

This was the reading used by Rev. Dr. William Schulz prior to his sermon. Rev. Schulz was the minister for the UU Partner Church Council program at General Assembly 2010 in Minneapolis, MN.

Reading is paraphrased from the philosopher Richard Rorty's essay on "Solidarity"

If you were a Jew in the period when the trains were running to Auschwitz, your chances of being hidden by your gentile neighbors were greater if you lived in Denmark or Italy than if you lived in Belgium. A common way of describing this is that many Danes and Italians showed a sense of human solidarity which many Belgians lacked

The traditional way of spelling out what we mean by "human solidarity" is to say that there is something within each of us – our essential humanity – which resonates to the presence of this same thing in other human beings

But consider those Danes and those Italians. Did they say, about their Jewish neighbors, that they deserved to be saved because they were fellow human beings? Perhaps sometimes they did but...usually, if queried to explain why they were taking risks to protect a given Jew, they would have used more parochial terms—for example, that this particular Jew was from Milan, like I am, or a member of my union, or a dentist I went to or a fellow bocce player or a fellow parent of small children. Our sense of

solidarity is strongest when those with whom we feel solidarity are thought of as “one of us” where “us” means something smaller and more local than the whole human race.

How, then, does moral progress occur? How do we expand our sense of solidarity beyond just those who are “like us?” By showing that when it comes to such common human experiences as joy, pain, gratitude and humiliation, our traditional differences (of tribe, religion, race, customs, and the like) are unimportant when compared with our similarities. This is the way to expand the sense of “us” to include now the family in the next cave, then of the tribe across the river, then of the tribal confederation beyond the mountains, then of the unbelievers across the seas. Or, even, by the way, the marginalized people right here among us who have been doing our dirty work all along.