy* (proposed editor: Anton Shufutinsky).
5. *Strategy Storytelling Against Cognitive Surrender* (Yue Cai, with an introduction by Mark Hillon).
6. *SEAM: Socio-Economic Consultation in the Age of AI* (Amandine Savall, Véronique Zardet, and Marc Bonnet).

The volumes are working proposals, refined each Wednesday in an open lab that begins September 30, 2026. That openness is precisely why a Hartman contribution is timely. The questions, relationships, and chapters are still antenarrative, still betting on what they will become.

The Argument

My thesis is simple to state and, I think, demanding to live. AI storytelling, as currently designed and marketed, tends toward what Hartman called *transposition*: the systematic subordination of richer values to poorer ones. Persons (intrinsic value) are rendered as data profiles and productivity functions (extrinsic value), which are in turn governed by metrics, policies, and model objectives (systemic value). The hierarchy $I > E > S$ is inverted into $S > E > I$. Hartman diagnosed exactly this inversion in the Nazi state, where ideas about people were valued above people themselves (Hurst, 2022). I am not claiming AI corporations are fascist. I am claiming the axiological *form* of the error is the same, and that form now scales through storytelling machines.

The contribution Hartman values can make to Series 3 is therefore threefold. First, **a value grammar**: a formal, teachable language for asking of any AI story which dimension of value it serves and which it sacrifices. Second, **a measurement tradition**: the Hartman Value Profile and six decades of axiological research give our qualimetric and antenarrative methods an ally in rigor (Byrum, 2024; Edwards, 2010).

Third, **an economics of partnership**: Hartman's neglected work on profit sharing and his forecast of a Third Stage of Capitalism anticipate the socio-economic arguments that SEAM brings to AI transformation (Hurst, 2022; Savall & Zardet, 2008).

The essay proceeds in four movements. I first review Hartman's life and the fifty-year history of the Institute. I then set out the theory of formal axiology in terms a storytelling scholar can use. The body of the essay maps Hartman's theory onto each of the six volumes. A discussion and conclusion follow, returning to the Institute's invitation: what will we choose our living legacy to be?

The History of Robert S. Hartman and the Institute

A Life Shaped by Organized Evil

Robert Schirokauer was born in Berlin on January 27, 1910. His earliest memories, by the Institute's account, were of war and death: his father volunteered for the Kaiser's army in 1914 (Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a). By fifteen he was writing essays against capital punishment and in praise of the value of human life. Between 1926 and 1932 he studied at the German College of Political Science, the University of Paris, the London School of Economics, and the University of Berlin, where he earned a law degree and briefly served as an assistant district judge (Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a; Edwards, 2005).

He also wrote. Between 1929 and 1932 he published anti-Nazi articles, including a satirical piece on Hitler, and that writing made his position in Germany untenable. He left on a false passport and took the name on it, Robert S. Hartman, keeping his birth name only as a middle initial (Hurst, 2022; Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a). Here is the first thing I want storytelling scholars to notice. Hartman's science of value began as a *counter-story*. It was an answer to a regime that had monologized a nation's narrative, and it was bought at the price of his own name.

Disney, Photography, and Exile

The second thing I want to notice is personal. From 1934 to 1941 Hartman worked for Walt Disney Productions as a copyright representative, opening offices in Scandinavia and later representing the company in Mexico, Central America, and the Antilles (Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a; Edwards, 2005). In 1995 I published a study of Disney as a "Tamara-land," a storytelling organization whose official narrative silenced a polyphony of other stories (Boje, 1995). I did not know then that the founder of value science had been one of Disney's guardians of story-as-property. The coincidence is instructive. Hartman stood at the exact place where story becomes asset, where an intrinsic act of imagination is converted into an extrinsic good and protected by a systemic regime of law. He lived the three dimensions of value before he formalized them.

He married Rita Emanuel in 1936, moved his family to Mexico in 1938, and immigrated to the United States in 1941, where the family became citizens (Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a).

Philosopher, Profit-Sharer, Consultant

Hartman completed doctoral work in philosophy at Northwestern University in 1946 and taught at the College of Wooster (1945–1948) and Ohio State University (1948–1956), with a visiting appointment at MIT in 1955–1956 (Edwards, 2005). What is less remembered is that during these same years he was

building an economics. In 1948 he wrote the *Profit Sharing Manual* for the Council of Profit-Sharing Industries, which he helped organize and later served as executive director; the Institute credits him as a founding spirit behind the modern American retirement plan (Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a). In 1958 he published in German a book on the partnership of capital and labor, which Hurst (2022) located in the Tennessee archives and whose English manuscript was never published.

Hartman spoke of profit sharing as a moral reformation, not a compensation technique (Hurst, 2022). He consulted on applied value theory with General Electric, IBM, AT&T, General Foods, and Nationwide Insurance (Hurst, 2022; Edwards, 2005). For a Nationwide management seminar in 1962–1963 he wrote the autobiographical *Freedom to Live*, later edited by Arthur Ellis (Hartman, 2013; Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a). A 1963 draft statement of Nationwide's principles, likely written by Hartman, asks the question every AI company should now be made to answer: "To stay in business for what?" (Hartman, 1963, as cited in Hurst, 2022, p. 18).

The Science of Value Takes Form

From 1957 until his death Hartman was a research professor at the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), and from 1968 he divided each year between Mexico City and the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a). He presented "The Science of Value" at Abraham Maslow's 1957 MIT conference on human values, published in *New Knowledge in Human Values* in 1959. The Hartman–Cárdenas seminar at UNAM (1959–1961) produced the instrument later called the Hartman Value Profile (HVP). His Spanish-language works on formal axiology, the structure of value, and the knowledge of good appeared between 1957 and 1965, and *The Structure of Value: Foundations of Scientific Axiology* appeared in English in 1967 (Hartman, 1967; Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a).

His circle is worth naming. In the late 1950s he was among the first members of the Society for General Systems Research (Edwards, 2005). In the late 1960s he served on the editorial board of the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology* alongside Viktor Frankl, Abraham Maslow, Arthur Koestler, and Robert Tannenbaum (Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a). Tannenbaum I knew. He was one of the phenomenologists I sat with at UCLA's Anderson School in the late 1970s, where Tannenbaum and Schmidt's (1958) work on leadership patterns was part of the air we breathed. So my own lineage in storytelling and Hartman's value science touch through the humanistic organization development movement, even if I did not see the connection until preparing this essay.

Hartman became the first president of the American Society for Value Inquiry in 1971. He was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1973, the year he died in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on September 20 (Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a). His collected writings on war and peace show that it was his study of war, above all, that drove him to formalize value (Hartman, 2020).

Fifty Years of the Institute

The Robert S. Hartman Institute for Formal and Applied Axiology was founded in 1976, in cooperation with Hartman's heirs, to advance his published and unpublished work, much of which is held at the University of Tennessee (Edwards, 2005). Its founders were his students of 1968–1970, among them David Mefford, Wayne Carpenter, Rem B. Edwards, Mark A. Moore, Art Ellis, and Gary Acquaviva

(Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a). Since 2008 it has published the peer-reviewed annual *Journal of Formal Axiology: Theory and Practice* (Edwards, n.d.; Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-b).

The Institute's recent work bears directly on the AI question. Byrum (2024) connects formal axiology to value capture, the displacement of rich values by simplified metrics. Hurst (2022) revives Hartman's Third Stage of Capitalism. The 49th conference in Irving, Texas, in 2025 took curiosity as its theme and explicitly engaged the use of AI (Robert S. Hartman Institute, 2025). Demarest (2026) argues that in an age when AI commoditizes information, *axiological intelligence*, the capacity to discern what is worth doing with what we know, becomes the scarce human capacity. The 50th conference in Savannah, October 7–9, 2026, includes sessions such as Marc Andonian's on bringing the three value dimensions into daily practice (Robert S. Hartman Institute, 2026a). The Institute, in short, is already asking the question Series 3 is asking. It needs a storytelling bridge.

The Theory of Formal Axiology

The Axiom: Good Is Concept Fulfillment

Hartman's science begins with a single axiom. A thing is good to the degree that it fulfills the concept, or standard, we apply to it (Hartman, 1967). A good knife has all the properties in the meaning of "knife." A bad knife lacks some of them. Goodness, on this account, is neither purely in the object nor purely in the valuer. It arises in the relation between the thing and the concept through which a person grasps it (Hurst, 2022). Edwards (n.d.) summarizes the architecture that follows from the axiom in five parts: the formal definition of good; three basic kinds of value; a hierarchy among them; an association of the three kinds with set theory and transfinite mathematics; and a preliminary calculus of value, later extended by Forrest and challenged by Moore's finitistic alternative. Edwards (2024) has recently reconsidered the axiom itself, which reminds us that the Institute treats Hartman as a launch pad and not a scripture.

Three Dimensions and a Hierarchy

Hartman distinguished three kinds of concepts, and therefore three dimensions of value (Hartman, 1967; Hurst, 2022):

- **Systemic value (S)** belongs to constructs: definitions, rules, policies, models, procedures, laws. A systemic concept is either fulfilled or not; a triangle with a gap in it is no triangle. Hartman associated this dimension with finite sets.
- **Extrinsic value (E)** belongs to things and actions in the world, known through classes and comparisons. A car or a quarterly report can be more or less good, and its properties are countable. Hartman associated this dimension with a denumerably infinite set.
- **Intrinsic value (I)** belongs to singular, unique beings valued for themselves, above all persons. A person cannot be exhausted by any list of properties. Hartman associated this dimension with the non-denumerable infinity of the continuum.

From this Hartman derived the hierarchy of value: $I > E > S$. People are richer in value than things, and things are richer than ideas about things or people (Hurst, 2022). Edwards (2010) calls this the core of axiological ethics. The hierarchy is not a claim that systems are bad. We need rules and models; Byrum

(2024) has long argued that executives need more systemic thinking, not less. The claim is about *order*. When a system is placed above the persons it was built to serve, value is destroyed.

Compositions and Transpositions

Hartman then observed that we do not only *have* values; we *value* them, and our valuing can enrich or impoverish what it touches. When a value is enhanced by a mode of valuing, he called it a *composition*; when it is diminished, a *transposition* (Hartman, 1967). With three kinds of value and three modes of valuation, each able to compose or transpose, the system yields eighteen primary combinations. These form the ranked structure behind the Hartman Value Profile and its many commercial descendants (Hurst, 2022).

For a storytelling scholar, compositions and transpositions are the key. A story is a mode of valuing. It can enrich a person, a thing, or an idea, or it can reduce them. A layoff announcement that tells workers they were "right-sized" transposes intrinsic value through a systemic concept. A founder's origin myth can compose an ordinary garage into a sacred place. The axiological question for any story is: *what is being valued, by what mode, and in which direction?*

Axiology as a Storytelling Grammar

The table below is my translation of Hartman's three dimensions into the storytelling forms I have worked with for four decades. It is offered for the Wednesday Lab to argue with, not as settled theory.

Hartman dimension	Value object	Mode of valuing	Storytelling form	AI-era example
Intrinsic (I)	Unique persons, communities, living places	Empathy, commitment, identification	Living story; antenarrative; the once-occurrent event of answerable being	A worker's own story of what a job means to her life
Extrinsic (E)	Things, actions, outcomes, markets	Comparison, use, practical judgment	Instrumental story; case, pitch, performance account	A productivity story of hours saved by a copilot
Systemic (S)	Models, metrics, rules, policies	Formal logic, classification	Grand narrative; BME (beginning–middle–end) script; model objective	A model card, a benchmark, a terms-of-service narrative

The correspondence is not exact, but it is suggestive. My work on antenarrative has always argued that living stories are unfinished, polyphonic, and irreducible to the retrospective narrative that management wants to tell (Boje, 2001, 2008). Hartman gives that intuition a formal ground. The living story is intrinsic because it cannot be exhausted by any list of properties. The BME narrative is systemic because it is complete or it is nothing.

The Third Stage of Capitalism

The part of Hartman's legacy most relevant to business in the AI Revolution has been hidden in the archives. Hurst (2022) reconstructs from Hartman's profit-sharing manual, his 1958 German book, and unpublished lectures a theory of three stages of capitalism, which he expresses in axiological notation:

1. **Stage One: brute capitalism and scientific management.** People are units of production and labor is a cost to be minimized. Taylor's (1911) scientific management is its benign form. Axiologically it is the systemic organization of work: things valued systemically ($E^A S$, position eight of nine compositions). It produced real material gains, but, as Hurst puts it, something in the worker's soul had to die for it to function.
2. **Stage Two: partnership of capital and labor.** People are contributors, paid salaries, offered benefits and profit sharing, fitted to jobs by benchmarking. Axiologically this is the person valued extrinsically by the demands of the role ($I^A E$, position four).
3. **Stage Three: the person at the center.** The job is valued in terms of the person ($E^A I$, position two). Hurst's indicators are that workers become capitalists, job crafting replaces job benchmarking (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001), and the individual in her wholeness takes precedence over the role, to the point that accounting rules stop treating people only as expenses.

Hurst (2022) is candid about the vision's weaknesses. Sears, which Hartman praised, went bankrupt. But he argues, and I agree, that the evidence of the Great Resignation and of deliberately developmental organizations (Kegan & Lahey, 2016) shows that Stage Three is still the horizon worth walking toward.

Limits and Risks

An honest essay should name where formal axiology can itself fall into transposition. Hartman's transfinite mathematics has been controversial among philosophers (Edwards, n.d.). More practically, the Hartman Value Profile can become one more systemic instrument for sorting persons, exactly the reduction Hartman warned against. Byrum's (2024) discussion of value capture, drawing on Nguyen's concept, applies to axiology's own products: a profile score can crowd out the person it was meant to reveal. Any Series 3 use of Hartman must hold the instrument answerable to the intrinsic.

Hartman's Values and the Six Volumes of Series 3

Each volume of Series 3 asks, in its own register, what AI does to the value of persons, work, and communities. In this section I read each volume through Hartman's hierarchy, name the characteristic transposition AI invites in that domain, and propose one Hartman-informed contribution the Institute's members could author.

Volume 1: Generative AI, Quantum Storytelling, and Organizational Futures

Volume 1, which Grace Ann Rosile and I may edit, explores quantum antenarratives, machine learning as living story, the intra-actions of large language models, and ethical guardrails (Boje, 2026a). Its premise is that generative systems are now actors in organizational sensemaking and that the futures they help produce are bets, not destinies (Boje, 2011, 2014).

Hartman's mathematics offers an unexpected ally here. He associated intrinsic value with the non-denumerable continuum: a person is a field of possibilities that no list can exhaust (Hartman, 1967). Quantum storytelling makes a parallel claim about the future. The antenarrative future is a superposition of unfinished bets, not a single plot awaiting disclosure. A large language model, by contrast, works over a finite vocabulary of tokens and a denumerable space of probable continuations. Whatever else it is, it is architecturally built from systemic and extrinsic operations. It can simulate the singular voice, and do so very well, but its native mode of valuing is classification and comparison.

The characteristic transposition in Volume 1 is therefore *futures captured by probability*. When organizations let the most probable continuation stand in for the most valuable one, they transpose intrinsic possibility through a systemic model. My work on the Ghost Vortex adds a second layer. The values of AI founders and corporate safety regimes are embedded in the product and reproduced wherever it speaks (Boje, 2026d). An axiological reading can ask which dimension of value each layer of that vortex privileges.

Proposed contribution: a chapter on *axiological antenarrative*, pairing Hartman's I/E/S coding with the qualimetric ABCD rubric Farzaneh Fatemi and I are developing for Volume 1. Every generative future-story would be coded for what it values, in which mode, and whether it composes or transposes.

Volume 2: Narrative Authority, Cognitive Access, and Institutional Legitimacy

Jillian Saylor's proposed volume examines AI-supported cognition, disability and neurodiversity, authorship, scholarly labor, provenance, trust, surveillance, and governance, asking who may think, know, decide, and count as a legitimate knower (Boje, 2026a).

This is the volume where Byrum's (2024) work on value capture is most needed. Institutions increasingly decide legitimacy by metric: AI-detection scores, plagiarism percentages, citation counts, productivity dashboards. Each is a systemic concept that, once installed, begins to govern the richer value it was meant to indicate. A neurodivergent scholar who uses AI to organize her thinking may be flagged as illegitimate by a detector, not because her knowing is poor but because the metric cannot see her. That is a transposition of the person through the system (I diminished by S).

Hartman's hierarchy offers a way to reframe the legitimacy debate. The question is not "Did a machine touch this text?" but "In whose service is the tool composed?" Where the AI tool is valued in terms of the person's own purposes, we have composition: things valued intrinsically, the E^I that Hurst (2022) identifies with Stage Three. Where the person is valued only by her compliance with tool-policed rules, we have transposition. Demarest's (2026) claim that the scarce capacity of the AI age is axiological intelligence, not information, belongs at the center of this volume: legitimacy should attach to judgment, not to the provenance of keystrokes.

Proposed contribution: a chapter on *value capture and the legitimate knower*, co-authored by an axiologist and a disability-studies scholar, testing institutional AI policies against the I > E > S ordering.

Volume 3: True Storytelling, DEI, and the Age of AI

Oscar Edwards's proposed volume asks whose experiences are amplified, stereotyped, excluded, or made answerable when algorithms shape hiring, evaluation, communication, and public narratives. Ken Long's contribution follows a year of the Monday True Storytelling Circle using AI as a support agent

(Boje, 2026a). True Storytelling, which Jens Larsen, Lena Bruun, and I developed as an ethical change method, asks storytellers to take responsibility for the futures their stories bring into being (Larsen et al., 2021).

Hartman's founding insight is a DEI insight. What horrified him in Nazi Germany was that a society valued its *ideas about* people more than people themselves, and destroyed people to defend those ideas (Hurst, 2022). Every algorithmic category that stands in for a person repeats the form of that error at a smaller scale. Demarest (2026) describes the contemporary version precisely: in polarized argument, the person dissolves into a position and the position into an enemy. An AI system trained to sort applicants by proxies is a machine for dissolving persons into positions.

The Monday circle offers the counter-practice. A circle of storytellers who listen to one another's living stories is an intrinsic valuation in action. When AI synthesizes the circle's recordings, the axiological test is whether the synthesis serves the members' own stories (composition) or replaces them with a summary that the organization then treats as the truth (transposition). True Storytelling and formal axiology converge on one principle: the story must remain answerable to the person it describes.

Proposed contribution: a chapter on *intrinsic inclusion*, using Hartman's hierarchy to audit AI-mediated hiring and evaluation stories, with case material from the Monday circle.

Volume 4: Human–AI Co-Creation in Entrepreneurship and Strategy

Anton Shufutinsky's proposed volume centers human factors, sociotechnical systems, and human–systems integration, asking when AI augments rather than displaces human judgment. It builds on Contemporary Sociotechnical Systems Theory and on Trist and Lewin (Boje, 2026a; Trist & Bamforth, 1951).

Hartman was a systems thinker, among the first members of the Society for General Systems Research (Edwards, 2005). But he was a systems thinker who insisted that systems exist for persons. That is also the core of sociotechnical theory. Trist and Bamforth's (1951) study of longwall coal-getting showed that a technically optimal system that ignored the social system of work produced worse outcomes on both counts. Joint optimization, in Hartman's terms, is a compositional ordering: the technical (E) and the procedural (S) enriched by, and answerable to, the human (I).

Hurst's (2022) reading of Hartman sharpens the design question for AI. Job benchmarking fits the person to the job ($I^{\wedge}E$). Automation-as-replacement treats the person as a removable part of a system, which is a transposition. Job crafting, by contrast, fits the job to the person ($E^{\wedge}I$), and it is here that AI could be genuinely value-generating: a co-creation tool that lets entrepreneurs and workers reshape their own work around their capacities and purposes.

Proposed contribution: a chapter on *joint optimization as axiological composition*, offering an I/E/S design audit for human–AI co-creation in new ventures.

Volume 5: Strategy Storytelling Against Cognitive Surrender

The volume developing under Yue Cai, with an introduction by Mark Hillon, offers grounded storytelling as an antidote to the AI demand for cognitive surrender. Its chapters address strategic renewal in a family business, storytelling in multinationals, the deconstruction of financial stories in crisis, ethics and

aesthetics in True Storytelling, socio-economic world-building, and Wilma Dykeman's community-based account of prosperity and sacred place (Boje, 2026a).

Cognitive surrender is an axiological event. It happens when leaders hand the judgment of what is worth doing to a systemic process, whether a model's recommendation, a consultant's framework, or the share price. Friedman's (1970) doctrine that the social responsibility of business is to increase its profits is the classic strategic transposition: the firm's many values collapsed into one systemic number. Hartman's 1963 question, "To stay in business for what?" (as cited in Hurst, 2022, p. 18), is the classic counter-question.

Hartman also left strategists a practical instrument. As a consultant he urged executives to ask four questions: what they are here for in the world, why they work for this organization, what the organization can do to help them fulfill their meaning, and how they can help it do so (Hartman, 2013, as cited in Hurst, 2022). These questions cannot be delegated to a model; they have to be answered by someone. Dykeman's sacred place and a family firm's renewal are intrinsic stories of exactly this kind. They are strategy grounded in the singular.

Proposed contribution: a chapter on *Hartman's four questions as a strategy protocol against cognitive surrender*, tested in AI-assisted strategic planning sessions.

Volume 6: SEAM: Socio-Economic Consultation in the Age of AI

The sixth volume brings the Socio-Economic Approach to Management (SEAM) into direct conversation with AI transformation. Amandine Savall, Véronique Zardet, and Marc Bonnet will contribute as editors or authors on consultation, hidden costs, untapped human potential, work design, and socially responsible capitalism in organizations adopting AI (Boje, 2026a).

Of the six volumes, this is where the kinship with Hartman is deepest, and it is almost uncanny. In the 1950s Hartman helped found a German institute whose name translates roughly as an institute for *socio-economic* enterprise design (Robert S. Hartman Institute, n.d.-a). A generation later Henri Savall founded ISEOR in Lyon and built SEAM on the premise that dysfunctions generate hidden costs, and that those costs can be converted into value by developing human potential (Savall & Zardet, 2008; Savall et al., 2008). Hartman's profit-sharing economics and SEAM's hidden-cost accounting arrive at the same place from different directions: people are not only an expense on the income statement; they are the source of the enterprise's value.

Hurst's (2022) third indicator of Stage Three capitalism, that accounting standards will one day stop treating people only as expenses, is essentially the SEAM program. SEAM already makes visible, in money, what companies lose when they treat people systemically: absenteeism, turnover, quality defects, and productivity gaps that never appear on the balance sheet. My working paper on humanoid robotics uses SEAM to argue that redeploying workers into improvement, quality, maintenance, and human-robot bridge teams yields stronger long-run results than a payroll-saving layoff calculation (Boje, 2026c). Read through Hartman, that argument is axiological before it is financial. The layoff calculation transposes persons through a cost model. Redeployment composes the technical system by the human.

Proposed contribution: a chapter on *Third Stage capitalism meets hidden costs*, jointly written by SEAM and Hartman Institute scholars, pairing Hartman's partnership of capital and labor with SEAM's qualimetric method as a consultation model for AI adoption.

Summary: One Grammar Across Six Volumes

Volume	Characteristic AI transposition	Hartman composition	Proposed Hartman-informed chapter
1. Generative AI, Quantum Storytelling, and Organizational Futures	Futures captured by the most probable continuation	Intrinsic possibility composes the model	Axiological antenarrative: I/E/S coding with the ABCD rubric
2. Narrative Authority, Cognitive Access, and Institutional Legitimacy	Knowers judged by detection and productivity metrics	The tool valued in terms of the knower (E^I)	Value capture and the legitimate knower
3. True Storytelling, DEI, and the Age of AI	Persons dissolved into algorithmic categories	The story answerable to the person it describes	Intrinsic inclusion: auditing AI hiring and evaluation stories
4. Human–AI Co-Creation in Entrepreneurship and Strategy	Automation as replacement of the human part	Joint optimization; job crafting (E^I)	Joint optimization as axiological composition
5. Strategy Storytelling Against Cognitive Surrender	Judgment surrendered to model or share price	"To stay in business for what?"	Hartman's four questions as strategy protocol
6. SEAM: Socio-Economic Consultation in the Age of AI	Layoffs justified by payroll models	Partnership of capital and labor; hidden costs revealed	Third Stage capitalism meets hidden costs

Discussion

Implications of Hartman's Values for AI Business Storytelling

Four implications follow from reading the AI Revolution through Hartman.

First, every AI story is a value claim. The press release announcing an AI deployment, the model card, the productivity dashboard, and the chatbot's cheerful reply all carry an implicit hierarchy of value. Most of them place the systemic (the model, the metric, the benchmark) at the top and the person at the bottom. Hartman gives storytelling researchers a way to make that implicit ordering explicit and to ask whether it is composition or transposition. This moves AI ethics out of the abstract and into the text, where storytelling scholars do our best work.

Second, the hierarchy can function as a design constraint, not only a diagnosis. $I > E > S$ is a rule that can be written into procurement policies, deployment reviews, and consultation protocols. Before an AI system is adopted, an organization can ask: Which persons does this serve? Which things and actions

does it improve? Which rules does it enforce, and are those rules subordinate to the first two? SEAM consultants and Hartman practitioners already have the facilitation skills to run such reviews.

Third, the Third Stage of Capitalism is being contradicted inside the AI industry itself. My comparative study of AI labor supply chains found that the most advanced technology in the world rests on an invisible layer of data annotators, content moderators, and feedback raters, many paid a small fraction of what the engineers above them earn (Boje, 2026d). In Hartman's terms this is Stage One brute capitalism rebuilt beneath Stage Three rhetoric: persons valued as units of production so that systems can be marketed as intelligent. The same pattern appears where AI data centers arrive in communities. In my own county in New Mexico, the intrinsic value of water, land, and place is being traded against systemic incentive packages negotiated before residents were told which corporations were involved (Boje, 2026b). An axiological reading of business storytelling must follow the story down to these layers.

Fourth, intrinsic valuing requires someone who answers. Bakhtin (1993) argued that there is no alibi in being: each of us occupies a unique place from which only we can answer. Hartman's intrinsic dimension and Bakhtin's answerability converge. A person is valued intrinsically when someone commits to her as a singular being. An AI system can help us see, remember, and compare. It cannot, on its own, stand in that answerable place, and a business story that pretends it can has transposed responsibility into the machine. Whether some future AI might have intrinsic value of its own is a real and open philosophical question; leading axiologists hold that only unique, conscious individuals have intrinsic worth. But the answer does not relieve the humans who deploy it of their answerability today.

How the Hartman Institute Can Be Part of Series 3

The Institute asks how its members will live the legacy. Series 3 offers six concrete doors. I propose the following, as invitations rather than assignments, for discussion at the Wednesday Lab and in Savannah.

1. **Chapter authorship in each volume.** Each of the six proposed chapters in the summary table above could be led or co-led by an Institute member, pairing an axiologist with a storytelling scholar.
2. **A cross-volume axiology advisor.** One Institute scholar could serve as axiology advisor across all six volumes, helping editors apply the I/E/S grammar consistently.
3. **A Wednesday Lab session hosted with the Institute.** The lab meets weekly on Zoom and welcomes guests; a session on Hartman and AI storytelling could follow Savannah.
4. **An integrated instrument.** Our qualimetric ABCD rubric and the Hartman Value Profile tradition could be combined into an axiological coding scheme for AI narratives, published first in the *Journal of Formal Axiology* and then in Volume 1.
5. **A reciprocal publication.** A themed issue or section of the *Journal of Formal Axiology* on axiology and AI storytelling would bring Series 3 scholars into the Institute's own conversation.

Tensions to Hold

Two tensions deserve to stay visible. The first is commodification. The Hartman Value Profile now circulates under many commercial brand names (Hurst, 2022), and axiology can be sold as one more sorting tool. If Series 3 imports Hartman only as an instrument, it will reproduce the value capture Byrum (2024) warns against. The second is method. Formal axiology seeks formal structure; antenarrative seeks what escapes structure. I think this is a productive tension rather than a

contradiction. Hartman's own theory reserves the richest value for what cannot be exhausted by any formal description, which is exactly where antenarrative lives.

Conclusion

Hartman began with a question about organized evil and ended with a science of the good. He did not live to see the Institute that bears his name, nor the AI systems that now organize so much of our working and storytelling lives. Yet his question fits our moment almost too well. We have built machines of extraordinary organizing power. What we have not built, and cannot delegate, is the knowledge of what is worth organizing.

I have argued that formal axiology offers Series 3 three things: a value grammar for reading AI stories, a measurement tradition that can join our qualimetric and antenarrative methods, and an economics of partnership that anticipates SEAM's case against payroll-driven AI transformation. Across all six volumes, the same pattern appears. AI tends to invert Hartman's hierarchy, placing models above work and work above persons. The task of business storytelling in the AI Revolution is to restory that inversion, to put I > E > S back in order in the stories organizations tell about themselves and the futures they bet on.

The Institute's anniversary message ends with a line I want to take seriously as a scholar (Robert S. Hartman Institute, 2026b): *You matter. Infinitely*. In Hartman's system that is not a greeting-card sentiment. It is a formal claim. The intrinsic value of a person belongs to the non-denumerable, the infinity that no list of properties, no training corpus, and no dashboard can exhaust. The message continues: *How you matter also matters*. That is the axiological turn from value to valuation, from what we are to how we answer for what we do.

Hartman's legacy is a launch pad, not an anchor. My own answer to the Institute's closing question, what will you choose your living legacy to be, is modest and specific. I would like the six volumes of *Business Storytelling in the Age of AI* to carry Hartman's hierarchy into the rooms where AI futures are being decided, and I would like members of the Hartman Institute to join us in writing them. The Wednesday Lab is open. The chapters are still unwritten. The story, as always, is not yet settled.

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