

## **THE HUMANIST-SPIRITUALITY STRUGGLE**

By Tom Chulak

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For the past thirty years there has been a debate within Unitarian Universalism between those who call themselves humanist and those who are seeking spirituality. The humanists for the most part identify with a Unitarian Universalism that is rational, scientific, and post Christian. Those seeking spirituality connect for the most part with emotion and intuition. Both of these ways of experiencing life have been part of Unitarian and Universalist history: One example being the struggle between the Unitarian Christians and the Transcendentalist in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Throughout the late 19<sup>th</sup> century into the 1930's humanism within our movement grew, however it was not until after World War II that it became dominant. For those who entered Unitarian Universalism in the 1950's through the 80's humanism was central. However, in the last two decades spirituality has emerged and eclipsed humanism.

This change has caused tension in many of our congregations. Spirituality has influenced our worship, music, leadership, education and other aspects of our congregations. For those who thrive on the rational and scientific, the changes have been disturbing and at times resisted. On the other hand, it is my belief that had we not opened up to spirituality, we would be declining today.

There has never been one way of being Unitarian Universalist. One of the great gifts of our way of being religious is that almost every 30 years, a new way of knowing or experiencing life arises in our midst which challenges the dominate worldview held in the present.

In 1985, we adopted our current Purpose and Principles. If my observation is correct, then somewhere around 2015, our current assumptions and worldview will be challenged and those who came into our movement in the last 20 or 30 years will ask what happened to the good old UUism grounded in spirituality.

This is the way of our faith, which uniquely affirms that the truth is open and revelation is not sealed. May we delight in this dynamic way of being while at the same time admitting that change is difficult.